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Abstract Words, images, and the body are memory media that are used in personal and cultural communication to construct our memory interactively. In literary works, these memory media carry historical and cultural memories and ethical connotations. William Gass's *Middle C* and August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* are both works presenting the idea of historical memory and cultural norms through words, images, and the body. By exploring three focal points, i.e., characters' self-identities, traditional cultural memory, and the fusion of different cultures in these two literary works, this paper analyzes the characters' ethical predicaments indicated by memory media and reveals the writers' attitudes towards and memorization of historical events.

Key words Words; images; the body; *Middle C*; *The Piano Lesson*

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Introduction

Words, images, and the body have been the media through which cultural traditions have been formed in order to "provide the material support underlying cultural

1 This paper is a part of the research project on "Chinese Foreign Literature Studies Index (CFLSI) Research and Application" (18ZDA284) supported by National Social Sciences Fund of China.

memory, framing it and interacting with individual human memories" (Assmann 11). The semiology experts Juri Lotman and Boris Uspenskij of Russian Tartu-School defined culture as "non-hereditary memory of a collective," so cultural memories rely on "certain practices and mediums" (Lotman and Uspenskij 3) and a "communication system" (Tamm 6). Individual and cultural memories are constructed and preserved through their mutual communication and interaction. Though each medium has its own unique patterns and channels for displaying cultural memories, words have always been held higher the other media of memory. However, memory media have been constantly changing and interacting with one another. Words, images, and the body are used by different individuals and cultures in communication to construct memories. Individuals refresh their memories by memory media. On the other hand, memory media represent the past ethical scenes and reveal people's ethical predicaments and identity crisis. In literary works, memory media such as the body and images are constantly integrated with written words, through which readers build their historical knowledge and memory. The contemporary American writer William Gass and playwright August Wilson emphasized Holocaust and slave history respectively in *Middle C* and *The Piano Lesson*, showing their same keen concern about traumatic memories in American and African American history. It is worth noting that their recording and representation of trauma are similar in these two works, in which words, images, and the body are mostly juxtaposed, and the memory medium and the ethical connotation evoked by memory media have always been the focus. Based on these two works, this paper attempts to explore different memory media in which the characters' ethical predicaments are revealed and examine the authors' ethical intention and choice towards memory.

From Words to Waste: Uncertainty and Search for Self-identity

German cultural memory theorist Aleida Assmann concluded that the history of writing has gone through four stages, i.e. pictographic writing, alphabetical writing, analogous writing, and digital writing (Assmann 199). Indeed, words are crucial to the study of the medium of memory. Words belong to a technical medium for writing and communication, so words are expected of recording and storing memories. However, words are described as a fragile box that "must perish". (Wordsworth 96) Milton, on the contrary, stressed the power of words, and believed that books contain "a potency of life…preserve the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them" (Milton 11). That is to say, words function as the medium of memory and its metaphor. Though words are a "dynamic, productive,

and inaccessible part of memory, [they] cannot be replaced" (Assmann 175). As memory medium, how much do we know about the past through written words? From the point of view of Thomas Carlyle, words are "falsified, blotted out, torn, lost…difficult to read or spell" (qtd. in Assmann 195). On the ground of these definitions of words, Assmann extended the medium of words to traces. Traces are "two-edged, open a very different path to the past from that of texts, and link memory inextricably with forgetting" (Assmann 197). Furthermore, she shifted traces to waste. The process of the interest of cultural memory moves from texts to relics, relics to traces, and traces to waste, so people put their "reverence of the insignificant and turned waste into information" (Assmann 201-2). As a result, in the ubiquitous traces and waste, the reliability of memory is deconstructed, and the characters are faced with ethical dilemmas due to the crisis of their ethical identity.

In Gass' *Middle C*, there were a group of people who were constantly changing their identities. They had more than one identity and ended up not knowing which one they should identify with. Joseph Skizzen's father, Rudy, was originally a Viennese Catholic. When he was prescient of the coming disaster, he disguised his family as Frankels and changed his family's identity to Jewish, so they successfully escaped from Europe. Soon after they arrived in London, where Blitz began, Rudy proclaimed once again that the whole family was British, and they were Scofields after a surprise visit by six men in black. Inasmuch as the father won a race prize in an accident, he abandoned his family for America and never returned. As Professor Nie Zhenzhao pointed out that "in literary texts, all ethical issues are often related to ethical identity. There are many kinds of ethical identities, such as those that based on blood lineage, on ethical relations, on moral norms, on collective and social relations, and on occupation" (Nie 263-264). Rudy's continuous changing of the family name and identities aroused his son Skizzen's uncertainty of his ethical identity that are based on collective and social relations. Skizzen collected various historical clues and traces and preserved his collected "treasure" in the attic that was named as "Inhumanity Museum". He was born in London, and was totally unfamiliar with his parents' experience in Europe, so he tried to know their history from all kinds of writings, relics, and traces. From the inside, he has been defending his innocence and following his father's practice, guarding himself with various false identities (Joey, Joseph, Professor Skizzen).

> What he really wanted the world to see, were his lifelong ruse to be discovered, was the equivalent of Moses's tablets before they got inscribed: a person pure, clean, undefiled, unspoiled by the terrible history of the earth. So he

> could rightly say to his accusers (and accused he would be): When you were destroying yourselves and your cities, I was not there; when you were debasing your noble principles, I was not there; when you were fattening on lies like pigs at a trough, I was not there; when you were squeezing life from all life like water from a sponge, I was not there. So see me now! Untarnished as a tea service! I've done nothing brave but nothing squalid, nothing farsighted but nothing blind, nothing to make me proud, yet never have I had to be ashamed. (Gass 321)

It is worthy of being noted that Gass is good at "producing characters his consciousness inhabits via the words that create and express them so as to learn and judge what possible or impossible self lies lurking in scattered fragments among all the exploded debris of the modern psyche" (O'Hara 207). Skizzen was also addicted to the writing world, and believed that art and fiction could seek solace against the memories of atrocities. However, the more obsessed he felt, the more unsure he became. As Oedipa Maas's network "W.A.S.T.E." in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, Skizzen's "Inhumanity Museum" looked like a messy waste dump filled with empty soda cans and trash containers, which were associated with violence and disaster in individual memory. Once again, the memory of history was wrapped up in the unreliability of writing, and in the novel "anything will do" (O'Hara 211), The character's ethical identities remained changeable, and the true one was obscured by the false ones. When Skizzen thought that he would be exposed for all his hypocrisy and fake identities, he survived again, and his fake identities sustained. Though Skizzen used wastes and words to search his ethical identity, his puzzlement was not solved. He was caught in his predicament.

Similarly, August Wilson's play, *The Piano Lesson*, via memory media, presents the puzzlement of ethical identity of African Americans in the first half of the 20th century. The heroine Berniece stayed with her 11-year-old daughter Maretha in her uncle Doaker's house. Buried in grief of their families' deaths, Berniece and Doaker spoke no more of the past. At the beginning of the 20th century, most African Americans are illiterate, so written words were not a reliable way for them to record and understand the past. Doaker's recollection of the past showed the absence of writing. He used to be a cook, working on the railways, so his identity was revealed mainly through the items in his kitchen. As he stood in the kitchen, washing and cooking, he recalled his reminiscence in the railway. Those fragmentary memories flowing in his song pieced his past experiences together. "Gone leave Jackson Mississippi/and go to Memphis/and double back to Jackson/

Come on down to Hattiesburg" (Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* 55). To Africans the oral tradition is the "mnemonic devices peculiar" (Gates 5), and also the medium of "nonlinguistic sighs" that leads to the past (Assmann 197). As a railroad worker, Doaker's working song served as a kind of trace that linked individual memory with forgetting. However, it was the cooking utensil, like dishes, pots, and seasoning bottles that revealed Doaker's identity, which were in resonance with Assmann's "waste". They were the most insignificant items in daily life, but they were signs, working as "signifying signs to stimulate the subject to remember" (Zhao 44). These kitchen utensils reactivated Doaker's memories of his time on the railroad, signifying his past ethical identity, but he was puzzled with his identity as a railroad cook because he had other identities. He had been obsessed by several black women, sneaked into the slaveowner Sutter's house with his two brothers to get their piano back. These identities were kept in others' memories and left to gossips. He never confirmed their authenticity and decided to forget the past. In addition, Berniece was uncertain about her identity and searching for her ethical identity. The death of her mother and her husband involved her into a crisis of ethical identity, and her hesitation of marrying Avery showed her fear of the loss of her identity as a child, a wife, or a mother. Martha, even as a little girl, faced a crisis of identity resulted from her mother's refusal to tell her anything about her family history. In a world where various memory mediums coexisted with deliberate forgetfulness, historical memory was challenged, and waited to be awakened.

Gass and Wilson did not deny all kinds of historical events, but questioned the reliability of historical memory. Just like any other texts of the novel, words as the medium of memory can give people only some comfort with traces of history. Readers still feel ambiguous and make free associations. Besides, the two writers also deal with the relationship between the memory and images.

The Memory of Images: The Fall of Traditional Culture

Due to the fact that "paintings and sculptures could not effectively protect whatever they represented against the ravages" (Assmann 179), words and images as memory media differ from each other, and are even in constant competition. Actually, images are viewed as an entrance to the past. Fritz Saxl further illustrated the relationship between images and the past. He wrote, "In pictorial sign language, in contrast to normal speech, a vast reservoir of experience is transmitted from primal times to posterity…It will always be a preserver of the early stages of human culture in history" (qtd. in Assmann 216). Images are therefore an indispensable part in the construction of memory, and provide memory with original clues. Though

words "supported a clearly legible tradition, the image was perceived as connected with emotion and the unconscious" (Assmann 208). In other words, the image as medium of memory is metaphorical, which is silent and eloquent. The image cannot be expressed or processed by words. When people see images, they are stimulated by the emotion or imagination hidden in the minds. In literary works, ekphrasis is related to the description of painting and images, including verbal representation, visual representation, and a rhetoric and cross-media distraction. Paintings can "tell stories, make arguments, and signify abstract ideas" (Mitchell 160). In a nutshell, the literary image representation not only projects images on readers, but also has dialogues with readers. Gass and Wilson excel at utilizing images in their works. They either use words to construct images, or emphasize the description of certain images, revealing the characters' ethical predicament and the hero's or the heroin's confusion and loss of historical memories.

Gass's *Middle C* is abundant in musical images. In the novel Skizzen was separated from traditional culture and faced with ethical chaos of professional identity. Though he received no actual training in music, Skizzen claimed himself as Professor Skizzen and boasted himself as an expert on the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg, the founder of the atonal twelve-tone. In Schoenberg's opinion, art should neither be described nor symbolized, but directly express human's spirit and experience. The atonal composition technique broke the melodic structure of traditional composition, and music was neither balanced nor repetitive. Meanwhile, the rhythm became unpredictable and unrestrained. In response to these characteristics, the novel was written in the nonlinear artistic technique, combined with the free-beat twelve-tone music. Thus, the novel was both simple and powerful. The novel's title "Middle C" originally meant the note in the middle of the piano or harmonic system. However, the twelve-tone technique abandoned the idea of tonic and dominant and became a succession of distinct notes. Thereby, it is hard to grasp the theme of the novel. Gass put this idea into the novel, so the whole text was arranged like musical scale. Through various changes of font and typeset, the novel presented a musical image, showing the confusion and loss of human's historical memories of the Holocaust. Skizzen was struggling to seek his own cultural identity, and his collection in his "Inhumanity Museum" and all events in his life presented a disorganized and messy image similar to the twelve-tone music image. All of a sudden, the crazy, despair, fear, and anxiety mingled with unpredictable human destiny, and he could not find the cultural tradition he was familiar with. In fact, the use of musical images and twelve-tone technique not only prevailed in *Middle C* but also demonstrated in the preface about the Holocaust in Gass's *The Tunnel*,

in which the hero Frederick Kohler was continuously digging the tunnel in his basement, finding no direction and getting lost in his own language world. Skizzen was impressed by his first music teacher Mr. Hirk.

> The notes emerge like children into an ordered universe; they immediately know their place; they immediately find it, for the order you hear was born with them… these notes are not born orphans, not maroons surrounded by worse than ocean, but they have relatives, they have an assignment in a system. (Gass 242)

Skizzen was searching for the system in music and life, only to find an anti-system. Like all Gass's protagonists, Skizzen finally turned to words for comfort, but the musical images in the texts played the dual roles of image representation and meditation, so he was caught by helplessness and confusion.

In African traditional culture, the function of images is no less than that of words, especially paintings and carved images. To be specific, sculptures were used "during the entire life cycle of the African." (Sege 6) Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* reveals the function of sculptures in African American daily life. In the novel, the carvings on the piano were visual signs of the history of an African American family that was once enslaved. In the slavery period, the slave owner Nolander traded the great grandmother and grandfather of Berniece for a piano as a gift for his wife. However, Nolander's wife missed the traded slaves so Norlander asked Berniece's great grandfather to carve his traded families on the piano. The great grandfather was grieving for his loss of family members, so he carved all kinds of things on the piano, including the wedding ceremony of jumping the broom, Mama Esther's funeral, Norlander's journey with the two slaves, etc. The carvings evoked the family's miserable historical memories as slaves and conveyed the family's memories and emotions of the sufferings with blood and tears. For the descendants, it was challengeable for them to consider how to deal with the historical memory embodied by the carved images. African carvings contain images, and they, after proper ceremonies, are regarded as "the dwelling place of a 'spirit'…or ancestors or members of the family" (Segy 2-3). African traditional culture "is the practice of rituals and the recognition of the ever presence of the living-dead (ancestor), and allows the person to coexist in harmony with other members of the community and nature" (Kamara 503). At the very beginning, in the face of the piano with African carvings, Doaker and Berniece refused to touch it and recall their family memories when they were immersed in grief. Boy Willie attempted to sell it so that

he could "stand right up next the white man and talk about the price of cotton… the weather, and anything else [he] want to talk about" (Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* 92). As a result, Boy Willie and Berniece got angry about each other. Wilson's demonstration of the African descendants' attitudes towards the memory medium of craving images reflects the African American descendants' ethical predicaments in identifying with their community and their indifference to traditional culture and family legacy. However, their conflict came to an end after they realized that the piano with African carvings had a close relationship with their ancestors.

Both Gass and Wilson are concerned about words, in which the writing and images as media of memory are integrated with each other. Such kind of technique enriches the creation skills of writing and broadens the boundary of the representation of images. It is worth noting that these two media also highlight the characters in the text and image context, and memories from the body are participated.

Body Writing: A Carnival of Trauma Memory

Assmann got her inspiration of body as medium from the Bible, in which God says "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (31:33). The accumulation of the unconscious, as a habit or the trauma of brutality, will be imprinted on the memory, which features body writing. Body writing is regarded as a process of internalization, but it will be "externalized in a dramatic scene that once more links remembering and forgetting to an act of writing" (Assmann 232). The body is sensitive so it is vulnerable to the outside world. Therefore, body writing is not mere about individual experience, but also about memories of social experience. For instance, a tattooed man is a marked man, for "the body is a memory" (Clastres 184). The soldiers' wounds in their bodies are memory of war. "The body memory of wounds and scars is more reliable than that of the mind" (Assmann 235). Since the ancient times, the tattoo custom has worked for the establishment of identity, while the memory of wounds and scars is a reminder of trauma which challenges the identity. Moreover, the depiction of trauma memory is prevalent in literature of the Holocaust. In Kluger's memoir of the Holocaust, Auschwitz is described as "a lunatic terra incognita, [and] the memory of which is like a bullet lodged in the soul where no surgery can reach it" (Kluger 112). From the perspective of Sigmund Freud's psychological analysis, trauma and the uncanny is closely connected. The features of uncanny include the present and past, memory and forgetting, return of repression, and negative emotions (Tong 88-90). The uncanny is resulted from the trauma that society put on individuals. The wounds in the body and the trauma in

the heart are two basic factors of body memory, which are constantly reconstructed under different ethical circumstances, building the true and false traumatic memories. The characters in Gass's and Wilson's works are engaged in traumatic memories, so they are confused about history and lost in their physical feelings and real experiences.

Like the protagonist in Gass's *The Tunnel*, Skizzen in *Middle C* neither experienced the Holocaust nor got scars on his body. Nevertheless, he suffered psychological trauma because of his parents' experiences. They tended to shut themselves in the cluttered attics where the used items delivered memories. His boyhood experiences were deeply embedded in Skizzen's physical memories, thus trauma remained. Though Skizzen had no personal experience of the Holocaust, his life was closely tied to it. At the beginning, his father took the whole family fled from their hometown, and then his father abandoned his family. Thereafter, he collected various items of atrocities and disaster, put them into his "Inhumanity Museum", trying to get an answer of his father's choice. It is no doubt that the father's sternness left the mother and children in the shadow of misfortune. Skizzen had no clear understanding of the Holocaust and his family's history from his parents' complaints. The fact is that the testimonies of the survivors of the Holocaust "don't come from the deep memory" (Langer 7) and the testimonies are "human documents rather than merely historical ones, so the troubled interaction between past and present achieves a gravity that surpasses the concern with accuracy" (Langer xv). Like the description of the war in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Gass's dealing with his characters' trauma from the Holocaust is fragmentary. Skizzen's kick of the empty soda cans into a trash container in the attic implied the clutter of his collections and historical memories. The traumatic memories rendered Skizzen a growing sense that he could only find little comfort in art and language. The cause of the recurring atrocities on the weak is sometimes resulted from the perpetrator's selfishness, just as Skizzen's father Rudy did. Skizzen also managed to establish himself as a traumatized innocent man, so he kept changing his identity. In Gass's words, the "innocent people" like Skizzen are everywhere in the society. Confronted with the atrocities of history no one can be spared. "No shape in time. No beginning. No end. No middle. No knowing where you were"(Gass 161). This kept Skizzen in low spirit. "The fear that the human race might not survive has been replaced by the fear that it might survive"(Gass 22). This sentence constantly appears in the novel and flashes through Skizzen's mind, which displays Gass's extension of personal trauma to all humans, so Gass always emphasizes on finding comfort in the world of the words. The contrast between trauma and comfort is more impressive than the

mere description of trauma.

Like those in Gass's novels, the characters in Wilson's plays suffer trauma too. Through the characters' attitudes towards memory and memory media Wilson shows the characters' struggle in the ethical dilemma and delivers his ethical intention of his writing. From an ethical point of view, memory "involves not only the individual emotions... also the relationship between individual and history... [so] memory touches the field of ethics and morality. The essence of memory is the human's obligation, namely, 'shall I remember,' and 'should I remember or forget'"(Zhao 124). In *The Piano Lesson*, the piano, as a memory medium, conveyed the trauma of Berniece and indicated the relationship between Berniece and her families. Berniece, in her early age, experienced her father's death in the fight for the piano and her mother's death from weeping on and wiping the piano. In her adulthood, Berniece's husband was beaten to death by a white policeman when he was trying to save Berniece's brother Boy Willie with a gun. The successive deaths and pains deepened the wounds within her, and she could not speak of the traumatic memories or remember them. Her husband's gun and the piano served as the media of fragmentary traumatic memories that communicated with her in silence. She said that,

> When I played it she could hear my daddy talking to her，the pictures came alive and walked through the house. Some time late at night I could hear my mama talking to them. I said that wasn't gonna happen to me. I don't play that piano cause I don't want to wake them spirits. They never be walking around in this house. (Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* 70)

Thus, Berniece refused to touch anything that will stimulate her memory of the past sufferings. Her trauma was pertinent to Levee's in Wilson's another play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Levee witnessed her mother raped by a gang of white people, got wounded when he spooked up to save her mother, and left in the chest "a long ugly scar" (Wilson, *Ma Rainey* 69). Not long before he saw his father was hanged and set by fire. The long scar became a medium that reminded him of the harshest and most vivid memory, and he was overwhelmed by long repression and hurt. Levee and Berniece were traumatized by racial slavery and persecution. Wilson demonstrates the performance of and reaction to the traumas suffered by the characters, and shows the role of African traditional culture in soothing the trauma of African Americans. Levee joined in a blues band, and proposed valuable ideas to develop blues. Berniece overcame her trauma and held a traditional African

religious ritual summoning the spirits of her ancestors to expel Sutter's spirit, which can be regarded as "a summoning of 'cultural memory'" (Noggle 71). Berniece in Wilson's work ultimately chose to touch the medium of memory and confronted with family's past suffering. Berniece's ethical choice delivers Wilson's ethical intention, namely, the African descendants' identification with African traditional culture. Religious rituals enable black individuals to integrate their traumatic memories into traditional culture where their individual trauma gets healed, so they realize their identity as African Americans and no longer get lost easily in the mainstream culture.

As it is demonstrated above, the body memories of the characters in Gass's and Wilson's works convey trauma. As the medium of memory, the body, integrated with words and images, is the extension of memory, and forms a mode of carnival as important internal memories in cultural memory.

Conclusion

Words, images and the body as memory media are different but closely related to one another, indicating different ethical scenes. In the historical context, these media construct our interpretation and imagination of the past. As a matter of fact, in the world of electronic information technology, words, images or the body as the media of memory is changing, with simpler means to spread and a broader scope and more acute memories of history and culture involved. Aleida Assmann writes in her *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization* that there is a "radical change in the concept of cultural memory. Previously, memory had been defined in terms of tradition, inscription, and storage, whereas the new historical consciousness defines it in terms of erasure, destruction, gaps, and forgetfulness" (Assmann 196). Therefore, the ethical choice of "what should we remember?" deserves more attention. The works of Gass and Wilson, by virtue of words, images, and the body as memory media reveal the authors' reflections on historical and cultural memories.

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Against the Aphanisis of the Subject: Rewriting the Myth of Black Woman in Grace Nichols's *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*

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Abstract The present study explores Afro-Caribbean poet Grace Nichols's "The Black Women Goes Shopping," "Beauty," "Looking at Miss World," and "Invitation" from her poetry collection *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) in relation to the concept of aphanisis. Based on a post-Lacanian analysis, the essay argues that against the dominant discourse of the civilizational ideal, Humanism, that silences black women by categorizing them as sexualized and racialized others, Nichols's poetic personae rewrite themselves by evacuating the standardized negative implications associated with black women, confined to the lower leg of the binary trap in Western metaphysics. Rather than presenting themselves as marginalized figures spoken by myths and produced through abjection, these women resist their fading by the semantic overkill of the Other and shatter the self-pitying image assigned to them through their subversion of the Symbolic from within. Leaking out from the cracks of grand narratives, they reposition themselves outside the dialectics of recognition and voice themselves beyond the grasp of symbolic significations. By their transgressive repositioning, they open up a new space of signification and object to their fixation by the deadly gaze of the dominant discourse.

Keywords aphanisis; Lacan; the Other; dialectics of otherness; Grace Nichols; *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*

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Introduction

I can say I can write
no big poem enough
to hold the essence
of a black woman
or a white woman
or a green woman.
(Grace Nichols, *Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman* 52)

Ostracized from the dominant categories of subjectivity as anthropomorphic others by the normative humanist ideal of "'Man' as the measure of all things" (Braidotti 67-68), black women have been denied fluidity and repressed within the dialectics of otherness. Contrary to the common discourse that tends towards a reductionist and marginalizing presentation of black women, Grace Nichols makes her poetic personae stand as active agents that speak their own words instead of accepting to be spoken by the words of the Other. Moreover, different from works where black women arouse pity for themselves, through acknowledging their double colonization, Nichols does not let her women pile on the agony for directing attention to their exploitation. Rather, she paints self-confident black women who aim at renewing history and stepping outside of their expected roles. However, it should be emphasized that "Nichols's reworking of history does not remain within the symbolic order, but becomes the site of a possible re-entry into the Imaginary and a utopian vision of what a woman might be" (Easton 59). In the light of this, the present essay argues that straying away from the strictly defined frames and scripts aimed to tame black women, Nichols draws a vibrant portrait of black women who have a dynamic link with their desire. Through choosing the fat black woman as the speaking subject of her poetic sequence, she "signals her refusal to occupy the subject(ed) position designated for the black woman by history"

(Narain 186). With the aim of unveiling how Nichols's black women unsettle the colonial and patriarchal discourse and resist being spoken by the Other, her four poems—"The Black Women Goes Shopping," "Beauty," "Looking at Miss World," and "Invitation"—are analyzed against the background of post-Lacanian theory. Different from studies focusing on a feminist or a postcolonial reading of the poems, the paper adopts a psychoanalytical approach. Through a post-Lacanian psychoanalytical reading, it is shown how Nichols's women re-home themselves in an alternative ontological site and rewrite their own myth distorting the Symbolic with their menacing voice leaking from the unmapped Imaginary territory.

Against the Aphanisis of the Subject: Rewriting the Myth of Black Woman in Grace Nichols's *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*

As a British poet of Caribbean descent, Nichols rewrites African women's history by presenting black women not as passivized figures but as active agents who subversively reject restrictive Symbolic categorizations imposed on them. Through her poetic personae's revision of a fat black woman, who speaks from her body, she "critiques monolithic construction of race, sexuality and national identity" and challenges the "idea of a superior language" (Alexander 128). Her poetic personae's foregrounded corporeality, in this sense, echoes Cixous who says: "Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth" (880). In a post-Lacanian terrain, their resistance to be pinned down on to a wall as doomed to remain in the lower leg of the phallogocentric signification stands as their reaction to their aphanisis—to the loss of their authentic voice.

At this point, one needs to look at what the term 'aphanisis' comes to mean from a Lacanian perspective. Introduced into psychoanalysis by Ernest Jones to mean "'the disappearance of sexual desire,"' the term 'aphanisis' has been modified by Lacan in a way to mean "the disappearance of the subject in the process of alienation" (Evans 12):

> The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement, in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject. There, strictly speaking, is the temporal pulsation, in which is established that which is the characteristic of the departure of the unconscious as such—the closing. (Lacan, *S XI* 207)

Though acknowledging that this process has been termed as 'aphanisis' by Ernest Jones, Lacan underlines in which sense he departs from him: "aphanisis is to be situated in a more radical way at the level at which the subject manifests himself in this movement of disappearance that I have described as lethal […] I have called this movement the fading of the subject" (*S XI* 207-208). In this regard, "the being of the subject" is located "there beneath the meaning" as Lacan further notes: "It is of the nature of […] meaning, as it emerges in the field of the Other, to be in a large part of its field, eclipsed by the disappearance of being, induced by the very function of the signifier" (Lacan, *S XI* 211). Within this context, the meaning (the Other) is oriented towards shaping the being (the subject) in the polarized frame of universalizing significations.

Arguing along similar lines with Lacan, Braidotti also underlines "the dialectics of self and other, and the binary logic of identity and otherness" that she regards "as respectively the motor for and cultural logic of universal Humanism:"

> Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others.' (15)

The Other causes the transition from an individual to a subject(ed) position: "The Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made present of the subject—it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear" (Lacan, *S XI* 203). Given "the fact that the subject depends on the signifier and the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other," (Lacan, *S XI* 204) the reason behind the erasure of fat black women's authentic selves from the historical scene, through the totalizing discourse of grand narratives, is unveiled. However, Nichols's fat black woman does not bend to the erasure of her agency in the Symbolic but instead carves out her own meaning through her bodily melodies and constantly reconnects her pre-castrated self to ascend from existence to being.

"The Black Woman Goes Shopping"

Taken from her collection *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984), where Nichols uses "revisionary mythopoesis" "to engender a new heroine, a woman who revises the esthetic of female beauty, challenges oppressive societal forces, and emerges as a powerful queen, founder or goddess" (Scanlon 59), the poem "The Black Woman

Goes Shopping" opens with the re-presentation of "a fat black woman" who is implied to be merely window shopping in the cold weather of a "London winter" with the difficulty of finding any "accommodating clothe" for her size (1-5). The difficulty the poetic persona faces in finding any clothe for her size implies that her body does not conform to the standards. In such a context based on "a systematized standard of recognizability—of Sameness—by which all others can be assessed, regulated and allotted to a designated social location," "the notion of 'difference'" is seen as "pejoration" (Braidotti 15; 26). While her fatness challenges the judges of normalcy by breaking away from the normative definitions of an ideal body size, her failure to find a suitable clothe implies that the Symbolic insists on not giving her any gratification unless she loses weight.

This mutual fight between the non-conformist poetic persona who resists being normalized in the Symbolic by embracing her fatness and the established system that forces her to conform to the normative standards by not producing clothes that could fit her size continues through the following lines. For instance, even "the frozen thin mannequins" of the stores that she encounters on her way make her feel uneasy by "fixing her with grin" (6-7). Similarly, no sooner does she get away from these mannequins pinning her with their deadly gaze than she is exposed to the gaze of "pretty face salegals" who exchange "slimming glances,/ thinking she do not notice" (8-10). These sale girls, who are estranged from their motherly space, are also spoken and acted upon by the Other although they act as metonymic extension of the Father. This reflects how "the position of the subject" "is essentially characterized by its place in the symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech," prior to which "there is neither true nor false" (Lacan, *S I* 80; 228). However, instead of remaining silent to her victimization by the gaze of those already inscribed within the Symbolic, the poetic persona boldly voices the discrimination exerted on her by body politics and intrudes into the discourse which aims at her constitution as a normative subject. For instance, in the closing lines, she says: "when it come to fashion/ the choice is lean/ Nothing much beyond size 14" (19-21). "This momentary yet momentous act of levity, which refuses the paralyzing propensity of the store to fix the Fat Black Woman's public persona as an aberration not easily accommodated, packs a subversive punch" because

> in countering with witticisms her objectification in the store (which stores up unaccommodating prejudices and ways of seeing, not just ill-fitting clothes), the Fat Black Woman arguably mobilizes in a public space some of the resources she has made for herself at home. (McLeod 123)

In protesting against her absorption by the Symbolic as 'a fat black woman,' her merging the private with the public destabilizes the integrity of the binary system, as well. Similarly, without self-pitying herself, she questions even the "Lord" for his denying her any "breezy sunlight": "Lord is aggravating/ Nothing soft and bright and billowing" (11-13). Complaining about the gloomy weather, she challenges the symbolic presence of the Other that denies her any access to fluidity by its freezing codes, expressing its force in the operation of body politics.

The poetic persona's refusal of being stabilized by language is also reflected by her cursing along "all this journeying" not through the words of the standard English but through the words of her nation language: "The fat black woman curses in Swahili/ Yoruba/ and nation language under her breathing" (15-17). Reflected by her deliberate choice of "de" in such expressions as "de weather" or "de pretty face salegals" (5; 8), her use of Creole helps her to object to "the imperial 'correctness' of English that acknowledges the infusion of different languages, idioms and dialects into spoken Caribbean-English" (Williams, *Contemporary Poetry* 37). Besides, creative fusion and reworking of African, European and Caribbean influences underline "the fundamental plurality of Caribbean spaces" (Neumann and Rupp 476), which transgresses the universalizing assumptions of the humanized and symbolized world of Eurocentrism.

"Beauty"

As in "The Black Woman Goes Shopping," "Nichols counters historic voicelessness and oppression by forging a new standard of beauty and a new mythology" throughout her poetic collection (Scanlon 64). Her fat black woman remains insistent on challenging her symbolization by the dual hierarchized oppositions also in the poem, "Beauty," subverting the schematic assumption of what it means to be beautiful. "When the subject appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as 'fading', as disappearance. There is, then […] a matter of life and death between the unary signifier and the subject, *qua* binary signifier, cause of his disappearance," Lacan argues (*S XI* 218). Despite the normative standards of beauty that are aimed at the aphanisis of fat black women under the label of ugliness or lack of dignity, Nichols's poetic persona conceives herself as other than she is named and claims that beauty is "a fat black woman" (1-2). Through her resistance to "language as name-giving power," she experiences jouissance of transgressing Lacanian concept of the signifier, depicted by Zizek as "the power which mortifies/ disembodies the life substance, 'dissects' the body and subordinates it to the

constraint of the signifying network" (51). Within this context, she also awakens to brightness her authentic self that had been numbed by the capture of symbolic classifications, given that serving the ends of the universalistic Humanism, 'naming'—"which is both destructive of the thing and allows the passage of the thing onto the symbolic plane" (Lacan, *S I* 219)—equals to death of the individual:

> Word is the murder of a thing, not only in the elementary sense of implying its absence—by naming a thing we treat it as absent, as dead, although it is still present—but above all in the sense of its radical *dissection*: the word 'quarters' the thing, it tears it out of the embedment in its concrete context, it treats its component parts as entities with an autonomous existence. (Zizek 51)

"A name, however confused it may be," further argues Lacan, "designates a specific person, is exactly what makes up the transition to the human state" (*S I* 155). At this thorny juncture where the subject is integrated into the field of the Symbolic at the cost of her/his disposal by the signifier, the poetic persona in question exposes the constructedness of the degrading connotations assigned to her along with the fictionality of her symbolic position, erased under the label of a fat black woman. Implying her refusal of signification and regulation by the dialectics of otherness, she counters the universalizing discourse about female beauty also in the following lines where she depicts the fat black woman as "walking the fields" and "pressing a breezed/ hibiscus/ to her cheek" (3-6). Behind Nichols's choice of an unfamiliar natural setting for her 'beautiful' fat black woman lies her wish to assert that beauty lies beyond the boundaries of her colonial setting. Alexander states:

> Debunking conventional (colonial) paradigms of (white) female beauty, the Fat Black Woman redefines beauty, dismissing the material definition attributed to it as superficial. Extending the concept of beauty beyond mere material/ physical, the Fat Black Woman validates the natural and spiritual attributes of beauty that extend beyond a colonial geography to a tropical (Caribbean) landscape. In this decolonizing process, the Caribbean is reappropriated as the site of colonial occupation and conquest to a locale that fosters self-determination. (131)

Transpositioning herself in an uncharted territory away from the humanized world of her inscribed subjectivity, the poetic persona reconnects the field of the Imaginary where she could remain as sterilized from any categorizations. Her speaking from

the Imaginary within the Symbolic reminds us "what the subject has to free himself of is the aphanisic effect of the binary signifier" (Lacan, *S XI* 219). As part of her rejection to be stabilized by aphanisic 'civilization,' the poetic persona denies also wearing shoes and walks barefootedly "while the sun lights up/ her feet" (7-8). In this way, she "refutes their non-citizen status" and reimagines the society as having "a more flexible, unscripted designation" (Alexander 131).

In the second stanza, the poetic persona speaks herstory from the Imaginary and writes a new myth, instead of conforming to the myth of black women scripted by history. At this point, one needs to hear Nichols's words in her essay "The Battle with Language," in which she states why she created a new myth by her revision of black women:

> It [mythology] has created certain images and archetypes that have come down to us over the ages, and I have observed how destructive, however inadvertently, many of them have been to the black psyche. As children we grew up with the all-powerful male white God and the biblical associations of white with light and goodness, black with darkness and evil. We feasted on the world of Greek myths, European fairy tales and legends, princes and princesses, Snow Whites and Rapunzels. I am interested in the psychological effects of this on black people even today and how it functions in the minds of white people. (287)

Pointing out their confinement to less than human status by white mentality, Nichols opens up an alternative space of signification for black women by creating a new myth. In this way, she "rejects the stereotype of the voiceless victim: historical and current sufferings are not trivialized but the emphasis is put on agency, on the capacity not only to endure but also to respond to slavery, colonialization and postcolonialization" (Fumagalli 16).

The rewriting of the discursively produced subjugated black woman is shown in the poem especially by that she, barefooted, stands in a sea, "riding the waves" and "drifting in happy oblivion" (11-12). It should be stressed that the poem's choice of sea as a setting is not coincidental because "for Nichols, place is more than the natural and visible world. It is a complex interweaving of history, community, authority and subjectivity" (Gill 179). "Transformed into the fixity of print only to bring to the surface the frictions and tensions between West African, Caribbean and European cultures that defy unifying narratives of post/colonialism," "the fluid sea" in Nichols does not succumb to "the painful and alienating effects of

colonialism" (Neumann and Rupp 478; 476). Instead, it serves for the subversion of the colonial past: while the woman's "drifting" means "a denial of the bone-breaking labour as field hands and domestic servants, slave and free," her floating "in happy oblivion" "in the ocean on which her ancestors suffered the horrors of Middle Passage of the Triangular Slave Trade, that key image of acute suffering in New World Black culture" displays another "reversal of slave times" (James, Williams, "Capitalism and Slavery" cited in Easton 61). Moreover, by re-homing herself in a sea—acting as a displaced form of an amniotic fluid in mother's womb—the poetic persona violates the symbolic borders set before her to give her finality. As such, with her phantasy to return to her pre-castrated self, she retrieves a sense of illusory wholeness and experiences jouissance for sliding in the nonlinearity of the sea, where her meaning as a woman is constantly dispersed and scattered. In this way of enjoying the polysemic ground of being a woman, she goes beyond the dialectical frame of the Symbolic where "every element has value through being opposed to another" (Lacan, *S III* 9) and accordingly where she, as a woman, is defined in relation to man. Besides, she points to the "ambivalence" of her mythical position, reflecting that "woman incarnates no stable concept" because "through her is made unceasingly the passage from hope to frustration, from hate to love, from good to evil, from evil to good" (Beauvoir 163). This underlines especially the non-Cartesian status of the subject, split as a speaking I and a spoken I and never fully in the capture of language serving for his/her symbolic realization by the Other. As Verhaeghe argues:

> The important thing about the subject is that it has no essence, no ontological substance. Its production is by the signifiers, coming from the field of the Other, but it would be a mistake to assume that a subject is identical to the produced signifier(s). (375)

The poetic persona's elusiveness despite the totalizing discourse of the Other thereby unveils the constant flickering of Nichols's poetic persona along the three registers. At this point, one needs to refer to Laforgue who emphasized women's mirage-like status as the reason for their reduction to the level of non-existence: '"Mirage! Mirage!' cries Laforgue. We should kill them since we cannot comprehend them; or better tranquilize them, instruct them"' (qtd. in Beauvoir 267).

Why the poetic persona's sliding in the sea incarnates the constant imaginary flickering of signifiers necessitates a closer look on sea's metaphorical significance. In relation to the sea's resistance to symbolic closure, "a common construction of

European thought places a charted historicized reading of landscape in opposition to an atemporal, 'ahistorical sea'" and "the repetitive cycle of seawater is read as incompatible with time, culture or memory," says Tynan referring to Barthes's depiction of sea in his *Mythologies* (1972) as a '"non-signifying field' which 'bears no message"'(146). Seen by W.H. Auden also as '"a primal undifferentiated flux,"' the non-dualistic space of sea creates menace for the operation of binary logic for being "incompatible with notions of temporality or civilization;" however, rather than being 'ahistorical,' sea acts as "a repository of the past, a palimpsestic textbook of erased or unvoiced Caribbean history:"

> Returning to Western constructions we can observe that Barthes's reading of the sea as a void of signification seems to derive from an understanding of ocean as fluid, shifting space that bears no material sign of human history, unlike terrestrial space, which bears more evidence of the progress of civilizations. Unlike land, the sea is unmarked by human history and therefore cannot be monumentalized in the tradition of colonial landscapes. Dwarfing the achievements of humankind, the passing of empires and epochs, the boundless waves are a constant reminder of human insignificance in the wake of the unceasing elemental. Yet, this is exactly the draw of this alternative aquatic historiography. The resistance of the sea to final inscription or decryption explains its appeal to Caribbean theorists; it denies the stabilizing impetus of imperialist accounts of the past. (Tynan 146; 150; 151)

By her temporal deviation from cursive to sea's monumental time, the poetic persona compensates for her denial of Symbolic gratification and holds on to narcissistic gratification in the Imaginary, like a fetus floating in the womb "in happy oblivion" (12), as unaware of any shaping formulas of the phallogocentric system. Given that in religious cosmogonies, sea is read as "void, chaos, or noncivilization out of which life, order, and civilization emerge" (Tynan 147), she implies also that she blurs the boundary between categories of thought generated within binary logic and re-establishes the Imaginary in the Symbolic by her mother-like sea that will enable her imaginary fulfilment. This is shown by the lines where she is embraced by the sea, away from the intrusion of the paternal metaphor: "the sea turns back/ to hug her shape" (13-14). Her body's such acceptance "in all its formations—deviance, outcast, othered, grotesque—signals rejection of Victorian ideals of normalcy, femininity, decency and the ideal citizen" (Alexander 128). In a similar vein, it reflects that as "the subject is ontologically polyvocal" (Braidotti

93), totalizing discourses fail to find an adequate word for her/his flux. Tynan argues, within this context, "if national ties are frequently asserted by an association of a people with soil or land, then the association of a people with the sea as a supranational zone offers an alternative for diasporized or polycultural groups" (149). Hence, reflecting the collapse of 'the ideal body,' the fat black woman takes the sea as an imaginary substitute for her fragments as it does not try to put her into a certain frame but affectionately accepts her with all of her non-conformist qualities.

"Looking at Miss World"

Similar to the defiant poetic persona of "Beauty" who strays away from the identity she is given in relation to the Other, under the Law of the Father, the poetic persona of "Looking at Miss World," also, refuses to integrate into a field of dualistic symbolic significations. Standing for Nichols's "empowered, empowering and uncontainable fat black woman," who "confronts a series of discourses that traditionally have relegated and continue to relegate black people (especially black women) to the margins" (Fumagalli 17), she does not surrender to the racial segregation of her 'steatopygous'[1] body. Set in the context of a beauty contest, she is depicted as staring intently with her eyes fixed and wondering whether "some Miss (plump at least/ if not fat and black)" will "uphold her name" (1-4). Waiting with excitement for the announcement of her name, she ends up feeling disappointed because she is not perceived by the jury members there, let alone being selected by them. So, she "awaits in vain" while "slim after slim aspirant appears/ baring her treasures in hopeful despair" (5-7).

"In true speech the Other is that before which you make yourself recognized. But you can make yourself recognized by it only because it is recognized first," says Lacan (*S III* 51). Paradoxically, the decision of the poetic persona to take part in this beauty contest might imply her desire for symbolic integration, given that she wants to be perceived by the jury, acting as active bearers of gaze. However, the knowledge that she dares to participate in this contest despite her fatness and blackness shows that she does not submissively comply with the universalizing significations by being a part of this contest but rather asserts her opposition to the regulations of the colonial and patriarchal discourse. Furthermore, "assuming the

1 "Coined in the nineteenth century to describe the buttocks of 'Hottentot' women" (McLeod 123) and given in dictionary as the condition of having "an excessive development of fat on the buttocks that occurs chiefly among women of some African peoples and especially the Khoisan" (*Marriam-Webster*), the term 'steatopygous' is used by Nichols in her poem "Thoughts Drifting through the Fat Black Woman's Head While Having a Full Babble Bath."

role of spectator" rather than acting as an ideal participant, she "inducts herself into the judiciary chambers as the self-acclaimed adjudicator of both judges and contestants" and shakes both "the neat narrative of white masculinity" and "the male gaze" (Alexander 137-138), aimed at the constitution of her subjectivity. In this regard, her hope for winning this contest and indifference to the criteria of beauty reflect her resistance to remain in the place assigned to her in the symbolic dialectic.

As part of her rejection to be rigidified by the dialectics of recognition, the poetic persona, moreover, re-establishes the blissful context of Imaginary in the Symbolic, taking no notice of the contest results. As such, as "meaning is by nature imaginary" (Lacan, *S III* 54), she can destabilize her established position as a racialized and sexualized other and overcome dialectical oppositions to carve out for herself an authentic self-expression out of the hierarchical symbolic categorizations. From the second stanza on, for instance, she refuses to accept her determined identity gained in relation to the Other by falsifying the jury's definition of beauty. To imply that the jury members equate beauty not with the natural but rather with the artificial, she depicts them as "mingling with chiffons" (16). Then, in an attempt to avoid this spiritual dryness, she wants to escape from confronting the utter nakedness of her being denied symbolic gratification and expresses her boredom for being there: "O the night wears on/ the night wears on" (14-15). In the last stanza, she does not merely remain indifferent to the active bearers of gaze with her lack of interest in the contest result but also tears apart the wall behind which she had been pushed as doomed to the lower leg of the binary system and actualizes her phantasy of success by pouring "some gin" and "toasting herself as a likely win" (17-19), as if she were the Miss World.

"Invitation"

Opposing the "aberrant figure of woman" that has been defined in history as "black, fat, lesbian, sexually voracious, disabled, or ugly" (Thomson 28), the poetic persona of "Invitation" also refuses to be narrated in relation to the Other. The poem opens with the self-confident words of the poetic persona who does not hesitate a moment to unburden fat black women's silenced unconscious. "Man's relation to a world of his own—obviously this is where we've been starting off from for a long while now—has never been anything but play-acting in the service of the discourse of the master," says Lacan (*S XIX* 199). As if taking revenge on the colonial and patriarchal discourse for all those years during which they have not been given a hearing ear for their unconventional body size or color, the poetic persona defies the discourse set before her as she ironically states that her fatness doesn't concern

anybody: "If my fat/ was too much for me/ I would have told you" (1-3). Similarly, she states that if she had been fat, she would already have lost weight by going "jogging" even in foggy weather and by dieting more carefully than "a diabetic" (6-7; 11-12). In this way, she requires the Symbolic to regard her as how she regards herself: "I'm feeling fine/ feel no need/ to change my lines" (14-16).

In the second stanza, opening again with "Come up and see me sometime" (19), the poetic persona expresses her resistance to the dialectics of otherness more fearlessly, feeling satisfied not only with her weight but also with all her body. Her wish to be recognized out of the dialectical scheme of the humanistic discourse can be regarded as her response to the signifier's precedence over the subject, as Lacan argues:

> the subject […] if he can appear to be the slave of language is all the more so of a discourse in the universal movement in which his place is already inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name. (Écrits 113)

As part of her denial of established codes that repress her carnal side, she depicts her breasts, her thighs, and her seabelly, which in turn calls to question the reliability of the binary signification system, to constructedness of which Lacan directs attention, arguing further that "the signifier enters the signified, namely, in a form which, not being immaterial, raises the question of its place in reality" (Écrits 115). So, the poetic persona takes so much pride in her "huge" and "exciting" breasts that she depicts them as "amnions of water melon" that are too big to be grasped (21-23). She shows the same defiant reaction against her fading also in depicting her thighs: "my thighs are twin seals/ fat as slick pups" (24-25). Going one step further in her challenge to realistic narration by the regulative standards of the Symbolic, she depicts her genitals, rebelliously stating: "there's a purple cherry/ below the blues/ of my black seabelly" (26- 28). Through giving details about her private parts, she says 'no!' to her fixation by the Symbolic and wants those who pin her with their gaze for her non-conformism to learn that there is nothing wrong with her body.

Conclusion

To conclude, although the subject gains identity in relation to the Other, s/he resists full submission to the grasp of language and breaks the neat narratives with her/his flux and split: "all our experience runs counter to this linearity," held by Saussure "to be constitutive of the chain of discourse, in conformity with its emission by a single voice and with its horizontal position in our writing—if this linearity is necessary,

in fact, it is not sufficient" (Écrits 117). As subjects dissolving in the continuous presence, Grace Nichols's poetic personae in "The Black Women Goes Shopping," "Beauty," "Looking at Miss World," and "Invitation" also resist to be storied by the Other, through their insistence on not conforming to the normative standards, set by the dialectics of otherness.

In the poem "Black Women Goes Shopping," the poetic persona walking in the cold winter of London challenges the normative standards of urbanized beauty by her body size. Similarly, in "Beauty," the poetic persona transpositions herself from her colonial setting to sea and subverts the definition of beauty by re-establishing the Imaginary in the Symbolic. The persona of "Looking at the Miss World" openly states that she does not want to be the passive recipient of the gaze—metamorphosed into the form of the jury members in the beauty contest in which she participates—as she crowns herself as if she were Miss World. By acting in this non-dialectical way as she desires, she ignores the rules and expresses a sense of jouissance. Finally, "Invitation"s poetic persona breaks free from the narration of Symbolic, by communicating not through language but through her body. By their rebellious attitudes to the normalizing practices, thus, all of the four poetic personae of Nichols pose a threat to the aphanisic effect of civilization.

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The Battered Hearts that Throb in Agony: Environmental Pollution in Ojaide's *The Activist*

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Abstract The late twentieth century ignited a global revolutionary impulse in the interface between literature and environment. Environmentalist ideologies became more manifest in the articulation and criticism of literary texts. Nigerian literature experienced and has continued to experience different shades of representation of the environment of which Tanure Ojaide's narrative fiction is one of such representations. Although scholars have examined the representation of the environment in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006), they have often ignored the structural and persistent patterns of environmental pollution and how they relate to a class within an ethnic minority in the novel. This study examines the above relationship using environmental justice eco-critical approach, a strand of eco-criticism that establishes a connection between environmental issues and social justice, to disclose the social forces that are responsible for the heavy pollution in the work. These forces undergird the representations of and reflections on both the gaseous and the non-gaseous pollution/pollutants in the novel. It concludes that environmental privation is inextricably interwoven with social injustices, the biggest victims of which are the vulnerable and subservient class of a dispossessed minority ethnic group.

Key words ecocriticism; environmental literature; environmental humanities; Nigerian literature

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Introduction

This paper examines, within the context of environmental literary criticism, the representation of gaseous and non-gaseous pollution and how they relate to a specific class in a minority ethnic group in the novel under study. Nigeria's environmental literature has essentially focused on the representation of the Niger Delta[1] region of Nigeria. This is because the region has been enmeshed in "bioterrorism through the destruction of their aquatic and terrestrial reserves" (Onyema 236)[2] and also, monumental pollution and pollutants traceable to Nigeria's oil history. Aghoghovwia holds that, "in discussing the coastlines and littoral zones of Nigeria's Niger Delta, it is not possible to avoid reference to the 'Oil Encounter'" (176).[3] The discovery of crude oil in the region in the mid twentieth century brought about the presence of multinational oil companies that are involved in the different processes of exploration and processing of oil. The activities of these multinational oil companies have conversely altered the pristine state of the region as they are also a nightmare to the region and other adjoining parts within the Nigerian State. According to Edebor, "the oil producing areas of Niger Delta are the worst hit by gas flaring with untold impacts on agriculture, food security, public health, and fundamental human rights" (42).[4] The terrestrial and the aquatic resources of the region have been steadily debased and reduced to a site for different types of pollution and pollutants—ranging from the gaseous to the non-gaseous and from the biodegradable to the non-biodegradable. Writers and environmental rights

1 An oil producing coastal area in Nigeria which has been ravaged by the activities of multinational oil companies. The area is exposed to different kinds of pollution.

2 Chris Onyema and Chrstabel Onyema. "Tale of the Harmattan: Environmental Rights Discourse in Ojaide's Eco-poetry." *International Journal of Development and Management Review* (INJODEMAR) Vol.10, June 2015, 235– 250.

3 Philip Onoriode Aghoghovwia. "Versifying the Environment and the 'Oil Encounter': Tanure Ojaide's *Delta Blues & Home Songs" Alter*nation Special Edition 6, 2013, 175–196.

4 Adedokun Solomon Edebor. "Rape of A Nation: An Eco-critical Reading of Helon Habila's *Oil on Water.*" *Journal of Arts and Humanities* Volume 06, Issue 09, 2017, 41-49.

campaigners have creatively reacted to the heavy pollution the region suffers, through the three major genres of literature.

Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* is a narrative representation of this battered region, a peep into the world of a people whose history has been inseparably and unfortunately intertwined with the history of pollution. Ojaide's foray into environmental literature is borne of the experience of the vicissitudes of a polluted environment of his people of the Niger Delta region. The social atmosphere of his oil-rich region continues to evoke neo-colonial tendencies and raise questions of conspiracies against a segment of the Nigerian State. This social condition may have spurred Ojaide into activism. His figure as a social crusader is aptly captured by Nwagbara who holds that "the hallmark of Ojaide's art is to use literature to engage the realities in his milieu. For him, literature is a reproduction of social experiences; it is a refraction of the totality of human experience" (18).[1] Ojaide's *The Activist*, like his poetry, such as *Labyrinths of the Delta* (1986)*, Delta Blues and Home Songs* (1998)*, The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007), and so on - explores environmental pollution of the Niger Delta. Incidentally, Ojaide's passion as a social advocate intersperses elements of the fictional and the actual in this novel, as the plot, setting, characterization and so on draw heavily from the contemporary realities in Nigeria's Niger Delta region by making "reference to the historical and experiential" (Irele 11).[2] Lukacs' words: "it is very difficult for the writer really to free himself from the currents and fluctuations of his time and, within them, from those of his class" appropriately captures his endeavours (254).[3] He weaves a narration that evokes a scathing image of a people who are tortured to the margins of existence and "employs poetic metaphors to expose marginalization, neglect, exploitation, and the brutal reality of the region" (Okoro 26).[4] With commitment, his art is for social advocacy. He is in the league of African eco-conscious writers such as Isidore Okpewho, Niyi Osundare, Helon Habila, Kaine Agary, and so on, who espouse eco-consciousness and provoke diverse discourses on rethinking Africa's anthropocentric cultures.

The plot of the novel could be mistaken for actual events in view of its

1 Uzoechi Nwagbara "Poetics of Resistance: Ecocritical Reading ofOjaide's *Delta Blues & Home Songs and Daydream of Ants and Other Poems." African Study Monographs*, 31(1), 2010, 17-30.

2 Abiola Irele. The *African Experience in Literature and Ideology* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1981.) 11

3 Georg Lukacs. *The Historical Novel*. Translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962) 254.

4 Dike Okoro. "Situating Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan*: History, the Environment,Socio-economic and Political Concerns, and Orature" *Contemporary Literary Review,* Vol 5, No 2, 2018, 19-32.

historiographic underpinnings. Following this, most of the places mentioned in the novel like Itsekiri, Abuja, Ugheli, Urhobo, and others are real places. Some of the organizations mentioned like OPEC, CLO and others are actual organizations, and some of the circumstances reconstructed in the novel bear semblance with the realities in the actual Niger Delta. Nigeria, which is mentioned fairly often in the novel, portrays the historicity of *The Activist* as a piece of fiction based on actual events. This, perhaps, derives from the passion of the author to tell the story of suffering of his people which he could not achieve with his poetry. He offers an insight into the world of a people who are battered and who throb in the throes of environmental pollution. Ojaide takes on the apparel of a cultural historian and fuses it with his creative energy to respond to the troubling realities of oil pollution within the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta. In many respects, this echoes the position that "every writer is individually placed in society, responding to a general history from his own particular standpoint, making sense of it in his own concrete term" (Eagleton 8).[1]

Conceptual Framework/Literature

The two working concepts that chart the flow of this analysis are ecocriticism (in which environmental justice ecocriticism is a strand) and environmental pollution. In responding to what brought ecocriticism to existence as a methodology, Bellarsi avers that "historically, ecocriticism emerged in response to an environmental crisis and ecological spoliation" (74).[2] As a theory, it evolved in the last decade of the 20th Century and became popular with the publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. In her introduction to the text, Glotfelty defined ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii).[3] Ecocriticism is further conceptualized as an "omnibus term most commonly used to refer to environmentally oriented study of literature and (less commonly) other expressive media, including the critical premises informing such study" (Buell, Heise and Thornber 418).[4] The conceptualization of ecocriticism as an "omnibus term" draws from the multiplicity of strands within the ideological

1 Terry Eagleton. *Marxism and Literary Criticism.* (London: Methuen, 1976.) 8

2 See Franca Bellarsi. "The Challenges of Nature and Ecology." *Comparative American Studies an International Journal*, vol. 7, No.2, 2009, 71-84.

3 Cheryll Glotfelty. "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology,* Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996) xviii.

4 See Buell, Heise and Thornber. "Literature and Environment." *The Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36. 2011, 417– 440.

frame of ecocriticism. Environmental justice ecocriticism is one of such strands, a combination of the principles of environmental justice and the propositions of ecocriticism.

Julia Sze observes that "environmental justice challenges the mainstream definition of environment and nature based on a wilderness/preservationist frame by foregrounding race and labor in its definition of what constitutes "nature"" (163).[1] T. Y. Reed draws from the principles of environmental justice and the ideals of ecocriticism and coined the concept of environmental justice ecocriticism in his essay, "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism". He states his motivation and holds that, "in coining this label, I hope to coalesce existing work and help foster new work that understands and elaborates the crucial connections between environmental concerns and social justice in the context of ecocriticism" (145).[2] Reed advances fundamental questions that touch on class and race through environmental justice ecocriticism. Among the questions are: "How can literature and criticism further efforts of the environmental justice movement to bring attention to ways in which environmental degradation and hazards unequally affect poor people and people of color? How has racism domestically and internationally enabled greater environmental irresponsibility? […]. How can issues like toxic waste, incinerators, lead poisoning, uranium mining and tailings, and other environmental health issues, be brought forth more fully in literature and criticism? [...]. How can ecocriticism encourage justice and sustainable development in the so-called Third World?" (149).[3]The foregoing questions raised by Reed are the cornerstones upon which the principles of environmental justice ecocriticism were founded. They will greatly influence the analyses of this work.

Environmental justice ecocriticism broadened its scope from its traditional application and an initial focus on the American minorities, to include global minorities; just in similar manner ecocriticism expanded its threshold from an initial focus on the Anglo-American writings to a more robust global perspective that saw the integration of the literatures of the former colonies of the imperial powers. In environmental justice ecocriticism, the ecocentric and the anthropocentric proclivities collapse into Paul Tylor's "biocentric" perspective which places

1 Julia Sze. "From Environmental Justice Literature to the Literature of Environmental Justice." *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy*. Ed. Joni Adamson et al. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002) 163.

2 See T. Y Reed. "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism." *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy*. Eds. Joni Adamson et al (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002) 145.

3 T. Y. Reed's efforts to establish a framework for environmental justice ecocriticism.

importance on both humans and the non-humans on Earth (100).[1] It trumps the interconnection of the structures of environmental privation and social inequality. Thus, environmental justice ecocriticism is a site for an intersection between environmental problems and social problems.

Abosede grasps the concept of environmental pollution as applied in this study and holds that "pollution of the environment is one of the major effects of human technological advancement. It results when a change in the environment harmfully affects the quality of human life including effects on animals, microorganisms and plants" (14).[2] Deviating from Abosede's idea of environmental pollution as occasioned by progress, Isife affirms that this pollution "can be categorized into three groups" of "air or atmospheric pollution, aquatic or water pollution and land or surface area pollution" (29).[3] Within this study, atmospheric pollution is discussed as gaseous pollution while aquatic and surface pollution are discussed as non-gaseous pollution. Gaseous and non-gaseous pollution are used in this work as analytical tools. This draws from Ojaide's representation of the various forms of pollution in the novel under study.

The Struggle that Goes Unabated

Tanure Ojaide's Niger Delta region has witnessed tremendous struggles that are centred on both social and environmental justice. The late environmental rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, lived and died fighting the structures that fan the embers of social and environmental exploitations of the Niger Delta region. In writing on Ken Saro-Wiwa's struggles for social and environmental justice, Susan Comfort asserts that, "I explore his varied efforts to construct new narratives of social change that draw together environmental struggle with challenges to racial, ethnic, and class oppression" (230). She conceptualizes his varied struggles and sums them up as "cultural politics and social justice" (229).[4] Ken Saro-Wiwa's Ogoni ethnic minority suffers similar environmental pollution as Ojaide's Urhobo ethnic minority. Both Ogoni and Urhobo are among the ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta region of

1 See Paul W Taylor. *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011) 100.

2 Ewetola E. Abosede. "Effect of Crude Oil Pollution on Some Soil Physical Properties." *IOSR Journal of Agriculture and Veterinary Science*. Volume 6, Issue 3, (Nov. - Dec. 2013), 14-17.

3 ChimaTheresa Isife. "Environmental Problems in Nigeria: A Review." *Sustainable Human Development Review*, Vol. 4, Nos. 1&2, 2012, 21–38.

4 Susan Comfort. "Struggle in Ogoniland: Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Cultural Politics of Environmental Justice". *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy*. Eds. Joni Adamson et al (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002) 229.

Nigeria. It is under this backdrop that Ojaide's activism blossomed and manifested in his creative works, of which, *The Activist* is a component in his composite literary productions. Ojaruega sums up *The Activist* as eco-activism thus: "Ojaide's Activist refuses to be a passive observer of the environmental endangerment going on in his beloved region" (41).[1]

Umezinwa critiques *The Activist* through the perspective of female activism. She sees the narrative as an echo of women's collective activism and holds that "Tanure Ojaide was one of the African authors to put women in the forefront burner of the black agitation against exploitation, violation and other ills of colonialism" (2019).[2] Ojaide's narrative is an effusion of privation, debasement, resistance and so on; thematic underpinnings that pervade his writings. His idiosyncratic style ceaselessly echoes structured injustices of which, humans and the environment are victims. Writing on the image of the environment in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tales of the Harmattan,* Onwudinjo observes that "Ojaide uses the devastated condition of the Niger Delta to reveal the lost friendship between man and environment" (515).[3] The belligerent relationship between humans and the environment is also an echo of the belligerent relationship among humans, an aftermath of power play, leading Nwagbara to declare that "*The Activist* is a contemporary novel that deals with post-independence disillusionment about oil politics, ethnic marginalisation (sic) and environmental predation in Nigeria" (2008:225).[4] In all, they have omitted concentrating wholly on the social valence remotely prompting the environmental degradation in the work. This essay, through environmental justice ecocriticism, analyzes the representation of the gaseous and the non-gaseous pollution against the social forces that induce them in the first instance.

Gaseous Pollution as a Narrative Structure

Ojaide opens his narrative and graphically portrays issues that border on environmental health, a major concern of environmental justice ecocriticism, by

1 Enajite Ojaruega. "Eco-activism in Contemporary African Literature: Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* and Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist.*" *Eco-Critical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes.* Ed. Ogaga Okuyade (Oxford: African Books Collective, 2013) 41

2 Jennifer Umezinwa. "Gender Discourses and the Portraiture of Women Activism in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist,*" 2019. DOI .10.13140/RG.2.2.22355.02089.

3 Kenechukwu Onwudinjo. "A Critical Perspective on the Image of the Environment in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tales of The Harmattan.*" *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2015, 505–518.

4 Uzoechi Nwagbara. "Political Power and Intellectual Activism in Tanure Ojaide's The Activist." *Nebula 5.4*, December 2008, 225–253.

addressing the question of how "issues like toxic waste," "lead poisoning," "and other environmental health issues" are upstaged in literature (Reed 149).[1] *The Activist* takes off on the preponderance of human pollution of the environment, where a careless interaction with the environment is captured by the narrator. He describes the movement of the Activist, the major character in the work, from the airport after his arrival from the US to his hotel room and what he witnesses as he moves along a Lagos street, "the motorcyclist meandered through the congested road as his engine rattled noisily and exhaled dark smoke and was soon out of sight" (10-11). The motorcyclist shows no interest about the state of the engine of his motorcycle which generates chemical compounds that pollute the environment. The dark smoke from the motorcycle's exhaust has the description of sulfur dioxide. This reveals that the state of the motorcycle's engine does not aid a complete burning of fuel. This episode at a Lagos street heralds greater pollution that is yet to come as the narrative gradually shifts to the Niger Delta, where baffling trends in human pollution of the environment are subsisting structures. The heavy pollution in the Niger-Delta is fallout of oil extraction as pollution is implicated in oil extraction and associated activities. This setting seems to highlight the much neglected minor but equally polluting activities in the Niger Delta ecology of environmental pollution. Call them a subdivision of the trending behemoth of pollution.

The above is supported by a major polluting episode. The village of Ekakpamre, a village in the Niger Delta, is completely burnt down as a result of oil blowout. The greatest pollutant the people of the Niger Delta suffer is oil. According to the narrator:

> An oil blowout exacerbated by a pipe leakage and fueled by gas flares, threw Ekakpamre and its people into an unprecedented state of anxiety […]. Bell Oil knew very well that there was a blowout but did not ask its fire –fighting team to put out the fire […]. The poisonous methane gas fumes engulfed plant, wildlife, and humans around for days […]. The residents found themselves helpless before this monstrous fire. They were all black from the sooth of smoke and ashes. There were many premature births because some pregnant women went into sudden labor. Babies coughed relentlessly. The old wheezed. Eyes itched and those already with poor eyesight had their problems worsened by the fire and smoke. No one was safe from the fuming blaze. (240-241)

1 What T. Y. Reed considers the major preoccupation of environmental justice ecocriticism.

The scenario described presents oil in a temperature at which the distinction between liquid and gas disappears. Oil, as it were, is a non-gaseous substance because it exists in liquid form. But in the above extract, it is subjected to a very high temperature as a result of burning. This burning results in the emission of gaseous substances. The oil blowout in Ekakpamre village that results in unimaginable fire outbreak, together with the reported gas flares release chemicals into the atmosphere. These chemicals may interact in dangerous ways to harm living things.

The effects of this gaseous pollution are very immediate as they are very traumatic and pathetic in the village. Imagine the list of negative things that happened because of the oil blowout and consequent burning. According to the narrator, "pregnant women went into sudden labor," "babies coughed relentlessly," "the old wheezed," "eyes itched," and "the poisonous methane gas fumes engulfed plants, wildlife, and humans." He further concluded that, "no one was safe from the fuming blaze." This portrays man's utter neglect, and negative interaction with the environment. A very disheartening point is that the company whose activities caused this catastrophe does not care about the situation. The Bell Oil is after oil exploration and profit maximization, which bequeaths them the power to act as they will. This acquired economic power is responsible for their disregard of their corporate social responsibilities which should have upped the welfare of the people through whose resources they are empowered. Unfortunately, the indigenes of the Niger Delta become systematically impoverished and relegated to a condition that weakens thoughts of resistance. The distribution of opportunities and privileges are skewed to favour relatively more powerful class and more populous ethnic nationalities within Nigeria's social strata. This draws from the power dynamics that concentrate power on the Federal Military Government and other quasi surrogates, like the Bell Oil. There is no devolution of power or balance of power which would have given the Niger Delta region a comparative advantage over other regions in issues of ownership rights and the corresponding benefits. These social injustices therein are reflective of power play.

The activities of Bell Oil that poison the atmosphere and endanger the lives of the people of the Niger Delta are portrayed as frequent occurrences**;** a trend that cuts across Niger Delta villages. Ojaide's evocation of this unjust and dangerous trend addresses Reed's concern of how literature and criticism can "bring attention to ways in which environmental degradation and hazards unequally affect poor people and people of color" (149). The oil blowout and fire incidents are not only noted in Ekakpamre village. According to the narrator:

> When there was the blowout at Roko village, the Activist saw a test case of Bell's callousness that opened an opportunity for attack. The pipes crossing the village burst and caught fire. The pipes had been shoddily laid to the oil installations a long time ago when oil was discovered in the area […]. The pipes were leaking from age because they were weather beaten. These pipes crossed playgrounds of children, crossed cassava farms of the women, and even went through many parts of the village. Residential homes stood on both sides of pipe lines […]. When there was this outburst of crude oil that easily caught fire; the village was burnt to the ground. (175-176)

The foregoing reveals a great deal of insensitivity and human-corporate wickedness as a giant oil prospecting company cages villages with oil pipes, even when the dangerous effects of oil blowout are public knowledge. The question is, would the Bell Oil have engaged in what Reed calls "environmental irresponsibility" (149), if the Niger Delta were to be their homeland? The answer is in the negative, as unfolding realities will confirm. The Bell Oil deliberately fails to provide fire-fighting equipment to such villages, should oil blowout occur. This is a dangerous capitalist model of one with power in a powerless, poverty-stricken minority setting. It sets itself up as a threat to the lives of the people by engaging in a deliberate degradation of their environment, an action that they will never deliberately undertake in the West.

The curve of human exposure to gaseous pollution continues to be on the rise and appears intractable, possibly, owing to the company's purposeful perpetuation of unjust actions against the people. The account of a deliberate use of tear gas on some women of the Niger Delta who are on a peaceful protest against the degradation of their environment is a site of the powerful using the instruments of power to subdue the weak. In an attempt to abort the nude protest organized by these women, Women of the Delta Forum (WODEFOR), the narrator reveals the uncanny forces the women had to contend with, in this case, an overwhelming gaseous pollution that sent the women into a soporific state:

> The world was denied the spectacle of a naked parade of old women before the oil terminal and the nearby flow station. Mask-wearing navy personnel with the assistance of retired marines kept by Bell Oil Company in their own coordinated plan overwhelmed the island with tear gas and a type of gas nobody knew its name but made people dizzy and mindless. Every exposed

person was daze and the women and pressmen became drowsy and sleepy. (251)

It is ironical that these women got an overdose of what they were out to stop. An exposure to tear gas inherently goes with some consequential effects that are often negative. The effects include burning sensation on the skin, irritation of the eyes, nose, difficulty in breathing, and other attendant effects that depend on the type of tear gas used and the quantity released into the atmosphere. It is obvious that a high concentration of tear gas that surpasses description is used on the Women of the Delta Forum (WODEFOR) and the pressmen. The narrator says it is "a type of gas nobody knew its name but made people dizzy and mindless", he further says "every exposed person was dazed and the women and pressmen became drowsy and sleepy". Although tear gas might be taken as a non-lethal weapon for crowd control but it can still be very dangerous.

Uwe Heinrich released a study commissioned by John C. Danforth, of the Office of Special Counsel, to investigate the use of tear gas by the FBI at the Branch Davidians' Mount Carmel compound. He concluded that the lethality of tear gas used would have been determined mainly by two factors: whether gas masks were used and whether the occupants were trapped in a room. He suggests that there is the possibility that a high exposure of tear gas can significantly contribute to or even cause lethal effects. He further says, "many reports have associated tear gas exposure with miscarriages. This is consistent with its reported clastogenic effect (abnormal chromosome change) on mammalian cells" (37).[1] If an exposure to tear gas is associated with these negative effects, it is obvious that the Women of the Delta Forum are not free from these effects, especially as some of them are still in their reproductive age, even the protest leader, Ebi, who has a nascent marriage to the Activist. These helpless women, Women of the Delta Forum had organized a peaceful protest against the devastation of their environment with all kinds of pollution, which by extension affect their health, only to face another deadly pollutant in gaseous form, tear gas. In this, they faced a hierarchy of social injustice. The first is enough for a responsible government to close the company's operations and further functioning. The second is enough for those peopling the management to be slammed with criminal charges that would see them being penalized and fortune of damages paid to serve as deterrent to future exploiters of the powerless.

The Battered Hearts on the Throes of Non-Gaseous Pollution

1 See Uwe Heinrich. *The Toxicity and Lethality of Tear Gas* (New York: Johnson & Hadel, 2001) 37.

The concept of non-gaseous pollution bears on the solid and liquid states of matter that pollute the environment of those whose livelihood, the substratum for power-balancing, depends on its wholeness. Thanks to the snag within this group, the acclaimed activist. When the Activist and his girlfriend, Ebi who is also a lecturer as the Activist at the Niger Delta University go on a picnic in the Great River, the narrator repots the fascinating discovery of Ebi, with regard to the level of pollution in the river she used to know very well in her childhood days:

> The magnitude of the desolation of the water shocked them. Where were the flying fish that used to shoot out of the water into the air and then somersault back into water? That spectacle was now confined to memory. The water was no longer the herb dark draught that she liked to dip her hands into and wash her face with. It was light green, greasy, and smelly. The large fish population had either been decimated by chemicals from oil industries or migrated downstream into the ocean. Where were the flocks of storks, kingfishers, and many exotic types of birds that filled the airspace as one approached the ocean? (90-91)

The degree of pollution in the Great River is similar to that of the Ugunu River. This is a case of the very useful becoming useless. The narrative gradually reveals the degree of pollution in the Niger Delta as it also reveals an amenable scoundrel, a pseudo messiah whose actions contribute to the devastation of the Niger Delta environment, who is also the protagonist and who bears the name, the Activist. In a sense, the oppressed and underpowered minority in need of liberation has within its ranks one who highlights the overbearing attitude of the unjust oil company.

"The magnitude of the desolation" of the Great River ought not to have shocked the Activist because he is also culpable in the desolation, irrespective of his grandstanding as a social and environmental activist. Consequently, one may be forced to ask: in what sense is he actually "the Activist"? An activist is "someone who works hard to achieve social or political change, especially as an active member of a political organization."[1] Is the Activist an active member of any political organization? Does he work hard to achieve political change? Does he work hard to achieve social change? Why his role in the Delta Cartel? These are some of the fundamental questions the very name the protagonist bears raises. A man who desires and works for social change should not have been involved, for

1 See "activist" in *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (3rd Ed.) (Essex: Longman Group, 1995).

whatever reason, in a cartel that specializes in oil bunkering; illegal oil business. This is also the same man that laments about the devastation and degradation of his environment with all its pollution. The Activist is aware that bunkering involves blowing of oil pipes for the purpose of stealing oil. His role in the ignominious Delta Cartel is similar to the role of Bell Oil multinational in polluting the environment of the Niger Delta. The Activist is as depraved as the oil companies that deteriorate the Niger Delta as well as the Federal Military Government that has failed to protect the environment against mindless devastation and privation. Call it a triangular complicity. This is why the character of the Activist is a bunch of contradictions. There is no genuine activism in his character and personality. He exudes diverse images and changes with the changing times. His grandstanding and preposterous dispositions appear to be the height of Ojaide's craft in a narration that exposes the scoundrels, the charlatans and pseudo personalities who live in perpetual pretence in order to exploit more the battered communities of the Niger Delta. Perhaps, this is the reason why there is so much power on the side of the oil companies and powerlessness on the side of the people. Unjustness cannot but thrive here.

Textual evidences abound of the triangular complicity in repressing the dispossessed. The inhabitants of the Niger Delta are not equally exposed to pollution. This consolidates Merchant's position as observed by Bellarsi that "'hierarchical differences within human society affect the character of environmental problems' (Merchant, 2008: 27), as not all classes and ethnic groups are equal before environmental pollution" (76).[1] The social relations that expose the Niger Delta and its people to environmental hazards are encouraged by racist and class tendencies, with the support of the Government. Class stratification, domestic and international racial prejudice are enablers of larger "environmental irresponsibility" (Reed 149). The Government and its agents eternally sustain the interlocking paradigms that encourage the subjugation of the Niger Delta. For example, the foreign nationals live far away from the people, in an atmosphere that is much better than where the people live. They do not drink from the greenish ponds the people drink from nor suffer from oil licks and explosions the people suffer from. In describing the beautiful residential quarters of the Bell Oil Company and a river that runs behind the fence which serves as public water for the local villagers, the narrator states:

Several gardeners drove mowers and kept the entire place manicured and

1 See Franca Bellarsi. "The Challenges of Nature and Ecology" *Comparative American Studies An International Journal*, vol. 7, No.2, 2009, 71-84.

> trimmed. Some other workers swept the roads and picked trash from the streets. Trash drums stood at different locations to ensure that the streets were maintained and kept clean. Bold signs admonished residents against littering and violators were threatened with heavy fines. This town was neither Warri nor Lagos, slum cities; rather it was Ugunu, a model European township in the heart of Africa…behind the tall concrete fence, local villagers still fetched water from the Ugunu River, brown from chemicals of oil exploration, for bathing and cooking needs. (276)

Class stratification and environmental racism can be teased out as well. The Bell Oil Company is a multinational company that bears no corporate social responsibilities in the Niger Delta. Their corporate social responsibility should have been, at least, to protect the environment that nourishes their business but such commitment is lacking. It seems difficult to believe that the Ugunu Quarters exist in an environment such as the Niger Delta; an environment mistreated and a people traumatized. Why is it out of the considerations of the company to extend some facilities at the Ugunu Quarters to the local villagers? And the narrator says that the villagers "still fetched water from the Ugunu River, brown from chemicals of oil exploration." It is sad that those who share in a common humanity could be meted with inhuman acts by their fellow humans. The Ugunu River has been polluted with chemicals as a result of oil exploration, and the perpetrators have refused to provide an alternative water supply for the local villagers. They are left to fetch from their polluted river, soaking themselves with chemicals and eating food cooked with chemicals. The aquatic life that sustains the people is destroyed, their water becomes unfit for human consumption and their existence is threatened. The narrator describes the living condition of the characters as hell-like. This is a contrast to other inland states, whose land does not produce the oil they benefit from. Those inland states enjoy good living conditions and also enjoy the oil wealth much more than the Niger Delta that produces it. This is because of power play that keeps and sustains their advantageous positions. The narrator acknowledges this:

> The Federal military Government operated a quota system that favored inland states that inflated their population by counting their cows, dogs, and goats as humans. That was what they believed a national census to be all about. Since they had population advantage, the people of those states enjoyed the oil prosperity at the expense of the hard-toiling farmers and fishermen and women whose land, waters and air were polluted by oil slicks, blowouts, and

> permanent flares that made hell a daily experience of the Niger Delta people. (48-49)

The characters in the Niger Delta should have had a comparative advantage over those in the inland states in terms of development but the reverse is the case.

The social and environmental injustices perpetrated in the Niger Delta stimulate criminality and produce individuals who are not only amenable but vulnerable to criminal tendencies. The environment has a great deal of influence on human development. Quality environment can translate to quality life and reduce negative tendencies. Some psychological and antisocial problems such as depression, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, rape, and so on, have a high concentration in poor living environment. All these ricocheted from the first layer of unjust behaviour, the first level of social injustice between the company and the people, before it recreated itself among the dispossessed. This might account for the unending restiveness in the Niger Delta. There are cases of rape, robbery, constant uprising, and cultism at the Niger Delta University. This might also account for the murder of Professor Tobore Ede by the students of the Niger Delta University. Professor Ede had gone to the University, according to the narrator, "with the task of pacifying the restless students" (117), over the oil blowout at Roko village. He was burnt alive because he was considered an ally of the Bell Oil multinational company, the very company that has questions to answer in the devastation of the environment of the Niger Delta. Onah traces the interlocking relationship between human beings and the environment and concludes that "the human being and the environment relate to each other dialectically. As we affect the environment, it in turn affects us" (37).[1] Such issues as the unimaginable pollution, the depletion of forests, the total disturbance of the ecosystem, the social paradigms that exclude the people from the benefits of their resources and breed poverty are actions that inherently go with unavoidable reactions. These negative actions and reactions reinforce the living condition in the Niger Delta.

The cases of rape in the novel reveal the double trauma the women face; a traceable indirect impact of the first-degree social unjustness set off by the oil company. First, the trauma occasioned by the activities of the oil companies which destroyed their environment, and secondly the antisocial activities of their fellow citizens whom the squalid environment has broken and battered. These social deviants turn their women to victims of robbery and rape. Environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources have a great deal of gender

1 Fab Onah. *Human Resource Management* (Nsukka: Fulladu, 2003) 37.

implications as a result of social norms that circumscribe gender roles. The women have had to face the trauma of searching for good water which has continued to elude them because the Ugunu River, the Great River and other sources of water are more of chemicals than water. The search for this essential and domestic item is to the detriment of other activities that relate to their development and empowerment. The narrator graphically captures the disturbing images of women in the Niger Delta:

> Photographs moved the Activist immensely. He had pasted to his bedroom wall photos of starving children and those of raped and battered women. He kept a file with newspaper cuttings of various forms of pollution. Clouds of smoke enveloping human beings in their homes; women fetching water from a greenish stream. (17)

There is neither development plan for the Niger Delta nor interest in raising the living standard of the people; "women fetching water from a greenish stream" reveals that there is no alternative source of water as it echoes Merchant's position, as noted by Bellarsi, that "society's neglect of the poor and ethnic minorities is usually made manifest in their predictable relegation to enclaves characterized by toxic or low-quality environments (Merchant, 2008: 28–30)" (76). The environment of the Niger Delta is a "low-quality" one, corrosive by any measurement, through dangerous chemicals or debilitating human actions. It is a disheartening narrative that has different colours of human injustice meted out to a people who are highly incapable of holding out against the powerful in a depressing scenario of power asymmetry– a story of battered hearts that throb in agony. The account of the narrator that hell is a daily experience of the Niger Delta people is a metaphor that conveys the image of an environment that has collapsed under the heavy burden of social injustice And Ojaide could not have made a better attempt at exposing this than he has in *The Activist*.

Conclusion

Ojaide artistically weaves in the novel a structural exploration of humans' relationship with the environment and also humans' relationship with fellow humans. *The Activist* is among the very few African novels that have fully explored the various kinds of pollution and pollutants that have been used to alter the environment and subdue a particular class in a definite geographical location. The text explores what Crosby refers to as *ecological imperialism*: "a

form of colonialism aimed at damaging as well as exploiting the environment and ecology of the colonized" (452).[1] Crosby's position is constantly echoed and reinforced by extrapolations from the text. The Bell multinational oil company displays crass colonial posture, through its actions and inactions in the Niger Delta. Ably encouraged by the complicity of the Federal Military Government, the company becomes the lever of power with which the underpowered, less protected and marginalized minority, the Niger Delta people, are ruthlessly crushed The accumulated power on the side of the company easily sets it aside as an unconscionable violator of human and environmental dignity in the course of which it perpetrates unjust actions. . The graphic of images of "dark smoke," "gas flare," "oil blowout," "tear gas," "acid rain," "carbon monoxide," "sulfur dioxide," "river, brown from chemicals," "greasy and smelly stream," and so on are not only pointers to the despoliation of the environment but also symbolic representations of the suffering of the characters in the Niger Delta, first, as black people in the hands of the company and secondly, as a minority group within the Nigerian State. It is very unlikely that any of the big tribal nations within the Nigerian setting would have suffered the unjust actions of both the government and the oil company as the Niger Delta people did if oil were mined in their territories. Rooted here is the success of *The Activist* as a representation of the woes of the weak and unprotected in the hands of the powerful and protected as they unpretentiously set off environmental devastation and social injustice.

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Plant Writings in Eudora Welty's Early Works: A New Materialist Approach

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Abstract This paper, firstly scrutinizes the plant writings in Welty's early works, *A Worn Path* and *A Curtain of Green,* looks into the agency of plants as well as the intra-actions of human and the nonhuman through the New Materialist approach, and then further investigates the aesthetic value of Welty's writing and her environmental ethics. Welty, in *A Worn Path,* diminishes the distinctions between human and plants by emphasizing the agency of the latter, which is the manifestation of her de-anthropocentric view. Similar views are also found in *A Curtain of Green*. In addition, she presents how plants remain interactive with human beings affectively through their agency, thereby, as the depiction of the affective power of plants in healing the psychic trauma. Therefore, plant narratives, for one thing, add an ecological value to Welty's "place" writing, for another, demonstrate the aesthetic significance of her environmental ethics.

Keywords Eudora Welty; *A Worn Path; A Curtain of Green;* plant writings; New Materialist Approach

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Introduction

Just as Faulkner's biographers often mention Rowan Oak, where Faulkner used to live, in Oxford, Mississippi, Eudora Welty's biographers, too, talk a lot about Welty's former residence on Pinehurst Street in Jackson, Mississippi. In contrast to

the spectacular row of rowan oaks in front of Faulkner's house, Welty's is planted with a variety of flowers and plants. The house, with its Tudor Revival Style and the surrounding courtyard, is named "Eudora Welty's House& Garden," becoming one of the most famous tourist attractions in Jackson. Welty's Garden can be traced back to the year 1931, when Welty's mother, Mary Chestina, who was prostrate with grief after her husband's death, devoted herself to the garden, growing flowers, shrubs, fruits and vegetables. After returning home from New York, Welty often helped her mother with pruning and they also discussed gardening. Flowers and plants, serving as a bridge of emotions shared between mother and daughter, became an important material for Welty's writing during that period. "The garden and writing were linked at some profound level" (Marrs 6). After Welty sold her two short stories, *Powerhouse* and *A Worn Path* to *The Atlantic*, she received her paycheck and soon spent a great sum of her new gains "on flower seeds from Burpees" (Haltom and Brown 126). In her letters to friends in the 1940s, sometimes she described in great details the growth of plants, especially the moments when they started to bloom, and sometimes she complained about the bad weather that caused her plants to suffer. Her correspondence with friends was so focused on plants that reviewers regarded it as "The Gardening Talk" (Eichelberger xviii).

After years of nurturing by Welty and her mother, plants in the garden grew in abundance in the 1940s. At the same time, however, the Deep South, where Welty lived, was undergoing a lengthy restoration of ecology from vegetation destruction. After "a half-century of intensive exploitation and chronic wastefulness" since 1880s, forests in Mississippi area witnessed the most devastating destruction on record in the 1920s (Buell 2). In 1927, the worst Mississippi River flood ever in a century struck the area, inundated the delta, and made people realize the "the consequences of their actions" (Fickle 117-8). Welty, who worked for the Works Progress Administration since the 1930s, frequented many rural towns in Mississippi in order to provide the government with the records of the South's development during the Depression. Not only did she photograph the ecological changes in the South with her camera, but she also tried to write down what she had observed. Plant writings appear in many of the short stories in Welty's collection, *A Curtain of Green*, published in 1941. Writings of trees, flowers and thorns can be found everywhere in *A Worn Path*, in which Welty meticulously depicts the geographic landscapes along the way as an elderly African American woman named Phoenix Jackson ventures towards a nearby town to acquire medicine for her grandson. The short story *A Curtain of Green* focuses on Mrs. Larkin, a young widow who suffers from her husband's death and spends her entire time working in the garden,

which resembles the experience of Welty's mother. In *Flowers for Marjorie*, Welty, through the detailed writings of plants, subtly presents the grotesque plot of a pregnant wife being brutally murdered by her husband who is under great financial pressure. Besides, the thorny rose, a rather ironic image, is a metaphor for the harsh reality encountered by the poor in the South during Great Depression. What is the aesthetic value of various plant writings in Welty's early works published in the 1930s and 1940s? What kind of environmental ethics does Welty, a gardener and a lover of plants, convey through her plant narratives? This paper, based on these questions, intends to investigate the aesthetic value and cultural connotation of plant narratives in Welty's early works.

Since the 21st century, various discourses of "things" in many academic fields, including "Thing Theory," "Neovitalism," "Speculative Realism," and "Actant Network Theory," etc., have shaped "The Material Turn," a highly heterogeneous theoretic field. In recent ten years, "New Materialism," was more often used as an umbrella term to encompass "a range of new ways of understanding the relationship between humans and the object world that have emerged across a number of disciplines" (Epstein 185). As Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann noted in their introduction to *Material Ecocriticism*, the first of the most basic assumptions of New Materialisms "is the chasm between the human and the nonhuman world in terms of agency" (Iovino and Oppermann 2). In the introduction to *New Materialisms*, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost summarized the goal of new materialists as to "rediscover a materiality that materializes, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognize that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider anew the location and nature of capacities for agency" (Coole and Forest 9). The manifestation of agency, in Barad's words, is through "specific intra-actions that phenomena come to matter." And it is through such practices that the differential boundaries between "humans" and "nonhumans," "culture" and "nature," the "social" and the "scientific" are constituted. In summary, "the universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming" (Barad 135).

Following New Materialism, ecocriticism has seen a "plant turn" in recent years. Critical plant studies attempt to reverse the tendency among humans denoted as "Plant Blindness" which neither notices nor values plants in the environment (Balding and Williams 1192). Plant study scholars call for attention to "Botanical Being" (Ryan 6), and a kind of "vitality" in Bennet's sense that is intrinsic to plants and independent from human will (Bennet viii). In terms of Welty studies, although literary researchers have started to notice the connection between her gardening

experience and her writing, these studies tend to either adopt a macroscopic view or focus on analysis of identities, with little attention paid to the "agency" of plants. This paper, on close reading of *A Curtain of Green* and *A Worn Path* through the New Materialist approach, intends to explore the botanical "being" and "vitality," as well as the "agency" of plants through which the affective intra-action between human and the nonhuman is achieved, and then further investigate the aesthetic value of plant narratives in Welty's early works, and her environmental ethics.

A Worn Path: Diminished Distinction between Human and Plants

Published in 1941, *A Worn Path*, winning the O. Henry Award, is regarded by critics as one of Welty's early masterpieces. The story is named after Natchez Trace, a worn path, along which the heroine, an elderly African American woman named Phoenix Jackson, undertakes an arduous journey twice a year to retrieve medicine for her sick grandson. Although Phoenix's journey towards Natchez for medicine is the main plot line, two-thirds of the story focuses on vegetal environment along the rural path, presenting a bleak winter picture of the South suffering from an economic recession due to the impact of Great Depression. Environmental writing, though accounting for a significant part of the work, has, for many years, mainly been used to interpret the identity of characters or the cultural connotations of the story. Some critics have suggested that the environment of Phoenix's journey, filled with hardship, shapes her into a persistent and optimistic spirit. As Vande Kieft concludes, Phoenix is, like Faulkner's Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, "a completely and beautifully harmonious person (Vande Kieft 29). Others, considering Phoenix's race and the deep-rooted racism in the South where the story is set, have interpreted the environmental obstacles as a symbol of racial oppression, with words like "chains" that imply constraint on freedom as supporting details (Moberly 115). This traditional interpretation of texts has been criticized in New Materialist studies of recent years. Influenced and inspired by various discourses of "The Material Turn," literary researchers such as Bill Brown, Babette Barbel Tischleder, and Elaine Freedgood have raised awareness for "thingness" and "vitality" in material writings in literary works. From their perspective, "the protocols for reading the realist novel have long focused us on subjects and plots; they have implicitly enjoined us not to interpret many or most of its objects" (Freedgood 1). In traditional readings, the objects are indentured to the subject and a character's possessions, even if they are mentioned with a certain degree of emphasis, "are meant to tell us something about that character and not about themselves or their own social lives" (Freedgood 12). As the new materialist approach implies, things are not only regarded as the springboard

of textual analysis but also endowed with the same subjectivity as humans. Plants, inanimate objects in the traditional sense, have "the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies," which can "aid or destroy, enrich or disable, ennoble and degrade" human beings (Bennet ix).

In *A Worn Path*, Welty focuses largely on the description of a wide variety of plants, including pines, thorny bushes, barbed-wire fence, old cotton, a field of dead corn, and the quiet bare fields, showing the biodiversity of the nonhuman world which Phoenix is in. These plants are brought to life with sounds and movements of their own. The cornstalk "whispered and shock" (Welty 279), the scarecrow was "dancing in the wind" (ibid), and some corn husks "blew down and whirled in streamers" (Welty 280), all with their unique "vitality" and "being." The vitality of the nonhuman world can also be observed through the de-anthropocentric scene in the beginning of the story, where a "small" old woman, placed on a worn path without a soul in sight, "walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps" (Welty 275). Visual images such as "small" and "alone" miniaturize human figures in the picture and to some extent, dilute "human activities," while at the same time, the physical environment made up of "pine" and "path" is highlighted in contrast, and the power of things is therefore emphasized. Some New Materialists maintain that to blur human beings in the picture can achieve "a radical reorientation of humans' place in the world and the place and power of things, which are variously construed as part of us, inherently divided from us, or able to be manipulated by our artistic endeavors" (Russell 198).

In addition to the display and emphasis on the vitality of things, Welty abolishes the distinction between human beings and plants in many detailed writings, which altogether achieve an aesthetic effect in which "things behave like humans and humans like things" (Brown, *ST* 113). When portraying Phoenix, the only human being in the winter pinewoods, Welty zooms in, like focusing a camera, on her skin with "a pattern all its own," comparing her wrinkles to plants as she writes "numerous branching wrinkles as though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forehead" (276). Similarly, big dead trees are compared to "black men with one arm standing in the purple stalks of the withered cotton field" (Welty 278), in which the personification of plants makes the unhuman object assume "characteristics of human subjects" (Brown, *OT* 372), thus diminishing the distinction between the animate and inanimate beings. With the entanglement of human beings and plants, plants are elevated to the same position as humans, and become objective entities independent from humans.

Consequently, a new relation of human and the nonhuman emerges. Welty's

Phoenix, alone in the nonhuman world, is no longer the dominator and conqueror of nature; instead, she truly connects with nature. With her thin, small cane, the old woman keeps tapping the frozen earth in front of her to see whether the road is passable in a natural way. Phoenix walks from side to side "with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grandfather clock," which suggests a synchronization of human and nature (Welty 275). Familiar with the law of nature, Phoenix also knows December is "not the season for bulls," and neither will she encounter snakes that "curl up and sleep in the winter" (Welty 279). Throughout the story, Welty depicts an old woman who is sensitive to natural odor and sound and is able to smell wood smoke and river. Besides naming the plants along the path, old Phoenix communes friendly and pleads respectfully with them to keep dangers out of her way. As plants, in her eyes, are living, breathing things with their own laws of being, the bush which catches her dress is just "doing appointed work" (Welty 277). Through the intimate interaction between plants and old Phoenix who recognizes the botanical being and value, the distinction between human beings and plants further diminishes, and a harmonious picture in which human and the nonhuman are equals and companions of each other is foregrounded.

Phoenix, illiterate and untamed by modern industrial civilization, respects botanical being, which is opposed to the dominant environmental perspectives. In this sense, plant writings in *A Worn Path* form a narrative confrontation with the plant discourse in the South during the first half of the 20th century, and thus, imply Welty's criticism of the anthropocentric view, and the objectification and subjugation of plants. Welty, in interviews, has repeatedly lamented the ecological destruction and disasters in the South in the 1920s. She claims that Mississippi is "really a pretty well-endowed state by nature," but many of these natural resources had been misused; most of the forests in the state were cut over completely by the late 1920s, leaving a bleak and depleted landscape (Fickle xii). The old woman who respects botanical being and complies with the laws of nature is portrayed as positive and kind in Welty's story, which undoubtedly embodies Welty's underlying identity with Phoenix's views on plants and nature. Readers, too, resonate with her attitude towards the physical world of nature through Phoenix's limited omniscient point of view, and further comprehend Welty's environmental view and ecological ethics embedded in *A Worn Path*.

A Curtain of Green: Affective Intra-actios between Human and Plants

A Curtain of Green, slightly predated *A Worn Path*, was first published in *The Southern Review* in 1938, and was hailed by critics as the "auspicious beginning" of

Welty's writing career (Peterman 91). Welty presents a story with a typical "trauma-healing" theme through her unique objective writing techniques. In this short story, Mrs. Larkin, a white widow traumatized by seeing her husband accidentally killed by a falling chinaberry tree, is haunted by the memory "tightened about her easily" when "a curtain had been jerked quite unceremoniously away from a little scene" (Welty 213). Suffering from the death of her husband, Mrs. Larkin spends all her days gardening in order to distract from the pain. However, she, as the ending suggests, ultimately finds solace in the act of gardening because when the day's work in the garden is over, "she would lie in bed, her arms tired at her sides and in motionless peace" (Welty 218). Mrs. Larkin, as many critics believe, is based on Welty's mother, who immersed herself in the loss of her husband and later accomplished her "trauma-healing" process through gardening. According to Suzanne Marrs, "Mrs. Larkin's isolation within her community, her grief, her venturing into the garden, and her discovery of some consolation there draw in oblique ways upon Chestina Welty's experience" (Marrs 7).

Among all Welty's works, *A Curtain of Green* is extremely abundant in plant writings. With plants as the title of the story and even the title of Welty's first short story collection, the significance of plant writings is self-evident. In current studies of this short story, some interpret plants as a symbol of "barrier" isolating Mrs. Larkin from the outside world, or as a containment of her traumatic memories (Chandrasekhar 428). Others regard Mrs. Larkin's garden-work as an example of what Hélène Cixous, a French feminist literary critic, calls *écriture feminine*, maintaining that it is through her gardening that "Mrs. Larkin is able to break through the state of melancholia that has plagued her for over a year" (Crews 21). In these studies, plants, treated as metaphors, are mostly attached to or possessed by the subject, with their own "being" and "agency" unheeded. In *A Curtain of Green*, plants, with destructive power, are responsible for Mrs. Larkin's trauma in the first place (since her husband is killed by a falling tree), but with affective power, they are also the reason for the healing of her psychic trauma in the end. To a certain extent, plant writings parallel the "trauma-healing" process of Mrs. Larkin in the story. Thus, to scrutinize the plant writings and to explore further how plants remain interactive with human beings affectively through their "agency" not only provide a new approach to the re-reading of its "trauma-healing" theme but also help to examine Welty's environmental ethics conveyed through her works.

Similar to *A Worn Path*, *A Curtain of Green* begins with depiction of the environment, placing human beings in a grand, formidable nonhuman world, as is reflected in details like the regular rain that "would come about two o'clock in the

morning," "trees along the street," "rows of flower gardens in the town," and every leaf that "reflected the sun from a hardness like a mirror surface" (Welty 209). At the beginning of the story, Welty introduces the "agency" of the inanimate physical world independent from human will, and obliquely displays the interdependence and intra-action of all kinds of things when she portrays the reflection of sunlight by leaves. Human beings, however, are only a part of the environment, and they can do nothing but "sit in the windows of their houses, fanning and signing, waiting for the rain" (ibid). So far, Welty has set the tone, suggesting that everything in the universe has its own pattern and vitality. Then, the second paragraph turns to the characterization of Mrs. Larkin, who toils in the garden. Although Welty does not describe her heroine's appearance in as many details as she does in *A Worn Path*, she conjures up a New Materialist picture with similar aesthetic connotations to the former through plentiful plant writings. Compared with Phoenix in *A Worn Path*, Mrs. Larkin is even more blurred in the picture. With her "clumsy, small" figure, she works "almost invisibly," "submerged all day among the thick, irregular, sloping beds of plants" (Welty 210). While human subjectivity is hamstrung in the picture, the botanical vitality is emphasized as Welty describes the garden as "more and more over-abundant and confusing" (ibid). That the garden is "slanting" and "tangled" further epitomizes the wildness and disorder of botanical being. In addition, plants possess a certain kind of forcible, destructive power that can be exerted on human beings. "The intense light like a tweezers picked out her clumsy, small figure" and "separated it from the thick leaves" (Welty 209-10). It can be seen that at the beginning of the short story, plant narratives convey an inharmonious, contradictory tension between plants and human beings, thus previewing the emotional conflict between Mrs. Larkin and plants.

As the narrative proceeds, Mrs. Larkin's response and resistance to the power of plants become obvious. Mrs. Larkin, in her "old pair of men's overalls," with "a sort of sturdiness" (ibid), works in the garden with a hoe, clearing patches of uncultivated ground and beating down weeds. Ecofeminist scholars have explored the connection between women and nature, as Noël Sturgeon explains, the focus of ecofeminist theorizing, as well as critiques of ecofeminism, "has been how to conceptualize the special connection between women and nature presumed by the designation 'ecofeminism'" (Sturgeon 263). Seeing from this point of view, Mrs. Larkin, with her masculine dressing and expression, denied her association with nature. In fact, the hoe, an image of conquest, even reinforces her "masculinity." Since her husband is killed by the natural power of plants, Mrs. Larkin's working in the garden with a hoe can also be understood as a protest or revenge against nature.

Unlike old Phoenix who sees plants as her equals, Mrs. Larkin tries to impose human power on nature, but the garden she has been trying to transform still has "the appearance of a sort of jungle." Her struggles seem futile. As is implied by Welty in the description that her "overalls" are "almost of a color with the leaves" (212), Mrs. Larkin's confrontation with plants, instead of healing her psychic trauma, submerges her in the same power that kills her husband.

The story reaches its climax with a turn in Mrs. Larkin's emotions as she interacts with plants. The turn begins with "the first drop" that "touched her upraised arm" (Welty, 217). The rain, at the beginning of the story, is depicted as a regular, disturbing thing that comes at two o'clock in the afternoon every day, with the same destructive power as plants. But here, it miraculously "touches" Mrs. Larkin, marking a central point where trauma turns to healing. Mrs. Larkin's lowering and dropping of the hoe indicates that she begins to abandon her anthropocentric view, leading to a breakdown of the barrier between her and the plants. Then, Welty went on and wrote that "the green of the small zinnia shoots was very pure, almost burning. One by one, as the rain reached them, all the individual little plants shone out, and then the branching veins" (ibid), in which images like "small shoots" and "little plants" further hints at Mrs. Larkin's new birth after the healing of her trauma.

A shift from the objective point of view to limited omniscient point of view echoes this turning point. Readers' horizon is limited to Mrs. Larkin's emotional experience, and they can thus perceive the generation of emotions through the intra-actios between Mrs. Larkin and plants. From Mrs. Larkin's perspective, "in the light from the rain, different from sunlight, everything appeared to gleam unreflecting from within itself in its quiet arcade of identity" (ibid), which, positively and appreciatively, shows the vitality of the nonhuman world. Again, the power generated from "within" the plant "itself" is highlighted. Instead of the destructive power exerted on human beings in the beginning, plants, with their comforting "agency," now have a positive affective power. The emotional entanglement of the vegetal fragrance and Mrs. Larkin best illustrates their affective intra-actions. When "a wind of deep wet fragrance beat against her," "tenderness tore and spun through her sagging body," "as if it had swelled and broken over a daily levee" (Welty 218). In the end, Mrs. Larkin sinks down into "the flowers" and lies there in a state of complete relaxation, immersed in the realm of plants. The fragrance of plants, or the "physicochemical processes" contained in the fragrance, soothes down Mrs. Larkin's nerves, creating an intra-action between plants and human body (Coole and Forest 9). The powerful transcorporeal encounter also generates new emotions in Mrs. Larkin. Her attitudes towards plants shift from fear and confrontation

to acceptance and appreciation. In this sense, plants subdue and shape human emotions, as well as heal psychic trauma with their affective power.

In *A Curtain of Green*, Welty, through exquisite plant writings, presents the dual power of plants, including both the negative power independent from human will, and the affective power that comforts and heals human beings. Welty and her mother knew well enough the healing power of plants as they put it that "when we are weary from contact or perhaps conflict with the everyday world," the peace and fragrance of the loved garden "are soothing to frayed nerves and its recurrent beauty whispers a message of comfort and hope when our hearts are lonely or sorrowful that 'steals away our sadness ere we are aware'" (Haltom and Brown 139). To Welty, the coexistence of the dual power of plants is an objective being of nature, and the wisdom of getting along with plants requires human beings neither to try to stop changes in gardens nor to "impose one's will over anything, especially a helpless bush" (Haltom and Brown 126).

Conclusion

A Worn Path and *A Curtain of Green* as Welty's two early works, through the emphasis on botanical "being" and "agency," both manifest her de-anthropocentric view, and demonstrate her environmental ethics that respects and values all things in the universe. What is different is that in *A Worn Path*, as the distinction between human beings and plants diminishes, Welty foregrounds a harmonious picture in which human and the nonhuman are equals and companions of each other, and implicitly criticizes the environmental view of her time which was characterized by the objectification and subjugation of plants. In *A Curtain of Green*, Welty is more dedicated to depicting how plants remain interactive with human beings affectively through their "agency," and how they affect characters' perception and their cognition of "place", thus presenting the affective power of plants in shaping human emotions as well as healing psychic trauma. Plant narratives in Welty's early works add an ecological value to her well-known "place" writing; furthermore, the plants in the "place", with their unique aesthetic connotation and rich literary life, demonstrate the aesthetic significance of Welty's environmental ethics.

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Self-Differentiation and the Marginalized Idol of Love in Patrick Süskind's *Perfume*

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Abstract The German writer Patrick Süskind symbolically projects the power of scents in his historical fantasy novel, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. The protagonist, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, has a supernatural ability to identify the odors of almost everything around him, yet he remains an undifferentiated self in psychiatric terms, seeking love, influence, and acceptance. Using Murray Bowen's concept of self-differentiation, this article investigates the theme of marginalization in Süskind's *Perfume* by examining emotional webs of interrelationships between Grenouille and those around him in different social, institutional, and cultural capacities. In his quest to have a unique personal scent, Grenouille becomes an obsessed murderer of twenty-five girls. However, he ends up tragically by being devoured with lust rather than love, ironically because of his special concocted perfume. Adopting a psychiatric approach, the article examines the functional level of Grenouille's differentiation in three emotional systems and relationship processes: with Madame Gaillard, the tanner Grimal, and the perfumer Giuseppe Baldini. Grenouille, it is concluded, has a low level of self-differentiation, i.e. a weak range of self development. Accordingly, he is guided by his emotions in

his contact with others and not autonomous in his thinking. His life goal is to be loved as an idol. However, his level of self-differentiation does not allow him to be an idol; instead, he remains in the margin, and his life remains ephemeral, as evanescent as "perfume."

Key words Patrick Süskind; *Perfume*; Bowen family systems theory; self-differentiation; marginalization

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Introduction

Literary scholars have not paid adequate attention to Murray Bowen's family systems theory, specifically the concept of self-differentiation, for understanding the dynamics and interpersonal interactions among an emotional system. In this regard, the protagonist Jean-Baptiste Grenouille in Patrick Süskind's horror, historical fantasy novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (1985) can make an interesting case for analysis. Bowen's psychiatric theory, it is argued, can be used to examine an individual's satisfaction in life, maturity, decisions, managing stress, and balancing one's position with relation to others. Striking a balance between one's individual identity and relation to society and leading an orderly successful life are the main challenges faced by Süskind's protagonist in *Perfume*, and this is attributed to lack of self-differentiation in Bowen's theory. Grenouille's gift of smell and his life ambitions, we are told, "were restricted to a domain that leaves no traces in history: to the fleeting realm of scent" (3). Accordingly, he is both insignificant and marginalized. As Bowen maintains, differentiation of self, as a system for categorizing people, "defines people according to the degree of *fusion*, or *differentiation*, between emotional and intellectual functioning" (362; emphasis original). Ephemerality, marginality, emotionality, and dissatisfaction are indicators of Grenouille's undifferentiated self. An undeveloped self entails more dependence on others for approval and acceptance, more emotionality, anxious behavior, and

apparent self-contradictions. For Bowen, those at the low extreme of the self-differentiation scale fuse emotions and intellect and have their lives dominated by emotional functioning: "Whatever intellect they have is dominated by the emotional system. These are the people who are less flexible, less adaptable, and more emotionally dependent on those about them. They are easily stressed into dysfunction, and it is difficult for them to recover from dysfunction. They inherit a high percentage of all human problems" (362). Such a definition of the less differentiated people (who fuse emotional and intellectual functioning) is essential for our discussion of Grenouille's character, especially emotional dependence and lack of adaptation.

Previous readings of the novel have not employed Bowen's theory on self-differentiation to analyze Grenouille's character, although they have covered significant psychoanalytic, feminist, social, and existential perspectives. Critics have studied issues like homicide, patriarchy, and gothic elements in the novel. Unfortunately, much criticism available on the novel was published in German and is unavailable to most English readers. Some studies available on the novel in English include graduation projects or unpublished MA theses. Hence, this article is both legitimate and original. In one study, Edith Krause associates Grenouille's existential conflict with the theme of the absent mother and brings in a feminist discourse to reflect the circumstances and path of his life. Krause argues that "born in the overlapping space of a cemetery turned market square, Grenouille's entrance into being instantly evokes the poles of life and death associated with the feminine" (349). Furthermore, Grenouille's early childhood, Krause claims, is marked by "the crucial lack of the maternal care necessary to stabilize the physical and emotional growth of a child" (352). Krause concludes that "growing up speechless, disfigured, and unnoticed, Grenouille is a figure on the social margins" (356). On the other hand, Jeffrey Adams remarks that *Perfume* focuses on an emotionally and physically abused orphan "whose supernatural sense of smell guides him in a perverse search for the lost origin of his identity" (259). In Adams's opinion, Grenouille's deficiency of a personal scent implies an absent identity and individuality. In a psychoanalytic study, Tamer Lokman introduces Grenouille as a psychopathic murderer "who usually constitutes a threat to his social surroundings" and is likely "to bring severe damage and ruin the life of those who cross path with him" (82). Significantly, Lokman contends that Grenouille becomes "a love seeking self-centered monster using his olfactory gift to achieve his goal of a glowing social acceptance" (81). However, Lokman never attempts a psychiatric understanding of Grenouille's motivation or nature as we intend to do in this article.

Yanna Popova provides a non-traditional reading of the novel, examining the novel's representation of smell based on a study of perception verbs and a general cognitive-linguistic principle of metaphorical "embodiment" (135). Popova argues that Grenouille's discernment of the objects (through smell) offers a different "cognitive model of the external world" we often construct through the sense of vision, which thus requires "alternative ways of expression" (135). Abby Hodge compares and contrasts the novel and the film adaptations in terms of themes and medium limitations (novelistic graphic description vs. camera's eye): "Though both deal with identity, humanity's flaws, and death, Süskind's Grenouille shows the absolute evil that exists in an absolutely evil world, while Tykwer's [film] interpretation shows how a world of absolute evil can pervert the naïve people who inhabit it" (95). Fulvio Marone presents a psychoanalytic Lacanian reading of the novel with Grenouille's lack of personal odor taken to represent "the lack of the phallic signifier" and "an olfactory other" (113). However, this current article pursues neither the traditional psychoanalysis of Freud nor the Lacanian interpretations of the French school of psychoanalysis. Instead, it employs psychiatric theories, in particular those of Bowen and Kerr, to unravel the role of emotional, family units in individual behavior and development.

Despite these significant, theoretically oriented readings of *Perfume*, no literary study has examined Grenouille's level of self-differentiation and its role in his marginality. Consequently, this article argues that Grenouille, with a low functional level of self-differentiation, has a high level of chronic anxiety and, therefore, his dysfunction is emotional, physical, and social. Moreover, smelling and odors will be mainly equivalent to feelings and emotions because they are connected with love rather than objective reason. Thus, Grenouille—as an unloved solitary orphan—seeks love, acceptance, and happiness. However, he remains depressed, frustrated, and suicidal because of what he lacks at the level of personality. The result is a low level of self- differentiation, as indicated by his lack of personal scent contra his gifted nose, a critical perspective which available readings of the novel have not addressed. According to Kerr and Bowen, "The more differentiated a self, the more a person can be an individual *while in emotional contact with the group*" (94; emphasis original). This means that Grenouille's lack of solid self impacts his individuality and relations with others. He remains an anxious pauper who is exploited and emotionally dependent on others for satisfaction.

Perfume depicts the story of the gifted Grenouille who is marginalized in his society of eighteenth century France. After his birth, his mother is found guilty of four previous infanticides and decapitated accordingly. Grenouille's lack of personal

scent originates from his mother's lack of love to her infants. The circumstances of Grenouille's birth are surrounded by heat and suffocating odors of decay coming from the nearby graveyard. From the beginning of the novel, the reader perceives the events by the dominant sense of smell. Süskind emphasizes this point to designate that odors have a powerful effect on us. Furthermore, odors are more connected to different types of feelings: love, hatred, happiness, sadness, joy, fear, and disgust. *Perfume* is divided into fifty-one chapters in four parts regarding Grenouille's psychological and moral development. Grenouille's life can be traced to his birth in squalid surroundings; attending church; meeting the nurse Jeanne Bussie; going to the orphanage with Madame Gaillard; working for a tanner named Grimal; assisting Giuseppe Baldini (a master perfumer who grants Grenouille journeyman perfumer papers); getting imprisoned for seven years in a cave; being taken in by a nobleman; returning back to Grasse where once again he encounters a fragrance like the one of the girl he murdered in Paris; and finally ingloriously dying in the neighborhood of his birth in Paris. Grenouille's self-differentiation will be examined according to these life stages, especially the early formative ones.

Self-Differentiation and the Marginalized Idol

Self-differentiation is the main concept in Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory. The theory consists of eight interlocking concepts: differentiation of self, triangles, family projection process, the nuclear family emotional system, multigenerational emotional process, sibling position, emotional cutoff, and societal emotional regression. Self-differentiation is defined by Kerr and Bowen as the individual's ability to differentiate between thoughts and feelings in order to guide his or her functioning in the family system (100). The function of any individual in the family system is not related to culture, social class, ethnic differences, or being normal, neurotic, and schizophrenic. Self-differentiation applies to every individual regardless of one's religious principles, cultural ideals, and social values. Cultural behavior is not totally ignored in this concept, but the individual's function in the emotional system depends on thoughts and emotions (Bowen 364). Grenouille's level of self-differentiation will be examined according to his thoughts and feelings regardless of his cultural and social beliefs. Furthermore, Grenouille's level of anxiety or emotional reactivity (to a real or imagined threat) will also be examined in order to assign him a specific level of self-differentiation. Generally speaking, however, when anxiety is intense, "people become more reactive and less thoughtful" (Kerr and Bowen 99). This decline in system functioning leads to a lower level of self-differentiation.

Early in the novel, Grenouille is defined by the wet nurse to the monk in terms of negation and anonymity as "[t]he bastard of that woman from the rue aux Fers who killed her babies!" (8), which immediately signals a potential low level of self-differentiation in the growing child whose father is absent and whose mother is a convict. Grenouille's early stages of life, especially with Madame Gaillard, have a great effect on his level of self-differentiation because she represents the custodian and, likewise, the emotionally absent mother. In Bowen's theory, the parents' level of self-differentiation influences their children. Additionally, a child's level of self differentiation could be higher or less than that of their parents. Richard Gray contends that "the three persons largely responsible for Grenouille's childhood development−his mother, Father Terrier, and Madame Gaillard−represent the values Süskind associates with enlightened society in the mid-eighteenth century: egocentrism, calculating rationality, emotionlessness, orderliness, 'justice'" (495). The monk, Father Terrier, who represents religious tolerance at the Enlightenment era does not have a big role in shaping Grenouille's level of self-differentiation. The level of self-differentiation transcends cultural and social values. Consequently, the Enlightenment culture of the eighteenth-century France should not be overlooked as it sheds light on the difference between thoughts (reason) and feelings. However, such an enlightened culture (ironically) does not seem to have changed Grenouille's low level of self-differentiation.

Madame Gaillard and Grenouille's mother have some common characteristics such as emotionlessness, mercilessness, and a weak sense of smell, unlike Grenouille who is an odor genius differentiating all types of scents. During the labor of her son, Grenouille's mother "perceived the odor neither of the fish nor of the corpses, for her sense of smell had been utterly dulled" (5). She does not recognize that her four previous stillbirths are human beings, not a kind of "bloody meat that had emerged had not differed greatly from the fish guts that lay there already, nor had lived much longer" (5). Grenouille's mother, still in her mid-twenties, has some thoughts and hopes "to live a while yet, perhaps a good five or ten years, and perhaps even to marry one day and as the honorable wife of a widower with a trade or some such to bear real children" (5). Krause clarifies that against such dreams, "her life ends when the unwanted and hence 'unreal' child enters the world on the grounds of the former cemetery. Physically impaired, *socially marginalized*, and never identified by a name, she remains a mere shadow with dreams that degenerate into nightmares" (5; emphasis added). She has ambition to settle down and be an honorable wife with real children, which indicates that she does not consider her multiple "stillbirths, or semi-stillbirths" (5) as real children. Although Grenouille's

mother is merciless, she is driven by her emotions rather than thoughts to have a low level of self- differentiation that emotionally transmits to her son. She is devoid of love, tenderness, sympathy, and tolerance. The wet nurse, Jeanne Bussie, refuses to keep baby Grenouille because he does not have a smell like other babies (10). She thinks that he is even possessed by the devil (10). Thus, Grenouille is rejected from his infancy as different, and as undifferentiated in Bowen's terms.

Madame Gaillard has a greater effect on Grenouille's level of self-differentiation than his actual mother because he lives with her for eight years. Her role in shaping Grenouille's personality is typically unnoticed by critics. When she was a child, "her father had struck her across the forehead with a poker, just above the base of the nose, and she had lost for good all sense of smell and every sense of human warmth and human coldness-indeed, every human passion" (20). Madame Gaillard lacks not only the sense of smell but also human warmth and passion. She is even worse than Grenouille's mother when it comes to emotions. She had "a merciless sense of order and justice" because "of her total lack of emotion" (20). She neither discriminates nor prefers any one of the children in her orphanage. She lacks emotions, yet she is "aware of" only two sensations: "a very slight depression at the approach of her monthly migraine and a very slight elevation of mood at its departure. Otherwise, this numbed woman felt nothing" (20). Her main concern in life is to afford a private death because she fears public death among strangers. If she has such fears, then Madame Gaillard is unable to think clearly or to feel any kind of emotions because she is so frightened of death. She is emotionally numb by fears from future and shock rooted in her father's past violence to her.

Kerr and Bowen mention that individuals with a low level of self-differentiation are "so sensitized to the world around them that they have lost the capacity to feel; they are numb. Emotionally needy and highly reactive to others, it is very difficult for people in this range to maintain long-term relationships" (100-101). Therefore, it could be argued that Madame Gaillard's level of self-differentiation is very low because she is driven by emotions of fear that control her thoughts on the idea of receiving a "private death." Consequently, her diminished level of self-differentiation emotionally transmits to all the children in her orphanage, including Grenouille, even though she is not their actual mother.

As a child, Grenouille requires nothing other than food and clothes. He lives with Madame Gaillard with the minimum basics of living, yet for "his soul he required nothing. Security, attention, tenderness, love-or whatever all those things are called that children are said to require—were totally dispensable for the young Grenouille" (21). He seems an existential character that does not care about spiritual

requirements of typical human beings such as care or love. He had given up such requirements "just to go on living-from the very start" (22). Or rather, he had dispensed with these necessities because of his birth and harsh circumstances. He was born without a soul or scent, i.e. without a distinct personality. "Every other woman," we are told, "would have kicked this monstrous child. But not Madame Gaillard" (23). The cry that announces his being and attracts people's attention to his murderous mother is "not an instinctive cry for sympathy and love. That cry, emitted upon careful consideration, one might almost say upon mature consideration, was the newborn's decision against love and nevertheless for life" (22). The newborn has to existentially choose between love or life but not both. He is detestable among the children at Madame Gaillard's household who try to suffocate him several times using a pile of rags or their hands. As he grows older, he is more deserted by other children. Surprisingly, the children do not hate or envy him, but they are afraid of him (24). Even our fears of something can ultimately create a feeling of hatred. The amount of fear and hatred feelings in Madame Gaillard's household are absorbed by Grenouille and consequently affect his level of self-differentiation. They could be the reason behind Grenouille's loveless and guilty state.

Because Grenouille rarely communicates with the other children, it is difficult for him to retain or name things and objects without odor or fathom abstract ideas such as "justice, conscience, God, joy, responsibility, humility, gratitude, etc." (26). If they are classified to thoughts or feelings, the majority of these notions and concepts are thoughts. Thus, his cognitive learning is sensual rather than thoughtful. He uses his senses (smell in particular) to recollect some thoughts about things. At the age of six, he becomes "an autodidact possessed of a huge vocabulary of odors that enabled him to form at will great numbers of smelled sentences" (27). Madame Gaillard notices that the self-taught Grenouille has supernatural qualities. He does not fear darkness; he makes his way back and forth without any wrong move; he can catch the smell of visitors before they arrive; and he can predict a thunderstorm before it happens. He is able to perform all of these feats with the aid of his prodigy of smelling. In this regard, Süskind makes Grenouille's sense of smell replace that of his eyesight. Such abilities are dreadful to Madame Gaillard because she thinks that he can see through locked doors, brick walls, wood, paper, and cloth. Grenouille lives with Madame Gaillard for years, which means that his basic level of self- differentiation is already shaped. Nonetheless, his functional level of self-differentiation will be enhanced or undermined during the course of his life. Madame Gaillard believes that whether Grenouille is a "feeble-minded" or not, he has second sight. Being a feeble-minded person and having second sight

are qualities associated with thoughts rather than feelings. However, Grenouille is neither feeble-minded nor a man with second sight. His character is too mysterious and introverted. Furthermore, to use Bowen's family systems theory, self-differentiation "transcends categories such as genius, social class, and cultural-ethnic differences. It applies to all human forms of life" (364).

Grenouille turns eight when he is sent by Madame Gaillard to work with a tanner named Grimal. Madame Gaillard knows that "by all normal standards Grenouille would have no chance of survival in Grimal's tannery" (30). Grimal has "a notorious need for young laborers-not for regular apprentices and journeymen, but for cheap coolies … about whom there would be no inquiry in dubious situations" (30). Grimal abuses vagabonds and homeless children in his tannery. Children at his tannery, including Grenouille, scrap the meat from stinking hides, dye them with poisonous chemical substances, and tan pits with caustic fumes. After a year in Grimal's tannery, Grenouille has anthrax, but he resists death. Grimal is happy that Grenouille survives because the latter cannot be replaced by other workers. Accordingly, when Grenouille turns thirteen, Grimal allows him to leave on Sundays evenings. With Grimal, Grenouille proves to be "a docile and productive worker" (33). This is because Grenouille realizes from his first glance or from the first sniff of the amount of odors in Grimal's shop that the tanner is as cruel as the fatal odors enveloping the tannery. Grenouille perceives life through the sense of smelling, which is mainly considered a feeling rather than a thought. To assign a level of self-differentiation relying on the sense of smell is still not enough at this stage because Grenouille is involved in Grimal's emotional system regardless of the fact that we do not know about Grimal's family or emotional system. Nevertheless, and in Bowen's family systems theory, to assign one's level of self-differentiation, emotions and relationships are all that is demanded. However, Bowen explains: "People in the lower half of the scale live in a 'feeling' controlled world in which feelings and subjectivity are dominant over the objective reasoning process most of the time" (473─474). Such feelings, it can be observed, shape Grenouille's life and crucial decisions.

During weekends, Grenouille is released to do what he likes. He roams Paris sniffing all kinds of odors and saving them in his mind. When he turns fifteen and in the thirty-eight anniversary of the king's coronation, Grenouille is faced by a unique delicate odor of a red-headed girl who confuses him:

> For the first time, it was not just that his greedy nature was offended, but his very *heart* ached. He had the prescience of something extraordinary-this scent

> was the key for ordering all odors, one could understand nothing about odors if one did not understand this one scent, and his whole life would be bungled, if he, Grenouille, did not succeed in possessing it. He had to have it, not simply in order to possess it, but for his *heart* to be at peace. (40; emphasis added)

This quotation connotes three important points about Grenouille's level of self-differentiation. First, the sense of smelling equals emotions and feelings because Grenouille feels that he should possess it to understand the quality of all other odors and "for his heart to be at peace." Second, Grenouille is guided by his emotions in the emotional system rather than his thoughts. In the same situation, heart is connected to what Grenouille feels at the presence of the scent. Grenouille feels his heart pounding, and he expects that the reason behind this pounding is "his excited helplessness in the presence of this scent" (41). Third, Grenouille cannot differentiate between his thoughts and feelings. When he follows the odor, "his fearful heart pounding, for he suspected that it was not he who followed the scent, but the scent that had captured him and was drawing him irresistibly to it" (42). And when he discovers that the source of that odor is the girl in the rue des Marais, he thinks that he has never seen anything beautiful like that girl. Grenouille means that he has never smelled anything as beautiful as the odor of this girl:

> For a moment he was so confused that he actually *thought* he had never in all his life seen anything so beautiful as this girl-although he only caught her from behind in silhouette against the candlelight. He meant, of course, he *had never smelled* anything so beautiful. (43, emphasis added)

This turn, the sense of smelling is equivalent to thought. Grenouille's thoughts in such situations create his feelings and even his decision to kill the girl. Therefore, smelling represents Grenouille's feelings and thoughts but it is, once more, a matter of feeling rather than actually thinking. His confusing of thought and feeling is indicative of low scale self-differentiation in Bowen's theory on emotional relationships.

Grenouille discovers that he is a wunderkind in making perfumes since the time he kills the red-headed girl. He "felt as if he finally knew who he really was: nothing less than a genius. And that the meaning and goal and purpose of his life had a higher destiny: nothing less than to revolutionize the odoriferous world" (46). In owning the girl's scent, Grenouille achieves utmost happiness. He feels that he is not less than a genius and realizes the purpose of his life; he possesses an "exquisite

nose, a phenomenal memory, and, most important, the master scent taken from that girl in the rue des Marais" (46). Grenouille believes that he finds the triad of his ability to create not only a scent but also a soul. The components of this triad are: his nose, his memory, and the master scent of the girl. He owns the "magic formula for everything that could make a scent, a perfume, great: delicacy, power, stability, variety, and terrifying, irresistible beauty" (46). In creating a scent with such qualities, Grenouille identifies the components of the idolized soul and the identity that he would like to possess.

It is Grenouille's life chance when Grimal sends him to the perfumer and glover, Giuseppe Baldini, to deliver the goatskins for the Spanish leather. For Baldini, perfume represents the soul of the person who makes it. He mentions that it "was the soul of the perfume-if one could speak of a perfume made by this ice-cold profiteer Pelissier as having a soul-and the task now was to discover its composition" (62-63). Pelissier is a very famous perfumer in Paris and one of Baldini's rivals. Pelissier also makes the perfume "Amor and Psyche" that Baldini is not able to emulate. "Amor and Psyche" could represent heart and mind, feeling and thought, and, therefore, low and high levels of self-differentiation in people's lives.

According to Kerr and Bowen theory, people in the very low level in the scale of differentiation of self do not have the ability "to differentiate between thoughts and feelings" because they are "so immersed in a feeling world" (101; emphasis original). At this stage, Grenouille raises his functional level of self-differentiation by balancing between his thoughts and feelings. When he hears that Baldini wants the goatskins, he does his best to be the one who delivers them. Upon entering Baldini's perfumery and walking behind Baldini's shadow, Grenouille is overcome by "the idea that he belonged here and nowhere else, that he would stay here, that from here he would shake the world from its foundations" (72). His dream is to stay at Baldini's shop. He is aware that nothing justifies "a stray tanner's helper of dubious origin, without connections or protection, without the least social standing, to hope that he would get so much as a toehold in the most renowned perfume shop in Paris-all" (72). Grenouille's immodest thoughts are not a matter of hope but certainty. He is encapsulated by his feelings of inferiority, and he makes his decision to change. Working with Baldini is a matter of certainty rather than expectation for Grenouille. This idea assigns Grenouille a higher functional level of self-differentiation that enables him to differentiate between his thoughts and feelings. He challenges Baldini in making the perfume "Amor and Psyche," and he succeeds in making a perfume that is "completely new, capable of creating a whole world, a magical, rich world fine" (90). While Baldini achieves the maximum reputation

in perfume manufacturing making use of Grenouille's olfactory organs, Grenouille becomes a specialist in distillation, and it irritates him to know that many things cannot be distilled at all. He aims to "create entirely new basic odors, and with them to produce at least some of the scents that he bore within him" (103). After months of disappointing experiments to create a fundamentally new scent, Grenouille falls seriously ill. Baldini does what he can in order to save the secret of his wealth and reputation but all in vain until Grenouille asks him about other ways to extract the scent from things "besides pressing or distilling" (109). Grenouille feels much better when Baldini provides him with the answers that he needs to succeed in perfume making. Wanting to succeed and being goal-oriented make him temporarily achieve higher levels of self-differentiation.

Baldini's thoughts are mainly about the six hundred formulas that are recorded from Grenouille in how to make totally new perfumes and that "the whole generation of perfumer would ever be able to implement" (114). In such an emotionless environment, Grenouille encounters the same history with the cold soulless Madame Gaillard and with the cruel inhuman Grimal. What Grenouille cares about is the journeyman's papers that would make it possible for him to live an inconspicuous life, to travel undisturbed, and to find a job. Producing a top-selling perfume and competing Baldini and other bourgeois perfumers are not the things that Grenouille needs. He wants to "empty himself of his innermost being, of nothing less than his innermost being, which he considered more wonderful than anything else the world had to offer" (112). He wants to empty his mind and heart of what surrounds him. His main target in this stage of his life is to reach emotional self-awareness. After a journey of five days, Grenouille reaches the peak of a mountain located in the Massif Central of the Auvergne to establish "the kingdom most distant from humankind" and even any respectable mammal (123). He wants to cut himself off physically and emotionally from the whole world. He celebrates his arrival to the mountain of solitude and makes his mind up not to leave this mountain all that soon. During this stage Grenouille seems contented, proud of himself, and majestic in the empire of "Grenouille the Great." He idolizes himself as the founder of his own empire:

> Yes! This was his empire! The incomparable Empire of Grenouille! Created and ruled over by him, the incomparable Grenouille, laid waste by him if he so chose and then raised up again, made boundless by him and defended with a flaming sword against every intruder. Here there was naught but his will, the will of the great, splendid, incomparable Grenouille. And now that the evil stench of the

past had been swept away, he desired that his empire be fragrant. (130)

This narcissistic idol enjoys his empire where he can do whatever he wants, forget his painful past, and assert his will. Grenouille's thoughts and feelings are all concentrated on his greatness and the ability of his olfactory system. At such moments, his will represents his thoughts and beliefs rather than his feelings. According to Kerr and Bowen, people "can function at levels that are higher or lower than their basic level depending on the circumstances of the relationship system in which they are operating" (98). Grenouille is not thoroughly involved in a relationship system with others now. Accordingly, he cuts himself from the world and lives in more suitable circumstances that boost his "basic" self-differentiation. According to Kerr and Bowen, there is a difference between *basic* and *functional* levels of self-differentiation: "Basic differentiation is functioning that is *not dependent on the relationship process*. Functional differentiation is functioning that *is dependent on the relationship system*" (98; emphasis original). Furthermore, "The functional level of a person with a low basic level can rise and fall many times even during just few hours" (Kerr and Bowen 99). Grenouille's emotional system now is a free world as he imagines that he is a king in a castle on his cozy sofa a calling his "invisible, intangible, inaudible and above all inodorous, and thus utterly imaginary servants … to fetch something for him to drink" from "the great library of odors" (133). Trying to enhance his basic self- differentiation of independence from relations with others essentially means lowering his functional level of emotional dependence. However, Grenouille simply fails in this regard.

After seven years of a solitary life in the cave, Grenouille suddenly discovers that he has not any kind of personal scent as a human being. He decides to leave the cave and heads to Montpellier in the south. Upon his arrival, he attracts people's attention because of his awful appearance. During this stage, Grenouille succeeds in making a human-like odor to himself. He notices the effect of his "new aura" (158) from several meetings with crowds of people. He becomes more confident and arrogant because he believes in his capability to make an odor that is "not merely a human, but superhuman, an angle's scent, so indescribably good and vital" to make whoever smells enchanted and in love with the bearer to the extent of "insanity, of self-abandonment" (160-161). He is determined to become "the omnipotent god of scent" (161). Grenouille secretly leaves to Grasse after achieving certain fame as the survivor caveman. Grenouille's purpose of coming to Grasse–"the Rome of scents" and "the promised land of perfumers" (172)–is a matter of a well-planned thought to learn about the techniques of scent production. His feeling does not cling

to the beauty of the town but rather to a thought of learning more about perfume production in order to make his superhuman scent.

However, Grenouille's emotions are agitated by the odor of Laure Richis, a red-headed girl. He inhales the "fatal scent" (176) and finds it resembling the scent of the first red-headed girl from the rue des Marais. He feels dizzy, happy, and even frightened to find that scent in the world again. At this stage, Grenouille is guided by his emotions again. As Bowen confirms with respect to self-differentiation, it is typical for "low-level people to operate on feelings" rather than decide on the basis on thinking (475). Grenouille works as a second journeyman for Madame Arnulfi and her journeyman and paramour Dominique Druot. He starts to make personal perfumes for himself; first, he tries the "odor for inconspicuousness" (189), but it proves to be inconvenient for him because he is ignored in certain occasions. Furthermore, this odor gives him the quality of being unnoticeable, insignificant, invisible, and even marginal. Accordingly, he makes "a scent for arousing sympathy" that proves to be suitable with middle-aged women (190). Then he makes a nauseating odor and wears it when he wants to be avoided and left alone. These odors are worn by Grenouille according to situational demands. Finally, he dedicates himself to "his real passion: the subtle pursuit of scent" (190). Although Grenouille is guided by his emotions, he seems aware of his thoughts for the future as he "systematically" plans to "sharpen his weapons, polish his techniques and gradually perfect his methods" in perfume production (190). Nevertheless, he is still dominated by his feelings because he realizes that he can imitate human odor, but what he seeks is "the odor of certain human beings: that is, those rare humans who inspire love" (195). It is a matter of passion to achieve what he wants because odor, for Grenouille, equals love. His over-rationalization of his decisions and his sometimes exaggerated and sensitive reactions to surrounding people and events indicate his low level of self-differentiation. In the case of people with very low self-differentiation, Bowen writes, "So much of life energy goes into maintaining the relationship system about them–into 'loving' or being 'loved' or reaction against the failure to get love, or into getting more comfortable–that there is no life energy for anything else" (162).

During his work with Madame Arnulfi and Druot, Grenouille accepts to remain there under poor conditions. He also pretends to be very stupid while stirring, washing tubes, and cleaning the workshop but never ignores to monitor and observe every process of extracting perfumes using his nose. Furthermore, he acts as if he does not understand his own genius in olfactory powers, and he only implements Druot's orders. Likewise, he succeeds in being "conspicuous neither by his absence

nor by his presence" and being totally uninteresting (188). This is what Grenouille wants: to prepare himself for possessing the odor of Laure Richis "very gradually and with utmost caution" to be the idol who inspires love (193). However, the level of self-differentiation does not identify the amount of intelligence. Consequently, Druot who is "not fabulously intelligent, but not a complete idiot either," realizes that his best decisions are those ones that depend on whatever Grenouille "almost thought" or "somehow had a feeling about" (185). This indicates that Grenouille's thoughts and feelings are clear to Druot who recognizes Grenouille's ability in perfume making. Neil Donahue mentions that in a harsh world, Grenouille succeeds "to survive and gain for himself a measure of independence while preserving his secret talent, which he now begins to refine as an analyst and collector of scents" (38). Druot knows that Grenouille is more talented than him. Grenouille encourages Druot to have this feeling of superiority displaying the role of unambitious person although Grenouille never says what he thinks or feels. This also indicates that Grenouille is aware of what he thinks and feels even at the presence of Madame Arnulfi. Druot also follows Grenouille's opinion and advice secretly because Druot knows that what Grenouille says regarding perfume production is the right thing.

Sometimes, Grenouille has the ability to differentiate between his thoughts and feelings to some extent, yet he is driven again by his feelings to possess the odor of Laure Richis. He walks along the wall where the garden of Laure Richis is located. He is "filled with the happiness of a lover who has heard or seen his darling from afar and knows that he will bring her home within the year" (197). Grenouille has never felt love, and he does not have the ability to inspire it. He realizes that he loves the scent of the girl and makes an oath to possess it. No wonder, Bowen explains that for people on the low-scale of self differentiation, main life goals revolve around "love, happiness, comfort, and security" (474).

Grenouille's life decisions are based on what he "feels" right. Kerr and Bowen mention that "people at this level are so immersed in a feeling world that they are mostly unaware of an alternative. Major life decisions are based on what feels right" (101). Such people's functioning is governed by emotional reactions. Grenouille behaves as if he is the lover of Laure, and he does what he can in order to have her odor in a year. His decision in possessing Laure Richis' odor comes as an emotional reaction to his feelings. One thought that disturbs him is what he can do if he loses the odor after possessing it. Grenouille starts a process of killing many young girls, taking their clothes, cutting their hair, and extracting their odors. In Justin Yi's opinion, each murder is "insignificant on its own and can only be meaningful if these pieces are all combined—the lives of humans are temporary,

but when collected under the jurisdiction of a god, then the ephemeral quality of life can be set aside to produce a divine, eternal existence, which the ultimate perfume was supposed to do" (224). In killing twenty-five girls, Grenouille collects the components of the divine, eternal, everlasting, and inspiring aura. At the night of killing his twenty-fifth victim, Laure Richis, Grenouille works with "professional circumspection" (222). During the night and while he waits until he can extract Laure's odor from her body, he does not think of the scent that is "made of the auras of twenty-five maidens, nor of future plans, happiness and success" (226). However, he thinks of his past life stations with Madame Gaillard, Grimal the tanner, Giuseppe Baldini, and Marquis de la Taillade –Espinasse. This designates that he is emotionally guided by his feelings about his miserable emotionless past rather than his thoughts about the future. When he finishes his task with Laure, he drinks up her scent, "her glorious scent, his scent" (227). In Grenouille's opinion, Laure's scent is the most essential component of his superhuman scent that makes people not only admire but also adore him. In Bowen's theory, however, undifferentiated people seek love and approval or attack others for not providing such feelings (474).

When he is discovered as the criminal and at the day of his execution, he pours a drop of his perfume on himself. The miracle occurs that the crowd cannot believe that the man who stands at the scaffold is "innocence personified" and "*could not possibly be a murderer*" (244; emphasis original). They cannot resist their feelings towards Grenouille and are overcome by the influence of this god-like man; hence, the scheduled execution deteriorates into a large orgy. Grenouille manages to make the world admire him and worship his scent: "To hell with admire! Love him! Desire him! Idolize him! He has performed a Promethean feat" (248). Considering his miserable past of squalor and lack of emotional warmth, Grenouille reaches his goal but does not find real gratification in love either. He realizes that his fulfillment is in hating and being hated, and he never achieves a true emotional independence needed for a high level of self-differentiation:

> He would have loved right now to have exterminated these people from the earth, every stupid, stinking, eroticized one of them, just as he had once exterminated alien odors from the world of his raven-black soul. And he wanted them to realize how much he hated them and for them, realizing that it was the only *emotion* that he had ever truly felt, to return that hate and exterminate him just as they had originally intended. (249─250; emphasis added)

He could not empty himself of the only emotion inside him, hatred. The arrogant unsatisfied idol wants to exterminate his worshipers from the world because they do not understand his needs. Grenouille mentions that "the only one who has ever recognized it [the perfume] for its true beauty is me, because I created it myself. And at the same time, I'm the only one that it cannot enslave. I am the only person for whom it is meaningless" (260). Living all his life in the margin of society, and even in the margin of the emotional system, he cannot think moderately. Grenouille becomes conscious that people do not worship him but they worship his "counterfeit aura, his fragrant disguise, and his stolen perfume" (249). Richard Gray argues that Grenouille realizes smells "as unavoidable, but it is precisely for this reason that he considers olfactory sensations the most effective medium for influencing and manipulating sensate creatures. On the basis of this recognition, Grenouille formulates his olfactory program for tyranny" (493). He is aware that odor is "the brother of breath" and people inhale it to control their hearts. He knows the connection between scent and love, and he wants to be the supreme god of scent.

The amount of emotions provoked by the effect of Grenouille's perfume is massive. Grenouille could not differentiate between his thoughts and feelings because he is immersed in the world of feelings. He thinks that he is the idol who is able to eradicate these worshippers from the earth and be "the new Messiah" or "the Supreme Emperor before kings and emperors" in Notre-Dame (159). He thinks that it may be possible that people on the parade grounds have felt what he feels when he smells the floods of odor of the girl playing in the garden. "Then he thought no more, for thinking was not his strong point" (261), which indicates that he is more engrossed in a world of feelings. Nonetheless, he just wants to die and is driven by his emotions again. He dies at age of twenty-eight at the hands of cannibals who ironically "were uncommonly proud" that they "had done something out of love" for the first time (263). He does not want to live in isolation or with human beings. Being in the margin of life suits Grenouille more than being in the top of it or, at least, living in the middle as an ordinary person. Accordingly, he cannot be assigned in a high level of self-differentiation nor a moderate one. It never satisfies him to be an idol admired or worshipped. Instead, he is the fatalistic and existential "idol" of hate, self-alienation, and marginalization.

Conclusion

The marginalized idol, Grenouille, is the prisoner of his "inferior" and ambivalent identity. He is the focus of the contradictory and terrifying world scented with fragrance yet exuding violence and cruelty. The urgent desire to search for the lost

identity, which can be realized by attacking the identities of others, is overrun at the end by his divine smell as an idol. The ideology of contempt and inferiority is the desire of the unlimited hero to prove his existence and non-existence at the same time. Feelings of inferiority have delayed his sense of heroism and intensified Grenouille's anxiety, emptiness and self-contempt. Grenouille proves his presence after being skilled in perfume manufacturing. However, his abused outcast spirit is unable to overcome the hatred and frustration ensuing from the lack of having a special smell differentiating him from others. This feeling of marginality in scents gives him a constant sense of nothingness. Because he does not have a differentiated smell (despite his attempts to do so), Grenouille does not pay attention to values, ethics, or religion. He feels neither pain or remorse nor hope or recognition of laws. Surprisingly, Grenouille has an exaggerated and short-lived form of self-importance in his divine-like new fragrance.

The ultimate fragrance represents his salvation yet his false identity. Thus, the idea of inferiority remains the dominant end of the "(anti)hero" who lived it and who finally died at the hands of other drunken, homeless and marginalized others. Within half an hour, Grenouille "had disappeared utterly from the earth" (263). Grenouille's life is as evanescent as his scent. He is a perfume addict, a murderer, a cave monster, and above all the undifferentiated marginalized idol uncontrolled by moral constraints. He is at the low scale of self-differentiation because he lives in a feeling world rather than a thinking one. He is emotionally needy and reactive to others although he appears emotionless and independent. His life energy is consumed in searching for love that he pretends to be uncaring about, and his anxiety is high as he does not feel comfortable except during the years in the cave before he discovers that he does not possess a scent. He does not have the ability to differentiate between his thoughts and feelings, and most of his life decisions in idolizing himself are based on what he feels right, as when he decides to live alone in a mountain. He murders twenty-five teenage girls in Grasse in order to own their perfume and, consequently, to make an unprecedented perfume for himself. Kerr and Bowen mention that "very poorly differentiated people, if stressed sufficiently, may murderously strike out at others, particularly at those on whom they are most dependent" (101). Grenouille is one of those undifferentiated people who violently strike out at others to possess the formula for his perfume.

When it is discovered that he is a murderer and on his way to execution, Grenouille wears the superhuman perfume that he makes from his victims to delude the crowd and convince them of his innocence. Furthermore, the crowd of people is overwhelmed by emotions to extent of participating in a huge orgy. In *Perfume*,

"Odors have a power of persuasion stronger than that of words, appearances, emotions or will. The persuasive power of an odor cannot be fended off, it enters into us like breath into our lungs, it fills us up, imbues us totally. There is no remedy for it" (86─87). The entire crowd of Grasse could not resist the beauty of this undifferentiated marginalized idol who becomes their celebrated idol. In his decision to leave Grasse, Grenouille's hatred increases, especially when he realizes that people worship him only by the effect of his perfume. Accordingly, he gives up his emotional attachment to those people and aims at Paris to die there. Kerr and Bowen remark that "when stressed into emotional disequilibrium, the dysfunction tends to be chronic and severe. The dysfunction may be physical, emotional, or social" (101). Grenouille is emotionally unstable and is socially dysfunctional. He ends his life journey at the fish market where his life story had started. Kerr and Bowen add that at "the extreme lower end of the scale are people who have given up on relationships. Typically, they are in various types of institutions or are existing marginally in society" (101). Grenouille gives up his relationship with his emotional system two times: first, when he cuts himself off physically and emotionally in a cave for years, and second when he decides to return to Paris where he finally pours the whole bottle of his magical perfume on himself to be eaten by criminals who claim that they did so "out of love." Because feelings have no role in an enlightened rational world centered on reason, Grenouille remains the marginalized, undifferentiated, and self-annihilating idol.

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Richard Wagner vs Klaus Mann: An Artist-Man Image in the Context of the Faustian Theme in *Mephisto*

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Abstract The article studies the concept of an artist-man as an artistic personality in the philosophical aesthetics introduced by Richard Wagner, based on the idea of the synthesis of the arts, and its transformation in the aesthetics of modernism. The purpose of the research is to analyze the concept of Wagner, provide rationalization for its connection with the Faustian theme and consider its interpretation in the novel *Mephisto* by Klaus Mann. So, the purpose stipulates the usage of methodological basis of the study including cultural and historical, historical and literary, comparative, philosophical and aesthetic research methods. The Wagnerian image of an artistic person and the idea of the synthesis of the arts gain momentum at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and get a second wind in the artistic legacy and theoretical works of the famous Russian symbolist poet Alexander Blok, who developed the concept of Wagner. According to Wagner, the idea of the synthesis of the arts resulted in the idea of creating the image of a free person capable of comprehending, renewing and transforming the world, and thus revealed a connection with the Faustian theme, vital during this period. The essence of an artist-man, establish himself in his creativity, is considered in the article in terms of the development of the Dionysian principle as a primitive creative energy, aimed at creating and transforming the world and man with the help of art. Wagner's concept is realized in an invertible way in the novel by Klaus Mann, where the image of an artist-man is identified with the image of Mephistopheles as the embodiment of a destructive principle. The article analyzes the degrading artistic principle on the basis of the image of protagonist. Mann's interpretation of the Wagner concept and the Faustian theme enables to conclude that the modernist literature of the 1930s is accentuated by the idea of the degeneration of the artistic creative Faustian

principle, its transformation into the demonic principle. So, the idea of transforming the world, implemented in the state reorganization headed by the totalitarian Nazi government, has got the features of the apocalypse.

Key words image of an artist-man; artistry; the Faustian theme; Apollonian and Dionysian; image of Mephistopheles.

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Introduction

The last decade has seen the greater interest in the image of an artist-man as the scholars tend to appeal to the problems of symbolism in literature as well as to such phenomena as artistry, artistic epoch, artistic consciousness and behavior, etc. It is stipulated not only by desire to explore the history of the problem but also by the specific interpretation of the image of an artist-man in the literary works of the 20th century. We can find a number of works covering the problems connected with studying the aesthetic concept of "an artistic man" introduced by Richard Wagner and its impact on symbolism in literature (N. Kravtsov, I. Kondakov, A. Zherebin); the specific features of the image of an artist-man in the works of A. Blok (Ye. Chugunova); the phenomenon of the artistic era and its decline (V. Kantor), etc.

The image of an artist-man, whose "cultural background" originates in Richard Wagner's works in the early 19th century and gains its momentum in the aesthetics of Russian symbolism at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries (A. Blok, A. Bely), played a significant role in the development of the Faustian theme in the literature of the 20th century, revealing the connection between the Wagnerian concept of "artistic personality" and Faustian aesthetics. The purpose of the research is to analyze the concept of Wagner, provide rationalization for its connection with the Faustian theme and consider its interpretation in the novel *Mephisto* by Klaus Mann. So, the purpose stipulates the usage of methodological basis of the study including cultural and historical, historical and literary, comparative, philosophical and aesthetic research methods.

Wagner's Image of an Artist-Man: The Artistic Energy as the Energy of Faust

Wagner's aesthetics had the artist-man raised as the embodiment of the synthesis of the arts which stipulated the idea of unifying the world, its transformation and

renewal. It should be noted that Wagner appealed to the concept of the synthesis of the arts in the 1840s when being self-absorbed and fancied with the "tranquility" of biedermeier he deeply felt the problem of unifying and renewing scattered Germany resulted in the burst of the revolutionary moods of 1848-1849. In 1849, the concept of synthesis of the arts and the type of "an artist-man" as the driving force for its embodiment is developed by Wagner in the articles *Art and Revolution* and *Art-Work of the Future*. According to the researchers, the same decade saw the best early Wagner's work — the symphonic overture *Faust* (1840), which reveals the philosophical pathos of Goethe's tragedy.

In this regard the idea of synthesis of the arts and Wagner's appeal to the image of an artist-man were considered, to a certain extent, to be a return to the aesthetics of romantic universalism. The image of an artist-man depicted an artist having gone beyond the limits of empirical reality which is "an aesthetic man" who came instead of "a utilitarian man." According to Wagner, "Artistic Man can only fully content himself by uniting every branch of Art into the *common* Artwork" (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 75). "An artistic man" is a strong, beautiful person, straining to the free dignity of Man, embodying the world aspirations for the pure humanity. He is the one to whom the world belongs as an eternal, inexhaustible source of the highest delights (Wagner, *Art and Revolution* 54–55). The irresistible attraction of an artist-man to an intuitive comprehension of the secret laws of life allows us to consider it as the embodiment of absolute reality, in the pursuit of which the deep essence of the human spirit is revealed.

The image of an artist-man was presumed to contain Wagner's intention to ontologize the artistic reality. A. Zherebin says that "Wagner sought to abolish the differentiation between the art and life in the name of the transformation of a man and the world. A synthetic art appears to him as a means of a global synthesis of all phenomena of life, the creation of a certain integral style of culture, in which the "aesthetic sacredness" (Thomas Mann) should become the focus of spiritual self-determination of the people and the individual" (6). While considering the type of an artist-man as the embodiment of the "self-valuable manifestation of the inventive spirit" (Krivtsun 156), Wagner intuitively connected the aesthetics of artistry with the Faustian aesthetics. The idea of synthesis of the arts presupposed the creation of a free perfect man, striving to comprehend and transform the world. Therefore, we believe that the characters of Wagner's most fundamental operas (The Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser, Wotan) are regarded by the researchers as the characters of the Faustian type: "They embody the idea of being, the all by nature, but the one realized in an infinite variety of forms, which contains both creative and

destructive principles. Their moral development discloses the ambivalent features of the Faustian reflection as a result of semantic development: from the folk tales to Goethe's interpretation" (Babiy 14). We believe that "Goethe's interpretation" should be completed with "Klinger's one" that depicts Faust tirelessly striving for exploring the mystery of the world which is similar to Wagner's characters as well as to the image of an artist-man: "Pride and untamable impetuosity of mind and in the constant workings of a heated imagination, which was never satisfied with the present <…> He soon felt the narrow limits of humanity, and endeavoured to burst their bonds" (Klinger 26). So, here we have the image of an artist-man as the Faustian spirit harmoniously inherent and the artistry is conceived as a character-forming quality of the Faustian nature, ensuring the integrity of the image of the legendary character.

An artist-man is "a man as a single entity" shown in the concept of Wagner was the image of a person, who "perceived himself as an element of superpersonal being, embodied the synthesis of the ultimate and infinite and realized the idea of a connection with the world entity in creativity" (Zherebin 8). This interpretation enriched and deepened the essence of the Faustian principle. "The synthesis of the ultimate and infinite" suggested overcoming the romantic gap between the ideal and the reality. The artistry coming "not from its dual nature, but from the fullness of the flawed consciousness," according to V. Arslanov (247), provided the "eternal image" with the harmonious wholeness of the spirit and, pushing the boundaries of empirical reality, aroused the desire for an alluring infinity.

The motif of longing for the infinite, peculiar to the Faustian soul, found its realization in the works of Aleksander Blok. The poet believed that it was the greatest essence of the artist-man image which, according to the researchers, was finally completed in the image of Gaetan (*Rose and the Cross*, 1912), but, in our opinion, it was semantically realized in the aesthetic views of Aleksander Blok. The poet considered the artist-man image to disclose a person audient to "a distant call" of the human aspiration for the "desired and unknown," for achieving "the impossible," "a melody that resounds in memory, invoking and summoning up a call" (Blok, *Rose and the Cross: To Staging* 527):

The world's limitless ecstasy
Is given to the singer's heart.
To the vain road of destiny
The ocean calls him to depart.

Surrender to impossible dreams,
For what is fated shall be done… (Blok, *Rose and the Cross* 59)

According to Blok, an artist-man "yearns for changes waiting for something, starts to explore the ways, tries to tune into the movement, which will soon grab him and lead uncontrollably to the goal set" (Blok, *Rose and the Cross: Note Explaining* 536). This movement disclosed the ability of an artist-man "*to live voraciously and act* in the new era of whirlwinds and storms, which was fiercely sought by the mankind" (Blok, *The Collapse* 115).

The impulse of the artist-man to reach the infinite, in fact, reveals the Faustian intention to the spiritual transgression which is the desire to go beyond one's limits and to go outside the world, to abandon the common norms and rules, traditions and prohibitions. The scholars believe that the instrument for the transgression is an artistic act as a fusion of the holy and sacrilegious (Mankovskaya 477), which opens the demonic side of the artistic personality. The demonic principle inherent in the Faustian spirit is a manifestation of creative energy. It is known that when Goethe considered Faust as a demoniac character, he "refused to accept the demonic principle" of Mephistopheles: "No. Mephistopheles is too negative being; The demonic can be seen only in positive energy" (Eckerman 567). The demonic principle, reaching the peak of spiritual tensions in the artistic act, contributes to the intuitive comprehension of the sacramental life, makes it possible to explore the fundamental principle of being, thereby revealing the affinity with the Dionysian element: O. Krivtsun says that "The demonic <…> is an analogue of the Greek mysteries, the personification of the Dionysian connection with the primordial element, with the "initial chaos" <…> Dionisyism, according to the scholar, appears as experiencing the artistic (168). In this respect the Wagnerian image of the artist-man was further developed into the image of the Dionysian artist created by Nietzsche. The Dionysian artistry made the sensual experience of life more tangible, reaching the affectation, when "the sensual is self-valuable and goes beyond all reason" (Krivtsun 164), creating a situation of exceeding the limits and thus developing the ability to oppose "the ego" to the world. When the confrontation prevails, the artistic "turns into a self-sufficient beginning which reigns in all other properties of reality" (Krivtsun 164) and takes on the form of an ardent romantic rebellion as a state of mind peculiar to the Faustian nature. We believe that it was the state, caused by a passionate Faust's hunger for grabbing the mystery of the universe from God, which allowed making a deal with the devil.

Meanwhile, the absolutization of the Dionysian destroyed the integrity of an

image, which was ensured by the balance of the sensible and rational principles and revealed the very essence of the artist-man. According to Wagner, "the whole artistic man, who proclaims in the arts of Dance and Tone the physical longing become a longing of the soul. His longing for artistic commune gives birth to Thought, the highest and most conditioned faculty of artistic man (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 134, 138).

Wagner harmonized the interaction of the sensible and rational principles (the Apollonian / the Dionysian) in the image of an artist-man in the attempt to create the ideal of a perfect personality capable of transforming and renewing the world. Extrapolating the artistic instinct of transforming a person to changing the world, Wagner develops the idea of creating a new – aesthetic – reality, in effect, implementing the program of the world revolution at the level of art. Thus, according to A. Zherebin, "the socio-political problems in the concept of Wagner are seen through the problems of aesthetics" (6). The artist-man is called for becoming the center of the renewed world and the active energy of the transformative processes. Wagner focuses on the idea of transforming the world as the primary purpose of the artistic personality, thereby, he renders the Faustian aspirations: "An artistic person<…> rules Nature to his own artistic needs and bids her serve his highest purpose (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 158); "An artistic person" is "a wonderful and powerful person to whom the whole world belongs" (Wagner, *Art and Revolution* 54). The idea of a new life creator with the features of the Renaissance God-like man will be later realized in the image of "a superman" by Nietzsche which was considered as a collective individual identified with the people in the same way as an artist-man.

The ideal of a perfect person who is "an artistic man," "capable (according to Wagner) to feel with perfect clearness its earlier indefinite presage of the Highest, transformed thereby to godlike consciousness" (Wagner, *A Pilgrimage* 42), resembled the image of the demiurge that was noted by the Russian critics and triggered the total rejection of the Symbolists. Thus, S. Durylin in the work *Richard Wagner and Russia* (1913) describes Wagner as "an artist who usurped the divine power. He, the demiurge, is the supreme god of the world of aesthetic reality created by him, for whom the boundaries of art coincide with the boundaries of the universe" (9). In this regard, the transformation, according to Wagner, is not only a necessary condition for a creative life, but also the ability of a person "to rise above his fated dependence on the world will in the act of artistic activity." Thanks to this capacity, the artist-man "attains the perfection of the universal personality, full of the cosmic life content but not because he accepts the game of the world will, as he

overcomes it" (Zherebin 16).

The moments of close interconnection and mutual interaction between the images of the artist-man and Faust allow us saying that the image of Wagner's artist-man is based on the rethinking of a well-known cultural archetype. Artistry appears as an inherent quality of the Faustian nature settling the internal conflicts and ensuring the integrity and harmony of the Faustian character, in which creative and destructive, sensual and rational, contemplative and active principles are balanced. Separation of the artistic, its transformation from a free art play "without any desire to manipulate someone's consciousness" (Arslanov 249) into histrionics leads to the disintegration of the Faustian image, in which the spiritual component disappears, being substituted for pure pragmatics.

The close interconnection of the artistic and Faustian principles, which marked a kind of intersection of the cultural destinies of two images, reaches the peak of its aesthetic and ontological manifestation in the first half of the twentieth century, when the "artist-man" and Faust, in fact, become the symbols of the era, and the Faustian myth—"a precedent text" (N. Pakhsaryan 136). S. Klemchak points out the affinity of the artistic and Faustian principles, claiming that the 20th century saw "the image of Faust" drifting "towards the artist-man <…>, uniting the images of the poet and conqueror into a single one" (163). It is also symbolic that the scholars offered to interpret this period as an "era of artistry," as its prosperity at the beginning of the century and the decline in the 1920s-1930s coincides chronologically and conceptually with the period of the last outbreak and decline of the Faustian culture. Thus, not only the crossing points are revealed but also the general tendencies of the development of Faustianism and artistry are seen (including the prerequisites for explosion and decline), when the impulse of transforming the world and the aspiration for transforming a man, converging, intersect in a single point.

Considering the first twenty years of the 20th century as a period of incredible spiritual rise, the flowering art and science, described by N. Berdyaev as a "cultural renaissance," V. Kantor focuses on the active creative energy in art and science in Russia and in Western Europe, which led to the incredible discoveries in the life of mankind (126). It was a period when the artistry was felt as a divine creative energy aimed at reaching harmony with the world. R. Bazhanova notes that "the artistry appeared as an artistic and aesthetic way of man's taking up a multiple position in the Being which provided the great and complete Presence in the world as a unique way not only "to dissipate" in the flow of the Being, taking its forms (Proteus beginning of a man), but also as a unique opportunity to contrast one's

human (corporeal, first of all) essence with the changing time and space of the universe. Meanwhile, it is as the possibility which activates the Dionysian principle and allows getting one's own changing and multiple human essence in the disguise of the Other (Bazhanova 11). In this regard the phenomenon of artistry solved the problem of individual freedom, later transformed into the idea of liberating the mankind, which marked "the inevitability of a huge number of people reaching the forefront of the history and the artistry turning into a mass phenomenon. According to the scholars, it preconditioned its decline in the following decades (it should be noted that at the same time there is a transformation of Faustianism into mass ideology, to a large extent caused by the transition of the Faustian principle into the form of collective individuality).

The 1920–1930s marked the period when the Faustian spiritual energy turned into pragmatism and artistry as a creative potential into histrionics, a gallery play. This tendency was once predicted by Nietzsche: "the most interesting and maddest ages always emerge, in which 'the actors', all types of actors, are the real masters" (216). These "maddest ages" brought about a phenomenon when the great actors, so called "the transformers of the world" described by V. Kantor as "self-appointed," "the people behind pseudonyms" appeared on the historical stage. Among them we can find Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Hitler as well as Mussolini, Franco and etc[1]. In this situation, the very essence of a play as a productive form of cultural development was undermined.

The play, the most significant feature of which, according to Johan Huizinga, is its temporary completeness ("Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is "over"), "now <…> never *ends*, and therefore it is not a true play" (Huizinga, *In the Shadow* 332). Artistry transformed into a gallery play turns into "a false seeming, a masking of political purposes behind the illusion of genuine play-forms" (Huizinga, *Homo ludens* 211).

Transformation of the Artistic Principle in the Novel by Klaus Mann

The nature of the pestilent metamorphoses of artistry was revealed along with the Faustian theme in *Mephisto. Novel of a Career* (*Mephisto, Roman einer Karriere*, 1936) by Klaus Mann, where social and political processes are considered through the prism of deteriorating cultural and aesthetic phenomena, artistry and

1 It is noteworthy that these people felt that they are the actors. In one of the last interviews, Mussolini said: "Yes, madam, I am finished. My star has fallen. I work and I try, yet know that all is but a farce <…> I await the end of the tragedy and—strangely detached from everything—I do not feel any more an actor. I feel I am the last of spectators" (Nelson).

Faustianism. Stressing the relevance of his artistic research Klaus Mann wrote: "Was it worth writing a novel about such a prominent figure? Yes. A play actor became an embodiment, a symbol of the regime which is histrionic to the core, deeply mendacious and unviable" (Mann, *The Turning Point* 134).

Two ways of artistry realization — the genuine and the imaginary— are mentioned in the epigraph of the novel taken from Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship by Goethe: "All weaknesses of a man could be forgotten for an actor, but none of an actor could be forgotten for a man" (Mann, *Mephisto* 3). The theme of acting determines the type of the artistic space of the novel as a scenic space embodied in the image of a theater city where a historical play is on the stage. The thin line between the genuine and the imaginary, traditional for the theatrical stage, going back to the aesthetics of the prehistoric theater (Freidenberg), according to the author's intention, becomes visible so the artistic space of the novel is divided into two spheres represented in the image of two theater cities—Hamburg and Berlin—each is the embodiment of the genuine (Hamburg) and the imaginary (Berlin) artistry principles.

The image of the theater is a meaning-making dominant of the urban space in the novel. The Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, embodied the holistic images of two cities, are seen in the novel as a reflection of the historical and cultural processes and the social and political life of Germany, with the Wagnerian idea of the theater as a universal semantic space where the artistic humanity is formed and developed. As A. Zherebin notes this space allows "a theater using the functions of all public institutions, taking the place of the parliament and the court, the science and production" (12).

The difference between the genuine and imaginary artistry is not only connected with the space (different cities), but also with the time, symbolically pointing to the change of the historical epochs, namely, before and after the Nazis coming to power as the history of Hendrik Höfgen's career begins in Hamburg in the 1920s and is transferred to Berlin in the 1930s.

The image of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus of the 1920s in Hamburg introduced Wagner's idea of creating a single artistic humanity based on the aesthetic activity prevailing over the utilitarian one. Klaus Mann emphasizes the preservation of the classical repertoire in the theater, despite the fact that it is not reasonable in economic terms as it significantly reduces the revenue. The idea of forming the aesthetic humanity is compliant with the artistic ideology of the theater, being the main principle of Oscar H. Kroge, a director.

The image of Kroge whose external appearance coincided with the internal

content: "A speaking face, high wrinkled forehead, once thick white hair thinning out and his kind eyes, full of wisdom, hidden behind the wire-rimmed glasses set in gold" (Mann, *Mephisto* 38), complied with Wagner's vision of an artist-man: "Through the expression of the eye itself, which directly meets the eye of the beholder, man is able to impart to the latter not only the feelings of the heart, but even the characteristic activity of the brain; and the more distinctly can the outer man express the inner, the higher does he show his rank as an artistic being" (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 91).

The theater unites under one roof the representatives of all social layers in the city and the advocates of various, sometimes opposing, political views. They are the communists (Otto Ulrichs) and "the sympathizing" (Kroge, Hedda von Herzfeld), the national socialists (Hans Miklas, Knurr) and others. Theater was the place where very diverse people, being in love with the art, turned into "the humanity" as all disagreements vanished, jealousy and resentment, atrocity and tyranny of the director Höfgen are more than outweighed by the successful premiere.

In "the theatrical" vision, the city was represented as an artistic space, *created*, as Höfgen was obsessed with the idea of conquering, of mesmerizing the Hamburg audience, of being ingratiating at any price and thereby gaining the power over Hamburg, so it was in Hamburg where Höfgen was formed as an artist-man.

The "Hamburg" period of Höfgen's creative work is marked by the desire of the character to reach the heights of acting. His talent is tremendous, multifaceted and developed by the urge of the artist-man "to expand the individual man, to whom he would address himself, to the associate manhood of full publicity <…>, broadens out his own particular being, by the portrayal of an individual personality not his own, to a universally human being" (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 193). The novel *Mephisto* present this universally human being principle in the image of Hamlet as a role accessing the skills of an actor, testing the authenticity of artistry as well as the ability to achieve a high ideal[1*]. The author's approval of Höfgen having coped with Hamlet is, therefore, the most valuable criteria for the artistic genius.

Klaus Mann often focuses on the brilliant play of Höfgen, his omnipresence, his sophisticated talent of transformation, especially in the first chapters of the novel. The way how Höfgen plays on the stage allows us supposing that Mann's

1 It is interesting that Wagner saw the high level of artistic skills in the role of Faust, not of Hamlet: "Should it ever come to a general master of our actors and a sifting-out of the unfit, I would give to each the role he might select from *Faust*, and make his retention at the Theatre depend on how he took it. This would be the test of the actors' originality, the converse of that proposed above for the originality of the pieces" (Wagner, *Actors* 183).

image of an artist is really close to Wagner's artistic person, as Höfgen during "Hamburg" period is undoubtedly able to become "the subject and the matter of his own artistic treatment" (Wagner, *The Art-Work* 156), was perceived as the divine image of an artist on the stage:

> He could be elegant as well as tragic. His smile was bitchy, but a wrinkle over the bridge of nose was full of anguish. He could charm with his perky wit, he could strike with a powerfully raised chin, with a speech full of imperatives and a nervous gesture full of pride. He could touch with a humble helplessly wandering gaze, with a tender confusion seemed to belong to the other world. He was noble and mean, arrogant and tender, harsh and depressed—the one demanded by the repertoire <⋯> His brilliant, knowing no limits, defiant reincarnation is simply brilliant! (Mann, Mephisto 106–107, 277)

This period brought about the brilliant talent of Höfgen multiplied by titanic diligence and ambition. He works sixteen hours a day, obsessed with a desire of keeping on self-development, self-transfiguration and with the idea of having absolute power over the crowd. These qualities could remind Faustian longing for the infinite, the urge for endless search, a boast about being solitary and at the same time the reminiscence of the eternal motive for power over the world: "He felt like a winner when he had the opportunity to break away from the public, to step into a bright light and shine. He felt really safe only being above, face-to-face with the crowd existing only to bow to him, to admire him, to applaud him" (Mann, *Mephisto* 180). Being worshipped by the crowd for Höfgen meant transforming the public by means of his powerful artistic rebirth. Wagner noted that "this powerful, nay, this despotic effect can necessarily be never equaled by any other art," thus "the highest grade of the effect of the sublime was here attained" (Wagner, *Actors* 161).

Achieving the effect of artistic transformation and impact on the public was not possible only provided with the acting mastery and the laws of the theater followed, in other words, applying only "Apollonian principle." It was necessary to have a natural, inborn artistic principle being the source of creative energy set in the image of a spontaneous, instinctive, sensual Dionysian soul. Höfgen found the source of instinctive creative energy, fueled by his talent, in Juliette, a mistress and a dance teacher.

The image of dark skinned Juliette Martens in her novel is the personification of a primitive natural principle, felt even in her stage name, Princess Tebab, perceived by Juliet herself as her real name, as well as in the name "Black Venus"

given to her by Höfgen. Primitiveness is also laid down in the basis of her artistic essence as Juliette is a step dancer and a step teacher, the art genetically coming from the ancient tradition of the African rhythmic ritual dance. Klaus Mann focuses on Juliette's appearance pointing to the savage, often animal essence: "strong, fierce cheekbones," "barbarous head," "agile, violent and intelligent eyes," "flat nose" (Mann, Mephisto 89-90), "muscles of chocolate legs" (Mann, Mephisto 93), "open ferocious mouth with dark, cracked lips and bloody tongue" (Mann, Mephisto 104). She speaks, "turning the eyes wildly," "a gruff, barking voice" (Mann, Mephisto 205), so he creates a portrait of the character as a visual image of the Dionysian principle, the original artistic energy:

> Her face resembled the terrible mask of an unknown god - this god reigns in a dense forest, in a secluded place; as if grinning and gazing he demands the humans to sacrifice. And he is given those sacrifices, with blood flowing at his feet, he sniffs a familiar sweet smell, slightly swinging his regal body in the rhythm of a mad tam-tam. And he is surrounded by his loyal performing an enthusiastic dance. Scattering their arms and legs, jumping, swaying, staggering. Their roar turns into a voluptuous moan, and now they are suffocating, and now they are falling, falling down at the feet of a black deity, they love, they admire, because they can love and admire only those whom they sacrificed the most expensive which is their blood. (Mann, Mephisto 97–98)

M. Voloshin considered a dance as body liberation and noted "what can be more beautiful than a human face, reflecting faithfully and harmoniously those waves of moods and feelings rising from the depths of a soul? Our body should have become our face <…> the body should have reflected the spirit. A dance is the same sacred ecstasy of the body as a prayer being the ecstasy of a soul <…> Out of words and out of any tools a man become an instrument in a dance, a song and a creator, and his whole body sounds like a timbre of voice." According to Voloshin, dance is "an expurgatory mystery" where "the rhythm rises from the very depth of the unconscious human essence." The cosmic and physiological merge in a dance, feelings and logics, reason and cognition come together (394). It was in the ecstasy of dance, when the image of the artist-man appeared considered as such in Wagnerian interpretation. Juliette's dance lessons awakened the natural cosmic principle in Höfgen's soul, being a source of genuinely artistic spirit, it spiritualized the talent, filled the mastery of Höfgen's play with a higher meaning

and, ultimately, made the public's heart miss a beat. That is why Höfgen was completely sincere when he repeated to his Black Venus that he owed his success entirely to her. Communication of Juliette and Höfgen resulted in the highest degree of tension, affect, irrational demonic impulse, which, according to O. Krivtsun, can produce something extremely significant, which can make you face with the primary music of being, with the inmost fire of creativity (168).

Under the circumstances the image of Juliette took on a symbolic meaning in the novel. In fact, she lost the status of an independent character turning into an organic component of the image of Höfgen, thus, she was the aesthetic dominant of the image of the artist Höfgen, *the shadow of the Dionysian artist* inseparable from him allowing the character taking stock of him, as only with Juliette, "together with her, only with her, he forced himself to be sincere. He did not hide anything from her, even his own shame" (Mann, *Mephisto* 206). But what is the most important is that this "Dionysian shadow" fueled the divine fire of creativity in the artist's soul. In this regard we should note that the comparison with Dionysus emphasized by Klaus Mann while describing Höfgen's scenic performances can be met in each chapter covering "the Hamburg period" of the character's life:

> He nodded imperatively to the conductor, and when he waved his wand again, he began to dance. No, it was a bald gentleman in a gray, a bit shabby everyday suit any longer! What a shameless, exciting transformation! In a broad daylight! Isn't he Dionysus, the god of wine, throwing out his hands and feet in ecstasy?.. Voluptuous moans flew out of parted lips. <⋯> Hendrik gave a sign to the music to stop, he was already standing in a careless posture, put a monocle into his eye. So, no one would believe that this gentleman, looking at a piece of paper with a critical eye, shaked in the Dionysian trance two minutes ago. (Mann, Mephisto 233–234)

Höfgen's multifaceted talent was realized not only on the stage. Let's consider the fact that the face of an actor-man is seen through the divine face of the artist at the end of this scene because the artist Höfgen was as such not only on the stage, but also in life. Acting as a behavior style, being an integral quality of the protagonist, indicates the unity of the aesthetic and ontological spheres of being in Höfgen's consciousness. F. Stepun in his work *The Nature of the Actor's Soul* noted that "the most peculiar feature of genuine artistry is an irresistible longing for both reality and dream as two equivalent hemispheres of life" (58). In this regard the behavior of Höfgen was not the result of being aimed at benefiting, but an artistic world

perception as such, the impossibility of being different. Paradoxically, it was the quality that made Höfgen attractive to the others because it communicated the complexity and mysteriousness of his character, laying in the impossibility to be determined, "*Where does this person have the hypocrisy begin and where does it end?*" (Mann, *Mephisto* 240). Sebastian caught he artistic essence of Höfgen quite accurately: "It seems to me that I understand him. He always lies, and he never lies. His falsity is his authenticity, it sounds difficult, but it is absolutely simple. He believes in everything, and he does not believe in anything. He is an artist" (Mann, *Mephisto* 240). In this case the constantly changing masks in the life of the protagonist often told about the desire to run away from the problem, about the unwillingness to resolve a difficult life situation rather than about the perverse disposition.

It is important to note that the author's stance to the idea of Höfgen being prone to permanent reincarnations in the novel is extremely negative. Klaus Mann sees the falsity in the transformations of the character, with no longer a human face but the mask of a comedian, which is realized by means of adding an ironic or grotesque detail to the portrait casting doubt about the authenticity of Höfgen as an artist. Thus, the portrait of the character often has two perspectives; the first one demonstrates the one, who Höfgen wants to appear, the second – who he is in fact, according to the author:

> These gray and green chatoyant eyes reminded the precious stones inflicting misery... All ladies and mostly all men found Hendrik Höfgen <⋯> pretty handsome. His deportment was restrained, as he realized his irresistibility, his movements were greatly planned and his tail coat was expensive. It was a way to distract attention from the fact that he was obviously fat, with fatty hips. (Mann, Mephisto 26)

> Höfgen's hands <⋯> with their clumsiness refuted the anguishing temples. The back of the palms was too wide with red hair. The fat fingers were rather long and the nails were square and not so clean. It was these nails that gave the hands something ignoble, almost repulsive. (Mann, Mephisto 75)

The key details of the portrait, frequently emphasized in the course of narration, play a major role in the author's interpretation of the image of Höfgen, increasing the gap between the poles of the binary opposition "to be / to seem." So, "*fatty hips*" and "*not so clean nails*" destroy the seemingly demonic image of the character;

"*anguishing temples*" and "*protruded chin*" lose their greatness next to "*chatoyant eyes*," which looked like "*precious stones*." Comparing the character's eyes with precious stones is of special importance, in fact, they become an artistic detail which could be met throughout the novel. A vivid metaphor describing the portrait of Höfgen is appealing "the eyes are rare precious stones inflicting misery <…> frightened" in combination with the evaluating epithet "pretty handsome." The key words "Beauty (handsome)," "Precious," "Fright" at the beginning of the novel contain a subtle allusion to Charles Baudelaire's *Hymn to Beauty*, thus, weaving the motif of *The Flowers of Evil* into the narrative, which later will be felt at full strength, becoming, to some extent, the meaningful one in the relations between Höfgen and Juliette:

> Do you come from Heaven or rise from the abyss, Beauty?
> You walk upon corpses which you mock, O Beauty!
> Of your jewels Horror is not the least charming… (Baudelaire 74)

The well-known words of Baudelaire, which interpret the dual essence of beauty, in fact, tending to stipulate its diabolic nature[1*], draw attention to the moment of close interrelation and reciprocity of the Divine and Diabolical principles as the next transformation of the artistic spirit. At the beginning of the novel Höfgen recites the French poet to Juliette, however, the portrait of the protagonist mentioned in the prologue proves the kinship of Höfgen and the Baudelaire demonic anti-ideal of beauty, for example, "eyes like precious stones," "frightened" and ability to "wade through slaughter" repeatedly stressed by the author as the inevitably interconnected qualities of Höfgen's nature, in which the external beauty manifests the inner mental ugliness.

It is necessary to emphasize that out of all the properties of precious stones (shine, radiance, transparency, etc.), the author emphasizes only iridescence and shimmering, in other words those qualities, meaning and figurativeness of which are really close *to the image of the game*. Thus, "the mirror of the soul" of the protagonist reflects his deep essence embodying the constant transformations, transfiguration, masks changing, i.e. the game that places artistry on the verge of histrionics, comedy, when the artistic ecstasy of transformation as Wagner`s "a sacrifice of his personality" boils down to a change in facial expression, which

1 The scholars state that *Hymn to Beauty* is one of the brightest examples of Baudelaire's diabolism being the attempt to state that the Devil is the progenitor of all kinds of beauty, especially female (Vitkovsky 305).

is expressed in rather vivid, emphasizing falsity, ironic strokes to the portrait of Höfgen in the novel: "A timid theatre staff faced a face of a noble, sophisticated tyrant, however, slightly resembling to the face of an aging and irritated governess" (Mann, *Mephisto* 81) etc.

It should be noted that one of the greatest examples of the author's modality in the novel is shown not only in the image of Hendrik Höfgen. The biased stance of the writer can be found in relation towards the rest of the characters in the novel, whose portraits clearly reflect the socio-political and ethical priorities of Klaus Mann. Such visible examples of the author's likes and dislikes, at times turning into the excessively hard-line author's stance towards Mephisto's characters, is likely to be stipulated by the nature of the novel as a genre, making a text be of a journalistic style at some point, a text with recognizable prototypes. The prototypes in the novel are not just Klaus Mann's contemporaries. On the one hand, these were the Nazi politicians the writer rejected and felt disgust to, and, on the other hand, his friends and relatives, famous theatrical figures being his close acquaintances and those sinking deep into his mind[1*]. All of them could be found on the pages of the novel and the artistic images still preserve the joy and pain experienced. In this regard the portrait characteristics reflect not even subjective but rather intimate personal view of the writer, the image of Hendrik Höfgen could fit into.

On the other hand, evidence of the unique author's stance in the details of Höfgen's portrait can be considered as foreshadowing the future transformations of the artist. In this respect many portrait features of the character reflect the transformation of artistic imagery which is realized in the actualization of the

1 Thus, the image of Hendrik Höfgen was created on the basis of a well-known actor Gustaf Gründgens who served as a commissary in the Deutsches Theater and the Prussian state adviser under the Nazi regime. The image of Oscar Kroge has clear signs of a portrait resemblance to Erich Ziegel who was a famous director, head of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in the 1920s. Max Reinhardt, the legendary director of *Faust*, who was called "the father" of the German stage production in the 20th century, was perpetuated in the image of the Professor. The image of the court poet and playwright Cäsar von Muck is compliant with Hanns Johst, a notorious expressionist writer, who went to serve the Nazis. Carl Sternheim, a well-known satirist dramatist of the early 20th century, became the prototype of Theophil Marder; it is possible to trace the features of the actress Pamela Wedekind, engaged with young Klaus Mann, in the image of his beloved Nicoletta von Niebuhr. The image of Barbara resembles Erika, Klaus Mann's sister, the image of her father, the secret counselor of Bruckner, has an apparent similarity with Thomas Mann. Klaus Mann found his place in the portrait gallery in the image of Sebastian, a friend of Barbara. It is so obvious that the image of the fat the prime minister, the patron of Höfgen, reflects Hermann Göring, the image of the Propaganda Minister – Joseph Goebbels, and so on.

famous Christian cultural mythologem "Holy Face—Face—Disguise" in its sacred sense of "the divine—the human—the diabolical."

The "tarnishing" Holy face of the artist and the transformation of a face into the disguise are revealed in the novel as a new stage in Hendrik Höfgen's work, connected with his move to Berlin. The capital, being conquered by Höfgen, was his ultimate dream, it became a real challenge for him testing his strength, the ability to preserve and develop the divine and human principles of artistic nature. The howling success, predominating and power (over the city), fear, betrayal and, ultimately, the shipwreck of hopes were the milestones of "the Berlin period" in the protagonist's life, marking the decline of the artist-man.

The beginning of the career in Berlin, which was so successful for Höfgen and so significant for the development of the artistic image, was characterized by the fruitful cooperation of Höfgen with the Professor, the head of the Deutsches Theater. The crowning achievement of this collaboration and, intrinsically, of the artistic career as a whole, was the role of Mephistopheles in Faust, which was staged by the Professor on the occasion of centenary of Goethe's death in 1932-33. Communication with the great direction master has impressive results as Mephisto becomes a triumphant role of Höfgen, and, at first glance, it seems that he reaches the heights of his artistic mastery, however, this performance can reveal the key transformations of the artist-man, following below:

> Mephistopheles, the "strange son of chaos," is the great role of the artist Höfgen, he did not put so much fervor into any other role. Mephistopheles should be his own masterpiece. His mask itself is a sensation as Höfgen makes out of the prince of darkness a scamp, the scamp the king of heaven sees this embodiment of evil in his infinite goodness, at times even honoring him with his society because of "all the spirits of denial he is the one I best can tolerate…" He plays him as a tragic clown, diabolical Pierrot. A perfect bald head is powdered white as well as the face; his eyebrows extended upwards grotesquely, his blood-red mouth stiffened in a smile. The gap between the eyes and artificially raised eyebrows is painted in multiple colors <...> Exciting landscape of colors over seductive precious stones are the eyes of Satan! (Mann, Mephisto 287)

The image of Mephisto performed by Höfgen becomes the main element "tuning" the Faustian theme into the novel, the theme that was mostly revealed with the maximum depth and brightness of expression in connection with the image of

Berlin and "the Berlin period" of the character's life.

It should be noted that the development of the Faustian theme in the novel is primarily aimed at strengthening the Mephistophelian principle and weakening the Faustian one that could be proved, above all, by means of direct allusions to Goethe's tragedy. G. Ishimbayeva notes that the first chapter of *Mephisto* ("Prologue, 1936") refers to two prologues of *Faust* by Goethe, i.e. the scene of Klaus Mann's novel is laid in the theater as well as among the celestials (11). However, unlike the tragedy of Goethe, where the main characters in Prologue are "The Lord and the heavenly host," Klaus Mann's scene depicts the celebration of Prime Minister's birthday, where a splendid reception at the Deutsches Theater turns into a ball of Satan.

Thus, at the very beginning of the novel there is a strong connection established between the Nazi regime and the infernal forces of evil, in which the images of the powerful "Nazis" are the personifications of the Devil's retinue. It should be noted that the contemporary studies tend to interpret the fascism figuratively as "a brown Faust" and in this respect we can assume that Klaus Mann claimed the motif of the fusion of Faust with the devil in the beginning of the novel. In this case the interpretation of the destructive nature of the Faustian principle comes to the forefront, so the author projects it to the image of the artist-man, thereby, defining the way of developing the image of the protagonist.

The atmosphere of the wedding of Höfgen and Nicoletta von Niebuhr is getting ominous and demonic. It is designated in the novel as "the wedding of Oberon and Titania," where the traditional mythological images of the king and the queen of elves are transformed into the images of the rulers of Hell.

Finally, the demonic principle is strengthened in the chapter "A Pact with the Devil," where the traditional scene of Faust making a pact with Mephistopheles acquires a different semantic load. The deal, where the soul of Faust is bargained, is not the matter, what is important is the transformation of Faust into Mephistopheles when the Faustian principle turns into the demonic one. G. Ishimbayeva emphasizes that the character of Klaus Mann's novel is "a true German, with "the Faustian soul" and "a piece of Mephistopheles," being under the dominant influence of the Faustian principle as well as of the Mephistophelian one, given the circumstances. In this case the mythologem of Faust bargaining with the Devil is twofold in the novel, because Höfgen has two opposite principles and, hence, each side acts as the seducer, then as the seduced (Ishimbayeva 9). At the same time the author keeps on emphasizing the internal affinity of Hofgen with the evil forces: "*Hendrik had an innate sense for the base motives of the underworld*" (Mann, *Mephisto* 300). In

this case the deal with the Nazis, Höfgen is making when he accepts Göring's proposal to take the post of a managing director of state theaters, is a quite logical step for the protagonist. And, like the treaty with Mephistopheles for Faust meant his imminent death, the deal with the Nazis for Höfgen marked his death as an artist-man. The subject of the contract in the traditional plot and in its modern interpretation is equivalent, therefore, in the first case it is the soul of the scientist, in the second one—the soul of the artist. Punishment is also quite equal: the understanding of the artistic gift loss becomes the infernal torments of the character, the logical outcome of transforming the soul of the artist into the soul of the hypocrite as well as the transformation of the Divine principle into the Diabolical one.

This diabolical light throw an ominous shadow and everything becomes distorted, space is going deformed, so the city turns into a theatrical scene where an absurd historical performance is played, showing "the corruption of people," the destruction of personalities, "a slight and almost parodical shift of social roles" (Kantor 154):

> Very nice killers, and everyone now has the highest positions in the Gestapo. The teacher, recently released from an insane asylum, is now the Minister of Culture. The lawyers calling a law the liberal prejudice. The doctors considering the treatment to be the Jewish quackery. The philosophers declaring a race to be the only objectively true <...>[1] and the foreigners cannot take their eyes off the impressive, creepy performance. (Mann, Mephisto 353, 479)

This constant "sprinkling truth and deception," peculiar to the Berlin scene, reminds the features of the folk theater, where, according to O. Freidenberg, the borders

1 The given quotation can be regarded as an allusion to the novel about Faust by Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger where a series of allegories is used in the description of the Infernal Banquet: "Then appeared Medicine and Quackery, and were received with loud laughter: they danced a minuet, to which Death clinked the music with a purse of gold... These were followed by Jurisprudence, a sleek, rosy-faced dame, fed with fees, and hung about with commentaries – she coughed through a tedious solo; and Chicanery played the bass-viol. Last of all entered Policy, in a triumphant car drawn by two mares, Weakness and Deceit. On her right sat Theology, holding in one hand a sharp-pointed dagger, and in the other a blazing torch. Policy herself wore a golden crown upon her head, and supported a sceptre over her right shoulder. She descended from the car, and danced with Theology a pas-de-deux, to which Cunning, Ambition, and Tyranny played on soft tinkling instruments (Klinger 33–34).

between the real and imaginary are not substantial and the very essence is the game of the imaginary and the present, throwing one instead of another (38). The principle of the struggle between the lie and the truth, being the basis for the image of a theater city, the replacement of the real by the imaginary, makes us perceive the Berlin scene as a farce, "in which the manager and primary actor performs the whole play, playing with the public and fooling the present audience" (Freidenberg 39), but Mann interprets a farce as a bloody buffoonery where the Nazi act is played by the comedians, clowns, masks: "They stood, pierced by curious glances of the best representatives of the chosen society—four rulers of the country, four comedians—the chief of advertising, a specialist in death sentences and bombers, a married ingenue and a pale play actor" (Mann, *Mephisto* 33). It is remarkable that Höfgen finds his place among these ruling comedians, as the deal with the devil provided "the poor hypocrite" with the status of the power, therefore, the involvement in that grand deception, the buffoonery simulation of the truth, played out on the Berlin stage, resulted in a triumph of "the pseudo" category, for example, "pseudo-gods" carefully monitor how "pseudo-actors" declare only lie, and the city itself seems to be losing its authenticity as "nobility was easily replaced with worldly manners being superior," live music in the theater cafe is replaced with an electric piano, and the cakes *as if made of clay and cardboard*.

There is no place for the real and genuine in this "world of mirage and illusory" (Freidenberg). The divine energy of artistry is incompatible with the diabolical hypocrisy. The art workers, representing the true artistic principle in the novel, are expelled from the country. Oscar H. Kroge, Theophil Marder, Professor, Sebastian leave the Berlin stage as well as Germany. They are followed by Barbara, the ex-wife of Höfgen, and her father, the secret counselor Bruckner.

Juliette also becomes an emigrant. She, embodying a spontaneous Dionysian "ego," becomes inappropriate and even dangerous for Höfgen who climbs the career ladder which allows entering the circle of those in power. To save the grace of his diabolical patrons, Höfgen renounces Juliette, in effect, handing her over to the Gestapo and forcing her to leave Germany. "*He lost her, sent her away. He was a traitor*," the Dionysian shadow left Höfgen. Having rejected the Divine principle, Höfgen twisted his fortune with "*bloody adventurer*," because the cooperation with them allowed quenching the thirst for power and recognition. Such was the price of favor from those in power.

However, as M. Blumenkrantz notes, the expulsion of the Divine principle turns into its return in demonic forms (62). Service to the Nazi regime is symbolically expressed in the novel by means of the motive of binding the

artist Höfgen with the demonic forces. Höfgen is so involved into the role of Mephistopheles, that this image is no longer a role.

The fusion of Hendrik with the Devil is evidenced by the symbolic loss of his own name, as Höfgen is called only "our Mephisto" in "the court" of the almighty Prime Minister. The moment of fusion with the Devil essentially changes the content of the Faustian archetype, as indicated by G. Ishimbayeva: "There is an irreversible transformation of Faust into Mephistopheles. The ambivalence peculiar to Faust in the Renaissance times<…> and continued to be a significant personality dominant during the Enlightenment, the Baroque and the Romantic periods, but it disappears in the era of the Empire when the character of the legendary hero acquires a monistic certainty and in this sense, wholeness and uniqueness, turning into a personality of the satanic type <…> The Faustian principle in him is completely superseded by the demonic, diabolical, and the Nazi Mephistopheles is born" (13).

The effect of such a "reincarnation" of images is also achieved by the fact that the loss of the Dionysian shadow symbolizes the destruction of human image, its transformation into the creature of the twilight afterlife that is the Devil, who is known to have neither a face nor a shadow. Instead of a face, he has the appearance, the disguise, Höfgen takes. So, the way to the heights of a career, is, in fact, a downward movement. Stages of this path reflect the moments of degradation of the artist's image, forming a chain of transformations from "a holy face" to "a disguise."

But the deformed space of the theater city, reminding a buffoonery, shows the image of the devil as distorted. In the above excerpt from the novel, which describes Höfgen as Mephistopheles, the author focuses on the fact that Mephisto performed by Hendrik is the devil in the mask of the clown: "*scamp*," "*tragic clown*," "*diabolical Pierrot*," "*Harlequin*." The way how the character interprets the legendary image lacks the devil's all-destroying power, creating only an illusion of his power and, in a certain sense, anticipating the role that will be prepared for the actor by the power, and which, in effect, will predetermine the essence of the metamorphosis of the artist-man: Höfgen-Mephisto is a court jester under the Nazi regime, revealing an inner kinship with his representatives: "He [the Prime Minister] considers Höfgen-Mephistopheles to be a bit of a court jester and a brilliant scamp, a funny toy" (Mann, *Mephisto* 383); "Höfgen, perhaps, fits into this society, he has the same false dignity, the same hysterical impulse, the same vain cynicism and cheap demonism" (Mann, *Mephisto* 346). In the Nazi buffoonery, where, like in the Folk theater, "each of them is a simulation and the likeness of another; each of

them is a counterfeit one" (Freidenberg 40), the loss of one's own identity and the transformation of the artist Höfgen are inevitable. The break with Juliette, leading to the disappearance of "the Dionysian shadow," causes the degradation of the artistic principle in the image of Höfgen and the transformation of the artist-man into a hypocrite. In the role of the court jester Mephisto, the image of Höfgen, regressing, becomes identical to the image of the farce actor, who, according to O. Freidenberg, "is not yet "an actor," but "a fool," "a hypocrite," "a charlatan," "a swindler" (61). The betrayal of the Dionysian "ego" turns into a collapse of artistic talent for the protagonist. At the beginning of the narration he succeeded in performing the role of Hamlet, but at the end of the novel Höfgen fails, as the role of Hamlet can be performed just by the real actor, not a hypocrite.

Histrionics, meaning not creativity, but its imitation, substitution, served as the reason for the symbolic death of the character. Having transformed into a comedian, Höfgen lost the gift of creating new meanings. "Out of the art," stressed F. Stepun, "the artistic path to the end merges with the tragic path, turning from a specific form of resolution of multipsyche into strangling of the soul ..." (56).

Conclusion

The close relationship between the images of the artist-man and Faust in Klaus Mann's novel reveals the general preconditions for the degradation of the artistic and the decline of the Faustian principles. As M. Blumenkrantz points out, "there are two possibilities for a person to realize his freedom. Freedom, as a passion for creativity, strives to "be," the will to implemention is triumphant. Freedom, as a passion for self-affirmation, seeks "to possess"; it manifests the will to excarnation and death" (63).

So, according to the scholar, the transformation of the artist into the hypocrite as well as Faust into Mephistopheles is caused by the substitution of "the implicit measure "to be" with "the explicit measure "to possess" (Blumenkrantz 98). Like Faust, Höfgen "bartered away" the desire "to be" an Artist to possess the power of the artist. The harmonious unity of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles in the image of the artist-man was broken by the rejection of one disguise in favor of the other, as a result, the image lost its integrity, because "the absolutization of any single disguise leads to the substitution, a part is the substitute for the whole, which destroys the harmony and demonizes the usurping principle <...> When the sense of unity is already lost, the person, asserting himself in one of the principles, inevitably comes into conflict with other principles, only exacerbating the detachment and discord" (Blumenkrantz 97). It seems that M. Blumenkrantz points

out the destroyed harmony and demonization of one absolute disguise are connected with the transformation of Faust into Mephistopheles.

The decline of the artistic and Faustian principles in Klaus Mann's novel embodied the writer's desire to comprehend the essence of historical and cultural processes. "Appearing" through the image of the theater city of the 20th century, the image of the buffoonery, embodying the prehistoric and pre-ethical principle of art, symbolically indicates the return of mankind to its primitive state. The novel keeps on stating the idea that the Nazi apocalypse has thrown the country into the darkness of barbarism, marking the collapse of civilization. The process of falling from the boundless peaks of the Faustian spirit to the prehistoric, primitive-barbaric state in the novel Klaus Mann is conceived as a process of changing the appearances of the artist, which brings the moment of *unmasking* the city and the person to the forefront. The image of the theater city, in its absurdly buffoonery modification, is a reflection of the fading image of an artist, in which the spiritual face of history is discerned as a gigantic horrific spectacle showing the end of the Faustian civilization.

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Group and Female Solidarity: Humor in *Funny in Farsi*

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Abstract Firoozeh Dumas, an Iranian immigrant living in America, narrates her life story and inspires readers to laugh even at the most tense moments. She wrote her memoir, *Funny in Farsi*, in English. The article examines her humor as grounded in three major theories and analyzes different forms of comedic expression in *Funny in Farsi*. The article also seeks to establish to what extent humor used in *Funny in Farsi*' is gender, ethnic and culture dependent. Dumas' humor, grounded in her unique social experience, develops positive social solidarity with other ethnic groups on the one hand and with her female readers on the other.

Key words Humor Theories; Ethnicity; Group Solidarity; Female Solidarity; Firoozeh Dumas; Funny in Farsi

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Introduction

1.1 History of Iranian Female Humorists

In the early 20th century, Iranian women were not allowed to learn to write, although there were some families as exceptions. People believed that if women became literate they would write romantic letters to men and cause disgrace and shame to their families (GholamHosseinzadeh & et al). The growth of literacy and the formation of women's associations were among the measures that helped women become independent and gain a stronger sense of identity. Publications have had a major impact on the progress of women's equality during the past century. In addition to raising awareness of and emphasizing the importance of women's cultural contributions, advocating respect for women's rights at home and in larger society has had a positive role in promoting women's ability to express independent voices . These changes slowly provided a platform for the development of literacy and the acquisition of civil rights for women. On the other hand, in private and family settings, changing women's attitudes about gender changed their relationships with men as well.

Bibi Fatemeh Astarabadi (1858-1921) was the first female Iranian satirist, a writer of the Constitutional Era who wrote essays for influential magazines of her time, most of which were in defense of women's education. She was also the founder of the first women's school in 1907, attended by girls, mothers and grandmothers. She wrote *The Failings of Men*[1], the first satirical book in response to *Edification of Women*[2]. The language in her book is harsh and derisive towards men who consider themselves civilized, ridiculing their attitudes and behaviors.

The bright and distinct presence of women humorists in Iran dates back to the 1940s which was the period of the social transition from traditional to modern life. In the years that followed, a handful of women satirists, in comparison to male ones, published their writings in magazines like *Tofiq* (Sadr). Contributions of two pages of *Caricature* magazine, gave independent identity to female humorists in the first decade of the 1950s but with the prohibition of sexual satire, the activity of the satirist women almost disappeared. In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, with morality review, sexual references became the red line in writing. Although, this opportunity seems to provide space for women's satirical literary expression, Iran's male dominant atmosphere restricts their works in this genre compared to other types of literature (Sadr). The social and cultural limitations play the most important and decisive role in inhibiting women's ability to develop and express humor.

1.2 Contemporary Female Humorists

In recent decades, Iranian women's humorous expressions have shown various

1 Ma'ayeb al-Rejal

2 Tadeeb al-Nesvan published in 1288 by an anonymous prince in Qajar court

signs of changes, especially with women boosting their power by performing stand-up comedy. However this change and growth in humor are not significant for women living in Iran. Due to various obstacles in the way of female satirists in Iran, just a handful of them, such as Goli Taraghi and Mahshid Amirshahi, become significant figures. Zeynab Musavi, an Iran's taboo-busting stand-up comedian, explains the reason best. "Being a female standup comedian in Iran is like competing in a swimming competition whilst you are three meters behind the starting line and your hands and legs are tied," she told *The Guardian*, referring to a comparison one of her fellow comics has made. She continues: "The most difficult thing is to go on stage and tell viewers that I'm not [performing as] a woman, nor an Iranian, nor a Muslim, I'm not even pretty, nothing. I'm just a comedian, just watch my comedy" (The Guardian). In fact, humor for Iranian women is a method of resistance allowing them to shift oppressive scripts of discourse that discourage them from speaking to a context where they can speak on their own terms (Billingsley 20).

Those who have immigrated to and made their homes in other countries have made great fame worldwide. Some of them, most of whom are mostly second generation immigrants, perform as successful stage comedians, such as Shaparak Khorsandi, Zahra Noorbakhsh, Enisa Amani, and Negin Farsad. They speak to many issues through the lens of comedy, issues like American politics, Iranian culture, religion, race, humanity and Islamophobia. For them humor is a metaphorical masque and a device through which they negotiate the precarious position of immigrants' liminality.

1.3 Firoozeh Dumas, Life and Career

Firoozeh Dumas, born in Abadan, Iran, immigrated to USA with her family at the age of seven. She later attended UC Berkeley where she met and married a Frenchman. She has written two memoirs *Funny in Farsi* (2003) and *Laughing without an Accent: Advantures of Global Citizen* (2008) and a novel, *It Ain't so Awful, Falafel* (2016).

Funny in Farsi was on the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *New York Times* bestseller lists. Jimmy Carter called *Funny in Farsi* "a humorous and introspective chronicle of a life filled with love _ of family, country and heritage" (Steven Barclay Agency). *Funny in Farsi* has become part of the curriculum in junior highs, high schools, and colleges around the country and is now on the California Recommended Reading List for grades 6-12. Educators have found that Firoozeh's books are a gateway to many conversations, including shared humanity, immigration, language, family, and identity.

Firoozeh Dumas is a second generation immigrant and a careful observer of

her surroundings. She employs humor in her memoirs to communicate her concerns with her Iranian and American readers. She observes cultural difference between where she was born and the place to which she and her family immigrated while also finding the humor in and playfully portraying social interactions. Moreover, her intimate and peace-building language encourages readers to laugh in the tense moments that emerge from ethnic, gender and cultural differences. She currently traveling to different countries to convey the message represented in all her three books: "our commonalities far outweigh our differences" (Dumas Preface). In humorous narration of her life story she uses self-deprecation and gentle comedy and in doing so avoids attacking the people whom she depicts. She has a positive influence on the unity and solidarity of ethnic groups and female readers, by raising and reinforcing the already existing bonds. She introduces herself a citizen of the world and in her jokes does not differentiate between in-group or out-group members. At the same time, by adding an amusing tone in the conversation she conveys messages of solidarity. These qualities mark her as a strikingly distinctive and noteworthy memoirist.

Funny in Farsi and Three Big Theories

2.1 Superiority Theory

This is the earliest approach to humor, dating back to philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and usually referred to as disparagement, aggression, or degradation theories. Plato stated that laughter originates in malice and we laugh at what is ridiculous in other people, feeling delight instead of pain when we see even our friends in misfortune (Morreall). Similarly, Aristotle saw comedy as the imitation of people who are worse than the average and viewed it as a "species of the ugly" (in Poetics, reprinted in Morreall 14). Later Thomas Hobbes advanced the general acceptance of the superiority view for several centuries. According to Hobbes humor is just play, a game that should not be taken seriously and is not intended to inflict actual harm. Individuals who tell ethnic jokes do not necessarily believe the stereotypes conveyed in their jokes. Gruner stated that "a stereotype is merely a very handy kind of shorthand to provide the essential framework for understanding the content of a joke" (qtd. in Martin 47). Gruner views humor as "playful aggression," expressing a more positive perspective on superiority/disparagement theories than those held by traditional superiority theorists. Humor as "playful aggression" emphasizes feelings of well-being and success. Being able to poke fun at other people or situations that would normally be viewed as threatening or constrictive can create a sense of liberation and security (48).

Davies rejected the superiority/aggression theory of humor because it seems to confuse the playful aggression of humor with "real-world" aggression (Davies 326). Gruner argued that these objections reveal a misunderstanding of his theory (Martin 48). The aggressive side of humor is also evident in the merciless teasing that children often inflict on one another. A great many of the jokes that are so popular in our culture quite obviously involve the disparagement of others, including members of either sex (but most often women), various national or ethnic groups, or people of low intelligence. Sociologist Christie Davies described how people of every country and region make jokes about members of a particular nationality or subculture who are considered to be similar yet different enough from the cultural mainstream to be objects of ridicule.

In her vacation accompanying with other children of almost the same age, Dumas is questioned by a boy who poke fun on her appearance:

> "Well," he said, "do you look down a lot?" "No, why?" I asked. "Well, your nose points downward so I figured that's because you're always looking at the ground or something." Upon hearing this, all the kids around me burst out laughing. (Dumas 46)

This account can be analyzed from a gender and ethnic point of view. Cantor found that both female and male college students showed greater appreciation for disparagement humor in which a male had the last laugh at a female's expense, as compared to jokes in which a female disparaged a male. Furthermore, subjects of both sexes preferred disparaging jokes in which women (rather than men) were the victims of both men and women. Thus female, being perceived as the inferior and weak figure is made the target of fun. Furthermore, if we look at this event through an ethnic lens, the boy who is a member of an assumed superior ethnicity banters and laughs at the one assumed inferior.

However, Dumas's expresses humor in a more measured tone. In Freudian theory there is a positive correlation between the amount of hostility present in a joke and its perceived funniness. Gruner stated that "usually, everything else being equal, the more hostile the humor, the funnier" (110). However, some researchers challenge this claim, arguing that "a moderate amount of hostility or aggression in humor is funnier than either too little or too much" (Martin 50).

Gruner argues that even jokes involving nothing more than a clever play on words can convey a sense of superiority (qtd. in Martin 54). Most of Dumas's comedy in *Funny in Farsi* derives from superiority theory. This "humor involves a

pleasing realization of one's superiority to some other being" in which the "laughable person is one who exhibits some vice but is unaware of this flaw" (Shaw). When Dumas describes her childhood experience in Disneyland's Lost and Found place, waiting for her parents, another lost boy came in:

> A few minutes later, the door opened and in came a screaming boy who looked to be a few years younger than I. As Team Comfort rushed to his side, it became … In desperation, one of the employees turned around and started walking toward me with a big I-have-a-great-idea smile on her face. I knew what was coming. "Is that boy from your country?" she asked me. "Why, yes," I wanted to tell her. "In my country, which I own, this is National Lose Your Child at Disneyland Day." (Dumas 20)

She writes in detail about Americans' ignorance about Iran. When her classmates ask stupid questions at school, enquiring if they had camels in Iran, she delights in bantering with them, replying yes, they had camels.

> "A one-hump and a two-hump the one hump belonged to my parents and the two humps was our family station wagon. His eyes widened "Where do you keep them?" he asked "In the garage of course told him" (Dumas 33)

2.2 Incongruity Theory

Incongruity theory refers to cognitive components of humor. "Humor occurs when there is a mismatch or clash between our sensory perceptions of something and our abstract knowledge or concepts about that thing" (Martin 63). According to incongruity theories, the comicalness of a joke depends on the unexpected or surprising nature of the punch line. The incongruity in Dumas' is what Bergman called a "hidden moral incongruity" behind which there is always a moral point to the joke. She amuses readers by enhancing the fun through both the expression of humor and its hidden moral.

While vacationing in the Bahamas with her husband and asking locals for directions, the only response would be offers to purchase coke. "They weren't talking about the fizzy drink" (Dumas 168). Later she asked the security guard of their hotel:

> Why the police didn't do anything about all the people trying to sell coke on every corner. "The police are often in on it," he told us. "We have a lot of

> wealthy cops in the Bahamas."(Dumas 169)

This incongruous joke with a funny punch line encourages readers to laugh at the unexpectedness of characters' statements and behavior, while she is highlighting the systemic corruption. Dumas' jokes about her father conveys affection as well as respect for his hard work. The incongruity in Dumas comedy is represented mostly by unexpected though funny comments:. Along with skillfully drawing on the humor of the unexpected, Dumas practices Bergman's theory by consisting expressing veiled moral sentiments in a witty manner.

> Throughout the school year, my father studied on weekdays; on weekends, he studied some more (Dumas 91).

2.3 Tension Relief and Coping with Adversity

Witty humorists "make fun of stupidity, incompetence, laziness, or other failings of the people who frustrate, irritate, and annoy them" to transform the threats and discomforts and "to minimize the feelings of distress that these others might cause, and derive some pleasure at their expense" (Martin 20). This aggressive form of tension relief humor helps individuals to cope with their adversity and it functions as "highest of the defense mechanisms" (Freud 216).

Firoozeh Dumas writes about being lost in a park as a child, retrospectively commenting humorously about the stressful experience.

> "I'm lost," I told him. "Okay," he said in a kind voice. "Can you tell me what your parents look like?" I told him. "Now can you tell me what your parents are wearing?" he asked. No seven-year-old, except maybe a young Giorgio Armani, could tell you what his parents were wearing on a given day (Dumas 20).

Martin argues that "the greater the emotional arousal and tension engendered by the stressful events, the greater the pleasure and the louder the laughter when joking about them afterwards" (20). Humor for Dumas is a relief, a catharsis for her discomforts, as best expressed in her memoirs. Some of Dumas' comedy is a "pleasant expression of her inconvenient environment or elimination of something painful or harmful" (Stebbins). She coped with her emotional discomfort living in a country with a far different culture through humor, with wit functioning as a veil hiding her distress.

Different Forms of Humor

Martin divides humor that occurs in daily interactions into three categories: joke telling, spontaneous expression, and unintentional behavior. The first one deals with the canned jokes people use in their conversations and occupies the lowest percentage of daily laughter. The second category accounts for 72% of daily laughter arising spontaneously during social interactions, either in response to funny comments that people make or amusing anecdotes about personal experiences. The final category involves the laughter that arises from utterances or actions that are not meant to be funny and accidentally make others laugh (cited in Martin 12). Humor in *Funny in Farsi* involves mostly the second category. In her daily social interactions, Dumas produces a sort of context-dependent humor. Spontaneous conversational humor, according to Martin takes many different classifications and categories with regards to their intention and usage. Below are some types of humor from the text. The examples in this section can be studied and interpreted from a number of angles significant to the analysis of humor.

3.1 Irony

Irony is the expression of a statement in which the literal meaning is opposite to the intended meaning. Dumas draws on irony in the following passage:

> I was stuck with the King Kong of all sleeping bags and nothing to put it in. Finally, my father, with his "mind of an engineer," came up with a brilliant solution: a Hefty trash bag (Dumas 45)

"Mind of an engineer" encourages the reader to expect an impressive solution, but Dumas disrupts this expectation with an ironical punch line.

3.2 Satire and Sarcasm

While both satire and sarcasm qualify as aggressive humor, satire pokes fun at social institutions or policy and sarcasm targets an individual rather than an institution. Dumas targets an Iranian girl's clothing which was not suitable for a parade.

> With each breath she took, I expected her bosom to just break free and come out to watch the parade with us. (Dumas 136)

Dumas' humor is gentle and usually avoids aggressive satire, favoring instead self-deprecation. She drolly describes her own family's treatment of roots and culture as

being rather blasé and indifferent:

> Abdullah, my shohar ameh, was a man of books, a learned man who enjoyed learning for its own sake. Fluent in Arabic, he had a particular interest in linguistic roots. In his thirst for knowledge, he stood alone. Potatoes, radishes, and turnips were the only roots my family cared about. (Dumas 98)

Similarly, she pokes fun at her own father' lack of interest in cultural heritage:

> In the lobby of an art museum, his hostess had obviously thought that as an engineering student, my father could benefit from a bit of culture. Little did she know that the only culture my father was interested in was the kind in yogurt. My one memory of a family excursion to an art museum ended with my father asking, "Did we have to pay to get into this place?"(Dumas 92)

Dumas' purpose here is to portray shortcomings such as indifference to cultural experiences issues and heritage. She accomplishes this purpose through self-deprecating humor to win the attention and good will of readers and avoid causing offense.

3.3 Overstatement and Understatement

These forms of humor involve changing the meaning of something another person has said by repeating or paraphrasing it with a divergent meaning. As an example, Dumas hyperbolizes the seemingly hopeless experience of getting lost during the early days of their arrival in America.

She and I wandered aimlessly, perhaps hoping for a shooting star or a talking animal to help guide us back. (Dumas 6)

Dumas also uses an extreme analogy to describe her mother's unhappiness:

He (Dumas' father) was upset that my mother did not want to make time-shares a regular part of their twilight years. "Why can't you just go and have a good time?" he asked her. Perhaps the same can be asked of patients going to the dentist for root canals. (Dumas 80)

3.4 Self-deprecation

Most of Dumas humorous remarks target her. "This may be done to demonstrate modesty to put the listener at ease or to ingratiate oneself with the listener" (Martin 13). Dumas embraces the fun in laughing about herself, her family, and her nation of origin. She does not take herself too seriously and laughs at her follies and weaknesses.

The noses in my maternal lineage are all large and hooked. Gonzo, on Sesame Street, bears an uncanny resemblance to my mother's side of the family. (Dumas 162)

In making fun of her appearance, she works to create an intimate and friendly tone with readers. This manner of introducing herself to an audience extends a sense of good will, which helps her convey a message of solidarity.

3.5 Teasing

Teasing or banter involves humorous remarks directed at the listener's personal appearance or foibles. In contrast to sarcasm, the intention is not to seriously insult or offend. In narrating her school life Dumas describes funny banter and teasing. An example includes Dumas' interaction with a boy during her first bus trip:

"Well," he said, "do you look down a lot?" "No, why?" I asked. "Well, your nose points downward so I figured that's because you're always looking at the ground or something." Upon hearing this, all the kids around me burst out laughing. (Dumas 46)

Teasing among school children may result in harmful consequences (Douglass 2016) which usually ruin peers' intimacy. Dumas never talks about an intimate American friend in her memoir, which might be the result of such ethnic or racial teasing. She humorously narrates her unpleasant experience. Zin says: "Humor exposes ugly human phenomena (those that render the world almost unbearable) to mockery, in the hope of thereby eliminating them. (356)»

3.6 Clever Replies to Serious Statements

Humor in this category comes from a clever reply to a statement or question that was meant to be serious, as this exchange demonstrates:

> "Is that boy from your country?" she asked me. "Why, yes," I wanted to tell her. "In my country, which I own, this is National Lose Your Child at Disneyland Day."
>
> "No," I told her. "He's not from my country."(Dumas 20)

3.7 Transformations of Frozen Expressions

This form of comedy entails transforming well-known sayings, clichés, or adages into novel statements. In her language, Dumas uses different types of verbal humor to evoke laughter even at her own expense.

"He's not from my country." I had no idea where the screamer was from, but I knew he wasn't Iranian. A gerbil would never mistake a hamster for a gerbil, and I would never mistake a non-Iranian for an Iranian. (Dumas 21)

3.8 Allusion or Cultural References

The humor in this category references cultural, mythological or biblical phenomena. Firoozeh Dumas creates fun and memorable comedy by playing with real characters' name, situations, places and themes. Indeed, much of this humor requires prior cultural or biblical background knowledge. The following sentence is Dumas' comment on a boy who was lost in Disney Park and nobody understood his language.

> Not only was he separated from his loved ones, he was now trapped in the Tower of Babel. (Dumas 21)

The Tower of Babel is a biblical and mythological reference to humanity with a language. The tower was ordered to be constructed by a tyrant and meant to reach heaven, an act of defiance against God. God scattered humans across the earth and divided them into different linguistic and cultural groups.

Unable to learn to swim under her father's instruction, Dumas comments that: "I was my father's Waterloo" (69), a final crushing defeat. She applies many familiar names in her work, much of them likely to be more familiar to her American readers.

> Like a caterpillar morphing into a butterfly, my father magically transforms into Daddy Warbucks as soon as he sets foot in Iran. (Dumas 185)
>
> My aunt dragged me out of the pool and, doing her best imitation of General Patton in a bad mood, announced that I was hopeless. When my parents joined us, she announced, "Firoozeh is a rock." (Dumas 72)
>
> "Now can you tell me what your parents are wearing?" he asked. No seven-year-old, except maybe a young Giorgio Armani, could tell you what his parents were wearing on a given day. (Dumas 20)

Ethnic Humor in 'Funny in Farsi'

Ethnic humor is defined by Apte as "perceived behaviors, customs, personality, or any other traits of a group or its members by virtue of their specific sociocultural identity" (qtd. in Cashmore 161). Ethnic humor makes fun of a group's specific traits such as race, language, appearance, behavior, ancestors, and homeland. Two basic modes of interactions according Mulkay are "serious and humorous." He suggests that a socially risky message is communicated through humor in a way that allows both the speaker and the audience to "save face" if the message is not

well received in an ambiguous context (qtd. in Martin 362). "Humor of this sort generates a considerable amount of mirthful laughter, but they also have a more serious underlying communication function" (Martin 366).

The problem with the religious explanation is obvious: nothing rhymes with "Muslim." At least if you're "Jewish," you can feel "blue-ish" during Christmas, but with "Muslim" you're just stuck. (Dumas 104)

By making a humorous remark about certain attitudes, feelings, or opinions, we can reveal something about ourselves in a way that allows us to deny it if it is not well received (Martin 117). Dumas jokes about different religions or races to see to what extent those attitudes are tolerated or accepted by others. For example she writes:

> Before meeting me, François had a longtime French girlfriend. From all accounts, she was an intelligent and capable person. But she was Jewish. Her religion was a problem until François started dating me. Compared to a Muslim, the Jewish girlfriend didn't seem so bad after all. I once asked François if there was anybody he could have dated that would have bothered his mother more. "Well," he said, "a black Communist bisexual would have really irked her. (Dumas 141)

Despite the belief of most Westerners that all Middle Easterners look alike, we can pick each other out of a crowd as easily as my Japanese friends pick out their own from a crowd of Asians. It's like we have a certain radio frequency that only other Iranian radars pick up. (Dumas 21)

Most of her jokes about her mother focus on her ignorance, which is rooted in her past and oppressive experiences, to inspire laughter among readers. She communicates her annoyance with embarrassing behavior of her ethnic group by means of humor that is gentle and non-aggressive.

My children know that a visit from their grandparents means a dozen packets of American Airlines peanuts. How do they get so many? My mother has a system. "I tell them that I'm visiting my grandkids and they love peanuts." I assume that works better than telling the truth: "I'm paying $150 for this seat and I would like the equivalent in free food" (Dumas 77).

Ethnic representation of her nation's traditional system of marriage is expressed by Dumas' amusing analogy.

Dating, like the rodeo circuit or trout farming, is a completely foreign concept to my parents (Dumas 142).

And when recounting preparing her wedding guest list, she writes:

> I didn't know half the people on the list. "Who are the Abbasis and why are we inviting them?" I wanted to know. "They invited us to their daughter's wedding last year. Plus, they live in Australia. They won't come." They came, and they brought a niece with them. On a dozen occasions, invitations addressed to "Mr. and Mrs." came back announcing that six would be attending. Since our wedding was taking place in the summer, our guests who themselves had houseguests decided to just bring them along. We invited 140people, 163accepted; 181showed up. (Dumas 145)

She describes her family's food preferences:

> Sultani, a combination of lamb, beef, and chicken kebob on an enormous mound of rice. His order arrived, looking as though someone had just grilled an entire petting zoo. (Dumas 142)

According to Martin, "humorous communication reduces the risk of hostility and rancor that might be generated using a more serious mode of communication in confrontation" (120).

4.1 Ethnic Names, a Source of Humor

When we use names in daily communications, correct pronunciation is crucial for proper and healthy interactions. Some people believe it is acceptable to mispronounce unfamiliar names, and in doing so focus only on their comfort levels.. Encountering unfamiliar ethnic names in multicultural societies complicates this phenomenon. Members of an underrepresented ethnic or racial group "probably get tired of explaining or correcting it [their names]. The fix should come from the person who mispronounces it" (Pitlane Magazine). Dumas narrates her experiences with such difficulties:

> My cousin's name, Farbod, means "Greatness." When he moved to America, all the kids called him "Farthead." My brother Farshid ("He Who Enlightens") became "Fartshit." The name of my friend Neggar means "Beloved," although it can be more accurately translated as "She Whose Name Almost Incites Riots." Her brother Arash ("Giver") initially couldn't understand why every time he'd say his name, people would laugh and ask him if it itched. … nobody without a mask and a cape has a zin his name. (Dumas 62)

Douglass and et al. (2016) found that "teasing may be one way in which adolescents interact with their close peers and friends about ethnicity/race, and that such experience may have harmful individual effects that are consistent with general discriminatory experiences." However, Dumas describes her painful experience through a lighthearted analogy: Exotic analogies aside, having a foreign name in this land of Joes and Marys is a pain in the spice cabinet (Dumas 63).

Dumas is a self-aware observer who "hold that things might be changed by a less tedious approach that is, by means of humor" (Ziv 357). Ziv believes that "Humor exposes ugly human phenomena (those that render the world almost unbearable) to mockery, in the hope of thereby eliminating them... In his efforts at changing and improving mankind, man turns matters he thinks grave into absurdities. He does this sometimes with delicate casualness, sometimes with disrespect, and sometimes with ferocity. The laughter that derives from the perception of absurdity reforms the world. (357)" In the following passage, Dumas' use of humor illustrates Ziv's description of its potential for social reformations and improvements:

> My name, Firoozeh, chosen by my mother, means "Turquoise" in Persian. In America, it means "Unpronounceable" or "I'm Not Going to Talk to You Because I Cannot Possibly Learn Your Name and I Just Don't Want to Have to Ask You Again and Again Because You'll Think I'm Dumb or You Might Get Upset or Something." My father, incidentally, had wanted to name me Sara. I do wish he had won that argument… Fifth grade in Whittier, where all the kids incessantly called me "Ferocious." (Dumas 63)

Thus for Dumas humor has an "educational function," reflecting Bergson's theoretic emphasis on addressing detrimental behavior and advancing positive changes by strengthening healthy bonds and solidarity.

4.2 Ethnicity, Stereotype and self-deprecating

Members of ethnic groups often employ humor to resist stereotypical tags. Describing an uninvited girl in her wedding party, who came in the hope of finding a husband, Dumas writes:

> I like to think that she eventually found a husband, a tall Iranian doctor maybe, or perhaps a short Mexican businessman with a big heart, or a medium-built Irish Catholic book vendor whose family thinks she's the best thing that ever

> happened to their son. But regardless of her husband's ethnicity, one thing's for sure. If she did get married, there are a couple fewer lambs in Iran. (Dumas 153)

In addressing Iranian girls' aimless lives, the main end of which being marriage, Dumas references a stereotypical perception of Irish-Americans. At first glance, this comparison seems aggressive but according to Attardo and Raskin, forms of humor are not really aggressive at all: they simply make use of common stereotypes to play with ideas in an amusing way. Self-deprecation is another form of ethnic humor, as presented by Freud's representations of Jewish humor. Simon Critchley explains how this self-deprecating humor can be liberating and cathartic, and certainly a more ethical activity than externally directed joking.

> For my American friends, "a visiting relative" meant a three-night stay. In my family, relatives' stays were marked by seasons, not nights (Dumas 24)

Dumas creates jokes that communicate her societal pressures by referencing stereotypical perceptions of a racial group historically perceived as superior. Moreover she skillfully expresses her internal conflicts about identity in American society.

> Once I got married, my name became Julie Dumas. I went from having an identifiably "ethnic" name to having ancestors who wore clogs (Dumas 65)
>
> My mother and I, because of her Turkish ancestry, possess a skin color that on Nicole Kidman is described as "porcelain" and on others as "fish-belly white."(Dumas 37)
>
> This is why, in my next life, I am applying to come back as a Swede. I assume that as a Swede, I will be a leggy blonde. Should God get things confused and send me back as a Swede trapped in the body of a Middle Eastern woman, I'll just pretend I'm French. (Dumas 41)

Dumas injects subtle humor in many situations involving her own personality, traditions, nationality, and even visits to her relatives. In this way she creates an identity for herself as well. Kotthoff writes, "By joking at his own expense in a particular context a man can create an identity for himself as a 'new man' and a girl can use the same strategy to present herself as the "girl next door" (Kotthoff 2006). According to him humor in interactions can form an identity.

After my rendezvous with the welcoming committee, I searched the airport for someone carrying a sign with my name on it. Once I found her, I was greeted with "Where have you been?" I explained to her that I was a VIP, a Very Iranian Person, and things just take longer for us. (Dumas 133)

Gender Representation

Deborah Tannen states that "men and women have somewhat different conversational goals: for women, the primary goal of friendly conversation is intimacy, whereas for men the goal is positive self-presentation" (Cited in Chiaro 135). These different goals are also reflected in the ways men and women use humor. Women more often use humor to enhance group solidarity and intimacy through self-disclosure and mild self-deprecation, whereas men more often use humor for the purpose of impressing others by appearing funny and creating a positive personal identity. Thus humor is a mode of communication that, along with more serious communication, is used to achieve gender-relevant social goals.

Dumas represents and explains the notions of what a woman should be and wants to be in the two distinctly different American and Iranian cultures. She criticizes Iranian feminine ideals dictating that a woman should marry, bear children and cook, and she complains about the injustice towards girls in Iran. Her aunt Sedighe didn't have the same opportunity as her own three brothers who were engineers and doctors.

> Sedigeh was not allowed to pursue her education past sixth grade and was married shortly thereafter. All her brothers became engineers and doctors. My father found this a huge injustice ... she would have become the best doctor of them all, for not only was she smart, she was resourceful as well (Dumas 100)

Her parents were always proud of their son:

> My parents, both of whom are painfully shy, looked upon their outgoing anomaly just as Native Americans regard an albino buffalo—he (Farshid) was a miracle. (Dumas 43)

Most of Iranian women represented by Dumas are referred to as good cooks. She describes the women of her mother's era as:

> In her era, a girl's sole purpose in life was to find a husband. Having an

> education ranked far below more desirable attributes such as the ability to serve tea or prepare baklava (Dumas 5)

She critiques Iranian women for being more obsessed or burdened with cooking than pursuing their dreams, and she does so by employing gentle and playful humor.

> No one was made happier by our foray into eating prepared foods than my mother, who, lacking both Iranian ingredients and Zahra, had a very difficult time cooking in America. The Colonel's secret recipe had set my mother free (Dumas 26)

In fact "Shake 'n Bake" does not have a translation equivalent in Persian "culture where slow cooking, not speed and ease, is the preferred method of food preparation and cooking is a duty, not an entertainment" (Excerpt from Firoozeh Dumas' new book). In the representation of Iranian women worrying about their beauty to please male partners, she begins by citing an example of a confident and an intellectual American woman, who was librarian in Berkeley University:

> This woman had the ugliest nose I had ever seen. It was as if God, in a moment of confusion, had switched her nose with the beak of an exotic bird. I suspected that somewhere deep in the rain forests of Brazil, high in a mango tree, lived a toucan with a human nose. (Dumas 161)

Duma wondered why the American librarian didn't seem insecure and was able to move like a "beauty queen". She goes on to engage in broad satire about the role the nose plays in Iranian women's lives:

> In Iranian culture, a woman's nose is much more than a breathing device; it is her destiny. (Dumas 161)

Dumas humor is not aggressive, but is instead gentle and funny and even sometimes self-deprecating with the hope of educating women to improve their self-esteem more than their physical appearance, which can lead to a happier and more enjoyable social and individual life.

> I grew up thinking that it was normal to yell "Not the profile!" whenever a picture was being taken. Mine is the kind of nose that enabled me to impress

> fellow high school students with my ability to balance a pencil and eraser between my nose and mouth. This enviable contortion act pretty much sealed my fate as the type of girl who never had to worry about buying a prom dress. (Dumas 162)

Dumas also critiques Iranian women's pressure to undergo cosmetic surgery, mostly nose jobs, in order to find good husbands. This illustrates Morgan's point that "women's attractiveness is defined as attractive-to-men" (243). In fact their act is not an act of freewill, and Morgan argues that it is a way of colonizing women's bodies. Dumas prioritizes the mind's beauty, emphasizing women's self-steam and confidence. She writes:

> I hate beauty pageants. This may have to do with the fact that I was one of those girls who learn early on that they will have to rely on their brains to open doors. It took me years to overcome the beauty expectations of Iranian culture and a few more years to overcome growing up in Newport Beach, where the standard of beauty involves rigorous exercise, bottles of hydrogen peroxide, and silicone. There was no way I was going to dip my toe in the dysfunctional pond of beauty pageants. (Dumas 173)

As a member in the committee of judges in a beauty contest, Dumas challenged and subverted the traditional emphasis on superficial qualities:

> The girl we had selected was undoubtedly the underdog. She was quite overweight, she was the least physically attractive, and she had the smallest cheering section. She was, however, the most articulate…we were looking for depth, not beauty (Dumas 178)

Her humor is "undeniably female and feisty" (Darlington 331) when she talks about her dirty and greasy hair and body. She needed to bathe. She was powdered to play the role of ghost but rather she "resembled someone who'd been dunked in a vast of bread dough."

Among the women characters represented by Firoozeh Dumas, her mother Nazireh and her mother's sister aunt Parvin are able to shift their traditional views. Parvin was the first female in the family who pursued her education and achieved professional success. Her mother also pioneered the acceptance of a non-Iranian husband for Firoozeh Dumas.

> Aunt Parvine has always been considered something of a deity in our family because she managed, despite being an Iranian woman of her generation, to become a doctor and to set up a successful practice in Geneva. (Dumas 71)
> When her mother realized that she wanted to marry François, she said, "He will be like a third son to me," and wiped the tears off her face. At that very moment, my mother threw aside everything she and her generation knew about marriage and entered a new world where daughters select their own husbands. She became a pioneer. (Dumas 144)

Moreover, Dumas is a Cixousian loyal female character. Fidelity is her salient feature as represented in her memoirs. She writes:

> "Without my relatives, I am but a thread; together, we form a colorful and elaborate Persian carpet" (Dumas 103)

She has courage to assert herself and laugh at the traditions of her origin. This laughter according Billingsley can "be used to break the binds of masculine discourse, carrying a power to assert women as women distinct from men by pulverizing masculine-centric institutions, laws, and truths" (9).

> I wanted to stand up on the table and tell the girls to take off their high heels and hurl them at the organizers of this event, demanding that the pageant be replaced by a spelling bee. Instead, I just sat there and prayed for the end. (Dumas 177)

According to Cixous women must break their silence by writing and thus liberate themselves from the prisons built by men. Women can draw from the irrational unconscious to break patriarchal tradition.

Conclusion

Firoozeh Dumas, an Iranian female humorist who writes in English, was able to develop her own style of writing memoir with the employment of humor. She is an insightful observer of her social environment and expresses sensitivity to articulate and convey her message in a highly effective manner, i.e. humor. Her humor has a variety of linguistic types; from irony, exaggeration, satire, sarcasm, to self-deprecation. Intimate, gentle and peace-building are remarkable traits of her jokes

with "educational function." Through humorous remarks, she wants to reform detrimental cultural, ethnic, and racial behavior. Dumas remarks on and critiques the Iranian women's lack of self-esteem and their suppressed nature in humorous ways; inviting them to break the destructive ideals built for them by society. Moreover, she conveys her messages that "our commonalities far outweigh our differences" and "Muslims, Jews, Catholics, we're all the same," and condemns ethnic and gender inequalities. In communicating these messages, she benefits from the use of comedy, employing a humorous tone and mostly self-deprecating humor that helps reduce possible tensions among her American and Iranian readers. She tries to avoid impolite, aggressive, and hostile jokes towards different ethnic groups. Therefore her language and overall work strengthen solidarity among different ethnographical groups on the one hand and her female readers on the other.

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Epistemological Approach to Understand Religious Principles in *Serat Wedhatama*

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Abstract This study aims to examine the epistemology concept written in *Serat Wedhatama*. *Serat Wedhatama* is the masterpiece of King Mangkunegara IV (1811–1881). It teaches the principle of "*Agama Ageming Aji*," meaning religion as the grip for the king, the concept of human beings, the purpose of life, relationship between people and with God, including the efforts to achieve the perfect life. It is known to be a handbook and guiding principle for Javanese people. The study on the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* done here intends to put the concept of knowledge as a core to understand ethical teachings as the central point of the manuscript. A comprehensive and holistic understanding is necessary to explain *Wedhatama*'s moral thought for not being partially disconnected from its epistemological basis. In addition, this study aims to explore the field of epistemology in the Eastern philosophy, especially Javanese philosophy. So, far, Javanese philosophy is given less attention than it should be. The study is conducted by assessing *Serat Wedhatama* as a material object, and epistemology (philosophy of knowledge) is used as the perspective of the study.

Key words Epistemology; *Serat Wedhatama;* religious principles; thought on ethics; ethical teachings; concept of knowledge

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Introduction

Human knowledge is always engaged in two place scenes, namely, spontaneous, and

reflective knowledge as it was explained in Montmarquet (94-103) and Vigotsky books[1]. Both types of knowledge are distinctive in man, proving that man can know that he knows, he is true, he is mistaken, he adds knowledge, and so on. In the process of evolutionary consciousness (Lewis 104-133), humans are commonly faced with problems that spur the fast growth of new consciousness because it is disputed[2]. Examples are the problem of disagreements, choice of dilemmas, making of mistakes, and occurrence of conflicts between transcendent and immaterial knowledge, materials and principles, senses, and mind, singular and compound, subjective and objective, and relative and absolute (Velmans 125).

Given that human beings are always in the quest for the quality of knowledge, knowledge is developed, which further breeds various types of systematic knowledge, such as philosophy, science, technology, theology, and ideology (Matthews 1397). Each type of systematic knowledge grows with its own distinction, even though they remain as a type of knowledge (Lynch 202, 218). Human beings then question the criteria of knowledge certainty and validity, direct and indirect knowledge, and the sole or the composed and accumulated knowledge from various types of knowledge (Hofer and Pintrich 22). Such a process occurs because knowledge is a part of life, interacting with time, surrounding environment, and fellowmen, related to historicity and the social; thus, this process is constantly racing and growing from the level of pre-reflective knowledge toward that of the reflective one (Zalabardo 147).

The phenomenon on the quest for the quality of knowledge, as described previously, corroborates to the concept of knowledge contained in *Serat Wedhatama* (Wibawa 2). The manuscript (*Serat Wedhatama*) is written by King KGPA (Kanjeng Gusti Pengeran Arya) Mangkunegara IV (1811–1881), one of the influential Javanese King from Kasunanan (Kingdom) Surakarta. The manuscript can be considered a handbook for some Javanese, especially those who live in or around Surakarta and Yogyakarta in Java Island. The manuscript that contains the principle of "*agama ageming aji*" (religion as the king's grip) is a little more about human

1 Vygotsky wrote books on the analysis of the nature of verbal thought as based on word meaning to understand cognitive processes. The following books were used in this study: "Thought and Language" (Vygotsky, Lev Semyonovich. *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: The MIT Press, 1986) and "Thought and Speech" (Vygotsky, Lev Semyonovich. *Thought and Speech*. Moscow, Russia: Labyrinth, 2005).

2 Ventegodt and co-workers also explained this in the human development model as written in the article of Ventegodt, S., Hermansen T.D., Elensborg-Madsen, T., Raid, E., Nielsen, M.L., Merrick, J. "Human Development IX: A Model of the Wholeness of Man, His Consciousness, and Collective Consciousness". *Scientific World Journal* 14 No. 6 (2006): 1454-1459.

beings, the purpose of life, the relationship with others, the relationship with God, and the effort to achieve perfection[1]. Therefore, it is significant to study the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama*.

The epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* is an interesting one to study for two reasons. First, epistemology is essentially a human endeavour to investigate the knowledge of life and life itself, understand human identity, and eventually realize human position in front of God and with relation to the universe. Epistemology itself is the theory of knowledge, as well as the philosophical study of the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge as it is written by Moser in the Oxford Handbook of Epistemology[2]. As a "man in a journey" or "a constantly keeping search kind of creature" *(Homo viator)*, people cannot stop revealing how to gain knowledge, what tool should be used to measure truth, and how the nature and pattern of knowledge are acquired. The fact on the human endeavour implies how epistemological study is fundamental to life[3]. Second, *Serat Wedhatama*'s epistemology is relevant to the world's actual problem. The various crises that hit the world and nations today are not economic, social, political, and legal matters, but are essentially rooted in the moral issues that are misguided from the mentality of the nation[4]. The sublime and profound moral teachings from inheritance seem to have been forgotten and abandoned in modern life. Reviewing and appraising *Serat Wedhatama* remind nations about the sublime moral values as provisions for us to understand where life must be oriented. The epistemological study of *Serat Wedhatama* is expected as a nonmaterial contribution to provide views to overcome our alienations as human beings.

The study on the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* is also important because the manuscript generally contains teachings on ethics. When a deep and profound study is conducted, ontological, axiological, and epistemological

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1 Previous studies have been done extensively regarding *Serat Wedhatama* contents, such as the ones by Satyapranawa et al. and Anjar Any. However, none used epistemological approaches.

2 Moser, Paul K. *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002.

3 Tan and Crawford in their book wrote about necessary conditions to gain knowledge including some theories of truth, e.g. coherence, correspondence, or pragmatical theory (Tan, C., Crawford, L. *Knowledge, and Inquiry: An Introduction to Epistemology*. New Jersey, USA: Prentice Hall, 2006).

4 There are some issues as described by Thomas, Davis. *Contemporary Moral and Social Issues: An Introduction Through Original Fiction, Discussion, and Readings*. New Jersey, USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014 as well as issues described by Ristovski, Ljupco. "Morality and Ethics in Politics in the Contemporary Societies". *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs* 2 No. 3 (2017): 83-93.

views are found. The ontological view of the manuscript is demonstrated by its fundamental description of God, human beings, the universe, and the relationship among the three. The axiological view is seen in *Wedhatama*'s teaching, which is full of ethical values, as a life guiding principle and an aesthetic value shown by "*tembang macapat*" or a specific Javanese stanza used to deliver the content of *Wedhatama*'s thought (Sulistyo 97). Meanwhile, the epistemological view of *Serat Wedhatama* is known from the way the manuscript puts the concept of knowledge as a core to understand ethical teachings and how it has been put as the central point of the manuscript. Although the concept of knowledge in *Serat Wedhatama* is not as explicitly written as its ethical concept, the core of the manuscript is less understandable, unless it is thoroughly studied in terms of its concept of knowledge.

The epistemological view of *Serat Wedhatama* must be investigated based on two reasons. First, the study intends to understand the teachings of *Serat Wedhatama* more comprehensively and holistically than before. The entire content of *Serat Wedhatama* should be unanimously and completely understood, so that the moral teachings, for example, are not partially disconnected from the underlying epistemological concept. Second, the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* must be studied to enrich the field of epistemology that refers to Western philosophy more than other philosophies. Eastern philosophical thinking, especially Javanese philosophy, is still a wide area to be studied. The interest, attention, and orientation of the discourses in philosophy so far, including the tendencies in the discipline of philosophy in Indonesia, tend to refer to Western philosophy. Therefore, the treasures of Eastern philosophy (especially Javanese philosophy) have not received adequate attention as they should.

The existence of *Serat Wedhatama*, in addition to the other masterpieces of the works of Javanese poets, undeniably makes a valuable contribution to philosophical treasures. Therefore, the study of *Serat Wedhatama* remains relevant and actual. In such a framework, the study on the epistemological view of *Serat Wedhatama* is necessary to anticipate the unbalance of Western-Eastern philosophy orientation as described above.

Foundation of Theories, Hypothesis, and Methods

Foundation of Theories

Philosophical research conducted to discover the essence of something should be based on three important aspects, namely, ontology, epistemology, and axiology[1].

1 In this study, the epistemological method for qualitative research from De Gialdano was used as an approach.

In the context of philosophical study, epistemology is intended to examine the nature of knowledge, which includes knowledge source or origin, nature and type, boundaries, as well as the issue on the legality of its validity and reliability (Aliyu et al. 10-12). Epistemology questions how knowledge is obtained, from which the source is, and what its true character and nature are[1]. The sources of knowledge are empiric, ratio, intuition, and authority, all of which further determine the type of knowledge whether it is empirical, rational, intuitive, and authoritative knowledge, respectively[2]. Therefore, the source and type of knowledge can further determine its truthful nature.

Hypothesis

In this study, epistemology, which plays the underlying role of each knowledge structure, becomes a formal object to examine *Serat Wedhatama* as a material object. Epistemological study is conducted by exploring the source, type, and truthfulness of *Serat Wedhatama* knowledge. The hypothesis of this study is that the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* can be found in the concept of *Sembah Raga* (worship by physical conduct), *Sembah Cipta* (worship by controlled mind conduct), *Sembah Jiwa* (spiritual or soul worship), and *Sembah Rasa* (worship by sensing or worship beyond rituals). The four *Sembah* or worships show that the knowledge of *Serat Wedhatama* comes from an authoritative teacher, as well as from rational, empirical, and intuitive knowledge which have different forms, patterns, and truths.

Research Materials

This research is a literature study on the concept or philosophical view of a manuscript named *Serat Wedhatama*, with the study on the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* as the focus. With this concern, the author sets *Serat Wedhatama* as the primary source of literature. Other studies, writings, and reviews on *Serat Wedhatama*, as well as literature related to epistemology as a formal object in this study are used as secondary libraries for the present research. The primary library in this study is *Serat Wedhatama*, a masterpiece written by KGPA Mangkunegara IV, which is published in two language versions, namely, *Wedhatama Kawedhar* (written

1 Chevsky and Wolfmeyer (2015) clearly explain about ontology, axiology, and epistemology although it is limited to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics areas.

2 While Juhos (1976) wrote about three sources of knowledge in the selected papers in epistemology.

in Javanese) and *Wedhatama Winardi* (written in Bahasa Indonesia)[1].

The secondary libraries used to investigate the epistemology of Serat Wedhatama are the following books entitled *Menyingkap Serat Wedhatama* by Anjar Any[2], *Wedhatama (Karya Sri Paduka Mangkunegara IV) bagi Orang Modern* by Anand Krishna[3], and various writings in the magazines, journal articles, and academic papers about *Serat Wedhatama*[4]. Other secondary libraries related to epistemology as an object are *Epistemology: The Theory of Knowledge* by Bahm[5], *Filsafat Ilmu Sebuah Pengantar Populer* by Suriasumantri[6], *Epistemologi: Filsafat Pengetahuan* by Hadi[7], *The Philosopher's Dictionary* by Martin[8], *Element to Philosophy* Katsoff[9], and *Living Issues in Philosophy* by Titus and co-workers[10].

Analysis

In this study, *Serat Wedhatama* was set as a material object, and epistemology was used as a formal object to construct the perspective of the study. The analysis was performed using the following methods in philosophical research: (1) Interpretation: the process of searching, reviewing, and interpreting *Serat Wedhatama* to capture its philosophical basis and values in the manuscript. Appraisal is then applied on

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1 The manuscript written by Mangkunegara was the main object in this study (referred to Mangkunegara IV, K.G.P.A, Hadisutjipto, S.Z. *Wedha Tama*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Pradnya Paramita, 1979). For in depth reading, the following books were also investigated: "Wedhatama Kawedhar" that was published in Javanese by Boekhandel Pasarpon (Solo) in 1936 and "Wedhatama Winardi" (3rd edition) was in Indonesian published by PT Citra Jaya Murti (Surabaya) in 1988.

2 Any, Anjar. *Menyingkap Serat Wedhatama*. Semarang, Indonesia: Aneka Ilmu, 1983.

3 Krishna, Anand. *Wedhatama (Karya Sri Paduka Mangkunegara IV) bagi Orang Modern*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1999.

4 For comparative readings, the following books from Soedjonoredjo were also used as references: Soedjonoredjo, Raden. *Wedhatama Winardi*. Kediri, Indonesia: Boekhandel Tan Khoen Swie, 1937 and Soedjonoredjo, Raden. *Wedhatama Winardi*. Surabaya, Indonesia: Citra Jaya, 1987.

5 Bahm, Archie J. *Epistemology: Theory of Knowledge*. Chicago, USA; World Book, 1995.

6 Suriasumantri, Jujun S. *Filsafat Ilmu Sebuah Pengantar Populer*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Sinar Harapan, 1984.

7 Hadi, Protasius H. 1994. *Epistemologi: Filsafat Pengetahuan*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Kanisius, 1994.

8 Martin, Robert M. *The Philosopher's Dictionary*. Calgary, Canada: Broadview Press, 1994.

9 Katsoff, Louis O. *Element of Philosophy*. New York, USA: Ronald C. Press, 1986.

10 Titus. H., Smith, M., Nolan, R. *Living Issues in Philosophy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994.

the findings[1]; (2) Internal Coherence: the process of determining the linkage among all elements behind the thought in *Serat Wedhatama* (Morrow 250)[2]; (3) Holistic: the epistemological process in which knowledge origin, nature, and correctness are determined, is used as a study tool[3];(4) Historical Continuity: the process of connecting the development and existence of the thought[4] in *Serat Wedhatama* to the historical, socio-political, philosophical, and cultural backgrounds and situations, as well as the influence of these situations on the thought; (5) Heuristic: the process by applying the epistemological perspective and approach to find distinctive philosophical foundation in *Serat Wedhatama*[5].

Results and Discussion

Epistemology comes from the Greek word, *episteme*, meaning knowledge, and *logos* which means science or theory. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* states epistemology as a theory of knowledge that investigates the issue of the authenticity of knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and certainty, and the relationship between knowledge and misperception[6]. Epistemology is then interpreted as the theory of knowledge (Bawengan 47).

Archie J. Bahm introduced "theory of knowledge" or "epistemology" as a science originating from the question, "What is knowledge?" It involves many other questions, such as "What is truth?" and "What is certainty?" and their opposites such as "What is ignorance?", "What is falsity?", and "What is doubt?". Each of these questions involve other questions, such as "What is consciousness?", "What is

1 This method is called meta-interpretation in qualitative research as also previously written by Yanow, D., Schwartz-Shea, P. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. New York, USA: M.E. Sharpe, 2014. A reference by Weed (2005) was also applied in this study.

2 This is also recommended in an article by Levitt, H. M., Motulsky, S. L., Wertz, F. J., Morrow, S. L., Ponterotto, J. G. "Recommendations for Designing and Reviewing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Promoting Methodological Integrity". *Qualitative Psychology* 4 No. 1 (2017): 2–22.

3 This is the approach suggested by Wilson, D. R., Wilson, W. A. "A Holistic Approach to Research". *Journal of Community and Health Sciences* 3 No. 1 (2008): 59-67.

4 The historical continuity is suggested by Olejniczak, T., Pikos, A., Goto, T. "In Search of Continuity: Theoretical and Methodological Insights from a Case Study of a Polish Centennial Company". *Journal of Management History* 25 No. 4 (2019): 565-584.

5 The heuristic approach is referred to Kleining, Gerald, Witt, Harald. "The Qualitative Heuristic Approach: A Methodology for Discovery in Psychology and the Social Sciences. Rediscovering the Method of Introspection as an Example". *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1 (2000): 13.

6 Blackburn, Simon. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016.

awareness?", "What is intuition?", "What is inference?", and "What are sensation, perception, conception, memory, and imagination?" (Bahm 1).

Another term closely related to knowledge is *logos*. *Logos* means the mind, adjacent to the word *nous* which means favour. Sometimes, epistemology is also called logic, the science of thinking. Logic learns the matter of knowledge, truth, and certainty, which has the same scope as in epistemology. Indeed, logical thinking does not necessarily mean critical thinking. Logical thinking or reasoning, which is considered an ordered way of thinking, does not always contain truth and certainty.

According to Hadi[1], epistemology is sometimes identified as a discipline called *critica* or *criteriologia*, a systematic knowledge of criterion or benchmark, to determine correct knowledge and unrighteousness. *Critica* and *criteriologia* are derived from the Greek word *krinomai* which means to prosecute, decide, and determine. Prosecuting true and incorrect knowledge is somewhat close to *episteme* as a cognitive-intellectual process to set something in place.

Epistemology investigates three fundamental issues. First, the question on the origin of knowledge, which studies the source of knowledge, from where true knowledge comes, and how to know. Second, the question on the character of knowledge, which investigates the nature of knowledge, whether a world that is completely out of mind should exist, and how to discover it. Third, the question on truth, which studies the standard of measuring truth. Knowledge comes from four sources, namely, empiric or the experience of sensing, authority or testimony, ratio or intellectuality, and intuition or inspiration. The question on the character of knowledge investigates whether something is real, or whether it is objectively and completely beyond the human mind, or whether the world is only conceived by reasoning. Subjectivism puts the object of experience to be in mind, not the one outside the mindfulness. The perceived object, which is sensed by the senses, is dependent and unseparated from its consciousness. As Edmund Husserl says, consciousness "will always be consciousness" (Laskey 99). By contrast, objectivism puts the perceived object, and the quality of the sensed object exist and are free from human consciousness. Without any interference, object or objective matter will always be as it is.

The knowledge correctness issue relates to three categories. First, the type of knowledge built; second, the way in which the knowledge is obtained; third, a dominant subject–object relationship in the knowledge formation process (Mc

1 In his book, Hadi explained on about epistemology and transformed the knowledge into local language as referred to: Hadi, Protasius H. 1994. *Epistemologi: Filsafat Pengetahuan*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Kanisius, 1994.

Carthy 423-424). With these categories, the possibility that every knowledge subject will differ in perception and understanding is reasonable, in addition to the diversity of the correctness verification that appears from it. The first category derives four types of knowledge, with their distinct natures, namely, ordinary, scientifical, philosophical, and religious knowledge.

Based on the truth standpoint, several theories are found as the basis. Correspondence truth theory states that knowledge is true when it corresponds to reality. "A belief is called truth if it corroborates with a fact", as mentioned in the book by Randall and Buchler[1]. A statement is true if the material of the knowledge contained in the statement corresponds (relates) to the object addressed by the statement. Coherence theory explains that a thing is true if it is coherent or consistent with the previous thing considered true. Both theories are used in scientific thinking. For example, Blackburn found theoretical reasoning based on deductive logic. Meanwhile, pragmatic theory considers truth as something that can be practiced in a situation. In pragmatic theory, if the statement is functional and useful, then it is considered correct, but if the statement is no longer functional and useful, then it is abandoned. Another benchmark of truth is related to the logic of language called syntax truth theory which was developed by a language philosopher. This theory considers a statement is true when it is grammatically correct. Meanwhile, semantic truth theory states that the correctness of a true proposition depends on its meaning. The key point is whether a clear valid reference exists or not. Logical superfluity truth theory comes from the idea that a truth discourse is a kind of language chaos because what should be proven already has its degree of self-righteousness.

Meanwhile, in accordance with the material object of this study, *Serat Wedhatama* is etymologically derived from the word "*Wedha*" which means knowledge or doctrine, and the word "*Tama*" which means good (Ismawati 115)[2]. Thus, "*Wedhatama*" means knowledge of the main goodness or doctrine. The content of the manuscript written by the late KGPA Mangkenegara IV in the structure "*tembang macapat*" (a specific Javanese stanza derived from a song) is divided into four parts, namely, about ethics in the form of "Pangkur," the law of causality in the form of "Sinom," the science and sincerity in the form of "Pocung," and the teachings of worship in the form of "Gambuh" (Sulistyo 97). These four

1 Randall, J.H., Buchler, J. *Philosophy: An Introduction*. New York, USA: Harper & Row, 1971.

2 As it is originated from the work of Mangkunegara IV, K.G.P.A, Hadisutjipto, S.Z. *Wedha Tama*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Pradnya Paramita, 1979

forms ("Pangkur," "Sinom," "Pocung," and "Gambuh") are the branches of "*tembang macapat*."

It reveals that *Serat Wedhatama* is composed of five basic principles. These five principles are about the existence of God, human relationship, knight soul (*jiwa ksatria*), respect for other opinions, and struggle of life teachings. The entire teachings of *Serat Wedhatama*, which are summarized in the 100 Canto (verse)[1], lead to the perfection of a human being, in his efforts towards the Creator. The purpose toward the perfection of a human being is pursued by the practice to train the body and soul. The practice of training behavioral manner and way of thinking results in a strong personality that is ready to understand the profound substantial concept written in the manuscript.

Although the content of *Serat Wedhatama* seems to be fragmented and written in different forms of "*tembang macapat*," it is found to be systematically and holistically integrated. Starting with the objective of the writing, KGPA Mangkunegara IV systematically and hierarchically wrote about fundamental and spiritual teachings, with a converged peak on the principles of *Sembah Raga*, *Sembah Cipta*, *Sembah Jiwa*, and dan *Sembah Rasa*. The four *Sembah* concepts are the essence of the philosophical thought in *Serat Wedhatama* (Ardani 38). Ardani and Simuh[2] relate the four *Sembah* concepts in *Serat Wedhatama* with four stages in Islamic teachings, namely, *Shari'a (*Islamic religious law which covers all aspects of human life*)*, *Tariqat* (a path of spiritual learning), *Hakikat* (truth, reality), and *Makrifat* (attainment of spiritual knowledge). Therefore, in this point, the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* is found in the concept of *Sembah* (worship). As explained, epistemology questions knowledge in terms of the source, character, and measure of truth. The source, character, and measure of the truth of knowledge can be derived from the four *Sembah* concepts in *Serat Wedhatama*.

The first worship taught in *Serat Wedhatama* is *Sembah Raga*. The principle of *Sembah Raga* (worship by physical conduct) is done through self-sanctification with water. It must be practiced regularly, diligently, and carefully in the form of ablution prior to the five times prayer. The result of *Sembah Raga* is a healthy and fresh body, which is ready to integrate thoughts and feelings. The practice of *Sembah Raga* shows the knowledge gained from the authority and empiric. Authority enables

1 As it was studied in a book of Ardani, Mohammad. *Al Quran dan Sufisme Mangkunegara IV*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Yayasan Dana Bhakti Wakaf, 1995.

2 In his book, Simuh studied the relationship between the level of worship in *Serat Wedhatama* with the concept of mysticism in Islam (Simuh, Simuh. Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam ke Mistik Jawa. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1995).

knowledge to be obtained simply, without undergoing empirical experiences. Authority can also be reflective or intuitive. The source of the knowledge gained can come from a person who is an expert or a relevant and trustworthy teacher. In the case of *Sembah Raga*, it is the teacher who teaches the procession of *Sembah Raga*.

The next knowledge source found from the concept of *Sembah Raga* is the senses ("*indriya*" in Javanese). *Indriya*, as a knowledge source, is composed of two elements: physiological senses (*indriya lahir*) and inner or soul senses (*indriya batin*). Physiological senses refer to perception and observation, demonstrated by the five senses of human beings which function to perceive things. Soul or inner senses function to perceive imaginary senses and their meanings, unifying or dividing them, conceiving ideas, memorizing the conceived ideas, and remembering or recalling such ideas. In this context, knowledge is obtained based on the perception in the form of a physical object. *Sembah Raga* is such a physical or physiological sensing; therefore, the knowledge obtained from the process cannot describe the essence of reality, or it is considered far from the essential truth[1].

The truthfulness of the knowledge of *Sembah Raga* (worship by physical conduct) is corelated to three categories. First, the type of the knowledge built; second, the way the knowledge is obtained; third, a dominant subject–object relationship in the process of knowledge formation. The first category spawns four types of knowledge, with different natures of truth, namely, ordinary, scientific, philosophical, and religious knowledge (Mc Carthy 424). *Sembah Raga* is categorized as ordinary knowledge. Ordinary knowledge has a subjective essence of truth, depending on the subject. Its nature is always true, as far as the means to obtain is normal or no deviation exists.

The second worship written in *Serat Wedhatama* is *Sembah Cipta* (worship by controlled mind conduct). This *Sembah* no longer emphasizes physical activity. What to do is self-training to carefully control desires. According to *Sembah Cipta* teachings, people who succeed in carrying out a *Sembah Cipta* becomes a wise man. Based on the nature or characteristic of the way the knowledge is acquired, *Sembah Cipta* belongs to intellectual knowledge which is derived from ratio or reasoning. Knowledge obtained by reasoning is considered universal and immaterial.

1 The understanding and perspective were also concluded by Endraswara in his books on "Buku Pinter Budaya Jawa: Mutiara Adiluhung Budaya Jawa" (Endraswara, Suwardi. *Buku Pinter Budaya Jawa: Mutiara Adiluhung Budaya Jawa*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gelombang Pasang, 2005) and "Falsafah Hidup Orang Jawa" (Endraswara, Suwardi. *Falsafah Hidup Jawa*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Penerbit Cakrawala, 2006).

Observing the human body only results in sensing knowledge (*pengetahuan inderawi*). However, observing human beings while investigating their essence results in the conclusion that human beings are creatures of thought *(animal rationale, hayawan nathiq)*, thus gaining a universal abstract rational knowledge of human beings. This type of knowledge, according to rationalists, is gained by using deductive methods. The premise used in the reasoning process is derived from a clear and acceptable idea, which is not really a creation of the human mind, but it has been existing for a long time. In this case, the human mind only functions to recognize it.

Sembah Jiwa (soul worship), as a third worship written in the manuscript, aims to understand identity as a human being. *Sembah Jiwa* is truly dedicated toward

Figure 1. Etymologically, *Wedhatama* is originated from the words *wedha* and *tama*. *Wedha* means knowledge and *tama* means main goodness. It contains 5 basic principles about the existence of God, human relationship, knight soul (jiwa ksatria), respect for other, and struggle of life teachings. The manuscript is written in the form of Javanese stanza (Javanese poetic rhythm), which is divided into 4 forms of stanza: namely *Pangkur* (7 lines)*, Sinom* (9 lines)*, Pocung* (4 lines), and *Gambuh* (5 lines).

God and is the last path to the level of finding the essence[1]. *Sembah Jiwa* is done by always remembering God (*zikr*). Implementing *Sembah Jiwa* involves four stages, namely, through experiencing *Ngangkah* (reaching), *Ngukut* (positioning and mastering), *Ngiket* (binding), and *Ngruket* (hugging), with the highest peak in the condition of "forgetting and being forgotten" (*Kanyut,* in Javanese), wherein macrocosm lives in microcosm. The condition of "forgetting and being forgotten" is where the conscious and unconscious minds melt and integrate with the overall reality. In *Sembah Jiwa*, the object of *Ngangkah*, *Ngukut*, *Ngiket*, and *Ngruket* is called *triloka* (three worlds), which refers to material, mental, and spiritual worlds. Thus, to reach, to position, to bind, and to hug are significant steps to integrate and master *triloka* into the inner self. Integrating and mastering *triloka* into inner self requires doing practices taught in *Sembah Raga*, controlling desires and self through *Sembah Cipta*, and contemplation and *zikr* through *Sembah Jiwa*. If this condition is achieved, then macrocosm lives in microcosm (inner self).

The fourth worship written in the manuscript is *Sembah Rasa* (worship beyond rituals or worship by inner soul) which does not require any further practices.

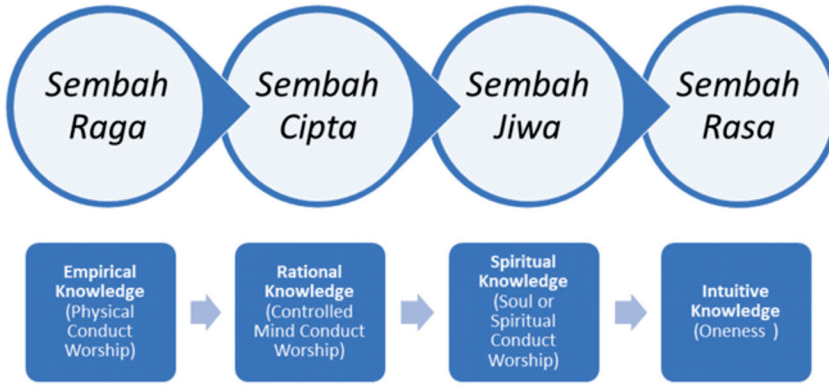

Figure 2. Epistemologically, the moral thought in *Serat Wedhatama* is the transformation from empirical knowledge, rational knowledge, spiritual knowledge, and intuitive knowledge. Perfection in doing physical conduct worship which is based on physiological sensing (motoric and sensory) is the entry point to the perfection of intellectual worship which is based on clear and pure reasoning. Perfect intellectual worship will transform human being into highly intensive spiritual worship to achieve the truth which is based on intuitive knowledge.

1 This spiritual sides of the Javanese philosophy found in Javanese literatures were also studied intensely by Suwondo and co- workers (Suwondo; T., Riyadi. S., Priyoprabowo, D., Sukardi, M.P. *Nilai-nilai Budaya Susastra Jawa*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1994).

Sembah Rasa only requires an agile and firm inner soul. Once it is achieved, human beings only feel the essence of life. Both *Sembah Jiwa* (the third worship) and *Sembah Rasa* (the fourth worship) belong to intuitive knowledge because the knowledge source is intuition or inspiration. When knowledge is obtained rationally and empirically, the process used is reasoning. Intuitive knowledge is gained without the process of reasoning. This phenomenon can be found in situations where one who focuses on a certain problem and suddenly finds the answer to the problem without going through a tough process of reasoning.

True intuition is a shortened path toward knowledge which is supposed to be expressed by senses and reflective thoughts. Therefore, those with much experience in their field can easily have intuition. A profound spiritual view, for example, can appear among those who are consistently busy with spiritual thoughts. Aesthetic inspiration comes to those who intensively relate to the world of art. Likewise, religious intuition arises from those who are intensively close to religious matters. Intuition is personal and cannot be foreseen. Intuition is not reliable to be considered and used as a basis to construct systematic knowledge. Intuitive knowledge can be used as a hypothesis for subsequent analyses in determining the correctness of a statement.

Based on the nature or characteristic of the way the knowledge is acquired, it is clearly observed that each *Sembah* in *Serat Wedhatama* has its own category in science (e.g., logic or *akal budi*, empirical, rational, and intuitive). A methodological measurement such as correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and logic truth theorem can be used and applied respectively, depending on the type of knowledge inside *Sembah* teachings, expressed in the manuscript. Nevertheless, the four *Sembah* in *Serat Wedhatama* is integrated and directed to gain a type of religious knowledge, based on Islamic teachings. Therefore, the implication is that to meaning the worships can evolve dynamically, but the content of the meaning is not changed and absolute because it is derived from the holy book. The absolute nature of the manuscript has an implication that belief should be put as the basis to understand truth in knowledge inside *Serat Wedhatama*.

Conclusion

In this study, epistemology is used to understand the overall intent of Wedhatama as a moral teaching. Understanding the proper philosophy of knowledge or the epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* is found to help understand the concept of moral messages comprehensively. The epistemology of *Serat Wedhatama* is found in the concept of four *Sembah* or worships, namely, *Sembah Raga*, *Sembah Cipta*,

Sembah Jiwa, and *Sembah Rasa*. The sources, characteristics, and truths from the epistemological perspective in *Serat Wedhatama* can be explained in the four worships. The epistemological approach for *Serat Wedhatama* opens the possibility of explaining the hidden values and presenting the values and moral teachings systematically not only for *Serat Wedhatama* but also for other Javanese manuscripts which are generally more intuitive than empirical and rational. The contents of literature constructed using empirical and rational knowledge capture meanings easier than those of that constructed by intuitive knowledge. Unfortunately, in-depth messages are often conveyed intuitively, as observed in *Serat Wedhatama.*

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Textured Understanding of the XIX Century US Missionary Enterprise in the East

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Abstract This paper aims to articulate the historical background of the US missionary policy in the East and its outreach through literary and publicist texts. I argue that the theories and concepts motivating the Americans for the mission in the East in the XIX century were inspired by centennial attractiveness of the region to both Europeans and Americans. Additionally, in the US political and literary imagination, the eastern land was associated with the border of "the land of promise" "gifted" them by the Heavens. Linking the idea of the Old and New Canaan, the Americans determined the Middle East as a "new frontier" of their country. My basic claim is that the missionary, as a strategic tool of the 'soft power' managed the US colonial policy in the East and justified it with noble tales. What encouraged the pragmatic Americans to launch "soft power" technologies there? The reason lays not so deep: in a direct interrelation between the widening of New England missionary to the Middle East and the development of financial and exploration points there.

In the paper, I propose the diversity of the American missionary narratives, most of which are intertwined into political texts. The travel diaries, essays, and particularly, the colonial-missionary novels have been structured around a plot describing the missionaries as courageous and legitimate defenders of the eastern lands and culture, and the aborigines, who were seeking their protection. This policy of the Americans have been pursued until present: without changing its essence, it has acquired new forms, and uses modern technologies to intervene in the politics of the eastern countries. In examining the roots of the US colonial policy, I explore the Joshua Strong's concept of the Anglo-Saxons' priority, Frederic Turner's "Frontier thesis", and other American myths and stereotypes.

Key words orientalism; missionary; colonialism; soft power; cultural dominance

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Introduction

Missionary activities and their role in the world historical, cultural, economic, and religious politics have always been in the center of numerous disputes and discussions. Who are missionaries: ministers of good or uninvited guests? What goals do they pursue: is missionary a disseminating of the God's word or a secret territorial and cultural expansion of other nations? What forms is this activity reflected in the texts?

Initiated in England, missionary movement further was supported by other European countries and America. A large variety of religions disseminated its values in missionaries around the world, but movement of Christian preachers at the turn of the XVIII-XIX centuries was comparatively widespread. Missionaries of all Christian denominations quoted a passage from the Gospel of Matthew, where the risen Jesus says to his followers: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations…."[1] Missionaries perceived this passage as the "Great Commission" and considered it as one of the last mandates that Jesus had given the disciples before ascending to Heaven.

It is challenging to reveal, what ideas pushed the Christian missionaries at the beginning of their journey, and how they correlated with the indigenous population in the stations. The expectations might be different. As N.Etherington states, only 12% of people on mission settlements were there for "spiritual" reasons. The majority sought either material advantage or psychological security (Etherington 31-40).

In 1820, first missionaries arrived in North Africa, India, Ottoman Empire, and China with the goal of "evangelizing the world", and played a significant role in the history and life of these regions. Firstly, God's messengers influenced the

1 Matthew 28: 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Holy Bible, New International Version®, 2011.

restructuring of social welfare of aboriginal people. They were actively involved in building schools and hospitals, developing local agriculture and technology. Secondly, self-righteous missionaries made efforts to impose an alien morality to the aboriginal people, and insisted on accepting the European way of life, which was largely ignored by the local people. In the study of Christian missions in Africa is noted, "Some groups such as the Basotho and the Tswana openly welcomed missionaries, others like the Pedi, the Zulu and the Pondo vehemently rejected their presence as a matter of national policy" (Etherington 34).

As any missionary, the earliest American missionaries to the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century were sure that their faith carried an imperative of universal evangelization. They were intolerant to other religions, and their belief in their own was unwavering. American missionaries managed two-folded situation: they were initiators of incipient Western imperial expansion into Ottoman lands, and spending the sums given by pious American churchgoers to support the mission, enjoyed the opportunities of political and economic access (Sharkey 2).

American missionaries were key social actors and played a significant role in constructing public affairs of the New Republic. As the historian William R. Hutchison observed, the American foreign missionary movement had become, by the late XIX century, "a massive affair, involving tens of thousands of Americans abroad and millions at home. It sent abroad, through most of its history, not only the largest contingents of Americans, but also the most highly educated" (Hutchison 1). The functions of "the most highly educated" Americans involved not only spread of evangelical values, but influencing minds and souls of the local people through building schools, and hospitals, establishing printing presses, and other institutions in all the territories, including the Ottoman lands.

The situation was identical with the missionary in China. The main areas of activity of Protestant missionaries in China, both English and American, were medicine, pedagogy, and politics. Contemporary China researchers state that great importance to medicine and education attached by Protestant missionary in the occupied lands was the best way to get closer to the local population. In Beijing, all districts were united into religious communities and temples. The main goal of the Protestant religious activity was also construction of schools, hospitals and other cultural and charitable institutions. They hoped that through school teaching they would force the Chinese to enjoy Christian cultural and religious values. Through medical service, the missionaries were planning to gain the favor and sympathy of the Chinese people, thereby involving them to preaching Christianity. Therefore, each Protestant mission paid special attention to medical service of the indigenous

people (Romanenko 169). Sharkey argues that missionary encounters strongly affected all parties involved, leading to changes in ideas, practices, and outlooks (Sharkey 2). In his turn, Hutchison mentions the missionaries as "the chief interpreters of remote cultures for the people at home" (Hutchison 1).

Along with it, some scholars propose that generally missionary enterprise in the East was a failure because of a small number of converted to evangelical Christianity. As one of the main reasons of this failure, they mark the concentration of protestant missions mainly in the cities, unlike Catholics, who predominantly carried out missionary work in rural areas (Romanenko 171). We agree with the view that missionary enterprise could not completely succeed in the Asian countries because of their traditionalist cultures, and support V. Styopin explaining it with differences in cultural identity. According to Styopin, "identity in traditionalist cultures means being a part of a definite clan, caste, given from birth. If one leaves this community, he then loses his identity", personal and cultural (Styopin 6).

In studying the texts of the US missionary enterprise, we are observing the imposition of one culture upon another. We attempt to explore this possibility of a power imbalance between Christian missionary culture and the respondent culture, which is based on racial, national, and gender differences. Over time, missionary activity had become a form of both spiritual and physical inclination. Willingly or not, religious people often appeared at the forefront of the processes, which further turned out as colonization efforts. It comes out from the missionary texts that the spread of the Christian faith has never been a way to "civilize" backward peoples outside of Europe and the United States. There were varieties of reasons for missionary presence in these lands, which we had discussed before. Therefore, revealing the peculiarities and technologies of implementation into an alien environment, learning the methods and means of justification the dominance of one culture over another in the narratives also contributes to textual understanding of the US missionary.

We believe that the parallel task of the missionaries was to learn the culture of the colonized people. In this process, the missionaries came across more difficulties in understanding the traditionalist cultures of the local people. The Europeans and Americans could not grasp the essence of a circular movement of these cultures, which saw "the best state of their society not in the future, but in the past". Academician Styopin characterizes it as "a return to the original foundations" (Styopin 7).

Unfortunately, this knowledge has automatically transformed respondent culture into the alien "othered," and as Raka Shome notes, "from an object

of study, it became the object of criticism" (Shome 43). Consequently, all the gained information of racial, cultural, and national character, lifestyle, strengths and weaknesses of local people turned into an instrument of domination and manipulation of the West. In the Preface to his well-known work, Edward Said quotes an epigram of Disraeli "The East is a career"[1]. "When Disraeli said in his novel Tancred that the East was a career", explains Said, "…he should not be interpreted as saying that the East was only a carrier for Westerners." And he adds, "there were—and are—cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West" (Said 5). Evidently, these remarks of Said could be related generally to the mode of thinking of the most Westerners about the East, especially of the missionaries to the East. Their gendered, "othered", "orientalized" views concerning the indigenous people of the East had influenced their approach to the local population of the colonized territories whom they tried to learn and understand, and who were called "heathens", "barbarians", etc. in their narratives. Finally, they could not grasp such a simple thing that other "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force or more precisely their configurations of power" (Said 5).

On the problem of European and American missionary to the East

By the early XIX century, Jerusalem was restored as the center of Anglican presence in the Ottoman Empire. England made efforts to be in forefront of this restoration process, and in 1809, the London Society for Propagation the Christianity among Jews was founded. Later on, in 1820 under Church was established the first Missionary Society, which started training missionaries for the Middle East. Popularizing theology and marketing Christian missions by London Society in the 40s of the XIX century has been well studied by many researchers[2].

In 1841, an Anglo-Lutheran bishopric was established in Jerusalem, whose duties included maintaining a theological dialogue with the Eastern churches,

1 See: Disraeli, Benjamin. *Tancred: or, The New Crusade.* The Online Books Page. https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=Disraeli%Benjamin%2C%201804%2D1881

2 See: Gidney W.T. The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, from 1809 to 1908. L., 1908; Tibawi A.L. British interests in Palestine, 1800–1901. Oxf., 1961; Farah E. Caesar. Protestantism and Politics: The 19th century Dimension in Syria // Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period; Political, Social and Economic Transformation / Ed. by David Kushner. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986, 320–340; Jewish Intelligence. L., 1835–1842; American missionary journal: The Jewish Chronicle / Ed. by J. Lillie. N. Y., 1846. Vol. I–II.

as well as, excluding any propaganda among them, and influencing, mainly by personal example. The missionaries of the Society also considered non-Jews as objects of preaching. In the 40s, the activities of the Anglicans in Ottoman Syria intensified markedly (Solodukhina 65-77).

Gaining independence of the New Republic in America soon was followed by brisk commerce with the Orient, which gave the country an important force. Oriental trade was actually significant for the New Republic, both as an economic value, and as a sign of national power. Soon after the Revolutionary War and signing the Acts of Trade, US ships arrived in Ottoman lands: Constantinople in 1786, Smyrna in 1797, and Alexandria in 1800 (Field 113). The main object of trade with Smyrna was opium for China. This trade was a sign of power, and the United States cornered the Smyrna market (Finnie 30-31).

There is a direct interrelation between the development of trade and widening of New England missionary to the Middle East. Obviously, a more intense penetration of Western Christianity, especially Protestantism, began after the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860). Opium wars was a tool for each side to strengthen its power in the eastern markets. By the 1830s, the United States had negotiated a commercial treaty with Turkey, and trade with the Tripolitan states became well established. Consequently, Great Britain got an open trade and access to the Chinese domestic market, and the Chinese maintained sovereign control over their trade and independence from the Western powers (Bays 47-48). After winning the Opium Wars, foreign powers forced the Chinese government to sign a series of treaties in which foreigners, including missionaries, were granted exclusive rights (Bays 66).

The Middle East, which kept religious relics and shrines, could not be left aside by the American churchmen either. Actually, the interests of both sides – the state and the church came across on this land. Therefore, the initiative of the church to create a mission in the eastern lands immediately was supported by the American state, and Christian missionaries who were anxious that on this land "the cultures of ancient Christian churches and Islam mingled" and the distinctions between "enlightened" and "heathen" were extremely unclear (Malini 78). Following the disestablishment of Protestant churches in the early XIX century, the clergymen sought new ways to regain their former power, popularizing evangelical values and attracting new followers.

The first American missionaries arrived in the Middle East in 1820 and in the next five years carried out extensive activities to popularize Christianity and convert Muslims to this faith. By 1825, they already had two stable missions—in Malta and

Beirut. The triumph of missionary activity was opening of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut in 1866. The 100th anniversary of this College was widely celebrated in this country in 1966 (Tibawi 29, 303).

There are different approaches to US missionary in a variety of sources and scholarly researches. Nevertheless, the key point in all assessments are the words "empire" and "imperialism". Thus, an American researcher E. Conroy-Krutz assures that "American evangelicals had dual identity: they were both evangelical Christians who saw themselves as transnational figures taking part in a global struggle for God's kingdom, and Americans whose national pride called them to partner with Great Britain in the conversion of the world" (Conroy-Krutz 5). They believed that the Anglo-American civilization was a model of upper development, which should have to be accepted by low civilized nations. In *Missionaries and Imperialism* the role of missions in colonized territories is revealed as economic, social, and cultural exploitation, and the missionaries are called "imperialists; if different from other imperialists, it is because they were marginal, or because they were worse" (Howard 2018). Hutchison confesses, "All western missionaries were somehow enmeshed in political imperialism" and calls them "selective imperialists" (Hutchison 205). In the review to Conroy-Krutz's book, the author R. Brenner reminds that that it were the evangelicals who "had helped lay the groundwork for American imperialism by their active disseminating of American values around the world, particularly in Ottoman state, Africa, Hawaii, Palestine, and India" (Brenner, 2016). It is obvious that the American missionaries were motivated in their activities not only by religious fervor, but also by colonial and economic interests.

Missionary movement abroad has become the subject of many literary texts published in the United States. The novels about missionaries were addressed mainly to the female readership, especially interested in this topic, and most active in the formation of foreign missions. The writers created colonial missionary novels, the main characters of which were brave Western men, who at the risk of their lives, explored new territories, or participated in archaeological excavations in a distant country. They believed that, like Champollion[1], they would be able to discover lost civilizations and forgotten languages, presenting their own culture to ignorant aborigines. Western women in these novels had a mission to spread biblical truths,

1 Jean François Champollion (1790-1832), great French philologist and historian, whose discoveries laid the basis for what is known today as Egyptology. It was Champollion who fiercely contested all the academic assumptions about Egypt, and, by deciphering the Rosetta stone unlocked the secrets of its ancient language, and established a scientific basis for studying Egyptian civilization. <https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fid_9701/993_champollion.html>

and to support Western men in their intentions to change the faith of Muslim women[1].

The images of missionaries, their activities on the "Christianization of the world," their relations with local people, methods and techniques of learning alien culture, and involving the "heathens" to the Christian preaches—all these issues were reflected in different forms of the nineteenth century US missionary narratives. A sketchy literary story about missionary in the Middle East branches out into many components of US racial-gender imperialism. To veil true goals, and attract more readers to these works, the authors managed a love story in a racial-gendered setting, although a love story in its various manifestations is just an ornate decoration of the plot. In essence, through the images of explorers, American authors drew a parallel between the European colonists, the first settlers of North America, and a new generation of American discoverers of eastern lands.

The methodology of this study is based on the analysis of postcolonial and gender components of the XIX century American missionary narrative by means of implementing historical and narratological tools. The study particularly concerns the missionary novel in the Middle East in its historical context, and synthesizes literary, cultural, and religious studies. American literature of that period could be hardly evaluated in terms of postcolonial studies, as unlike the empires of England and France, it did not possess colonies outside its borders at that time. In contrast, modern scholars emphasize the colonial status of early American literature (Buel 411). So, literary and publicist works concerning the East demonstrate a clear sensitivity to the imperial ambitions of New England, issues of racial and gender differences. Daniel J. Boorstin, Ahmed M. Metwalli, Helen Montgomery, A.L. Tibawi, Ann Douglas and many other researchers of early American literature[2] have covered these issues in their works.

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1 Well-known works of this period were: Henry Brent, "The Mysterious Pyramid" (1850), Maturin Murray Ballou, *The Turkish Slave* (1850), and John De Forest, *Irene the Missionary* (1879). Even well-known woman writer Maria Susanna Cummins wrote a missionary novel *El Fureidîs* in 1860. William Ware wrote *Zenobia* (1837), a history of Palmira queen, highlighting the difference between eastern and western rulers. –N.I.

2 See: Boorstin, Daniel. The Americans: The Colonial Experience. Vintage Books: Random House, New-York, 1958, 434; Metwalli Ahmed M. Americans Abroad: The Popular Art Travel Writing in the 19 century. Montgomery, Helen Barret. Western Women in Eastern Lands. New York: Garland, 1987; Tibawi, A.L. American Interest in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work. Oxford: Clarendon, 1966; Ann Douglas. The Feminization of American Culture. New York: Knoph, 1977.

Gender Discourse in US Missionary Texts

When churches appealed to American women for missionary work in the eastern lands, the latter welcomed the initiative with great enthusiasm. Having become missionaries, American churchwomen could strengthen their social status in a post-revolutionary society, gain independence and certain power over the oppressed women. According to Ann Douglas, "it provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated." She recognizes that "it always borders on dishonesty but it is a dishonesty for which there is no known substitute in a capitalist country" (Douglas 12).

On this way, American women-missionaries embodied their nation as an empire, whose representatives are fundamentally different from Eastern women. In his speech on the social status of oriental women, Rev. Ross Houghton highly appreciated the efforts of "those Christian ladies of America whose sympathies and efforts are enlisted in the work of elevating Oriental women through the power of Christian education" (Rev. Hougton 5). Thus, the first feminine missionary organizations were established by 1800, 11 years before the foundation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. By 1848, there were already 13 feminine missionary societies in New England (Montgomery 19). In general, missionary women adopted the rhetoric of a portable Christianity from their brethren who had much more experience in this field. Women's societies, claiming organizational and financial autonomy, were just constructing their own path on this way.

Appreciating the activities of missionary women in the East, Samuel Worcester wrote in 1815, that those *outside* Christianity have no "good hope." "….Their Gods cannot save them", he adds, "their religion does not satisfy the heart or the life, does not dissipate the darkness which heavily broods over them, thickening into the blackness of eternal night" (Singh 106).

By the mid XIX century, women in missionary societies in the United States were using similar images. The process of involving American churchwomen to support "helpless and secluded heathen women" was so intense, that by 1900 among 94 missionary boards exclusively women's boards counted 41 with several supporting agencies. Missionary organizers of women's missionary societies in America claimed to have raised 4 million dollars through their 2 million supporters (Singh 106). Nevertheless, as Ann Douglas notes, "nineteenth-century American women were oppressed, and damaged; inevitably, the influence they exerted in turn on their society was not altogether beneficial". But why?—We wonder how they

could combine attributed to American women toughness, oppression, and non-beneficial influence on the society. Douglas reveals her views on the situation, "The cruelest aspect of the process of oppression is the logic by which it forces its objects to be oppressive in turn, to do the dirty work of their society in several senses" (Douglas 11).

Women missionary activities in the eastern lands were presented both in the letters, reports, social histories, and in Presbyterian women's journal titled "Woman's work for Woman," which published widely produced missionary writings on the US missionary in the nineteenth century. Diversified missionary texts, served as "conduits for disseminating and perpetuating discourses about the heathen" (Singh 138). These texts represent a corpus of "knowledge" about the "Other," based on assumptions of religious, racial, and cultural character. Therefore, reading missionary literature was crucial for understanding the missionary.

Missionaries produced a great variety of texts. They were encouraged to write both letters home, and reports, articles, memoirs, travelogues, and autobiographical and anecdotal narratives. They considered it a professional *obligation* to inform their home community about their progress in the field, to send detailed information with facts, needs, and problems. Consequently, a vast body of writings, called missionary literature, has been collected in American archives, and could be used in creating literary works.

In the array of missionary literature there were literary texts based on missionary reports and social stories. Enjoying missionary reports and stories, the authors attempted to create literary works readable for all ages, especially for women readers. In order to attract women they constructed their narratives like love stories. So, in *The Turkish slave, or, The Mahometan and his harem: a story of the East* by Maturin Murray Ballou (1850), this relationship was presented between the Greek slave Alik and Esma, the daughter of the Turkish Sultan. In the novel *Irene The Missionary* (1879) by John De Forest, the love triangle is much more complicated: the explorer Huberstein De Vries, fascinated by the local beauty Saada, was the object of love of his compatriot—missionary Irene Grant. Finally, in the novel *El- Fureidis* (1860), Maria Susanna Cummins also describes love affairs of the archaeologist Meredith, and Havillah, the daughter of an American businessman from a mixed marriage with an Indian woman.

To show the difference between American and Eastern women, the latter in these novels were portrayed as frivolous, idle, and oppressed, while women missionaries were represented as independent and intelligent. The liberation of women from harem was an important task for both women-missionaries and their

compatriots—men, although, generally, concern for the moral order was considered the prerogative of men. These novels ended in the same way as all women's novels: the missionary, who tried a little freedom and achieved some success in name of Christian faith, completed her mission, returned to her family and community, married a strong and decent man.

This template plot was generally accepted in all works about missionaries, where writers satirically depicted the ideological foundations of a country whose heroes were realizing its imperial ambitions. Awareness of racial and gender hierarchy of missionary and colonial imperialism was an important feature of these works, demonstrating the unlimited frontiers of the Eastern discourse in the mid-XIX century.

Frontier Theory in the Missionary Novels

The Americans believed that the more their country was developing, the further east in search of new lands the new borders of the United States should have extended[1]. To their opinion, this way should stretch into the historical depths of civilization, where it started its evolution cycle[2]. Accordingly, in the novel *Irene, the Missionary,* the Middle East for New England resident Uberstein De Vries, a strong, energetic, and self-confident representative of the American nation, meant a new frontier in his country's colonial policy. As a professional archaeologist, DeVries spent all his time

1 The Frontier Thesis, forwarded by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893, had a profound influence on the formation of the ideology of US expansionism. In his theory, Turner pointed out that "the American character owes its aggressive, innovative, and democratic characteristics to the American border." He declared that the border creates freedom, "destroying the bonds of tradition, offering new experiences, creating new institutions and activities. "Turner first put forward his theory in an article entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in 1893 at the International Columbia Exhibition in Chicago. It is enlightened in: Billington, Ray Allen. Land of Savagery / Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century (1981); Jensen, Richard. "On Modernizing Frederick Jackson Turner," Western Historical Quarterly 11 (1980), 307-20; Etulain, Richard W. Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians (2002).

2 The idea of a civilization passing through a full cycle in its development was popular at that time. It was argued that empires arose at the dawn of civilization in the Far East, and then expanded to Europe, and further to the New World. XVIII century English traveler Andrew Burnaby expressed this popular view after visiting America: "an idea, strange as it is visionary, [had] entered into the minds of the generality of mankind, that empire is travelling westward; and every one is looking forward … to that destined moment when America is to give law to the rest of the world." See: Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 101.

among the ruins, studied the remains of the lost culture and wrote the history of this region for indigenous people: "The whole of Asia Minor ought to be excavated," he confidently declared (Forest 35).

Unlike the American scholar, a relentless "discoverer of the Syrian culture," the locals themselves were lesser interested in the ruins than in their economic benefits. Thus, through the image of DeVries, a young, energetic nation was described as capable of detecting and evaluating the values that the eastern aborigines themselves were not able to implement. Using this narratological tool, John de Forest emphasized, on one hand, the strength and patriarchal power of the United States, and on the other, the helplessness and dependence of the eastern inhabitants.

Accordingly, the same type of narration extends in El-Fureidis. In this work, the image of the main character Meredith, the explorer of the East, is more complex and contradictory in terms of racial and cultural distinctions. Meredith, a self-sufficient English aristocrat, who on his own came to El-Fureidis, discovered an unusual land, which looked like the narrative in Bradford's History of the Plymouth settlement. Let us compare these texts:

> ...that far-famed Eastern land, which, when the Most High divided unto the nations their inheritance, He gave unto his chosen people, - that land that immortalized as the Paradise of our earthly parents, the Canaan of the favored race, … the cherished spot whence the day spring from on high has visited us.... (Cummins 11)
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> Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah[1] to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (saved upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects. (Bradford 61)
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> Our fathers were Englishmen, who came over the great ocean and were ready to perish in the wilderness, but they cried to the Lord, and He heard their voice and looked on their adversity…. Yes, let them who have been redeemed of the Lord, show how He has delivered them from the hand of the oppressor. (Bradford 62)

William Bradford, as the first American chronicler, imitated the Pilgrim's voyage to New England with the Israelites' migration from Egypt to Canaan described in Deuteronomy:

1 Mountain from which the Mosses saw the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34. 1-4).

> But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. (Deuteronomy 26. 6-8)

Thus, Maria Cummins colors the speech of her main hero by cognitive features of Bradford's History and the Book of Judaism. It is the key point of the American explorers in both the early experience and the colonial period. "Like "a city upon a hill"[1], El-Fureidis is described in the work as "a beacon set upon a hill", i.e. we may call it a lighthouse that indicates the path to all the humanity, and is supposed to lighten the moral values of the aborigines (Cummins 60). This "lighthouse on a hill" is fairly mentioned as "the paradigm of a new imperial border" (Malini 101).

The content of the Frontier theory as well as of the US missionary are closely linked to each other. As in implementing Frontier theory, accordingly, in the missionary politics the Americans used supporting tools, such as myths and legends. We could observe it in both preaching, and variety of talks of Father Lapierre with the heroes of "El-Fureidis". The key point of all his talks is accusing Ottoman government and Syria of despotism, bribery, injustice etc., and necessity of conversion the local people from pagan religion to Christianilty.

Another main point in emphasizing the Middle East as a new US border is the use of New England rhetoric. This rhetoric strengthened with the idea that the Americans had been under the protection of God and their destiny was presupposed, laid in the minds of the New England colonists.

"Already men's eyes are turned upon us. Western Europe and enterprising America are emulating each other in their beneficent labors in this direction. … and religion lends her aid and sanction to the work, for a faithful band of Christian missionaries are in the van of the reforming army. …God stands at the helm, and holds the nations in the hollow of his hand" (Cummins 42-43).

In 1630, the founder of the first Massachusetts colony, John Winthrop (1588-1649), a supporter of a harmonious Christian community and author of the sermon "A Model of Christian Charity", referring to his compatriots, made a speech, which subsequently became a key moment in the history of the American history:

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1 The Puritans, who arrived on the coast of Massachusetts, dreamed of constructing a holy city there similar the one that had been indicated in the biblical legend. Due to this legend, "city on the hill" was to become a beacon to the rest of the world. See: Urofsky, Melvin I. *Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy* (New York, 1995) 487.

> We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so if we shall deal falsely with our god in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. (Boorstin 3)

Comparing these texts shows that they are imitating each other both in style and in content. Thus, the author of "El Fureidis" expands the borders of the United States to the Middle East, establishing both cultural, religious, and territorial closeness of these lands. In addition, the concept of Manifest Destiny, which grew into the theory of the exclusivity of the American nation, reveals in the text the bid for assimilation with the "politically backward peoples," and colonization of peoples plunged into "darkness."

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, American missionaries settled in such regions as Anatolia and European part of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iran (until 1935-Persia). Hiding behind the slogans on the "evangelization of the world", missionaries facilitated the penetration of American capital into the explored areas. The thirst for discovering new lands, expanding borders, and searching for new markets was veiled by "fair and noble" Christian thoughts. Peyman A. Baharvand reveals these plans as follows, "The cultural hegemony of the West, that justified the presence of colonizers in their colonies, served the capitalistic interests of colonizers to plunder natural resources and appropriate fertile lands. Colonized subjects were supposed to adopt the language and manners of colonizers in order to get rid of their barbarity" (Baharvand 139).

It is undeniable; Orientalist discourse was a tool to depict non-western people as "savage" and "primitive", and to justify westerners' presence in the East. As Conroy-Crutz concludes, the Christian imperialism envisioned by the missionary "had little to do with states. It relied on existing political and economic networks between supposedly Christian nations and the so-called heathen world". The author focuses initiative of the missionaries mostly on the "spread of Anglo-American culture and Protestant religion," emphasizing the Anglo-American governance as "a tool in this larger project" (Conroy-Crutz 10).

The fundamental and regulatory force of the US policy was the theory of Predestination. This doctrine included several components or areas of activity: economic, expansionist, religious, etc. According to this concept, the New

Englanders believed that the American continent was gifted to the settlers by Divine providence, and God ordained the future of this country. Particularly, the burden of the Americans was to seize and Christianize the land. The purpose of further colonization of the East was intruded into the minds of the young Americans even at school. An interesting fact remembered Rachel Bailey Jones from his school years:

> I learned that my country was founded on ideals of freedom and equality that we were trying to spread throughout the world. My curriculum told me that the violence and wars that were supported by my country were necessary for the defense of freedom and democracy. I learned that technology and science were invented in Europe and the United States, and that we were helping the less developed people of the world to bring them up to our level. (Jones 7-8)

There were some rare cases when the Americans resisted this hegemonic discourse as a threatening state. A well-known American political leader Carl Schurz stated in his "Manifest Destiny,"

> We are told that unless we take charge of a certain country it will be ill-governed and get into internal trouble. This is certainly no inducement. This republic cannot take charge of all countries that are badly governed". He stressed the fact that "the fate of the American people is in their own wisdom and will. Therefore, it would be better if they devote their energies to the development of what they possess within their present limits. (Schurz 745-746)

Along with religious propaganda, the merit of missionaries in the cultural expansion of peoples is also great. To get closer to the indigenous people, the missionaries translated the Bible and distributed it to the aboriginal people, served in the fields of medicine, healthcare, and agriculture. They reconstructed temples, built schools and hospitals, where also served the community. Nye reveals this approach as "soft co-optive power" and believes that "soft power is just as important as hard command power". The author is sure that "if a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow it" (Nye 167).

We consider, missionary activities is a demonstration and intrusion of soft power, and the US for several centuries have been applying this policy all over the world. The power of the US is in the ability of manipulating public wants and reconstructing the situation the way they want. As Nye shows, "co-optive power

is the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences in ways consistent with its own" (Nye 168). In "structuring a situation", early American novel was managed "as a political and cultural forum," and as a tool, which could express the vision of a developing nation. Missionary novels, being a product of ambivalent US policy towards the East, demonstrated hidden interest of the new Republic in the region, and fulfilled the special task of "creating literature against the overwhelming impact of their nation's residual colonial mentality" (Davidson 11).

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Incompleteness in French Literature in the Past Century

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Abstract Literature is composed of a group of *Cinderella's* whose miseries are brought about by their violent and abusive fathers, and whose incompleteness is due to their mothers' helplessness. Miseries come along one after another, but at the same time, plant seeds of love and hatred. Deficiency cries for remedies, and at the same time, brings forth talented youth. This paper aims to reveal the feature of incompleteness in French modern and contemporary literature by studying its awkwardness. Awkwardness would mean unnatural and uneasy in traditional culture, but it can also mean supernatural and super at ease in the context of drastic turns in the development of civilizations. French literature in the recent century is outstanding in terms of awkwardness. And this awkwardness not only acts as an antidote to repression, but also embodies the practice by men of letters They write about absurdity and absurdly write, present helplessness and helplessly present, reveal all that is abominable and abominably reveal, and they rip up gentility and always rip up gentlemen-like. Not only does awkwardness embodies incompleteness, but also feeds, repaired and developed incompleteness. To put this phenomenon briefly is that awkwardness lives by its awkwardness.

Key Words French literature; modern and contemporary condition; incompleteness; awkwardness

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Incompleteness makes literature. Imperfection is the nature of literature. Awkwardness, described as uncomfortable or unnatural, is the concentrated embodiment of the true nature of literature. Therefore, it can be said that the awkwardness for incompleteness gives literature a kind of character to get rid of vulgarity. Literary

awkwardness is the fermentation of tricky events or the embodiment of awkward psychological modality. What we call decent literature benefits from imperfections, which is tantamount to say that such literature is up to perfection by deficiency. In other words, imperfection is another way to express awkwardness. Literature would be inevitably less than its taste without it, at best, only the vulgar emotions wrapped in beautiful words. Excellent literature from all over the world cannot more or less be separated from such a quality. For example, *Homer's Epic, Book of Songs, Li Sao, Tian Wen,* and *Letter to Ren'an* by Sima Qian are the cases with such endowment; it is the same with the works like *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Don Quixote*. Furthermore, just as there is incompleteness literature, so come forth the theories like "poetry expressing aspiration," "poets out of anger," "release of sexual repression" and "symbols of anguish," etc..

Literature is the product of human beings' want, and the literature of all ethnic groups are no exception. Why only mention the modern and contemporary French literature, that is, French literature in the past hundred years? The author thinks that in ancient and modern literature, incompleteness is only the cause and yeast of formation, but in this particular period, French literature directly resorts to fragmentariness as literary symbol which is expressed incisively and vividly. From the point of view of traditional culture, awkward state is unnatural and uncomfortable; as far as the variables of civilization turning point are concerned, it is supernatural and super at ease. Here, we choose three Chinese Characters " 尬 "(gan in pinyin, literally awkward, embarrassing, unnatural), " 甘 " (gan in pinyin, literally willing, sweet, righteous) and " 敢 " (gan in pinyin, literally dare) to summarize three key points of modern and contemporary French literature with incomplete quality.

The Literature Successfully Lives by Its Awkwardness to be Awkward

The Gan, (" 尬 ", awkwardness, embarrassment) of literature is the first remarkable feature of French literature in the past hundred years. It is said that awkwardness is a true element of human literature. What it claims is the cause of literature---incompleteness**.** In the long process of literary development, the deficiencies as constituent elements have been decomposed and misappropriated, even obscured and annihilated. This priceless treasure, which was earlier than the existence of literature, beneficial to literature and was born with literature, has not received sufficient attention, nor has it been developed in mufti-dimensions and in a large scope.

French literary world has been outstanding in terms of the manner of deficiency

in the past hundred years. The awkwardness of deficiency is not only the resistance to all repressive forces, but also personal practice of literary people who live by the awkwardness of incompleteness and write about this state. They write about absurdity and absurdly write, present helplessness and helplessly present, reveal all that is abominable and abominably reveal, and they rip up gentility and always rip up gentlemen-like. This awkwardness not only reflects incompleteness, but also an feeds, repairs and develops completeness. To put it this phenomenon briefly, that is, literary awkwardness successfully lives by its awkwardness of incompleteness.

If we talk about the awkward state of French literature in the past hundred years, the first thing is the embarrassing and awkward situation created by the times, i.e. the absence, belatedness and perversion of positive energy over and again. In the 20th century, France experienced a series of wars, and literature and art in a broad sense was afflicted by torrential bloods and ferocious wars. Axis vs Alliance, Henri Philippe Pétain vs Gaulle, hot war vs cold war, suzerainty vs subordination, the left vs the right... Absurdity, a paradoxical theme, aroused surging tides and turbulence in literature one after another, thus making literature uneasy and unnatural. The subject matter of war and its trauma constitutes a haunting black memory. Secondly, literature was placed in the state of awkwardness for its incompleteness or, to say, the results of the mission of French culture. For nearly a hundred years, French culture is actually the mouthpiece of the Mediterranean culture. Although Europe was ravaged by fascism, unyielding literature based on France acts as the outpost. The voice of the Gallic rooster inspired and encouraged the Mediterranean cultural circle. French literati made a resounding sound without flinch. This is why the various voices can turn up in the literary forum. However, loud voices tend to be funny, and "the preacher tends to be poor" is also commonplace, embarrassing, yet impressive and lovely. Finally, the awkwardness of incompleteness comes from the free atmosphere of France. Freedom often makes the literati carried away, thus making it out of expectation. Does freedom have anything to do with incompleteness? The answer is yes. In addition to wars and other violence, freedom is also its catalyst. The modern and contemporary French literature reveals another paradox, that is, freedom fulfills no shortage of literary incompleteness and imperfections; on the contrary, freedom accomplishes the incompleteness in the absence of literary deficiency. Literary incompleteness has become fragmentary literature, just as countless Godot's waiting makes the masterpiece of "waiting for Godot." The unfettered French society put writers in an open environment. Especially after World War II when the whole French cultural environment seemed like the world of April with grass growing crazily and the warblers flying wildly,

full of spring light was in the literary garden where French writer groups spoke freely. The most beautiful literature fluttered here, and the ugliest creations were unbridled. The literary and artistic forms of incompleteness by French writers and French-based writers from all over the world, are not accidental, but commonplace.

Generally speaking, awkwardness can be said to be the beauty mole of French literature and art in the past hundred years, and even its barometer. It is the achievement of French literature and art. Embarrassing literature is imperfect in the ordinary world, but not all of them can be excellent literature.With its lurking in imperfections, the modern and contemporary French literature turns into the imperfection, the essence of which is to enter into another spiritual world, namely, the world of "god is dead". Therefore, the deficiency becomes the deficiency of implicit ideal, and the deficiency literature becomes an epoch-making literature.

The Literature Successfully Lives by its Willingness to be Awkward

The character " 甘 " (gan in pinyin, literally willing, sweet, righteous) of literature is the second outstanding feature of French literature in the past hundred years. Many imperfections can be summarized by a Chinese character " 甘 " (gan in pinyin). It has a deep connection with 尴 (gan,embarrassment, awkward). It also means "sweet", which dilutes the bitterness of the word 尴 (gan) , its embarrassment and awkwardness. In addition, it means "willing", glad of the embarrassing and awkward deficiency. Finally, the word means "righteousness", bearing the grievance of an awkward state. As far as this is concerned, the feeling of 甘 (gan) is connected with 尴 (gan) the awkwardly deficient state. In the modern and contemporary French literature, the awkwardness of incompleteness is subtle in shape, and the feeling of 甘 (gan) is its perceptual temperament. There is an affinity in the process of awkwardness (尴 , gan) to willingness (甘 , gan) with some connection of true form; they are also different from each other in that awkward state is to focus on generative and endowing aspect, whereas 甘 (gan) regards bearing and receiving.

The incompleteness squeezes literature, and the squeeze makes literature. The differences of modern and contemporary French literature lie in its incompleteness, not afraid of suffering, and from the bitterness comes the wonderfulness. There are countless writers worldwide who suffer yet achieve. However, it also results in a limitation of long-term suffering and repression so that the accustomed literature has become an entity, over time just like the spring unable to recover after stretching up to an unbearable extent. Despite its advantages, it has its malpractice of nodules. At the beginning of the last century, most of the French literati were not steeped in hardship. They were immersed into the expressway of industrialization

and modernization, being either as the cultural trend riders or as the proud son of thought. They are also hosts in the ups and downs of war, in the economic take-off and dazzling changes of freedom, so they fully experience a mixture of tastes in awkwardness and free and easy in mentality and writing. Compared with their former generations, their endowment is worth pondering. The literati in the 18th and 19th centuries were bent over by the primitive accumulation of capital with a great deal of suffering. What they wrote was the literature tamped by suffering, going straight to the bottom of the society, being the entity literature of blood and fire. The masterpieces like *La Comédie Humaine, Les Misérables, Madame Bovary, Boule de Suif* all belong to this kind, and the incompleteness of literature coming downward to the bottom has not risen up, not to mention incompleteness literature with achievements. However, modern and contemporary writers, with less palpable love and hatred, have more beans-like description, more champagne-style foam humor, with an emergence of rare inaction, mischief, and uneasiness. So depressive as *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, unrestrained as *L'Amant*, boring as *La Nausée*, bitter as *La Peste*, being as ethereal in other world of life as in L*'étranger*... These works are no longer substantive works reflecting the status quo, but the spiritual embodiment of fate, war, prison, death and being. These things make literature into deficiency literature. At the beginning of the century, the writer were still able to recall the sweetness of Marguerite's snacks. From the middle to the end of the literary world, the works almost belonged to this type. Writers brewed various deficiencies and defects for sweet taste, turning awkwardness into willingness, feeling at home in that inadequate state.

If many writers in history write because of such incompleteness, then most of the writers since the 20th century have directly turned themselves into incompleteness, with no regrets and willingness to do so, just as Sisphus pushed the boulder up the mountain, placed in the state of deficiency, of becoming it, of willingness to it. It becomes a style of incompleteness.

The Literature Successfully Lives by Its Daring to be Awkward

It is commendable for one to be willing to be in an awkward incompleteness. It is more valuable to dare to be so (敢 , gan, literary dare to do). The spirit of modern and contemporary French literature in daring its awkwardness is worthwhile writing a great deal. The awkward quality of incompleteness is a special quality of literary variables. It is difficult to reveal its tender buds in a repressive society, so it has never been highlighted in history. In other words, only when the various political constraints and human nature are unlocked with an open and free culture booming,

can it show its true appearance.The author has always believed that literature is a multifaceted god, a nine-headed monster, a root grass, or a nebula song; in a word, it is a great humanistic luxury of incompleteness. These deficiencies often happen accidentally in a certain way, rarely together, not to mention gathering of various groups of deficiencies and resonance of various kinds of awkwardness. However, awkward literature in the modern and contemporary French literature and culture has emerged rapidly and brilliantly, with its subtlety, its reason, and its extremes, daring to be awkward.

Daring to be awkward and embarrassed is the most prominent strength of character of French literary people and even of many cultured people. André Breton, Duras, Sartre, Camus, Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Simon, Michael Tournier—the array of writers are all warriors with the fragmentary quality of awkwardness.They not only dare to reveal their shortcomings and ugliness, but also dare to defile their own names and to displace themselves. As far as the mind is concerned, only a few literary heroes have this style in the history of human literature. For example, Lu Xun of China is a great man of this kind. The reason why we are optimistic about the awkward literature of France for nearly a hundred years is that this kind of literature has prevailed throughout in this respect. They are the most daring to expose their precious self, not afraid of foul publicity; Most daring to dissect deep-rooted bad habits of the people regardless of pressure; the most daring to shake away the burden of achievement, not hesitating to tear open the hypocrisy of freedom, equality, and fraternity; the most daring to reveal the other side of truth, goodness, beauty and sanctity, which is as respectable as those who reveal the blood of capital; the most daring to break through stereotypes and old habits in the area of style clearance, even as into no-style territory; the most daring to push the literary frontier to the boundless horizon, letting the otherness literature become popular, and as to the melting-casting action in pure literature, miscellaneous literature, pan-literature para-literature, bad literature, and non-literature, literary people almost do whatever it takes to do everything; the most daring to be open to the diversity of linear time and space and dynastic culture so that in recent decades it has been difficult to cage literature with modernity or post-modernity; the most daring to break away from the boundaries of cities, countries and states, as writers in France are like the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) in Paris not only feel at home, but also can learn from the past and the present and inspire the writing...We have used so many positive expressions of “most” as polar rhetoric in one breath, because a cultural occasion can push shortcomings to the center, which can really be described as a cultivation of humanistic world with no center. And among

them the most considerable is the awkward deficiency literature, which is the most difficult to taste. The audacity of French modern and contemporary literature is a symbol of the center-less humanism.

Needless to say, such open literature benefits from the accumulation of the humanities and history of France, from the catastrophic events of the last century, from the wide opening of religious restraints, and from the rapid economic development since the middle of the last century, from the unprecedented openness of politics and the full inclusion of culture and education; of course, there is also an adjustment of awkwardness in the multiplicity of human nature and standing-out of incompleteness.

Generally speaking,Literature is composed of a group of *Cinderellas, whose miseries* are brought by its tyrannical father, and whose defect is due to her mother's helplessness. Miseries come along one after another, and at the same time, plant seeds of love and hatred. Regretful incompleteness cries for remedies, and meanwhile brings forth talented youth. Incompleteness forces awkwardness which reversely is reflective of fragmentary character. Awkwardness has a great deal of enchantment, of contradictions, of changes, and of transformation. As an embodiment of imperfections, its attendance is actually its absence, and its deficiency is its abundance. Its quality and level are expressed by the presence of awkwardness, a paradox of both yes and no. The author has advocated the general transformation of literature, and expounded on the otherization and para-interpretation of literature. The awkward literature of incompleteness in France for nearly a hundred years is tantamount to the evidence of such thinking. Literature is shown in non-literature, in Phoenix Nirvana, with the quality of having both yes and no, of being in coexistence of both life and death.

The Posthumanist Methodology in Literary Criticism

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Abstract Intensified research into the natural world, the deterioration of which caused by humans we are experiencing particularly acutely nowadays, makes us redirect our attention towards our surroundings. Contemporary literary studies are likely, therefore, to benefit from such theories as Posthumanism, which, criticising anthropocentrism, posit a new perception of matter as inherently creative and endowed with subjectivity.The paper discusses selected tenets of posthumanism as a possible ideological backdrop to literary analysis. While not a homogeneous theory *per se*, posthumanism provides the field of literary criticism with particularly illuminating concepts. Its approach stresses the fact that a human being is an intersection point of material and non-material as well as human and non-human determinants. It also emphasizes relational and discursive nature of all existing entities whose meanings are formed in the ongoing processes of interactions ('intraactions') between them. Posthumanist analysis focuses on the sensual immediacy of material objects and on the kind of human – non-human closeness which rests upon material interconnectedness between the two participants of the relation. The posthumanist methodology appreciates the importance of the characters' corporeality and focuses on the so far neglected or underappreciated elements of the diegetic world, namely the non-human subjects.

Key words posthumanism; materialism; non-human; intraaction; corporeality

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Introduction: A New Theory?

Undoubtedly, any literary analysis has to rely on certain theoretical underpinnings which determine the place of a text in the realm of humanities and indeed in the world at large. To what extent the theory of literature can be practiced as a separate discipline is, however, questionable. The „end of theory" (Young 3-20), preceded by the „death of the author", heralded by Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes in the second half of the XX century, resulted from an assumption shared by an increasing number of scholars that the variety of human forms of expression can hardly be encompassed by a single theory. A model which would be broad enough so that it could account for the diverse, and often apparently contradictory, human experiences as well as peculiar ways of perceiving the world, would have to resign from the exclusiveness of the criteria that make up its body, and thus would cease to be what is commonly understand by the term „theory", and what could be roughly defined as a set of rules determining a proper way of dealing with a problem. Reality, the way postmodernists saw it, cannot be reduced to a single dimension and cannot be correctly translated into a one-dimensional system of signs.

As a relatively fresh trend and encompassing a number of dissimilar variants, posthumanism does not represent a homogeneous structure of thought which could be referred to as "theory" *per se*. Though its origins can be traced directly to poststructuralism, it draws its inspirations from thinkers as distant in time as Baruch Spinoza or even Protagoras[1]. Posthumanists investigate human relationships with animals and the influence of material objects on the lives of individuals as well as humanity as a whole. They analyse the nature-culture dynamics as well as the intricacies of the structure and functioning of matter (as analysed by quantum physics); they are engaged ecologically, politically and culturally. However diverse, though, posthumanist approaches are unified by rejection of anthropocentrism—defined as privileging the human form of existence over the existence of non-human animals and material objects, materialist attitude to the world and objection to the

1 The appearance of posthumanist approach was to a large extent prompted by scientists' observation that the Earth has entered a new era – the Anthropocene – as a result of human activity. The term was coined by Paul Crutzen in year 2000, but the author points to the beginning of the 19th century as a moment when, with the increase in use of fossil fuel, human impact on the Earth rose to an unprecedented scale, becoming one of the strongest geological factors.

post-Kantian correlationism (Meillasoux 50-81).

With regard to literature, posthumanism does not aim at offering a new "theory" of interpretation which would prove the previous methodologies misguided of deficient. Since posthuman perspective strives to account for variety of sensibilities which individuals display, while encountering literary works it does not preach one correct method of interpreting literature. Posthumanist thinkers challenge the traditional humanistic definition of the human as a creature marked by certain distinct qualities which justify their leading position among other beings. This takes place by undermining of the fundamental humanistic distinctions which have defined man's place in the world such as body vs. mind, body vs. soul, sensual vs. mental, human vs. animal or human vs. thing. Posthumanism puts forward the issue of corporeality as the funding principle of the human existence and thus sees a human being as *Homo somaticus vivens*, rather than *Homo sapiens*. Thus the bedrock of the tools for an in-depth study of various aspects of human condition that posthumanism offers is necessarily one's very body-ness which makes one bound up with the world most intimately. Posthumanist approach to literature seeks to bring to the reader's attention certain elements of the diegetic world which might have been previously overlooked and which are arguably vital for discovering new strata of meaning. These elements include animals, plants, material objects and matter as such, the status of which—in literature and in the real world—is changing dramatically as our knowledge and understanding of the non-human beings deepen. No longer is the natural environment understood as a passive stage on which human actors are sole performers of meaningful acts. A literary work comes to be perceived as a result of an indispensable, active and constant interchange of meaning between human and non-human participants of a relationship which results in a particular form of message which is open for interpretation. My paper does not provide a thorough study of all the aspects of posthumanist methodology. Its purpose is much more modest as it aims at pointing out but a few ways in which literary criticism may benefit from the posthumanist theory. I do hope, however, that the reader will find my sketchy analysis interesting.

Posthumanism: A New Exploratory Perspective for Literary Criticism

Protagoras's assertion that the human being is "the measure of all things" placed them in the position of epistemological superior instance[1]. The superior position of human (and, specifically, of the human male) is, according to Rosi Braidotti,

1 Although it must be mentioned that the meaning Protagoras intended to convey was supposedly that of the relativism of human cognition.

symbolised by the Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, which, apart from stressing the utmost beauty and perfection of human (male) body, at the same time credits human with a set of "mental, discursive and spiritual values" (*The Posthuman* 13). The belief in human predominance over other species goes hand in hand with Eurocentrism which was built on the conviction that a European man is not only inherently moral, but also endowed with exclusive access to knowledge of what is right, just, true and noble. Such a humanistic Eurocentrist stand justified the imperialist ambitions of some European countries which actively sought to expand their political influences to bring enlightenment to "the darkest corners" of the world. It promoted the derogatory image of a "primitive savage" also in those European countries whose imperial ambitions were limited. The power dynamics between "us" and "them," "kin" and "alien," much of the literature of the nineteenth century is focused on, further cemented the tendency to perceive difference in terms of binary oppositions representing inherent ethical and aesthetic value. Out of two cultures, one needs to be "better," out of two principles only one has to be "true," which makes the other one necessarily false.

That ideological perspective was mirrored in the field of literary theory in which structuralist ambitions to discover a precise universal theory of language predominated well into the twentieth century. With the arrival of poststructuralism marked by the works of Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva and others, the conviction about the possibility to find Truth (with a capital T) gave way to much more modest hope to gain some understanding of what may be true *for* somebody. Although not freed completely from the predominance of language, literary theory tried to account for diversity as not an aberration, but the inherent quality of being, and thus as an indispensable element of any interpretation.

Criticism of correlationism was another consequence of disillusionment with "objective truths" and with the pervasive power of the human mind. Correlationism is believed to have originated in Immanuel Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal dimensions of the world and the idea that humans can only have access to the phenomenal layer of reality. What appears to us is always and necessarily filtered through our senses and minds, therefore we cannot reach the thing "in itself." Our thoughts, on the other hand, are always filled with stimuli coming from the "outside" of our minds, thus a "pure thought" does not exist either. Correlationism, Quentin Meillassoux opines, is "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other" (5); it also means that things are only real inasmuch as they are perceived by a human subject (Bryant).

Posthumanists believe instead that not only do things exist independently of human existence, but also that it is possible for humans to access reality not as a linguistic construct, but in its pure materiality. What is more, the world's materiality consists in concrete material objects which do not merely provide a neutral background to our existence but actively influence our lives, bodies and minds.

The two main posthumanist groups of theories which spring from a new perception of reality are Object Oriented Ontology[1] and New Materialism, and within the latter agential realism of Karen Barad and vital materialism of Jane Bennett are distinguished. Both groups of theories question Kantian correlationism and focus on other-than-human beings, whose existence is independent from human perception acts and conceptualization processes. That being said, however, while Object Oriented Ontology perceives reality as a collection of independent objects which withdraw from human or non-human interaction (Harman 2), New Materialism stresses the relational and discursive nature of all existing entities whose meanings are formed in the ongoing processes of interactions ("intraactions") between them (Barad, *Posthumanist* 801-831); material object is characterized by its inherent vitality and the capacity to participate in a meaningful dialogue, which takes place between humans and non-humans at a material level (Bennett 24). Both approaches, however, regard matter as somewhat uncanny in the way it presents itself to us—an inexhaustible reservoir of creative potential, thus their perception of matter is far from reductionist. The sheer *mattering* of matter, a physical process in which new forms come to existence, is the way in which meaning emerges, as Karen Barad stresses (*Meeting* 3).

As a result, the "active character" vs. "passive setting" polarity, which seems to be one of fundamental tenets of literary analysis, reveals its conventionality and dubiousness. Inherent vitality, creativity and agency of matter can be spotted in literature wherever personification of supposedly inanimate beings, ranging from small material objects to the fundamental elements of earth, air, fire, and water, does not merely serve the purpose of mirroring the acts of human characters, but revels intrinsic personhood of various forms of matter. Also, abundant application of nature imagery makes reader notice quite a few similarities between human mental and bodily processes and natural phenomena. Their role in the literary text goes beyond the illustrative function of symbolizing human psychic states. Acting as independent agents, the elements actively contribute to, and at times generate, certain reactions on the part of the human subjects. Rather than consisting of two dissimilar spheres:

1 The most inmportant representatives of Object Oriented Ontology include Graham Harman, Timothy Morton and Levi Bryant.

nature and culture, human reality is portrayed as Donna Haraway's *naturecultures* – nature and culture representing two sides of the same "natureculture phenomenon" defined by continuous interchange of dynamic elements; a collective of different forms of existence unified by a common material foundation.

While poststructuralism and deconstruction are focused on language as a fundamental dimension of the human existence, posthumanism directs its attention towards the body. Contrary to the previous humanistic paradigm, backbone of which being the belief that a human being is defined predominantly by their power of reasoning, the new attitude stresses the importance of one's body in forming their identity. Human has proven only too often that relying on rational thinking does not necessarily prevent one from displaying behaviour which is destructive for individuals and for humanity at large, not to mention the natural environment[1]. Since reason does not provide humans with a substantial support in forming a mutually beneficial relation with their surroundings, perhaps it is one's corporeality that ought to be devoted more attention to? The motivations for a 'somatic turn'[2] came from the humanities as a result of scholars' realization that the stiff categories of traditional humanism no longer correspond to the way individuals experience their existence and understand their identities. What humans expose on a daily basis is not their "nature," but their immediate corporeality and the concrete world which permeates their bodies with smells, sounds, images, tactile impressions and some conceptually elusive experiences which constitute the uncanny dimension of our existence.

That is the reason for which many posthumanist researchers are greatly inspired by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of corporeality. With its pivotal concepts of *one's own body*, *body schema* and *la chair*, his philosophy does not refer to the symbolic or cultural meaning of the body, but describes it as a concrete material object characterized by certain biological functions and intrinsically interconnected with the word (*Phenomenology*). The validity of a number of dualisms, such as body-mind, body-soul, physical-metaphysical etc., with which human existence has often been defined, is questioned on the basis of the psycho-corporeal nature of human experiences in which the demarcation line between the two supposedly separate categories becomes blurred. That said, according to the philosopher, the

1 That obviously applies to particularly appalling events such as the Holocaust, but it is also visible in excessive exploitation of the Earth's natural resources, both organic and inorganic. Suffice it to say, a rational human fails to notice certain logical cause and effect relations due to which the harm meant for other beings unavoidably ricochets.

2 D. Hillman, U. Maude, *Introduction*, s. 7.

uncanny quality of the body which resembles the uncanniness of *la chair— flesh* of the world—cannot be uncovered by scientific research only, as its relationship with the world includes certain components which appear 'magical' to us (*Visible* 146-151). Therefore, the literary genres which include fantastical elements, such as magic realism, science fiction, fantasy, weird fiction, to name but a few, do not seem too far conceptually from his phenomenological theory which is built on the presumption that there is much more to this world than what is clearly visible.

Apart from rational thinking, our day to day existence depends equally on the "bodily wisdom," a faculty of the body which allows it to respond to external stimuli without the involvement of mental processes, and which appears to be rooted in a particular kind of a "dialogue" between the body and the material world. The importance of sensory perception which, according to Merleau-Ponty, brings us closer to things themselves, and which allows us to 'touch' the world rather than think about it, as well as "taste" it rather than speculate about its possible dimensions, is emphasised in the posthuman thought. A posthumanist literary analysis would therefore appreciate the instances of sensual imagery in which the interconnectedness between humans and the world is revealed. Sensual perception plays a crucial role in the process of forming the characters' identities and defines their attitudes towards the world. Protagonists' experiences are interpreted as a stream-of-perception flowing incessantly through their bodies and minds. Similarly to the modernist stream-of-consciousness technique, which revealed the fleeting nature of human mental representations, the stream-of-perception technique (Brinton 363-381) points to the dynamism of human existence which corresponds to the variability and fluidity of reality as such. A human being appears to be a dynamic material centre consisting of a plethora of different sensual stimuli, rather than an established constant "self." It does not mean that the concept of an independent human subject is negated, but it certainly means that the subject is not entirely independent. That is to say, an individual is not a separate being, similar to a Leibniz's "windowless monad," but is an open structure which is naturally inclined to form bonds with the external world. The impossibility of determining a clear border line between what forms the internal portion of their bodies and minds and what belongs to the external world becomes apparent if we scrutinize our interaction with the surrounding world closely enough. Bodies are permeable and their very existence rests upon the acts of absorbing the elements of our surroundings, such as oxygen, food, sunlight etc. What we eat, what we experience, and even the air pressure influence our perception and interpretation of reality as well as our behaviour. As what is external becomes internal—is literally

incorporated, as it becomes part of our bodies—the boundary between the two becomes blurred. When regarded in the broad context of meaningful surroundings constantly influencing their body and mind, perception and understanding, the human as such represents a thing—an object of creative work of matter. The bodies of literary characters are interpreted as entities subjected to transformative changes resulting from not only biological forces, but also societal and cultural forces which determine their behaviour and meaning throughout their lifetime. Human identity can be therefore defined as an intersection point of material and non-material determinants, whose indispensable formative influence on a human being undermines the possibility of individual freedom or independence.

In the epistemological sense, therefore, the human can be defined as a knot in a perceptual net of living creatures, whose account of reality is but one of many possible ones. Although we do experience the same reality, our interpretations of it can both overlap and differ greatly, but undoubtedly they cannot be reduced to one universal version. This seems to apply to literary studies where variety of interpretations is only possible thanks to variety of individual sensibilities and does not contradict unity, quite the opposite, it is the very condition of unity as the term denotes a group of similar items of partially dissimilar qualities.

The fundamental distinction of humanism is the one in which a human being is presented as an anti-thesis of an animal. That is not to say that humanism does not acknowledge the reality of human bodily existence, but it certainly suggests that one's existence does not exhaust itself in the corporeal phenomena. Whether perceived from a religious point of view, as God's creation, or from the atheistic standpoint, as an ultimate achievement of the process of evolution, the human is a being which exceeds its sheer biological potential. Calling somebody „an animal" is generally believed to be offensive as it suggests the person's inferior position resulting from either non-human appearance or non-human behaviour[1]. But then, as it has been mentioned before, posthumanist approach recognises the importance of those qualities of living creatures which have been so far downgraded by classical humanistic system of values. Posthumanist methodology questions the very human–animal dualism on the grounds of striking mutual translatability of human and animal functions. This 'humanimal' kinship is stressed by means of applying animal imagery to portrayals of humans on the one hand, and expressing animal point of view in terms of human faculties on the other. Informed by posthumanist

1 Undoubtedly the set of qualities which are attributed to humans and which distinguish them from an animals, is culture-specific, dependent on geography and history as well as prone to ideological influences.

non-anthropocentric methodology, literary studies focus on examples of animal narration, which try to reveal the animal perspective and the way in which the world meaningful non-human animals. Naturally one of the core issues in such analyses is the one of language as a means of communication and a conceptualization tool, which lies at the heart of the humanistic human-animal distinction. It is no longer the human language only which is capable of effective interchange of meaning, but multitude of other means of communication, including the ones which are alien to humans, that are appreciated and accentuated as intelligent, meaningful acts. Posthumanist literary criticism therefore, as it has been mentioned before, aims at shifting the centre of attention from the anthropocentric point of view to the "*zoe*-centric" perspective which makes room for other-than-human sensibilities and functions.

Zoe and *bios* are two Greek terms for "life." Whereas *bios* denotes life in its biological sense, *zoe* refers to life as a general attribute of beings, as a force permeating the world, the very condition of existence. Human participation in *zoe* does not differ from the participation of other animals or plants, although the kinds of their *bios* do: "*Zoe* is the poor half of a couple that foregrounds *bios* as the intelligent half; the relationship between them constitutes one of those qualitative distinctions on which Western culture built its discursive empire" (Braidotti, *Transpositions* 37). That is why when a posthumanist scholar refers to a human being as a „humanimal" the term is not supposed to be derogatory, but it serves the purpose of stressing the importance of the biological basis without which the human being cannot truly understand their behaviour. It is only thanks to realising the fact that we actually are animals whose brains have developed in a particular way, but whose other "animal" functions remained intact, that human is ever able to make sense of one's drives and yearnings. What posthumanism suggests then is trying to approach one's animality with humility and sympathy, which with time may give way to actual pride in possessing an in-depth knowledge about the processes taking place in one's own body and in being able to interpret its subtle signals.

Acceptance of the otherness of the other as well as acknowledgement of the fact that it serves establishing my identity and does not threaten it, lies at the heart of a posthuman perspective, which sees the world as inhabited by a community of equally important beings. Hence the increasing popularity of new animism among some posthumanist scholars, and the emergence of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Berkes 1-10) which rests upon the belief that subjectivity and personhood should be distributed more generously among non-human beings as well. Posthuman literary analysis reaches to the concepts produced by it when

focusing on the role of the non-human protagonists whose influence on the development of the plot has often been overlooked or belittled. The formative activity of the elements, for instance, used to be diminished and reduced to the illustrative function; their role was to metaphorically reflect the inner states of a protagonist's mind[1]. Rarely has nature been interpreted as an actant[2] possessing equal rights with human actants and displaying the qualities of a person: it wants something, aims at something, expresses some emotions. The question remains whether such an interpretation of nature is not yet another example of anthropomorphism in which human perspective prevails. It certainly might be the case, however, there is no shame in admitting that humans cannot exceed their species-specific cognitive faculties and have to do with what is at their disposal. In that case associating the natural phenomena with human experiences may be seen as a way to bring one closer to nature. It can also be argued that since the world abounds in 'natural' connections, pointing to certain similarities between human and non-human phenomena is justified, not as an act of reducing one to the other, but as an attempt to stress those aspects of reality on which its unity is founded.

To highlight the necessary connection between various elements of the world, Karen Barad has introduced the term "intraactions" (*Posthumanist* 801-831) which stresses the dynamism and processual quality of reality but also its inclusiveness. While the term „interactions" suggests that the relationship between two participants of it is voluntarily and they themselves exist independently, the term "intraaction," according to the author, describes the nature of those relations much more adequately, as it suggests that objects are immersed in the common material reality and they cannot but stay in connection to some other objects. More importantly, Barad's term points to the author's belief that it is the relations ("phenomena") that are the primitive components of reality, not particular objects which interact with each other: "That is, relations are not secondarily derived from independently existing 'relata,' but rather the mutual ontological dependence of «relata» —the relations—is the ontological primitive" (815). Everything, therefore,

1 Romantic poetry may serve as an apt example of literature in which nature 'mirrors' human emotions and even if it does induce certain reactions in humans it is still presented as a passive source of stimuli rather than an independent 'character' in a literary work.

2 The term 'actant' is believed to be coined by Algirdas Julien Greimas, who used it to describe the structural roles typically performed in storytelling. The sense in which the term is used in the present paper is closer to the one present in Bruno Latour's book *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, in which it refers to any entity which is capable of initiating movement or inducing reaction in another entity. In that sense the term can denote both animate and inanimate objects (Latour 237).

comes to existence as related and appears because it is related.

The world, as perceived by the posthumanist thinkers, is not centred on human beings who, due to their power of rational thinking are solely entitled to attribute meaning to things and phenomena. Meaning is perceived as an attribute of sheer matter which, rather than a static substance, is, as Barad observes, „an ongoing open process of mattering through which »mattering« itself acquires meaning and form in the realization of different agential possibilities" (817). The main criterion for classifying a given entity into the "person" category—consciousness—which is believed to be an exclusively human feature, is thus questioned on the basis that first, we cannot be sure that it is indeed limited to human beings, second, there is no objective reason for regarding the conscious existence as in any way superior to the unconscious existence. Consciousness certainly does not prevent humans from self-destructive behaviour which, from evolutionary point of view, testifies against it. Humbled by their own history of violence, brutish cruelty and short-sited anthropocentrism, humans have come to the point when re-thinking of their place in the world and relationship with the non-human members of the earthly community is a matter of survival, and an urgent one.

One of the most important aspects of posthumanist analysis of literature is thus its ecological dimension, funded on the belief that the human, being a biological organism, is naturally subject to the influences of one's surroundings. Human corporeal processes not only bear striking resemblance to the external phenomena, but are directly linked to them: "Like the vicissitudes of persons in love or conflict, the vicissitudes of bodies are cornerstones of narrative fabulae. Body changes may play out as the representation of familiar corporeal experiences—as aging, as the renovations of puberty or pregnancy, or as the result of mundane violence of other persons, physical forces, living processes, or cultural models" (Clarke 45-46). What should be emphasized is the fact that the material context within which the main hero (the "text" proper) exists is the very condition of making sense of the world created by the author. Therefore, even if it is actually the mental process that is meant to be shown in a text, the author cannot do without employing a host of objects which are "external" to the mind—physical reactions, material objects, natural phenomena. The two dimensions are dissimilar, and yet the link between what is mental and what is material is unquestionable; we understand one of the pair only thanks to or by means of another. And indeed the extent to which the non-human surroundings impact upon the human actants in literary works more often than not raises doubts as to who plays the main role.

It is quite common in Europe that the so called "close senses", such as touch

or smell are regarded as inferior, and the "distance senses," such as sight and hearing as superior ones. Such an attitude seems to be based on the presumption that close proximity of matter is in a way defiling. It is surprising then that the tactile immediacy of material objects is what defines our existence to a degree incomparable to any other sense. The sense of touch is necessitated by sheer gravity which makes us always touch something, if only the floor under our feet. Any object I touch is my multidimensional point of reference: its temperature, hardness as well as texture make me relate to my own temperature, hardness and texture, it makes me define myself as a three-dimensional object among other three-dimensional objects.

We are used to interpreting material objects as symbols of some abstract concepts, reminders of people and events, mere pretexts leading to texts proper. It is not my intention to deny the fact that things do function as symbols and sometimes convey meanings which only narrowly refer to their material substance. What I would like to stress however, is that we are not necessarily aware that things we surround ourselves with do determine our lives and perception, alter our habits and plans, shape the way in which we value others. The owner of the only bicycle in the village will be defined predominantly by the uncommon object she possesses. Owning a bicycle has impact on her conduct of everyday life—the object calls for regular repairs, requires a place to store it in and it entails the necessity to acquire other things (a pump, some grease) that are indispensable in order to make sure that it functions well. An object then not only influences the way its owner is perceived by others but it also impacts one's immediate material surroundings, their behaviour and the way one perceives reality (e.g. focusing on other bikers in the area, news concerning biking industry etc.).

Literary characters are individuals imitating human beings of flesh and blood and thus they cannot do without interacting with material objects, whereas they can and often do exist away from fellow humans or animals. Even if the world presented in the novel is the one taking place in the protagonist's mind, the content of it is in fact a reminiscence of one's interaction with the „external" world. The concepts of "external" and "internal" worlds are themselves questionable, since between the two there is a constant interchange of content: our minds process the outside stimuli but at the same time they are the ones to determine the way we perceive those stimuli. There is no "objective external world" that we reach to, and there is no independent subjective "inner world" we can lock ourselves in. The unavoidable permeability of our bodies (and/= minds) undermines the thesis of human freedom understood as the ability to exist independently from the external factors. This is not to say that the human is a formless entity mechanically driven by constantly fluctuating

outside world. Indeed, we are aware of our identities being separate from the rest of reality and we do have the power to exercise our will. Whether that „will" is free, however, is doubtful. There are various actors in literature, "not all of them human, not all of them organic, not all of them technological" (Haraway 297), and it is only natural that the very many ways in which they shape and define one another constitute the body of majority of literary works. The posthumanist literary analysis does not aim attention at the symbolic dimension of things, focusing instead on the tactile immediacy of material objects and on the kind of closeness between man and an object which is based on participating in the same material substratum. The identity-building quality of things functioning as extensions of self, which rests upon corporeal interconnectedness between man and material objects, is scrutinised. Hence the affinity of posthumanist approach and the ontological assumptions of New Animism, which equates subjectivity with the ability to relate and consequently it attributes the status of being a subject to inanimate objects as well.

The "new human"—the post-human—therefore exemplifies the "cyborgised human," an individual whose existence necessitates his/her being attached to material objects which function as extensions of the individual's powers. While reaching out to the external world for new ways of solving problems appears to be quite a common feature among all the living organisms, the post-human is at the same time aware of the fact that with such an attachment comes a great responsibility. Since our dependence on objects, plants and animals runs deep into the core of whatever it means to be human, the non-human should be given its due place in the world. Monika Bakke rightly observes that even if it is not the 'post-human' who is waiting around the corner, then it is definitely "a decentered human—a biological organism existing in vital interdependence between human, the non-human life forms and technologies" (Bakke 8), the human who is much more aware of their bodily life and of being inseparable from the biological world.

Conclusion

The posthumanist portrayal of the human condition which questions the dominant role of rational thinking and emphasizes alternative ways of experiencing the world, might make criticism open up for the literary representation of corporeality as the main source of human lived experience of reality. Its perspective transcends the limitations of Cartesian dualisms and presents the human being as a coherent psychophysical being, intrinsically interconnected with other forms of animate and inanimate existence and defined by the dynamics of its 'nature' as well as the unbreakable intimate connection with the material world. Posthumanism views matter

as inherently meaningful and endowed with an inexhaustible potential to manifest itself in a variety of forms. As such posthumanism may be a source of new interesting methodology in literary studies as it provides the tools which make it possible for a critic to see in a new light the previously ignored elements of the diegetic world. Attributing personhood also to other-than-human beings is a way out of the limitations of anthropocentrism, as it facilitates the perception of man as an actor among other human and nonhuman actors unified in their profoundly uncanny materiality.

In the posthumanist perspective discourse is not perceived as a synonym for language, but much more broadly, as a function of reality which involves interlocutors of various kinds. Under the umbrella term of posthumanist literary criticism diverse analyses can be carried out: some of them may focus on the agential role of nature, while others might stress the importance of non-human actants as well as the active role of matter. Scholars may choose to concentrate on "cyborgised" human body, the transformative role of technology or the dynamics between human and non-human spheres of reality and all of those topics will remain within the realm of posthumanist thought. It should be emphasized that the number of scholars whose attention is attracted by the posthumanist perspective is growing. Whether it is due to the pervasiveness of technology or not, we are becoming increasingly aware of the inescapable interconnectedness between phenomena and interdependence between beings. Much of scholars' interest is devoted to ecological issues which, surprisingly, prove to be inseparable from those areas of research which are traditionally associated with the field of "humanities." As Christoph Kueffler rightly observes: "environmental studies have recently gained new momentum by strengthening the role of the humanities and by developing new collaborations among arts and design, indigenous peoples, social activists, and natural sciences" (Kueffer 254). Such a collaboration ought to take place in between or beyond the fields of literary criticism and science as well, allowing cross-discipline fertilization and, possibly, better understanding. Certain foregoing standards in literary analysis, such as "dualistic thinking, anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism, generalized systems analysis, and unidimensional problem-framings" (255), overlap with the core issues discussed in posthumanism, therefore the analyses combining those areas, focusing on issues of mutual concern, may prove both fruitful and inspiring.

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