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Mouths: Robinson Crusoe's Colonial Fantasy and its Subversion

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Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) can be read as a fundamental text of (Western) European colonisation and naturally, concomitant with this, of the Protestant middle-class *homo economicus*. The novel seems to justify several ideological, historical, political, racial and gender assumptions, which are revealed particularly sensitively in the very first encounter between Robinson and Friday. The study examines this scene, with particular attention to the phrase "a very good mouth." The paper is seeking an answer to the question as to what position the coloniser assigns to the native in the light of the fact that Friday's qualities that appear at first reading seem feminine, and thus, make Friday appear a feminine subject in this 'colonial idyll.'

Keywords: Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe,* colonisation, gender, subject, colonial fantasy

1 Introduction: Masculine 'Mastery' and What Subverts It

In the passage describing the first meeting between Crusoe and Friday (*RC*, 205–6)[1], besides a rather perplexing array of adjectives referring to the native, the narrator uses the term "a very good mouth" in describing Friday (*RC*, 206). It is definitely odd to read this very collocation in a description pertaining to a man, since a male person's mouth would not typically be characterised as "good." This simple but confusing adjective that the narrator uses here might need some explanation, in spite of the fact that at first glance the adjective seems to mean nothing else than 'European-like,' 'well-proportioned,' 'not typical of natives.' Crusoe is probably not an impartial observer here but someone who projects his fantasies and desires onto the native. This paper argues that Crusoe's idea of control is considerably undermined by the feminine appearance of the native, which he first tries to rectify

[1] All subsequent references to *Robinson Crusoe* will be to this edition: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) in the form (*RC*, page number).

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by granting Friday the status of an infant, but due to mutual suspicion, this family idyll is bound to be terminated.

In order to answer the question of exactly what kind of colonial fantasies are enacted in the novel, let us first consider the aspects of Crusoe's economic and colonial position. In the classic interpretation, the protagonist is the prototypical white, Western, Protestant individual who, by virtue of his middle-class values, first achieves business success, then, thanks to his reason and ingenuity, survives some twenty-seven years of his solitary existence on a desert island, bringing a native under his control and making the small Caribbean island his quasi-colonial home. The protagonist's inventiveness is purely empirical: he repeatedly states that he has not learned the skills and tricks of the trade necessary for survival at home, but has acquired them by observation and experimentation. For instance: "I had never handled a tool in my life, and yet in time by labour, application and contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had tools" (*RC*, 68). These are core values of the Western bourgeois middle class emerging in the 17th and 18th centuries, the backbone of which are hard, persistent work, ingenuity, initiative, optimism, a belief in God and a sense of mission, which compensate for the lack of formal education and represent individualism above all else (see Watt 1976, 67 et passim).

However, Crusoe does not seem to be content with only living modestly and frugally on the island – for it is precisely the "middle station of life," (*RC*, 38) the modest, restrained middle-class life that he rebelled against at the beginning of the novel. Partly guided by the strange logic of capitalism, which, incidentally, also appears in another of Defoe's novels, *Moll Flanders* (1722), he wants to gain more and more.

The colonial authority he exercises over the island is demonstrated by highly controlling and egocentric language. For example, he alludes to a period of his stay on the island as "in the sixth year of my reign" (*RC*, 137). Elsewhere he almost maniacally takes stock of the treasures of his "empire." For example, in one paragraph, he claims: "You are to understand that now I had, as I may call it, two plantations on the island – one my little fortification or tent, with the wall about it, under the rock, with the cave behind me, which by this time I had enlarged into several apartments or caves, one within another" (*RC*, 151). The choice of words is striking because the plantation as an economic unit was typically used to grow crops that yielded high profits (coffee, cotton, tea, and tobacco) and usually required slave labour or wage labour to cultivate. This idiom is the continuation of his earlier discourse on his plantation in Brazil.

On the one hand, then, Crusoe imagines himself on the island as a plantation owner of the expanding, colonising world trade, and on the other, he continually implants the spatial and eco-social notions that had characterised the life of the English

merchant class back in his home country. For instance, in relation to the previous quote, he reports that he enlarged his cave "into several apartments . . . one within the other" (*RC*, 151). The word "apartment," which had become established by the 1640s, does indeed mean a detached room, but it typically meant a space within a house for the private use of one person or family. Similarly, his economic unit in the woods is called a "country seat" (*RC*, 152), which is a lot more than summer cottage, and bears ramifying cultural and historical implications in the English context. The phrase "happy rural seat of various view" (Canto IV, line 247) can be found in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, among others), and it recalls the genre of the country house poem, and also the establishment called 'country house,' which, with a typical English understatement, denotes a country 'castle,' a mansion, or at least a building of considerable size, a place where wealthy citizens, having become rich from (colonial) trade, typically retired after their careers. Crusoe practically declares himself a kind of prosperous Western European citizen on the island and, as Suvir Kaul notes, "Crusoe's ambition here oscillates precisely between the twin poles of colonial expropriation, the exculpatory legal and ethical illusion of a 'Right of Possession,' and the hope of conveying those overseas properties into the propriety of a manorial estate in England" (2009, 72). Or, inverting the logic, he translates the image of the imagined manorial estate owner into the conditions of the uninhabited island.

Crusoe's ultimate wish is to obtain total control over the island, even to extend it to interpersonal relationships. Perhaps his most frequently used words in the novel are "to obtain," "(to) master" and "mastery" meaning skill, dexterity, deep knowledge, but also dominion, superiority, and power. Watt points out that emotions usually "play a very minor part" in the novel (1976, 77), and even when they appear, they are linked to some economic transaction. It is not surprising, therefore, that Crusoe describes even his encounter with the first man in terms of the linguistic equivalent of acquiring wealth and possessions. In one passage, for example, he writes: "I had been near the *obtaining* what I so earnestly longed for, viz. somebody to speak to" (*RC*, 198; emphasis added). Elsewhere, too, he speaks of the encounter – still, let us add, at the level of fantasy – as the acquisition of something: "as soon as I had gotten this man" (*RC*, 199); "if possible, to get a savage into my possession" (*RC*, 199); "to get one of those savages into my hands, cost what it would" (*RC*, 200). It is typical, moreover, that Crusoe later fantasises that he could acquire not one but two or three savages and bring them under his dominion – "to make them entirely my slaves to me" (*RC*, 200) – with a further manifestation of the logic of early capitalism: "I had no remedy but to go on" (*RC*, 35). Indeed, in the age of original accumulation, there is "no remedy but to go on" with the process, and to acquire more and more – not only objects, but also people. As György Kalmár notes in his analysis of the narrative technique of the novel, it is probably a never-ending

process, for, as Crusoe's desire is always in search of another object, and "in a sense, the story is written not so much by Crusoe as by the metonymic slippage of his desire from one object to another" (2002, 119; my translation). The protagonist is almost maniacally preoccupied with the desire to acquire, to possess, and it is almost with pleasure (in Freudian terms, one might even say, in an "anal-erotic" way) that he counts, lists his possessions, his assets, and their growth.

However, the image of the agile, white, middle-class merchant, coloniser, planter, slave-owner, merchant-adventurer, etc., and the fantasy of desire forged from it, may seem to be a rather precarious construction. It needs to be constantly reaffirmed, and Crusoe needs to constantly prove to himself that he has achieved something. As Christine Owen, quoting Pocock, asserts, the figure of the masculine, conquering hero is a post-Victorian construct. In fact, the 18th-century image of this figure is more of an effeminate figure tormented by anxieties, insecurities, passions and even hysterias (2011, 163). In line with this, Kaul argues that the "anxieties, fantasies, and desires generated in the intra-European struggles over plantation colonies and favourable trading practices swirl into and around definitions of the would-be imperial subject, whether merchant or planter, slave trader or slave owner" (2009, 78).

It is thus intriguing to examine the cause of the anxieties that Crusoe seems to be compensating for with his never-ending desire to conquer, to make lists and gain possessions. Owen argues that Crusoe's masculine order is destabilised and undermined by subversive forces that are the "archetypically female goddesses of disorder as Fortune, Luxury, and most recently Credit herself" (Pocock qtd. in Owen 2011, 163). Luxury and consumption are, of course, interrelated; after all, the view prevailed in the 18th century that it was primarily women who could be associated with the idea of the consumption of useless luxuries (Owen 2011, 166), and that a luxurious lifestyle was a hotbed of passions. Crusoe's aversion to cannibalism is also understandable from this point of view, since it is, in his eyes, the act of an uncivilised savage, unable to control his passions (and consumption). In an age when speculation, stock exchange transactions and the emergence of the bill of exchange stand in stark contrast to the concrete, empirically tangible landed property and the gold coin, for a Protestant, Puritan person, this is then translated into the opposition between illusion and reality. In other words, the opposition lies between fiction (i.e., Satan's artifice, the world of illusions) and the 'reality' of the possession of real objects (it is enough to think of one of the first speculation scandals, the South Sea Bubble in 1720, in this respect).

Crusoe also wants to stabilise himself in the course of the novel, for he is initially a kind of 'floating' and/or undefined subject. At the beginning, he is neither an experienced sailor, nor a merchant, nor a gentleman, nor a lower-class person – this status is described by his father in the phrase "upper station of low life" (*RC*, 4). He

is, in fact, a nondescript person without individuality. Crusoe's (and Defoe's) aim is to be "a solid" person, that is, avoid losing credibility, often also perceived in that age as a virgin woman (Owen 2011, 171), and to find solid ground under his foot after drifting on the "ocean" of commerce, as Defoe metaphorically describes commerce in *The Compleat English Tradesman*, published in 1726 (see Owen 2011, 164).

2 "A very good mouth": Friday as a Woman?

If, then, Crusoe spends considerable energy to avoid the subverting forces of luxury, consumption, fortune and credit, which all seem archetypically feminine, by trying to stabilise himself by the virtue of control and power over the island, the fundamental question to be discussed in the light of all the above will be why Friday still seems to be endowed with feminine or effeminate qualities at the first encounter in Crusoe's account. Before looking at the specific passage of the encounter, let us consider in detail what happens before it.

After the discovery of the footprints, the excited Crusoe gets into an almost hysterical, feverish state: ". . . this had agitated my thoughts for two hours, or more, with such violence, that it set my very blood into a ferment, and my pulse beat as high as if I had been in a feaver [*sic*] . . ." (*RC*, 108). Then he falls into a deep sleep, and upon waking up, summarises his dream. It is about saving a native who is fleeing from his pursuers. The dream is far from just a vague impression; it is a detailed description of where the pursued man flees to (the thick grove in front of the fortification), what Crusoe does to him ("carry'd him into my cave"), and, as if nothing were more natural, the next co-ordinate clause is: "and he became my servant" (*RC*, 198). Thus, if we are to accept the Freudian interpretation of the dream as a wish-fulfilment, Crusoe explicitly desires a servant, an Other. In other words, he desires a position in which he does something good (he saves the life of the escaping savage) and obliges the Other to become, as it were, his obedient servant out of 'gratitude.' He neither wants to commit violence, nor is he driven by 'racist' considerations; he, for instance, claims that he is horrified by the idea of spilling "humane blood" (*RC*, 199). Instead, he imagines a kind of exchange (or credit transaction) that benefits him: he 'lends' a life to Friday, who 'repays' Crusoe with eternal servitude.

The other main component of this desire is of a different, voyeuristic nature: Crusoe wants to *see* savages. The narrator stresses that he was no longer cautious after five canoes had landed, and that he did not even care if he was noticed; as he puts it: "I was now eager to be upon them" (*RC*, 200). So another main motive

for the encounter is to be able to gaze at the natives (but ideally not to be seen by them). This motif of undetected voyeurism will be discussed in more detail later.

Crusoe's dream is only partly realised. This is perhaps the first subversive element in the lonely protagonist's carefully constructed and ordered world. He saves the native's life by shooting one of his two pursuers and rendering the other harmless; the latter is killed by the native who will be named Friday. During the first encounter, in compliance with Crusoe's dream, Friday immediately submits to Crusoe's will ("swearing to be my slave for ever" [*RC*, 204]), and the protagonist takes the "prisoner" to his cave. In the meantime, he does not forget to note that the dream is not precisely fulfilled (let us recall that Crusoe is obsessed with keeping everything under control), because the fugitive did not seek refuge in the grove (*RC*, 202). As if to remedy this 'defect,' he takes the native straight to the cave, where the latter lies down and falls asleep. It is then that the ominous description takes place. It is important to note that Crusoe, while the native is asleep, can observe the naked savage undisturbed. It is worth quoting the original passage at length here:

> He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large; tall, and well-shaped; and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance, too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive-colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat, like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and as white as ivory. (*RC*, 205–6)

Kaul describes the encounter as a "colonial and homosocial idyll," ironically adding that Crusoe, as if running through a checklist, is looking for "offending non-European facial and epidermal features" in Friday (2009, 74). The description is truly unique in that it tries to capture the elusive external features by listing what is found and is not found in the native, perhaps even mentally arranging these in two columns (like in a 'debit–credit' chart). The description moves from the larger units to the smaller parts; first the body structure is assessed, then the face, the hair, the skin, the nose, the lips, and the teeth. Obviously, this description or the kind of perspective would not be far removed from the way a slave trader looks at the exhibited 'goods.'

At the same time, two, perhaps related, aspects are prominent. On the one hand, Crusoe uses unusual adjectives, as he describes a man in a way that the observed person seems almost feminine, or a kind of hybrid (see Owen 2011, 168–69). Friday displays "sweetness and softness," his skin is "of a bright kind of a dun olive-

colour, that had in it something very agreeable," his mouth is "very good," his lips are "thin," his teeth are beautiful and white. On the other hand, the juxtaposition seems to prove that Friday's figure – filtered through the colonial fantasy of desire – is free of excess, of uncontrollable passions. The emphasis on the general, one might say modest adjectives ("handsome," "well-made," "good," "long," "round," "thin," "well-set," etc.) serves this purpose, and the other items of the oppositions denote some exaggerated, nauseating, almost superfluous quality: well-made vs. too large; good vs. fierce and surly; sweet[ness], soft[ness] vs. manly; long vs. curled like wool; tawny vs. yellow, nauseous tawny; small nose vs. flat like the Negroes. References to an excessively robust physique, ferociousness, cruelty, excessive masculinity, the uncontrollable, knotty, unruly, woolly hair, the "nauseating" yellowish skin, the flat nose, all seem to call attention to a deformation that can easily be linked to the above-mentioned forces of luxury, credit, consumption and fortune (as well as passion) that destabilise and contradict Puritan lifestyle, and to the opposing counterparts of modesty, sedentariness, moderation, consistency, and planning.

3 Friday's 'Birth'

Thus, it would be logical to interpret the above description as Crusoe's projection of desire for a feminine Other, in which "femininity can only appear in disguised form, in the form of a man, behind a colonisable male identity that can be disciplined" (Kalmár 2002, 124; my translation). Friday does seem a feminine phenomenon, serving to balance the conspicuous absence of women on the island; Gillian Hewitson, for instance, contends that "a feminine other is necessary for Crusoe's identity. Actual women are absent from the island, but woman is an absent presence; she is present as feminized nature and as the feminized native" (2011, 118).

However, it would be unreasonable on the part of Crusoe to include femininity in this colonial and manorial discourse. The feminine element always carries with it something subversive and undisciplined in the narrative. Crusoe's attitude to women is notoriously modest, almost pathologically reticent; the novel is almost devoid of female characters, or if they do appear, they serve a purely practical purpose (Watt 1976, 75), such as guarding Crusoe's money or, like his wife, bearing him children. As we have seen, femininity is also linked to subversive elements embodying excess, consumption, and luxury.

It would be more reasonable to argue that the figure of Friday appears in this fantasy as a child, an undeveloped and sexless human being. This is also confirmed by the positive connotations of the adjectives quoted above, which do not suggest

attraction or eroticism but rather proportion, neat, almost classicist arrangement ("well-made," "well-set"), smoothness ("long and black" hair), underdeveloped qualities ("small nose," "round and plump" face), kindness or innocence ("smiled," "sweetness and softness"), not to mention the evenly set ivory-white (milk) teeth. The native will be suitable for participation in the colonial scenario because, according to Crusoe, he does not possess the (feminine) qualities that would only confuse him in the construction of a fantasy of desire. Rather, the native serves as a pleasant sight, and as an androgynous, infantile creature.

There would certainly be nothing surprising in treating the colonised subject (or more precisely, the subjugated non-subject) as an infant, an uncivilised, undeveloped non-subject without culture and speech. In fact, reversing the logic, one could argue that Friday as a female subject could be presented as an incomplete adult. However, the rest of the narrative supports the idea that the fulfilment of Crusoe's wishful fantasies is the assumption of the role of the father. This is nothing new either, since there is hardly a critical study of the novel that does not mention the process by which Crusoe 'civilises' the savage and in the process symbolically becomes a 'father.' Jean-Jacques Hamm, for instance, points out that "[l]ike a creator, a god, or a father figure, Crusoe shapes Friday into a 'faithfull, loving, sincere Servant.' Friday, by his behaviour, becomes a model, the epitome of the good pupil, a good companion and the good and honest servant" (1996, 117). Crusoe dresses his 'child' up, feeds him (typically with bread dipped in milk), gives him a name – characteristically Friday, which, as Robyn Wiegman argues, is exactly the day when God created the first man, so with it Crusoe again asserts himself as a paternal divinity (1989, 45). Indeed, Crusoe teaches him to 'speak': first makes the native call him "Master," then goes on to draw a line between right and wrong with the words "yes" and "no," and finally sets up a clear cultural boundary by letting him know that eating human flesh is a taboo.

It is revealing, however, that even in his dream, before their meeting, Crusoe imagines taking the native into his cave first. The cave is a 'loaded' symbol in many respects, since in the classical Freudian interpretation, it could represent female genitalia, on the one hand, and on the other, it is the place where the old goat, which had previously represented the Father, passed away (see Kalmár 2002, 129–33). Although Crusoe justifies taking Friday to the cave and not the "fortification" by wanting at least part of his dream fulfilled (*RC*, 205), another possible reading of the episode can be that the time has come for the birth of the 'child' now that the death of the symbolic Father has allowed Crusoe to make his (the Father's) previous possession his own. Crusoe then begins to think about how to "accommodate" the native, so he constructs a small tent between the two fortifications, in front of the mouth (!) of the cave. Yet, its entrance only opens inwards to stop Friday from

coming out at night (*RC*, 202): "As there was a door or entrance there into my cave, I made a formal framed door-case, and a door to it, of boards, and set it up in the passage, a little within the entrance; and, causing the door to open in the inside, I barred it up in the night, taking in my ladders, too; so that Friday could no way come at me in the inside of my innermost wall, without making so much noise in getting over that it must needs awaken me" (*RC*, 208). It is as if Crusoe relegated Friday to an embryo position inside the symbolic womb and controlled when he is due to be born (i.e., come out).

Once Crusoe is convinced that Friday is harmless (i.e., not a threat to his paternal status), he allows him to 'exist,' and goes into a lengthy speech on how he has never had such a good servant: "never man had such a more faithful, loving, sincere servant than Friday was to me; without passion, sullenness, or design" (*RC*, 209). It is again important to take a look at the discourse into which the three nouns (passion, sullenness or design) fit. They seem to be excessive qualities going against the "middle station of life" Crusoe's father designed him for. Passion as such is to be avoided as much as possible in the Puritan way of life, since the denial or transcendence of passions is a prerequisite for a sober, moderate lifestyle. Stubbornness and obstinacy can also signify a lack of discernment, while malice and sullenness a lack of piety, according to contemporary standards.

Furthermore, all three traits can be linked to Crusoe's childhood/youthful self. It is not so much, as Kaul claims, that "Crusoe looks to Friday for a confirmation of a particular version of himself" (2009, 75), and it is not, either, that these are some kinds of 'barbaric' qualities to be eliminated from Friday. Rather, Crusoe wants to see his 'son,' the infant version of himself in the native, the very subject that his father would have wanted to see in him. First, a subject with no passions, without the desire to travel, a 'bound' subject. Second, he wants him to be obedient and pliable, not bad-tempered or sullen, so that he can accept the paternal (divine) authority. Finally, he wishes to see Friday to be "without design" (i.e., not having plans, not plotting against him). The word "design" here refers back to the beginning of the novel, when Crusoe recalls that his father "design'd [him] for the law" (*RC*, 3), destined him for a career in law ("designed" him), and when the father advised him against "what he foresaw was [Crusoe's] design" (*RC*, 4). The imagined wishful fantasy is thus a child who has no plans, no intentions, no vision of the future, but who can be formed, moulded, "planned," "designed" and set on some course by his father. Briefly, the coloniser Crusoe wants to recreate in Friday the very infant subject he refused to become, a subject tied to a place, without passions, living a comfortable but mediocre life, obeying his father's word, and having no autonomy.

Crusoe tries to assert his 'paternal' authority in other ways, too. A rather overloaded symbol in this respect is the rifle, with which Crusoe, as if with a phallic symbol,

"takes possession" of the native (see Kalmár 2002, 123). It is significant that Friday is terrified of the weapon, and is not aware of its function; moreover, Crusoe consciously conceals this knowledge from him: "I took this advantage to charge the gun again, and not let him see me do it" (*RC*, 212). That is, to return to the motif of the uninterrupted gaze: Crusoe's ideal is the situation in which he can gaze at naked natives but the other cannot see or understand. In the passage analysed, one morning he and Friday go out to kill a goat of the flock, but on the way they catch sight of a female goat and two of her young goats beside her, consistently referred to as "kids" (*RC*, 211). Crusoe shoots one of them, but before doing so he orders Friday not to move or speak (i.e., to remain a fixed, bound, disciplined, desire-less subject). Then the passage goes like this: "I catched [*sic*] hold of Friday, hold, says I, stand still; and made signs to him not to stir, immediately I presented my piece, shot, and kill'd one of the kids" (*RC*, 211). Although in Early Modern English, *piece* did indeed mean cannon, gun, rifle (Hoad 2003, 352), the phrase can also be interpreted as *I presented my rare treasure* (in this sense, the threatening phallus), as well as "I presented my piece," in the sense of *I played my part*, meaning that Crusoe acts out his wishful fantasy of paternal authority in order to secure Friday's submission and subservience. It is also remarkable that Crusoe singles out a kid of the goat family to shoot, and after the act, the native is "sensibly surpriz'd, trembled, and shook, and look'd so amaz'd that I thought he would have sunk down" (*RC*, 211). Thus, what the scene alludes to is that Crusoe could eliminate Friday from the 'family idyll' any time he wishes.

4 "and make a feast upon me"

What ends this 'idyllic' situation is actually the dynamics at the root of the colonial encounter; namely, the master–slave scenario as summarised by Hegel. Although Tamás Bényei warns in his very detailed summary (2011, 52–88) that "the Hegelian narrative cannot be seen as a critical tool that can be brought in from the outside to interpret colonial texts or phenomena," it can be read as "one of the fantasy scenes that define the imaginary of colonising Europeans" (2011, 65; my translations). The paradox of colonial recognition (the recognition of the master by the slave, but at the same time the recognition of the other by the master) lies in the fact that "as the indigenous are stripped of their humanity again and again at every moment by the dehumanising colonial rhetoric, [...] in the colonial hierarchy, the native person is not a real subject, not a real other, that is, not someone whose submission and recognition would yield the coloniser real satisfaction, with irrefutable certainty of

his own superiority" (Bényei 2011, 60; my translation). The paradox here lies in the fact that the master or 'parent' has to deny the other their humanity in order to prove their superiority. But at the same time recognition can only come from a human being, so they have to 'elevate' the other to be seen as a master. This can never be fully achieved, however, since the slave (the colonised) is, by definition, incapable of legitimising authority. This is why Crusoe tries to reach a compromise by not denying Friday's human status, and therefore 'elevating' him, but only partially, granting him a childlike status. Nonetheless, a *tabula rasa* subject, deprived of his language and culture, cannot legitimise Crusoe's authority, however much the coloniser wishes to "imprint right notions" (*RC*, 217) on his mind.

The impossibility of affirmation leads to paranoia of power, as the native is unable to give the 'right' answers and to justify colonial narcissism. As Homi Bhabha puts it, "the native refusal to unify the authoritarian, colonialist address within the terms of civil engagement gives the subject of colonial authority – father *and* oppressor – another turn" (1994, 141). The colonial believes that the native hates him, and, as a result, he begins to hate the other. The logic goes something like this, according to Bhabha: I want him to love me – he does not love me – he hates me – I hate him (1994, 141). Friday, in Crusoe's eyes, remains in some ways a 'superfluous,' 'subversive' factor on the island, especially when he (the native) begins to ask surprising and perplexing questions about Christian faith. For example, he raises the question that if God is so all-powerful, why does he not kill the devil (*RC*, 218). Thus, the "very good mouth" of Friday becomes a 'bad mouth' and the servant/son/student seems to outdo or at least question the master/father/teacher. This failed mimicry, "almost the same, but not quite," as Bhabha puts it, "does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence" (1994, 86). Despite the 'colonial idyll' of filial affection, there is a lingering suspicion in Crusoe that he has failed to eradicate the 'barbaric'/childish customs in Friday, which logically leads to a sense of menace and a fear of the return of these 'barbaric' practices. As Bhabha formulates, "the authoritarian demand can now only be justified if it is contained in the language of paranoia" (1994, 141). At one point Crusoe fantasises about being killed and eaten by savages:

> and this observation of mine, put a great many thoughts into me, which made me at first not so easy about my new man Friday as I was before; and I made no doubt but that, if Friday could get back to his own nation again, he would not only forget all his religion but all his obligation to me, and would be forward enough to give his countrymen an account of me, and come back, perhaps with a hundred or two of them, and make a feast upon me, at which he might be as merry as he used to be with those of his enemies when they were taken in war. (*RC*, 224)

This danger is definitively removed with Friday's reunion with his real father, when the native fulfils the status of a child not only in Crusoe's wishful fantasy, but also in reality.

5 Conclusion

One way of interpreting the description of Friday that uses the expression "a very good mouth" could be that despite what the phrase would suggest, the coloniser, instead of regarding the native as a (non-) subject endowed with feminine characteristics, sees the colonised as a childlike, sexless, submissive being whom he can dominate with his paternal–colonial power. In Crusoe's fantasy, the "mouth" is open in only one direction on the part of the native, just like the tent at the mouth of the cave, whose door opens only inwards. That is, it can be fed – as Crusoe writes: he had "two mouths to feed instead of one" (*RC*, 213) –, just as ideas can only be planted in the native, childlike mind, conceived as *tabula rasa*, from the outside. In this sense, Friday's mouth initially appears to be "good," i.e., obedient and receptive, like Moll's, the parrot's mouth, which is able to repeat prefabricated items. However, Friday is clearly unable to legitimise Crusoe's power, for he emerges from the cave and dares to ask questions of his own which the coloniser is unable to control. The native seems to hold, through some hidden similarities, 'a mirror up to' the coloniser, so he becomes a subject of suspicion and is written out from the story.

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The Production, Circulation, and Reception of Edith Wharton's Travel Writings

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This essay explores how a discursive definition of travel writing maps out the study of Wharton's travel texts. Firstly, the essay provides a historical overview of approaches to travel writing. As part of this, it explains the notion of travel writing as a discursive formation and considers the questions of the production, circulation, and reception related to the study of the discourses of travel. Secondly, the types of American travel writing available at the time of Wharton's time are surveyed and her travel texts are positioned among them. Thirdly, the actual publishing context and the contemporary reception of Wharton's work and her travel articles are considered. After these investigations, a set of questions for reading Wharton's travel writing can be formulated.

Keywords: travel writing, postcolonial studies, post-theory, Edith Wharton

1 Introduction

Edith Wharton is generally known today as an American author of novels of manners like *The Age of Innocence* (1920), but this has not always been her only appeal. She also published widely as an essayist, a travel author, and a literary critic, as well as writing plays and poetry from the turn of the century through the 1930s. In Wharton's reception today, her works "beyond fiction" are being investigated more and more. Laura Rattray's monograph *Wharton and Genre: Beyond Fiction* (2020) contains chapters dedicated to Wharton's poetry, drama, travel, aesthetics, art history, criticism, and life writing. In tandem, the thirty-volume *Complete Works of Edith Wharton* under contract at Oxford University Press is to have separate volumes on these genres, besides novels, short stories and translations by Wharton.

Wharton's travel writings constitute a part of her work beyond fiction. Wharton published four volumes of travel writing in her lifetime: *Italian Villas* (1904), *Italian Backgrounds* (1905), *A Motor-Flight Through France* (1908), and *In Morocco* (1920). The typescript of her fifth text, *The Cruise of the Vanadis* (1888), was found by Claudine Lesage at the Municipal Library of Hyères in 1991. Other non-fiction texts by Wharton which are sometimes discussed as travel texts include *Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort* (1915), *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919)

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and *The Decoration of Houses* (1899). Moreover, the several archives with holdings of Wharton materials turn out an article or fragment occasionally, so by 2023 Wharton criticism is aware of additional travel articles on Morocco and France and fragments of travel writing about the Aegean Italy, and Spain (Singley et al. 2022).

Wharton's travel texts have attracted modest critical attention so far. Traditionally they were handled as material to provide a better understanding of Wharton's fiction, and indeed her characters travel extensively and her settings are often described in architectural detail. There is one monograph available on the topic to date, Sarah Bird Wright's magisterial *Edith Wharton's Travel Writing: The Making of a Connoisseur* (1997). However, there has been an emerging interest in Wharton's specific travel texts more recently. For instance, the popularity of war studies and the centenary of the Great War drew attention to her *Fighting France*.[1] Moreover, the transnational turn towards currents of ideas beyond national borders directed attention to Wharton's cosmopolitanism in her Italian and French pieces.[2] Similarly, several postcolonial critiques of her *In Morocco* have appeared lately.[3] In addition, Wharton's love of travelling by motor (automobile), her need for speed and movement gave reason for discussions of technologies of modernism in her *Motor-Flight* and *In Morocco*.[4] This rising visibility of Wharton's travel writing indicates that it is time to rethink the position of these texts not only in relation to her other works but also as an independent area of study. In other words, what happens if Wharton's travel writings are read *as* travel writing? More specifically, how can this set of texts be approached from the direction of travel writing studies that has been flourishing since the 1990s? The essay explores how a discursive definition of travel writing maps out the study of Wharton's travel texts.

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1 A new centenary edition of *Fighting France* was published by Alice Kelly at Edinburgh University Press (Wharton 2015) that includes discussions of strategies in women's war writing; for this see also Julie Olin-Ammentorp (2004).

2 For Wharton and transnationalism see the 2016 collection *Edith Wharton and Cosmopolitanism* (Goldsmith et al.) and also the ground-breaking *The Wretched Exotic* (Price and Joslin, 1993); Rattray's edited *Edith Wharton in Context* (2012) on Wharton's time and place and also literary milieux; her other collection *The New Edith Wharton Studies* (Rattray and Haytock, 2019) on "international" Wharton; most recently, part four of Orlando's *Bloomsbury Handbook to Edith Wharton* on global and cultural contexts (2022).

3 See Frederick Wegener's work (1996, 2000), Gary Totten (2022), Nancy Bentley (2005) and Meg Toth (2016).

4 Especially by Bentley (2005) and Totten (2013, 2016 and 2022).

2 Definitions of Travel Writing

In Anglo-Saxon literary and cultural criticism, travel writing studies have experienced an explosion of interest since the 1980s, when literary studies, history, anthropology, and geography began to generate interdisciplinary criticism on travel texts. Yet, as the editors of an early reference book, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, pointed out in 2002: the area was far from being well-defined, and they first "had to bring the subject to focus" to be able to comment on it (Hulme and Youngs 2002, 1). This initiative was still echoed in the sequel to the volume in 2009 (Halmera and Bendixen 2009, 2). Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst formulate this emerging multidisciplinary interest as part of "a war against grand narratives" in the 1980s, in which "travel writing proved especially adaptable and responsive to the application of cross-cultural, postcolonial, gender and globalisation studies" (2015, 1; see also Burke 2010, Thompson 2011, Youngs 1994 and 2006, Siegel 2002, Mulvey 1990). Kuehn and Smethurst quickly add that in the era of post-theory travel writing lost none of its appeal, as the spatial/geopolitical turn in the humanities has contributed to its continuing allure, and travel in fact has supplied several metaphors for critical practice outside travel writing studies: "displacement, (re-)location, (de-)territorialisation, mapping, topology, boundaries, space, place, mobility and so on" (2015, 2). This second-wave post-theory approach can be applied to travel writing itself as well, where attempts at exploring the genre are formulated in spatial terms as "positioning" the genre, looking at its "margins," its "extensions," its "borders" (ibid.). The generic permeability of borders of travel writing as a genre intersects with critical accounts of the generic fluidity of travel texts (Totten 2022, 129; Borm 2000, 78 and 2004, 13; Faragó 2004, 28, Halmera and Bendixen 2009, 2–3).

The variations of travel criticism can be readily reconstructed according to Kuehn and Smethurst's theory and post-theory periodisation. As a point of origin for a theory of travel writing, they pinpoint the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as the landmark event. Building on theoretical premises by Michel Foucault, Said relied on a host of literary and "sub-literary" texts like travel writings, for elaborating his idea of the workings of Orientalist discourse. Characteristically, Peter Burke (2010) sees these analytical sections of Said's book and not his theorising as its most rewarding arguments (Burke 2010, 5). Said's example paved the way for hosts of literary and nonfiction studies within postcolonial studies which are socially invested rhetorical readings of linguistic power-plays about the relation of self and Other in diverse discursive contexts of a global "planetary consciousness" (Pratt 2003, 29–30). A brief overview of Mary Louise Pratt's and Sara Mills's early uses of Foucault and Said in the area of travel writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth

century provides the conceptual guidelines for a definition of travel writing for the case of Wharton. Kuehn and Smethurst argue that more recent theorisations of travel belong to the age of post-theory: these studies point to the need for a study of architectural topologies in a global context.

Said's *Orientalism* explicates signifying processes through which Western knowledge about the Middle and Far East, the Orient, is generated. Said relies on Foucault's notion of discourse as a linguistic pattern of thinking and comprehension that generates an area of knowledge (2003, 3). Discursive practice is the activity through which knowledge of a given subject comes into being in an interplay of power, according to a set of constraints but also productively (cf. Said 2003, 6 and 23). Most importantly, discursive knowledge is non-referential, it has no mimetic connection to its supposed object; therefore, there is no question of it being real or false (or a lie): discursive knowledge is always a representation, patterns of which are to be studied in order to reflect upon contextual reasons for their formation (20–21).

Orientalist discourse exists in many forms that Said set out to assess, at least partially. Literary works constitute one small area of Orientalist discourse, as many kinds of cultural products are produced discursively: "political tracts, journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philological studies" (Said 2003, 23), diverse forms of social communications about the Orient. Foucault in his "What is an Author?" (1989) saw discourse as a limiting force, a powerful tool that determines and de-individualises knowledge production to the point of eliminating the notion of the individual subject (Foucault 2001, 1631–32). In contrast, Said viewed discourse as a site for imaginative knowledge production in which old discursive elements could surface in new combinations and possibly with a potential to resist the prescriptive drive of the discursive matrix (2003, 23).[5] Said's notion of Orientalism refers to the body of knowledge generated by the Orientalist discourse of nineteenth-twentieth century "Anglo-Saxon and French," that is "Western" or Occidental perspectives (16–17): produced by artists, scholars, politicians, colonial administrators, journalists, travelers simultaneously – all of which Said shifts with a searching eye for new combinations, tropes, or ambiguities of representations.

Travel writing studies adopt the notions of discourse and discursive knowledge production for defining its scope.[6] Influenced by anthropology after the linguistic

[5] So Said, the "Oriental" formulated a belief in resisting the simplifying Western discourse of the Orient. The Western format of the academic book actually *created* a discursive site for his imaginative "writing back" where he could develop his critique of Orientalism.

[6] Foucault's thinking in *Discipline and Punish* and "What is an Author?" provide the theoretical toolkit with which Said, Pratt, Sara Mills, and Youngs begin to unfurl their problematisation of knowledge production by the racial other, or white European women's versions of Orientalist travel writing

turn (Campbell 2002; Marcus and Clifford 1986), travel writing in this sense is defined very broadly as social text that comes into being through discursive production and exists in historically different modes and patterns that can be analysed rhetorically. It tells the story, experience or lessons of an actual traveler or a unified narrator.[7] Traditions of writing travel produce knowledge about other people, foreign lands, and habits according to different generic patterns: the hero's adventures, the pilgrim's tale, the nobleman's cultivation, etc., the rhetorical analysis of which can pinpoint inconsistencies of representations. Travel writing, then, is a cultural product that exists in cultural circulation: it not only comes into being as a result of a discursive production but also its publication, circulation, and reception depend upon its positioning in the wider cultural field.

Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) provides an illuminating example of a multidisciplinary rhetorical reading of travel texts spanning centuries of European colonisation. Pratt identifies her approach to travel writing first. She finds that up to the 1990s travel writing was studied and commented in three basic ways. Firstly, travel commentary may be celebratory, recapitulating exploits of the authors. Secondly, it may be documentary, drawing on the text as a source of information.[8] Thirdly, it may be literary, when texts by literary figures are studied in order to point out their artistic and intellectual dimensions connected to the authors' 'main' work (2003, 10). She contextualises her own project as part

produced by male authors. Most relevant to readers of Wharton, Mills's book on female travel authors does not define the male/female difference in terms of biology, psychology, or *écriture* but through the social practice of how knowledge production by women travelers works in these texts: what examples they use, what patterns and forms characterise their writing and, just as importantly, what factors determine the publication and reception of their texts. She devotes two full chapters to theorising the notion of gendered discourse and her elaborate and illuminating explication proved usable for many who followed (cf. Said 2003, Pratt 2003 [1992], Mills 2008 [1991], Youngs 1994, Siegel 2002). These early books are not informed by the late theories of Foucault on ethics, which have been published in English recently as part of publishing edited versions of his lectures at the Collège de France, by Macmillan and Picador in England and St. Martin's Press in the US. Cf. esp. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984* (2012).

[7] As we shall see, diverse authors who are to be referred to in this section all think of travel writing in a broad sense, be it thematically, through generic interactions or by considering its borders and permeabilities (see Hulme and Youngs 2002, Youngs 2006, Bendixen and Halmera 2009, Kuehn and Smethurst 2015).

[8] Historically oriented accounts of Hungarian travel writing trace typical reactions to the US and Mexico from the post-revolutionary perspective of late nineteenth-century Hungarian travelers (see Glant 2013 and Venkovits 2023).

of the large-scale effort to "decolonise knowledge," in which "colonial meaning-making" has become a subject of critical investigation (2).[9]

While Pratt was analysing discourses of travel writing from three eras of European colonisation, in 1991 Sara Mills almost simultaneously extended the Foucauldian discursive framework to women's Orientalist travel writing, representing its cultural work from production through reception. Mills focused on the differences between male and female Orientalist discourses and mapped out the varieties of Orientalist discursive practices performed by British women travel writers. She pointed out that for women in the Victorian era it was "sexually improper" (2008, 41) to publish literary texts, so they often channeled their creative energies into the writing of less valued texts like diaries or travel writing. Her thesis about colonial travel writing by women was that Western women were not comfortable either with the colonial enterprise or with the expectations of femininity they faced (3), therefore ample differences can be found between the male-centred view of the colonial Other and the female one. Women relate more emphatically to the colonial Other as an individual than men who tend to denounce race (3). In addition, Mills claimed that the differences between male and female colonial travel texts were shaped by constraints of production and consumption, as well. She discussed how women's travel writing was produced and consumed (published, illustrated, reviewed and evaluated, sold) in its original context. Her research aims at locating constrains and resistances of production and consumption, as well. She writes:

> The project of this chapter is to trace the way the discursive situation determined women's travel texts in the colonial period. What differentiates this account from pure determinism is that there are possibilities for resistance to this process of constraints, and I concentrate on tracking down the resistances as much as the constraints as such. (68)

Mills' work was republished in 2008, and her lucid text has become a textbook example of discursively oriented study of race, class and gender in travel writing.

The critical treatment of travel writing today illustrates how a genre formerly considered subliterary or unimaginative (Halmera and Bendixen 2009, 1) is

[9] She analyses the mutual engagement between "European travel and exploration writing and European economic and political expansionism" (Pratt 2003, 38). This practically means that she studies how "travel texts by Europeans about non-European parts of the world have created the domestic subject" of European imperialism from the 1750s through the 1980s (4). In particular, she is after signifying practices that encode and legitimise the aspirations of economic expansion and empire. She finds connections from travel writing to other forms of knowledge, primarily between travel writing and enlightenment natural history, poetic science, and Victorian verbal painting. She locates signifying practices based on how they formulate Euro-centred forms of global consciousness versus a racially different Other.

integrated into the study of cultural texts. When the interest of literary scholars shifts to the interactions of cultural discourses and the histories of cultural issues (reacting to projects like Marcus and Clifford's *Writing Culture*, 1996), travel writing comes to be seen as a social act, a discourse of cultural interaction. The way travel writers represent their Others indirectly shows their own discursive positioning and opens up travel texts for wider cultural analysis – to the point where travel-related terms begin to dominate the critical discourse. One such term in Kuehn and Smethurst's *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (2015) is topology: the "study of shapes and structures especially in relation to landscape and the built environment" (6). Topology gains primary importance in travel writing as a way of mediating the traveller's experience of space:

> In travel writing, topologies mediate between the traveler's sense of place and his or her cognitive response to it. In some travel writing this can become a dynamic relation between the space regarded and the culturally-defined perceptual structure imposed on it to make sense of it. Adjustments are often made, and place can resist the imposition of topologies, turning structure to anti-structure and vice versa. (Kuehn and Smethurst 2015, 6)

Burke characterises the vision of nineteenth-century educated travellers as saturated by previous travelers and artists:

> Well-educated travelers often saw foreign countries and cities through the eyes of artists and writers who had already visited the same places and published their impressions. Robert Browning, Henry James and Marcel Proust all took John Ruskin's book *The Stones of Venice* with them and they saw Venetian churches and palaces in a Ruskinian light. As for Ruskin himself, he remarked that 'My Venice, like Turner's, had been chiefly created for us by Byron.' (2010, 5)

This aspect seems to be a particularly relevant way to consider Wharton's descriptions of architecture and landscape, which in her rendering often conform to visions by earlier artists and follow a preset order of description. How the imposition of a culturally defined perceptual structure happens in Wharton is the task at hand for this study to explore.[10] The issue of patterns of representing architecture and

[10] The hermeneutics of the visual understanding of space is a broad philosophical question and a major issue of aesthetics. Sándor Radnóti traces the emergence of the notion of landscape in philosophy and art history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He argues that the idea of landscape (and of sublime landscape in topological elements like the sea, the sky, mountains, and the garden and these in landscape paintings) is a historical cultural construct. Varieties of cultural landscapes were articulated and formulated by Emmanuel Kant, Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Edmund Burke, and John Ruskin in the period (Radnóti 2022, 177–260). Particular sublime landscapes were identified with specific national imaginary communities throughout the long nineteenth century (264–80). Radnóti's overview relates directly to the discussion of national literary cults in late

landscape in late nineteenth-century American travel writing about Europe leads to the discussion of discourses of travel writing available for Wharton to render topological features in a globalised context.

3 Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Discourses of Travel Writing and Wharton's Work

Ways of travel and writing about travel are cultural practices interlinked with politics, technological advancements, economic and social change, as well as developments in art and literature. In the long nineteenth century of the West, major shifts in technologies of travel widened the availability of travel to the middle class and increasingly for women to destinations across the globe; the secularisation of arts and sciences posed basic questions about the nature of humans and historical change that travel writings sought indirectly to address and to reflect on. Many wonderful overviews cover this broad area.[11] I wish, very briefly, just to sketch this history on the level of commonplaces and key terms in order to provide basic reference points for Wharton's texts.

The nineteenth century changed ways of travel and ways of thinking and writing about travel significantly. For centuries, travel had been an elite preoccupation of the rich, while rapid industrial and social changes increasingly democratised travelling during the century. Very simply put, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, industrial and economic development that resulted in social shifts found their counterpoint in the Romantic movement that revalued individuals and their relationship to nature positively in the face of technical progress. Patterns of travel shifted in reaction to social and intellectual reconfigurations. Most importantly, the rapid development of ways of travel resulted in a democratisation of travelling by the 1840s.

As James Buzard explains, before the 1840s the seventeenth and eighteenth-century habit of the aristocratic Grand Tour had the ideological purpose of

nineteenth-century Hungarian travel writings, for instance the case of the cultural construction of Lake Balaton as part of the Hungarian national landscape by novelist Mór Jókai in the illustrated periodical *Vasárnapi Újság* (Szajbély 2010, Radnai 2022, and see also: Takáts 2007b, 2012, and 2007a; cf. Nyáry 2023). This signals the fact that in addition to an awareness of early modern and Modernist Hungarian authors writing about traveling abroad (Szirák 2016, Balajthy 2019, Németh 2018), nineteenth-century Hungarian domestic travel writing is appearing on the critical map, as well.

[11] See Mulvey 1983, Stowe 1994, Schriber 1997, Smith 2001.

rounding out the education of young sons of aristocratic families by acquainting them with continental art and society (2002, 38). This function was challenged by travel on a bigger scale affordable to a wider section of society after the 1840s. The middle class could afford to travel and they travelled not so much for education anymore; they were more sensitive to curiosities, as well as exotic and picturesque sites. The Romantic interest in the individual, sublime nature, and the sinister sides of the past at the beginning of the nineteenth century functioned as an impetus for tourism which became large-scale from the 1840s on. The middle and second part of the nineteenth century brought about a more objectifying way of countering progress, relating to nature and the past in travel. This was subdued by turn-of-the-century aestheticism and an interest in a personal experience of beauty through travel.

Buzard defines the English Grand Tour as an ideological exercise (2002, 38). It was a social ritual in elite families to send their sons to Europe after finishing their studies at university. The sixteen- or seventeen-year-old would be sent to travel around Europe with a chaperone or a group of aides to acquaint himself with European art and manners. The tour had a relatively set itinerary, which included Calais, the Loire Valley, Paris, Geneva, and a crossing of the Alps to Milan, Florence, Venice, and Rome. The way back would be through Austria, Germany, and Amsterdam – but the whole circuit could run the other way around, too. The educational Grand Tour favoured classical (Roman and Renaissance) sites and the expectation was the cultivation of both "good manners and educated tastes" (41). The ancient general assumption was that travel would provide "men the opportunity to achieve notable distinction through self-defining experience" (Smith 2001, i). The idea of self-defining experience was modified in the Grand Tour by the reliance on specifically European locations of classical culture for an aristocratic male clientele.

From the 1840s on the development of transportation systems like the railways and steamships enabled the mass mobility of people and increased the scale of travel "fanned by" empire building and trade (Carr 2002, 71). As a result, the elite Grand Tour was rivalled by tourism and organised ways of travel centred around guide-books that determined where to go and what to see. The reason for travelling was no longer educational as it had been in the case of the Grand Tour. The new motivation for travel was to stage the individuality of the tourist by seeking pleasure; visits to picturesque sites highly valued by Romantic artists were relied on to fulfil the function (Buzard 2002, 42–43). Leisurely travellers bent on preserving old habits of dawdling appeared in sharp contrast to efficient tourists doing an itinerary in a matter of weeks, not years (48–49).

Changing patterns of travel influenced changing discourses of travel writing in the nineteenth century in several more or less distinct but overlapping waves. In the first

wave, most accounts of travel written in the echo of the Grand Tour offer stories of cultivation about art and the useful legacy of the past. They are directed at an audience, even if they take the form of letters. In the second wave, the rise of tourism brings a change in who travels and why – middle classes travel for individual pleasure rather than the common good, and this initiates the need for individualised personalised accounts on the one hand, and the mass production of practical guidebooks on the other. The third wave, from the 1880s through the Great War, in the context of late nineteenth-century realism and aestheticising, starts out with an objectivising tone, then it becomes a more personalised pattern of writing about travel (Carr 2002, 75). The last wave of Anglo-Saxon travel writing occurs in the interwar years. At this time, literary travel writing is conducted by disillusioned Modernist authors whose travel writings display a fair amount of world-weariness (81).

American travellers in Europe in the nineteenth century sought to enlarge their cultural and artistic horizon by visiting sites and artworks of cultural value. In the US context, the leisurely and cultivated tempo of travel that survived from the Grand Tour appeared in the form of the travel book by the "belletristic" traveler (Wright 1997, ix), for instance Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne or Longfellow. For Irving, the influential American travel writer of the first part of the nineteenth century, travel serves "to compile impressions from ephemeral contact with venerated foreign sites" (Decker 2009, 128), and the traveler studies European sites because he "balances an appreciation of the European past with a nationalistic affirmation of the American future" (Bendixen 2009, 109). In addition to this nationalistic interest in things past, Irving also established the conventions of literary travel writing (Bendixen 2009, 109) for generations of American travelers to follow.

Another impetus for travel in late nineteenth-century US culture can be found in works of authors who belong to the Genteel Tradition. George Santayana's 1910 essay on "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" defines and criticises the cultural work of the genteel tradition at the same time. Santayana describes the US as "a young nation with an old mentality" (1968, 37), where the life of an actively expanding and innovating nation is conceptually driven by ideas of an earlier context. The American mind is inhabited by opposing halves, Santayana writes, the technological modern spirit he calls the American will and the traditional and conservative morally sensitive spirit he calls the American intellect (ibid.). The Genteel Tradition is connected to the sphere of the American intellect that is rooted in Calvinist belief and American Transcendentalist attitudes, but had "grown stale" by the early twentieth century (1968, 39), Santayana claims. At the time of ever-increasing industrialisation, incorporation, immigration, and social strife, genteel intellectuals and authors reacted by envisioning an improved, ideal US based on

conservative values of polity and culture.[12] As part of the Genteel cultural work, the aim of acquiring Classical and Neoclassical European cultural tradition was to elevate and unify US culture according to Republican political standards (Wright 1997, 37). European Classical and Neoclassical examples mainly included but were not limited to literary examples: architectural models were also part of the import of cultural goods. Within the Genteel project of cultivating the nation, Neoclassical architecture was to help create public spaces where the populace could live up to high standards of political and social behaviour: the democratic ideal of social justice, a classical education into beauty, a moral compass for what is right (Benert 1996, 324).

Interestingly for our concern with architecture, Santayana's lecture on the Genteel Tradition relies on architectural metaphors for substantiating the difference of the technologically oriented modern American spirit and the traditional, conservative genteel one in American life. Santayana refers to the contrast metaphorically as one between the skyscraper versus the colonial mansion. He visualises the two opposing extremes of American mentality that coexist at the turn of the century as different kinds of architectural constructs. Santayana famously identified elitist Genteel cultural ideas of the American intellect as feminine, residing in the colonial mansion. Genteel ideals could possibly emasculate the power of the male American will, residing in the crassly perpendicular skyscraper. Santayana could not have relied on the example of the white symmetrical Neoclassical building as a metaphor for the Genteel tradition because, first, it would have masked the explicit gender

[12] Emily Coit provides a rich intellectual history of late-nineteenth century US genteel politics and cultural elitism through discussing how Henry Adams, Henry James, and Edith Wharton relate to Genteel ideas of democracy and education. She claims that (Santayana's positive opinion of James notwithstanding) all three authors remained elitist and racist both politically and in their ideas of education, even though they criticised tenets of the set of ideas that is called the Genteel tradition (2021, 8). She also explains how the term the Genteel tradition has been used to service various conservative cultural agendas in the early twentieth century (234–42) which, for Wharton, usually turned out to be very critical (223). Coit's beautifully written argument even links the architectural metaphor of the colonial mansion in Santayana's essay (which stands in for the American intellect) to Wharton's home The Mount (224–25) to say how the erection of The Mount predated Santayana's essay, as did Wharton's correspondence with critical remarks on skyscrapers; as if Wharton had anticipated Santayana's later trope with the opposition of the colonial mansion and the skyscraper. (Just for the sake of signaling a small figurative ambiguity in Coit's metaphor, let me note that the design of The Mount was informed by French, Italian, and English traditions. The layout of the house itself was modelled on Belton House in England, a typical English country house, the garden followed the Italian-style geometric pattern, the furnishings French and Italian classical examples as per the ideal in Wharton's and Codman's *The Decoration of Houses*. The Mount itself is more cosmopolitan than it looks and varies from the American colonial house type considerably (cf. Macheski 2012, 190–91), which problematises rather than simplifies Wharton's relation to the "American intellect" in the metaphor.)

differentiation between old-fashioned private space and modernised public space, second, he possibly did not want to refer to any imported architectural model as a visual reference point speaking about *American* traditions. Yet it needs to be pointed out that viewed from the perspective of the classicist bent of the genteel model of US culture, perhaps a reference to the white symmetrical Neoclassical villa would have also been appropriate to visualise and to criticise the Europeanised elitist cultural ideal the Genteel tradition held dear. The most famous mediator of a classical cultural (including architectural) heritage for the US was Charles Eliot Norton, the first professor of the history of art at Harvard University (a post he held between1872–98), co-founder of *The Nation* in 1865. Norton idealised Ancient, Medieval Gothic and early Renaissance European art and architecture (Blazek 2016). Norton disseminated his views widely, and he was also an avid traveler, whose work inspired US travelers in Europe like Henry James, Henry Adams and Edith Wharton.

To see Wharton's authorial position more clearly, one also needs to consider what difference it meant to be a *female* travel author of the Genteel tradition in turn-of-the-century America. Anglo-American women travel authors in the nineteenth century were expected to write about travel in ways that fit their traditional domestic roles. The nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class woman was the moral and social centre of her stable domestic world, well-separated from male domains of activity. Yet she also travelled, as travel formed part of her leisurely consumption (Smith 2001, 15). The lady traveler was constrained by expectations of decent behaviour: she could travel as a wife or daughter, as a representative of social causes (to save, convert, civilise), or a charity worker, or for her own health. Travel also presented itself as a site of education, institutionalised forms of which were not open to her, and as an activity that was less regulated by limiting conventions of gender discrimination than her domestic context (Smith 2001, 17). According to Sidonie Smith, the lady travel author concentrated on scenes of her travel while she tried to decently sideline her own importance by suppressing the first person "I" (2001, 18) and by reporting on manners and customs rather than politics and administration, a practice which links their work to ethnography (19; Wright 1997, 46). Suzanne Schriber investigated nationalism and womanhood in a vast array of travel texts by American women and showed that despite expectations that they would write about everyday concerns, women travelers – for instance Margaret Fuller, Sophia Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher-Stowe, and Wharton – wrote about art and architecture with sophistication (Schriber 1997, i–xii). Rattray goes as far as to argue that Wharton "seldom presents herself as a woman traveler" (2020, 94). Gary Totten agrees that Wharton is an atypical female author (2022, 179).

Edith Wharton's travel writings are positioned at the intersection of the belletristic, genteel, and objectifying, primarily masculine ways of writing about travel, on which

she could draw as a woman. Sarah Bird Wright found that Wharton transcended all these traditions of writing travel via her expertise (1997, 36). Wright did not problematise Wharton's specialised female perspective explicitly but through the stories of illustrations that she would have liked to be different from the ones expected of a woman author. She also implied a possible connection between Wharton's and Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer's work, and Mary King Waddington's professional treatments of art history in their books on Italy, France, and England (1997, 47).

In contrast, William Decker reads Wharton's travel writing together with that of Henry Adams and Henry James. He lumps the three well-known authors together without gender differentiation again as elite cosmopolitan travel writers who "all have read Ruskin" and are "on the cathedral trail" to find diverse secular means of celebrating Europe's Christian past through monuments (2009, 128). Decker reads Adams, James, and Wharton as representatives of the cosmopolitan "well-educated travelers" influenced by Ruskin to whom Burke also refers (2010, 5). Because of their common Ruskinian approach, Decker argues that all three authors are preoccupied by "the visual consumption of beauty" (2009, 132), yet it is Wharton's texts that provide "lessons of aesthetic appreciation" and culminate in scenes of visual beauty described with a painterly eye (131). In contrast, Adams is more invested in questions of cultural history and James in the production of personal impressions (Decker 2009, 129–30). In particular, Adams's, James's and Wharton's accounts of cathedrals and ancient ruins can be regarded as key topographies of their aesthetic ruminations. Decker's observations connect Wharton's travel writing to a genteel cosmopolitan ideal of learning and art through the Ruskin-induced topography of cathedrals and ruins, even if it leaves the feminine aspect of her texts unexamined. When Helena Chance discusses the architectural principles in Wharton's *Decoration* and *Italian Villas*, she also finds pronounced links to Ruskin-induced Gothicism and Beaux-Arts movement Classicism (2012, 201–2) without making gender differentiations.

As the final step in the overview of diverse discursive frames for writing travel available for Wharton, it is useful to highlight key textual meeting points that inform her texts and motivate her aestheticising search for beauty. Wharton critics have already enumerated that Wharton's travel writing was influenced by the work of specific authors like Wolfgang Goethe, Addington Symonds, Paul Bourget, and Vernon Lee (Lee 2008, 83–89 and Rattray 2020, 90), links to whom are to be mentioned in relation to specific travel accounts. I would only like to add as a note that these informing works can be connected to three major traditions of travel writing. The Enlightenment ideal of aesthetic and social *Bildung* related to the elite Grand Tour emanates from Wharton's love for Goethe' *Italian Journey* (1816–17). The romanticising personal touch of the belletristic tradition is present through

Symonds and Bourget, and the scientific-moralising thrust can be considered through Charles Eliot Norton and Harper Lee's works. Norton's work connects Ruskin's theories of architectural beauty and continuity to scenes of Wharton's visual consumption of beauty in her travel writing.

The historical discursive context around Wharton's travel writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consists of interlocking strands generally moving away from the legacy of a Romantic sensitivity through an objectivising and continuity-oriented stance towards an agnostic aesthetic sensuousness of Modernist taste. Wharton the emerging professional author navigated among these traditions when she represented her experiences as a female travel author in the institutional context of nineteenth and early twentieth-century US literary production.

4 Publishing Wharton's Travel Writing

The discursive definition of travel writing adopted for this discussion entails not only that one studies the factors of text production but also its institutions: contexts and modes of publishing and contemporary reception. Reduced prices of production and a growing demand made the nineteenth century the golden age of periodicals (Nettels 2012, 137). According to contemporary habit, Wharton published her poems, short stories, book chapters, and essays in illustrated monthly magazines between the 1890s and 1930s. The book publication of these pieces, altered and amended with some extra sections, usually followed soon after. Wharton was in constant negotiations with magazine editors and book publishers on plans, needs, deadlines, marketing and, very importantly, prices and sales revenues, as her extended business correspondence testifies (see Towheed 2007, Shaloo 2012 and Girling 2016). She developed close ties to Scribner's editors William C. Brownell and Edward Burlingame, and later to Appleton's Rutger B. Jewett, who eventually became her agent. The journals she wrote for included the highbrow *Century Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *North Atlantic Review*, and later the middlebrow *Pictorial Review*, the *Delineator,* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*. As Elsa Nettels points out, the "majority of her most notable writings were first available to the reading public in serial form" (2012, 144).

Wharton's travel essays also appeared in illustrated monthly journals first. The illustrated travel essay was a popular genre for periodicals, as it provided welcome variation between short stories and other literary genres (Wright 1997, 37). Turn-of-the-century US middle-class female readers educated their sense of travel through reading impressionistic travel authors of the mid-nineteenth

century. This influence was changing slowly in highbrow periodicals like *Harper's*, *Scribner's Monthly* or *The Century* (Wright 1997, 37). Journal editors needed publications that served readers' needs, so editors favoured the impressionistic tradition. Wharton began to sell her stories on the marketplace of illustrated monthly magazines for women after 1913, when she ceased to publish her texts exclusively in *Scribner's Magazine* (Pajot 2020, 9–10).

The study of the market of periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has been a popular area of recent periodical studies[13] that has initiated an exciting direction in Wharton's reception as well – another new expansion, as it were. To view periodicals as an institutionalised form of literary production relies on a socially oriented view of the literary field[14] in which a literary marketplace of products serves a diversified clientele of readers, highbrow or middlebrow. Wharton's publishing habits relied on habits of her times. First, she was linked to the periodicals managed and read by her own social class: those of *The Atlantic Monthly*'s circle (Billips 2018). As a case in point, Pavlina Pajot's dissertation shows how the market of periodicals made Wharton navigate the needs of periodicals and publishing houses differently, as her revisions between journal piece and book chapters indicate. Pajot describes that in the 1910s Wharton published her poems, stories, chapters and essays in highbrow magazines. She was loyal to *Scribner's Magazine* and her editor Richard Burlingame until Scribner's could process her outpouring of texts no longer (Shaloo 2012, 122). Afterwards, she sought multiple outlets for her short forms. By the end of the decade, she published with middlebrow magazines also including the *Pictorial Review* and the *Delineator*. Finally, in the 30s she struggled to find the right market for her socially critical stories (Pajot 2020, 26). Throughout these years, she transformed her journal publication to fit the needs of the readers of her books, an upgrade most visible in the revisions she made for the book versions of these pieces in the twenties.

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[13] See Pavlina Pajot's overview (2020, 10–12), and also Edie Thornton's "Selling Edith Wharton: Illustration, Advertising, and *Pictorial Review*, 1924–1925" (2001), Sarah Whitehead's "Breaking the Frame: How Edith Wharton's Short Stories Subvert their Magazine Context" (2008), and her "Edith Wharton and the Business of Magazine Articles" (2019), Shafquat Towheed on Wharton's business correspondence with Macmillan's (2007), Sharon Shaloo on Wharton and her editors (2012), and Paul Ohler on digital archives and Wharton's publications in periodicals (2015).

[14] Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* provides the background for Wright's and Pajot's work, too. The literary field is defined as one area of the cultural field, the literary work of art is not to be studied in itself or as a product of an autonomous agent but 1) through its conditions of publication and reception 2) against the backdrop of patterns of the field of literary production 3) in the wider context of other fields of race relations and power relations (Bourdieu 1993, 30–31). For Bourdieu and Wharton see Carol Singley's reading of *The Age of Innocence* through Bourdieu's concept of culture as a social field (2003).

The publication history of Wharton's travel essays and books normally figures as a fact and figure introduction, not as part of literary institutions and market factors. Hermione Lee's biography, for instance, in a wonderfully meticulous way, provides all the details of which travel article appeared where and when before being turned into a chapter in a book, and she sums up the main points of the volume afterwards. It is customary to include these "publication data" in the introductory section of scholarly articles as well (cf. Rattray 2020) as a kind of bibliographical fact. What difference does it make to say that one views information on publication history as part of the life of the travel text? As we have seen, the first wave of travel writing critics like Mills in the 1990s would answer that it is possible to look at stories of publication as sites of expectations and negotiations between author and editor, product and market, and supply and demand that embody the interplay of contemporary cultural preferences and norms ([1991] 2008). This is the approach to be adopted for considering the publication stories of Wharton's travel books.

Wright's monograph already initiated such a market-oriented approach. Wright devotes a full chapter to the discussion of Wharton's travel publications in the literary marketplace. In particular, she gives detailed publication histories based on archival material and surveys the sales reports of Wharton's travel books, as well. Wright portrays the story of sales as a way to look at Wharton's professionalisation process. She provides valuable archival footage on the story of the illustrations in *Italian Villas*, too; in fact, a major part of the chapter on Wharton's first travel book relates to this incident. Wharton was commissioned to write essays on Italian villa architecture by the editor of *Century Magazine* based on her earlier travel essays on her Italian giros. Picturesque sketches by Maxwell Parrish were ordered for the volume by the editor, as well. Parrish's attitude to producing the sketches was much to the dislike of Wharton: he was not present at the sites when she was, they could not cooperate through correspondence, and the sketches did not highlight the points Wharton wanted to emphasise. Wharton repeatedly proposed including layouts of gardens and drawings of key architectural elements in scale instead of impressionistic sketches, but the editors paid no heed to her suggestions (Wright 1997, 39). In brief, the story of the publication process translates as a struggle between Wharton's scientifically minded representation of her data and the editors' expectations of impressionistic travel sketches on scenic Italian villas. Without the influence of the market factors that the editors' requirements represent, Wharton would have turned out a comprehensive handbook of Italian villa architecture complete with layouts and architectural drawings. In its actual form, the book can be seen as a mixture of these two sets of endeavours.

The contemporary reception of Wharton's travel writing also belongs to the life of texts as part of the available discursive and institutional framework. In this

regard, James Tuttleton's volume on the contemporary reception of Wharton's work (Tuttleton et al., 1992) serves as a reference point. Reviewers of Wharton's individual travel works can be assessed in relation to traditions of travel writing and in relation to the gentile educative-architectural tradition, as well.

5 Conclusion

A survey of the notion of travel writing and of historically distinct discourses of travel writing in the nineteenth century contextualises the study of Wharton's travel texts. Travel writing has been defined as a social text about the act or lessons of travel performed in historically changing patterns that is to be studied in relation to preliminaries, publication and reception history. A brief overview showed that Wharton's travel writing can be placed in a variety of historically relevant discursive contexts: the Enlightenment tradition, the belletristic tradition, and the gentile tradition that Wharton, the upper-class woman author was directly related to. The marketplace of periodicals was the first gateway between Wharton and her readers, book publications usually followed afterwards in a modified form, offering another channel that catered to another set of readers. Wharton's contemporary reception can be arranged usefully according to available discourses and the expectations of the literary market.

By analogy, for the travel writings this implies that Wharton's architectural vision is to be thought of in its discursive institutionalised contexts as a changing representational strategy catering to specific groups of readers. In particular, the focus of my investigations has been to find out (1) how the discourse of observing architecture based on John Ruskin's writings on Italy and France is both defied and relied on in Wharton's travel writing and what its purported aims are and (2) how this enterprise changes the trajectory of Wharton's travel writing roughly between 1904 and 1926 in tune with changes in the institutional context.

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Identity Construction through Images of Clothing in Fleur Adcock's Poetry

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This study examines how Fleur Adcock, a New Zealand-born British poet, establishes identities through images of clothing in three of her poems. Adcock's acute observations of clothing reflect the close link between dress and the construction of the self and our place in society. In "The Soho Hospital for Women," Adcock portrays clothing as a crucial aspect of personal identity, while in "Londoner" clothing reflects the conflict of the divided self. "Witnesses" reconstructs female identity under patriarchy by emphasising the different functions of clothing for men and women in the courtroom.

Keywords: Fleur Adcock, identity, clothing

Fleur Adcock's poetry is characterised by acute and witty observations of various quotidian experiences. Several of her poems exhibit detailed descriptions of the wearing of apparel, through which she attempts to construct her displaced identities in different manners. This paper focuses on three of Adcock's poems – "Londoner," "The Soho Hospital for Women," and "Witnesses" – exploring how the imagery of clothing in her poetry emerges as a symbolic reflection of displacement, marginalisation, and power dynamics in the process of identity formation.

Rather than being solely a part of the external and social creature, clothing is eminently associated with the internal subjective self. As Joanne Entwistle notes: "Dress lies at the margins of the body and marks the boundary between self and other, individual and society" (2001, 37), and is thus essential to the construction of individual identity. Adcock's interest in identity is apparent throughout her "nine collections of poems from *The Eye of the Hurricane*, published in New Zealand in 1964, to *Looking Back* (1997), gathered together in *Poems 1960-2000* (2000)," and "one of Adcock's main preoccupations is her own identity, New Zealand or British" (Bracefield 2018, 59). Born in New Zealand of Northern Irish and English descent, Adcock grapples with a complex sense of identity marked by enduring estrangement from both her country of birth and her country of immigration throughout her lifetime. This paper delves into the pivotal role of clothing in Fleur Adcock's poetry, employing it as a lens to scrutinise the intricate dynamics of identity

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formation. While firmly grounded in the motif of clothing, the examination extends beyond its initial focus, contributing to a more expansive understanding of identity construction throughout Adcock's poetic work.

In "Londoner," the inappropriate clothes and shoes the speaker wears suggest the psychic disruption caused by her frequent physical journeys between Britain and New Zealand, reflecting the conflict of the divided self. As the title "Londoner" adumbrates, the poem depicts how the speaker spent her days as a Londoner back from her visit to New Zealand, experiencing dismal weather and dreadful traffic along the flourishing metropolis in contrast to the rustic atmosphere in New Zealand. The poem starts with her attempt to renegotiate her hybrid British-New Zealand identity by transforming her incongruity of wearing "a cotton skirt, a cardigan, jandals –/ or flipflops as people call them here,/ where February's winter" (2000, 182). According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, our experience of our bodies in time and space gives us our sense of self. As an "embodied practice," dress is essential to our perception of the world; our experience of dress determines our sense of self and place in society (qtd. in Lee 2015, 31). The speaker's neglect of the difference of the season between the two countries demonstrates her alienation from both nations, which is emphasised by the sheer contrast between her light outfit and her neighbours' overcoats. The rhetorical question "Aren't I cold?" (2000, 182) conveys a sense of self-deprecation and uncovers her inner struggle triggered by the abrupt physical change of travelling from New Zealand to London. Accidentally blurting out the kiwi word "jandals," which has been a core part of New Zealand's cultural identity for ages, reveals that her consciousness fails to keep up with her physical movement. Furthermore, her brief moment of confusion and the immediate response to change the word into "flipflops" demonstrates her awareness of her physical surroundings and her psychological struggle to locate herself. Louise Dabène and Danièle Moore argue that "language plays the part of an 'emotional cement' in own-group recognition and the determination of in-and-out boundaries" (1995, 23). This language choice and the subsequent quick adjustment by the speaker here can be interpreted as a manifestation of code-switching, involving the juxtaposition of elements from two or more languages, thus serving as a "boundary-leveling or boundary-maintaining strategy" (Heller 1998, 1). This strategic use of language may evolve into a marker of identity and is particularly relevant when examining code-switching in post-colonial literature.

As the speaker navigates the physical and linguistic transitions, she seems to gradually embrace her complicated national identity. "The neighbours in their overcoats are smiling/ at my smiles and not at my bare toes" (2000, 182). Being greeted with genuine smiles instead of being mocked by her neighbours renders the speaker a sense of belonging and establishes the grounds for her to come to

terms with her dual national identity. The unexpected amiability also provokes the protagonist's contemplation of self-identification:

> they know me here.
> I hardly know myself,
> yet. (2000, 182)

The dialogic space here reflects "some fragmentation caused by the distancing effects of time and space" (Wilson 2007, 50) and the fractured identity she has retained over two decades. The isolated "yet" indicates her willingness and resolution to explore, relocate, as well as embrace her ambivalent identity. It is only a matter of time before she figures out the way to construe her self-identity. The title "Londoner" seems to suggest her tendency to identify herself as English. However, her unconscious reference to New Zealand underlying the lines insinuates that the painful sense of estrangement she endured from both countries for ages has slowly dissolved.

> It takes me until Monday evening,
> walking from the office after dark
> to Westminster Bridge. It's cold, it's foggy,
> the traffic's as abominable as ever,
> and there across the Thames is County Hall,
> that uninspired stone body, floodlit.
> It makes me laugh. In fact, it makes me sing. (2000, 182)

The industrialised scene of obnoxious traffic and the "uninspired," "floodlit" County Hall remind her of the natural landscape in New Zealand. However, the apparent incompatibility of urban London and idyllic New Zealand, as she puts it, "makes me laugh. In fact, it makes me sing." In other words, the heroine is well primed for embracing both the favourable and unfavourable sides of the two nations, which validates her determination to reconcile herself to her dual identity. The exhilaration she has experienced from ultimate self-relocation inspires her to "sing" out this poem in the end.

From another perspective, the title also delivers a sense of irony. Striving to blend into British society for a long time, the speaker finds herself still lingering in a marginalised position. The protagonist endeavours to establish and consolidate her English identity by roleplaying as a diligently working Londoner. As illustrated by Sarah Lynne Bowman, "role-playing offers participants an alternate platform on which to practise social roles and adopt alternate modes of identification" (2010, 138). Throughout the years of being back and forth between New Zealand and Britain, the speaker develops and changes her complex feelings towards these two countries. Having decided to finally settle down in England, she regards herself

as being integrated into its prosperous capital city. However, as she observes her surroundings through the foggy night, her identity seems to become vague again. In the end, she cannot help but laugh at herself for being too naive to believe that she eventually located herself in London. As Erik Erikson notes about teenagers, "the search for a new and yet reliable identity can perhaps best be seen in the persistent adolescent endeavour to define, overdefine, and redefine themselves and each other in ruthless comparison" (1994, 87). Similarly here, the relentless comparison with and imitation of Londoners reveals the hard effort the speaker made to construct and maintain her seemingly reliable identity.

In "The Soho Hospital for Women," Adcock gives a portrayal of the clothes worn by two female patients on the weekly outing, in comparison with the hospital gowns that patients are supposed to put on during their admission, which indicates her reluctance to efface personal identity. As Nathan Joseph and Nicholas Alex point out, the uniform suppresses individual idiosyncrasies in behaviour and appearance (1972, 719). Hospital gowns, being a kind of uniform, create the sense of being exposed, vulnerable and de-identified. When patients don their hospital gowns, they are relegated to the "sick role," being automatically stripped of their own identity.

Nellie, a breast cancer patient and mother of several children, wears a quilted dressing gown that "softens/ to semi-doubtful this imbalance" (Adcock 2000, 158). The hospital gown not only cunningly covers her flawed body but also shields her from unkind gazes. However, her individual identity is also "softened" by "her quilted dressing-gown." Women often experience dissociation from themselves and the loss of identity after becoming mothers, as the maternal role outweighs their individuality. As depicted in the poem, people focus on Nellie's single breast as having been able to feed several children, while "there's no starched vanity/ in our abundant ward-mother" (2000, 158). In spite of the fact that she nurtures a big family, no one keeps her company aside the bed. Her silvery hair, lolled slippers, and weathered smile disclose her frailty and loneliness, but also suggest her tenacity and serenity. Moreover, when she is granted the chance to go out, she finally can choose her own outfit which provides moments of comfort and individuality.

> When she dresses up in her black
> with her glittering marcasite brooch on
> to go for the weekly radium treatment
> she's the bright star of the taxi-party –
> whatever may be growing under her ribs. (Adcock 2000, 158)

The moment she exchanges the uniform for her favourite piece of clothing, her own personality becomes more vibrant. The narrative then pivots to the second female patient the speaker encounters at the hospital. Battling cancer, she opts to

wear her unsuitable personal clothing for the weekly outdoor treatment amid her deteriorating health.

> Doris hardly smokes in the ward –
> and hardly eats more than a dreamy spoonful –
> but the corridors and bathrooms
> reek of her Players Number 10 [sic!],
> and the drug-trolley pauses
> for long minutes by her bed. (Adcock 2000, 158)

Player's No. 10 (the cheapest cigarette on the British market in 1968), the minimal food intake, and the shrinking waistline imply that Doris is one of the lung cancer patients who often experience loss of appetite and unintentional weight loss as a result of cancer treatment. Her pale face, in sharp contrast with the scarlet sweater, announces her shattering health condition.

> Each week for the taxi-outing
> she puts on her skirt again
> and has to pin the slack waistband
> more tightly over her scarlet sweater.
> Her face, a white shadow through smoked glass,
> lets Soho display itself unregarded. (Adcock 2000, 158)

Despite her declining condition, she manages to get rid of the hospital gown in exchange for her ill-fitting clothes, assuring herself that she remains connected to and aware of her surroundings. The act of changing into her familiar clothes helps her maintain a sense of normalcy or familiarity even in the midst of health challenges. As Joseph and Alex claim, "standardisation of apparel is another source of group-imposed conformity" (1972, 723). Notwithstanding having little control over what treatments they have to receive and when or how much medication they have to take, patients are able to retain moments of dignity and self-expression in choosing what to wear for the weekly outing. Adcock pays homage to the way women strive to establish and maintain their identities.

"Adock's compassion for women who have suffered from neglect, illness or maltreatment or who are victims of male predatoriness or social mishap, in particular environmental disaster, is interwoven with an acute sense of their individuality" (Wilson 2007, 79). This compassion is vividly portrayed in the opening stanza, which creates a disagreeable and depersonalising atmosphere. Here, patients are exposed to incessant buzz, harsh lights, and suffocating whiteness. The threefold repetition of "strange" in the very first stanza emphasises the speaker's anxiety and helplessness, which set a desolate tone for this poem. With "strange rooms,"

"white door," "strange bed, mechanical hum" and "white light," the Soho Hospital for Women witnesses the doomed destiny of countless women. No male figures, except for one doctor, appear in the poem, which ironically coincides with the social function of the hospital for women, as the title explicitly suggests. The absence of men throughout the poem exemplifies the dismal conditions of disregarded women in society.

The speaker's personal experience of a medical surgery sheds a light on women deprived of agency, revealing their emotional struggles and the depersonalising impact of invasive medical procedures.

> Doctor, I am not afraid of a word.
> But neither do I wish to embrace that visitor,
> to engulf it as Hine-Nui-te-Po
> engulfed Maui; that would be the way of it.
>
> And she was the winner there: her womb crushed him.
> Goddesses can do these things. (Adcock 2000, 156–57)

These two stanzas above imply that the heroine is undergoing an induced abortion. Hine-Nui-te-Po, a goddess of night and death in Maori legend, crushed her son Māui, who attempted to enter her vagina and exit from her mouth to achieve immortality and destroy her at the same time. Although the protagonist claims that she is "not afraid of a word," she is still worried that raising a child as a single woman might destroy her life. "But I have admitted the gloved hands and the speculum/ and must part my ordinary legs to the surgeon's knife" (2000, 156–57). This powerful and emotive statement underlines the loss of agency and control experienced by women who simply become passive recipients of violent and invasive procedures. The words "admitted" and "acceptance" (in the first stanza) suggest a sense of resignation or defeat on the part of the speaker, which exposes the emotional toll that these experiences can take on women, as they are forced to endure painful and invasive treatments that strip them of their dignity and autonomy. The ironic use of "ordinary legs" is particularly striking, as it reinforces the ways in which the speaker's body has become depersonalised and reduced to another medical case to be examined and treated by a medical authority.

The hierarchical power dynamics between male doctors and female patients reveal the depersonalising and objectifying aspects of medical settings, which present women as passive subjects rather than individuals with agency and emotions. After recounting the stories of herself, Nellie, and Doris, the speaker casts the narrative lens back on her own story:

> The senior consultant on his rounds
> murmurs in so subdued a voice
> to the students marshalled behind
> that they gather in, forming a cell,
> a cluster, a rosette around him
> as he stands at the foot of my bed
> going through my notes with them,
> half-audibly instructive, grave. (Adcock 2000, 159)

The only man present in the poem is surrounded by students and he seems to enjoy his glorious moments of dominating the current situation. The gorgeous and vigorous "rosette" strikes a discordant note with whiteness and numbness prevailing in the hospital. On the one hand, the rosette, in many of the ancient Near Eastern religions, represents the birth, death, and rebirth of the sun. This symbolic imagery adds a further indication that the speaker went through an abortion surgery. The "cell" serves as an invisible wall resisting the entry of the protagonist who is supposed to be the centre of this situation. Treated as a passive medical case rather than a woman who endures, she is ironically secluded from her own health condition. "The slight ache as I strain forward/ to listen still seems imagined" (Adcock 2000, 159). With no intention to concern himself with the speaker's emotions, the doctor "turns his practised smile on me:/ 'How are you this morning?'" (Adcock 2000, 159). On the other hand, the rosette has been linked by H. S. Smith to the concept of 'divine' kingship and to Sumerian and especially Elamite symbolism: "It is believed the rosette was a symbol for kingly authority, or possibly the king's power of life or death over subject peoples" (The Book Blog). Playing the role of the king in the hospital, doctors are in command of life and death over patients. It highlights the ways in which women's bodies are depersonalised and objectified in medical contexts, as they become reduced to mere patients or medical cases, where their personal experiences, emotions, and autonomy are eclipsed by their health conditions. In addition, the situation in the Soho Hospital for Women can be seen as the epitome of the whole society, in which men are supreme rulers who always stand in the centre of the world, surrounded and supported by "students," with women being their subjects. "'Fine,/ very well, thank you.' I smile too./ And possibly all that murmurs within me/ is the slow dissolving of stitches" (2000, 159). Replying in a polite and restrained manner, the speaker manages to maintain her dignity by making efforts to bury her emotions. Similarly, W.H. Auden also examines the power dynamics between female patients and male doctors in the lyrical ballad "Miss Gee," which presents by understated and unadorned verbs how the woman patient is violently and cruelly treated as a medical case even after her death: "'Gentlemen, if you please,/ We seldom see a sarcoma/ As far advanced as this.'" (Auden 1979, 55). The doctor's apparently polite and professional utterance to his students is ironically contrasted

with the stark reality of Miss Gee's miserable situation, as she lies half-cut on the table, which underscores the lack of agency and control that women often face in medical settings.

Adcock's poem continues with the speaker's post-hospitalisation experience, where the act of choosing the ingredients for a meal in a supermarket and preparing it becomes a powerful symbol of her autonomy and self-sufficiency, contrasting sharply with the loss of identity and autonomy experienced during her hospitalisation.

> I am out in the supermarket choosing –
> this very afternoon, this day –
> picking up tomatoes, cheese, bread,
>
> things I want and shall be using
> to make myself a meal, (Adcock 2000, 159)

The deictic device "this" indicates that there is some perceiving "I" in the situation and the line "things I want and shall be using" reinforces the presence of such a perceiving self. Despite her inability to maintain autonomy and dignity in the hospital, the female speaker is able to do so in the supermarket as she chooses the items she wants to use in her meal. In addition, the temporal deixis here conveys a sense of immediacy or urgency, which suggests that the speaker is reluctant to spend time in the hospital since it might remind her of loss and pain. Following her discharge, the patient's first priority is to procure groceries and prepare meals for herself, with no external support to rely on. This inclination towards self-sufficiency precludes any immediate reflection or processing of her emotional state. Notably, the choice of food items suggests her financial constraints, indicative of a single woman living independently. Nevertheless, she revels in the sense of freedom and satisfaction. The speaker then shifts the focus from herself to other women patients she encountered at the hospital again. She feels content and blessed to be able to make a seemingly simple meal for herself, while they are confined to their beds with "stodgy suppers" that serve as a reminder of the unpleasant conditions faced by patients.

The role of names is key to the construction of identity and to notions of selfhood (Hough and Izdebska 2016, 30). Adcock renders every female figure a sense of identity by mentioning their names, which also demonstrates her celebration of their composure and fortitude. At the same time, these named characters appear to be the readers' acquaintances, a fact that tends to provoke their compassion and empathy. However, there is no hint of a name for the speaker. What is more, the constant narrative shifts and the unnamed heroine imply an incoherent and unstable self. "Discontinuities, displacements, shifting angles of vision characterise Adcock's treatment of gender as they do her treatment of place,

and raise questions, in a similar way, about identity" (Gregson 1996, 94). It is not until the very end of the poem that she seems to locate herself:

> I lift my light basket, observing
> How little I needed in fact;
> and move to the checkout, to the rain,
> to the lights and the long street curving. (Adcock 2000, 160)

Observing closely yet detached, the speaker unveils a cruel but real condition women are facing. And in doing so, Adcock strives to defend their lost identities throughout the poem.

As in "Witnesses," a poem in which Adcock lays emphasis on the different functions of the dark clothes of men and women in the male-dominated courtroom, in an effort to reconstruct the long-oppressed female identity under patriarchal domination. "Dress can communicate certain messages language cannot, especially those requiring constant 'semiotic repetition rather than innovation' including cultural constructions such as gender" (Lee 2015, 28). In "Witnesses," both women and men dress in black in the court, but the information they intend to convey is different in all respects. "We three in our dark decent clothes,/ unlike ourselves, more like the three/ witches" (Adcock 2000, 299). For the three women, "dark decent clothes" serve as a means to empower themselves. Black normally connotes professionalism and seriousness. When they come to testify in the courtroom, consisting solely of men, they must avail themselves of external forces. In this case, black clothes provide a sense of security and fortitude, which is particularly necessary given the scrutiny they will face from the men present. In order to counteract the oppressive male gaze, the women must assume a demeanour of determination and courage. As they stand up against masculine officialdom, they must exhibit these qualities in order to present themselves as legitimate and credible witnesses. Initially, these three women pin their hope on their testimony and they have the belief that they may win this trial for the woman. Therefore, they imagine themselves as "the three witches" who could wield supernatural power over the smoke to save this family. However, in the last stanza, the smoke disappears and reality resumes without them even getting a chance to testify. It can be seen that the three women are the epitome of the marginalised women in society, told to wait outside their whole life. Notably, the reference to the three witches in *Macbeth* suggests their failure. As Adriana Madej-Stang argues, "his [Shakespear's] witches are powerless" (2015, 74), since "the witches, with their first prophesy, create only a possibility, but it is Lady Macbeth who makes her husband act and overcome his fears" (2015, 73).

The baggage of dress carrying sexual meanings is entrenched within the culturally established definitions of 'femininity.' Richard Collier argues that "men's bodies are

taken for granted or rendered invisible, in contrast to the attention paid to female bodies at work and in other public arenas" (qtd. in Entwistle 2001, 54).

> A man in a wig
> and black robes. Two other men
> in lesser wigs and gowns. More men
> in dark suits. We sit down together,
>
> His future hangs from these black-clad
> proceedings, these ferretings under her sober
> dress, under our skirts and dresses
> to sniff out corruption (Adcock 2000, 299)

On the one hand, the four women figures "decently" clad in skirts and dresses are unable to escape from the erotic scrutiny in the male-defined courtroom. On the other hand, the male body can be at least superficially obliterated by the male suit with no sexual association intended. The "wig," "black robes," "gowns," and "dark suit" have come to connote 'professional' for men. Women are still seen as located in the body, whereas men are seen as transcending it. At the same time, they set out to convey an intimidating and oppressive image through their dark suits to be able to psychologically manipulate women in the court. According to Collier, for women who "wear a tailored suit much the same as a man, her identity will always be as a 'female professional', her body, her gender being outside the norm 'masculine'" (qtd. in Entwistle 2001, 53). Therefore, the black skirts and dresses the four women wear are treated as the standard 'masculine' dress, the "meek versions/ of their clothing" (Adcock 2000, 300), as Adcock points out. Women are compelled to conform to the prescribed gendered connotations of dress. This tradition amounts to the repression of the body and also female identity, since identity is most clearly and consistently articulated by clothes. The phrases "unlike ourselves" and "our own meek versions/ of their clothing" suggest that the three women figures possess strong self-identities, which is celebrated by Adcock. However, this is far more than enough. They choose to stand up in solidarity to fight for the subjugated female identity.

Adcock explores identity issues throughout her oeuvre in various manners. She focuses upon the profound significance of dress in the process of identity construction and considers clothing as expressive of identity. In "Londoner," Adcock portrays the speaker's sense of displacement as a result of living in a city that is not her place of origin. Through the speaker's own improper clothes and her observations of the clothing of those around her, Adcock captures the fragmented nature of the speaker's identity. Similarly, in "The Soho Hospital for Women," Adcock examines the experiences of women seeking medical attention in a male-dominated hospital,

using clothing as a means to highlight the marginalisation of women in the medical field. Finally, in "Witnesses," Adcock dwells on the significance of clothing in the courtroom, particularly in relation to gender and power dynamics. In this poem, clothing is utilised to express the empowerment of the three female witnesses as they navigate the male-defined court system, and also to expose the suppression of the female body and identity. These three poems evidently reveal that Adcock uses clothing as a means to construct identities. The poet effectively employs images of clothing to explore issues of displacement, marginalisation, and power dynamics in a variety of contexts. In "Londoner," "The Soho Hospital for Women" and "Witnesses" Adcock manages to renegotiate her hybrid British-New Zealand identity, defend personal identity, and imply a liberation of the long-oppressed female identity through the varied depiction of clothing.

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Spatial and Corporeal Poetics of the Haunted House: A Female Gothic Reading of Helen Oyeyemi's *White is for Witching*

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The paper seeks to offer a Female Gothic reading of Helen Oyeyemi's 2009 novel, *White is for Witching*. The dis/location of female identity and corporeality are examined within the context of Gothic space. Female Gothic corporeality and identity are explored through the themes of eating disorder, maternal hauntings, and the haunted house. The spatial and corporeal poetics of the haunted house are illustrated through the peculiar and symbiotic relationship that the female protagonist shares with the haunted house. Oyeyemi's novel is interpreted as belonging to a Female Gothic tradition and as a narrative that embraces and reconfigures the classic Gothic trope of the haunted house.

Keywords: Female Gothic, female corporeality, female identity, haunted house

1 Introduction

The critically acclaimed British-Nigerian author Helen Oyeyemi was only nineteen when her first novel, *The Icarus Girl* (2005) was published (Wisker 2016, 150). Oyeyemi's oeuvre has garnered significant academic attention in the past few years, evidenced by the collection of essays *Telling it Slant: Critical Approaches to Helen Oyeyemi* (2017). Oyeyemi's novels blend myths, fairy tales and the Gothic with tropes, narratives, and images from a wide range of literary and cultural sources. The critical reception of her work tends to consider her a postcolonial writer (Wisker 2016, 150) but her work engages innovatively with contemporary Gothic and feminist literature as well (Buckley and Ilott 2017, 8). Some of her works weave together classical Gothic tropes with Caribbean folklore and African Yoruba mythology (Buckley and Ilott 2017, 3).

Sarah Ilott argues that Oyeyemi's novels are what Hélène Cixous describes as *écriture feminine*, or "women's writing" (2017, 4) and can be read as "feminine textual bodies" (Ilott 2017, 4). Cixous and other feminist literary critics, such as Elaine Showalter, Ellen Moers, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue for a distinct female literary expression that differs from a masculine style of writing. They claim

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that a feminine mode of writing describes unique female bodily experiences and female anxieties. Oyeyemi herself in an interview verified that she prefers to write about women: "I just want to find out about all the different lives a woman can live" (Oyeyemi 2014).

Female Gothic is the sub-genre that most accurately describes the Gothic and feminist implications of Oyeyemi's *White is for Witching*. The Female Gothic is regarded as a distinct sub-genre of Gothic fiction and a critical area of study. The term was coined by Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* (1976), in which she defined it as "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (1976, 90). Moers describes how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women novelists such as Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and the Brontë sisters employ certain coded expressions to describe anxieties over domestic entrapment and the female body and sexuality. Moers also claims that the nature of the Gothic produced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female authors continues to be present in the works of twentieth-century authors such as Sylvia Plath and Carson McCullers. Moers made one of the earliest attempts to trace a female manner of writing the Gothic. She argues that Female Gothic narratives are "where woman is examined with a woman's eye" instead of being objectified from a male standpoint (109). She argues that depictions of uniquely "female experiences" such as pregnancy, motherhood as well as the exploration of repressed sexuality, "self-disgust, the self-hatred, and the impetus to self-destruction" and giving "visual form to the fear of self" are recurring themes and more common in the writings of women than of men (107). Moers's term touched on something vital to women's experience and generated a body of feminist literary scholarship exploring the Gothic themes in women's writing.

The relevance and the fertility of the Female Gothic lies in its ability to bring out new interpretations from canonical texts, re-evaluate neglected texts, and introduce new texts to the existing canon. This is evidenced by recent works such as Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace's *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009), or Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's *Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2016), which offers a chronological study addressing texts from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. Gina Wisker's *Contemporary Women's Gothic Fiction: Carnival, Hauntings and Vampire Kisses* (2016) establishes a new canon for contemporary women's writing with the inclusion of recent works. Wisker argues that women's Gothic writing also continues to deal with matters such as "the domestic, […] sex and sexuality, spaces, places, behaviours and norms which oppress women, the body as a site for reproduction, and terror, technological control and power relations" (107).

Oyeyemi's novels explore the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality. For this reason, according to the critical reception of the novels, no dominant critical

perspective provides an all-encompassing reading of her fiction (Buckley and Ilott 2017, 2). The authors of *Telling it Slant* read *White is for Witching* in the context of postcolonialism (see Burton 2017, 74; Ilott 2017, 132). However, in an interview for *The Guardian*, Oyeyemi explains that readers tend to read *White is for Witching* as a story about race while it is about providing a new direction in the genre of Gothic haunted house fiction: "*White is for Witching* was my haunted-house/vampire story. But people get a bit excited if there's a black person and say, 'Oh this is about that thing' when actually it's about expanding the genre of haunted house stories […]" (Oyeyemi 2014).

Agreeing with Oyeyemi's claim, instead of a postcolonial reading, this paper offers an analysis of the novel in the context of the Female Gothic and aims to join and enrich the literary critical discourse of this sub-genre with the analysis of *White is for Witching*. The focal point of my investigation is eighteen-year-old Miranda Silver, who lives in a mysterious ancient house in Dover with her father Luc, her mother Lily, and her twin brother Eliot. Miranda suffers from an eating disorder called pica. After her mother's death, her condition worsens and she develops an ability to communicate with the ghosts of her female ancestors haunting the house. Throughout the novel, Miranda struggles against the haunting presence of her maternal ancestors and the house's domination that threatens to destroy her mental and physical health. The novel chronicles the events that lead to the disappearance of Miranda. Oyeyemi's text leaves the ending open for several interpretations. It is never revealed whether Miranda disappeared or was killed by the house.

In the first section of the essay, I discuss the female character's antagonistic relationship with her maternal ancestors. It focuses on Oyeyemi's portrayal of femininity and motherhood as monstrous instead of nurturing. Femininity and the Female Gothic body are explored through the concepts of the monstrous feminine by Barbara Creed, and the abject by Julia Kristeva. I read Miranda's eating disorder as part of her monstrous maternal inheritance and a symptom of her divided self, which I examine through the trope of the Gothic double.

Then I move on to discussing the corporeal and mental disintegration of the disturbed and fragmented female subject. Many Gothic narratives have delved into women's concerns regarding physical and mental health; this unit argues that Oyeyemi achieves this by portraying Miranda's unique eating disorder known as pica. This section of the analysis relies on the intersection of relevant contemporary theories such as food studies, consumption theory, and women's Gothic fiction to highlight the connection between Miranda's disordered eating habits and her relationship with food and consumption. The ambiguous relationship between food and horror makes us reconsider what counts as food, and motifs such as the

transgressive and devouring body, disgust, and hunger. The second half of this section discusses the erotic possibilities of food and eating in the novel.

The last section explores the topic of the haunted house and demonstrates the inventiveness of the novel by analysing examples of how the house is portrayed as a conscious character.

2 Female Gothic Hauntings: The Maternal Bloodline of the Silver Women

Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic narratives show an interest in the family, which symbolises inheritance, usurpation, and aristocratic primogeniture: "[t]he 'house' (like the Gothic castle of later texts) is not just the domestic space, but itself a metaphor for the legal institutions of marriage and patrilineal inheritance (enacted through the 'bed') which erase the female name" (Wallace 2009, 29). A classical eighteenth-century Gothic plot involves a female character who escapes a tyrannical father and finds herself in the hands of a powerful husband. Usually, everything is about male inheritance, which means that the name and property are passed down from father to son, while women lose the right to inherit and possess. Many female authors like Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley and Shirley Jackson have questioned gender and sexual ideologies within the family structure. Instead of presenting a powerful male line, like many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic narratives, Oyeyemi centres her narrative on a powerful female line.

Juliann Fleenor places at the centre of the Female Gothic "an ambivalence over female identity, above all the conflict with the archaic all-powerful mother, often figured as a spectral presence and/or as the Gothic house itself" (qtd. in Wallace and Smith 2009, 3). The Female Gothic, in particular, offers a lens through which the complexities of female identity and motherhood are examined and subverted. Many Female Gothic texts, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, offer monstrous and threatening depictions of female embodiment and mothering. Fleenor's claim is in line with *White is for Witching*'s elements as it presents Miranda's ambivalence about her identity and corporeality and her conflict with her maternal ancestors. Some Female Gothic narratives present a living mother while others use the motif of the absent and deceased mother. For example, in the eighteenth-century Gothic texts by Ann Radcliffe, the mother dies before the narrative begins. In *White is for Witching*, the motif of the absent and deceased mother appears in the haunting presence of the ghost. Miranda was sixteen when her photojournalist mother was shot to death in Haiti. Miranda could not deal with the grief, had a mental breakdown and admitted herself to a psychiatric clinic. After her homecoming, Miranda's eating disorder called

pica worsens and she starts to get visited by her spectral foremothers, the generations of Silver women: her mother Lily, grandmother Jennifer, great-grandmother Anna Silver, and an unnamed ancestor referred to as the Goodlady.

Claire Kahane says the following about Female Gothic narratives highlighting mother/daughter relations: "This ongoing battle with a mirror image who is both self and other is what I find at the centre of the Gothic structure, which allows me to confront the confusion between mother and daughter and the intricate web of psychic relations that constitute their bond" (1985, 337). In *White is for Witching*, the bond between the generations of Silver women manifests in their eating disorder. Except for Miranda's mother, all of Miranda's female ancestors have suffered from pica. Miranda's great-grandmother, Anna Silver developed a strange craving for mud and leaves. Miranda's grandmother Jennifer also suffered from pica. Interestingly, Miranda's mother, Lily did not suffer from this eating disorder. There was an unnamed female ancestor long before Anna Silver who might be the Goodlady that haunts Miranda. The woman's mysterious condition is described in the following way:

> This woman was thought an animal. Her way was to slash at her flesh with the blind, frenzied concentration that a starved person might use to get at food that is buried. Her way was to drink off her blood, then bite and suck at the bobbled stubs of her meat. Her appetite was only for herself. This woman was deemed mad and then turned out and after that she was not spoken of. I do not know the year, or even how I know this. (2009, 24)

In the Gothic, women have been identified through the body, which often has been associated with monstrosity (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 108). Marie Mulvey-Roberts argues that the female body has been at the heart of the Female Gothic and calls it the "unruly or transgressive female Gothic body" (107). She argues that "the female Gothic body has developed through the Madonna/whore duality, incarceration, fragmentation, hybridity, and sexuality, while femininity itself has been demonised in Gothic" (108). Barbara Creed in *The Monstrous Feminine* explores the representation of woman-as-monster in the horror genre. She names this figure as the "monstrous feminine," and argues that the ghastly figure represents "what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject" (1993, 1). Drawing on Kristeva's notion of abjection, she argues that the monsterisation of women happens because of women's closeness to the abject, especially through menstruation and childbirth. Accordingly, this female figure in Oyeyemi's novel is explicitly described as monstrous by exhibiting cannibalistic, vampiristic and auto-vampiristic tendencies. Auto-vampirism is considered a rare medical condition and refers to drinking one's own blood. It is also documented as a mental disorder because some schizophrenic patients showed signs of auto-vampirism. People suffering from auto-vampirism

often engage in self-harm to obtain blood (Jensen and Poulsen 2002, 47–78). This female ancestor also "sustains the purity of her blood without polluting her body with the blood of others" (Stephanou 2014, 1249). Her auto-vampirism marks the beginning of the history of consumption in the female line of Miranda's family. The madness and illness that plagued the mysterious female ancestor are later transmitted through blood inheritance. Drinking her own blood ensured the passing down of a pure female line and inheritance without the intervention of patriarchy in the Silver family. Thus, the house of the Silver women is governed not by a patriarchal system of power relations but by a powerful generation of monstrous matriarchs. Pica is also depicted as a hereditary disease because almost all of Miranda's female ancestors have suffered from this eating disorder. The first woman's extreme form of pica gradually moderates and is replaced by eating mud, chalk, plastic, and other inedible substances.

Oyeyemi presents a duality in motherhood, depicting it as an innocuous longing and a monstrous one. The maternal haunting is both comforting and frightening for Miranda. In the following poignant passage, the presence of her mother's ghost offers consolation:

> my adjustment to Lily's ghost was sort of like when you're insanely thirsty, but for some reason you can't get the cap on your water bottle to open properly so you tussle at it with your teeth and hands until you can get a trickle of water to come through. A little water at a time, and you're trying to be less thirsty and more patient so that the water can be enough. The thing with having seen Lily was just like that, a practical inner adjustment to meet a need. At least she is there, I'd thought, even if she is just a ghost and doesn't speak, at least she is
>
> there
>
> was a bird on the windowsill later in the afternoon. (2009, 62)

Here, Oyeyemi makes an interesting comparison between the need for water and the presence of a ghost. In the Gothic tradition, ghosts have an uncertain status: "the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of someone or someone other" (Jacques Derrida qtd. in Munford 2016, 121). Thus, neither present nor absent, material nor immaterial, the ghost troubles the stability of the subject (Munford 2016, 121). Water is a soothing element and symbolises life, rebirth, and healing. For Miranda, the mother's ghostly presence is soothing like water and is part of her healing process. In this passage, "Oyeyemi's experimental use of lineation additionally functions as a visual code of narrative disruption" (Din-Kariuki 2017, 65). Here, two different narratives are connected by the deictic word "there," which is placed in between them. It is relevant to Lily's ghostly presence and the bird on the windowsill. Thus, the deictic word "there" also creates a spatio-temporal disruption

and indeterminacy. The word "there" also indicates the spatial indeterminacy of the ghost. Oyeyemi intentionally made the two happenings spatially and temporally distinct yet coalescing.

Miranda is controlled by her maternal ancestors through their shared eating habits. Joan Brumberg writes that

> [e]ating disorders are rooted in the problems of mother-daughter separation and identity. […] The "hunger knot" experienced by so many modern daughters represents issues of failed female development, fear, and the daughter's guilt over her desire to surpass her mother. […W]omen who have disordered relationships to food are unconsciously guilty of symbolic matricide and their obsessive dieting is an expression of their desire to reunite or bond with the mother. (2000, 31)

Women in the Silver family are similarly tied to their own "hunger knot," which manifests in their pica. The intentions of her maternal ancestors are not entirely clear for Miranda. At times she acts as a vessel for their evil forces and as a victim of their will and destructive desires. For instance, Miranda often asks her foremothers for advice on how to deal with her eating disorder: "How is consumption managed?" (Oyeyemi 2009, 170). Miranda hopes for consolation and one of the women answers her in the following way: "It is useful, instructive, comforting to show that you are not alone in your history. So I have done you good and now, some harm" (24). In the following grotesque and nightmarish dining scene, Miranda is invited to join her maternal ancestors around a table filled with edible and non-edible food:

> They were naked except for corsets laced so tightly that their desiccated bodies dipped in and out like parchment scrolls bound around the middle. They stared at Miranda in numb agony. Padlocks were placed over their parted mouths, boring through the top lip and closing at the bottom. Miranda could see their tongues writhing. (2009, 127)

Here, the female body is monsterised, deemed ungovernable, and associated with threatening forces. The "desiccated" bodies of the women symbolise Miranda's sickly, anorexic body. The maternal ancestors also resemble the devouring mother archetype of Jung, or Freud's Oedipal mother. This archetype is a symbolic representation of a mother who devours her child psychologically and emotionally. This devouring mother represents the most negative aspects of motherhood, for example, possessiveness, control, and manipulation (Proser 2020, 155). The women invite Miranda to eat for them – as one of them says, "[e]at for us" (2009, 128). They want to control Miranda through their shared eating disorder; to make her fully embrace her maternal heritage and become like them. The women have padlocks upon their mouths, which offer "a visual metaphor for the politics of silencing that are both racial and gendered" (Harris Satkunananthan 2017, 124). Usually, some

parts of the female body, such as the mouth, breast, or genitalia, are portrayed as the most threatening (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 111). The mouth not only symbolises resistance against patriarchy but also a dangerous appetite to destroy the racial other. Miranda's great-grandmother Anna Good's husband was killed by the Germans in Africa during the Second World War. Her hatred is expressed in racist and nationalist terms: "Blackies, Germans, killers, dirty . . . dirty killers" (Oyeyemi 2009, 118). Miranda's identity comes to resemble more and more her maternal ancestors' as she slowly comes under the control of the Goodlady. When Miranda looks into the mirror she sees all her ancestors in her mirror image: "She looked at her reflection and saw a cube instead, four stiff faces in one" (129).

Thus, Miranda's connection to her maternal ancestors and their past represents a burden for Miranda. Lily also warns Miranda that the Goodlady is "much stricter than any mother. She's like tradition, it's very serious when she's disobeyed. She's in our blood" (2009, 66). Miranda tries to break away from the hatred and sorrow that is bestowed upon her by her ancestors. She disobeys her ancestors because she leaves the house to study at a university. At the university, despite her eating disorder, Miranda tries to lead a normal life away from the house and the depressing presence of her female ancestors. Her lesbian relationship with Ore, a black girl, causes trouble for the house and the maternal ancestors because if Miranda engages in a lesbian relationship, there will be no continuation of their female bloodline.

White is for Witching shows powerful instances of the splitting of Miranda's identity. Miranda's problematic identifications include her conflict with her identity, corporeality and maternal ancestors, which are illustrated by the trope of the Gothic double. The double or *doppelgänger* became a recurring motif in Gothic fiction, which expresses otherness and the duality of human nature (Ballesteros González 2009, 119). Doubling has psychological roots because it explores a conflict in the mind. This conflict is represented by the split of personality. This motif explores the encounter with oneself as another or the other. It refers to the division of the self, such as when characters fight with the good and evil parts of their personality. The following passage shows an interesting type of double, the mirror image:

> Miranda looked in. She looked with the most particular care and she saw Lily Silver standing there in her room, smiling sadly. It took half a minute, too long a terror, to realise that she was only looking at herself. Wasn't she? (2009, 33–34)

When doubling happens, surfaces such as mirrors and portraits act as mediators to reflect and reveal the darker and hidden aspects of one's identity. Here, the mirror acts as an important signifier for the acts of Miranda's self-identification. Miranda's double appears in the mirror as the ghost of her mother. The double and doubling can also be examined in the light of Freud's concept of the uncanny. Freud describes

the uncanny as something foreign, but at the same time strangely familiar ([1919] 1955, 226). In *White is for Witching*, Miranda's terror is not necessarily caused by her image in the mirror but by the uncanny recognition that she sees herself as her mother. This dread and anxiety that Miranda feels comes from the feeling of what is called matrophobia, "the fear of becoming a mother oneself; the fear of specifically becoming one's own mother" (Reid 2020, 78). Matrophobia is a recurrent motif in many Female Gothic narratives. Deborah D. Rogers coined the term Matrophobic Gothic and argues that the "dramatic heart […] of the Matrophobic Gothic […] is the daughter's conflict with maternal figures from whom she cannot totally separate" (Reid 2020, 78).

Tania Modleski's term "female uncanny" appears to be in line with the concept of matrophobia. Offering a gendered interpretation of Freud's argument that two sources of an uncanny sensation are "the fear of repetition and the fear of castration" (Freud qtd. in Modleski [1982] 2008, 63), Modleski argues that these are for women: a "fear of never developing a sense of autonomy and separateness from the mother" ([1982] 2008, 63). Modleski further argues that "since women have more difficulty establishing a separate self, their sense of the uncanny may actually be stronger than men's" (63). Similarly, Miranda has difficulty separating from her mother, who keeps returning. Lily's appearance in the mirror symbolises the power of the matriarchal line in Miranda's family. Miranda's biggest fears are repeating her mother's life (being murdered) and becoming monstrous like her maternal ancestors.

The following two examples of Miranda's double illustrate her problematic acceptance of her identity and corporeality. The motif of doubling occurs when Miranda sees or imagines a perfect version of herself in a drawing:

> The perfect person was a girl. Bobbed dark hair, black dress, pearls she was too young for, mouth, nose and chin familiar . . . Miranda's, almost. Look, look, remember. This sight might not come again. The perfect person had beautifully shaped hands, but no fingernails. A swanlike neck that met the jaw at a devastating but impossible angle. Me, but perfect. She quickly corrected herself. (2009, 48)

Miranda sees an alternate version of herself. For Miranda, facing her double is frightening and disturbing because she recognizes herself as foreign but at the same time strangely familiar. This might be a perfect version of Miranda but somewhat grotesque, threatening and monstrous. The distinct physical features of Miranda reflect the good and evil parts of her personality. Miranda's quick correction of herself strongly indicates that she is ambivalent and hesitant about seeing herself as other and monstrous. In the following grotesque and nightmarish scene Miranda encounters her ghostly double:

> She was not quite three dimensional, this girl. And so white. There couldn't be any blood in her. She was perfect. Miranda but perfect. She was purer than crystal, so pure that she dissolved and Miranda couldn't see her anymore but still felt her there. (2009, 79)

The words "dissolved" and "still felt her" prove that Miranda meets her ghostly double. However, the appearance of this ghostly double also resembles a vampire because it is too white and has no blood. Miranda's monstrosity is not just described by her strange eating habits but by her supposed vampiric behaviour. There is a possibility that Miranda inherited vampiristic tendencies from her unnamed female ancestor who drank her own blood. Oyeyemi in an interview hints at Miranda being a vampire: "I thought, what's an unnatural appetite? A girl who eats chalk, but probably with a desire to eat something else" (Oyeyemi 2010). This is evidenced in the novel when Miranda secretly desires an unnamed food and realises "how hungry she was; not for the sharp-toothed fireworks that Sade was lighting in Luc's pot. Not for chalk, not for plastic ..." (2009, 96). Elsewhere, during the nightmarish dinner scene with the maternal ancestors, it becomes evident that all the food and non-food displayed on the table "make Miranda hungrier for what was not there" (127). Thus, Miranda secretly knows that she craves blood. In both examples, Miranda sees her strange and grotesque versions, which might reflect her split self that acts as a physical manifestation of a dissociated part of herself. This dissociated part is the direct manifestation of the darker side of Miranda – none other than the figure of the vampire.

3 The Female Gothic Body: "Manage your consumption"

In *White is for Witching*, Miranda's corporeality and fragile sense of self are always connected to her consumption. Lorna Piatti-Farnell in *Consuming Gothic* argues that Gothic and horror fiction abound in images of food-related bodily experiences (2017, 3). The ambiguous relationship between food and the Gothic invites us to think about motifs such as monstrous appetite and pleasures, hunger, repulsion, and abjection. Gothic and horror literature, through the representation of food and consumption, explores and questions the boundaries between "human and inhuman, self and other, right and wrong" (4), edible and inedible, nourishing and non-nourishing. In the Gothic, humans or supernatural beings such as vampires and zombies are always associated with unnatural and monstrous appetites. Thus, Gothic food is portrayed as something that increases hunger rather than satisfies it. In the Gothic, food and consumption appear as pleasurable and disgusting at the

same time. However, most importantly, consumption always expresses the nature of the character it is associated with.

White is for Witching portrays a violation of taboo in the exploration of a peculiar eating disorder that involves eating things that should not be eaten. The illness that Miranda suffers from, pica, is a "medical term for a particular kind of disordered eating. It's an appetite for non-food items, things that don't nourish" (Oyeyemi 2009, 22). Brumberg writes that the classification of food-refusing people falls into three categories (2000, 102). One is "morbid appetite," meaning "eating outside the normative food categories (ingesting leaves of trees, seeds, roots, chalk, unripe fruits, and faeces or urine)" (310). Miranda's morbid appetite manifests itself in a strange craving for chalk and plastic. Pica is classified as an eating disorder that usually develops in infancy, childhood, or adolescence (Keel 2017, 16–17). Its symptoms sometimes increase when someone is experiencing extreme stress and anxiety. In addition, psychosocial factors such as family issues and maternal deprivation can be causative factors (S. Singhi, P. Singhi and Adwani 1981, 783–85).

In the novel, food and consumption determine the way Miranda sees herself. Food and eating are "central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies, which itself is inextricably linked with subjectivity" (Lupton 1996, 1). "Eating transforms our bodies, but it also affects our identities: for what we eat, and how we eat it, is never truly separate from our notions of ourselves" (Piatti-Farnell 2017, 4). Miranda's strange eating habit does not just transform her body but also the way she defines herself. Ever since her early teenage years, Miranda has always defined herself through her eating disorder. When Miranda had to introduce herself in school or somewhere else, instead of saying her name she said the following: "Pie-kah, pie-kah, I've got pie-kah" (2009, 22). Pica also serves as the language of Miranda's inner experience. Here, the word pica is written down as "pie-kah" (Miranda's pronunciation) to express her affliction. Miranda as a child defined herself through her illness: "Whenever Miri talked about her pica with Lily she seemed so grown up about it, a shaky balance of humility and dignity" (22). Miranda is also aware that her eating disorder is an addiction that imprisons her body and she has little control over it. As she says to her brother, who wants to taste chalk to feel what Miranda feels when she eats it: "Don't start, you'll get stuck" (23). As a consequence of eating chalk and plastic, Miranda often had cramps that "twisted her body, pushed her off her seat and lay her on the floor, helplessly pedalling her legs" (23).

Oyeyemi depicts Miranda's eating body as malleable and volatile and connects consumption to a sense of otherness. In the Gothic, consumption is a transgressive act that violates taboos, especially that of the body. Kelly Hurley in *The Gothic Body* argues that instead of presenting the body as stable, the Gothic offers "the

spectacle of a body metamorphic and undifferentiated; in place of the possibility of human transcendence, the prospect of an existence circumscribed within the realities of gross corporeality" (1996, 3). The Gothic is a body-centred mode that displays the body's fragility, vulnerability, and bodily functions as disgusting and threatening. One of the major preoccupations of the novel is what is and is not considered food. Pica can be repulsive to those who do not suffer from it. In the following haunting scene, Miranda's "gross corporeality" can be observed as she takes pleasure in consuming plastic:

> Plastic was usually very satisfying. A fifty-millimetre wad of it was tough to chew away from the main body of the strip, but with steady labour, sucking and biting, it curved between the teeth like an extension of the gum, and the thick, bittersweet oils in it streamed down her throat for hours, so long she sometimes forgot and thought her body was producing it, like saliva. (2009, 76)

At first, before digestion, food enters the mouth. Sarah Ilott argues that the mouth in taking in food is used to symbolise the formation of Oyeyemi's female protagonists, as the mouth "functions as border between inside and out and involves processes of identification, internalisation, and assimilation, or abjection, dissociation, and disgust" (2017, 135). Thus, the mouth is an important space where we can experience pleasure or displeasure. When food is swallowed and chewed, it "ceases to be food, and becomes something else" (Piatti-Farnell 2017, 18). It becomes Other (14). Certain matters are deemed repulsive, forbidden and one "does not put in the mouth forbidden [and] polluting things" (41). No pleasure should be connected to ingesting inedible substances. The act itself is culturally and physiologically perceived as unnatural and alien. However, consumption in itself is horrific because we can never truly know the foods that are entering our bodies: "once the oral threshold has been breached, we have been colonised by the food, connected to its sensorial and physiological boundaries in virtue of its liminal properties" (15).

Piatti-Farnell calls the Gothic body an "eating body" that gives "an insight into how the perception of the effects of food on the body – from thinness to fatness – is profoundly connected to our cultural notions of right and wrong, desirable and repulsive" (2017, 12). There is a certain feeling of otherness about the process of eating: "we leave the familiar in order to encounter the unusual, unfamiliar, strange, Other" (Heldke qtd. in Piatti-Farnell 2017, 4). Our primary goal with eating is to gain nourishment. Food can be known or unknown and there is always a certain unfamiliarity linked to consumption: food is conceptualized as extra-corporeal, it exists outside of our bodies, and it is something that physically does not belong to us. The process of consumption involves the familiarisation and acceptance of something foreign into our bodies (Piatti-Farnell 2017, 4). There is a duality in

Miranda's eating disorder. Miranda exhibits food-refusing behaviour as she refuses or reluctantly consumes edible and nourishing food, while she craves inedible, non-nourishing substances. Non-food items are not just extra-corporeal but inherently unusual and unfamiliar. In contrast, Miranda finds edible and nourishing food non-nourishing, repulsive and undesirable.

Oyeyemi, in the passage above, provokes the reader with the possibility of eating such matters and also shakes the boundaries of acceptability. The novel's preoccupation with what is and is not food also invites a reading of the novel employing Kristeva's theory of abjection. In her *Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva argues that food "designates the other" and "penetrates the self's clean and proper body" (1982, 75). Abjection also "involves the process of casting away something that unsettles one's concept of identity by clouding the distinction between the self and what lies outside the self" (Murphy 2016, 28). Kristeva further argues that "[f]ood becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the nonhuman" (1982, 75). Abjection is the feeling of anxiety and disgust that arises in the subject at the sight of certain horrible substances. These matters are faeces, urine, vomit, menstrual blood, and decaying food (2–3). Kristeva also argues that experiencing an abject material might simultaneously cause pleasure and disgust (1). The matters Miranda eats are not food per se but it is possible to consume them. I argue that they can also be considered abject materials. In the passage above, the body as a live organism merges with an indigestible substance and the body is the one that becomes the other, unfamiliar and unknown. This alien matter goes inside the body and the body becomes so accustomed to the foreign matter that it connects to its "liminal properties" by producing it. As a consequence, Miranda becomes a liminal subject. Pica is also defined as a "qualitative disturbance of appetite, a 'pathological' urge or craving" (Strungaru 2007, 32). Here, Miranda consumes plastic with an insatiable desire that can be defined as a perversion and a fetish.

Miranda's pica and lack of appetite for nourishing food leave her body starving and extremely emaciated. She begins to see her own body as the other, unfamiliar and strange, and her condition also shows signs of anorexia. Brumberg writes that the contemporary anorexic is food-obsessed, constantly counts calories, and structures her life around the avoidance of food (2000, 5). Miranda also avoids food and whenever she has to eat food, she counts the bites. To restrain her appetite and consumption, she systematically tells herself and often writes it down "Behave yourself, she wrote. Eat." (2009, 191), and "Manage your consumption" (191). This raises interesting questions: is it possible to control one's own digestive system and appetite? or is the body and its functioning forever unknown and foreign to the self?

The following paragraph describes Miranda's obsession with her condition, her own body and its flaws:

> Miranda nodded and her reflection nodded, so that was twice. She crossed her hands over her stomach, as if that would stop her from retching. She blushed because the light in the fitting rooms was stark and hot, like being stared at.
> (I'm not that thin, I'm not that thin)
> She smoothed the pleated skirt of the dress she had on. She liked it. He had chosen the perfect dress for her. Or, at least, for the girl she wanted to be. (2009, 40)

Her slowly vanishing body is plagued by her eating disorder, which is visible when she goes shopping with her father: "full of clammy ghosts that hovered around her body when she put them on. The cold trickled down in the gaps between the material and her chest. Scarecrow girl" (2009, 36–37). Here, Oyeyemi provides Miranda's clothes with a spectral quality as she compares their thin material to a ghost. The very thin materials that Miranda tries on offer "a tangible reminder of the otherwise intangible, absent body" (Munford 2016, 123). Similarly, Miranda experiences her own body as ghostlike because of her extreme thinness. Miranda's father blames her for her condition: "No one who is well looks the way you look at the moment" (2009, 39). This shatters Miranda's already fragile sense of self, which is evidenced when Miranda admits that her life is miserable due to her eating disorder and the haunting presence of her ancestors: "I am not alive" (182). Her father thinks Miranda is too thin and refuses to buy her new clothes. This way he oppresses Miranda and exercises his patriarchal power. He aims to control Miranda's dressing, as an incentive to make her eat food. Usually, women occupy the role of the nurturer but here Miranda's father tries to assume it – yet, Miranda constantly refuses the food he cooks for her. The rejection of the father's food represents the rejection of patriarchy.

In *White is for Witching*, Oyeyemi not only explores the horrific possibilities of the oral, but also that of the erotic. At the university, Miranda begins a passionate, romantic relationship with a girl named Ore, who is of Nigerian descent. In the following quote, Oyeyemi describes the lesbian erotic embodiment through the mouth in Miranda and Ore's lovemaking: "her nipples hard under my lips, her stomach downy with the fuzz that kept it warm, the soft hollows of her inner thighs" (2009, 180). For Miranda, the mouth acts as a space where she can explore her budding sexuality and femininity. For her, during lovemaking, the mouth is something she can control; however, when she consumes inedible substances the eating disorder gains control over her.

Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran argue that the erotic bond within lesbian relationships is often expressed in terms of food and eating (2003, 5). In the following passage, Oyeyemi merges lesbian lovemaking and food:

> Ore's smell was raw and fungal as it tangled in the hair between her legs. It turned into a blandly sweet smell, like milk, at her navel, melted into spice in the creases of her elbows, then cocoa at her neck. Miranda had needed Ore open. Her head had spun with the desire to taste. She lay her head against Ore's chest and heard Ore's heart. The beat was ponderous. Like an oyster, living quietly in its serving-dish shell, this heart barely moved. Miranda could have taken it, she knew she could. Ore would hardly have felt it. (2009, 191)

This passage is rich in gastronomic and erotic images. Some foods carry a strong sexual and erotic connotation because they are considered sensual for their appearance and taste. We usually associate love and sex with sweet-tasting foods (Hospodar, 2004, 84). Foods such as chocolate and whipped cream are sometimes used for titillation. Here, Oyeyemi employs milk, cocoa, oyster, and spice to depict the sensuality of their lovemaking. All of these foods are considered powerful aphrodisiacs (Hospodar 2004, 84–91). Chocolate, as one of the most effective of them, is a seductive delight that is depicted here as a smell and taste on one of the most sensual parts of the body, the neck. Oyster is said to be a classic aphrodisiac because of its shape, texture, and smell, often compared to the vulva (85). Here, interestingly the oyster is not used to symbolise the vulva but the heart. A heart that Miranda thinks she could easily take out if she wishes.

Oyeyemi portrays an interesting duality of sexual desire: a sensual, harmless desire and a monstrous one. The second half of the passage quoted above has a darker tone and depicts the possibility of violence. The mouth functions as a space through which monstrous and carnal desires speak via gustatory hauntings of taste and appetite. Miranda realises that her appetite for Ore is becoming more and more dangerous. Miranda admits that she may want to taste Ore's flesh by biting her: "running her nose over the other girl's body, turning the beginning of a bite into a kiss whenever Ore stirred, laying a trail of glossy red lip prints" (2009, 191). Miranda tries to restrain her dangerous appetite for Ore and reminds herself that "Ore is not food," and admits that "I think I am a monster" (192). Her vampiric tendencies, traceable back to her unknown female ancestor, might not be restricted to craving her own blood.

4 "There's something wrong with this house, isn't there?": Miranda and Silver House

At first sight, a haunted house looks just like any other normal house, but sooner or later it turns out to be dangerous. In the case of the haunted house, the haunting does not always originate from the same source. A traditional haunted house is usually defined as a house that is inhabited by a ghost. The house does not possess a will on its own and only acts as a passive setting because the ghosts use it as an instrument. There are houses, however, whose "ominousness is not the result of a curse or possession by an unseen, alien presence, but stems instead from its very own self; that is, the house is itself the very source of strangeness or anomaly" (Ng Hock Soon 2015, 2). Dale Bailey writes that the first writer to attribute a definitive feature to the haunted house formula was Edgar Allan Poe: a house that is alive and possesses a will on its own; a sentient house (1999, 22). However, in the mid-twentieth century, Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) offered a novelty to the haunted house formula: a haunting house. In the case of a haunting house, the ghostly effects are only caused by the unconscious workings of the character's troubled mind. Oyeyemi recycles these traditional gothic tropes, namely the haunted house and the ghost story; however, the inventiveness of Oyeyemi's novel rests on its depiction of a sentient house that is a conscious character and one of the narrators.

Oyeyemi uses ambiguity effectively to create suspense and frustration and to raise unanswered questions. Ambiguity is an important feature of the Gothic genre. Oyeyemi leaves supernatural events open to interpretation and plays with the Todorovian notion of the "hesitation" ([1970] 1973, 41) which rests between belief and disbelief of the supernatural. The novel's most unusual aspect is that the reader is never quite sure who is evil: the house, the ghosts of the matriarchs, or Miranda herself? The other two major ambiguities permeate the whole narrative: are the ghosts of the female ancestors real or the symptoms of Miranda's fragile mental health? Does Silver House possess an evil consciousness? Or has it become the vessel of the hatred that its female inhabitants exhibited? The novel's unorthodox narration is "structured by a set of interwoven narratives, drawn together through variations in typography, including switches in font and style to signal shifts in narrative position" (Din-Kariuki 2017, 65). Oyeyemi employs the narrative voices of Miranda, the house, Eliot, and Ore, who all share their distinct viewpoints of the events. Through this multiplicity of narrative voices, and a fragmentary narration, *White is for Witching* does not offer closure; instead, it offers multiple possibilities. For instance, the novel immediately starts with a question concerning space: "where is Miranda?" (2009, 1). Disregarding the traditional narrative structure and linearity,

the story begins with the ending, while providing opposing answers from Miranda's brother Eliot, Miranda's girlfriend Ore, and Silver House itself, describing her mysterious imprisonment, disappearance, and death, respectively. However, the most interesting one is the house's reasoning: "Miranda is at home (homesick, home sick)" (2009, 3), "me I will not allow her to live" (2009, 4). The house's menacing statement implies that it is the house itself that might have killed Miranda. The prologue immediately sets a dark tone and gloomy atmosphere and foreshadows that there will be no happy ending.

In Gothic texts, many haunted houses are presented as threatening and menacing not just from the inside but outside, as well. However, when Miranda and her family move into Silver House, Eliot describes the house in the following manner:

> Our new house had two big brown grids of windows with a row of brick in between each grid. No windows for the attic. From the outside the windows didn't look as if they could be opened, they didn't look as if they were there to let air or light in, they were funny square eyes, friendly, tired. (2009, 22)

On the one hand, the house's exterior is surprisingly friendly. On the other hand, the appearance of the windows and their inability to let in air and light create a claustrophobic feeling. The house is incredibly tall with its five stories. Its façade is deceptive: it is friendly from the outside but menacing from the inside. From the inside, the house manifests hostility to foreigners, black people, and immigrants, to the level of trapping them in strange spaces or bringing them to floors that should not even exist. The Kurdish family who worked and lived in the house felt the house's threat and decided to leave. The house's xenophobia may be rooted in the great-grandmother, Anna's hatred toward foreigners, which could animate the house and encourage it to expel the racial other. This transition from secure and friendly to uncomfortable is similar to that of the familiar turned strange, which defines Freud's concept of the uncanny. According to Freud, the uncanny is "undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror" ([1919] 1955, 219). Freud also notes that the homely and unhomely are intimately connected and the slow unfolding of the homely into the unhomely is the basis of the uncanny (226).

The house's consciousness is evidenced by its being a focaliser. When the house presents its own point of view, the reader gains access to its thoughts and aims. The house's conscious presence can be observed in the following passage:

> I am here, reading with you. I am reading this over your shoulder. I make your home home, I'm the Braille on your wallpaper that only your fingers can read – I tell you where you are. Don't turn to look at me. I am only tangible when you don't look. (2009, 73–74)

Oyeyemi here delves into the idea that there is an enigmatic quality that pervades the whole structure of the house both from inside and outside. Surprisingly, the house seems not menacing at all and tells a lot about the intimate relationship that humans share with it. In *Poetics of Space* (1958), Gaston Bachelard argues that the most intimate of spaces is the house and regards it as a "felicitous space," and "the space we love" ([1964] 1994, xxxv). For Bachelard, the house acts as a "tool for analysis of the human soul" (xxxvii). In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty claims that space may be independent of the subject, but it also extends from them. Space also "determines the configuration of the subject to a point by either serving as a mirror from which the subject derives her sense of self-image or affecting her unconscious to subtly recalibrate the coordinates of her subjectivity" (qtd. in Ng Hock Soon 2015, 12). This demonstrates how both subject and space leave an imprint on each other. Additionally, the house suggests that it is this feature that makes the house a home. "I am only tangible when you don't look" can mean that the house, like a spectre, can observe its inhabitants without being observed in return, or without making the observed person know when they are being observed.

How did the house become a sentient house and a hostile entity? Does it have any supernatural abilities on its own or is it haunted because of the ghostly presence? The house recalls becoming a conscious entity in the following manner:

> I cried and cried for an hour or so, unable to bear the sound of my voice, so shrill and pleading, but unable to stop the will of the wind wheeling through me, cold in my insides. That was the first and last time I've heard my own voice. I suppose I am frightening. But Anna Good couldn't hear me. When she closed me up again it was only because she was too cold. (2009, 23)

This passage exemplifies a personification of the house: it cries and feels cold, like a human being. This quote underpins Merleau-Ponty's argument that both the subject and lived space leave imprints on each other in the process of habitation. Oyeyemi also shares this view as she writes that "[h]abitation is in itself a form of haunting, whether that's a tribe that settles on a particular piece of land, a family in a home or the mind in the body" (2012). Indeed, the house shares a special and intimate relationship with the generations of Silver women. The close connection between the house and the Silver women is evident in the following statement by the house: "you are a mother of mine, you gave me a kind of life, mine, the kind of alive that I am" (2009, 24). The house thinks of the woman as a mother.

However, there is evidence that before the house became fully sentient, it already had some supernatural power on its own, as it declares "I chose to be created" (2009, 67). This statement strongly implies that the house possessed a will of its own but

it needed human agency to become a conscious entity. The great-grandmother's original intention was to surround herself with a house that protects her from everything. However, the house rather became an unhomely home than a homely one for the Silver women. Later, the house came to possess a desire to keep the Silver women within its bounds. It also came to possess a moral agency to tell and decide what is proper and what is not. Based on this, I argue that the house exerts a great power over Miranda. To destroy her, the house directly interferes with her physical and mental health. The narrative very effectively presents the slippages in space which are the result of Miranda's deteriorating sense of space due to her illness, grief and the house's evil influence.

The house plays a significant role in Miranda's deteriorating sense of space.[1] Miranda is "only uncertainly here; she comes and goes" (Punter 2017, 27). This means that Miranda's reality is also questionable because her perception often changes from a normal-seeming reality to an awareness of the supernatural. For instance, Miranda constantly has bad dreams, which are initiated by the house. Therefore, Miranda is usually awake at midnight hours, which means that she likely suffers from insomnia. The waking and sleeping hours get blurred for her. In the text, the spatio-temporal indeterminacy is shown through random intercuts between different places and times. A case in point is when Miranda decides to have her midnight feast, goes to the kitchen and a bit later she suddenly finds herself in the street. She sees strange, pale people from one of her mother's pictures and also a corpse. Such strange presences pervade the text. Miranda is haunted by these occurrences, which express the problematic absent presence of places and objects, which might be there and not there. The house plays these cruel tricks to make Miranda question her sanity.

The house also interferes with Miranda's physical health. It attacks Miranda at her weakest point: her eating disorder. The house wants to control her through consumption. The first day Miranda's family moves into the house, Miranda finds chalk on the floor of the bedroom that "she'd picked as hers" (Oyeyemi 2009, 20). This defining moment marks the beginning of Miranda's pica. The house also might consciously lure Miranda into picking the chalk. Miranda's choice of room also describes her later declining mental and physical health. She names her room

[1] For instance, her uncertain existence is described by spatio-temporal indeterminacy. Miranda's sense of time is connected to her deceased mother. She loses track of time because she wears her deceased mother's watch, which is "ticking away Haitian time, five hours behind ours" (2009, 5–6). This means that she is out of time. She also often does her activities in different time slots and as a result, she is disoriented. For instance, when she decided to have a "midnight feast" (2009, 76) she checked that it was 5 a.m. in Haiti and her mother probably would be awake having an early breakfast. She tries to continue living according to her mother's time in Haiti.

psychomantium. The room is the darkest one in the whole house and Miranda has heavy curtains to make it even darker. The room is described in a haunting and uncanny way: "In a psychomantium, glass topples darkness. Things appear as they are. Visions are called from a point inside the mirror, from a point inside the mind" (33). The darkness of the room stands for Miranda's unstable mental health, fragmented identity, and fragile physique. In the room, Miranda has a huge mirror that shows things as "they are"; the mirror reflects Miranda's slowly vanishing and emaciated body. In another example, in one of her "midnight feasts," Miranda cannot sleep and in the kitchen, she desperately tries to eat food:

> She took a knife and divided the plate, pushing food aside so that there was a clear line in the middle of the plate, a greasy path of sanity. […] She thought, there is no way that taking this stuff into my body is doing me any good. Sauce ran across her nose and cheeks and there were tears in her plate. (2009, 77–78)

The house frequently controls Miranda through supernatural occurrences. This kitchen scene describes Miranda's unsuccessful and desperate attempt to eat food and she notices that all the vegetables disappeared from her plate. This is one of the cruel tricks of the house that makes Miranda question her sanity and keeps her weak, hungry, and ill. The divided plate also symbolises Miranda's divided self.

When Miranda goes away to attend university, for the first time she feels free from the house's surveillance and the ghost of her foremothers. She almost succeeds in leading a healthier life but it is already too late for her. After a year she is sent back home. This time the house does not hold itself back and expresses its malicious intents:

> I would save Miranda even if I had to break her. […] How easy to suffocate. Her heart and lungs were already weak. It would not have taken much to kill Miranda. That moment passed. In the next moment my thought was to let her die. If she continued as she was, that would be soon. […] It was my little joke. (2009, 194)

As the house itself expresses, it would be so easy to kill her because she is already dying. When Miranda returns from college, she is in very poor health. The house describes Miranda's state as:

> She had been finding it difficult to see, and as she came in on her father's arm and hesitantly turned her head from side to side, I saw how heavily she was relying on her hearing – I felt her struggle to perceive shapes. […] I depressed my floors for her, made angles of descent that led her across the hallway and through my rooms and up my stairs with the decisiveness of someone who could see properly. (2009, 193)

This passage exemplifies that Miranda is almost blind and she can no longer spatially determine where she is in the house.

When Miranda brings her lesbian lover, Ore, back home, the girl sees the house's real intentions from the very first, and she also feels that she has been picked by the house as its next target. Miranda and Ore make love and the house and the female ghosts watch them in disgust: "We saw who she meant. […] The skin. […] Anna was shocked. Jennifer was shocked. Lily was impassive. Disgusting" (2009, 194). The house and the female ghost's racism is clear from this quote. They wish to kill Ore but she manages to escape, leaving Miranda behind. The house has got what it wanted: a broken Miranda.

In the last chapter, Oyeyemi goes back to the first question that the novel starts with: where is Miranda? Each character had a different explanation of where Miranda ended up. According to Ore, she is dead, while Eliot thinks she has disappeared. However, there is a strong implication that she was succumbed by the house:

> It was in trapdoor-room that she fell, and the house caught her. She had thought she would find the goodlady below, or Lily, or Jennifer, or her GrandAnna, but there was no one there but her. In trapdoor-room her lungs knocked against her stomach and she lay down on the white net that had saved Ore but would not save her. Two tiny moons flew up her throat. She squeezed them, one in each hand, until they were two silver kidneys. Acid seeped through her. (2009, 239)

Miranda's body is never found. The text implies that Miranda is imprisoned inside the walls of the house as a ghost after her death. The other possible explanation for Miranda's disappearance is that the house consumed Miranda and her corporeality merges with the house. Her brother notices that furniture is moved in the house and hears steps in the attic. Miranda occupies an in-between space: she merges with the house and is also bound to the matriarchal lineage in the form of a ghost.

5 Conclusion

Helen Oyeyemi's deeply disturbing novel *White is for Witching* proves to be an excellent example of *écriture féminine* with its portrayal of a feminine textual body. The novel rightly belongs to the sub-genre of Female Gothic, a feminine mode of writing the Gothic that describes unique female bodily experiences and female anxieties. In addition, the novel provides a lack of a happy ending which is a more recent phenomenon in the Female Gothic subgenre. The entire novel centres on the mentally and physically broken female protagonist, Miranda. Oyeyemi cleverly chooses an eating disorder as the central illness, which is an epidemic among the young, especially women today. Moreover, Oyeyemi weaves this illness into Miranda's family history, an eating disorder

that is passed down from generation to generation. In this paper, I have argued for the protagonist's disordered eating habits as part of the monstrous maternal inheritance, with the novel demonstrating that women by their nature are not always nurturing. In doing so, Oyeyemi depicts a duality in motherhood and sexual desire, presenting it as an innocuous longing and a monstrous one. Oyeyemi presents pica, an eating disorder that involves the consumption of things that should not be consumed. Here, pica is Gothicised and represented as an ultimate violation of taboos. Understanding pica as an example of abjection provokes the reader to consider the possibility of eating such matters and also shakes the boundaries of acceptability. Miranda's unvarying focus on her eating disorder in defining her subjectivity and corporeality is instrumental to her ultimate, sad fate. Oyeyemi engages innovatively with the traditional forms of Gothic literature, reworking the classical tropes of a Gothic haunted house and the ghost story genre to examine Miranda's corporeality and identity. Oyeyemi has added a new dimension to contemporary Gothic literature by presenting the haunted house as a conscious character with its own will and distinct viewpoint.

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Educational Horizons in the Works of Female Authors between 1770 and 1830

Female Voices: Forms of Women's Reading, Self-Education and Writing in Britain (1770–1830). Edited by Éva Antal and Antonella Braida. Recherches Interdisciplinaires et Transculturelles. Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2022. Pp. 268. ISBN 978-2-84867-933-4.

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Books lie on the shelves, on the table and even on the floor as Minerva crowns a reading woman with a laurel: the abundance of knowledge and acknowledged female mastery welcomes the reader on the cover of *Female Voices: Forms of Women's Reading, Self-Education and Writing in Britain (1770–1830)*. The illustration is borrowed from *The Lady's Magazine* (vol. XX, 1789), and it represents a frequent motif, as Dóra Janczer Csikós reminds readers later in her essay. The image embodies the topics discussed in the collection: the importance of self-improvement and self-education for British women (and in some cases authors from the continent also involved) in a volume covering the period "from the mother, Mary Wollstonecraft to the daughter, Mary Shelley," as the editors express (15). The collection reflects on how the women of the specified period managed to find different aims to articulate their thoughts and ideas for self-expressive and educative purposes. The volume is a significant contribution to the study of British literature as it aims to amend the British literary canon by calling attention to the role of women in shaping society and art.

The British society's attitude to the female voice during the 19th century is summarised by the opening essay "The Corinne Effect: British Responses to the Reading of Madame de Staël's *Corinne* (1807)" by Hannah Moss. Shortly after the French writer's *Corinne* had been published, reactions appeared in literary forms on the other side of the Channel. Critics attacked *Corinne* in terms of its radical portrayal of a free-spirited Anglo-Italian poet and argued that the main character could not suite the British social norms. Moss examines a novel, a novella and a poem written in response to *Corinne*. A parody, *The Corinna of England* was published in 1809 by an anonymous author (who is probably the little-known woman novelist E. M. Foster). However, Moss emphasises that the novel does not necessarily condemn the idea of a successful poet but rather highlights the consequences of unsupervised education. *The History of an Enthusiast* (1830) by Maria Jane Jewsbury also sheds a critical light on the character of Corinne by showing a heroine, Julia Osborne, whose enthusiasm for art leads her to heartbreak as she must abandon love and

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family life by sacrificing them on the altar of literary fame. The author argues that the work is probably the product of its writer's misery as she was forced to focus on domestic life and had to suppress her literary aspirations. To offer a lyrical perspective, Moss turns our attention to the work of Felicia Hemans, who found her literary doppelgänger in Corinne. Moss in this short section analyses Hemans's poem "Corinne at the Capitol," and concludes that the author felt sympathy for Corinne, as her experiences spoke to her, especially regarding her miseries and hardships. The different interpretations illustrate the various attitudes to the position in society which female creative artists were expected to occupy.

The above-mentioned Dóra Janczer Csikós begins her essay, "Reflections and Thoughts on Education: from *The Lady's Magazine* to Mary Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799)" by describing a dominant view on women's education presented by John Bennett's work *Strictures on female education; Chiefly as it relates to the culture of the heart* (1787), which salutes the equality between the sexes in Britain. His ideas were praised, only *The Lady's Magazine* refused to do so, as it is evident that Bennett's views are only limited to the traditional ones and he advocates gender-specific education for boys and girls. This educational model based on separation due to the allegedly different intellectual qualities the sexes possess is refuted and disputed by women authors. Mary Hays's novel, *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799) follows the life of Mary Raymond, an orphan who is – although educated – taught to "*think* but not to *reflect*" (77). Csikós argues that Hays shows through female characters only the negative sides of the different kinds of education they received and the lack of support from society.

There were, nonetheless, instances when the access to knowledge was free and open, as Kiel Shaub's "Critical Companions: Arts-and-Sciences Education for Women and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)" reveals. In London educational institutions were established, such as the Royal Institution of Great Britain and the Surrey Institution, where anyone who was interested in the announced lectures could attend them, regardless of their gender or social status. However, the participants received no qualification. These lectures were popular especially among women whose experiences and reflections were manifested in different kinds of publications. Unfortunately, the arts-and-sciences institutions became gradually less inclusive and multidisciplinary as the repression of fine arts started. Mary Shelley attended Coleridge's lectures, which proves she was aware of how these institutions worked. Shaub's aim was to analyse *Frankenstein* within this context.

Krisztina Kaló in her essay "Clara Reeve's Epistolary Novel in the Service of Female Education: *The School for Widows* (1791)" mentions the importance of literary salons for women, as these spaces provided an opportunity for exchanging ideas. She goes on to argue that publishers of the 18th century realised the need

for intellectual improvement especially among middle-class women. The novelist Clara Reeve stands in the author's focal interest, who gave voice to women, especially widows, through her works. Reeve was a well-educated writer who was influenced by the classics. According to her, the novel must fulfil two purposes: enjoyment and moral improvement; hence, her writings also served a didactic end. The subject of her novel is a marginalised group, namely, widows. Kaló points out that in the British literary canon unmarried women above 30 years of age were either comic figures or invisible ones, although she offers two contrasting views by other researchers concerning the truth about the vulnerable position of widows who inherited nothing from their deceased husbands. Reeve's novel has two main characters, Mrs. Frances Darnford and Mrs. Rachel Strictland, who are both honourable but must endure hardships resulting from their new social status. In Kaló's reading, Mrs. Strictland is a good example for widows to find ways to become useful members of the society by doing charity work. In Mrs. Darnford's case, her corrupt husband's nightlife and gambling addiction cause financial problems. Her husband's immorality and thirst for luxury is contrasted with Mrs. Darnford's virtuousness and modesty. However, Kaló reminds us that even though it is to Mrs. Darnford's merit that she could stand up after her social status had changed, as she became a governess and later opened a school, her attitude as a wife was often obedient towards her unethical husband, which leaves the system of patriarchy unquestioned.

Educating others is more prominent in Alexandra Sippel's essay, titled "Dispelling Economic Misconceptions: Jane Marcet's Teaching on Political Economy." Marcet was known for writing *Conversations* on various subjects, including sciences, philosophy, history etc. Intellectual circles welcomed her and she was respected by male scientists. To preserve the stability of the British society, Marcet found it her duty to educate the citizens of the country and debunk the misconceptions on the imbalanced relationship between the working class and the upper classes by illustrating through her literary works that the growing capital of the rich benefits the lower classes, as well. The social tension between the working class and the employers increased, as dissatisfaction over low wages and the working and living conditions grew. In her educative writings Marcet challenges the prejudices against the upper classes by using a language which makes her text digestible for non-aristocrats, since it discusses political economy within the frame of tales. In her writings she tried to prove that everyone was moving towards the same goal. Sippel, however, highlights that Marcet promoted no political activism for women. She stuck to the status quo regarding women's place in society and even though she emphasised the importance of education for women, she limited it to the purposes of being an intelligent conversationalist and mothers being good teachers for their offspring.

In "Educating to Economic Realities through Fiction: Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen," Marie-Laure Massei-Chamayou also portrays a woman who shared her knowledge to encourage self-improvement. Edgeworth was an exceptional figure, as her father invested in her education, which allowed her later to become the accountant for the family and publish educational writings on the topics of economy, such as "The Orphans" and "The Purple Jar" for children, and "The Good Aunt" and "The Absentee" for adults. Supported by Jane Austen's novels, the author argues that people in general and women in particular became increasingly interested in the financial matters of estates and annual incomes, since marriage for the latter did not only mean financial but also existential stability. In Massei-Chamayou's reading the main goal of Edgeworth, whose works were not unknown to Austen, was to warn the public of the dangers material goods could mean to them and to advertise modesty and efficient financial strategies.

Hélène Vidal in her essay "Self-fashioning in the Age of Sensibility: the Duchess of Devonshire's Educational Writings" studies another woman, Georgiana Cavendish, who thanks to her mother's support received excellent education and produced literary works for educational purposes. The author examines two epistolary novels, *Emma* (1773) and *The Sylph* (1779), and one pedagogical play, *Zillia* (1782) to reveal that Cavendish is concerned with self-development and ethics. Her main themes include benevolence and generosity. In *The Sylph* and in *Zillia* the heroine can rely on somebody during her journey of personal growth, while *Emma* follows a more traditional line portraying an obedient daughter and wife. Vidal suggests that Lady Georgiana's *Bildungsromane* can be interpreted as autofiction, a combination of autobiography and novel, a genre that allows the author to create a fictional self for herself, finding her own voice through the characters.

Similarly, for the writer, poet, playwright, and translator Mary Tighe her mother also played a crucial role in her life, as Harriet Kramer Linkin describes in "Reading Mary Tighe Reading." Tighe's mother as a Methodist leader provided her daughter with sufficient intellectual stimuli. Linkin emphasises that while Tighe found her own voice, she stayed loyal and respectful to her mother. The study analyses two literary works by Tighe, *Psyche; or the Legend of Love* and *Selena*. Both novels focus on self-improvement and self-education.

A different genre and purpose appear in the poetry of Hannah Cowley, as described by Angela Escott in "War Dramatised in Hannah Cowley's Epic Poem *The Siege of Acre* (1801)." Although the noble genre of the epic was considered a masculine territory, Escott reminds us that in the 18th century there were prominent female figures who composed "long poems of this nature," such as Mary Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, and Anna Seward, to name only a few (145). What distinguished Cowley from the others is her rather plastic representation of the war. She not only

focuses on the sentimentalist aspects of her subject matter, but she also profoundly and accurately describes the siege of Acre in 1799 and contemplates on war itself and with it the enigma and complexity, or, rather, the paradox of human nature as it oscillates between aggression during war times and kind-heartedness in other circumstances. Cowley's epic is based on historical events, however, she also included two episodes of fiction.

David García in "'Where arts have given place to arms': the Poetry of Helen Maria Williams in *Paul and Virginia* (1788)" scrutinises Williams's own sonnets in her translation of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de St. Pierre's work from the viewpoint of Williams being an Englishwoman held under arrest in France and touches upon the political implications her texts suggest. By the reviewers these sonnets are called "embellishments"; however, García proposes the term "interspersed" due to the multifunctionality of Williams's sonnets. Her poems allow disguised political messages and reinforce the novel's sentiment but they can also be read alone. García concludes that Williams managed to create a method for finding her own voice in a place where British writers were monitored by censorship.

Another political writing in the disguise of a literary work is examined by Anthony John Harding in "Mary Hays's *Female Biography*: Writing Women into the Public Sphere." Hays's *Female Biography* consists of six volumes of "lives of notable women" (90). Harding contextualises the birth of the project by recapitulating British social norms. Similarly to other studies of this volume, Harding describes Britain as a country where women with an urge to influence society or to create were heavily discouraged and ignored, which deepened the contrast between the public and the domestic sphere. However, as biography was a respected genre, Hays utilised its potentials and collected women of the past – queens, military leaders, writers, luminaries, and supporters of female education – and shared their values and achievements with the British community without idealising them. She also used her biography to point out tragedies concomitant of misogyny.

Another collection of female figures – though this time fictional ones – was provided by Anna Jameson. In "Literary Criticism as Women's Rights Activism in Anna Jameson's *Shakespeare Heroines,*" Magdalena Pypeć notes that even though Jameson's views were similar to Wollstonecraft's, she chose a different strategy by using a diplomatic language in her works, thus avoiding radicalism to gain popularity. Jameson also highlighted that her aim was to provide a portrait of feminine nature and Shakespeare's characters were good examples for that because in her view they are profound characters who possess real-life qualities. In her book, Pypeć notes, Jameson not only writes as a literary critic, but also makes subtle hints at political and social matters. For instance, as opposed to critics before her, she reads Lady Macbeth as a caring wife and a supportive partner, not solely evil incarnated.

Angelika Reichmann's "Reading and Female Development in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)" focuses on the topic of reason and the female mind, which appear in diverse forms in the other essays, however Reichmann (and Nóra Séllei) focuses on this issue. Reichmann first examines the two human attributes of reason and sensibility within the framework of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; the second part of her essay is devoted to the close analysis of the novel, in which she connects the heroine's, Emily's transgressive act of reading with desire and self-development.

Nóra Séllei's essay, "Education, the Female Body and Feminine Embodiment in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)" takes a different viewpoint, as I see, a rather contemporary somaesthetics approach to the most well-known protofeminist's work. Séllei distinguishes the female body and the feminine embodiment, that is, the subject's consciousness of her corporeality and its cultural associations. Wollstonecraft did not intentionally reflect on the female body in her text, but the topic holds relevance within the framework of reason and sensibility. *A Vindication* not only makes a political statement but also focuses on the human qualities, as Wollstonecraft argues that women are rational beings, not only sensible ones. Even though the notion of the blending of reason and sensibility appeared in the 18th century, this was only limited to men, and in women's case feeling was still considered the dominant feature by default, as opposed to men. Sensibility is connected to the body, as its responses are communicated primarily through bodily expressions such as blushing, fainting etc. In this light Wollstonecraft criticises the damaging traditional view of the female body in the works of Rousseau and Milton, though she does not reflect on it directly. Séllei also mentions that if women lack the quality of reason, which is attributed to men, women stay with sensibility and sensuality, limiting their identity to their body with its derogatory associations. As far as the relationship between mind and body is concerned, Wollstonecraft refutes the idea of the (male) genius whose intellectual strength is balanced by his physical weakness and she argues that there is no such connection between the two, as opposed to her contemporaries. By emphasising the role of education, she covers the mind as well as the body. Séllei also notes that Wollstonecraft's vision was nonetheless utopistic and the self-empowered woman she imagined was a wife, a leader of the household, whose lifestyle promoted a well-balanced marital relationship.

The collection does justice to important female figures who, otherwise, are not integrated into the rather male-dominated British literary canon of the late 18th and early 19th century. Hence, we can find many names in the essays that used to be beyond the scope of research on the respective era's mainstream literary figures. The index of the volume helps readers to navigate their way among the wide range of authors. The book contributes to today's feminist discourse by presenting women of the past who were interested in different tools for education, social standards.

and genres, and were either radicals or not, but all of them were headed towards the same goal, even if their reasons were dissimilar: the significance of women's education and their intellectual improvement.

Discontinuous Continuity: Facets of Time and Temporality in European Modernist Literature

Temporalities of Modernism. European Modernism Studies 9. Edited by Carmen Borbély, Erika Mihálycsa and Petronia Petrar. Milan: Ledizioni, 2022. Pp. 379. ISBN 978-88-5526-848-6.

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That we are far from understanding the complexities of the experience in time in modernist literature and culture (and that, in fact, all three important lexical items in this clause, "time", "experience" and "modernist" could be almost endlessly scrutinised) is excellently attested by the present volume, the result of a broad international collaboration. The collection contains the studies of seventeen contributors, with six scholars representing the Faculty of Letters of Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), and the rest of the book including writings of authors from the universities in Angers, Bangkok, Budapest and Eger (Hungary), Edinburgh, Florence, Perugia, Philadelphia, Prague and Venice. As the Introduction authored by Carmen Borbély, Erika Mihálycsa, and Petronia Petrar points out, "several key terms that can shed light on our own relation to the contemporary world are rooted in the turbulence of the modernist age: relativity, originality, reproducibility, irreversibility, (in)terminability, duration, fragmentation, contingency, necessity, (anti)messianism, revolution, and (perhaps above all), the threat of a future" (18). The volume offers several different perspectives both on the concept of time in European modernism and on the various micro-histories of modernist ways of writing. As Jean-Michel Rabaté lucidly observes in the first essay, "The task looks contradictory because on the one hand it suggests that we will need to keep open a discontinuous history of modernisms in the plural, while on the other hand we long for a modernism that remains a singular entity" (61).

The collection of essays is organised into five parts. Part One includes two essays of a more theoretical nature on modernist temporalities. "Modernism Terminable and Interminable" by Jean-Michel Rabaté examines unfinished works of modernism. While distinguishing between "unfinished" and "interminable" works and implying that not only have these works been left unfinished but modernism as a project has also not ended due to the very fact that it is also interminable, Rabaté heavily draws on the concept of Freud's concept of Nachträglichkeit and Ferenczi's speculations on

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interminable analysis. The essay analyses famous interminable works of modernism, such as Schönberg's opera *Moses und Aaron* (as contrasted with Schubert's unfinished *Eighth Symphony*), Mallarmé's "The Book," Pound's *Cantos*, Hugo von Hoffmansthal's *Andreas or the Reunited Ones* and Kafka's *The Castle*, while pointing out that "[t]he symptom of incompleteness dominates in the German-speaking world" (45). One common element is exhaustion and uncontrollable proliferation (51) and the very impossibility of totalisation and metaphysical absolute. Finally, Rabaté sets up three categories of unfinished works, emblematically represented by Duchamp, Eliot and Walter Benjamin.

The next essay, "Somehow Successive and Continuous: Bergson and the Modernist Moment Reconsidered" by Randall Stevenson, challenges the treatment of time as a continuous flow by Bergson, who was inimical to chopping things up, seeing even change as indivisible and favouring continuity over segmentation. However, as Stevenson points out, for several modernist writers, inspired or influenced by innovations such as the motorcar or the cinema, reality seems series of successive images, rapidly alternating perceptions. The author convincingly shows how Virginia Woolf, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and Proust continued, despite the apparent contrast between fragmentation and flow, to integrate individual moments or episodes as absorbed into "the continuous inner life of consciousness and memory" (78).

Part Two, entitled "Recasting Chronology, Temporalities Out of Joint" includes three essays, not so much on the concept of temporality but rather on the less-discussed histories of modernism, citing Italian, Czech and Polish examples, and calling attention to various disruptions and "no-man's lands" in modernism's landscape. "Modernism and the Disruption of History. The Italian Example" by Mimmo Cangiano looks into the problem of how certain tendencies of the Italian modernist movement served to underpin the emergence of nationalism, drawing the conclusion that "modernism cannot be understood as a mere epistemological theory or artistic phenomenon. Instead, it must be identified as the cultural logic of a specific historical moment." (86) The author gives a detailed analysis of how, through the works of various figures like Ardengo Soffici, Giuseppe Prezzolini, or Giovanni Papini, modernism developed in the historical context of the "failed Risorgimento" (100), and key terms of modernism, such as flux, contingency, becoming vs. being, and subjectivity, affected even the concept of History. He also demonstrates that the image of a fragmentation reflecting the uselessness of any ideology serves as a central theme of a decisive Italian modernist novel, Pirandello's *The Old and the Young* (1909).

The purpose of Louis Armand's and David Vichnar's essay "Rotation Rerotation Suprarotation: The Politics of Prague Dada" is also to nuance the monolithically-conceived history of modernism by uncovering the intricate case of the Prague

Dada movement, which, for a long time, was seen as a "German" product, but a "tendency to nationalist chauvinism and anxiety of influence cannot obscure the fact that 1920s Prague and Brno did spawn a significant, in some cases even unique, 'underground' Dada scene" (112). The authors start from the arrival in Prague of Dadaists Richard Huelsenbeck, Raoul Hausmann and Johannes Baader in 1920, to go on first with assessing the works of Tristan Tzara, Melchior Vischer, Walter Serner, Emil František Burian, Václav Lacina, and Karel Konrád, then to connect the ludic elements in Hašek's writing (*Švejk*), and philosopher Ladislav Klíma's writings with "Ur-Dadaist" features, and finally to arrive at the mid-1960s scholarly study of the Czech Dada movement.

What connects this and the next study, Verita Sriratana's "I Burn (Marx's) Paris: 'Capital' Cities, Alienation and Deconstruction in the Works of Bruno Jasieński," is the fact that both Polish futurism and the Czech Dada challenged post-WWI capitalist structures and reacted to the "panorama of futility and anarchy" in new and unique ways. This is a case study of Polish writer Bruno Jasieński (1901–1938), the leader (also fiercest critic) of the futurist movement in Poland during the interwar period, and a victim, as a Soviet emigré, of the Great Purge in 1938. Just like in the case of Italian futurism, which must be seen in the context of Risorgimento, and the Czech Dada, which also can be examined against the backdrop of national independence, Polish futurism was also underpinned by Poland's regaining independence after some 150 years; "realism and nationalism, therefore, were also imbued in the fantastic and grotesque of Polish futurism" (149). Sriratana's in-depth analysis of Jasieński's 1926 novel *I Burn Paris* convincingly identifies Paris as "a place which is simultaneously 'placeless' as it stands for the homogenised urban experience faced with modernisation" (161–62), and also as a palimpsest, where Paris's ghost of revolutionary past resurfaces.

Three essays in Part Three, entitled "Keeping Time in Modernist Works," discuss the work of Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and the Romanian modernist novel within the framework of subjective time-keeping practices. In "The Flux of Becoming and the Dream of Permanence in a Reflection by Virginia Woolf," Ilaria Natali examines the theme of mirroring, reflection, and temporality in the context of several short stories and essays by Woolf, also touching upon key novels such as *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928). The essay draws attention to the paradoxes of mirrors and temporality, such as the one analysed in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection" (1929), where the looking-glass serves as a fixing and unmovable space as opposed to the fluctuating and dynamic quality of the protagonist's house. What mirrors offer or are expected to offer is "a state of permanence that is removed from the fragmentation of everyday life and disengaged from the flow of becoming" (183). However, mirrors and other reflective exterior substances (such as water) are

optical artifices connected to theatricality, bewitchment and deception (185) and, diametrically opposed to the first option, take away the promise of permanence and the coincidence of referent and image, as Natali convincingly proves with reference to several versions of the Narcissus myth as appearing in Woolf's short stories.

In "Modernist Plath," Annalisa Volpone draws a comparative analysis of Sylvia Plath's literary preoccupation with Woolf and James Joyce. Volpone's primary argument here is that Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) offers much debate on whether and how modernism "survived" in her work. Like Woolf's novels, Plath's "prose-poem" is a terrain of an incandescent and penetrating autofictional narrative, where the moments of being unfold through the protagonist's psychological responses to them. Similar aspects can be detected in Plath's treatment of Joyce. As Volpone claims, for Plath both Woolf and Joyce employ a linguistic ingeniousness that forms a bridge between the linguistic chasms of prose and poetry. In this respect, "[p]oetry and prose are combined through the use of a challenging language; on the one hand the omnipresence of an author, who continuously baffles the reader as he/she tries to decode the text, and on the other his abdication to the reader and his/her ability to produce meaning at each reading" (214). For Esther Greenwood in *The Bell Jar*, Woolf and Joyce are ideal literary models in her search for being a poet, a writer, a wife, and a mother, and her wondering if all this can be possible in a social environment designed to silence the artist in her.

Corin Braga's essay "Inner Temporalities in the Romanian Modernist Novel" discusses the interwar period, when Romanian writers began to follow the routes of the Western literary canon. Firstly, Braga takes note of the three philosophical principles and schools, William James's theory on the psychological continuum, Bergson's idea of intuitionism, and Husserl's phenomenology, which paradigms fascinated and inspired Romanian authors between the two world wars. Then, Braga's focus falls on the somewhat ambivalent way contemporary Romanian criticism responded to the paradigm shift that came with the new form of poetic art, the "much freer, more open, and sometimes uncontrollable structures designed to capture the flow of consciousness, the stream of thoughts, doubts, aspirations, affirmations, negations, or memories" (230), which pervaded the Romanian literary scene of the era. By discussing the novels of Max Blecher and other interwar Romanian writers, Braga explains how the novel benefited from Proust's inversion/introspection, whereby the narrators, alienated from the reality with all its horrifying effects on the inner life, are caught up in the semantic pool of consciousness.

The three essays in Part Four explore the idea of time out of joint within the framework of anarchy and predetermination. Angelika Reichmann's "A 'panorama of futility and anarchy' Reimagined in David Jones's *In Parenthesis*" analyses Jones's epic poem in its historical and mythical intertextual references to the literary tradition and

its narrative and visual recollection of the English medieval heritage. As Reichmann reveals, for Jones, calling forth the spirit of cultural history, evoking a sense of timelessness, and moulding images with different visual and textual allusions into a visual cohesion, are components to make sense of his traumatic experiences of the First World War, and to create a shrine both for those soldiers whose lives were wasted in the frontlines and the for the culture that started to recover among the ruins. The world of *In Parenthesis* is nothing short of a waste land, where human life is constantly threatened with self-annihilation, and where war and human sacrifice, infinite in time, are mere reminders of our futile existence.

Chloé Thomas's essay underscores the prevalence of prophetism in modernist poetry, particularly delving into Gertrude Stein's wartime prose. Thomas explores Stein's interest in occultism and her use of prophecy and prophetic sources as key to her quest for a narrative mode. One significant narrative approach in Stein's work involves the use of signs and faith as fundamentally empty concepts. Thomas elucidates this by highlighting how "a meaning (the end of the war) is associated to a sign (the box hedges in the garden being all pruned) and one just has to wait for the sign to occur – an occurrence which is, interestingly, tightly controlled by the prophetess herself, as she is the one gardening" (268). Another literary device for Stein, explains Thomas, is repetition, i.e., her choice of freezing the war into a literary trope and making it a-temporal in her autobiographical novel *Wars I Have Seen* (1945), which allows her to turn it into "a reality as a narrative, not a reality as an experience" (271). Thus, for Stein prophecy is a chronicle of a future already laid out and constantly re-written and war (and history) is the constant repetition of the same pattern.

In "Revolution as Fractured Time in the Modernist Romanian Novel," Sanda Cordoș examines the historicity of twentieth-century Romanian modernist literature. Here, the author explains how modernism emerged in Romanian literary circles as an ethos entwined with the sense of nationhood in writings by Eugen Lovinescu, Ion Vinea, and Mircea Eliade – a movement that was regarded as dangerous and which became largely extinct with the advent of Communism. As Cordoș argues, for Lovinescu, Vinea, and Eliade, this ethos rooted in the idea of revolution was crucial. They saw the concept of revolution as a creative force for aligning Romanian culture with Western standards. However, in postwar Romanian novels, the concept of revolution shifted to fractured time, focusing on individuals impacted by the war. The essay concludes by highlighting the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution in Timișoara, acknowledging the palpable loss of faith in modernism, while noting ongoing efforts for social and literary modernisation in Romania.

Part Five examines modernism in a postwar aesthetic context. The two essays of this part revolve around the question triggered by Adorno's statement that "[t]o write poetry

after Auschwitz is barbaric": How can we talk about the catastrophe of war and the Holocaust without aestheticising suffering? In "Auschwitz: Writing, Life and Literature in Three Novels by Imre Kertész," Gábor Schein discusses writing, life, work, existence, and writerly ethics as key aspects of Kertész's concept of modernism in *Fatelessness* (1975), *Fiasco* (1988), *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* (1990) and *Liquidation* (2003). The debate of these features of Kertész's writing might inevitably tempt one to read Kertész's work along the blurring lines between the fictional and the autobiographical. Indeed, Schein argues that the self-referentiality in Kertész's novels gives way to two different interpretations, one seeing his novels as a form of life-writing rather than works of fiction, and the other maintaining that "if writing is carried out under the skies of Auschwitz, it is perpetually forced to face the limitations and effacement of the modern daydream of one's 'own' life and death" (307). Schein suggests here that authors should embrace and reshape life's uncertainties, move beyond self-referentiality, and, while not necessarily experiencing a Barthesian death, consistently confront the possibility of their own demise.

Aura Poenar's "Witnessing Trauma: A Study on the Temporalities and Ethics of the Image" seeks to critically examine the complexities surrounding images and their ethical implications for reality and truth. The study refers many times to Judith Butler's theory on the "certain framing of reality/certain reality," i.e., how war is "framed" in visual and textual discourses to "recruit" viewers and listeners to the war effort and create the perception that some lives are less "grievable" than others. However, it notably overlooks engaging in a dialogue with Susan Sontag's criticism of the presumed veracity of (wartime) photographs – in fact, Sontag is relegated in this essay only to a single footnote. Together with Butler's theory of trauma, the author's use of Sontag's idea of "images frozen in time" could have placed the concept of trauma and the victim/perpetrator duality in visual and especially cinematic representations (besides Alain Resnais' pioneering Holocaust film *Nuit et Brouillard*, the essay also features the films of Jacques Rivette, Gillo Pontecorvo, Harun Farocki's *Inextinguishable Fire*, and Claude Lanmann's *Shoah*) in an excellent theoretical framework. Nevertheless, the essay powerfully problematises the dangers of spatial and temporal distance between image and audience, the truth and the reality that are either revealed or concealed by photographs, our empathy with what is represented, and the creative effort to turn the viewers into witnesses by fuelling their imagination.

In conclusion, the works in the present volume provide a distinctive investigation of the broad spectrum of temporal encounters in modernist literature, prompting a reconsideration of how modernism has been perceived during watershed moments in history. These essays not only call attention to the reciprocity between time and narrative, as well as time and our experiences of time, but also shed light on the frail

and divergent forms of truth, reality, and meaning. Thus, the book's interdisciplinary approach and its array of perspectives make it a worthwhile addition to the academic discourse on time, experience, and modernism in literature and culture.

English Literature from a Hungarian Perspective

Az angol irodalom története. 6. kötet. 1930-tól napjainkig. Első rész. ['History of English Literature. Vol. 6. From 1930 to the Present. Part 1'] Edited by Tamás Bényei. Co-edited by István D. Rácz and Judit Friedrich. Editors in chief: Tamás Bényei and Géza Kállay. Budapest: Kijárat, 2020. Pp. 629. ISBN 978-615-5160-94-3.

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'The History of English Literature' (*Az angol irodalom története*) volumes span fifteen centuries of the English-language literature of the British Isles from the 6th century to our times. The sixth volume focuses on the works published in the middle third of the twentieth century and is part of a two-volume set that covers, in Hungarian, English literature up to the present day. These two volumes end the book series initiated by the late Géza Kállay in the early 2010s. Like the rest of the series, the sixth book presents chapters by multiple authors: Ágnes Balajthy, Zsolt Czigányik, István D. Rácz, Attila Dósa, Ákos Farkas, Angelika Reichmann, Péter Szaffkó and Eszter Ureczky. Tamás Bényei, who is both the chief editor of the series and the editor of volume six, is also the author of 15 chapters out of 26 in the book. Thus, resulting from the expertise of the nine literary scholars in their respective fields, a deep understanding together with unique perspectives characterise the studies. These nine viewpoints provide the type of panorama of literary works and their contexts that a single-authored analysis could not. The chapters fit the objective of the book series: to arouse curiosity about British culture as a whole by addressing questions of social changes and human relationships that affect the creation of literary works. The sixth volume covers English literature from the 1930s to the decades after the Second World War in 554 pages. A bibliography of approximately 1200 items complements this, in addition to the nearly 40 pages of indexes and a table of contents at the front of the book. The reader is further assisted by editorial boxes, not only within the sixth volume but throughout the book series. These notes both provide additional information on the content and indicate which study in which volume discusses the topic of the given paragraph in greater depth or from a different angle. Thus, they enable readers interested in a specific topic to find the relevant passages quickly and easily, without having to read the whole book, chapter by chapter. The text thus fits well within the possibilities offered by the print medium to the twenty-first-century reader who is used to the comfort of clicking on hyperlinks to gain further, more in-depth information on the subject while reading online texts.

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The chapters are arranged chronologically, with occasional shifts of focus to geographical, generic, cultural and political considerations within that framework. Halfway through the volume, the chapter on the literature of the Second World War serves as a division both in terms of the structure and the topics discussed. The first part, with flashbacks to the late 1920s, presents the literature of the 1930s, characterised on the one hand by the memory of the Great War, and on the other by the economic crisis and the premonition of a coming war. In the first, longer chapter, Bényei shows the difficulty of putting the literature of the period into a well-defined framework. He describes the effect of politics on literature, palpable in the popularisation of certain genres, such as dystopia (25), on which he elaborates in a separate sub-chapter. His section on proletarian literature demonstrates the variety of ways in which the book approaches a literary work or phenomenon, presenting it within its social and cultural context. The analysis of Robert Tressel's 1914 novel *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (28), for example, reveals not only how the content and style of the work connect to the events of its time, but also presents the process of adapting this hugely popular novel to the stage and how it influenced the British elections after the end of the Second World War (29). In addition, Bényei devotes an entire chapter to the problem of defining modernist literature in the 1930s. He draws attention to theories that saw the need to redefine the term, explains the criteria on which it was reconsidered and the consequent need to change the temporal boundaries of this movement (47–50). In Bényei's studies, the physicality of the cultural context becomes visible. We see the traveller in search of foreign landscapes. We understand what it meant to travel abroad between the two wars and why Poirot travelled so frequently to exotic countries, etc. And to give credit to the structure of the book: those who want to know even more about the phenomena of alienation and the longing for foreign lands are directed by the editorial box to Ágnes Balajthy's "Térkép nélkül: angol utazási irodalom a két világháború között" ['Map without a Map. English Travel Literature between the Two Worlds Wars']. Bényei points out that the confusion caused by the destruction of people and illusions in the First World War, causing physical and psychological wounds, became a notable feature of literature (33). He analyses Isherwood's novel *The Memorial* (1932) as one of the outstanding works portraying the period from this perspective. The introduction to the notion of collective memory and the brief analysis of how Isherwood's book presents it (34) sheds light on how diverse the individual reactions to the collective trauma of war can be. In addition, they provide a valuable contribution to those interested in the research field of collective memory developed by Maurice Halbwachs in the interwar period.

Following Bényei's analysis of the cultural and social context and the prose of the 1930s, István D. Rácz discusses the poetry of the period. He continues this

line of thought in two other chapters, focusing on the poetry of the post-1950s. In his first chapter, he explains why the poets of those uncertain years are considered the poets of the 'golden age' (74). He analyses the poetry of W. H. Auden and the poets of his circle of influence – the Auden Generation – and the works of artists who did not belong to any group, such as John Betjeman or Robert Graves. In his chapters on poetry in the post-war decades, D. Rácz writes about the establishment of institutions that popularised poetry, emphasises the significance of poetry readings and expounds on the principles of editing anthologies. A separate sub-chapter deals with Ted Hughes's poetry, including his *Birthday Letters* (1998), in which Hughes published letters written to his late first wife, the poet Sylvia Plath, as a lyrical self. The chapter also prominently features Geoffrey Hill, whose poetry explored the supernatural in the aftermath of the horrors of the Second World War. Moreover, D. Rácz looks at poets other than the mainstream, including Roy Fuller, Charles Tomlinson, and the Maverick poets. The section includes a subchapter on Thom Gunn's gay poetry, which is of pioneering importance in terms of its absence in previous Hungarian-language English literary histories. Lastly, at the end of D. Rácz's final chapter, two sub-chapters focus on the genre of the long poem: Bényei's study examines the relationship between regionalism, modernism and the long poem, while D. Rácz focuses on the problematics of the genre in the 1980s and 1990s.

Aldous Huxley is the only author whose oeuvre receives its own chapter in this volume. Ákos Farkas discusses its place in the canon and provides insight into the processes that shaped it. Farkas gives special attention to *Point-Counter Point* (1928), *Island* (1962) and *Brave New World* (1932). He covers the topic of the debates on eugenics in the 1930s (94), drawing attention to the embeddedness of literary works in culture and social phenomena. Those intrigued by the subjects of utopia and dystopia, related to the works discussed here, can gain an in-depth understanding of these genres, as noted in the editorial box, from Zsolt Czigányik's chapter. Czigányik discusses the definitions and nexus of the two genres, the relationship between possible interpretations of such works and the author's intentions, and the interaction between the genre of utopia/dystopia and political and social processes. Following the chapter on Huxley, the focus of the book shifts to a literary method. The works of the writers of the 1930s, who lived in fear of an even more devastating war than the one before, are traditionally seen in the context of politics and realist writing. However, in her chapter on the mythic method, Reichmann points out that although the 'mythic method' associated with the 1920s was not for a long time seen as a way of writing that actively addressed the issues of the time, this approach has changed in the 21st century (97). As she explains, the change is detectable in the process of the changing reception of two significant authors of the period, David Jones and John Cowper Powys (97). Reichmann discusses the two authors

in separate sections to give a flavour of their methods but first describes the cross-section of their oeuvre, the mythic method. Drawing on Michael Bell's 1997 book on the relationship between modernist literature and myth (97), Reichmann shows that mythologising writing was tied in many ways to the "sense of relativity" that emerged in interwar Britain.

One of the outstanding achievements of the book series is that it provides an opportunity to write about minority literatures in their own right. In volume six two longer chapters by Attila Dósa discuss Scottish literature. The first analyses the poetry and prose of the Scottish literary renaissance in the first half of the century, while the second chapter focuses on Scottish literature after the Second World War. Dósa juxtaposes the social situation of the central English and the minority peoples in the British Isles and the artistic possibilities resulting from their conditions. He examines the problem of defining Scottish literature in the period and investigates the similarities and differences between the Irish and the Scottish literary revivals, as well as the theatre culture of the pre-war period. In the final chapter, he discusses Highland lyric poetry after 1945, the Scottish prose of the second half of the twentieth century, and the Glasgow theatre of the 1960s and 70s. Dósa's analysis of George Mackay Brown's work, which links the enclosed world of the Scottish Islands with the world of mythology, faith and legend, gives an insight into a particular Scottish atmosphere. The chapter includes an analysis of the prose of Muriel Spark, whose books on urban life have been published in Hungarian but whose most famous novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), is best known in Hungary for its 1969 film adaptation. Dósa's chapters are a great addition to volume six, as in Hungary, it is possible to study Scottish literature only in higher education and mainly as a specialist subject. For the average reader, the difference between English and Scottish literature is often unclear, and these chapters help clarify that difference.

Still in the first half of the book, while describing the interwar period, Bényei covers the major genres and approaches to literary representation in the period in four chapters. These include regionalism and provincialism, the big house novel, as well as middlebrow literature – traditionally associated with women writers – and its domestic novels, novels of manners and novels of sensibility. He devotes a separate subsection to the Golden Age of crime fiction within the discussion of middlebrow literature. He also writes about the identification of the novel as a female genre and analyses the legacy of Jane Austen. In one of the subchapters Eszter Ureczky puts Alan Hollinghurst's novel *The Stranger's Child* (2011) under the lens, describing the characteristics of the contemporary big house novel. These chapters are followed by Bényei's analyses of drama and theatre before and after the Second World War. The description of the decline in theatre-going with the advent of radio drama and the growing number of cinemas gives a good impression of the context in which the playwrights of the era

created their works, the same way as the fact that the lack of state subsidy fostered the founding of commercial rather than experimental theatres and turned theatres with small audiences into spaces for experimentation (243). Bényei uses the concepts of highbrow and middlebrow, discussed earlier in the context of prose literature, to show how targeting middlebrow prose readers shaped theatrical repertoires.

That narrative is continued in the second half of the volume, with a discussion of the British theatre of the post-war years by Péter Szaffkó. He discards theories connecting the twentieth-century renewal of British theatre with a single play, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, to put the phenomenon into a broader context. Among the reasons, he lists the impact of the Second World War and foreign plays as well as visiting actors (367, 369). He describes the work of the English Stage Company, which stimulated the revival of drama and theatre by providing playwrights with an opportunity to rehearse their plays before their completion with professional actors (372). The chapter also describes the Theatre Workshop, which brought a fresh approach to theatrical life by regarding the text as secondary to the collaboration between actor and director, and discusses the process of the creation and the importance of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, two of the most prominent institutions of English drama today.

To return to the section on the interwar period, its penultimate chapter, Bényei's study on colonialism and literature after Kipling shows how the growing anti-colonialism between the two World Wars affected the canon and led to the marginalisation of colonial-themed works, except for those by authors with established reputations (263). It analyses the role of Kipling's initially misinterpreted oeuvre in this context. By looking at the colonial themes and the reception of works by writers known to Hungarian readers (Kipling, Forster, Orwell) and some they are less familiar with (e.g. M. R. Godden), readers can gain a more nuanced picture of English attitudes to the British Empire and their impact on the reception of said writers. The sub-chapters on the indigenous perspectives in literary texts, their problematics and the satirical tradition of the subject provide intriguing approaches. Keeping the focus on foreign lands, after a subchapter on colonialism, Balajthy's chapter explores why travel was one of the definitive phenomena of the interwar period, what kind of literary texts it produced, and who the authors and readers of travel literature were. How do works of travel literature rank with contemporaneous writings? Balajthy speaks of the heroic glorification of the English explorers who had travelled the world (275) and the gradual transformation of travel literature from a narrative travelogue into the representation of the intimate experience of an inner journey (276). The chapter is a striking feature of the book since it vividly portrays certain social phenomena that have shaped attitudes towards and interpretations of travel and its literature. It describes the sense of alienation that

the physical, economic and spiritual devastation of the First World War created and shows that the act of travelling was a concrete result of that vacuum (276). To show how everyday phenomena can shape the creative process, the chapter explains the reasons why Robert Byron recorded in words and text what he saw during his travels in the Middle East: due to the ban on visual documentation (278).

The chapter on the literature of the Second World War, almost 50 pages long and located halfway through the book, already indicates the role of this historical watershed in literature: an intellectual demarcation line. In the first sub-chapter, Bényei draws attention to how the reception of Second World War literature has changed in recent years. For a time, Malcolm Bradbury's observations were generally accepted, which claimed that while the First World War had led to previously unknown literary realisations, the Second had a throwback effect on creative processes (287). This view has recently changed into an understanding that the literature of the Second World War had its unique, rich taste, influencing generations of writers to come. The chapter analyses this effect on the creation and reception of poetry and the rise of film (289). Bényei gives a long list of writers and poets who served in front-line service or worked in the war administration and speaks of their experience as authors as something characterised by the inadequacy of language to express their experiences. The chapter highlights the contemplative attitude of the period and the emergence of surreal images in the wake of the bombings. It comments on the metaphor of spectrality and the communication difficulties between civilians and demobilised soldiers. This exploration of themes and motifs in the context of social processes is a major contribution to understanding the literature of the period.

After the analysis of wartime literature, the third section of the book focuses on the changing contexts, renewed genres and institutions of post-war English literature up to roughly the last decades of the twentieth century. Bényei discusses the complexities of the notion of Britishness in the changed political and social contexts of the post-war period and the nostalgia that this engendered. The chapter also reflects on the differences between the memories of the war of the British and other "victorious" continental European citizens in literary works. A separate sub-section analyses the impact of the Cold War on literature and as part of that impact, the rise of the spy novel genre. Bényei describes the role of the BBC and other artistic groups in the move towards a more democratised culture that was emerging in the 1950s. Analysing the possibilities inherent in working-class literature, his chapter sheds light on the frailty of the working-class author's voice once his works are published. He also presents various contemporary voices on the legitimacy of workers' literature and the impact of the educational reform on the reading public.

Bényei also discusses the development of the novel genre after 1945 in several sub-chapters. He introduces the post-war period by reflecting on the crisis of liberal

humanism and the consequences this had on the themes, structure and language of the novel (478–80). He writes about the campus novel and its gradual shift from the pastoral tradition to comedy and satire, and explores the works of the late representatives of modernism in the 1960s. While examining the presence of parables and allegory in the works of William Golding and Iris Murdoch, the chapter also looks at the experimentalism of Doris Lessing's prose. The chapters maintain a cultural studies approach to literary works to gain a fuller picture of the period and a deeper understanding of the already canonised works. In the book's penultimate chapter, Ákos Farkas examines the English Catholic novel with its social and cultural background. He discusses the controversies associated with Catholic prose in Protestant England and analyses the oeuvre of four significant Catholic authors. These are G. K. Chesterton, who conveyed a sense of Christian values through his detective stories; Graham Green (532), who was sensitive to the fallen and the needy; Evelyn Waugh (532), who was attracted to the ritualistic acts of religion, and David Lodge, who drew on Green's rich intellectual legacy.

For readers interested not only in the literature but also in the culture of the period, *Az angol irodalom története* is both an informative and an intriguing reading. Like other volumes of the book series, volume six uses scholarly language to provide accurate information for professional readers and at the same time remains comprehensible and enjoyable for non-specialists. In addition to discussing literary works in their social context, the book also draws attention to the everyday features and symbolic objects of the roughly three decades it covers. This approach allows the reader to discover connections such as the relevance of the recurring motif of the chrome coating in the texts of the 1930s (32) in Bényei's chapter on proletarian literature or the role the Boots circulating libraries in the early 1900s played in the growth of middlebrow reading audiences (189). It shows how education and its institutions increasingly became the arena for canonical modernist works and offers such novelties as Rose Macaulay's text, which was published as an unabridged work in English only in 2019 for the first time and was therefore unknown in its full length even in its home country. Like the earlier parts of the series, this volume offers a wide range of approaches and knowledge for both Anglicists and lay readers to widen their horizons through gripping analyses of the English language literature of the mid-twentieth century.

History of English Literature: The Final Piece

Az angol irodalom története. 7. kötet. 1930-tól napjainkig. Második rész. ['History of English Literature. Vol. 7. From 1930 to the Present. Part 2']. Edited by Tamás Bényei. Co-edited by István D. Rácz and Judit Friedrich. Editors in chief: Tamás Bényei and Géza Kállay. Budapest: Kijárat, 2023. Pp. 751. ISBN 978-615-5160-95-0.

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The current, seventh volume with its more than seven hundred pages is a grandiose finale of the herculean project that is titled *Az angol irodalom története* ['History of English Literature'], and took more than ten years, fourteen editors and sixty-nine authors to be concluded. The aim of the series is to fill a hiatus in the study of English literature in Hungary (and in Hungarian) given that the last comprehensive history of English literature was published in 1972 (*Az angol irodalom története* ['The History of English Literature'] by Miklós Szenczi, Tibor Szobotka and Anna Katona [Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest]). After the untimely death of Géza Kállay, who was originally the father of this venture, Tamás Bényei from the University of Debrecen took over as leader and editor in chief, and he is also the editor of the seventh volume. In the Foreword of the volume the reader is asked to treat the sixth and the seventh volumes as one piece, given that both focus on English literature from the 1930s until the present – meaning that the authors dedicated 1380 pages to this diverse and tumultuous period. Nevertheless, this review concentrates solely on the seventh volume.

Bényei's voice dominates the volume, since he wrote eighteen chapters out of the thirty-seven by himself, and co-authored five more. Alongside him, several renowned academics added their own expertise to the title: Iván Nyusztai on absurd drama (44–61), István D. Rácz on poetry (24–26, 146–57, 240–46, 468–74), Attila Dósa on contemporary Scottish literature (311–49), Angelika Reichmann on Welsh literature in English (350–62), Marianna Gula on Northern Irish literature (363–80), Andrea Kirchknopf on Neo-Victorian fiction (427–39), Péter Dolmányos on Northern Irish poetry (381–90), Vera Benczik and Károly Pintér on science fiction (615–24) and Eszter Szép on comic books (642–53), among others. The volume altogether incorporates the writings of fifteen authors, yet, in terms of style manages to be coherent. As stated in the blurb of the volume, it aims to be attractive for the average reader while maintaining academic quality: Bényei does that eloquently, although some chapters (like Attila Dósa's "A közelmúlt skót irodalma" ['Scottish

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Literature of the Recent Past'], 311–49) are slightly more academic in style– and might not be an easy read for the average reader – while others (such as Eszter Szép's "A *Punch* magazintól a képregénykönyvig. A brit képregények egyik története" ['From *Punch* Magazine to the Graphic Novel. A History of British Comics'], 642–53) are a little more informal and may be more accessible for non-academics, as well.

If the reader opens the book and takes a look at the table of contents, they find that the structure of the volume is built on temporal, thematic, spatial and genre-focused blocks, but not necessarily in a linear fashion. The temporally based chapters treat the 1960s – in certain cases together with the seventies –, the 1980s or the Thatcher era and the 20th century as temporal units (see for instance Bényei's "A hatvanas évek: Swinging Sixties, Swinging London" ['The 1960s: Swinging Sixties, Swinging London'] 13–26, "Thatcherizmus és irodalom" ['Thatcherism and Literature'] 158–73, or "A kortárs irodalom változatai" ['Variations of Contemporary Literature'] 596–614). Spatially – and culturally – the volume emphasises on various occasions that its main focus is English literature (although it is debated within the texts what English literature actually means), yet the literatures of the Celtic nations are also dedicated their own separate chapters in the middle of the volume (Dósa, "A közelmúlt skót irodalma" ['Scottish Literature of the Recent Past'] 311–49, Reichmann, "Angol nyelvű walesi irodalom" ['Welsh Literature in English'] 350–62, Gula, "Az észak-ír helyzet az irodalom tükrében" ['Literary Reflections on the Northern Irish Situation'] 363–80 and Dolmányos, "Észak-ír költészet 1950 után" ['Northern Irish Poetry after 1950'] 381–90). These chapters – although their authors strive for as much detail as possible in providing a socio-cultural, historical and institutional background on their respective literatures and analyses of major works as well – given their constraints of space and length naturally cannot reach the depths that is achieved in other, more narrowly focused chapters of the volume. The most emphatic themes present in the volume – on occasion in multiple chapters – are for instance the question of the local and global (see Bényei 85–98, 561–95), the postcolonial experience and diaspora literatures (see Bényei 99–111, 492–539, Bényei and Séllei 475–91), gender and class issues such as the relationship of feminism and literature (see Bényei 247–84), the situation of female authors (see Bényei 112–27, D. Rácz 285–94), or the literature of the working classes (see Bényei 295–310). Regarding genres, among others the historical novel (see Bényei: 391–426), science-fiction (see Benczik and Pintér 615–24) and fantasy (see Benczik and Bényei 625–41) are addressed in separate sections – with the Harry Potter series having its very own chapter by Ildikó Limpár (654–56).

However, acknowledging the volume's own complex and not entirely linear structure, Bényei states in the Foreword: "we expect non-linear readers, who turn to these volumes to look up something, and then find their way through the text based

on the table of contents, cross-references and indeces" (12, my translation). Although I started out as a linear reader, during the second chapter (Bényei, "A kísérleti regény" ['The Experimental Novel'] 27–43) I decided to take the advice of the Foreword and follow the cross-references pointing to different chapters of this volume. With that method, from the experimental novels – J. G. Ballard, in particular – I found myself reading the chapters on science fiction and fantasy (615–24, 625–41). These chapters took me back to Bényei's "A lokális visszatérése" ['Return of the Local'] (85–98), in which he focuses on local and global perspectives and dissects the concepts of anti-pastoral, post-pastoral and magical realism. Following Bényei's cross references, I arrived at Scottish literature (311–49) and English Holocaust literature (440–63). My next steps through the volume traced out some very close connections between different chapters that do not construct a block or follow each other in the table of contents, yet, had the volume been edited differently, they might have been grouped together: the chapter on feminism and post-feminism (247–84) lead to the analysis of post-colonial rewritings (475–91), diaspora and multicultural literature (492–539), rewritings of 'female genres' (112–27) and the neo-Victorian novel (427–39).

It is fair to say that no matter where the reader starts the volume, the book is able to be read through in various orders and possibly innumerable permutations through the detailed cross-references. Furthermore, if the reader is lucky – or enthusiastic – enough to be in possession of all seven volumes, the same journey is feasible throughout the whole history of English literature, leading to unexpected yet revelatory connections between seemingly vastly different or distant authors, texts, themes or centuries. Therefore, the authors and editors created not one completed, sealed or exclusive history of English literature, but a series of books that provide the reader with many histories of English literature.

Not only volume seven, but the whole *Az angol irodalom története* will be an indispensable aid for students of English Departments in Hungary, as it provides an overview of the entirety of English literature with socio-cultural, historical, institutional backgrounds; it offers more in-depth analyses of certain seminal texts, thematic outlines of others and supplies the reader with enough books to read for a lifetime. The sheer number of texts – primary and secondary source materials – referenced in volume seven alone produces a forty-page-long Bibliography, which in itself provides an excellent starting point for more experienced researchers, as well. The seventh volume – along with the previous ones – is available for purchase at Kijárat Kiadó.

The Red Book of Central European Tolkien Studies

J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe: Context, Directions, and the Legacy. Edited by Janka Kascakova and David Levente Palatinus. New York and London: Routledge, 2024. Pp. ix + 188. ISBN 9781032525587 (pbk), ISBN 9781003407171 (ebk).

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The Routledge Studies in Speculative Fiction presents a systematic survey of the history of Tolkien Studies in Central Europe in the same way as Bilbo's manuscript of the journey "There and Back Again" and "The Tale of the Great Ring" compiled by Frodo were handed over to Samwise Gamgee at Grey Havens. However, *J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe*: *Context, Directions, and the Legacy* edited by Janka Kaščáková and Dávid Levente Palatinus goes further than the found manuscript of the Red Book that serves as a fictional basis for *The Lord of the Rings*. The nine chapters of the volume written by Hungarian and Slovakian scholars is a "necessary and long overdue contribution" (3) to Tolkien studies and the broad scholarly evaluation of the fantasy genre. The three parts of the book give a profound insight into how the Hungarian, Slovakian, and Czech translations and their reception evolved during the last decades of the twentieth century. In addition, the volume also demonstrates the ways in which Tolkien studies can evolve both in Central Europe and in the wider context of the contemporary twenty-first-century assessment of Tolkien as a cornerstone of the fantasy genre. Although Poland would belong to the Central-Eastern European region, it has been apparently left out from the scope of study, because of its own "burgeoning fantasy tradition" (3). However, the volume is a precious and worthy contribution to the reception of Tolkien's heritage in Central-Eastern Europe, as it reveals how Tolkien has been assessed in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The collection aptly recognises that Tolkien studies are "lagging behind" (2) in Central-Eastern Europe and offers a significant contribution to the understanding of the evaluation of Tolkien's works in the past few decades. The volume highlights that after the film versions of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* came out, Tolkien's effect on the Central European fantasy scene gained momentum. Moreover, Tolkien's "popularity and centrality in the cultural domain since the 1930s have been frequently attributed to its ability to channel, among other things, cultural perceptions and imaginaries of transgression, sublimity, instances of escapism and otherness, as well as the intricate relation between politics and power" (3). Thus, the

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volume sets out to combine cultural, literary and media studies to show how Tolkien's work became increasingly incorporated into the critical thinking of communist and post-communist Central Europe and how literary scholarship of the popular genres reflects the Anglophone cultural influence in the area. Most importantly, the volume tries to find the answer for several vexing problems. The first question concerns the reception of Tolkien's works as well as the "political, economic, and cultural anxieties in Central Europe" (4), while the second question is directed at the legitimacy of an independent conceptualisation of fantasy in the historical setting of Central Europe. The third question the volume attempts to answer is derived from the former two, as the articles explicitly try to find out what the history of Tolkien's reception reveals about the negotiation of Eastern European and global cultural values. The volume also poses the complex question of "how fantasy's worldbuilding helps circulate ideas about racial, political, and geographic otherness, femininity and masculinity, domination and equity, practices of exclusion, and, finally, mythological conceptions of good vs. evil, from communist times through to today's media-saturated culture" (4). The studies of the book seek answers to these questions and provide a plethora of possible approaches to fill in the relatively empty space of critical thinking connected to Tolkien studies and fantasy in general.

The reconceptualisation of fantasy and Tolkien's heritage brings along a confluence of perspectives. Based on the underrepresented nature of Central European fantasy writing and the scarcity of research related to Tolkien's works, the volume combines several different approaches. First, it tries to bridge the demarcation line between local and global to depoliticise the historically charged field of reception by considering the most recent phenomena of transnational fandom. Second, by considering the lessons learned from cultural theory, literary scholarship, and media studies, the book attempts to explore the fundamental processes behind the special Eastern European cultural and political givens. Third, it necessarily draws attention to a well-established and insightful Eastern European take on the Tolkien subject and thus brings fandom and the critical approach closer to each other. To reach this goal, the volume is divided into three parts. The first deals with the translations of Tolkien's texts and their reception in Hungary. The second section focuses on the same issue in the Czech and Slovakian context. The third part investigates the possibilities of how the evaluation and interpretation of contemporary Tolkien studies can develop in the context of young adult fiction and transmediality.

Part One, titled "Reception and Translations of Tolkien in Hungary," is dedicated to the Hungarian aspect. Both chapters of the first part are written by Gergely Nagy, one of the leading and most prominent Tolkien scholars from Hungary. In the first chapter, Nagy gives a rigorous and meticulous survey of the translations of Tolkien's work and their critical reception from the early 1970s to the turn of the

century. The chapter offers the minutely detailed publication history of Tolkien's works and their place in the literary and socio-cultural context. The second chapter is devoted to the same aspects in the 21st century and it provides an equally thorough historical assessment of all the possible aspects of Tolkien studies in the Hungarian setting in the aftermath of Peter Jackson's films. The literary, historical and cultural context of the new translations of Tolkien's earlier works and the revision of the older translations are carefully inspected, including the founding of the Hungarian Tolkien Society and the role of a new generation of Tolkien scholars whose work opened up novel vistas of study.

Part Two is entitled "Reception and Translations of Tolkien in Czechoslovakia and Its Succeeding Countries," and its four chapters survey the history of the translations and their after-effect in present-day Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The first chapter "Mythologia Non Grata: Tolkien and Socialist Czechoslovakia" by Janka Kaščáková investigates the history of the Slovakian and Czech translations and their reception in the last two decades of Soviet influence in Czechoslovakia. The detailed description of the censorship and the hostile politico-cultural context in which the translations found their way to the publishers, and finally to the public, evokes the times when reading Tolkien counted as an illegal underground activity. The systematic study reveals how the mere fact of reading Tolkien's works meant belonging to dissident circles and presents a sad memento of the times when reading certain works and entire genres was thwarted by the authorities. Tereza Dědinová's contribution to the volume bears the title "'Through darkness you have come to your hope': The Dynamics of J.R.R. Tolkien's Work Reception in the Czech Context" concentrates on how the independent Czech Republic from the 1990s on provided a new scene for the publishing of Tolkien's works and how the reception changed due to free speech and the unrestricted circulation of formerly forbidden literary works. The article also surveys the most paradigmatic Czech scholarly works on Tolkien and merges the historical insights with the evaluation of a slightly detached electronic survey conducted among contemporary young readers, which finds that Tolkien's "texts retain their autonomy over time and remain relevant to today's young readers" (90). Jozefa Pevčíková and Eva Urbanová's article "J.R.R. Tolkien in the Slovak Press Situation After 1990," translated by Jela Kehoe, constitutes the fifth chapter of the volume. The authors give the history of the three waves in which Tolkien's works were published in Slovakian and, focusing primarily on scholarly literary periodicals, daily magazines, fanzines and other popular forms of media, they cite several translation inaccuracies to indicate the main points of criticism the translations received by various constituents of the Slovak academic and popular scene. The last chapter of Part Two concludes the historical contextualisation of Tolkien's works published in Slovak and Czech. In "Unknotting the Translation

Knots in *The Hobbit*: A Diachronic Analysis of Slovak Translations from 1973 and 2002," Jela Kehoe compares the two existing Slovak translations of the novel. Kehoe focuses on the different translations from the vantage point of the emblematic terms and names in *The Hobbit* and investigates those instances which required a surplus amount of creativity from the two translators, but the chapter also enumerates cases in which one or both translations failed from a stylistic or semantic point of view.

After the historical aspects of the first two sections of the book, Part Three offers an insight into the new contemporary approaches to Tolkien studies in the region. Martina Vránová in the seventh chapter titled "Growing Up in Fantasy: Inspecting the Convergences of Young Adult Literature and Fantastic Fiction" offers a merging of Tolkien's heritage and young adult fiction, resulting in young adult fantasy. The study concentrates on recurring themes that are present both in Tolkien's works and young adult literature, such as identity formation, the role of the quest, and rites of passage. The chapter concludes that the substantial marketing success of young adult fantasy is based on the transposition of the disappearing phenomenon of the ritual into this new subgenre of fantasy. The penultimate chapter of the book is written by Nikolett Sipos and bears the title "One Does Not Simply Teach Fantasy: How Students of English and American Studies in Hungary View the Genre and Tolkien's Legacy." The study looks into how Hungarian university students enrolled in English and American studies programmes evaluate the fantasy genre and Tolkien's works in general. The article is centred around a survey conducted at two Hungarian universities, and its findings underline the importance of the applied merits of fantasy in the teaching process. The last chapter of the volume is written by Dávid Levente Palatinus. The article, titled "From Niche to Mainstream? Screen Culture's Impact on Contemporary Perceptions of Fantasy," highlights one of the possible futures of Tolkien studies and the genre of fantasy as it investigates the effects of streaming platforms on fantasy. The study examines the technological, commercial, budgetary, entertainment, aesthetic, and generic aspects of the proliferation of fantasy both as a form and mode in screen culture and finds that the medium of the streaming platform changes fantasy into a "multifaceted, mainstream narrative and cultural mode" (173).

Like the *Red Book of Westmarch*, which serves as the fictitious basis for Tolkien's probably two most important works, *J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe* is a groundbreaking work that puts the Hungarian, Slovak and Czech merits of Tolkien scholarship on the map of international fantasy studies. The volume conforms to the extensive renewing, hybridising and worldbuilding attributes of the fantasy genre, aptly demonstrating that the reception of Tolkien in the Eastern-European region is a worthy contribution to an already established international field of scholarly and popular interest.

Eating after the Apocalypse: Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Foodscapes

Food in Margaret Atwood's Speculative Fiction. By Katarína Labudová. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. Pp.146. ISBN 978-3-031-19167-1.

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What will food be like after the apocalypse? Will the few remaining humans roam a foodless wasteland until they finally collapse from hunger? Will they be reduced to diets of unpalatable, industrially produced food substitutes? Will they turn to cannibalism to survive? Or will a select few enjoy lavish Michelin-starred dinners in gated compounds while the rest perish beyond the gates? Food is one of the very few things essential to human survival, and consequently, issues surrounding food and eating feature prominently in our imaginings of the apocalypse. This is certainly true in Margaret Atwood's fiction, as Katarína Labudová skillfully demonstrates in her latest book titled *Food in Margaret Atwood's Speculative Fiction*. Atwood has shown a keen interest in food and consumption already in her literary debut, *The Edible Woman,* published in 1969. This novel centers around a protagonist who develops an eating disorder because of feeling suffocated by the social expectations and rigid gender roles forced upon her after her engagement. Although not a dystopian or apocalyptic novel, *The Edible Woman* already foreshadowed many of the food-related concerns that became prominent in Atwood's later apocalyptic writing. These include such issues as meat eating and cannibalism, the gendered nature of food and diet, or the interconnection between the consumption of food and consumption in general in corporatised, post-industrial societies.

It is precisely these concerns that Labudová brings to the forefront in *Food in Margaret Atwood's Speculative Fiction*. Labudová is an expert on Atwood's work, and she has published extensively on the topic. In addition, she is one of the few scholars in eastern Europe who critically engage with food in literary fiction. These two interests merge in her new monograph and provide fertile ground for an innovative and insightful discussion of Atwood's literary oeuvre. The monograph is based upon the premise that "food is one of the crucial thematic elements that readers can trace through the palimpsest of intertextual layers and hybridity in Margaret Atwood's speculative fiction" (2). Labudová notes that food is particularly significant in these novels because they depict worlds "where the characters' hunger, limited food choices and culinary creativity and eating rituals are embedded in the hostile environments of oppressive regimes, post-nuclear catastrophe, pandemics,

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and prisons" (ibid.). These observations serve as a starting point for an exploration of the various roles that food and drink have played in Atwood's speculative novels throughout her writing career.

Labudová's monograph is divided into seven parts: an introduction, five chapters containing analyses of Atwood's speculative novels, and a conclusion. Each of the chapters which form the main body of the monograph focuses on a different novel: the second chapter is devoted to *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testaments*; chapters three through five discuss the three parts of the MaddAddam trilogy, namely *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, and *MaddAddam*; and finally, in chapter six, Labudová turns her attention to *The Heart Goes Last*. Although the individual chapters form part of a single book, they can equally be read as stand-alone essays. Not only does each focus on a different novel, but each also introduces different food-related concepts and themes, ranging from the gendered nature of various foodstuffs in chapter two, through real versus ersatz foods in chapter three, to hunger and food rituals in chapter five, and feasting and alcohol drinking in chapter six. The individual analyses are always grounded in a sound theoretical background and are well supported by a close reading of the respective novels. A reading of the monograph as a collection of separate essays is also suggested by the layout of the book, as each chapter begins with an abstract and a list of key words and ends with a separate bibliography section.

Out of the many thought-provoking discussions in the book, the two that stand out most are the analysis of the relationship between food and sex in *The Year of the Flood* conducted in chapter four, and the discussion of the role that food plays in creating the grotesque mood in *The Heart Goes Last*, which is part of chapter six. In chapter four, Labudová highlights the interconnections between food and sex as the two elements necessary for the survival of any species. Since human survival is the central topic of Atwood's apocalyptic fiction, it is only natural that she should dwell on both, the alimentary and the sexual. Drawing on theoretical concepts put forth by Elsepeth Probyn and Deborah Lupton, Labudová demonstrates how food and sex have both "gone bad" (82) in the post-apocalyptic world of the MaddAddam trilogy, in which "[m]ost of the practices of sexual intercourse are depicted as unfulfilling and the food is inedible" (85). In chapter six, Labudová uses Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque to show how Atwood employs the motif of feasting to blend dystopia with farce in *The Heart Goes Last*. Food imagery enables her to create a carnivalesque atmosphere in which characters and readers alike are provided at least temporary relief from the perpetual gloom of a dystopian world ruled by ruthless corporate greed.

In analyses such as the two mentioned above, Labudová deftly employs theoretical ideas developed by various food studies and literary scholars, ranging from Michel

Foucault and Julia Kristeva to Fabio Parasecoli and Warren Belasco, in order to uncover the layers of meaning associated with food in Atwood's novels, and also to demonstrate how Atwood used food imagery as a strategic tool in constructing her dystopian and post-apocalyptic worlds. Such individual analyses are the book's strongest point. However, Labudová aims for the volume to offer a comprehensive analysis, which, paradoxically, proves to be its main drawback. Labudová's attempt to provide an exhaustive discussion of all culinary aspects of the novels under study results in a monograph that has an encyclopedic feel. While the book provides a plethora of inspiring, thought-provoking discussions, it lacks a central argument. As a result, Labudová's conclusion is rather weak despite the many insightful analyses conducted throughout the book. In the final paragraph, Labudová introduces the concept of domestication, claiming that food "domesticates the unfamiliar, alien environment of [Atwood's] speculative fictions" (133), however, such a conclusion might come as a surprise to readers, since domestication was not something that featured prominently in any of the analyses presented up to that point.

Despite these reservations, *Food in Margaret Atwood's Speculative Fiction* is undoubtedly a book worth reading. It represents not only a very interesting contribution to Margaret Atwood scholarship, but also a valuable addition to the burgeoning field of the critical study of food in literature. While all literature can be studied through the lens of food, apocalyptic fiction such as Atwood's lends itself particularly well to a food-based reading, as it deals with the issue of survival and is populated by characters stripped down to a primal form of existence, in which hunger and eating loom large. Labudová's volume does a great job of tracing these concerns throughout Atwood's oeuvre, and as such it is sure to become a valuable resource for anyone studying Atwood's writing, the (post-)apocalyptic genre, or food in literature in general.

The Digital Study of Literature: Old Paradox or New Paradigm?

The Digital Humanities and Literary Studies. By Martin Paul Eve. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 208. ISBN 978-0-19-885048-9.

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For university students interested in digital humanities, the works of Ted Underwood, such as *Distant Horizons* (2019), can be a great starting point to discover what digital humanities can provide to researchers. However, to understand the diversity of digital humanities scholarship, one can turn to Martin Paul Eve's *The Digital Humanities and Literary Studies* for further insights. The book adeptly illustrates how technology converges with traditional humanistic studies to reshape our understanding of human culture, literature, and history in a style that appeals to readers of varying backgrounds.

In the introductory chapter, Eve delves into the many concerns regarding the potential for digital humanities to bring about a shift back to an apolitical and formalist approach in the academic fields it intersects with, particularly literary studies. Scholars worry that the emphasis on computational analysis and quantitative methods, as embraced in some forms of digital humanities, might overlook or neglect critical aspects such as the social contexts, cultural diversity, and power dynamics prevalent in literary works. However, Eve argues that digital methods, instead of taking away the joy of reading, in fact, "bring us closer to literary texts" (4). He also gives an overview of previous scholarly discourse on the intersection between ethics and digital humanities, from Benjamin Ruha and Charlton D. McIlwain to Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein. The introduction also sets the tone for the subsequent chapters, outlining the book's structure: it plans to explore the contributions and potential of digital literary studies.

The book opens with a meticulous exploration of the shifting role of authors and writing in the digital age in the chapter "Authors and Writing." From delving into Gertrude Stein's stylistic innovations in *The Making of Americans* to questioning the ethical implications of computer-generated texts, Eve offers thought-provoking analyses of how technology intertwines with traditional writing practices. Moreover, he introduces the concept of "digital abundance" and explains how it relates to the vast amount of textual data available for analysis. However, he argues that the abundance of the digital realm relies on the labour of creating and maintaining electronic infrastructure, which is often overlooked. The second chapter, "Space and Visualization"

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focuses on the importance of multi-dimensional feature-sets visualisation in digital humanities studies. Here, Eve highlights the emerging concept of computational colonialism. Within font designs and NFO files, this concept manifests through an oversight of the historical and cultural importance of non-English glyphs. NFO files, utilised for sharing information about pirated software, notably overlook the original textual forms of non-Latin characters such as those from Czech or Portuguese, representing them simplistically in ASCII art. This practice tends to favour the English language and Latin characters, inadvertently neglecting linguistic diversity within computing and digital expression. Eve emphasises that the use of these glyphs, while lacking explicit awareness of their colonial connotations, might inadvertently carry historical implications associated with cultures impacted by colonialism. This oversight exemplifies a facet of computational colonialism, where the historical context of these characters in digital representations is often disregarded.

Eve goes into the specifics of visualisation in the third chapter, "Maps and Place." One of the most intriguing discussions in the book takes place in this chapter, when Eve analyses *I'm Jack* (2015), a novel by Mark Blacklock in which what is said and how it is communicated matter more than the content itself. The linguistic style of the novel (the use of the Wearside accent of Sunderland) serves to create a sense of time and place within the narrative, while the spatial and temporal metadata of the hoax letters and their impact on the investigation emphasises the importance of location and timing in the story. Eve ends the chapter with a thought-provoking inquiry about the purpose of digital maps and their relationship between literary representation and the reality it represents. As he sums up, "digital mapping approaches demonstrate to us the problems in transposing literary texts, which use their space as narrative structuration devices, onto maps that purport to represent an extra-textual reality" (128).

The fourth chapter, "Distance and History," explores the ways computational analysis contributes to understanding literary history and challenges established literary critical narratives. It introduces the work of Andrew Piper, who employs computational methods to examine punctuation in poetry, exploring patterns and trends but also highlighting the limitations in understanding the deeper meanings and nuances. Piper's approach showcases a symbiosis between computational findings and the need for close, human-centred reading to grasp the complexities. Furthermore, Eve offers new perspectives on genre conventions, textual analysis, and gender representation in fiction. He emphasises the intersection of digital approaches with political and social issues, such as gender, race, class, and more, revealing the implications and limitations of applying computational methodologies to literary studies.

Finally, the concluding chapter emphasises that digital literary studies is not a recent field, but one that has been around for years. Addressing the challenges of the area underscores the difficulty in verifying or disproving computational analyses and questions about causal reproducibility in computational processes. Despite these challenges, Eve advocates for the invaluable contribution of digital methods in offering fresh perspectives and a deeper understanding of literary texts. In this chapter, he emphasises the harmony between traditional close reading and newer distant reading approaches. He also highlights that the digital paradigm challenges established literary periodisation and provides a new scale for considering literary history. Furthermore, he notes the balance needed between descriptive methods and interpretation to ground literary analyses.

Martin Paul Eve's *The Digital Humanities and Literary Studies* is a thought-provoking inquiry into the interdisciplinary realm of digital humanities and its integration with literary analysis. Eve's arguments regarding the shift in the role of authors and writing in the digital age are well-supported and compelling. One of the most unique aspects of the book is its accessibility; it caters to both students and experts in the field. The various original and third-party case studies also complement its accessibility; and Eve's portrayal of how colonialism, font design, and the use of non-English glyphs in digital contexts reflect an overlooked history is particularly insightful. The inclusion of the ethical implications of computer-generated texts further enhances its value and makes it more significant in an age where AI seems to be taking over the writing landscape. Yet, Eve leaves readers with an optimistic outlook, signifying that digital methods pave the way for a renewed appreciation and deeper understanding of literary texts.

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