Faces of Cosmopolitanism

Approaches and Case Studies

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DOI: 10.53720/NOEM8864

With the rise of mass migration following the collapse of historical empires, cosmopolitanism has become one of the most widely discussed issues in the humanities and social sciences. To what extent do cosmopolitan attitudes foster transcultural communication and openness? To what extent do they rely on Western-centric norms and role models? Perhaps these are the two most important questions critics dealing with cosmopolitanism explore. In everyday speech, the term designates an open-minded, metropolitan attitude, which is understood as the opposite of parochialism. In critical discourse, however, unresolved contradictions and the abundance of new terms, such as "vernacular cosmopolitanism" (Bhabha) and "partial cosmopolitanism" (Appiah), make it more challenging to provide a straightforward answer to the above questions. This thematic cluster, which has grown out of a workshop organised by the "Cosmopolitan Ethics and the Modern City" research group at Károli Gáspár University, offers both an introduction to the central critical debates in the field and three case studies that explore the significance of cosmopolitanism in late-twentieth-century and contemporary literary works.

Cosmopolitanism: Origins and Core Concepts

The phrase "citizen of the world" originates in classical antiquity. According to Robert Spencer, it is this historical meaning that roughly corresponds to how the term "cosmopolitan" is used today: "In its colloquial usage cosmopolitanism still means roughly what it meant to the Cynics of the fourth century BC and later to the Stoics, to Christian intellectuals such as Saint Paul and to Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire and Kant: devotion to humanity and detachment from local bonds" (2). Unconditional acceptance and an empathic awareness, associated with cosmopolitanism since antiquity, are at the heart of this quasi-utopian discourse. Nevertheless, novels that portray the contemporary world often demonstrate the limits of the cosmopolitan ideal: Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) has been read as a paradigmatic example of these constraints (Vermeuleen 42; Mózes 60; Barta 225), along with Rushdie's latest writings (Ball 315; Györke, "Rushdie" 190). In the thematic cluster that follows, Edit Gálla's article examines how Bret Easton Ellis's *The Informers* (1994) depicts the failure of the cosmopolitan ethos due to the consumerism that eradicates meaningful life choices. Although the term "citizen of the world" may have roughly the same meaning across different historical and geographical contexts, the contributions in this section show that it is precisely the diverse and continuously transforming nature of the cosmopolitan disposition that advances the conceptual development of this discourse.

Spencer's summary also demonstrates that iconic thinkers have shaped the theoretical perspective of cosmopolitanism throughout its history. According to tradition, Diogenes the Cynic was the first to claim that he was a "citizen of the world" around 400 BC (Taraborelli x; Stanley 145). Since the Enlightenment, Kant's "Perpetual Peace" (1795) has been a key reference. Kant's vision of a "league" of peace that "would seek to end all wars for good" and his idea of "universal hospitality" (Kant 104–108) have become the basis of modern cosmopolitan thought. Postcolonial and feminist scholars, nevertheless, have called attention to the limits of the Kantian vision by arguing that this discourse universalises an experience available only to a select few (Hall 27–31; Bhabha, *Location* xiv; Vieten 3). The new approaches to cosmopolitanism discussed below originate from this critique.

Upon closer examination of the term's origin, however, it becomes clear that the concept was less elitist than it is often assumed to be. For instance, the notion of being on the periphery has played a significant role in shaping cosmopolitan thought from the very beginning. Diogenes of Sinope was a Greek philosopher who became a legend, yet according to the few remaining sources on his life, he occupied a somewhat peripheral place in Greek society. Apocryphal stories have it that Diogenes was exiled from Sinope, his native city, and even sold into slavery: Menippus of Gadra, the Cynic satirist, "wrote a work on his capture by pirates and sale as a slave to Xeniades in Corinth" (Bosman 2117). His offensive nickname dog "proved fitting to his rejection of societal norms and propriety for a life strictly 'according to nature'" (Bosman 2117). The concept of self-sufficiency, at the heart of Diogenes' cosmopolitanism, involves rejecting luxury, practising asceticism, and discarding social conventions and norms. In this sense, the Diogenian concept of world citizenship is the antithesis of contemporary global cosmopolitanism, which is often associated with mobility, affluence, and consumerism.

In line with Spencer's approach, most accounts distinguish three main historical phases of the cosmopolitan worldview. First, the classical Greek and Roman period, marked by the Cynic and Stoic philosophers, is notable for the *Republic* of Diogenes, the *Republic* of Zeno the Cypriot, and Cicero's *On Moral Duties* (*De Officiis*). Cosmopolitanism was envisioned as a utopian ideal in this period, since civilisation was considered incompatible with true virtue (Taraborelli x–xi). Second, cosmopolitanism gained influence among Christian thinkers, such as Saint Paul. As Christopher D. Stanley argues, "[t]he apostle Paul has been viewed by many as a cosmopolitan thinker who called Christ-followers to embrace the ideal of a single humanity living in harmony with a divinely ordered cosmos" (144). This view, nevertheless, differs significantly from the classical Greek concept, which is based on the idea that everyone should be invited to the ideal city. In contrast, Paul believed that only those devoted to Christ would share in the ideal world (Stanley 155). The third phase is marked by the above-mentioned Kantian turn, which gave a secular character to cosmopolitanism during the Enlightenment. Kant's "Perpetual Peace" encouraged teachers to educate their students in "feelings of cosmopolitanism" in order to promote progress towards "a universal cosmopolitan condition" (Stanley 149). The idea even became the cultural basis of Western colonialism that sought to eradicate pagan customs in the name of the "civilising mission," linking cosmopolitanism with "the Western colonial project in the minds of both colonisers and colonised" (Stanley 149). Although the term might "roughly" have the same colloquial meaning today as it had for its iconic representatives by the time of the Enlightenment, the discourse of cosmopolitanism moved substantially away from the Diogenian idea of "world citizenship." In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as the era of historical empires came to an end and the world became more globalised and interconnected, new approaches emerged, all of which sought to address the blind spots of this discourse.

New Approaches to Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Digital Culture

Critics often consider the 1990s a significant turning point in the history of cosmopolitanism, as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the growing influence of globalisation rekindled critical interest in the idea and its social viability (Stanley 151). However, the historical and cultural transformations that led to these new approaches occurred earlier. The collapse of historical empires following World War II led to mass migration from former colonies and Commonwealth countries to Western cities. Novels by migrant writers, such as Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Doris Lessing's *In Pursuit of the English* (1960), revealed alternative cosmopolitan experiences in London long before the 1990s (McLeod 24–58; Györke, "Stories" 168–169). Cultural theory began to address these new cosmopolitan visions somewhat later than literary works. As shown below, postcolonial and feminist critics began contributing to the discourse of new cosmopolitanism in the 1990s and after the turn of the millennium.

The idea of vernacular cosmopolitanism, discussed by Éva Pataki and Edit Gálla in this thematic cluster, has become the most influential alternative to Western cosmopolitanism in postcolonial studies. Introduced to academic discourse by Homi Bhabha and Sheldon Pollock in the mid-1990s, the term refers to non-standard language use, non-Western local cultures, and the experiences of refugees and underprivileged migrants in Western cities.[1] Vernacular cosmopolitanism also gained prominence through Stuart Hall's writings, who defined it as a cosmopolitanism "that is aware of the limitations of any one culture or any one identity" (30), but still showcases "the ability to stand outside of having one's life written and scripted by any community" (26). Bhabha understands vernacular cosmopolitanism as the opposite of global cosmopolitanism, which refers to a hegemonic variety based on cultural and financial privilege:

1 Bhabha first used this term to refer to the experience of disempowered migrants in his 1996 essay, "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism," which he further developed in the "Preface to the Routledge Classical Edition" of *The Location of Culture* (2004). Sheldon Pollock, seemingly independently of Bhabha, also employed this concept to demonstrate how cosmopolitan ideals emerged from local, non-Western contexts in pre-modern South Asia in his 1996 and 1998 publications, "The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, 300–1300: Transculturation, Vernacularisation, and the Question of Ideology" (1996) and "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular" (1998).

> [Global cosmopolitanism] is a cosmopolitanism of relative prosperity and privilege founded on ideas of progress that are complicit with neo-liberal forms of governance and free-market forces of competition. Such a concept of global "development" has faith in the virtually boundless powers of technological innovation and global communications. … A global cosmopolitanism of this sort readily celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery, so long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies. (*Location* xiv)

The reference to neoliberalism, free-market competition, and the boundless power of technological innovation makes it clear that global cosmopolitanism is complicit with the material and economic interests of the Western elite. In contrast, vernacular cosmopolitanism "emerges from the world of migrant boarding houses and the habitations of national and diasporic minorities" (xvi) and insists on "a right to difference in equality" (xvii). In other words, vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses on the local and captures the lived experiences of those on the periphery, challenging hegemonic cosmopolitan visions. The significance of local cultural differences is also at the heart of Anthony Appiah's view of cosmopolitanism,[2] explored by Éva Pataki and Ágnes Harasztos in this thematic cluster.

Bhabha's argument, to some extent, relies on poststructuralist reconceptualisations of cosmopolitanism; he refers to Julia Kristeva in particular, claiming that her notion of wounded cosmopolitanism has influenced his theory (*Location* xvii).[3] Kristeva's point that "by recognising [the stranger] within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself" (1) is indeed at the heart of cosmopolitan ethics—it is precisely the failure of this recognition that leads to the rejection of the "Other" in Bret Easton Ellis's *The Informers* (1994), as Gálla's article shows. Some new interpretations of cosmopolitanism, however, have moved away from the poststructuralist paradigm towards approaches that engage with the most pressing social and political questions of the twenty-first century. These approaches, not unlike other recent theoretical interventions that describe the new millennium

2 Appiah uses the term "partial cosmopolitanism" to outline a disposition that takes both local allegiances and "loyalty to all humanity" (xvi) into account.

3 See Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991). For poststructuralist reconceputalisations of cosmopolitanism, see also Jacques Derrida's *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001).

as "post-postmodern" or "metamodern," point out that the postmodern discourse "has proven increasingly inapt and inept in coming to terms with our changed social situation" (Akker and Vermeulen 2). Therefore, they argue for a politically engaged, more hopeful, yet self-reflexive attitude in the twenty-first century, while rejecting postmodern playfulness and cynicism (Schrag 2019).

Reflecting on some of these social and political issues in "Cosmopolitanism, Religion, Diaspora" (2018), Susan Stanford Friedman argues for the need to explore the role of religion in shaping "new cosmopolitan" attitudes. Speaking from a feminist perspective, Friedman stresses the significance of religion in the formation of Muslim women's cosmopolitan identities by claiming that "formulations of the new cosmopolitanism rarely discuss religion in any substantive way, let alone the particular way in which conflict over women's bodies feature centrally" (203–204). Earlier feminist readings of cosmopolitanism did focus on the bodily experiences of women (Fitzgerald and Stevens 81; Vieten 3); however, these approaches were grounded in the secular understanding of feminism, overlooking questions of faith and spirituality.[4] Religion, nevertheless, is especially significant in the diasporic context, since many contemporary migrants move from societies where religion is dominant into Western cities (Friedman 205). Focusing on the spiritual as an inherent aspect of new cosmopolitan identities, therefore, facilitates a more sophisticated understanding of the experience of vernacular cosmopolitanism as well.

Recently, scholars have started to explore the relevance of cosmopolitanism in the field of digital culture. Sandra Ponzanesi, for instance, has examined how digital connectivity influences the everyday lives of minorities, migrants, and refugees (1). She points out that, although digital networks offer new opportunities for migrants, the undesired effects of "data colonialism, algorithms of oppression, and biometric assemblage" (4) make digital cosmopolitanism hard to achieve. Thus, it needs to be recognised that "technology is never neutral or innocent" (5), and the "connectivity mantra" (5) may foster false hopes. One might also wonder how AI will transform digital cosmopolitanism in the contemporary world, as the use of language models not only helps non-native speakers express themselves fluently but also erases individual style and local differences.

4 On the impact of religion on Muslim women's cosmopolitanism, see also Saleh Chaoui's "Navigating the Religious in the Cosmopolitan" (2022).

Case Studies

The three case studies in this thematic cluster examine how contemporary English-language novels depict the manifold faces of cosmopolitanism. Edit Gálla's "Consumerism and Cosmopolitanism in Bret Easton Ellis's *The Informers*" explores Ellis's 1994 short story collection, set predominantly in Los Angeles during the 1980s. Ellis, author of *American Psycho* (1991), often depicts morally outrageous actions in his writing without any ethical judgment, which makes his fiction a fertile ground for exploring contemporary cosmopolitanism. Relying on Baudrillard's theory of consumer society, Gálla argues that his stories stage "a banal form of culturalist cosmopolitanism and a savagely competitive consumerism." Ellis's characters are privileged, global cosmopolitans, dulled by the multicultural environment of California. Although they are exposed to a sizable Latino population in Los Angeles, they are unable to see the racial "other": the consumerism that dominates this world leads to the commodification of human beings and values.

Gálla relies on Vincenzo Cicchelli and Sylvie Octobre's notion of "aesthetico-cultural cosmopolitanism" to describe the consumerist mindset of Ellis's characters. In her reading, this type of cosmopolitanism refers to varied cultural influences, including fashion, the cult of the body, and youth culture, for instance. In Cicchelli and Octobre's interpretation, "aesthetico-cultural cosmopolitanism" involves a genuine sense of "curiosity and interest towards products and practices whose aesthetic and cultural codes are situated outside of an individual's national aesthetic canon and cultural corpus" (6). In Gálla's article, however, culturalist cosmopolitanism refers to an uncritical and self-centred practice. Through the close reading of several short stories from the collection, Gálla's analysis demonstrates how this shallow cosmopolitan attitude precludes the emergence of ethical cosmopolitanism: characters in *The Informers* show no genuine interest in other cultures; they only consume signs of otherness in order to underscore their sense of cultural superiority.

Ágnes Harasztos's "Places of Absence: Cosmopolitan Agencies in the Fictional Budapest of post-1989 British Novels" focuses on two English-language novels that depict Hungary during and shortly after the Cold War: Tibor Fischer's *Under the Frog* (1992) and Malcolm Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale* (1992).[5] Harasztos points out that Fischer's novel reflects on Soviet-style internationalism, which was part of communist

5 For a comparative analysis of *Doctor Criminale* with Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (1988) and Tom McCarthy's *Men in Space* (2007), see Harasztos's "The 'Postmodern Baroque.'"

ideology during the Cold War, while *Doctor Criminale* shows how the region is imagined as an exoticised tourist destination after the fall of the wall. Both novels contrast contemporary realities with a pre-war cosmopolitan vision of Budapest. This cosmopolitan perspective, Harasztos argues, is associated with places of absence: passages that describe bleak urban areas allude to the time of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, for instance, evoking the period when Budapest was indeed a bustling cosmopolitan metropolis.

This rich and insightful reading draws on versatile theoretical concepts, ranging from Homi Bhabha's "sly civility" to Madina Tlostanova's "tempolocality."[6] From cosmopolitan theory, Harasztos applies Appiah's notion of "partial cosmopolitanism" to explore the answer local characters give to global narratives, including both communist internationalism in *Under the Frog* and post-1989 touristic cosmopolitanism in *Doctor Criminale*. She reads the 1956 Revolution depicted in Fischer's novel as an example of partial cosmopolitanism, and claims that, apart from this moment of radical rupture, there is no genuine cosmopolitan agency in these novels.

Éva Pataki's "Becoming a Cosmopolite: Identity Construction and The Cosmopolitan Imagination in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*" investigates how the main character of Hammad's novel constructs a cosmopolitan identity through the transnational migration he performs. *The Parisian*, published in 2019, is the debut novel of the British–Palestinian writer, who grew up in London. According to Jehanne Moharram, the narrative is historically inspired fiction, which draws upon the story of Hammad's grandfather: the main character, Midhat, leaves his hometown, Nablus, part of the Ottoman Empire at that time, and moves to France to pursue his studies. Pataki investigates the protagonist's lived experiences in various cities (including Constantinople, Montpellier, Paris, Cairo, and Nablus), as well as the affective qualities of these places, and argues that Midhat becomes a "local citizen of the world" in the novel. Relying on Bhabha's concept of "vernacular cosmopolitanism" and Orlando Wood's notion of "affective cosmopolitanism," Pataki points out that Midhat accepts "his right to difference by learning through bodily engagement." Her article can be read to suggest that the affective, non-verbal dimension of the cosmopolitan experience is as significant in understanding this phenomenon as its more tangible expressions.

6 See Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (2004) and Madina Tlostanova's *Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art* (2017).

These studies demonstrate that cosmopolitanism indeed has many faces, ranging from shallow, consumerist attitudes to deep, ethical commitments. The articles also reveal that the subject continues to attract scholarly attention. Although numerous critics have argued for the need to rethink the significance of cosmopolitanism over the past few decades, the academic field still has its blind spots, particularly when specific local contexts are explored in relation to the global flow of ideas. It is not only the postcolonial condition and diasporic realities that make it inevitable to propose new alternatives to hegemonic models; in Central and Eastern Europe, too, further research is needed to understand how literature produced in the region reflects on the local cosmopolitan paradigms that have emerged since 1989. We hope this thematic cluster will serve as an inspiration for such projects as well.

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Consumerism and Cosmopolitanism in Bret Easton Ellis's *The Informers*

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DOI: 10.53720/HUXN2735

Abstract: Rooted in the ancient philosophy of the Cynics and Stoics, cosmopolitanism is essentially an ethical notion, which insists on moral obligations and compassion towards others, regardless of racial, national, class, or other affiliations. However, in the late twentieth century, political and theoretical debates—generated by specific situations and issues—complicated the ethical notion of cosmopolitanism with more practical political and sociocultural connotations, melding it with globalisation, anticolonialism, and multiculturalism. Cosmopolitanism has also been associated with the global elite. The super-rich are the protagonists in Bret Easton Ellis's The Informers*, a collection of interrelated short stories, set in Los Angeles in the early 1980s. The sprawling, featureless city offers hollow enjoyment and the illusion of eternal youth through the consumption of commodities that include not only objects and entertainment but also human beings, who are commodified by means of their eagerness to experience more pleasure. Drawing on the ethical and the culturalist concept of cosmopolitanism and Baudrillard's theory of the consumer society and simulation, this paper argues that Ellis's privileged white Angelinos, immersed in a multicultural environment and global consumerism, are profoundly alienated not only from the racially other human beings they encounter, but also from family, friends, and even themselves. Their progressive debasement is caused by a way of life that is governed by consumerist values, such as the cult of the body, the adulation of youth, obsession with fame, and the commodification of people. Culturalist cosmopolitanism is shown to be an evolved version of consumerism, as it entails the consumption of the racial and sexual Other as a means of self-aggrandisement and the assertion of the cultural hegemony of white American masculinity. This paper concludes that culturalist cosmopolitanism as well as consumerism are fundamentally hostile to ethical cosmopolitanism.*

In today's globalised world, encountering different cultures has become a part of everyday life. Interest in, and open-mindedness towards, foreign cultures are widely promoted and posited as a means of resolving intercultural conflicts and furthering peaceful coexistence. Acceptance, tolerance, and respect for difference are increasingly subsumed under the notion of a cosmopolitan way of life, which involves crossing, and even abolishing, boundaries between self and other. However, as opposed to the ancient Greek world of the *polis*, the notion from which cosmopolitanism evolved, today's citizens live in a globalised capitalist–consumerist order, which encourages subjects to construct identities and achieve social positioning through consumption patterns. Therefore, the original philosophical notion of cosmopolitanism is significantly complicated by the transformation of societies into a worldwide system of production and consumption.

Moreover, in the wake of World War II, a new global political and economic order emerged under the hegemonic leadership of the United States. American hegemony is expressed not only through global organisations, supranational legislation, and multinational business corporations. It also means that today's globalised culture is largely the reflection of American norms, values, and tastes. The convergence of a cosmopolitan outlook on life, consumerist attitudes, and American cultural hegemony can be observed in the works of Bret Easton Ellis, one of the most highly acclaimed American writers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Bret Easton Ellis's fiction has been controversial, and its literary prestige has been fluctuating. The most contentious aspect of his writing is the depiction of morally outrageous actions that are not condemned by the first-person narrative voice (Baelo-Allué 33). Critics have attempted to interpret this authorial strategy by placing Ellis in various literary movements or styles, attaching labels to his writing (Baelo-Allué 22). Baelo-Allué summarises Ellis's critical reception history by introducing and elaborating on each label and determining the extent to which it fits Ellis's writings or has shaped his critical reception.

The first label attached to Ellis's fiction was the "brat pack" due to Ellis's close affiliation with young, affluent, overly hyped writers who achieved instant best-selling author status on publishing their first book. These writers lived celebrity lifestyles and were associated in the public imagination with Hollywood actors and the entertainment media, rather than the literary field. As a result of this label, Ellis's fiction has been seen as one that blurs the boundaries between high and popular culture (Baelo-Allué 23–26).

Secondly, Ellis's fiction has been deemed "postmodern," a term which can be interpreted in both a wider sense and a narrower one. Baelo-Allué explains that, as an umbrella term, it applies to all fiction written after World War II. In its narrower sense, it is applied to metafictional or experimental writing. In the latter sense, Ellis's fiction cannot be considered postmodern. Nevertheless, the notion of the postmodern has been evolving and has come to include a focus on the socioeconomic conditions of postmodernity. This view, developed by Fredric Jameson, is highly relevant in Ellis's work as it depicts "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Baelo-Allué 33). His conspicuously wealthy characters experience the "time-space compression" (Baelo-Allué 27–28) of late modernity, since they have instantaneous access to disposable consumer goods, quickly become tired of them, and search for new sensations. Eventually, this compulsive pursuit of novelty results in discovering extreme sources of sensation, such as drug consumption, transgressive and violent sexuality, even murder. According to critics that label Ellis as a postmodern writer, his exaggeration of consumer society's excesses results in a satire of our contemporary culture, in which only appearances and fragments are left for individuals from which to construct a personality (Baelo-Allué 27–29).

The third label that is commonly attached to Ellis's fiction is "minimalism," characterised by a flat style and a lack of formal experimentation. The narrators are non-committal, not omniscient, and are involved in ordinary situations. Whereas Ellis's writing displays the simplicity of minimalism, it deviates from it in terms of its upper-class characters, extraordinary situations, and catalogue-like descriptions (Baelo-Allué 29–31).

Due to these features, Ellis's fiction has been associated with the "downtown writing" label. Downtown writers aimed to subvert traditional social and artistic conventions and produced alternative art with limited dissemination. Ellis's *oeuvre* shares thematic concerns with downtown writing, as it represents transgressive behaviour, involving drugs, crime, sexual excess, obsession with consumption, fashion, and the entertainment industry, and the staging of inner-city life. In contrast, it apparently lacks the commitment of downtown writers who rebelled against socioeconomic and racial injustice (Baelo-Allué 31–33).

According to Baelo-Allué, the combination of certain features of postmodern, minimalist, and downtown writing can be summed up by a fifth label, that of "blank fiction." Blank fiction's subject matter is the urban life of the 1980s and 1990s, depicting its decadent consumerism, violent, criminal and sexual excesses, and abounding in references to its consumer culture (33). Annesley sees blank fiction's preoccupation with consumerism as its primary characteristic. However, far from lacking any intellectual depth, this focus on the commodity enables blank fiction—including Ellis's novels—to give an insight into the functioning of our culture (7–10). Whereas some critics dismiss blank fiction as the amoral purveyor and promoter of late capitalistic commerce and consumerism, others—including Annesley—assert that an exaggerated emphasis on consumerism as a way of life offers a critique of contemporary cultural and social practices (Baelo-Allué 33–35). Annesley argues that the first-person narrators who fail to condemn the moral turpitude of this lifestyle speak from within this culture, in the language of consumerism (92–97), thus providing an implicit critique of consumer society's excesses, in which all aspects of life have been colonised by commodification (117–118). Baelo-Allué points out the significance of Ellis's representation of mass society as one consisting of atomised individuals who have only the most tenuous, utilitarian relationships with each other. As there is no community to provide them with values, they succumb to fake moralities offered by mass culture and consumption. Therefore, they cannot be expected to take a moral stance on the actions depicted; instead, it is precisely their inability to do so that constitutes the moral of Ellis's novels (Baelo-Allué 33–35).

As this reception history makes clear, Ellis's fiction has been interpreted in the context of various literary styles and movements as well as the sociocultural conditions of postmodernity and consumerism. However, little critical attention has been directed to the affluent white characters' attitudes to racial otherness and cultural differences. Ellis's novels have not been examined in the context of cosmopolitanism either.

Drawing on the concept of cosmopolitanism as well as Baudrillard's theories of consumer society and simulation, this paper argues that it is a banal form of culturalist cosmopolitanism and a savagely competitive consumerism that are staged in Bret Easton Ellis's *The Informers*. The characters are privileged white upper-class professionals, artists, and youth, who are immersed in the multicultural environment and consumerist lifestyle of Los Angeles in the 1980s. Although exposed to the racial other, such as the Japanese, Latinos, and Blacks, these Angelinos engage only in culturalist cosmopolitanism with a view to enhancing their lifestyle and social status. Excessive consumption of mass media products and drugs as well as promiscuous and reckless behaviour lead to a progressive alienation from other human beings and themselves. While the racial other is ruthlessly "cannibalised," no meaningful companionship is formed with the same. The members of the elite remain locked in competitive, exploitative, or abusive relationships. The characters' rapacious consumerism and superficial cosmopolitanism precipitate the commodification of human beings and values, resulting in the debasement of the humanity of others as well as their own. It is not only the cosmopolitanism of the characters that is shallow and lacking ethical foundations, but their entire way of life is devoid of normative values or concerns. The dearth of ethical values in Ellis's fictional world is closely tied to the ethos of the consumerist society.

The Relationship between Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation, and Consumerism

The concept of cosmopolitanism originates in the ancient philosophy of the Cynics. The "*kosmopolitēs* (citizen of the cosmos) recognises his potential kinship with others and he has therefore a certain obligation to help them" (Moles 119). This kinship is based on the reason—intellect or judgment—that each human being possesses. This reason overrides the importance of other sociocultural markers such as race, sex, or social class. Diogenes, the most distinguished Cynic philosopher, coined the term *kosmopolitēs,* and the notion was later developed and explained by the Stoics (Moles 116–119).

The modern construction of cosmopolitanism first emerged in Kant's 1795 essay, "Perpetual Peace" (Papastephanou 1). Kant takes the contractual political philosophy of Hobbes and Locke as a starting point for his argument. In the same way in which individual people renounce absolute freedom to gain protection from the state, individual states will also eventually give up their absolute sovereignty so that they can avoid violent conflicts that occur in a political system where countries act independently and focus solely on their own interests (Chauvier 46). As a result of this mutually beneficial cooperation, their interests gradually coalesce, building solidarity between formerly indifferent or even hostile political entities: "the peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of rights in *one* part of the world is felt *everywhere*" (Kant 107–108).

However, by the 2000s, cosmopolitical thinking has bifurcated into two partially overlapping, partially opposing directions. Homi Bhabha labels these two cosmopolitical forms of thought as global cosmopolitanism and vernacular cosmopolitanism. Global cosmopolitanism is characterised by imagining the world as "a concentric world of national societies" (xiv) in which the ideal of progress legitimates neoliberalism in the political, and unimpeded competition in the economic sphere. Technological advances enable communication on a global scale, resulting in a "multicultural multinationalism" (xiv), which promotes diversity on condition that migrants bring profitable skills with them, contributing to economic growth. In contrast, refugees and impoverished, unskilled migrants are ignored and excluded. This leads to "unequal and uneven development" (xiv), and eventually, to "a dual economy" (xvi), which is a consequence of a "predatory" (xv) cosmopolitanism.

As opposed to global cosmopolitanism, vernacular cosmopolitanism places emphasis on the point of view of minorities (Bhabha xvi). Based on ethics, the vernacular movement critiques the hypocrisy and intolerance of global cosmopolitanism (xiii). Vernacular cosmopolitans lead "a hybrid form of life," defined by a movement "in-between cultural traditions," and refuse to be tied to "any single culture" (xiii). They claim their "right to difference in equality" and aim to redefine the political, legal, and social criteria of citizenship in a bid to achieve "symbolic citizenship." To do so, Bhabha contends, the "nation-centred view of citizenship" (xvii), according to which identities are constructed along the lines of origins or prior belonging, must be eliminated. Instead of the "quasi-colonial" ideology of global cosmopolitanism, premised on invidious dichotomies of local–global, centre–periphery, citizen–stranger, vernacular cosmopolitanism focuses on minorities as the true global citizens (xxi), who should gain acknowledgement by establishing and strengthening global minoritarian alliances (xxii).

A similar distinction between two approaches to cosmopolitanism, based on ethical values, is made by Papastephanou. The first is the Kantian, legal–moral philosophy that construes cosmopolitanism as a normative ideal. This conception of cosmopolitanism is oriented towards an imagined community and its relational possibilities. Therefore, it insists on responsibility towards the other. In contrast, the culturalist construction regards cosmopolitanism as an empirical phenomenon, whose avatars are members of a global elite, for example, the managerial class, scholars, and travellers. This approach has a primarily individualistic outlook and is mostly focused on the Western subject and its cultural enrichment (2–3). A very similar conception of this meaning of the term is conveyed by the phrase aesthetic cosmopolitanism, which denotes the consumption, production, and dissemination of cultural content worldwide by individuals (Octobre 276). Octobre calls this the most banal form of cosmopolitanism as it requires little investment of resources and is widely used by subjects to build an identity (276). Papastephanou rejects the culturalist, elitist, and universalist conception, and defines cosmopolitanism, in accordance with Kantian legacy, as an "ethico-political ideal" (2).

Even when restricted to its ethico-political sense, cosmopolitanism remains a complex interdisciplinary notion, which encompasses "ontological, ... legal, historical, ecological, aesthetic, economic, emotional and cognitive aspects" (Papastephanou 4) and, therefore, clearly transcends the culturalist construction. This complex ethical cosmopolitanism also exceeds mere temporary charity towards the refugee or migrant: it involves responsibility towards those who do not only visit but stay permanently as well as to those who "remain rooted" and do not visit our country. In brief, this ethically demanding cosmopolitanism, which is "an ideal and a virtue to be explored as a possibility," commits individuals to "a responsible, lawful, loving and thoughtful treatment of the whole *cosmos*" (4).

However, there is a crucial notion related to cosmopolitanism that cannot be ignored, irrespective of what construction of cosmopolitanism is applied, and that is globalisation. Cicchelli and Mesure present three intersections between globalisation and cosmopolitanism. The first overlap consists in cosmopolitanism's capacity to examine "the non-economic dimension of globalisation" (7). This refers to an attentiveness to globalisation's impact on individuals' experience and identities as well as its effect on culture, social norms, and institutions. The second link consists in a newly emerging world order, as American hegemony is being replaced by a multipolar global political system with emerging new powers, such as China and India. In the process, "new vulnerabilities, inequalities, imbalances, *and* opportunities" (8–9) are being created. The third meeting point is constituted by the relative weakening of nation states confronting the forces of globalisation, such as transnational capitalism, the global economy, supranational organisations, and military alliances. In this changing and increasingly interdependent environment, states are both hindered and assisted by supranational forms of political control. These aspire to global governance, while nation states try to navigate the intractable processes of globalisation (9). The nation state is increasingly unable to retain absolute sovereignty and deliver goods to its citizens, because "[t]he spatial scope of the problems and the spatial scope of governments do not match" (Agnew 313). The discrepancy between globalisation and cosmopolitanism is summarised by Cicchelli and Mesure as follows: "Contrary to the dreams of the eulogists of a unified world, the anonymous forces of globalisation are at the roots of the unfulfilled promise of the advent of cosmopolitanism" (11). In other words, globalisation is not necessarily conducive to cosmopolitanism, mainly because it lacks ethical values.

This marked contrast between an ethical and a practical worldview was also formulated by Ferdinand Tönnies in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887). As Inglis explains, Tönnies invented the dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft*, that is, community or "affectively based groups," as opposed to *Gesellschaft*, which stands for society or "rationally calculating, selfish individuals" (57). According to Tönnies, *Gesellfschaft*, characterised by *Kürwille* or rational will, gradually replaced *Gemeinschaft*, driven by *Wesenwille* or natural will. Whereas *Wesenwille* assesses the inherent value of a particular action, *Kürwille* considers its practicality. Therefore, *Kürwille* stands for rational and "individualistic calculation" (Inglis 58). Tönnies associates the emergence of this opportunistic way of thinking with merchants and argues that it spread among diverse populations due to the mobility and rootlessness of the merchant class. Unencumbered by ties to nation, community, or family, the merchant is quintessentially cosmopolitan (Inglis 59).

For Tönnies, the merchant is self-seeking, mobile, and adaptable:

> He is without a home, a traveller, a connoisseur of foreign customs and arts without love or piety for those of any one country, a linguist speaking several languages, flippant and double-tongued, adroit, adaptable, and one who always keeps his eye on the end or purpose he plans to attain. He moves about quickly and smoothly, changes his character and intellectual attitude (beliefs or opinions) as if they were fashions of dress, one to be worn here, another there. (Tönnies 168)

The merchant consumes foreign culture, such as food, music, and various forms of recreation, with a view to applying this cultural knowledge to his own individualistic purposes. Tönnies's merchant prefigures neoliberalism's neocitizen, whose relationship "to the structure of governance in which she participates is expressly and openly opportunistic" (Cherniavsky 75). Both the neocitizen and the merchant seek to utilise the competencies and affordances provided by a state or a culture, with which they do not profess any affective identification.

This mercantile attitude has much in common with culturalist or aesthetic cosmopolitanism, which involves the consumption of exotic cultural content as a means of enriching one's lifestyle and shape one's identity. Although the merchant's aim in appropriating cultural content is mainly financial, while the aesthetic cosmopolitan's goal is existential or sociopsychological—to satisfy a desire to belong—both avail themselves of alien cultures with a view to individualistic and egocentric purposes.

The predatory attitude of the neocitizen is in close rapport with global cosmopolitanism. Raschke argues that global cosmopolitanism is fundamentally corporatist, and the "global citizen" has evolved from Whyte's "organisation man" of the 1950s. The global citizen, under the thin veneer of humanitarian altruism, makes substantial profits from promoting transnational corporate interests (92). Essentially, the neocitizen is a global citizen since they both function according to the morally hollow logic of neoliberalism.

Moreover, the most banal form of cosmopolitanism intersects with consumerism, since it mainly consists of the consumption of foreign products. In addition, both aesthetic cosmopolitanism and consumerism involve the negotiation of individual identity (Paterson 6). Another common feature of consumerism and aesthetic cosmopolitanism is that both are driven by irrational needs, wants, and desires in contrast to the calculating and rational *Kürwille* of the merchant. Paterson emphatically rejects the notion of the rational consumer. Instead, he stresses "elements of the sensory consciousness and the nonconscious states" as well as "the temporary satisfaction of a desire or felt need" (3). Finally, consumerism is not incompatible with a concern for the wider world, as it may involve ethical and environmental considerations (7).

However, there is also a significant difference between aesthetic cosmopolitanism and the consumer as constructed by critics of capitalism, such as Marx, Weber, Adorno, and Marcuse (Paterson 7). The minimal requirement for even a banal cosmopolitanism is an openness to other cultures and ways of life, and, more importantly, to human beings who are significantly different from the self (Cicchelli and Mesure 4). In contrast, the consumer, confusing their biological needs with artificially generated desires and ignoring relational responsibilities, grows "alienated, unreflexive, inward-looking, and routinised" (Paterson 6). Marxist thinkers emphasise the alienation and self-centredness of the consumerist attitude, in stark contrast with cosmopolitan openness and curiosity towards others.

Consumer society is defined by Paul Elkins as "one in which the possession and use of an increasing number and variety of goods and services is the principal cultural aspiration and the surest perceived route to personal happiness, social status, and national success" (qtd. in Goodwin 2). Jerome Segal's definition adds that "an individual's self-respect and social esteem are strongly tied to his level of consumption relative to others in the society" (qtd. in Goodwin 2). It is worth highlighting that social status and social esteem depend, according to both these definitions, on one's level of consumption. The implication is that a consumer society is a competitive one in which individuals strive to surpass each other in terms of expenditure on, and use of, goods and services. Whereas consumerism entails competitiveness, ethical cosmopolitanism is based on the presumed equality of individuals, regardless of external variables such as income or consumption level. Therefore, a consumer society is inhospitable to ethical cosmopolitanism; however, it is compatible with a culturalist or aesthetic cosmopolitanism.

Consumerism in *The Informers*

The Informers, a collection of interrelated short stories, presents characters that seem interchangeable due to their disordered, pleasure-seeking lifestyle and their overlapping relationship network. Each story is told by a first-person narrator who is either named rather late in the narrative or remains nameless throughout, further enhancing the anonymous quality of the characters. As several narrators refer to characters who also narrate a story, many characters are presented from different viewpoints. This narrative strategy distances the reader from these characters since any emotional identification with a particular first-person narrator is seriously undermined by subsequent and often contradictory viewpoints.

Another factor that contributes to a sense of emotional distance is the characters' uncertainty and indifference about each other's background or everyday life that falls outside the scope of their relationship. For example, the narrator of "Another Gray Area" states that "Christie is my girlfriend, a model who I think is from England" (Ellis 153), whereas the fictional author of "Letters from L. A." avers that Christie is "half German" (Ellis 145). However, the main reason why emotional identification with any of the characters is difficult is that they have no meaningful relationships with each other: "My relationships here with people aren't tense or trying because no one requires a whole lot of serious emotional investment at all. They're very safe ... I feel kind of anxious and depressed because of them sometimes" (Ellis 140). The dearth of affective ties generates a deep-seated anxiety, which, nevertheless, is effectively suppressed by an atmosphere of eternal holidaymaking and a ready supply of easy gratifications.

The urban dweller has a calculating and matter-of-fact attitude to everyday life and human relationships according to Georg Simmel. This affectless temperament is generated by the money economy that pervades urban life. As a result, "in the treatment of persons ... a formal justice is often combined with an unrelenting hardness" (104). Another peculiarity of the inhabitants of the metropolis is that they fail to distinguish between objects since every one of them can be equated with a certain sum of money. Therefore, the exchange value of objects replaces the object themselves: "To the extent that money ... can become the common denominator of all values, it becomes the frightful leveller—it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair" (106). By implication, human beings also become indistinguishable items, which are drained of colour and uniqueness by the levelling and quantifying power of money. The uniform featurelessness of most of the characters in *The Informers* is caused by the levelling influence of the money economy.

The most conspicuous link that connects Ellis's urban dwellers is their consumerist lifestyle, which has four salient features: the cult of the body; an obsession with youth; aspirations to, or fascination by, celebrity; and the commodification of self and others through sexual relations. All these aspects involve consumption of material and cultural goods as well as commodified human beings.

Firstly, the cult of the body reflects the materialist and consumerist worldview of these wealthy inhabitants of Los Angeles. For Baudrillard, the body is the finest consumer item. As all consumer items, it is invested with symbolic value that enables it to become a marker of identity. Thus, the body is not only reified—turned into an object—but also exalted. In a materialist society, the uppermost level of existence, formerly occupied by spirituality, is now filled by the body as the tangible essence of the human being. The ethical notions of sin and guilt are also transposed onto the body, which is now seen liable to punish the guilty individual (*The Consumer Society* 129–131).

In the world of *The Informers*, bodily degradation is the one unforgivable sin, for which there is no excuse. The appearance of the female protagonist of "On the Beach," in the last stages of an unspecified terminal illness, is described and referred to with critical undertones, emphasising her "sinful" deviation from the well-cared-for, healthy body:

> She stopped shaving her legs because she doesn't have the strength ... [She used to be] [t]all ... and blond ... and her body was supple, carefully muscled, aerobicised, and now she basically looks like shit. ...
>
> "She's looking pretty shitty, dude."
>
> "But she's dying," I said, understanding where he was coming from.
>
> "Yeah, but she still looks pretty shitty." (Ellis 214)

Illness that ravages the body is regarded as the result of irresponsibility or the slothful omission of the individual's duty of care towards their body. To some extent, the condition of the body indicates the individual's degree of adaptation to society: the more it approaches the ideal, the more adaptable, and therefore successful, the individual is (Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* 131). The body, as the finest consumer item, is cherished and cared for to render it "a smoother, more perfect, more functional object for the outside world" (131). Thus, especially the female body, is reified and commodified in the name of self-care.

The female first-person narrator of "Letters from L. A." documents her gradual transformation from pale, artsy sophomore into party-going beach blonde: "I go to aerobics class with Christie in the morning and I've also been going to the beach a lot, working on my tan" (Ellis 145–146). The narrator's progressive integration into LA society is marked by outward signs of group affiliation, such as skin or hair colour, body shape, and muscle tone. The body is treated as a "colonised virgin 'territory,'" which one can exploit for manifestations of health and beauty. Therefore, it also performs the function of an investment which will yield returns in terms of social status and esteem. This process "represents a more profoundly alienated labour than the exploitation of the body as labour power" (Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* 131–132).

Closely related to the cult of the body is the imperative of slimness. In "The Up Escalator," there are references to anorexia among wealthy girls, which indicates that the drive to do violence to the body is the most characteristically expressed by excessive dieting among young women: "Faith begins to talk about how her daughter's therapy is progressing. Sheila is an anorexic. My daughter has met Sheila and may also be an anorexic" (Ellis 23). In contrast, obese and unkempt characters elicit revulsion, which is as much moral as it is physical. There is an interchangeability of internal and external ugliness, demonstrated by the overweight and scruffy-looking character, Peter, in "The Fifth Wheel." His repulsive appearance is portentous: "he's fat, three hundred, four hundred pounds, and his hair is long and blond and greasy and he's wearing a green T-shirt, sauce all over his face, marks all up and down his arms, and I get pissed" (Ellis 197). Somewhat later, Peter abducts and sexually abuses a little boy then incites the first-person narrator to murder the child, thus fulfilling the foreboding felt at the sight of his unattractive body. While consumerist society apparently promotes a positive relationship to the body in the name of physical indulgence and pleasure, it also enforces "repressive solicitude" towards the body. Consumerism exhibits a primeval aggression against the body since the obsession with slenderness is a form of violence, in which "the body is literally *sacrificed*" (Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* 142–143).

The second main feature of the characters' mindset is their fascination with youth. A youthful appearance is sustained well beyond young adulthood by dietary supplements, exercise, and tanning. For example, the grandfather of the young female protagonist of "Letters from L. A." "looked so tan and healthy it was positively eerie" (Ellis 131). The importance of the latter is that a naturally suntanned body is associated with playing outdoors or enjoying oneself on the beach—activities linked with the carefree youth. Therefore, having a tan is also thought to indicate contentment with one's life: "'But you don't look too good,' Cheryl says. 'I mean, you're tan but you don't look happy'" (Ellis 78).

Nevertheless, the cult of youth entails not only the care of the body, but also an imaginative identification with a youthful and, therefore, immature perspective. The middle-aged characters' emotional immaturity is the most clearly seen in their failure at parenting. The unnamed housewife is unable to love or take care of her children. Her distant and indifferent parenting is largely due to her lack of compassion and self-absorption, which are qualities often found in children and adolescents. Another example of a failed parent is Les Price, who is unable to let his son win any game, whether it be cards, tennis, backgammon, or, crucially, seducing women. Les vaguely hopes to improve his relationship with his son during their short Hawaiian holiday. There are traces of genuine affection towards his son; however, these flickering sparks of emotion cannot contend with the chilly atmosphere of competitiveness and a ruthless will to power, which characterise the corporate culture in which he lives. Emotions are fundamentally alien to the cult of business success embraced by executives like Les: "after the anger brushes past, I'm left with a feeling of caring that seems strangely, hopelessly artificial" (Ellis 45). Competitiveness, although a key trait of manliness, is also a distinctive quality of children, especially when playing games. When Tim is finally aroused from his lethargy by an encounter with an attractive girl, Les is "almost happy for him" (Ellis 59). However, he cannot conquer his habit of one-upmanship, and he sets out to captivate the girl by means of his wealth, worldliness, and cunning. Les's narcissistic self-aggrandisement prevents him from forming meaningful intimate relationships even when there is a genuine desire to be loved.

The third major aspect of these Angelinos' lifestyle is their aspiration to fame. This is closely linked to consumerism since consumption patterns are structured by individuals' desire to belong in a social group: "Commodities are purchased and used as markers of social position by consumers who are defining their relative position in regard to other consumers" (Paterson 39). The most apparent indicator of the characters' ambition to live a celebrity lifestyle is the solicitude with which they tan, exercise, and strengthen their body. Their virtually uniform appearance—tan, blond, slim, muscular—imitates the physique of actors, singers, and models, images of whom they consume daily. Watching MTV or Hollywood films and browsing the men's fashion magazine, *GQ*, are activities mentioned in nearly each story.

Both lower- and upper-class youth avidly consume popular cultural products, such as songs, music videos, magazines, and action-packed or romantic films as a form of entertainment. However, entertainment is more than a passive consumption of signs: it is a form of social activity, during which social norms of behaviour and appearance are transmitted and value systems are formed. "Entertainments," declares Brennan, "are more than outlets for enjoyment but places where social relations are reproduced" (72). To a certain extent, mass culture establishes democracy in the consumer society, as the same cultural products are consumed regardless of social position, thereby providing some common ground.

Whereas the consumption of mass media entertainment has a levelling influence, social class determines access to places. Working-class characters, small-time criminals, or impoverished drug addicts, especially women, are generally represented spending time indoors, while the elite is often seen driving around or moving between various entertainment venues, such as bars, restaurants, shopping malls, or travelling to far-flung tourist destinations. Lejeune et al. stress the intimate connection between cosmopolitanism and consumption, which manifests itself in differential access to public spaces: "consuming global goods or frequenting generic places mean greater cosmopolitan feelings or a greater willingness to engage with diversity and the other" (9). As opposed to exploited migrants and the local poor, "highly mobile elites ... benefit from unlimited access to places" (9).

Most characters belong in the upper echelons of society and work in privileged occupational categories in the entertainment industry, news media, and fashion; however, they are also prone to be degraded by the meretricious nature of mass culture. Anne, an aspiring writer in "Letters from L. A.," gradually surrenders her relatively respectable intellectual values to the demands of commercial viability. Anne's metamorphosis into a tan, blond socialite, who eventually turns out "commercial" film scripts, follows a predictable pattern, staging the process by which artistic aspirations are throttled by the pressure to conform. Randy, a financially successful filmmaker, is also a failed writer who allowed his artistic sensibilities to be debased by commercial interests. Selling out his talents, however, has taken a toll on Randy, who "feels hollow and lost" (Ellis 143) and eventually commits suicide—or, possibly, falls victim to mysterious vampires stalking the Los Angeles area. He is physically torn apart as a metaphor for his unresolvable inner conflict.

Another pitfall of celebrity life is that it is often acquired at the cost of other people's professional and personal tragedies. This is exemplified by Bryan Metro, the protagonist of "Discovering Japan." Bryan capitalised on the songwriting talent of the members of his former band and even exploited the suicide of one of them, by having a heart-wrenching film made about the band. Having betrayed his former band members, he immerses himself in celebrity lifestyle with a voracious appetite for drugs, sex, and violence. The lack of all social and moral restraint brutalises him, while he is also tortured by the awareness that his own music is inferior to the productions of the band members he abandoned to their fate. The road to celebrity is paved with human sacrifice, as the aspirational individual exploits and preys on others. Another example is Ann, who inherits Randy's house and Ferrari after his unnatural demise. The most outrageous instance of human sacrifice in the volume is the kidnapping and murder of a child, orchestrated by Peter, a fan of Bryan Metro.

The fourth feature of consumerism in *The Informers* is the commodification of people, which manifests itself in transactional sexual relationships. Transactional or "economically motivated sexual relationships" are defined as "sexual relations for money, not for survival, but for material resources and leisure items" (Wilson and Flicker 98). The unnamed housewife narrator of "The Up Escalator" is involved in a sexual relationship with a young man who is the same age as her son and who receives expensive gifts and cash disguised as loans in return for sexual favours. Dazed by tranquillisers, bored and fatigued, she spends her days lounging by the swimming pool, driving about, or having cocktails with girlfriends. She is immersed in an erotic daydream by the pool while watching the young pool boy, whose "muscles ... ripple gently beneath smooth clean brown skin" (Ellis 22). Her sensual reverie is abruptly terminated by the young man's announcement: "You have two dead rats in your drain" (Ellis 22). The rats in the swimming pool, which return in her nightmares, become symbolic of the moral sordidness of her consumerist and parasitic way of life. Sexual emancipation, for her, means the objectification of young men's bodies. However, she herself is commodified as an indolent and useless trophy wife to a successful film producer.

The paltriness of sexual liberation is shown most clearly when the sexually liberated woman confronts problems in an area other than sexuality. Freedom, in Levinas's philosophy, is indissociable from responsibility. To the extent that the subject is free, he or she must take responsibility for others: "Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness. The order of responsibility ... is also the order where freedom is ineluctably evoked" (Levinas 200). Therefore, a greater degree of real freedom is concomitant with increased compassion towards the other. However, much like her refusal to deal with the problem of rats in her pool, her inability to listen to her mother's complaints of her progressing terminal disease demonstrates that sexual freedom does not make the housewife a more compassionate and responsible adult. Since it is inoperative on the level of inevitable human realities, such as pain, loneliness, disease, decay, and mortality, the liberation of the female body increases neither women's agency nor their acknowledgment as responsible actors. In effect, the ideology of women's sexual freedom is ancillary to the ethos of consumerism since the former encourages women to regard men as interchangeable sexualised bodies or tools of gratification, in other words, as commodities. Baudrillard argues that sexual liberation, seemingly a radical change, ultimately re-establishes the constraints on women's agency in the public sphere and "stand[s] in the way of real economic and social responsibility" (*The Consumer Society* 137).

In brief, the characters' consumerist lifestyle is characterised by the commodification of self and others. Their consumption patterns are shaped by four ideological features: a reverence of the body, the adulation of youth, the obsession with celebrity, and transactional relationships. The eventual outcome of this ethos is not a sophisticated culture of hedonism—quite the opposite. The characters are increasingly desensitised by their transgressive sensual experiences, and their perception is dimmed by the quantifying and levelling perspective induced by the money economy. They develop a blasé attitude, like Georg Simmel's urbanite, who deems all objects essentially identical because they are all purchasable (106). This emotional withdrawal from the surroundings also affects interpersonal relationships with the result that both self and others are seen as strangers. This alienation has been associated with not only the metropolitan but also the cosmopolitan subject (Johansen 86).

Cosmopolitanism in *The Informers*

Ethical cosmopolitanism implies the existence of a common essential feature in all human beings, an ineffable quality that elicits the compassion of the moral cosmopolitan. By the same token, the culturalist version of cosmopolitanism implies the existence of a "unitary" or "single" global culture. This global culture is engendered by American hegemony: "globalisation could once (and especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attacks of September 11, 2001) be considered the synonym of American hegemony" (Cicchelli and Mesure 8). Hegemony necessarily has a cultural–ideological aspect since it "relies less on coercion than on ideological consensus or compliance" (Ramel 373). The Americanisation of the world is inextricably linked to both culturalist cosmopolitanism and consumerism, since both ideologies offer artificial and illusory identities, which can be accessed and consumed through material and cultural products.

Subjects' identity construction is based on simulated images that circulate in a globalised consumer culture. According to Baudrillard, simulation is the quintessence of American culture, and thus, of an Americanised world as well. Disneyland is the prime example of simulation. Its attraction consists in its ability to condense American culture. However, its real significance is that it represents an attempt to conceal the lack of a profound reality in American culture: "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it ... belong to the ... order of simulation" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 12).

Los Angeles, the setting of *The Informers*, bears a particularly close resemblance to Disneyland due to its profusion of similar entertainment venues. Headquarters to the American film industry, this city is "an immense scenario and a perpetual pan shot" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 13). Significantly, Los Angeles also recycles and circulates childish dreams and phantasms, which inform the highly unnatural and mediated lifestyles of Californians. Having lost touch with the real, the physical, and the social, they reinvent "penury, asceticism, vanished savage naturalness: natural food, health food, yoga" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* 13).

Some critics see *The Informers* as a literary response to social and urban problems. For Colby, the characters of *The Informers* are alienated from social space and from their own subjectivity. This melancholic estrangement is caused by the covert but "systemic violence of neoliberalism" (25). The increasingly privatised, corporatist economy, the trauma of the Vietnam war, and the failure to integrate minorities and redress socioeconomic inequalities spawned widespread resentment in 1970s urban America (Colby 28). In Colby's reading, Ellis's early fiction, including *The Informers*, gives voice to a social malaise, manifested in alienation and melancholia (29). The characters seem completely disconnected from reality, and this detached and mediated way of life is symbolised by the image of the glass pane. Les Price touching the glass of his office window while looking down at his son, who is queuing in front of a cinema, and Bryan Metro placing his fingertips on the small windowpane of the airplane, trying to discern the island of Japan, are both images that convey the characters' momentary realisation of their encaged, cordoned-off existence.

Both Les and Bryan, protagonists of "In the Islands" and "Discovering Japan," respectively, are emphatically severed from the cultures they are supposed to be discovering. The titles are in ironic contrast with the protagonists' isolation from life in these foreign lands, especially the latter title, since Bryan merely spends time in Japan without discovering any of it. They reside in international hotel chains such as the Hilton, visit coffee shops, bars, stadiums, or beaches crowded with tourists, all of which are venues associated with a standardised, global tourist industry and culturalist cosmopolitanism, detached from, and unaffected by, local particularities. Their privileged seclusion from the native culture generates a sense of imprisonment into an elitist and American way of life. Their privileges exempt them from common difficulties, but these same privileges also incarcerate them and make them unable to disengage themselves from patterns of manipulative or abusive behaviour towards others. Clearly, a cosmopolitan mobility and ease of crossing borders is not necessarily concomitant with an interest in, or respect for, other cultures.

A sense of suppressed guilt manifests itself in their self-destructive behaviour. While Les merely intoxicates himself with alcohol, Bryan is an inveterate heroin addict. When he severely (although accidentally) injures himself, he acts as if the injured body part did not belong to him:

> for a long time I'm staring at my palm, at a thin rivulet of blood racing down my wrist. ... I pull [the glass] out and the hole in my hand looks soft and safe and I take the jagged stained piece of glass ... and seal the wound by placing it back into it where it looks complete, but the glass falls out and streaming blood covers the guitar I'm beginning to strum ... . (Ellis 108)

Detachment from one's own body is intertwined with detachment from, and the lack of compassion towards, other people. Györke and Bülgözdi highlight the importance of affect (or the lack thereof) as a factor shaping subjects' relations to places: "sensations such as belonging or alienation ... mark the impact of the environment on the individual." Moreover, emotions are important mediators of social relations rather than being merely self-indulgent solipsistic sentiments (6). This construction of affect as fundamentally social is highly relevant to *The Informers*, in which the characters prove unable to establish meaningful relationships due to their emotionally deadened self and affectless attitude.

In "Discovering Japan," the elite male protagonist's encounter with the Other is staged as a dream. While actual interactions with young Japanese women are merely glossed over, the dream is vividly described. It conveys the privileged male's isolated and superior position: "I'm sitting in the restaurant on top of the hotel near a wall of windows and staring out over the blanket of neon lights that pass for a city" (Ellis 106). The words "wall," "blanket," and "pass for" refer to his incarceration within the order of simulation. In the dream, the Japanese girl—the Other, both in terms of race and gender—is both sexualised and threatening: "I'm drinking a Kamikaze and sitting across from me is the young Oriental girl from *Hustler* but her smooth brown face is covered with geisha makeup and the tight, fluorescent-pink dress and the expression creasing her flat, soft features and the gaze in the blank dark eyes are predatory, making me uneasy" (Ellis 106). As Baudrillard explains, exploited categories, such as women and racial others, are always, at the same time, threatening; this is why they are regarded as sexual objects (*The Consumer*

Society 137). While the "flat" features and the "blank" eyes convey the inscrutability of the foreign other, the "predatory" facial expression induces a fear which cannot be neutralised—as it might be in conscious waking life—by the sexual definition imposed on the girl through the "geisha makeup and the tight, fluorescent-pink dress." As the city below is emitting signs of an escalating panic then bursts into flame, the geisha girl is mumbling an inaudible word to the narrator, whose mounting terror is in sharp contrast with her serenity. Finally, a huge monster blasts through the window, grabs Bryan and lifts him towards its mouth. It is only when being seized by the monster that Bryan can distinguish the word muttered by the woman: "Godzilla ... Godzilla, you idiot ... I said Godzilla" (Ellis 107).

There is a twofold representation of the racial Other in this nightmare: the sexualised Other and the monstrous Other. While the former is inscrutable and vaguely threatening, the latter embodies the horrifying, vengeful ire and hatred of the oppressed: "the claw is ... pulsing with anger and covered with a slime that drenches the suit I'm wearing" (Ellis 107). The slime symbolises the privileged white male's visceral repulsion when encountering unmediated Otherness, whereas the motif of being devoured by the Other indicates a fundamental lack of confidence in American—or Western—cultural values. Overall, this nightmare stages the impossibility of communication taking place between the One and the—female and racial—Other as well as the profound terror of the One disguised as mastery and contempt.

The basic dualism of the One as opposed to the Other is, according to Haraway, a fundamental principle in Western culture. This fundamental dichotomy is supported by more specific dualisms that "have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals—in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self" (Haraway 59). While the One is complete and superior, the Other is multiple, indeterminate, and emphatically inferior: "The self is the One who is not dominated, who knows that by the service of the other ... To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial" (Haraway 59–60). Bryan's nightmare is a striking dramatisation of Haraway's "dialectic of apocalypse with the other" with its image of a burning, frantic city. It also represents the Other as multiple: both seductive geisha and slimy Godzilla. More importantly, the dream stages the illusory quality of the One's power and superiority over the Other.

In waking life, Japanese women, both sexual and racial Others, are humiliated, degraded, and even dehumanised by English and American visitors. Sexuality as well as the language barrier are used against them as a means of domination when the lead singer of an English band plays a cruel joke on the young Japanese hostesses: "'You a good fuck, bitch?' he asks, a sincere expression on his face, nodding. The girl looks at the expression, takes in the nod, the smile, and she smiles back a worried, innocent smile and nods and everyone laughs" (Ellis 127). Similarly, the American film producer, in the company of drugged Japanese idols, maliciously remarks: "Don't trust these fucking Japs ... I hope [the recent earthquake] got some of them" (Ellis 111). This remark as well as Bryan's dream of a blazing city may be allusions to the American nuclear bombing of Japan to win World War II. However, the most cruel and dehumanising incident in the story is Bryan's treatment of the two young prostitutes he slept with. He orders them to be removed from his room then listens to their screaming as the security guards maltreat and violate them. Waiting for the henchmen, he inadvertently locks eyes with the Japanese boy. Bryan, who had whipped this boy the night before, taunts him: "You feel sorry for yourself?" (Ellis 106). This question is the only utterance Bryan addresses to a Japanese person in the story, and it encapsulates the privileged Anglo-Saxon characters' attitude to the Japanese: a mixture of fear and contempt.

The American characters also encounter the racial other in Los Angeles, which has a sizeable Latino population. Cheryl, desperately in love with a fickle young playboy, receives a message. Her windshield wipers are broken off and a note attached says: "Mi hermana." Another character to whom a similar message is communicated is Graham. He sees a young Latino woman, apparently intoxicated by drugs, cross the road. She is almost hit by a large car, the driver of which swears at her: "'Watch out, you dumb spic' and the girl, not shaken at all, walks calmly to the other side of the street" (Ellis 170). As Graham is staring at her, she spots him and approaches him purposefully then whispers the phrase, "Mi hermano," three times, addressing the words directly to him. The mysterious encounter with the Latino woman is shown to have some significance: Graham is "transfixed" in anticipation and the girl feels her message is "urgent." In contrast with the customarily and uniformly blasé attitude of the characters, the white male protagonist is intrigued enough to think that the girl "looks worth following" (Ellis 171). Moreover, he is curious about the meaning of her words: "What did she say?" (Ellis 171).

However, his girlfriend's answer jolts him out of this momentary exaltation of mind: "Me hermano? I think it's a kind of chicken enchilada with a lot of salsa," Christie says. "Maybe it's a taco, who knows?" (Ellis 171). Christie's interpretation of the phrase reflects a culturalist attitude to cosmopolitanism. She associates the words with the typical consumer goods linked with Mexican culture: fast food. Both Christie's consumerist gloss and Graham's incomprehension of a simple phrase in Spanish are indicative of a profound indifference towards the culture of Latinos. The wealthy Angelinos' lack of interest in other ways of life is in stark contrast with the minimum requirement of cosmopolitanism, which is "openness to others" (Schmoll 257). In addition, Graham's failure to comprehend the phrase spoken by a Latino woman is reminiscent of Bryan's nightmare in which he could not distinguish the word mumbled by the geisha girl. In both cases, communication between the One and the Other proves impossible.

The phrase "my brother" uttered three times and the small gold cross the Latina is wearing suggest that the message is one of Christian love for a fellow human being. However, the Latina is intoxicated with drugs and Graham is a drug dealer. Therefore, the imagined kinship between whites and Latinos is based not on Christian love but rather on their mutual involvement in a pleasure-seeking economy of addiction and escapism.

Graham also encounters the racial Other when he observes a young Black boy being pursued by supermarket security guards. In a similar fashion to his reaction to the Latina, Graham shows interest in what the boy carried off, then dropped in the street. It is a packet of filet mignon, an expensive cut of beef. The packet is dripping blood, soiling Graham's costly white shirt, which is an image of defilement. The stolen meat oozing blood is symbolic of predatory impulses and reappears in the subsequent story, "The Secrets of Summer," in a more pronounced manner.

"The Secrets of Summer" offers a solution to the mystery of a series of gruesome murders alluded to throughout the stories. The murdered young men, who were drained of their blood and mutilated, were the victims of Dirk, a vampire. While Dirk targets young men, Jamie, another vampire, feasts on the blood of teenage girls. Alternatively, he consumes large quantities of raw filet mignon, which refers to the previous story. In this case, the imagined fraternity between Black youth and privileged white males is founded on a predatory way of life. In a world where wealth, good looks, and celebrity status are the utmost values, underprivileged categories such as Black youth aspire to become men like Bryan Metro or Jamie. These ruthless male characters are presented as role models, since they seem to have unlimited power to exploit others. Vampirism, a form of parasitism, is a metaphor for exploitative behaviour, glamourised as "the cool life" (Ellis 193). In retrospect, the pilfered packet of bleeding meat becomes symbolic of the aspiration of subjected categories to prey on others. Whereas the Black boy fails to carry off his loot and is presumably punished for his transgression, privileged white males, such as Bryan and Jamie, keep destroying other people and enjoy complete impunity. In addition to consuming blood, Dirk and Jamie have cannibalistic tendencies, indicated by piles of human bones, severed body parts, and their craving for human flesh. The cannibal, according to Paterson, "represents ... the endless appetites of consumer society" (3).

The vampire, an emblematic figure of capitalist and consumerist parasitism, also embodies Western cultural dichotomies. As a monster with a liminal body that transgresses boundaries between male/female and human/animal (Hurley 190), it can serve as an interrogation of social values. However, Jamie's character, with its emphatic heterosexuality—in contrast with the bisexuality of most other male characters—his well-appointed, designer coffin, and an appetite that can be sated with beef—a quintessentially American choice of meat—seems a rather effete and simplistic version of the vampire. Instead of uniting opposites, Jamie appears to assert the cultural superiority of the privileged white male. This is demonstrated by his predilection for watching the effect of his facial transformation on his helpless victims: "she looks up into eyes that cloud over completely, black and bottomless, and she reaches up, weeping with disbelief, and touches my face and I smile" (Ellis 191). The young women's function is to mirror and nourish the self of the One, providing it with a sense of omnipotence.

Conclusion

In *The Informers*, consumerism complements culturalist cosmopolitanism. Both aim at enhancing social status and contribute to practices of cannibalistic parasitism on subjected categories, such as women and people of colour. Both are ideologies that incite appetites for self-aggrandisement and the exertion of power over others. Culturalist cosmopolitanism is shown to promote the exploitation of the sexual and racial Other. Even in its mildest form, culturalist cosmopolitanism fails to engender genuine interest in other cultures and ways of life. Indeed, it promotes the transformation of other cultures into consumer items.

In effect, culturalist cosmopolitanism is an offshoot of consumerism and represents its evolution into more complex forms of exploitation. Consumer society exalts the body—including its health, fitness, slimness, and beauty—as the finest consumer item and thereby promotes its exploitation as a source of social status. Culturalist attitudes take the instrumentality of the body one step further and regard the body of the Other as capital that can be appropriated and used for the social exaltation of the One. Underprivileged demographics such as the youth, women, and ethnic minorities, function as a mirror and nourishment to the self. They are regarded as consumer items and are—sometimes literally, as in "The Secrets of Summer"—consumed for rejuvenation and social power.

Even as the One exploits the Other, the latter sometimes offers itself up as resource and sacrificial victim. Prime examples of this self-immolating behaviour can be found in the characters of stoned groupie girls, prostitutes, party girls, and young bisexual men. People are debased into bestial predators and prey, according to the logic of consumer capitalism. The predatory and parasitic economic system of consumer capitalism spills into subjects' private lives and interpersonal relationships, turning sexuality into a form of cannibalistic consumption.

There are only a few instances of the emergence of ethical cosmopolitanism in *The Informers*. Examples include Cheryl, who experiences genuine love for another person, which is not reciprocated, and Graham, who manifests signs of earnest interest in the way of life of oppressed categories, such as Latinas and Black youth. Nevertheless, their tentative awakening either veers off into psychological breakdown, as is the case of Cheryl, or a relapse into their customary indifference, which happens to Graham.

All in all, the ethos of consumerism and its more sinister outgrowth, culturalist or global cosmopolitanism, preclude the emergence of ethical cosmopolitanism in the sense of acknowledging the humanity of the Other, regardless of social status or cultural differences. Interest in other cultures is almost non-existent in *The Informers*, while the consumption of signs of otherness, with a view to strengthening the cultural and social superiority of privileged categories, is rampant. Both consumerism and culturalist cosmopolitanism are hostile to ethical values since they promote the reduction of objects and human beings to their exchange value. This, in turn, deprives subjects of uniqueness. Consequently, the interpersonal relations of global cosmopolitans are devoid of emotions, without which no genuine compassion for the other and, thus, no ethical cosmopolitanism can exist.

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Places of Absence

Cosmopolitan Agencies in the Fictional Budapest of Post-1989 British Novels

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DOI: 10.53720/BKED1926

Abstract: British novels set in East-Central Europe during the Cold War and the 1990s represent cosmopolitan communities of people from different traditions, nations, and identities in a fairly closed world where cosmopolitanism remains either a wishful memory or a desire for a more open-minded future. The image of the intercultural community in these novels fails to live up to the official propaganda of proletarian internationalism as well as that of pre-war capitalist urban cosmopolitanism. In both respects, the literary images reveal a sad lack of real cosmopolitan spaces, either because the suggested community of people is based on demagogic lies, or because the bustling cosmopolitan metropolises had been dilapidated and homogenised by socialist regimes.

After the Fall of the Wall, Second Bloc metropolises quickly shifted from Communist internationality towards exotic tourist destinations for Westerners in the 1990s, which entailed new types of cosmopolitan experiences. British novels about Budapest are engaged with the parallel spatial and chronological realities of the ex-Second Bloc, which is still in the process of making sense of the past. Tibor Fischer's Under the Frog *(1992) depicts socialist spaces in a metonymic relationship with their own past. Malcolm Bradbury's* Doctor Criminale *(1992) portrays the immediate aftermath of 1989, and displays a similar parallel consciousness constituted in a Budapest that is always aware of its own absences. Therefore, Hungarians in Bradbury's work often feel a deep Lacanian desire for the presence of an unknown West. In what Anthony Appiah designates as partial cosmopolitanism, local characters also give their specific answers to such global narratives. As both Fischer's and Bradbury's novels suggest, cosmopolitan agency often appears in the textual Budapest as an absence of the multicultural metropolis of the past or a fantasy.*

The discourse of cosmopolitanism, as the ideology linking people all over the world, appeared officially in Cold War East-Central Europe in the form of proletarian internationalism. Internationalism was the Eastern European version of the Western-centric concept of cosmopolitanism. According to Sándor Hites, the idea of internationalism, although tainted with Russian nationalism and Pravoslavic theological hegemony, was originally meant as an emancipatory ideology for the Socialist Bloc. This ideology aimed at reshaping cultural relationships outside the (Western) Eurocentric thinking during the Cold War (67). However, this concept found its way into the everyday reality of socialist countries tainted by constant figurative lies. On the one hand, official discourse roared about the happy community of international people's republics; on the other hand, it was a highly limited internationality, with First World countries strictly excluded.

This totalitarian doublespeak resulted in a typical Second Bloc experience of split consciousness, which is aware of the presence of a certain community of the here and now, as well as the denied but very palpable absence of certain others: Western countries or friends and relatives who had emigrated. Moreover, this absence is linked to Central Europe's past as bleak socialist spaces occupy the space of bustling cosmopolitan Central European metropolises of the pre-war times. As a result, the space of East-Central Europe became one where the absence of the past could constantly be felt as a bleak reminder of lost glamour.

Martha Nussbaum, in her book *The Cosmopolitan Tradition* (2019), claims that cosmopolitanism can also be called an umbrella term as a result of the various traditions of equal human dignity (3–4). Although the cosmopolitan idea had undergone constant modifications during the centuries as it was adjusted to various sociocultural contexts, as Anita Barta claims (222), equality and the corresponding democratic values have traditionally been coupled with cosmopolitan consciousness ever since the first, ancient Greek, occurrence of this notion. In European Modernity, urban democratic, and hence, cosmopolitan thinking appeared in coexistence with capitalism. Paul Gilroy, in his work *Against Race* (2000), conceptualises cosmopolitanism as closely linked to democratic order (7). In the post-war era, the twofold division of Cold War Europe radically broke the then-existing international relationships and capitalist cosmopolitan traditions alike. The Eastern part of Europe fell prey to another interpretation of cosmopolitanism, that of the communist class terror exercised in the name of the working class. Consequently, the question arises whether the post-war socialist internationalism in East-Central Europe could aspire to the rank of a member of this tradition.

Gilroy understands cosmopolitanism as a "comprehensive rethinking of ways we understand and analyse our vulnerable humanity" (20). As an ideology gaining ground in the immediate aftermath of World War II, proletarian internationalism also aimed at redefining humanity and recreating a transnational community. The proletarian community was believed and propagated to oppose chauvinist particularisms. One reason for such a propagation of communist internationalism was the trauma of WWII, which contemporaries experienced as a direct result of chauvinist ideologies. Historical possibilities of East-Central European cosmopolitanism during the Cold War, as they are depicted in two British novels about Hungary, are defined by these circumstances. This research aims to investigate fictional representations of how the excessively closed Socialist Bloc countries related to their universal humanity, torn between totalitarian doublespeak and their more cosmopolitan urban environment, giving rise to nostalgia for pre-war times.

As certain urban spaces evoked the more open-minded Habsburg monarchical past, others, typically the results of socialist housing estate programmes in the region, propagated a successfully realised proletariat community. These spatial manifestations of a cosmopolitan community, either past or fictional, appear in post-1989 British fiction about East-Central Europe, namely, Tibor Fischer's *Under the Frog* (1992) and Malcolm Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale* (1992). Both novels were written closely after the 1989 Political Changes, and they distinctively define a discursive field dominated by the process of coming to terms with the state socialist heritage.

As a result of the discursive environment mentioned above, these fictive universes are centred on ideological anomalies in their depiction of the totalitarian regime. Fischer's work is a bitterly humorous rendering of Hungary in the 1950s and Bradbury's novel also depicts 1990s Hungary with irony, mostly with a touristic focaliser (Harasztos 32–33). The touristic mindset is a contraindicated catchword against participatory cosmopolitanism, as Robbins claims (177). Still, both works display their own specific, perhaps a little tendentious, views on Hungary.

On the one hand, *Under the Frog* can be claimed as part of diaspora literature; indeed, Davis analyses the book in the framework of exile literature and claims that Fischer's first book has a specific outlook on Hungarian history, that of the second-generation émigré who mourns the loss of a country (58). Ágnes Györke, also investigating Fisher in the paradigm of émigré literature, claims that one of the book's aims is to bring the historical trauma of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 close to its readership (324). This traceable intention can also be a result of the émigré context of Fischer's childhood. In this sense, I argued for the book's historical vista being a product of Hirschian postmemory in my study "Photographic Origins of Postmemory in Tibor Fischer's *Under the Frog*" (2016). This émigré outlook also defines the novel's take on cosmopolitanism, and investigating the exact manner in which it does so is one of this paper's objectives.

On the other hand, the specific bias *Doctor Criminale* displays is that of a campus novel concentrated around the world of university wits. This circumstance might be interpreted as one that narrows the vision of the book in terms of representing multiculturalism. However, such a view is something Bruce Robbins makes a case against when, arguing for the relevance of academic discourses in promoting cosmopolitanism, he asks the rhetorical question of how it is possible for academics to promote multiculturalism if they are "so self-enclosed as [they] were told" (170). *Doctor Criminale* fits into Robbins's vision, as it attempts to engage in a discursive promotion of a unified Europe, as I also argued in my study "Korszakok halálakor mindenki áruló" [When an epoch dies, betrayal is everywhere] (2016). Notwithstanding the specificities, the two novels analysed in this paper witness a journey that starts from pre-war cosmopolitanism, moves through wartime racism, and eventually arrives at the post-war lie of internationalism, framed through what Bruce Robbins claims to be a post-cultural standpoint of cosmopolitanism of the 1990s (181). These attitudes to others can be best disclosed through the analysis of the novels' spatial settings, which this study aims to explore.

The politically determined notion, internationalism, was a catchword in the demagogic banter of the forty years of Second Bloc state socialism. Consequently, Fisher's fundamentally dark, humorous book consecrates its sharpest ironic remarks to this discursive reality of the state socialist system. Internationalism appears as a centralised practice during Communist Hungary with its closed borders. Similarly to the Communist ideology of proletariat internationalism, postsocialist societies of the 1990s also held new international bonds in high esteem. Opening up closed societies, economies, cultures, and ways of thinking to the West became the new and very fashionable catchword in the immediate aftermath of the Fall of the Wall when Bradbury's story takes place. Consequently, cosmopolitan bonds appear in the novel as very colourful interpersonal relationships between Hungarian and Western characters, ranging from exploitative to friendly or from investigative to superficial.

When the contexts of Fisher's and Bradbury's books are viewed in a strictly historical sense, it seems obvious that most post-1989 oppositional discourse rebelled against the official Communist propagation of proletariat internationalism alongside the bulk of communist ideological lies. These anti-communist discourses, however, also propagated the intensification of international relationships in the 1990s. This specific historical context of the given fictional universes calls for a differentiation of the concepts of internationalism and cosmopolitanism. In his book, *Cosmopolitanism*, Kwame Anthony Appiah links his concept of cosmopolitanism to Virginia Woolf's urging to be "free from unreal loyalties" such as "nation, sex, school, neighbourhood" (5). Given this definition, Appiah emphasises that both Nazism and the Socialism propagated by the Stalinist Soviet Union are great foes of cosmopolitanism (5). In this sense, the proletariat internationalism, propagated by the latter, can be considered to belong with the "unreal loyalties." Moreover, as Appiah argues, Soviet style internationalism still insisted on at least one unreal loyalty, that of class. Therefore, it opposed values of cosmopolitanism by "ruling out loyalty to all of humanity" (5).

From another perspective, cosmopolitanism can be viewed as a form of opening up in one's value system, habits, and general cultural traits to other people, other customs, and ways of living. Thus, Diogenes was the first cosmopolitan: his home was everywhere, his customs and ways of thinking he claimed not to distinctively belong to "unreal loyalties," such as his polis. In this sense, as opposed to Appiah's reasoning, which aims at disconnecting the two notions, Communist proletariat internationalism does bear a resemblance to cosmopolitanism, as both propagated a certain openness to others.

Martha Nussbaum's version of cosmopolitanism, grounded in equal human dignity, also backs a functional similarity between internationalism and cosmopolitanism. Nussbaum claims that both ideas entail a certain respect for equal human dignity and with that, a set of obligations towards our fellow humans, or fellow workers (3). In the two literary Hungaries of Fischer and Bradbury, internationalism appears as a restricted and institutionally coerced form of cosmopolitanism that is a noble but, in practice, flawed ideal, not devoid of forced unreal loyalties even. Consequently, in its ideal form, internationalism is a very similar concept to cosmopolitanism insofar as they both propose equal human dignity, openness in identity, and an active nurturing of loyalty towards fellow humans. In its practised, and markedly Second World form, however, internationalism can be conceptualised as opposed to cosmopolitanism.

Around the time of the 1989 Political Changes, two opposing political communities propagated openness to the post-war or post-Wall East-Central European communities, each driven by antagonistic motives. Could this be a difference merely in the direction of the desired opening, namely, its Eastern or Western orientation? Kendall, Woodward, and Skrbis, in their introduction to the volume *Sociology of Cosmopolitanism,* call attention to the tendency that the idea of cosmopolitanism appears in totalising, unfamiliar, and altogether too abstract discourses (4). Certainly, behind these centralised catchwords, there lies a constantly lived local and familiar reality which these novels could give an artistic image of. If, under the banner of either internationalism or cosmopolitanism, some form of cross-national and cross-cultural interaction could be promoted during two such ideologically opposed periods as Hungarian state socialism (1948–1989) and the 1990s, which emerged in opposition to that very regime, then there must be a contradiction at play. Such a repeated call for opening up makes one wonder: could there be some lingering wounds or empty spaces hidden under such an evident promotion of cosmopolitanism? The question arises whether Hungarians, both in their post-WWII collective mental state and in the aftermath of 40 years of Totalitarian Communism, were so local-minded and probably even provincial that learned minds and political leaders saw the need to promote cosmopolitanism. The answer might be affirmative, but as Appiah claims, cosmopolitanism does not aim to efface local differences, and in its tenable form, it builds upon partiality (5). This partial version of cosmopolitanism, more akin to postcolonial discourse than to the Kantian idea of cosmopolitanism, is generated in the face of the closed nature of Hungary during the historical periods these novels describe. It was often antagonistic to a more universalist version of global community building, which the Soviet type of Modernity was promoting in the name of internationalism. An investigation into possibilities, agencies, and spatial conditions of a diverse and more democratic cosmopolitanism and its representation in these novels can shed light on the memory work post-1989 ex-Second Bloc countries, especially Hungary, had to engage in when they attempted to come to terms with their state socialist past and its messages of cosmopolitanism.

Places of Absence

Under the Frog takes place mostly in Budapest, and the Hungarian settings of *Doctor Criminale* are also restricted to the capital city, which is described as the sole centre of, or rather, the only place worth mentioning in Hungary. This has obvious reasons in *Under the Frog*, since the events of 1956 concentrated the narrative space to the city, and such a portrayal is also logical in *Doctor Criminale*, a campus novel where the protagonist carries out his research about the renowned Hungarian scholar-philosopher in the university circles of Budapest. Certainly, Budapest appears in these novels as more or less the only cosmopolitan metropolis in Hungary.

Such a vision seems grounded, since Budapest, as depicted in these two novels, was undoubtedly a shallow version of its past self with regard to various aspects of cosmopolitanism. *Under the Frog* describes Budapest in its bleakest eras: WWII and the Rákosi era totalitarian terror. On the other hand, *Doctor Criminale* depicts the capital city at the moment of the change of the political system in 1990. These works describing the city either in the very closed period of state socialism, or in the immediate aftermath of it, also reflect upon the pre-war past when the city had indeed been a metropolitan centre and a bustling cosmopolitan city. In his book, *Identity and the Urban Experience:* Fin-de-Siècle *Budapest* (2004), Gábor Gyáni provides a detailed description of the Hungarian capital during the dual monarchy. Some aspects of Budapest cosmopolitanism he mentions include the multitude of languages spoken in its streets (189), the city's multicultural intellectual elite contributing to the artistic and scientific scene of European modernity (209), or specific urban mechanisms of inter-ethnic relationships flourishing in the city in the late 1800s (177).

Thus, when searching for cosmopolitanism in the city, the Budapest of these novels is a place of absence. The bleakly abandoned and closed urban areas, once much busier with foreigners and expats, appear as alternative, sometimes fictional, sometimes narrated, and sometimes fantastic alternative spaces. The different historical times that belong to these alternative spaces of the city feature as palimpsests of Budapest and, in turn, can be described in the creative coexistence of spaces of reality, of communicative and personal memory, as well as in the places of official discourses and utopian desires referring to a future, still-to-be-realised urban space.

A place of absence is constituted by the quality of a joint communal feeling that something is conspicuously missing. The lack can be constructed by societal fantasies of betterment, shared cultural memory of a place once having been very different, or—and this version is very typical of totalitarian regimes—by the figurative lies of official discourses. In this final case, the place often shows its face to those who live there, shamelessly deviating from its official descriptions. These different conceptions of twentieth-century Budapest form layers of spaces piled upon one another, as described by Henri Lefebvre in his foundational work entitled *The Production of Space* (8). This essay aims to find literary figurations of such spaces in which cosmopolitanism often appears as a marked absence.

Lived spaces give rise to fields of subjectivity, which Lefebvre conceptualises to be the result of a productive interaction between subjects and the spaces around them (18). Communist and postcommunist ideological backgrounds and their nexus to the Other also affect spaces, which in turn defines the position of subjects moving around in them. This essay also aims at mapping the discursive formulation of the heteroimage of Hungarians in their relationships to the Other in British novels about East-Central Europe. This is especially intriguing given the postmodern nomadic identity of many English writers of East-Central Europe novels. Writers ranging from Bruce Chatwin and Tom McCarthy to Patrick McGuinness belong to the group of citizens of the world who typically spent expat years in various countries and formulated their fictional accounts of East-Central Europe from that position. Both novels can be categorised as postmodern *Bildungsromane*: the protagonists, Francis and Gyuri, embark upon their journeys from a fairly closed mindset, both desiring contact with foreign people, and at the end, they turn into opening up to the Other, albeit there are differences in the manner of that opening. Certainly, Bradbury's novel prognosticates a unified Europe where values and a general postmodern attitude to the relativised ideas of truth and morality will be shared by the English protagonists and their newly acquired Hungarian friends. This was still a dream in the Hungary of 1990 when the novel takes place, directing the cosmopolitanism of Bradbury's novel into fantasyland. In contrast, Gyuri from *Under the Frog* is forced to emigrate and be "open" to other cultures as a refugee in Europe, because real, oppositional cosmopolitanism was impossible in Soviet-oppressed Hungary after 1956. It only lived elsewhere or in the past, that is, in places of absence.

Cosmopolitanism Desired

Under the Frog begins with a brilliant *mise-en-abyme* about Rákosi-era Hungary: the basketball players travel around in Hungary fully naked (for fun) in a train carriage once owned by the Nazis, while wondering who the informant is among them. The *mise-en-abyme* at first reveals the atmosphere and feeling of the state socialist regime where people had to fear the informant all the time, even among close friends or family. Travelling naked in a train carriage encapsulates this experience of being exposed to friends. Secondly, travelling (or rather the lack thereof) is associated with substitutions, such as fantasising about travelling in one's head:

> Gyuri settled down to think about being a streetsweeper while he gazed out of the window at the countryside that went past quite lazily despite the train's billing as an express. The streetsweeper was a sort of cerebral chewing gum that Gyuri popped in on long journeys. A streetsweeper. Where? A streetsweeper in London. Or New York. Or Cleveland; he wasn't that fussy. Some modest streetsweeping anywhere. Anywhere in the West. Anywhere outside. (3)

This figuration opens up a place of absence. On the very first pages of the fictional universe, where readerly expectations would forecast the first world-building description of the location where the story takes place, this text ironically highlights a characteristic lack in the nature of any places in Hungary under the Rákosi era, namely, that these places fail to be other places than what they actually are. Viewed through Gyuri's eyes, it is a very harsh judgement upon the countryside that it is characterised chiefly by the lack of certain qualities. This truth is revealed through Gyuri's mildly conveyed discontent at the train's "laziness" or the inferiority of his overall conditions, in which even street sweeping in Cleveland would seem better than travelling as celebrated basketball players of the nation.

The above-quoted passage also draws a parallel between the physical imprisonment, the one socialist citizens had to endure in the form of the closed borders of the Iron Curtain, and the psychological imprisonment in one's thoughts that one does not dare to reveal, given the fear of the possible informant even in friendly or work-related communities. The gesture of gazing out at a landscape, through the windows of a rushing train, involves a certain wishful longing that is linked to even farther places such as Cleveland or New York. This scene is an example of the psychological imprisonment Davis refers to in calling attention to how moving aimlessly from place to place also carries this meaning (58)—something Gyuri is constantly doing in the book. Consequently, in addition to the scene being a *mise-en-abyme* for Rákosi-era Hungary in general, it can also be read as a metonymy for a prison cell instalment. Gyuri's above-quoted predicament is likened to a prison cell where the prisoner walks up and down aimlessly (similarly to the basketball team's journeys), suffers from solitude (just as Gyuri does in a community filled with informants), and hopelessly desires to be somewhere else (just as Gyuri wishes to be outside Hungary).

The metaphor of the "cerebral chewing gum" also suggests the aimlessness of musing over Gyuri's desire to emigrate: after all, chewing gum is a food not to be consumed, which supports the idea of uselessness as an image.[1] Davis also calls attention to the parallel between Gyuri's desire to be elsewhere and Fischer and his parents' immigrant plight which affirms the claim that "those who escape physically seem no better off than those who remain" (58). Thus, this passage also sheds light on how fruitless both striving for and succeeding in emigration might be, since neither grants the real community of a cosmopolitan kind.

Still, in his futile desire to emigrate, Gyuri serves as the mouthpiece for the people who desire to escape from the People's Republic. Socialist Hungary was the alleged paradise of workers, where workers typically did nothing more than trying to sabotage work at the same time as longing to depart to the imperialist West. This section exemplifies the ironical link between cosmopolitan desires and global capitalist exploitation, which Gyuri and his friends would not have any grievances against, had there been an opportunity to flee the closed, bleak, and poor Communist Hungary. However, what they desire is a more comfortable life provided by the recognition of human dignity. Nussbaum also calls attention to the fact that the theory of cosmopolitanism excludes exploitation from its earliest conceptualisations. She refers to Cicero, who argued that respect for the other human being indicates treating him as an end rather than a means (Nussbaum 27). Still, Gyuri's desire to escape from socialist Budapest to be exploited in the West is the enunciation of cosmopolitanism in *Under the Frog*'s portrayal of the 1950s, fictionalising Hungary as a space that lacks certain features which would make it London, Cleveland, or New York. The absence of these places defines Hungary as a fictional space.

1 On a marginal note to the chewing-gum metaphor, these types of sweets had not been widespread in socialist Hungary in the 1950s. Hungarians tasted their first chewing-gums only later, in the Kádár era, as Ferenc Hammer describes in his study, "Sartorial Manoeuvres in the Dusk: Blue Jeans in Socialist Hungary" (58). This anachronism could signify a literary image of the 1950s in *Under the Frog*, which was projected back from the Hungary of the 1980s as Fischer experienced it then.

This cry for being elsewhere refers not so much to an openness and desire to learn about other cultures as to better conditions. However, cosmopolitanism can also be traced in this as it inherently entails a desire for general human dignity overarching nations and continents. As opposed to this, the official discourse and practice of proletariat internationalism provided people with a limited cosmopolitanism stretching only or mostly to the East. Such ties stretching over borders leave traditional international links of Central European cultures out of consideration. As a result, these international bonds often ended up as failure:

> they were intrigued by the arrival of a Chinese basketball player at the camp ... , but after that, despite the undeniable warmth, cordiality and curiosity on both sides, things slowed down somewhat, because whoever had arranged for him to attend the camp had either overlooked or forgotten that Wu, as he seemed to be called, spoke no Hungarian, no English, no German, no Russian or any other language of which anyone in the camp had a smattering. No one, of course, spoke any Chinese. (Fischer 114–115)

The lack of any real contact with the Chinese comrade ironically illustrates the failure of such enforced encounters. In providing reasons for the failure, institutionalised and centralised enforcement can be mentioned, as well as an accompanying disregard for the local needs and facilities, such as the language skills of the participants. This negligence is manifested in the unnamed official who arranged this visit and "had either overlooked or forgotten" about the local conditions. The first clause of the above quote is in accordance with Gyuri's fantasy about being a street sweeper in New York: it expresses a genuine desire to have encounters with the Other. And after all, cosmopolitanism is about an imaginary connection (Appiah 77) at first established in the mind. Still, however strong Gyuri's imaginary connection to abroad might be, the basketball players' initial interest in the Chinese comrade is swept aside by the totalising vision of internationalism organised in a bureaucratic system as a façade for real international ties.

But then, totalitarian socialism was not a regime to face reality. It lived in its own spatial utopia of cosmopolitan workers' fantasy, which is discursively created by the totalitarian doublespeak. In his workplace, the GANZ-MÁVAG factory in Csepel, Gyuri Fischer lives among the spatial settings of the figurative lies of proletariat internationalism and the friendly states of People's Republics. The factory yard is installed in such a way that it pushes the official international narrative on users of that space:

> As Gyuri entered the main yard, he passed a board which was bedecked with amateurish red decorations and which had a heading "Socialist Brigades" ... Alongside these displays was an elegantly penned scroll, "Hungarian-Soviet Friendship Society," heading a series of ailing black and white photographs of Soviet lathe-operators watching Hungarian lathe-operators lathe-operate with avuncular, elder-brotherly encouragement, and photographs of Hungarian lathe-operators watching Soviet lathe-operators lathe-operate, with younger-brother wide-eyed admiration. (Fischer 81)

In this excerpt, the inequality between two cultures is expressed by the younger vs. elder brother metaphor. Somewhat opposed to this perceived superiority of the Soviet brothers, this cross-cultural bond is expressed in a joint, markedly industrial activity, suggesting a more egalitarian working-class solidarity. This proletarian togetherness can be seen as an intended true cosmopolitan experience. Especially, as it situates the Soviet and Hungarian bond in opposition to the global metropolis and the generally invisible labour that makes its glamour possible. In her book, *Cosmopolitanism and Space* (2014), Emily Johansen calls attention to the prototypically individual focus on *flânerie* in cosmopolitan studies, which tends to disregard the people and their backyard spaces which make the urban space possible in the first place (57).

Although the centralised intention may seem benevolent and true to the spirit of international socialism, the irony of the narration is evident. The direction of this irony is twofold: discursive and situational. The discursive irony appears in the repetition of the word "lathe-operate" and refers to the content of the cosmopolitan connection between the Soviet and Hungarian workers. This irony's edge directly questions the validity of such forced international relationships between lathe-operators, because what lathe-operators can teach each other is basically lathe-operating, which renders the point in such connections rather non-existent. Certainly, this is a middle-class view on lathe-operating, and holding such an opinion, Gyuri rather appears as an outsider when walking through the propaganda façades of the working-class paradise, the GANZ-MÁVAG yard. This outsider identity of his is probably enhanced by his being picked as a deterrent against crime in the socialist system. He is also often referred to as "class x," which denotes either an aristocratic or a middle-class background. As such, he is incapable of feeling true brotherhood with the Soviet workers; therefore, what Robbins calls "autonomous unforced appreciation of coherence ... among distinct cultural entities" (177), which would have been a precondition to real cosmopolitanism, remains unrealised in this scene as well.

Gyuri's outsider focalisation provides the other, situational irony of the above quote. The passage describes Gyuri's morning practice, which is not unlike that of all the other workers in the factory and throughout the country. They walk through cardboard façades of images of an experience; namely, a fruitful exchange of professional knowledge in the circle of foreign workers, which is practically impossible for them to experience. Travelling was a rare privilege in the period, as Gyuri's streetsweeping fantasy also illustrated. This irony also questions the meaning behind these cosmopolitan ties, as they only exist as a façade, not as an everyday reality.

Similarly, disregarding the historical reality, such propagandistic representations of international relations seem absurd in the light of the fact that Hungary was a victim of the "elder brother's" military occupation. This renders the "wide-eyed admiration" very unlikely. Appiah claims that any cosmopolitan community must rely upon a benevolence towards strangers (86), which is missing here on Gyuri's part, given the military and political oppression. Hungarian feelings for the Soviets are more accurately described by the 1956 Revolution than as a "younger brotherly wide-eyed admiration." Such farcical spatial settings as the yard described in the above quotation contribute to an abject subjectivity, victim to what Gideon Baker calls "imperialistic projections of identity" (107).

Apart from the blatant lie behind these international relationships, faking them also disregarded the traumatic Hungarian experiences of civilian encounters with the victorious and often very barbaric Soviet soldiers during WWII. Instead of shared acceptance of the Other and their outlook that Appiah claims to be the basis for mutual respect and universal human dignity (58), these enforced and imaginary ties with the "Soviet lathe-operators" were more similar to unhealthy attachments, such as Stockholm syndrome. The basis of such international ties always relied on the unity of the proletariat: an ideological link which was deemed more important than any previous altercation. Under such conditions, it is in no way surprising that Gyuri and his fellow-workers lack what Appiah calls "cosmopolitan curiosity" (13), at least concerning the Soviets.

In addition, such spatial representations of mendacious official discourses of international fraternity overshadowed the reality of a post-Holocaust, post-German-relocation Hungary, closed in by Stalinist terror. The actual lived space is restricted by a prohibition of travelling, by a foreign power's political oppression and the concomitant coercion of international relations, experienced by passers-by fleetingly glimpsing at placards on walls. The characters moving in these spaces are aware of the presence of the Second Bloc communities of the here and now, both actual and imagined or forced, but they are also haunted by the denied but very palpable absence of certain other cosmopolitan communities they belong to: Western countries, emigrated friends and relatives.

Cosmopolitanism in the Past

The absence of once existing cosmopolitan urban life is most palpable in a spatial sense. Houses whose previous dwellers may never be seen again, whole districts whose inhabitants were forced out by wolfish ideologies, and even train carriages are spaces of memory. The absences they carry are linked to Central Europe's past: they talk about a pre-war cosmopolitanism. One example of this lost world of transnational and culturally colourful community is alluded to when a transformed railway building is mentioned. The now morally faultless workers' accommodation evokes memories of its previous function to welcome a cosmopolitan bourgeois public that frequented the prostitutes of Szeged:

> Just next to the railway station in Szeged was a high, redbrick building which now advertised itself as a hotel. It had been, as everyone knew, one of the most renowned brothels in Hungary before such dens of capitalist iniquity were closed down. Town, gown, yokels in their Sunday best (only worn at church, in a coffin, or at the knocking shop), commercial salesmen and royalty (admittedly only the Balkan variety) had all made their way through its portals. (Fischer 4)

This excerpt describes people finding home at the "knocking shop" and highlights social variety, by alluding to travelling people, salesmen, and the infamously rootless type of social class, the royalty. By ironically describing the royalty as "of the Balkan variety," the text proposes two fundamental characteristics of the visitors. Firstly, the word "variety" suggests the diversity of the customers. Secondly, the Balkans evoke a certain sense of chaos or a mixture of identities, given the tumultuous history and the many ethnic groups traditionally sharing this region. There is a third, and most ironic, meaning to this remark; namely, that it questions the authenticity of the royal lineage of those claiming to be royalty and Balkan at the same time. This is due to the relatively short history of Balkan monarchies, given that their disentanglement from the Ottoman Empire only occurred late in the nineteenth century. However, in all cases, this passage very vividly evokes the cosmopolitan array of these people meeting in the same place.

The passage very graphically evokes multinational people of all walks of life. This scenery appears vividly in the minds of those onlookers of the now silent or boring workers' hostel who are aware of its past. The contrast between the pre-war bustling of bourgeois people and the boredom of the disciplined workers of the 1950s suggests another type of antagonism between these two worlds. The pre-war urban scenery evokes a brothel which is necessarily a place of either revelry or the shameful hiding of this for a great number of people who all meet here for the same reason, namely, to fulfil their suppressed desires. Whereas, the workers' hostel represents the tedious sincerity of a socialist space of surveillance, hiding no secrets at least on an official level. The redbrick building used to be a kind of Foucauldian heterotopia for capitalist society: all kinds of people gathered here doing what is forbidden in their soppy-stern (after Philip Larkin) *fin-de-siècle* reality. This place was once indeed cosmopolitan, which is proved by the colourful list of the different social groups. The phrase "town and gown" evokes the youth of a university town, "yokels" represent the rural people, whereas "salesmen and royalty" represent the middle- and upper-classes of bygone Hungary. The evoked image of the "den of capitalist iniquity" in which hidden fulfilments of forbidden desires could be exercised is in stark contrast with the monotonous unanimity that state socialism had to offer: lathe-operators boringly lathe-operate. The cosmopolitan freedom encapsulated by this place exists only in the mind, and, in actuality, the building carries the absence of its past self.

The past multiculturalism is even more deplorable given the unanimity today's inhabitants of the same place display when the former prostitutes are taken on as workers, all "wearing factory overalls" (4). The socialist image of community entails a totalitarian monotony which opposes the condition that, according to Robbins, would make cosmopolitanism possible. He states that "the perspective of the cosmopolitan must entail relationships to a plurality" (177), which is impossible if everybody wears the same overall, is allocated the same job and the same workers' home to live in. This is rather the world of the Soviet-type internationalist vision.

The Austro-Hungarian monarchy appears as a truly cosmopolitan surrounding in a similar passage in Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale* as well. This novel also refers to the urban space of pre-war Hungary when it was visited by a diverse international public:

> Back in the days of the Dual Monarchy and the belle époque, the tired and sated aristocrats of middle Europe had, I gathered, come here to its great Grand Hotel for the famous hot sulphur baths, hoping to purge away their old amorous and gastronomic excesses and at the same time start on new ones. Rumour has it that Franz Schubert was made better here, though we can take it that Franz Kafka was made a good deal worse. (Bradbury 92)

As opposed to the previous passage, these lines call attention to the era of Hungary's history which linked it to the West, strictly forbidden fruit for socialist citizens in the novel's present. The quote evokes the diction of touristic flyers, thus excessively calling attention to the lack of any contact with the previously so frequent visitors from the West. Even categorising a German and a Czech Jew as coming from the West would have been meaningless in the times of the *belle époque* conjured up in this quote. Schubert and Kafka had been characters belonging to the same cultural zone of *Mitteleuropa* as Budapest. The ironic reference to their illnesses, supposedly cured or made worse by Hungarian baths, suggests a close relationship between these cultural zones in which the Pest gossip could gain access to such intimate details of the great men.

This description, such as the previous one, montages the bustling cosmopolitan cities of the past onto their own slightly dilapidated and rundown present of either the 1950s or the 1980s. These are places which fulfil the characters' fantasies nostalgically: there is a metonymic relationship between these places and their own past. Madina Tlostanova's notion tempolocality aptly describes such intersections of space and time. In her analysis of postsocialist modern subjectivities, Tlostanova aims at calling attention to the complex relationships characters moving in postsocialist cultural spheres maintain with space and time. Following but also decolonising both Bakhtin's chronotope and Foucault's heterotopia, she calls the palimpsest of overlapping postsocialist spaces tempolocalities (Tlostanova 94–96). This quotation from *Doctor Criminale* demonstrates a typical postsocialist tempolocality in which the past of a city is deemed more worthy, since it contained cosmopolitan encounters with such great artists as Schubert and Kafka, whereas the present exhales nothing but dilapidation.

The tempolocality that this passage creates does not exist in isolation, or merely in the fictional world. Tlostanova claims that it is "important to take into account not only the hermetic tempolocality of the fictional text but also the wider chronotope of its context" (120). Therefore, the sarcastic tone of the above quotation cannot be missed. It is apt that the tempolocality of the sulphur baths frequented by aristocrats of Europe was referred to as *belle époque*, and the French term exhales *fin-de-siècle* elegance. However, the suggestion that Schubert and Kafka came to Budapest only to deal with their physical needs, such as "purging away" their pains or taking part in "amorous and gastronomic excesses," leads to the conclusion that Hungary was a space for a menial type of cosmopolitan encounters, which suggest a colonial relationship between the visitors and Budapest. John Lukács, in his description of Budapest in the 1900s also highlights the overabundance of nightlife the city was Europe-famous for, and which enriched the place with an air of a "late aristocratic kind" and with "the desire to please [which] had a definite priority over the wish to be loved" (259).

Such a denigratory perception of Hungary heavily relies on a self-perception not devoid of the self-colonising attitude Alexander Kiossev describes in his study, "The Self-Colonizing Metaphor" (2008). Francis's intra-diegetic narration is speckled with references to information from the locals. One such instance can also be found in the above insertion "I gathered." The positive values associated with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchical era of Budapest, such as the aristocratic tourists, the present company of great artists, even the French term *belle époque*, form an integral part of a self-colonising cosmopolitanism Kiossev describes as a "resilient image of 'our own,' which was both self-ironic and hostile toward others." This presentation of Budapest in *Doctor Criminale* suggests that it is a place where cosmopolitanism is now already sadly absent. As Kiossev claims, such a self-irony is also concomitant with hostility towards others, and this might be linked to a specific

East-Central European inferiority complex,[2] since mourning the richer past self of a city also entails being blind to its present values.

Edward Soja denotes a parallel existence in chronologically different points of a single space a palimpsest (qtd. in Didier 7). Nostalgically looking back upon a desired but already past cosmopolitan urban space in the two investigated novels calls for a revisiting of the differentiation between the notions of cosmopolitanism, part of the Western tradition, and internationalism, belonging more to socialist modernity. Internationalism was the technical term in the Cold War-era Second Bloc, where the novels take place, and this term often denoted the cross-cultural experiences sought after in the texts in the name of cosmopolitanism. However, internationalism is the more politically loaded term, as Robbins argues (183); whereas, cosmopolitanism, per Appiah, is arguably an ancient notion of global citizenship, that is, "universality plus difference" (85). Nonetheless, my usage of the term "internationalism" was aimed at evoking the atmosphere of state socialist times since this is the endemic term for the historical tempolocality of Hungary between the 1950s and the 1990s.

At this point, it is also worthwhile to differentiate between these two notions for the sake of the following. How is cosmopolitanism different from internationalism as it was used in socialist Second Bloc countries during the Cold War era? As Emily Johansen claims, cosmopolitanism is often perceived as if in an everlasting present, contrasting with the historicity of the local (21). The traditional perception of cosmopolitanism posits this desired universal human community historically following a local and particular past. However, this chronological order was reversed in socialist Budapest as depicted in the analysed novels. The fictional bleak socialist spaces occupy the space of bustling cosmopolitan Central European metropolises of the pre-war times. Here, it is the past that is cosmopolitan and teeming with rich variety, and it is the socialist present that is international only in name. This socialist internationality could not enhance cultural understanding, because "no one spoke any Chinese" (Fischer 115). Therein lies one answer to the question of differentiating between the terms cosmopolitanism and internationalism: the former embraces differences, whereas the latter only aims at contact, but mostly on the grounds of a forced joint Proletarian sameness. The intercultural hybridisation

2 I wrote about various literary versions of a specific East-Central European inferiority complex in my dissertation entitled *The Postmodern Baroque: Bruce Chatwin's* Utz *and British Fiction on East-Central Europe at the Time of the 1989 Political Changes* (2021), 14, 45–46.

embedded in cosmopolitanism was pointed out by Marie Ostby, who argued that "cosmopolitanism rests on the hope that different societies will embody different values" (265). This acceptance of difference is absent in the socialist spaces described by the two novels. The fictional East-Central Europe is described as a space where people are constantly reminded of the absence of the past as a desire or a fantasy of cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism in Fantasyland

After the Fall of the Wall, Second Bloc metropolises quickly shifted from this schizophrenic internationalism towards becoming exotic tourist destinations for Westerners in the 1990s. This new role entailed a new type of cosmopolitan experiences. Malcolm Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale* depicts the immediate aftermath of 1989. This textual space displays a split consciousness constituted in a Budapest that is always aware of its own absences, similarly to Fischer's novel. Bradbury's early 1990s Buda and Pest are also engaged in a deep desire for the presence of an unknown West. This desire is akin to one described in Lacan's model of subjectivity. Lacan claims that, at the centre of subjects, there is always an absence of the loss of the symbolic mother; and the constant drive of the subject is directed to fulfil this void. In its primordial drive to fulfil an empty inside space, the Lacanian subject intends to pursue external objects which will substitute for its yearning for a lost centre. British novels tend to portray East-Central Europe as deeply desiring the West precisely in this manner, as if Western Europe were a long-lost central meaning of a very own East-Central European identity, as I also argue in my dissertation (Harasztos, *The Postmodern Baroque* 87). Francis, the English journalist who comes to Budapest in 1990 to continue his research on the great Hungarian philosopher, Bazlo Criminale, meets one of the renowned scholar's disciples, Sandor Hollo. It is in their conversation during the sightseeing walk in which the ex-university lecturer shows Francis around Budapest that Hollo highlights the simulacrum nature of the city:

> "Here we have built a great European city, two in fact, one old and one new. Our only problem is our European cities are not in Europe at all. Budapest is Buenos Aires on the Danube, all a pretend." "How is it a pretend?" I asked. "First, nearly all

> these buildings were not designed for here at all," said Hollo, "See there our lovely Parliament, down by the river, which hardly meets, by the way. The architect loved your House of Commons, so he made us one. The Chain Bridge, built by a Scotsman in a kilt. Eiffel from France made the railway station. Our boulevards are from Paris, our coffee houses from Vienna, our banks are English, the Hilton American. You see why they make films here, we are everything. And this old castle, Fisherman's Bastion, from which nobody has ever fished, by the way, was built as a fantasy at the turn of the century. So you see it is Disneyland, and we are Mickey Mouse."
>
> "I think it's a magnificent city," I said. "I too," said Hollo, "A great unreal city." (98–99)

This excerpt illustrates how the past cosmopolitan nature of Budapest, manifested in the contact the historical buildings maintain with Britain, the Eiffel Tower, or Vienna, and in an old desire for Budapest to belong to the West, created a space that is unreal and fantastic in its cosmopolitanism. However, this fantasyland, just like the Hungarian university teacher's name, is entirely Hollo(w); it lacks its own culture. Instead of nurturing his own values, Hollo, and, in his opinion, his own city as well want to imitate others, especially Western Europe. This gesture embodies the opposite of what Ostby calls "rooted cosmopolitanism" (263); in fact, it could be labelled as rootless cosmopolitanism.

Such a rendering is a considerably essentialising reproach on Hollo's part, and it is also a fundamentally structuralist criticism of the postmodern ethos where inherent meaning and quality are replaced by the interplay of surfaces. As Vinod Gopi states, Bradbury's use of architecture highlights the postmodern qualities of Budapest, metonymically equating the capital city thus to random eclectic architectural quotations (159–161). The negative aspect of lacking any essential culture of its own makes Budapest a great "unreal city" in this novel.

Nonetheless, it is striking how the conceptualisation of this self-colonising rootlessness or Hollo(w)ness is put in a conversation with an Englishman who, in the main plotline of the novel, searches for the final meaning of a Hungarian philosopher and, finally, Hungary itself. An answer this passage seemingly gives to Francis for his epistemological quest is that the touristically essentialising meaning of Hungary can be found in its desire to collect everything from the West and copy all this.

However, Hollo may very well have formulated the meaning of his land a little differently for someone else. His cynical and self-deprecatory answer may be a reaction to the very touristic curiosity Francis displayed instead of the cosmopolitan curiosity Appiah argues for (14). After thorough reconsideration of his journalistic mission, the absurdity of understanding a whole country by visiting it for two weeks, talking to a handful of Hungarians and viewing the most famous sights stands clearly in front of the reader. Consequently, Hollo's self-definition might be akin to what Homi Bhabha calls "sly civility." Bhabha claims that as a resistance to the Benjaminian "homogenous empty time of Western nationalist discourse" (qtd. in Bhabha 95), which describes the history of others as fixed civil progress, colonised discourses often fall back upon sly civility using a syntax of deferral by which colonised subjects create a "sign under erasure" (Bhabha 95). Consequently, reflecting on the capitalistic interest the West takes in Budapest, namely, the fact that they make films here pretending Budapest can be any other city, the meaning that Hollo might, in fact, hide behind his sly civility is expressed in this passage. He might not identify with everything being a copy in Budapest but feels that this is how Westerners see it. By the above quote, he might suggest that if they want to see Hungary as a simulacrum West, then he can very well serve this need. Hollo might only curtail this narrative about "Buenos Aires on the Danube" (98) precisely to serve the amount of interest these Westerners take in his country. Hollo, after all, is a yuppie, a very active young businessman, who immediately intends to take part in capitalism after 1989. Certainly, it could be stated that such a capitalistic background is just as detrimental to the effectiveness of post-1989 cosmopolitan encounters as the imperialistic one was during the Soviet oppression of Hungary.

Enunciative Focalisation of Central European Spaces

The rooted, rootless, desired, or forced cosmopolitan encounters of the novels are determined by the spaces where they are set. Besides, spaces also give rise to specific subject positions for the focalisation of what Michel de Certeau calls the "indication of the body within the discourse" (116). These focalisations can be pinned down in characters, actions, and emotions that make certain appropriations of spaces possible, and which express as well as subvert the confined socialist Budapest as narrative thirdspaces. Thirdspace is Edward Soja's coinage that denotes a complex understanding of spaces in their representations. The term refers to the space of the inhabitants and users who directly live the space across the symbols that accompany it (67). I use "thirdspace" accordingly as a space experienced in engagement with utopian, political, or artistic appropriations, in many cases subverting these ideological co-optations.

Fischer's narrative of socialist Budapest returns to an accentuated working-class place, the GANZ-MÁVAG factory. This ideologically saturated place gives rise to alternative spatial experiences resulting in a complex thirdspace. The factory yard is typically appropriated by socialist discourse, since, on propagandistic pictures, Soviet lathe-operators are displayed while lathe-operating. Gyuri's enunciative focalisation of the wall in the description provides an interesting perspective:

> Not far from these displays, but diametrically opposed to them, on the other side of the yard, was an enormous caricature of US President Harry Truman made out of cardboard. At the foot of this caricature was a board with the inscription "FRIENDS OF TRUMAN" in wobbly calligraphy, and in less bold lettering, "I'm out to destroy the gains of the people of democratic Hungary, please help me by taking it easy. My thanks." On the board, which looked like an old situations vacant notice that used to be hung outside the factory, various names had been inserted. There wasn't much seasonal variation in this either. Top of the list was Pataki, Tibor, followed by Fischer, Gyorgy. (82)

This ironic fictionalised description features the GANZ factory as a thirdspace where Gyuri is at once an ostracised member of the socialist community and a boy whose only possibility of getting associated with America (a country of his desires) is this ludicrously didactic billboard in the heart of a lathe-factory in totalitarian Budapest. This type of cosmopolitanism, which John McBratney labels "detested cosmopolitanism" (530), accommodates a field of subjectivity where those who have desires to learn more about and have more contact with other cultures than the strictly propagated communist ones are immediately punished by the ruling social order. Gyuri focalises his workplace with the eye of the outcast, the instrument of whose banishing from the community is the much-desired fellow-feeling of cosmopolitan relations he dreams about.

This passage is also one instance of the many in Fischer's work where the burlesque style is in stark contrast with the tragic content of the end. The ludicrously overachiever socialist brigade's notice about Gyuri's "destroying the gains of the people" by simply being late eventually turns out to be true at the end when he takes part in the 1956 revolution. His being a "friend of Truman" also gains a tragic weight when he is forced to live abroad after the Soviet repression of the revolution. As Gerd Bayer claims, the earlier cheerful tone of the novel, promising light entertainment, later leaves the readers baffled with the tragic ending. This betrayal of the characters' belief in a better future teaches the readers metatextually not to trust narratives of positive progress, akin to what its protagonist, the 1956 freedom fighter, Gyuri learns (452). The style of the above quote seems to highlight the inner controversy of the content. It not only deals ironically with mendacious socialist propaganda of a suggested anti-communist alliance with the US but also emphasises the fantasy nature of such ties. After all, Gyuri, who kept dreaming about being a streetsweeper in Cleveland, could only secure an association with a cardboard Truman.

The desire for a closer knowledge of the Other is directed towards the Hungarians in *Doctor Criminale*. The English focaliser of Bradbury's novel gradually becomes immersed in his search for the great philosopher, Bazlo Criminale. He meets university teachers and publishers to gather information on him, but the great man is as elusive as fixed meaning in deconstruction. During his search, Francis meets Hungarians in touristic spaces, such as restaurants or the Matthias Church. Such spaces define how the Hungarians treat him: firstly, as a rich Westerner to be exploited, whom they ask to pay for their meals in the restaurant, and, secondly, as a higher authority, to whom they report even on each other.

> She was blonde, blue-eyed, a Hungarian beauty … ; Hollo waved at her; she waved back. "Oh, I just forgot to mention," he said, "I told a friend of mine you would buy her lunch. You don't mind, I hope?" (103)
>
> …
>
> We went outside, into the square. Here Ildiko stopped on the pavement, and stuck her arm through mine. … "This fine philosopher, you know how he lives now?" asked Ildiko. "Fixing things," I said. "He talks to German and American businessmen in the bars and cafes, and promises he will find them some investment," said Ildiko, "Next he goes to some more bars and cafes, and talks to the government

> officials, telling them he can find them hard currency and takeovers. So a little bit here, a little bit there, and everyone has something. Be a little cautious." (106)

Thus, Francis, the English focaliser, saw the Hungarians as desperate people who expect Westerners to be like capitalist messiahs and authoritarian superiors to them. This role, allocated to the Brits in the novel, is manifested in scenes such as the restaurant dining and the sightseeing, in which the Hungarians compete with each other for Francis's favours.

These Hungarians deliberately seek cosmopolitan encounters, but they do not approach the Other on equal terms. They behave self-colonisingly towards themselves vis-à-vis Francis, just as someone coming from what Alexander Kiossev calls "culture of absences" would. Ildiko has not known him for more than a couple of hours and is ready to report on her possibly much older friend, Sandor, to Francis. Reasons behind this are unclear: they might lie in old habits from the not-so-distant socialist system of informants, or in much more actual self-interest. Later, it also turns out that Sandor was not entirely selfless in introducing Ildiko to Francis either, as she in a later phase of the story, cheats some easy money out of the Englishman, probably in a prearranged way.

Self-colonisation in this case happens not only on the level of cultural identification, but also on a very concrete economic level. Hollo and Ildiko do not consider, or more likely do not have the means, to form a fruitful engagement, cultural or economic, with the visiting Englishman but take him as an instant source to be exploited with the quickest means possible. Thus, they make Francis invite them for a dinner with what Homi Bhabha calls "sly civility"—further showcased by the fact that Hollo pretends to have forgotten to mention that he had invited another Hungarian to the restaurant on Francis's expense. The other, Ildiko, is already there, so the situation is irreversible without severe uncivility, which Francis would not risk, given that he meets the troublesome ex-university teacher in order to gain information from him on Bazlo Criminale. Hollo keeps the pretence of civility towards the Englishman, but, with Bhabha's sly civility, his behaviour includes "the native refusal to satisfy the coloniser's narrative demand" (Bhabha 99). This narrative demand would be to uphold the European norms in which nobody is forced into situations in which they have to pay without offering. However, honouring this European norm would uphold the coloniser's narrative, namely, that the participants of this situation are equally gentlemen, equally well-off, and endowed with equal opportunities. As opposed to this narrative, Hollo's sly civility reveals the self-colonising aspect of the situation. The Hungarian ex-academic reads it in such a way that, if this rich Westerner wants information from him, it seems only fitting to manipulate him into a position where he cannot avoid paying for his time, perhaps even footing the bill for dinner with his friends.

In the above episode, Sandor and Ildiko, the Hungarian characters, are focalised in a way that their inferior economic and imaginatively self-colonised position in relation to Francis is enunciated clearly. The space is a rich restaurant in the Buda castle where they steal a ride in return for some information, but Francis fails to receive anything from them in the end. Although they are freeloading, their position, enunciatively focalised in the restaurant, is still that of a respected and welcome guest eating a dinner they cannot afford. They enter into the Lacanian realm of the Imaginary, embodying façade-like identities in that situation. The thirdspaces of British fictional Budapest reflect an intersection of self-colonising desires. The enunciative focalisations display people either ironically missing and desiring real cosmopolitan experiences or exploiting the presence of somebody from another culture in order to appear higher prestige in their own. The scene between these three characters, indeed, pictures an "unreal city."

Partial Cosmopolitanism

By the various agencies enunciated in Budapest, the local engages in dialogue with larger narratives of the global, such as Communist internationalism and postmodernist multiculturalism. They all enrich the local possibilities of spatial cosmopolitanism or the lack thereof. In what Appiah names "partial cosmopolitanism," local characters give their specific answers to global narratives too: "loyalties and local allegiances determine ... who we are" (Appiah 5). In the last chapter of this study, I will investigate how, in Appiah's sense, these literary works display some of the answers that locals from Budapest provided for the global cosmopolitan issues Communism and immediate post-Communism raise.

The first half of *Under the Frog* describes the thirdspaces and the focalisations of the lived social order as giving rise to impossible, detested, nostalgic, and desired cosmopolitanisms of state socialism. Then, as the historical novel turns towards events of the 1956 Revolution, possibilities of real togetherness linking people with different cultural or national backgrounds improve suddenly. The 1956 Revolution filled the empty and mendacious international community of Second Bloc nations with real (anti-totalitarian) meaning. Gyuri experiences his first love affair with Jadwiga, a Polish guest student, who, together with other Poles and Soviets, joins the Hungarian freedom fighting.[3] This community of shared values even creates a glorious few days of realised communism, since the fighters share their goods as people in the communist utopia would:

> Jadwiga was wearing her quilted Soviet jacket, the pelt of a dead Soviet soldier, Gyuri thought bleakly. He had taken weapons from the dead internationalists, but weapons were somehow faithless, they didn't belong to anyone, they were just carried. (Fischer 233–234)

Calling the enemy "internationalists" is, of course, ironic, as the freedom fighters are the ones who really are international and cosmopolitan in their Hungarian–Polish–Russian loyalty against the nationalist and aggressive Soviet oppression. In the fictional 1956 freedom fight, a Polish and a Soviet soldier, named Witold and Victor, respectively, discuss the possibility of toppling Stalinism together in their respective countries with a Hungarian on the barricades: "'Budapest today, Warsaw next week. Right Witold?' Witold nodded in agreement. Then she added in Russian: 'Moscow, let's be realistic, one month.' Victor grinned in approval" (234). This scene demonstrates how real cosmopolitan loyalties are formed over shared values of the 1956 Revolution, not because, but rather in opposition to the propagated proletarian internationalism. Thus, the Hungarian answer to the proposed cosmopolitan community of socialist world order, as it is rendered intelligible in Fisher's book, is a split consciousness which takes internationalism seriously and realises it but discards forced forms of it.

The fact that the Polish student is a woman also surpasses previous proletarian international ties, which unanimously propagated inter-male contacts of cross-cultural fraternity, both in the case of the lathe-operators and in that of the basketball

3 The historical reality of Soviet soldiers who deserted and sided with the Hungarian freedom fighters often appears in individual recollections. However, their existence and numbers are still debated among historians. A recent book by László Domonkos, *Átállt szovjet katonák 1956-ban* [Soviet Soldiers Deserting in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956] (2024), still fails to bring the historical authenticity of this topic to a standstill. What is certain, however, is the presence of this element in the legendary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

players. According to Gilroy, the more traditional dreams of libertarian equality propagated "wilfully ungendered humanisms" (16), which Fischer's fictional 1956 manages to override. However, the fact that Jadwiga also takes the Soviets' military clothing conveys a unanimity previously attributed to the politically loaded notion of internationalism. Still, by abusing the Soviet uniform, Jadwiga wears it to embody a meaning opposing its intended Russian terror. Thus, she embodies the spirit of 1956 in this controversial manner, creating a spatial universe where nothing is as it seems: a Polish woman in Soviet uniform fights for Hungarian freedom. We could claim this to be a truly cosmopolitan corporeality, to use Gilroy's term (22).

Doctor Criminale paints a much bleaker picture about a simulacrum Budapest whose cosmopolitan days are past, and its desire to realise cross-cultural contacts ends up in a split consciousness. The split mindset of the novel's image of Hungary is torn between the local answer to globalisation and its own self-colonising culture. Sandor Hollo is convinced that Hungary is split along the lines of locality and cosmopolitanism: a very closed and local-minded rural Hungary stands against the middle-class Budapest, whose desires for cosmopolitanism and nostalgic memories of a past *gloire* cannot unite and reach a commonly achieved partial cosmopolitan relationship with the Europe, which has just been made available by the 1989 Revolutions:

> "I think it's a magnificent city," I said. "I too," said Hollo, "A great unreal city. You know two million people live in Budapest, and every one is a European, when they are not being Magyar nationalists. All are artists, intellectuals, actors, dancers, filmmakers, great athletes, fine musicians. Unfortunately just for the moment, they drive a taxi, but one day ... Then go out into the Puszta, and you will see Europe has stopped. The peasants have carts with horses, there are men in sheepskins herding flocks of ducks. Or look down the Danube a little, you will find great marshes and old women squatting by the river, washing clothes in the mud. That is Hungary. Two million intellectuals, eight million peasants, and only one thing in common. Barak [sic] palinka, peach brandy." (99)

The first sentence asserts a postmodern deferral of fixed meaning inasmuch as two opposed qualities determine Budapest dwellers at the same time. The second sentence comments on the simulacrum and fantasy existence of these people: they only pretend to be artists and intellectuals when, in reality, they have to drive a taxi to make ends meet. The Anglo-American non-settlement imperialist outlook defines the next sentence, which suggests that the Hungarian countryside is indeed too backwards to be considered part of Europe at all. Rural parts of Hungary are depicted in the discourse of pre-modernity. The final statement, suggesting that the symbol of unity between rural and urban Hungary is only peach brandy, has various connotations. It can refer to touristic country promotion, a significant element of which is palinka. Ágnes Györke also argues for this understanding of the untranslated Hungarian word "palinka" left in the English text of *Under the Frog* ("Affective Encounters" 181). In addition, it can also refer to a widely-known stereotype about Hungarians and their tendency to make merry by crying as a result of alcoholic inebriation. Finally, it can also refer to a sad statistical fact about the country, namely, the excessive number of alcoholics in the population. After all, the vision in either case is shallow, or even denigratory. However, concerning cosmopolitanism, the above quote suggests that Hungarian space is divided between urban, that is, European and cosmopolitan and rural, that is, provincial territories.

The novels of Fischer and Bradbury show an absence of the multicultural metropolis that Budapest once was. They also show a desire for real and partial cosmopolitanism, which rarely becomes realised, such as in the exceptional revolutionary moments of 1956. However, lived cosmopolitanism predominantly appears as a desire (or an impeded community) suppressed by either socialist totalitarianism or by the quick arrival of capitalism overwhelming Hungary, either from the East or from the West. Cosmopolitan tempolocalities, such as the bustling pre-war Budapest, the working-class Csepel, or the touristy Buda sights, tinted with a colonialist gaze, appear in these novels as a desire impossible to be realised or a rare occasion to be exploited.

Local Budapest versions of Appiah's partial cosmopolitanism created mostly split mindsets both during state socialist terror and the post-1989 period, in which reality, desire, nostalgia, and fantasy intersect with mendacious official discourses. Both novels describe Budapest's relationship to foreigners as difficult. It is so because Hungarians have to escape not only the official totalitarian or capitalistic discourses of cosmopolitan contact, but also because these narratives exist in the (self-)colonising gestures of the Hungarian characters in the text. These narratives of (self-)colonisation, which the fictive Hungarians of the two novels evade by sly civility, certainly fail to nurture mutual respect in their contacts with the foreigners. Consequently, Bradbury's and Fischer's fictional depictions engage with cosmopolitan encounters as contained by places of absence, either because they are in the past, or because they exist only in dreams, or because they are not honest. Except for the glorious 1956 Revolution, real cosmopolitanism can hardly be realised in the tempolocalities of Budapest shown in the analysed novels.

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Becoming a Cosmopolite

Identity Construction and The Cosmopolitan Imagination in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*

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DOI: 10.53720/RAXP8784

*Abstract: According to Gerard Delanty, the cosmopolitan imagination is "both an experience and an interpretation of the world"; it is "a way of viewing the world in terms of its immanent possibilities for self-transformation" (*The Cosmopolitan Imagination *6, 3). As part of a host of new approaches to and understandings of the changing notion of cosmopolitanism, literary representations of the cosmopolitan imagination may shed new light on the ways in which transnational migrants (re-)construct their identity in cosmopolitan spaces as "neo-cosmopolites" and "local citizens of the world." Through the close reading of Isabella Hammad's debut novel,* The Parisian; or, Al-Barisi: A Novel *(2019), my analysis primarily focuses on the intersection of affective cosmopolitanism as an embodied form of "cosmopolitan self-awakening" (Woods 136) and Bhabha's (2000) vernacular cosmopolitanism as a translation between cultures and the renegotiation of traditions in the diaspora subject's cosmopolitan imagination. Investigating the protagonist's bodily, embodied, and lived experiences in Constantinople, Montpellier, Paris, Cairo, and Nablus, I shall contend that the experience and interpretation of these cosmopolitan spaces, as well as their atmospheric affordances, greatly influence and are influenced by the protagonist's sensible and lived feelings, affective relationships and sense of self, manifested in an identity performance that leads to the reconstruction of his identity as "the Parisian," a cosmopolite incarnate.*

While classical perceptions of cosmopolites tend to define them as free-floating citizens of the world, not subservient to any religious or political authority but forming one single community, contemporary theories stress the importance of the local, the individual, and the migrant in their definition, and view cosmopolitanism as "a politics of space" (Cf. Rumford [2008]). Appiah's (1997) rooted cosmopolitans, for instance, "can pledge allegiance to their country but still remain committed to universal values" (Sunderland 70–71). Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitans translate between cultures and renegotiate traditions "from a position where 'locality' insists on its own terms" ("The Vernacular Cosmopolitan" 139). New approaches also emphasise that being cosmopolitan is not an identity but "a disposition characterised by self-awareness, a sensitivity to the world beyond one's immediate milieu" (Spencer 4). In Gerard Delanty's view, such a new, critical perspective requires what he calls "the cosmopolitan imagination," which occurs "when and wherever new relations between Self, Other and World develop in moments of openness" (*The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 52–53). According to Delanty, the cosmopolitan imagination is "both an experience and an interpretation of the world"; it is "a way of viewing the world in terms of its immanent possibilities for self-transformation" (*The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 6, 3).

Mapping the very possibilities that cosmopolitan spaces may provide for transnational migrants to re-construct their identity as "local citizens of the world," this paper follows the physical and metaphorical journey of Midhat Kamal, the protagonist of Isabella Hammad's debut novel, *The Parisian; or, Al-Barisi: A Novel* (2019). My analysis primarily focuses on the evolution of cosmopolitan identity through the stages of growing self-awareness, identity re-construction and empowerment, and finally, finding agency (Cf. Spisak [2009])—a process unfolding at the intersection of Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism and affective cosmopolitanism as an embodied form of "cosmopolitan self-awakening" (Woods 137) in the diaspora subject's cosmopolitan imagination. Investigating the protagonist's bodily, embodied, and lived experiences in Constantinople, Montpellier, Paris, Cairo, and Nablus, I shall contend that the experience and interpretation of these cosmopolitan spaces, as well as their atmospheric affordances, greatly influence and are influenced by the protagonist's sensible and lived feelings, affective relationships and sense of self, manifested in identity performance that leads to the reconstruction of his identity as "the Parisian," a cosmopolite incarnate.

The Embodied Experience of Growing Self-Awareness

Born and raised in Nablus, Palestine, Midhat embarks on his journey at fourteen, when he starts his studies at a French boarding school in Constantinople. Metaphorically, the journey marks the initial stage in the transformation of his disposition and subjectivity, since at "Lycée Impérial" he gets his "first taste of cosmopolitan life" and experiences "his own separateness" (Hammad 33). Looking down at his body in the shower room of the Lycée, Midhat becomes aware of his own body and its peculiarity, and realises that "no one else should be Midhat, or that Midhat should be no one else. … This realisation was like a tiny jolt of electricity that both locked him inside his body and alienated him from it. … The electric feeling of aloneness, victorious and agonising, unearthly" (Hammad 33–34). Besides highlighting the protagonist's interiority and sensible feelings (that is, unintentional bodily sensations), the quotation reveals an awareness of his body belonging to him and defining his self, and points to bodily experience as meaning-making (Cf. Merleau-Ponty [1945]), as the lived body "provides the point of reference for all lived emotional experience" (Denzin 111). Perceived as "victorious and agonising" at the same time, Midhat's growing self-awareness highlights the difficulty of such meaning-making yet also the spatial aspect thereof. Since embodied emotions are "intricately connected to specific sites and contexts" (Davidson et al. 5), Midhat's growing self-awareness may be both characterised by and a product of conflicting embodied emotions perceived in Constantinople as a cosmopolitan space contrasted with the cultural space of his home.

In David Chaney's definition, the "cosmopolis" is a place that "encompasses the variety of human culture," and cosmopolitans are people who "can cope with unpredictability … know what is expected in different cultural settings and can move between them with confidence and assurance" (158). In this initial stage, Midhat still lacks confidence and does not see himself as a cosmopolitan. Feeling simultaneously "inside his body" and "alienated from it" suggests that he perceives the body/self as both "I" and "Other," which signals the beginning of the "transformation of subjectivity in terms of relations of self, Other and world" (Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination" 6). His becoming a cosmopolite starts with the affected body enabling the growing feeling of cosmopolitanism and gradually becoming "the locus of cosmopolitan awakening," indicating affective cosmopolitanism (Woods 137–138).

Midhat's awakening and concomitant transformation continues in 1914 when his father sends him to France to study medicine and escape the war.[1] Aboard the ship to Montpellier, Midhat feels that his outline "weighed on him as a hard, sore shape, and his heart beat very fast. He assumed the feeling would pass. But it did not" (Hammad 13). His sense of loneliness re-emerges and manifests itself in the body reacting to and, at the same time, delineating him from his surroundings and situation. What Midhat experiences is both sensible feelings and lived feelings. The former denotes sensations, which are unintentional and not attached to the self, while in the case of the latter, feelings are indeed felt and expressed by the individual, so loneliness as an emotion is "felt as an embodied state," and the body becomes "a sounding board for the emotion" (Denzin). In other words, what he feels in his body echoes what he fears in his mind: the sore feeling of transition, both physically and mentally, the weight of the weightlessness of his very being. These complex and incomprehensible interconnections of body, mind and self recall Heidegger's (1962) notion of "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*), a theoretical interpretation of facticity as being thrown into the world without any prior explanation and being alive within a fixed set of physical, spatial, and temporal possibilities. Trying to make sense of the sense of thrownness, Midhat makes friends with a fellow passenger Faruq, and expands his knowledge of the French language and culture until he feels "he managed, more or less, to soothe the hard outline of his body—which still at times oppressed him with its stinging clasp" (Hammad 18). The protagonist's journey/immigration as a transitory state seems to generate a recurring, gripping sense of loneliness and separateness projected onto the environment and

1 In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), the Ottoman Empire was unofficially divided into zones of influence by European powers, with France claiming and maintaining control in Syria and Palestine through consulates and military presence (Laurens). As described in the novel, when the Ottomans signed a secret treaty with Germany in 1914, mobilisation began, and wealthy Levantine families tried to avoid conscription in the Ottoman army by sending their sons to Europe, considered safer than Nablus or Cairo. The protagonist's father, a Francophile like many of his generation, decided to send his son to France, "the pinnacle of Europe and exemplar of the modern age," and Midhat was "pleased by the confidence in him his father's decision displayed, and the love that wished to put him out of war's way" (Hammad 34–35). The reason that Midhat stays in France until the end of the Great War may be explained by the turbulent situation in Palestine caused by the "Sykes-Picot Agreement" of 1916 and Balfour Declaration of 1917, which threatened the political rights of Palestinian Arabs and led to a series of revolts and violent events in the region, as detailed by the appendix of the novel, "Key events in the development of the Palestinian and Syrian national movements."

experienced in the body, yet it also involves making connections and immersing himself in the possibilities. This resonates with Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, understood as "the arranging of space into a room for maneuver, a site of active responding to solicitations" (Wrathall 230), which is an integral part of developing "a new way of being-in-the-world" (Denzin). At this point, Hammad's protagonist—a cosmopolitan in the making—is in the bodily-emotional phase of this development, which is then followed by a cognitive phase of his growing self-awareness.

In Montpellier, Midhat is hosted by social anthropologist Frédéric Molineu and finds himself struggling with fitting in a culturally alien milieu that sees him as the "Turk," the "Arabian man," "the famous Oriental guest" (Hammad 70, 72). In response, Midhat identifies himself as "a Palestinian from Nablus who was a citizen of the enemy" and "the fool, the foreigner unable to control his own meanings" (Hammad 87, 108), thus highlighting his national identity and an internalised feeling of being an outsider, a stranger. The discrepancy between these two ways of identification leads to a "renewed sense of separateness and loneliness" (Hammad 109) and makes his stay in Montpellier a "socially situated embodied experience" in which "'culture' and 'nature,' as well as 'body' and 'mind,' are seamlessly intertwined and grounded" (Lindblom and Ziemke 152). He knows who he is but also acknowledges the problematics thereof; that is, he becomes aware of both the incomprehensibility and the irreducibility of his facticity. He wishes to refute his perception by others yet starts to internalise the feeling of being alien. His embodied emotions both trigger and are triggered by intrusive thoughts. Midhat's sense of conflict grows parallel with his (initially unrequited) romantic feelings for the professor's daughter, Jeannette, and eventually manifests itself in wanting to belong, which he tries to achieve by immersing himself in and imitating French culture: walking around the city with his new friend Laurent, improving his French accent and buying a new French hat (Hammad 44) for the sake of fitting in and impressing her. His search for a sense of belonging and the transformation it involves may be explained by Elspeth Probyn's definition of belonging: "the desire for some sort of attachment, be it to other people, places or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fuelled by yearning rather than the positing of identity as a stable state" (19). Midhat is portrayed as both yearning for attachment and scared by the changes it necessarily entails, and although he might not be fully aware of these conflicting emotions, they are indeed bodily felt whenever he finds himself in new circumstances and stressful situations, marking the unavoidable end and uncertain beginning of something as necessary stages in his development. His growing self-awareness is thus manifested in the embodied and lived experience of the problematics of identity and belonging and will soon lead to the realisation that both require a degree of change, some sort of fluidity instead of stability.

Midhat's high hopes for belonging and emotional attachment are crushed when he finds out that Molineu used him to write a study on "The Effect of a New Language Learned by a Primitive Brain" (Hammad 154), that is, observed him all along as an anthropological object, an inferior being, as the Other. When he confronts Molineu about studying him, the doctor asserts he only wanted to humanise Midhat, to which he replies: "To humanise me? … I am—really, I am amazed. Monsieur, I am *a person*. I am—no—" (Hammad 159, emphasis added). Midhat's defiant claim of being a person may be interpreted in several ways. His recognition of self as both the Other and the I—resonating with his embodied emotions in Constantinople—is now perceived and proclaimed to be his essential humanness and personness, pointing to the "recognition of self as Other, self in exile, [which] is the basis of our personal humanity and ethics, the only way to universal hospitality, open borders, equality, and cosmopolitanism" (Meerzon 31–32). On the other hand, "I am—no—" may also be read as both a refusal to identify himself as the Other and the inability to name what or who he is instead. This could mean that Midhat is not yet aware of the fluidity of the self, his identity as transition, and it may explain the masks he wears and roles he plays in Paris, where he flees after Jeannette does not stand up for him and he feels their relationship is irreparably broken (Hammad 161).

Identity Re-Construction and Empowerment in Cosmopolitan Space

While in Montpellier Midhat failed to identify himself other than as "a person" (Hammad 159), he arrives in Paris defiantly wearing his tarbush, despite knowing that "he could not have marked his difference more obviously" (Hammad 179) or highlight his Otherness more clearly. Joining Faruq and his Arab friends in their heated conversations about Palestine's and Syria's future, he becomes a member of a "cosmopolitan community envisaged in marginality" (Bhabha, "Unsatisfied" 195–196). At the same time, spending his nights in theatres and bars, and engaging in a series of brief sexual relationships with various women and prostitutes, Midhat also lives the life of Parisian *bon vivants*. This duality of attachment and non-attachment recalls Bhabha's theory of the difference between global and vernacular cosmopolitanism (1996). While for Bhabha the former "configures the planet as a concentric world of national societies extending to global villages," inhabits "imagined communities," and is characterised by privilege and prosperity (*Location* xiv), the latter "measures global progress from the minoritarian perspective" (xvi) and wishes to revise "political, legal and social citizenship … by extending them to include the realm of 'symbolic citizenship'" (xvii). Both approaches, however, entail the understanding of the cosmopolitan as one who "retains their connection to a particular community, while being aware of the need for openness to others" (Sunderland 70–71). For Midhat, this openness involves applying Bhabhaian mimicry, "an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas" (*Location* 88), as a conscious strategy of performing a "Parisian" identity in the enabling atmosphere of the city. The various roles he plays and the identity positions (Cf. Hall [1990]) he takes up according to the social situations he finds himself in point to the definition of global and vernacular cosmopolitans. Bhabha's concept refers to individuals with local bonding, yet also the willingness to broaden their cultural horizons, as a result of which they can move freely in-between cultural traditions and belong to more than one language or culture (*Location* 13).

Hammad describes Midhat's engagement in the cultural environment of the French capital primarily at the level of the body again. He attributes Paris's "electric atmosphere" to "a charge shared between strangers," which he perceives as "a pure thrill of Being. It lived in the body like a drug, this being alive in the jaws of the full, flying night" (Hammad 181). The interconnections of city and body, performance and emotion are particularly intriguing here from the aspect of affect and emotion as "embodied performativities evoked in, and by, particular settings" (Schorch et al. 94), and affective cosmopolitanism, defined as "embodied forms of cosmopolitanism that can be triggered by affective experiences" (Woods 137).

The "thrill of Being" Midhat experiences while performing the part of a "Parisian" in Paris may be interpreted as an affective experience concomitant with the atmosphere of the cosmopolis, which underlines the idea that "emotional participation is an integral part of one's experience of space" (Hasse 52). As Nora Plesske points out in her discussion of Gernot Böhme's article "Die Atmosphäre einer Stadt" (1998), "the metropolitan space is intrinsically bodily felt by urbanites because the urban atmosphere is scripted in emotional states of being" (139). In Böhme's theory, the atmosphere of place/space may be attributed just as much to the environment as to the individuals (114)—meaning that it both influences and is influenced by the people experiencing it. Midhat's bodily, embodied, and lived experience thus results in, and is the result of, the atmosphere of Paris as a cosmopolitan space "of new dynamics, interactive moments, and conflicting principles and orientations" (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 15): the intoxication and aliveness it offers and the relationships—whether strong or weak ties—it helps build.

The thrilling sense of being alive may also be attributed to what Tonino Griffero refers to as the atmospheric affordance of the city: an emotional tone or the message that a city sends out about its possible uses and functions, to which people may respond with certain behaviours (4). In this respect, Paris may be perceived, on the one hand, as an enabling city, one that invites—if not requires—both emotional participation and playing roles. On the other hand, the words "drug" and "jaws" suggest that Midhat could get stuck in the mask of the Parisian, get addicted to or fail to escape from the embodied and lived experience of this perceived freedom, which means that his transformation at this point is unavoidable. Paris thus leads to the second stage of cosmopolitan self-awakening—identity re-construction, described by Hammad as the protagonist's "new urbanity":

> Midhat the Levantine … now thoroughly estranged: the figure of the Parisian Oriental as he appeared on certain cigarette packets in corner stores … that innocent, hardworking man would be forever linked in Midhat's mind with the moment he was awakened to his own otherness. … He had fallen so easily into the compromise available in Paris, this type, by an embrace of otherness that at first he had admired in Faruq but which now appeared in his mind a skewed, performed version of what it was really like to be in a place but not of it, not to know it truly. (Hammad 187)

Midhat's embrace of otherness yet estrangement from his Levantine identity is a long process and may be interpreted in several ways. First, deliberately playing the role of the Parisian and the exotic Other may point to mimicry both as "partial representation" (Bhabha, *Location* 88) and as an identity performance, at the intersection of performance (role-play) and Butlerian (2003) performativity (a construction and display of cultural identity), with the immigrant being both the subject and the agent of their performative actions. The hybrid figure emerging through consciously mimicking the locals and exaggerating the stereotype of the Oriental Other may be perceived as "camouflage" but also "a contesting, antagonistic agency" (Bhabha, *Location* 193), a subversion of his projected-perceived identity as a means of self-empowerment.

Second, the figure of "the Parisian Oriental" also recalls Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolite, who prioritises a "right to difference" that "does not require the restoration of an original [or essentialist] cultural or group identity" and "has less to do with the affirmation or authentication of origins and 'identities,' and more to do with political practices and ethical choices" (Bhabha, *Location* xvi–xvii). For Midhat, these practices and choices involve a certain degree of holding onto his cultural roots through his community of Arab friends and participating in their political debates; yet, at the same time, also re-rooting and assimilating, signalled by the "performed version" of the Parisian, the manifestation of his initial desire to become "European both inside and out" (Hammad 187). However, his embodied and lived experience of being "in a place but not of it" (Hammad 187), that is, being allowed to participate in whatever the cosmopolis offers yet never fully belonging there suggests a compromise that involves a simultaneous attempt and refusal, yearning and inability to belong to any community or place exclusively, as signalled by his constant movement between them.

Midhat continues with his identity performances until "his life [becomes] multiple": playing the roles of "the student of history," "the companion of women," "the mysterious lover," "the debater," and "the arguing Arab" makes him realise that "the divisions, though sometimes porous, were abiding" (Hammad 194). The realisation of this multiplicity and the transgressions such divisions may entail suggests that, through his identity performances, Midhat starts to develop a cosmopolitan imagination, that is, a specific experience and an interpretation of the world (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 8), and a cosmopolitan disposition as a local citizen of the world, recognising the inherent possibilities it may offer for self-transformation "which can be realised only by taking the cosmopolitan perspective of the Other" (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 3). For Midhat, the performed identity of the Parisian Oriental and the multiplicity of roles played signal self-transformation as identity re-construction, which involves estrangement from his Levantine identity, described by Hammad as follows:

Midhat was learning to dissemble and pass between spheres and to accommodate, morally, that dissemblance through an understanding of his own impermanence in each. But as despondence broke out among his friends, Midhat found it was the arguing Arab, that least interesting of roles, which he performed more and more. … Standing on Faruq's balcony, looking down at the black cars in the street like a procession of hearses, he felt that some great frame had cracked. He turned back to the apartment and the scene trembled through the quartered glass, the room appeared dislocated, the faces of his friends unfamiliar. (Hammad 194)

The protagonist appears to be discontent with the role of "the arguing Arab," that is, the nationalist in exile,[2] and increasingly detached from his friends as he is "learning to dissemble and pass between spheres," that is, to embrace the new roles he is navigating between. From the aspect of his cosmopolitan identity, this may signal a shift from global to vernacular cosmopolitanism, moving beyond "simply acknowledging already constituted 'marginal' entities and identities" (Bhabha xviii). Such a move entails the possibility of reconstructing and accepting his identity as multiple and fluid; yet, it will prove to be a long and complicated process, of which the above-quoted realisation is but the first stage. At this point, Midhat's bodily and emotional reaction to this multiplicity still reveals a sense of rootlessness, the loss of a collective communal spirit (Cf. Weil [1952]). The longer he continues to play these parts, the more distant his roots (symbolised by his friends) become, and the less he can hold on to a sense of fixed, national identity (symbolised by the dislocated room), especially with the national movements and impending revolution back home, rewriting the borders and dislocating identities. At the same time, his "dissemblance" and "impermanence" (that is, the transitory and transformative nature of his performances) do entail a recognition of the possibilities for and inherent in self-transformation.

Midhat, the Parisian Oriental, may thus be read as the figure of subversion and transformation, marking the birth of a new cosmopolitan persona that relies on a "repertoire of imaginaries and practices" which "involves symbolically or physically crossing defined boundaries and claiming a degree of cultural versatility" (Jeffrey and McFarlane 420). As he claims in a letter that he writes to Jeannette before departing Paris:

2 Here Hammad refers to the Arab nationalist organisation al-Fatat (the Young Arab Society), established in Paris in 1911. Midhat is not a member, but his friend Hani Murad is one of the original founders and Emir Faisal's secretary at the Peace Conference in Paris (Hammad 237).

> I hoped that somehow my memories of life before I came to France might be the ones to stick, and that you would slide off them, and I would remain the same beneath. But I fear that on the contrary my experience with you has in fact become one of those primeval shapes of the mind, to an imprint that burdens everything that comes afterwards. … I became myself here, in this country, and for that reason I cannot represent anything. I belong here as much as I belong in Palestine. (Hammad 203–204)

His words not only attest to the transformative power of affective relationships—with both people and places—but also suggest a shift from vernacular to affective cosmopolitanism as "a way of being in, and engaging with, the world … a modality of existence that is grounded in and by the body" (Woods 135), through the spaces and places he inhabits and the physical-emotional connections he makes. In this respect, Midhat's transformation through love and heartache, and in the cultural space of the enabling metropolis, may also be understood as identity re-construction through "a process of learning or self-discovery" (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 86): he learns to relativise his own culture and identity, "even if an alternative is not articulated" (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 21), even if he cannot put into words who that "myself" is. Acknowledging becoming himself and belonging to both France and Palestine thus indicates Midhat's self-awareness and may also be read as a sign of empowerment.

Developing Agency

By the time Midhat, the Parisian *bon vivant*, returns home to Nablus in 1919, both he and the city have changed considerably. Jewish presence has increased due to the Balfour Declaration (1917). The Battle of Nablus (1918), which ended in British victory and Ottoman defeat, has led to British and French Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, the British Mandate, and a concomitant growing national sentiment demanding the independence of Palestine (Hammad 640). In response to these changes and under the influence of his life in Paris, Midhat clings to "a particular idea of cosmopolitan life" (Hammad 220), a cosmopolitan disposition *per se*, rejecting a rigid definition of identity along the lines of nationality and nationalism; yet, he is forced by his father to settle, both physically and metaphorically. Fourteen years later, Hammad's narrative portrays Midhat as an established man, running his own business and enjoying a much-envied, comfortable life with his wife and children in Nablus. What has not changed is positioning his identity as the Parisian, and the multiplicity of the roles played and perceived: "a man who had married above his station, a sybarite, an optimist, a success with women, a carefree lover of the West" (Hammad 458). This time, his cosmopolitanism appears to be less self-discovery and more "self-problematisation of one's own assumptions as well as those of the Other" (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 16)—the Nabulsi community he no longer feels part of.

Midhat's uprooting seems to be an irreversible process, making him keep up appearances, as he considers performing the identity of a Parisian (and thereby being seen as the Other) a safer and more liberating choice than having to return to his old, fixed identity. Realising that he was "always marked by his difference," he plays a part "as a kind of inverse of his persona in Paris" with "some kernel hidden in the folds" (Hammad 389), a few remaining traits of who he used to be—more Parisian than Oriental. His performed and embodied cosmopolitanism may be read as a "masquerade" freeing him from the requirement of local attachment but it also runs the risk of becoming "an entrenchment of divisiveness through its inability to foster connectivities and multiplicity of being" (Krishnan 689). Midhat, the Parisian of Nablus, or "Al-Barisi" becomes a native outsider, the epitome of in-betweenness and hybridity, a condition/position which, after a while, proves to be more limiting than liberating: he feels that he "could not conceal, nor even detect, the survival of his child-self in his mannerisms, or traces of his characteristics … Midhat wished he could isolate those traces and remove them. Not because they were defects, but because they pinned him down" (Hammad 235–236). Experiencing his place identity, that is, situatedness and rootedness through an emotional bonding with a place (Cf. Proshansky et al. [1983]) as suffocating, he increasingly yearns for the embodied and lived experience of his cosmopolitan self as "Al-Barisi."

As the social and atmospheric affordances of Nablus do not favour his cosmopolitan disposition, he frequently elopes to Cairo for a few days, where he can be "almost as anonymous as in Paris" (Hammad 223), that is, whoever he wants to be, thereby developing a sense of agency. Contemplating the differences, Midhat describes Cairo by claiming it is "not a part of him as Nablus was. Nablus was all smells and sounds, the rushing air between the mountains" (Hammad 208). Although his description shows a sense of nostalgia and an affective relationship with his hometown (the smells and sounds), it also suggests a considerably different approach to belonging. The embodied experience and atmospheric affordance of Nablus make it a confining space (surrounded by mountains) where Midhat, the transnational subject and cosmopolite not confined by borders and national identities (the rushing air), would not want to take root again. In contrast, the bodily and lived experience of Cairo is that of a cosmopolitan place "rich with possibility" (Hammad 220), oozing the atmosphere of freedom, offering him anonymity and bodily pleasures, and a transitory place, where he could experience belonging as becoming and "belonging in constant movement" (Probyn 19).[3]

Owing to his perceptible disposition, fellow Nabulsis view Midhat as "strange" (Hammad 236), in the sense of being both odd and foreign, indicating a negative view of cosmopolites as "rootless, dabbling, parasitic, without commitment to any community or place, lacking loyalty to their own country" (Sunderland 69). The local's envy and hatred, growing in parallel with the national sentiment of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine—campaigns against the Balfour declaration and increasing Jewish immigration (Hammad 645)—reaches its climax when Midhat's shop is burnt down, which leads to the realisation of his father's betrayal (hiding Jeannette's love letter for years). Similarly to the experience of previous betrayals and identity crises, the protagonist hears a ringing sound that feels like "a sharp blade of silver being inserted into his eardrum. Midhat clutched his ears and moaned. It was pretending to be benign, it pretended to be beautiful. But it was pain, that high ringing sound was pain. It was entering his ears like a virus. It was interfering in there, it was doing things it shouldn't" (Hammad 495). The embodied experience of treachery involves both sensible and lived feelings as pain takes over his entire body and mind. Midhat is taken to hospital with the diagnosis of psychosis.

Throughout the months spent there, Midhat feels that "his mind stopped and he became a body," while other times he thinks he is "locked up in his brain" (Hammad 526, 539). The sense of separateness, first felt in Constantinople and signalling the start of his journey towards becoming a cosmopolite, is now complemented with a sense of multiplicity when he notes that he "danced between two, three, four ideas of himself, that is to say of Midhat Kamal, and these ideas overlapped like conflicting maps of the same place" (Hammad 526–527). Hammad's description

3 Probyn draws on Deleuze's nomadic approach to movement and becoming, and describes her theory of belonging as "a heightened sensitivity to the sensibilities, to being captured by the manners of being and desires for becoming-other" (5).

of her protagonist's mental state points to both multiple identity disorder and the multiplicity of identity positions, and suggests that his mental condition is a metaphor for his (cultural) identity crisis, generated by a sense of otherness and his decades-long identity performance. Whenever his ability to think returns for a shorter or longer period, Midhat tries to capture and make sense of his "real" identity behind the performed ones but finds that

> It was hard to cling onto himself when there were so many others, there were so many other people and they were crowding him out. He tried to summon one of his four ideas of himself … but he couldn't even locate one. All he had left was this strange cut-out. He was a likeness in reverse. He was a cameo. (Hammad 529)

Seeing himself as a part played, a mere resemblance of who he used to be, incites fear that his "true" identity has forever disappeared behind "conflicting maps" that are the various masks worn. He relapses, feeling "his self dissolving again" (Hammad 530), suggesting a sense of loss due to a desperate yet futile attempt to return to a singular, solid identity.

Amidst the turbulent events of 1936—the riots and strikes, British military "comb-out," and the martial law declared in Palestine (Hammad 647)—what the protagonist experiences may be interpreted as a crisis of the cosmopolitan self, a "condition of self-confrontation," eventually leading to "more reflexive kinds of self-understanding" (Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination" 38, 42). As Midhat starts recovering, he begins to realise the importance of meaningful relationships and to see himself as he is, without any pretending or performance whatsoever:

> Here they all were, watching him return, gently, to this world. Ready to press him back into the shape of a person. … Without them, he was a body floating in the air. … His old schematic way of thinking was quite gone. Gone that ability, or propensity, to map one thing onto another. Nothing would ever again be contained by a map. (Hammad 619)

Midhat's determination to take control of his life indicates agency: he may still be the Parisian but has finally let go of identity performances and started to make peace with his multiple and fluid identity, allegorised by rejecting the map as "positionality, movement and practices" (Pile and Thrift 36), that is, the social and political context, as well as the mobility and practices it enables or requires, which creates one's identity. This learning process also resonates with the idea of affective cosmopolitanism denoting "the ways in which the self can *learn to be cosmopolitan* by realising a sense of open engagement with the (affect[ive/ed]) body" (Woods 137, emphasis added), as well as the immigrant's identity re-construction through embodied and lived experience, affective relationships and self-awareness.

Conclusion

In Bhabha's theory, the vernacular cosmopolite's lack of original identity entails a celebration of difference and privileging the individual, while identifying as one may be regarded as a decision, whether political or moral (Taylor-Collins), a conscious choice of "moving in-between cultural traditions and revealing hybrid forms of life" (Bhabha, *Location* xiii).[4] Affective cosmopolitanism likewise focuses on the individual but shifts its focus from the mind (decision) to the body, emphasising the process of learning to be a cosmopolite through engagement with the body, which can, in return, "enable a feeling of cosmopolitanism," based on "the embrace of the unity of embodied affectiveness" (Woods 144). Hammad's protagonist becomes a local citizen of the world both by learning to accept his right to difference and by learning through bodily engagement. First scared by cosmopolitanism in Constantinople, then getting to appreciate it in Paris and longing for it back in Nablus, Midhat's character represents "this interplay of the local and the global by which Self and Other interact" and "are transformed" (Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination* 11). His cosmopolitan self-awakening is a response to a series of affective experiences, in which "the self is freed from the inscriptions of society and culture, and empowered to explore new ways of being in the world" (Woods 137). A gradual and decades-long process, it is manifested in his embodied experience and fostered by his affective relationships and lived experience in cosmopolitan spaces, it involves becoming aware of the endless possibilities of transformation as a means of empowerment, and eventually leads to self-understanding and agency: his identity performance/positioning as the Parisian as a way of rejecting a rigid, national

4 Bhabha provides this definition regarding V. S. Naipaul's characters, in the Preface to the 2004 edition of *The Location of Culture*.

identification of the self amidst the turbulent times in the history of Palestine between the two world wars, and constructing a multiple, fluid identity with a cosmopolitan disposition and imagination.

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International Conference on the *Oeuvre* of Louise Glück

MÁRTON HOVÁNYI & KATALIN G. KÁLLAY

DOI: 10.53720/XWBT4104

In May 2024, Eötvös Loránd University Budapest (ELTE, Budapest) and Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary (KRE, Budapest) organised a hybrid conference on Louise Glück (1943–2023). The poet, whose paternal grandparents were Hungarian, taught creative writing at Yale and Stanford in the last phase of her life. She received the 2020 Nobel Prize in Literature for her several volumes of poetry, the crowning achievement of her many previous prizes. The closure of her life's work in 2023 was an opportunity for considering what Louise Glück has left behind.

The main question was how the results of the critical reception so far could be summarised and a first evaluation of the finished work of a lifetime made. The original voice of the author with Russian, Jewish, Hungarian, and American origins spoke up from an intercultural background. Since her poetic heritage is pure and rich at the same time, it could be approached from the perspective of comparative literary studies.

The topics for papers included the correlation between Louise Glück's intercultural background and her *oeuvre*, intertextual and intermedial elements in the *oeuvre*, the composition and poetic world of certain volumes, the interpretation of certain poems, social criticism in Glück's poetry, gender issues in Glück's *oeuvre*, conversation between poetry and related arts in Glück's writings, representations of the body and the rhythm of Glück's poems, as well as questions of translation studies.

The organisers of the conference were Márton Hoványi (ELTE), who initiated the idea, Katalin G. Kállay (KRE), and Ágnes Klára Papp (KRE). The conference had an exceptionally welcoming, personal atmosphere. Beside the individual papers, there was a round table discussion on translating Glück's work into Hungarian, with the participation of András Gerevich, István László G., Bence Visky, and Anna Branczeisz. MA students of Károli Gáspár University (Gyöngyvér Fazekas, Lilla Kárpáti, and Rebeka Patai) also presented their own creative works inspired by Glück's poems.

The conference was greeted online by Richard Deming, award-winning poet and Director of Creative Writing at Yale University, Glück's personal colleague and friend. It was a special moment of a good encounter, reaching out and forming a metaphorical bridge across the Atlantic Ocean, in celebration of a great poet and the power of poetry. It was reassuring to see how much poetry matters for students and scholars alike. The following three papers, by Boglárka Hardy (independent researcher), Bence Visky (PhD student, ELTE), and Mária Varga (MA student, KRE), are great examples of the inspirational academic atmosphere of the event.

Death Speaks

The Relationship Between Sound, Silence, and Death in Louise Glück's "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad"

MÁRIA VARGA

DOI: 10.53720/LAQI9732

Abstract: Death and silence are often connected themes in literature, with silence being used as a metaphor or herald for death. Although Louise Glück's poetry also contains such associations, silence is given a different role in "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad." Glück gives death a voice in these two poems, which she then enhances with different types of silence, thus giving it the illusion of aural volume and otherworldliness. The paper first aims to clarify what is meant by a "voice of death" in the context of the poems, then proceeds to demonstrate three types of silences: the silence of white space, implicit silence, and explicit silence. Finally, it is concluded that Glück's use of silence not only gives the "voice of death" the illusion of aural volume and otherworldliness but also gives the two poems an additional dimension of interpretation.

As Sabbar S. Sultan writes in "Silence and Its Discontents in Literature," from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to Beckett's trilogy, silence in literature is often associated with death (685–690). American contemporary writer Louise Glück similarly employs this trope in poems such as "Averno," where being heard is associated with being alive, or "The Drowned Children," where being quiet means death has come. However, in some of her other works she assigns silence a different role. In her poems "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad," Glück not only gives death a voice, but she also uses different types of silence to enhance it, thus creating an illusion of aural volume and otherworldliness. She achieves this effect in three ways: she uses explicit silence as both a connector and divider between the living and the dead; she employs implicit silence as a backdrop to the "voice of death," thus elevating it from its surroundings; and she also engages with the silence of the blank spaces around the text, using it to frame death's voice typographically, thus furthering its separateness and enhancing its effect.

For the sake of understanding the variety of silences occurring in "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad," it is important to clarify what is meant by the "voice of death" in this paper. "Voice of death," in the context of these poems, refers not only to the personification of death, but also to the voice—or sometimes sound—representing, evoking, or symbolising death. The two poems share the underlying theme of grief, specifically grief for the speaker's parents. Of the two parents, it is the mother that is given the most presence and voice; she is the one who takes on the role of the "voice of death" in both poems. In *The Poetry of Louise Glück: A Thematic Introduction*, Daniel Morris explains how Glück tends to associate silence and emotional unavailability with her father in her poetry (7)—a tendency which also appears in these two texts.

In "Aboriginal Landscape," the first line is spoken by the mother addressing the speaker: "You're stepping on your father" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 24), a sentence which is later repeated by her with an increase in volume. Afterwards, the speaker informs the reader that the mother is dead, thus confirming that the lyrical self is either hallucinating the voice, hearing a memory or interacting with a spirit. However, the mother's voice is not the only aural element representing death in the poem. Once her presence dissipates and the cemetery that the speaker imagines becomes silent, "very faintly, sounds of weeping several rows away, / and beyond that, a dog wailing" (24) can be heard in the distance. The "weeping" and "wailing" evoke images and emotions of grieving, taking over the role of the "voice of death" from the mother.

In "Visitors from Abroad," the first sound representing death is the ringing of the phone. The speaker herself associates it with death when she says, "[the ringing] had / my mother's persistence and my father's / pained embarrassment" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 22). The second aural association is once again the mother's voice, who appears in front of the speaker with the father and infant sister in the second section. The father and sister are notably silent throughout the scene. In her essay "Death and Absence," Glück writes: "The dead sister died before I was born. … I saw myself as her substitute, which produced in me a profound obligation toward my mother, and a frantic desire to remedy her every distress" (*Proofs & Theories* 127). This feeling of substitution is indeed echoed in "Visitors from Abroad" by none other than the mother when she says, "you have your sister's soul" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 23). Preceding this statement are the words: "Hardly a mention of us anymore, hardly a mention of your sister. /… But for us, she said, you wouldn't exist" (22–23). In reply, the speaker insists, "I write about you all the time" (23), which implies that the mother's words resonate with the speaker's own worries and insecurities. By having these emotions expressed by the mother instead of the speaker, Glück grants these lines a layer of guilt and, due to the words being spoken by the dead, a stronger sense of judgment and truth than they would otherwise convey. Ultimately, in both poems, the "voice of death" shifts between spoken words and abrupt sounds, with their connection to death clearly recognisable and their aural presence vivid. In "Death and Absence," Glück states: "Poems do not endure as objects but as presences. When you read anything worth remembering, you liberate a human voice; you release into the world again a companion spirit" (*Proofs & Theories* 128). Perhaps, in these two poems, this sentiment was taken to a more literal level.

Although the first type of silence, to be referred to as "explicit silence," is the most discernable, it still holds significance through its contrasting role to the "voice of death." Explicit silence (as opposed to implied silence) is silence which the author openly calls attention to, but such silence might still possess implications beyond what is made immediately apparent. In "Visitors from Abroad," the speaker, after picking up the phone, states that "the line was dead" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 22). This is immediately followed by, "Or was the phone working and the caller dead?" (22), establishing a strong connection between the absence of a voice through the receiver and the presence of the dead. (While it is established later that the receiver still emitted sound for a while, assumedly the beeping that accompanies a "dead line," the absence of a voice can be, and in this paper is, considered a form of silence.) In the following section, the appearance of the parents and of the mother speaking reinforces the idea of a connection with the dead. However, unlike in section two, the speaker and the dead are still separated by the medium of the phone in section one.

Likewise, in "Aboriginal Landscape," when the speaker states that "The cemetery was silent" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 24), it is not simply a confirmation of the stillness of the speaker's surroundings. Instead, the statement aims to highlight and add weight to the lines that follow it:

> … Wind blew through the trees;
> I could hear, very faintly, sounds of weeping several rows away,
> and beyond that, a dog wailing. (24)

The explicit silence in this case acts as a contrasting device to the sounds heard in the distance, thus enhancing the "voices of death," while also establishing the speaker as being in a separate space from them, giving the sounds an otherworldly quality.

In "Visitors from Abroad," the line "Outside the street was silent" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 23) has a similar purpose. The preceding section ends with the speaker breaking the silence—"I write about you all the time, I said aloud" (23)—in an attempt to communicate with the dead. However, the beginning of section four reestablishes the same silence, thus once again distancing the speaker from the voices of the dead. This is further supported by the speaker's observation that the receiver's "peevish throbbing has ceased" (23), which means that the possibility of communication with the speaker's parents has ended. As Noah Hickman observes, "[f]or Glück's speakers, silence operates as that marker; silence indicates that something has ended, that some speech (or event) concludes, and in its wake the now-finished thing leaves a lacuna of noise" (93). Like in "Aboriginal Landscape," this distance between the speaker's space of silence and the "voice of death," present in their noted absence in section four, gives the impression that the sounds are "not of this world." Ultimately, while explicitly stated silence might initially appear straightforward, it acts in these poems as a means to create distance between the speaker and the "voice of death," placing the latter in a space separate from the speaker.

The second type of silence appearing in both works is "implied silence": a silence not explicitly stated but interrupted by a voice or sound representing death, and which thus amplifies the aural volume of that voice or sound. Isaac Cates observes that "[Glück's] nine books of poetry have mastered certain subtle techniques of voice that make an art of implied silences" (463). Commenting on her interest in silence as it appears in writing, Glück herself has remarked in "On George Oppen": "As a reader, consequently as a writer, I am partial to most forms of voluntary silence. I love what is implicit or present in outline, that which summons (as opposed to imposes) thought" (*Proofs & Theories* 29). Certainly, the implied silences used in the two poems can be characterised as subtexts which invite the reader's thoughts. Cates concludes that Glück's works "depend on their own silences, and on the engagement of their reader during these silences" (476).

In "Aboriginal Landscape," there are two instances of implied silence, both pertaining to the mother's voice. The first is the silence of the speaker's father, whose silence only becomes truly notable when the speaker listens to the mother's voice and steps off of her father's supposed grave, "to where / my father ended and my mother began" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 24). The line could be interpreted in a way that the speaker has moved off her father's grave only to step on her mother's, in which case, after the mother's insistence that the speaker move, the father's silence becomes conspicuous. As previously mentioned, Glück associates silence and emotional unavailability with her father (Morris 7)—an association which is demonstrated implicitly in this case. The second instance of implied silence is the silence which occurs between the two occasions the mother speaks: the silence of the speaker. The mother asks her daughter to step off her father (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 24) and then repeats the same words but louder. The implication here, especially with the repetition being increased in volume, is that the speaker did not respond to the mother's demand but remained silent instead. The mother, in reply, raises her voice, and the speaker's silence emphasises this loudness in a way a simple repetition would not be able to do.

Implied silence in "Visitors from Abroad" also appears twice, the first appearance being the same as that of "Aboriginal Landscape": the silence of the father, which is implied in section two of the poem. Only, in this case, the silence of the infant sister joins that of the father, thus further elevating the mother's voice, both in terms of volume and significance, making her truly "[triumph] over the silence of death" (Hickman 98). The second way silence is implied is through the night. Nighttime in general is often associated with quiet and calm. In "Visitors from Abroad," the time of the day is first mentioned in relation to the phone ringing:

> … in the middle of the night
> the phone rang. It rang and rang
> as though the world needed me,
> though really it was the reverse.

> I lay in bed, trying to analyze
> the ring. … (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 22)

The fact that the speaker specifies that the phone is ringing "in the middle of the night" confirms that the sound is disturbing what would otherwise be a period of quiet. When the phone cuts off, the silence might be regained but the night remains disturbed, as "[t]he conspicuous cessation of noise from the phone receiver impregnates the stillness of the scene with the threat of its former noise" (Hickman 96). Like the speaker's silence in "Aboriginal Landscape," the silence of the night lends power to the ringing of the phone, enhancing its presence so that, even once the sound has ceased, the presence remains. Thus, the implied silence in both works provides the voice and sounds representative of death with a backdrop of silence from which it can abruptly appear, with a loudness that would otherwise be unachievable.

The third type of silence that can be identified in the poems is what is often referred to as the silence of the blank space (also known as white space, not to be confused with the sociological concept of "white space" pertaining to racism)—a silence meant to enhance the "voice of death" in "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad" by framing it. Writing about the collection of poems in which both of these works appeared, Hickman remarks: "in none of her collections does the concept of silence factor more explicitly than in … *Faithful and Virtuous Night*" (90). Glück herself has professed a love for "white space" (*Proofs & Theories* 29) and "deliberate silence" (73). The blank spaces this paper examines are those which can be found before and after a stanza. As Cates explains: "The silences between lines, and especially between stanzas, become Glück's equivalent for that slippery semicolon in 'In a Station of the Metro': spaces in which the listener the poem craves can bind one statement to another and make the poem (or the book) whole" (476).

The beginning of "Aboriginal Landscape" already utilises, for the purposes of silence, the blank space between the title and the first stanza, from which the voice of the mother—"You're stepping on your father" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 24)—unexpectedly emerges. While the reader might not yet be aware of the mother's circumstances, the sudden appearance of her voice from the blank space attracts notice regardless, creating a sense of anticipation and, as Cates aptly writes, "[t]he poet's mind working ahead of us … reveals itself in the interstices between the anticipated and the eventual" (463). There seems to be a deliberateness in how the blank space is interrupted by a voice, and indeed, the second stanza utilises the same routine: a blank space followed by an abrupt voice, this time louder, repeating the same words once again. The repetition of not only the voice but of the blank space itself furthers the illusion of an increase in volume. It is only after the second time that the reader is informed of the mother's deceased state, which creates, in retrospect, the image of a voice from "the great beyond" addressing the speaker, attempting to catch her attention. Hickman arrives at a similar conclusion: "[The poem] opens with the speaker's dead mother speaking, having triumphed over the silence of death now with a locution reserved for some beyond-state; whether such comes as literal speech or an imagined speech on the part of the speaker, the dead speaks, nevertheless" (98).

In "Visitors from Abroad," death (specifically the dead mother) again speaks. In the second section, the appearance of the speaker's family, and consequently the mother's speech, is preceded and followed by blank spaces. Or, to be more exact, the mother's words are first framed by implied silence, which is then framed by the blank space. That is to say, unlike in "Aboriginal Landscape," the blank space is followed by an implied silence, wherein the speaker describes the family standing "in the cold / on the front steps" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 22). What is particularly emphasised here is the mother's silence, singled out with the words: "My mother stared at me" (22). It is only after the staring is noted and analysed that the mother begins speaking. Thus, the words "you never think of us" (22), like her first words in "Aboriginal Landscape," have an air of judgment and truth, born from the certainty that it is the dead that the reader seemingly hears speaking, with an aural quality to the words amplified by the silence surrounding it. After having said her part, the mother—and the rest of the family—"vanished like Mormon missionaries" (23), with the word "vanished" and the blank space following it once again lending an illusion of silence to the scene. To conclude, both "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad" have the mother's voice framed by blank space, which lends itself to a silence that enhances her voice and the impression that it comes from "the great beyond."

There is another instance of blank space in section two of "Visitors from Abroad" which bears mentioning: the space between the first and second stanza of the section. The mother's words—"You never think of us, she said," and "We read your books when they reach heaven" (Glück, *Faithful and Virtuous Night* 22)—are notably interrupted by a blank space, whose placement could be meant as a representation of the speaker's silence. This could, technically, be also construed as a form of implied silence; however, its dependence on the blank space leaves it open for interpretation and justifies its inclusion here. As Afrah Mahdi Alwash remarks in "The Trauma of Death in Louise Glück's Selected Poems: A Psychoanalytic Study," "Glück writes about these traumatised subjects with a vision that comes from personal understanding" (993). In "Education of the Poet," Glück touches upon her family's relationship with speech and silence, the latter of which she used in response to her desire to speak being "regularly frustrated" (*Proofs & Theories* 5). There is a similarity that could be drawn between that childhood response and the silence interrupting the mother's speech if one interprets the silence as the silence of the speaker.

In both "Aboriginal Landscape" and "Visitors from Abroad," silence plays a critical role, amplifying the illusion of aural volume and the otherworldliness of the "voice of death." Glück's use of explicit silence in the poems allows her to create distance between death and the living, while retaining a connection between the two, such as the case of the phone in "Visitors from Abroad." She uses implied silence in a way that enhances death's voice, as an aural background from which the latter can emerge—an example being the father's silence in both "Visitors from Abroad" and "Aboriginal Landscape." Finally, her deliberate use of blank spaces allows her to further separate and enhance the "voice of death" by framing it, for instance, like she does with the mother's voice in "Aboriginal Landscape." Talking of Glück's preference for silence and space, Morris remarks: "Her poetic manner thus conveys a desire to have a lyric voice that is somehow not constrained by a physical manifestation on the page" (38). Indeed, Glück's use of silences has given her works a layer that proves to be as auditory in nature as a written work can be, thus granting these works—and their readers—an additional dimension of interpretation.

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“We Have Entered Eternity”

An Analysis of *The Wild Iris* and *Averno*

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DOI: 10.53720/RDJH3481

Abstract: This paper analyses two volumes by American poet Louis Glück: The Wild Iris *and* Averno. Averno *deals with the theme of trauma. The crater lake Averno is the setting, which is the gateway to Hades. The poetry collection shows our vulnerability and how we face loss.* Averno *presents a fragmented world, conveyed through Glück's formal fragmentation and sombre imagery. In contrast,* The Wild Iris *presents a reconstruction of the world, set in a mystical garden where different flowers tell their own narratives. The book explores themes of life and death, rebirth, cyclicality, and the quest for transcendence.*

Before entering into an analysis of two of Louise Glück's collections of poetry (*Averno* and *The Wild Iris*), it seems useful to make three brief comments in the introduction to this essay on the literary style, the characteristic themes, and the poetic technique of Glück. Glück's poems are characterised by psychological depth. Bollobás describes Glück as a “late modernist poet of authentic presence, with self-expressive lyrical poems exploring the personal's connections with the universal, the natural, and the mythological” (Bollobás, “Louise Glück” 46). Daniel Morris's book on Louise Glück is the most comprehensive work on Glück's poetry. Morris does not proceed in a chronological manner; instead, he approaches Glück's work through a series of interrelated themes, the most significant of which are: “autobiography, hunger, Jewishness, trauma, nature, and grief” (7). Glück employs a variety of poetic techniques, including free verse, fragmentation, and repetition. Her poetic language is frequently dense and suggestive, demanding close attention from the reader. The poems are often open-ended and ambiguous, which allows for multiple interpretations.

Averno (2006) contains a total of 18 poems. In this book, Louise Glück examines a range of personal and universal themes, including trauma, pain, memory, forgetting, grief, and death. She shifts the focus from the importance of life to a new understanding of death. The poems in the volume exhibit a range of forms, from brief lyrical compositions to longer narrative pieces. They collectively create a pervading atmosphere of apprehension, depression, and melancholy, congruent with the prevailing themes.

In her poetry, Louise Glück has eliminated the lyric speaker as both the subject and object of attention. In *Averno*, for instance, Glück employs Greek and Roman myths as a means of achieving this effect: Louise Glück "employs a lyric persona that is projected into impersonal realms and cold dramas" (Warren 98). In *Averno*, the voices in the poems "are similar in nature to ghosts speaking from another realm, where they observe the afterlife of an unnamed event. The majority of the poems present an uncertain and unpredictable situation, as well as a fragmented world that evokes despair in the lyric self" (Keniston 183).

Averno is also based on Greek mythology. The poem "Averno" recounts the tale of the ancient Greek goddess Persephone, who was abducted by Hades, the god of the Underworld. The title of the collection refers to the Italian crater lake of Averno, which was traditionally regarded as the gate to Hades' realm, the Underworld. In the volume, Lake Averno is identified as the underworld: a dark, cold, windy, and dry realm. The Earth is described as "an island of metaphysical solitude" (Bartczak 2). Glück turns her attention to the myth of Persephone but does not follow the conventional narrative. What distinguishes *Averno* is that it presents four distinct versions of the Persephone narrative. In "Persephone the Wanderer 1," Hades abducts and rapes Persephone, a young girl representing innocence and youth. However, Persephone not only survives death but also undergoes a transformation, becoming not merely a young girl but the queen of the underworld. "The Myth of Innocence" is told from Persephone's perspective. It commences with a young girl's usual visit to a pool, where she observes her reflection and perceives the presence of an unidentified male figure. She states that "death" has appeared and that a dark god is forcibly removing her from her mortal form. This is a traumatic experience for Persephone, who describes the events as "terrifying" and expresses a desire to be freed from her body, in a manner similar to that expressed by trauma victims. Julia Kristeva asserts that the experience of pain and trauma has the potential to significantly influence an individual's personality and character: these "borderline experiences" transform the personality (*New Maladies of the Soul* 242). In Kristeva's view, the consequence of borderline experiences is a fractured sense of time. In my view, this mode of being is also evident in Glück's poetry. The temporality of the poems is fragmented, and the lyric speaker is situated at a distance, both proximate and remote, as seen, for instance, in "Persephone the Wanderer 1": "My soul / shattered with the strain / of trying to belong to earth" (Glück 514).

In another poem, "Persephone the Wanderer 2," the reader is presented with Demeter's account of the traumatic abduction. The figure of Demeter is originally a nurturing earth-mother-goddess, who is a grieving mother in this poem. In recalling the abduction of her daughter, Demeter expresses profound grief. During this period of mourning, the world is transformed, becoming reminiscent of a snowy landscape and the icy fields of Elysium. After the return of her daughter, Demeter initiates the cycle of the seasons, and the cycle of life and death (Olkowski 18), thereby establishing a cyclical temporal framework. In "Women's Time," Kristeva argues that the cyclical view of time is a primary characteristic of women, as they tend to be more attuned to natural cycles, biological rhythms, and eternity (13–35). By reinterpreting the Persephone myth, Glück offers a unique perspective by providing a narrative and a voice for all three characters. Hades is also given a voice and can tell his own version of the same story. Hades' narrative is entitled "The Myth of Devotion." He asserts that he fell in love with Persephone and attempted to create a new garden for her, as well as to care for her. However, Glück notes that the type of love Hades represents is more like a powerful, possessive, and aggressive form of affection.

The emptiness and bleakness of the underworld of Hades is associated with winter in Glück's poetry. In "Landscape,"

> Winter emptied the trees, filled them again with snow.
> Because I couldn't feel, snow fell, the lake froze over.
> Because I was afraid, I didn't move;
> my breath was white. (533)

The function of snow in this context is not one of purification or renewal, but rather of burial and concealment. The thick layer of snow that accumulates during the winter months effectively buries life, concealing what once flourished: it banishes the past to the realm of oblivion. As Margaret Ann Gordon observes, Glück's figures are often immersed in a traumatic psychic landscape that is "characterised by a disorientation in space and time" (300).

The theme of time loss is a pervasive motif in Glück's poetic *oeuvre*. As postulated by Kristeva, our relationship with time becomes suspended in melancholy, in borderline situations, and in instances of traumatic victimisation (*New Maladies of the Soul* 81–90). In *Averno*, Glück portrays the aftermath of traumatic shock, depicting the subsequent period of stillness, paralysis, and numbness:

> I am at work, though I am silent.
> The bland misery of the world
> bounds us on either side, an alley
> lined with trees; we are
> companions here, not speaking. (508)

Glück also plays with time in her verse: her frequent use of enjambment creates a present tense in the poem. Glück also likes ellipses; the spaces and pauses created by punctuation in *Averno* also emphasise the unspoken. What is new in *Averno*, compared to Glück's earlier poetry, is the form of the poems—the echo, the fragment, the fugue, the prism: these terms (all of them poem titles as well as poem forms) indicate Glück's tendency to capture reflection, fragmentation, distance, and emptiness.

Glück has said of her poetry: "From the beginning I preferred the simplest vocabulary. I am attracted to ellipses, to the unsaid, to suggestion, to eloquent deliberate silence... because they are not whole, though wholeness is implied: another time, a world in which they were whole or were to have been whole is implied" (Glück, "Proofs and Theories" 73–77). As the quote suggests, Glück's art is also deliberately self-limiting. Since there is no rhyme or metre in Glück's poetry, syntax is most important to her. However, her poems can also be said to break away from traditional verse metre and rhyme schemes, reflecting the emotional freedom of the speaker and the rhythms of nature.

In Glück's second volume, *The Wild Iris*, her lyrical selves are driven towards transcendence by a quest to uncover the hidden truths of nature. This collection contains poems that are less dreary than the ones in *Averno*, and is about the need to discover joy and beauty. There is clarity and light in *The Wild Iris*, and the poems explore themes of healing, personal growth, and the balance between light and shadow. The flowers—whether wild iris, lilies, or others—represent the rebirth of the self after suffering. This book of verses is about the emergence of flowers into the light, which symbolises the awakening of the soul from a time of darkness.

The Wild Iris is set in a flower garden through which the speaker, a gardener in constant prayer, walks. In this mystical garden, the speaker-gardener, addressing God, searches for the meaning of life amidst the pain of trauma and loss. This collection of poems, thus, offers a mystical series of prayers in which the passing of the seasons provides the temporal framework for the "narrative" (Zazula 255). What is new in *The Wild Iris* is that, instead of one speaker, there are several voices. Daniel Morris describes the poems in this volume as an unusual "polyphonic lieder-cycle" (191). Glück's chorus is divided into three distinct voices. God speaks in the "voice of nature", the wife prays in the voice of the religious gardener, and the third voice is the various songs of the eighteen flowers. Consequently, Helen Vendler describes the work as a "song cycle" (36).

According to Grace Cavalieri's interview with the poet, the garden of *The Wild Iris* was inspired by Glück's own backyard in Vermont. The poems depict one year of that flower garden. Glück's garden might remind the reader of a monastery garden and what Imre Vörös calls "the stoic garden of tranquillity" (6). Glück's gardener searches for God and meaning in her life while working in the garden, as seen in the poem "Vespers 5": "I need you, you appear to me, not / often, however. I live essentially / in darkness" (Glück 294). In Glück's stoic garden, the flowers carry the transcendent knowledge of the world.

There are 54 poems in this volume and 18 of them have anthropomorphised talking flowers. The flowers symbolise fragility, growth, beauty, vulnerability, death, and rebirth. The following flowers appear as speaking characters: Iris, Trillium, Lamium, Snowdrops, Scilla, Hawthorn, Violet, Witchgrass, Jacob's ladder, Buttercups, Poppy, Clover, Daisy, White Rose, Ipomoea, White Lily, Golden Lily, and Silver Lily. They speak as if, in a dramatic monologue, they were recounting secret experiences of the cycle of life and death, of their own death (withering) and rebirth (flowering). The talking flowers contemplate the beauty and transience of the world; they explore spiritual themes and transcendent questions—see, for instance, "The Silver Lily": "We have come too far together toward the end now / to fear the end. These nights, I am no longer even certain / I know what the end means" (Glück 310). The poems with flowers tend to be dark and melancholy, dealing with themes such as death, grief, and the difficulty of finding meaning in life. According to Daniel Morris, the language of flowers is an imperfect language of grief and traumatic memory (178). The sentences of the flowers are elliptical; for example, in "Snowdrops":

> remembering
> after so long how to open again
> in the cold light/ of earliest spring—
> afraid, yes, but among you again
> crying yes, risking joy
> in the raw wind of the new world. (Glück 259)

Here, the snowdrop speaks of the painful but essential process of reopening after a long winter: the talking flower remembers how to reopen, so it has the power to renew and to be reborn.

There are 22 poems in the volume, where the lyric subject is the speaker, who is identified as the gardener. She is the wife, who on occasion addresses her husband, John, or the absent God in prayers that she refers to as "Matins" or "Vespers." The aforementioned titles, "Matins" and "Vespers," refer to the canonical hours of the Catholic Church, specifically "Matutinum" and "Vespera." That is why the religious speaker is presented in this work in two distinct hours: the early morning Matins and the early evening Vespers. Helen Vendler observes that the book is, in fact, one long poem, or one liturgical ritual, given that the "Matins" poems appear in the first half—i.e. the morning—and the "Vespers" poems in the second half—i.e. the evening (16–22). The female voice in the liturgical ritual (the gardener) struggles to reconcile her faith in God with the suffering she observes in the world. She frequently contemplates the transience of life and the nature of existence beyond death (Bidart 23–25). The relationship between the gardener-wife and the flowers is characterised by tenderness and intimacy; she nourishes and waters her plants, caring for them as a creative mother.

In the remaining 14 poems of the work, God, who oversees the cycle of life and death, is presented. His creative and destructive powers are both significant, as evidenced by the following quote from "September Twilight":

I gathered you together;
I can erase you
as though you were a draft to be thrown away,
an exercise because I've finished you … (Glück 311)

In *The Wild Iris*, this divine figure—sometimes referred to by the gardener as "Father" but mostly as the familiar "You"—assumes 14 different natural forms. As the titles of the poems indicate, God speaks in the voice of weather phenomena and the seasons of the day and year: "Clear Morning," "Spring Snow," "End of Winter," "Retreating Wind," "April," "End of Summer," "Early Darkness," "Retreating Light," "Sunset," and "September Twilight."

In this collection, God is not presented as an anthropomorphic being, as is commonly depicted in the Bible, but rather as the divine power and light of creation. The concept of divine light is exemplified in the poems "Retreating Light" and "Sunset." However, the symbol of God's light also features prominently in "Matins 7," a poem characterised by the radiance of dawn. The speaker is stunned by the beauty and power of the sunrise, which he describes as "white fire" and "earth's radiance" (Glück 282). Furthermore, light serves as a symbol of divine presence in "End of Summer":

If you would open your eyes
you would see me, you would see
… white light
no longer disguised as matter. (Glück 292)

Writing *The Wild Iris* was a slow process. For an extended period, Glück merely wrote a single line, which subsequently became the inaugural line of the poem's opening, as attested by the poem "The Wild Iris": "At the end of my suffering there was a door" (Glück 253). In this context, the door guides us into a domain where mysticism is an inherent aspect of everyday life. It compels us to reflect on the essence of the world, the nature of being outside or inside, the state of suffering, and the subsequent state after suffering, as well as the characteristics of openness and closure. The lines written by Glück are enigmatic. If there is indeed a "door" at the end of suffering, then suffering can be regarded as a dark corridor. However, an examination of the title poem reveals that the door metaphor refers to the speaker's belief in transformation and positive change after experiencing suffering. The door is presumably a portal to another dimension of existence.

In "The Wild Iris," the speaker indicates that he has experienced death. Glück employs a combination of enjambment and caesura to convey the tension between the forces of nature (such as growth and decay) and life and death. The poem ends with the image of a "great fountain, deep blue / shadows on the azure seawater" (Glück 253), which symbolises the rebirth of the speaker's soul from death. When the iris blossoms like a "great fountain," there is a sense of triumph and climax at the same time: the last stanza that follows consists of shorter lines, suggesting that the iris is withering and dying again—and being reborn once more.

The majority of the poems in the volume investigate themes pertaining to mortality, the transient nature of life, and the potential for an afterlife. Glück prompts the reader to contemplate their own existence. This is exemplified in the concluding poem: in "The White Lilies," the flower represents an optimistic symbol despite its own burial, as the soul is believed to have no death and, therefore, enters eternal life with joy. Despite the transience of existence, the lily finds meaning in the present moment, transcending time and becoming eternal through its experience of summer: "this one summer we have entered eternity" (Glück 314).

In conclusion, *Averno* is an exceptionally powerful anthology of poems that endeavours to address the subject of trauma. The collection demonstrates our vulnerability and how we confront losses. Averno presents a fragmented world, a precarious mode of existence, conveyed through Glück's formal fractured lines and sombre imagery. In contrast, *The Wild Iris* presents a reconstruction of the world: the book addresses themes of life and death, rebirth, cyclicality, and the aspiration for transcendence. It offers a reminder that even in the most challenging circumstances, there is potential for growth, understanding, and renewal.

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Postconfessionalist Breakthrough in Glück's Poetics

BENCE VISKY

DOI: 10.53720/PKXY4586

Abstract: One of the purposes of confession in confessional poetry, as stated by Diane Wood Middlebrook, is breaking through via the breaking of taboos. This act implies a deliberately bare language of honesty, where poetic complexity is entrusted to the intricacy of emotions, encompassing issues of attachment, social alienation, or mortality. Often touching on family relations, Louise Glück's poetry too is deceptively uncomplicated. Resembling the cadence of ordinary speech, her poems create the sense that the speaker is a real *person, a homogenous entity with a body and a birth certificate. There is a tension, however, between content and form in her lyric, in that it is specifically the reliability of the voice that the content interrogates. She reflects on this manifestly in "The Untrustworthy Speaker," namely the (un)reliability of the poetic persona as a conveyor of its life events. Doing so, she breaks away from the confessionalist mode of autobiography, in which the confessional "I" lays bare the contents of the poet's life in a gesture of protest against polite society, as an attempt to reveal the* real *"I," or as an act of cleansing. Pinpointing the break achieved by Glück, Gregory Orr classifies her as postconfessional, simultaneously demarcating a stream of contemporary American poetry that complicates the notion of* self *found in the confessionals. It is easier to see what Glück is breaking away from in terms of confession, but much more enigmatic, what the relationship of her poetry is to* breaking through. *In this paper, I will attempt to grasp Glück's postconfessionality by studying the possibility of* breakthrough *in her poetics, illustrating it with lines from "The Chicago Train," "The Night Migrations," "The Untrustworthy Speaker," "Dead End," "The Wild Iris," "Snowdrops," and "Dedication to Hunger."*

Poetry refuses to provide easy answers to difficult questions. It routinely abstracts, gives nuance, or even confuses through language. Louise Glück's poems are a paradox of the literary form. The deception of her poetic voice is that it is reduced to bare bones, resembling the cadence of ordinary speech, while dealing with unsolvable equations, such as problematic family relations, the complexity of selfhood, and the inevitability of death. When looking at her body of work through the lens of healing, one can pinpoint the unillusioned nature of her poetry that speaks of ordeal as an interlocked piece of the human condition. Despite her unwavering stoicism, she does depict breakthroughs—moments of spiritual and/or physical revelation that move the poetic subject out of impasse, and into a deeper understanding of themselves and their surroundings. This paper aims to investigate the nature of these breakthroughs and examine their interaction with the lyrical traditions she draws from.

In one of her essays, Glück reflects on a contemporary wave that she calls *The Culture of Healing*, and the tendency of certain works to culminate in "the soul's ... declaration of wholeness" (*American Originality* 67). The emerging genre Glück describes has a common theme of overcoming, where the survivor speaking to us gives the impression of a *real* person, a homogenous "I" with a body and birth certificate.

Take for instance these lines from Ocean Vuong's poem "Skinny Dipping" as an illustration of Glück's argument. In the poem, Vuong parallels undressing for a jump off a cliff with leaving behind warped self-images, and portrays the jump itself as the moment of transformation:

> my people my people
> I thought
> the fall would
> kill me
> but it only
> made me real. (10)

The triumphant tone distinct to Vuong's poetics celebrates resilience and transformation, declaring a variant of wholeness: being real. On the cover of the volume, *Time Is a Mother*, there is a message tucked in: "How else do we return to ourselves but to fold / The page so it points to the good part." The act of reading here is paralleled with that of healing with a direction given towards the "good part," the state of wellbeing that follows mended ordeal. Poetry poses as a utility for psychological leverage and terrain where the act of breaking through can be realised.

To illustrate an opposing trend, which deals more cautiously with intimacy, Glück gives Ross Macdonald's quote as an example: "[Macdonald] had to be interposed, like protective lead, between [himself] and the radioactive material" (*American Originality* 68). The radioactive material in Glück's argument is the overly intimate personal matter, the portrayed working through or "coming to terms," which lacks the craft of distancing. One would speculate that, after the catalysing experience of trauma, there is another step for the writer that has to do with the "quarantine" of careful self-reflection. The author is tasked with burying the *real* material under the "safe ground" of reflective fiction.

On the spectrum of extreme revelation (confessional poetry) and impersonalist withholding (modernist and/or avant-garde language poetry), Glück is on ambiguous terrain. While she rejects the "culture of healing," there is a space for elation in her poetry. And, although the confessions she puts on paper are not "hers," there are clear references to her "real" life. Moreover, she writes in the spirit of the confessionalists, who saw value in shedding light on difficult truths and laying them bare on the table.

Bartczak argues that Glück finds a middle ground (77) between High Modernist impersonalism and intensely personal lyric poetry. Similarly, Gregory Orr classifies Glück as postconfessional, which he deems a partial continuation of confessional poetry (654). After the modernists rejected Romanticism, in favor of more encompassing narratives, Orr argues, the confessionals, in turn, rejected impersonalism, injecting an "enormous intensity of self" into American poetry (651). Glück achieves a bridge between the two traditions, wherein lies the source of Glück's postconfessional poetics: combining the autobiographical with a range of outward-looking speakers that find emotional truth in the pressing spaces of interpersonal relations as well as the vastness of mythological worlds and alluring floricultural symbols.

In *Modern Confessional Writing*, Jo Gill gives a comprehensive overview of the purposes and characteristics of confessional poetry, among them "scriptotherapy" (7). Similarly, Rita Horváth asserts that the confessional mode erupted out of an urge to work through life-altering trauma in favor of a self-cure project (16). Anne Sexton, deemed unfit to raise her daughter, began writing at the counsel of her psychiatrist. John Berryman's father committed suicide when he was twelve. This resulted in a lifelong struggle with alcoholism and depression. For many of these poets, poetry provided an outlet to speak frankly about the dirt swept under their rug.

Still, the question persists whether, even in the case of highly revealing confessional authors like Anne Sexton or Robert Lowell, the poetic subject "exists." Writing and reading are processes of mutual meaning-making, where the two parties are co-authors. Suppose one does see the subject as an extension of the real person: what are the epistemological grounds for pairing up the flesh, bone, and mind person with the ink and paper persona? Certainly, there are overlaps between the biographical data and the sentences uttered by the voice one hears in the moment of reading. However, which are the meanings and images that get conjured in our minds when reading? Do they coincide with the person's next to us? Do they coincide with the real intent and identity of the author? In short, the nature of autobiographical identity is a question with many possible answers. What is certain is that this haziness makes for an inviting terrain for experimentation.

Naturally, one cannot speak of a uniform writing style when discussing the confessional mode. Berryman, for instance, is highly experimental regarding poetic voices, thus breaking the first-person autobiography mode. In his famed *Dream Songs*, a fragmentation of the speaker occurs where Henry relates his life events shifting between first, second, and third persons, as a friend referred to as Mr. Bones pops in and out of the conversation (Horváth 25). Berryman blurs the boundaries of the inner and outer self, placing Henry's troubles into a wider space of intersubjectivity where the idea of identification itself is obfuscated. Hence, the complication of selfhood appears already in earlier confessional poets, before Glück, with Berryman being one example in the company of countless others, such as Bainard or Plath (Fitch 21; Sanazaro 64).

At the root of the criticism against "showy" autobiographical confessional poetry is solipsism, or self-centredness that invites, according to Mary McCabe, "unhealthy curiosity" in the reader (qtd. in Gill 8). The intensely personal trudging into the self-indulgent does seem to play a part in what Glück describes a *culture of healing*. But what is new in the healing genre, in contrast to confessional poetry, is what Fitch calls a "self-aggrandising" quality (34), which has the danger of turning poems into vehicles of validation for one speaker's perspective or narrative. Furthermore, emphasis may fall on aura, uniqueness, and personality, as the reader may feel compelled to keep looking and scratch the itch of curiosity, despite the intrusiveness of the sight.

The confessional movement's invasive intimacy was criticised at its conception in the 1950s and 1960s and has given way to extensive reflection and a reimagined approach to autobiographical poetry in the current century.[1] The reimagining is bringing an extra layer of reflection to the writing table. The expansion of identity, in this sense, in Berryman and Glück, or later in contemporaries, such as Richard Siken or Jorie Graham, points towards a rhizomatic conceptualisation of identities rather than a homogenous one. Perception itself is questioned, and the boundaries of (un)knowability are stretched out through devices, such as paradox, the contrasting of form and content, and the allegorical journeys of life and death, as discussed below.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome as an "acentred non-hierarchical, non-signifying system without a General and without an organising memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states" (21). They speak of entities and their relations to each other as ever connected and interchangeable, and encourage viewing a thing not in, and of, itself with a definitive origin and vanishing point, but rather in terms of relation. In the same vein, Derek Parfit speaks of identity as "all-or-nothing," claiming that "most of the relations which matter in survival are, in fact, relations of degree" (11). He illustrates that if two people are fused, the resulting person will preserve qualities from both original people. Hence, survival is not "all-or-nothing" (Parfit 19) but a matter of degree that expresses a certain level of psychological continuity. Describing a diagram reminiscent of tree bark, Parfit writes: "each person has their tree, and this tree overlaps with many others" (23). In the webs of future and past selves, what comes to the forefront is not identity, but degrees of psychological continuity and connectedness. Thus, Parfit proposes to "give up the language of identity" (8). Deleuze foregrounding connectedness over hierarchy and origin, and Parfit arguing against the primacy of identity, together emphasise a cosmic infinitude of relatability over uniqueness.

Looking at the confessionalist mode, one can ask whether it is solely the enormity of the self that it injects into writing. Diane Wood Middlebrook attributes a larger cultural edge to confessional poetry. She considers the poetic strand of the 50s and 60s a "movement," whose purpose was to "expose the poverty of the ideology of the family in postwar culture, and to draw poetic truth from the actual pain given and taken in the context of family life" (648). According to Middlebrook, the "decorum, or the breaking of taboos" (646) that confessional poetry practiced was a reaction to the political pressures of the Cold War. The trauma, Middlebrook argues, was experienced in the institution of the family, which had a role to play in the engineering of consent in an ethically contentious time of US history. The themes of loss

1 See *Modern Confessional Writing: New Critical Essays* (2006), edited by Jo Gill.

and mental turmoil, in this context, operated under the flag of "resistance by means of illness" (642). Hence, her argument suggests a systemic edge to confessional poetry along with the personal.

Glück, having published her first volume *Firstborn* in 1968, after the peak of the confessional movement, bears many similarities to the poets of this time. The extent to which she draws from the tradition of painful truth-telling, the inclination to shock, and portrayal of personal anguish through themes of promiscuity, mortality, and sibling rivalry, varies throughout her *oeuvre* (Orr 662–663), with her first volumes, *Firstborn* (1968) and *The House On Marshland* (1975), bearing the most resemblance to the poetry of Robert Lowell or Anne Sexton. Dominated by themes of struggle for personal autonomy and emotionally barren relationships, the style of *Firstborn* is described by a major Glück scholar as "pyrotechnical, at times over the top" (Morris 4). The suggestion here is that there is an immature urge behind the poetic persona to overawe, overwhelm, and direct the readers' gaze with a flare gun. The opening poem, "The Chicago Train" warns us of what the reader can expect in the volume, setting the scene for a train ride, where a baby's head lies between her mother's legs: "I saw her pulsing crotch … the lice rooted in that baby's hair" (Glück, *Firstborn* 5). The desire to shock is evident in this early poem, where the combination of gore and Freudian allure make for a heavy read. Instead of overcoming, the poet is preoccupied with giving form to a taboo memory of a traumatised perspective.

Firstborn builds on autobiographical elements, but the identity of the poetic voice appears to change throughout the collection, suggesting a break from a traditional confessionalist autobiography already in the first volume. The question of autobiographical tendency is of interest in this paper's inquiry into Glück's breakthrough aesthetics, as it prescribes the nature of the revelation that can arise. For strictly autobiographical confessional poetry, the possibility of breakthrough lies in the "absolution" after confession (Morrison 205), in the relief after the purging of traumatic residue, or on a wider plane the gratification given by the resistance to coercive structures.

In Glück's case, the plot thickens. In "The Untrustworthy Speaker," she goes as far as to question the reliability of a poetic voice in conveying their life events: "Don't listen to me; my hearts been broken / I don't see anything objectively" (Glück, *Ararat* 34). The poet reflects on the willingness of a lyric subject to seduce, despite only being able to offer a personalised fraction or at times warped view of what is *real*. A fundamental paradox arises in the poem: the speaker asserts they are least to be trusted when they speak, and the reader is asked to trust that the speaker is untrustworthy. What the reader is supposed to trust is muddied. Belief in a single perspective and the emphasis on authenticity are weakened. Space is allowed for interaction between speaker and reader, and the prospect of *mutual* meaning-making takes the forefront.

Glück further complicates poetic subjectivity in her later collections by enmeshing voices, referencing Greek and Christian myths, and weaving in floriculture. The possibility of breakthrough happens on a wide, at times cosmic, plane reminiscent of the High Modernist tradition. Bartczak calls this revelatory aspect of Glück "psycho-theological" (72), thus attributing a quality of mysticism to her poetry, which for him derives from the inclination to the metaphysical, the pondering on life after death, and the preoccupations with grand schemes. Although Bartczak locates one of the backbones of Glück's poetry in mysticism, his emphasis on these being separate from confessional poetry may disregard some practitioners and/or works of confessional poetry. For instance, looking at Plath's "Lady Lazarus," one can see a combination of all the abovementioned endeavours.

The metaphysical inquiries in Glück, as in Plath, do not lead to any promise of solace. In "The Night Migrations," the speaker grieves for the dead who will not see the birds in the night sky. "What will the soul do for solace then?" (Glück, *Averno* 1), asks the speaker. "Maybe it won't need these pleasures anymore. / Maybe not being is simply enough. / Hard as that is to imagine" (1). Glück does not take "any consolation for granted" (Hallberg 143–145) but rather studies the nature of human experience astutely. Her speaker leans stoically towards the sufficiency of not being and surrenders itself to not knowing.

The temperature of Glück's poems is cold and emotionally detached, reminding the reader of a voice that values independence over all else—be it from the suffocation of broken-down family relationships portrayed in *Ararat* or romantic disillusionments represented, for instance, in "Dead End": "I said 'Listen, angel, wean me from this bit.' / I said, 'Divorce me from this crap, this steady diet / of abuse …'" (Glück, "Dead End" 33). The temperament stems from the meticulous approach to carrying out uncompromised psychological assertions that break through the limiting conditions of social code, a confessional attitude if there ever was one. In accord with Orr's argument, the relationship between confessional and postconfessional is not solely contrasting but complementary. Both use "unarticulated manifestations of disorder," which they "order" and "restore to human meaning" (Orr 654). The term "postconfessionalism" pinpoints a greater tendency in the experimental approach to autobiography and epiphanic transcendence.

Despite their stark tone, Glück's poems hold a possibility for transcendence. She "amplifies, complicates, and destabilises the lyric form" (Morris 201) by alternating human speakers with other entities. The internal winters brought about by the emotional barrenness of the speaker extend into external winters in "Snowdrops," where a flower speaks to the reader:

> You know what despair is; then
> winter should have meaning for you.
> I did not expect to survive,
> earth suppressing me. (Glück, *The Wild Iris* 6)

In the tension between the speaker and the earth, the choice of the Freudian word "suppression" inadvertently guides the reader toward a psychological reading of the poem. Emotional barrenness suppresses the speaker, but despite the death and despair of winter, it talks of survival. Survival, as in "The Wild Iris," comes in the form of sound; a "cry" that fertilises the barren winter scene and elevates the speaker's tone into a triumph uncharacteristic of Glück: "afraid, yes, but among you again, crying yes risk joy / in the raw wind of the new world" (Glück, *The Wild Iris* 6). In the final line, the raw wind of spring arrives and carries the voice like a seed, reflected in content and metre, as we see an *ionicus a minore* (light-light-heavy-heavy) being used, a metrical unit deriving from ancient Greek and Latin poetry in passages meant to be sung (Halporn et al. 23). Using enjambment, Glück mirrors the flow of continuity, rebirth, and resilience. "The mutability of embodied life" is transcended (Morris 201), as a breakthrough is realised on a wider plane, and the cycles of anguish and overcoming are paralleled with the seasonal cycles of barrenness and fertility.

William Doreski describes Glück's language, among others, as "revelatory" (150). Similarly to "Snowdrops," one can see this aspect crystallise in both the volume *The Wild Iris* and the eponymous poem, where "the speaker wrestles with issues of ultimate meaning" (Morris 207):

> At the end of my suffering
> there was a door.
> Hear me out: that which you call death
> I remember. ... (Glück, *The Wild Iris* 1)

Turning to the reader, the speaker declares:

> You who do not remember
> passage from the other world
> I tell you I could speak again: whatever
> returns from oblivion returns
> to find a voice:
> from the center of my life came
> a great fountain, deep blue
> shadows on azure seawater. (Glück, *The Wild Iris* 1)

The poem grows from the seed of difficulty. At the closure of the difficulty the speaker talks of a door that allows for "passage from the other world." The passage, analogous to death, is portrayed as an opening that allows for two-way traffic, and consequently, for return. The "whatever" before "returns" in lines 15–16 suggests the return not of persons, but of fragments of entities that have found their way back from "oblivion," as they found their sonic and linguistic form. In the closing lines, there is a hint of pastoral glow in the illuminated country life. The culmination is brought by pure water; the boundaries of the personal are, again, transcended. A breakthrough into an "other world" is portrayed in the form of an eruption of "a great fountain" in lines 18–20.

The tensions between the conditional world (*body*) and lyric longing (*mind*) in Glück are realised through speakers of various entities (daughter, flower, a version of God, etc.) (Morris 37). In *Descending Figure* (1980), intimate themes are approached again through an autobiographical lens. In "Dedication to Hunger," where the reader gets a window into *anorexia nervosa* (Orr 663), Glück further complicates the question of selfhood or the lack thereof. Speaking of hunger her speaker asserts:

> ... That is the premise
> of renunciation: the child, the model of

> restraint
> having no self to speak of
> comes to life in denial— (Glück, *Descending Figure* 29)

The brusque tone of measured restraint denies the speaker freedom of sentiment. Instead of an outward pouring voice, the reader is confronted with a patient and controlled lyrical precision, where self-control becomes mimetic of the speaker's and poet's "dedication to hunger" (Morris 36–60).

Inadvertently, the argumentation circles back to the paradox of the Glückian literary form. Although engaging with the literary tradition by interacting with religious canonical texts, Glück unwaveringly drives into oblivion. The lines, so economical and polished, hold much more than they initially let on. The oracular cadence and bare-bone lyric, become analogous to the "real life" and metaphorical *anorexia*. As Morris asserts, "anorexia becomes a traumatic symptom, 'written' onto the body (as if the author's physical being were a manifestation of the textual self)" (57). The textual self manifests as an inward assertion of control in poems such as "Dedication to Hunger." Inward control is broken through in later poems, as shown beforehand in "The Wild Iris" and "Snowdrops," where a cyclical rebirth and a transcending of traumatic "suppression" is depicted.

Hence in Glück, the aesthetics of healing differ from a strictly autobiographical approach, where a triumph of overcoming is depicted through the voice of a homogenous "I." As shown in her earlier and later works, traumatic residue forms an interlocked piece of the human condition, which she places into a larger cultural and aesthetic channel of High Modernism, confessional poetry, pastoral poetry, and stoicism, using classical literature, religious mythology, and botany as its sources of inspiration. The "soul's declaration of wholeness" is postponed or, at times, placed into natural cycles of bereavement and overcoming, as shown above in "The Wild Iris" and "Snowdrops."

Her elements of distancing and complications of selfhood, achieved through effects such as speaking through flowers, make for a postconfessional poetics. While she carries forward the confessional focuses of intimacy, family trauma, and illness, she also breaks through the traumatic residue with a revelatory tone, flowing into philosophical inquiries of life, death, and the afterlife as shown through "The Night Migrations." Doing so, she distances herself from what she calls a "culture of healing"

(Glück, *American Originality* 66–68) and opts for a lyric in which notions of self and overcoming are placed into larger cultural, existential, and botanical contexts.

Glück's poetics hold a paradox of content and form, manifested through cutting and revelatory statements (*content*) spoken with the cadence of ordinary speech (*form*). With this paradox, Glück parallels the tensions between content and form, body and mind. The depictions of intimate illnesses, such as *anorexia nervosa*, and complicated family relations, such as sibling rivalry, make for a measured and lyrically precise poetics of intimacy that flow into larger questions of the human condition. This makes Glück a distinctive postconfessional poet, who adheres to comprehensibility and emotional immediacy while building bridges between selfhood and universality.

The aesthetic of breakthrough in Glück's lyric happens in a wide vacuum of interchanging speakers. The confessional mode of autobiography, where breaking through happens, on the large, via the breaking of taboos, is stretched out into more encompassing narratives. At times, Glück's speakers are navigating the claustrophobia of problematic family relations, and at times, they transcend the physical embodied world to roam like vessels on lyric odysseys. In the end, the journey, although intimate and emotionally intense, is not solely personal, but the journey of a wider culture that spans millennia.

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Proust, Woolf, and Narrative Rhythm

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DOI: 10.53720/DZNE1478

Abstract: This paper offers an analysis of the intersections between temporality and narrative rhythm in Marcel Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu *(1913–1927) and Virginia Woolf's* To the Lighthouse *(1927) within the narratological framework provided by Gérard Genette in his seminal critical work,* Narrative Discourse *(1980). Genette's classical work is a taxonomy of narrative that pays special attention to the way temporality structures prose. Genette introduces concepts such as* anachrony *and* anisochrony *to the analysis of Proust's* roman fleuve *to demonstrate that narrative rhythms emerge through such intricate variations in temporal order and duration. Woolf's prose has been subject to thorough narratological analysis (Banfield, Levenson, Phillips, etc.), including various examinations of temporality in her novels (Auerbach, Ricœur, Sheehan, etc.), but the temporal rhythmic movement in* To the Lighthouse *has not been discussed in the joint context of Genette's narratology and Proustian temporality. This paper seeks to broaden the scope of analysis of narrative rhythm in the Woolfian novel while also highlighting the depth of Proust's influence on Woolf's prose style. I argue that the temporality of* To the Lighthouse*, similarly to the* Recherche*, is characterised by anachronies and anisochronies on the narrative levels of story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discours*).*[1]

This paper is an investigation of time as it is treated in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927) and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) within the framework proposed by French narratologist Gérard Genette in his critical study, *Narrative Discourse* (1980), originally *Discours du récit* (1972). As one of the prominent

1 Supported by the ÚNKP-23-3 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for Culture and Innovation from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

writers of British literary modernism, Virginia Woolf has been at the centre of academic attention for decades when it comes to gauging the innovativeness of modernist prose.[2] Despite the breadth of research on the form, style, and temporality of Woolf's novels, no endeavour has been made to closely examine the intersections of time and rhythm in her prose within the framework of classical narratology. I offer a review of Virginia Woolf's stylistic, structural, and thematic choices in her fifth novel, *To the Lighthouse*, based, on the one hand, on classical narratologists' differentiation between temporalities of story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discours*), and on the other, on Genette's examination of the *Recherche*. I also consider Genette's conclusions on the *Recherche* in my analysis of Woolf's novel, since the extent of Proust's influence on her prose style and treatment of time can hardly be disregarded, even with a scope as narrow as this paper's. In what follows, I argue that—similarly to what Genette has found in the case of Proust's *Recherche*—anachronies and anisochronies strongly influence the narrative structure of prose. But, while Genette argues for the rhythm-making effect of anisochrony, I argue that the two types *together* create meaning-making textual "rhythms" in the temporal structure of *To the Lighthouse*. I further argue that the sense of stagnation that permeates the novel is portrayed with Genettian anachronies, while on the level of discourse narrative speed and movement are perceivable through varying types of anisochronies.

Genette, Narrative Temporality, and Rhythm

Narrative Discourse is as much a comprehensive and grammar-inspired taxonomy of prose as it is a succinct investigative work of Proustian narratology with newly conceived terminology. Following the formalist-structuralist trend, Genette bases his idea of dual temporality on the distinction between narrative discourse

2 Hungarian researchers, like Judit Bánházi (2024), Nóra Séllei (2012), and Krisztina Kitti Tóth (2017), have published extensively on Woolf, touching on topics such as cyclical time, cultural self-reflexivity, and artistic performance. Narratological perspectives and temporality have been the centre of much attention in international Woolf studies. In *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russel and the Epistemology of Modernism* (2000), Ann Banfield observes the modernist form of *To the Lighthouse* as an elegiac novel, while Paul Sheehan (2015) and Jesse Matz (2018) discuss the treatment of time in *To the Lighthouse* from a philosophical perspective. In his chapter written for *The Cambridge Companion to* To the Lighthouse (2015), Michael Levenson uses classical narratology, including Genettian terminology, to examine Woolf's complex use of perspective in her novel.

(*discours du récit*) on the one hand, and story (*histoire*) on the other, with narrative discourse further split into narrating (*narration*) and narrated text (*récit*) (33). This is a dual structure of what Monika Fludernik calls *tokens* and *types*, or of particulars and abstracts, inspired by Saussure's *langue* and *parole* scheme (88).[3] The story-discourse scheme is part of the theoretical lineage of Russian formalists' *fabula* (story) and *sjužet* (plot), especially Vladimir Propp and Viktor Shklovsky. Fabula is the skeletal version of a story, while *sjužet* signifies the different ways the fabula may be narrated (Fludernik 4). Genette was not the only one who made use of this formalist scheme; the most definitive figures of structuralism were all influenced by the nature of the *fabula*-*sjužet* paradigm. In *Story and Discourse* (1971), Seymour Chatman argues that "the story is the what in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the how," also acknowledging that "the Russan formalists, too, made the distinction" (19–20). In *Introduction to Poetics* (1981), Tzvetan Todorov juxtaposes two narrative levels which he describes as "the universe represented" and "the discourse representing it" (29).[4] Similarly to his contemporaries, Mieke Bal contends in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985) that "it is even customary to speak of a double linearity: that of the text, the series of sentences or sequences; and that of the fabula, the series of events" (68). These structural levels are constitutive of narrative texts because they represent one of the most basic principles of storytelling: that the subject and the mode are two entirely separate elements of narrative, and Genette recognises that the existence of story and discourse presupposes separate temporalities on the two different levels.

Genette's concept of story time and narrative time in *Narrative Discourse* is a dual conception of narrative temporality theoretically rooted in Gunther Müller and Chistian Metz's ideas. In "Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit," an essay included in the collection *Morphologische Poetik* (1974), Müller notably perceives the duality of narrative time, distinguishing between *Erzählzeit,* the time it takes to "consume"

3 The inspiration of linguistics, specifically Saussure, is not new in structuralism or narratology. From the 1950s, linguistics informed Franz Karl Stanzel's morphological typology of narratives as well as the taxonomies of Todorov, Barthes, Genette, Mieke Bal, Gerald Prince, and Wayne C. Booth throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Saussure's definitive influence on structuralism can also be seen in, for example, Barthes's "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits" (1966) and Todorov's various works such as "Les catégories du récit littéraire" (1966) or his contribution (the part titled "Poétique") in *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (1968), written by Oswald Ducrot, Tzvetan Todorov, Dan Sperber, Moustafa Safouan, and François Wahl.

4 *Introduction to Poetics* is the English translation of Todorov's "Poétique" from *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?*.

(narrate or read) the story, and *erzählte Zeit,* the time span covered by the story itself (270). Genette also mentions—as his other inspiration—Metz's idea of narrative as a "doubly temporal sequence" (18). Indeed, in *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, Metz explains that "there is the time of the thing told and the time of the telling (the time of significate and the time of the signifier)" (18).[5] At the same time, David Wittenberg calls attention to the fact that all "pre-Genettian" endeavours to grasp the "structurally inescapable *gap*" between *Erzählzeit* and *erzählte Zeit* seem to fall short in presenting "the restlessness or volatility" of *Erzählzeit* (122). Perceiving this "gap," Genette considers discourse time "pseudo-time" due to its own dependency on fleeting, easily changing durations. He contends that since "the narrative text … has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading," we must "accept literally the quasi-fiction of *Erzählzeit*, this false time standing in for a true time" (34). Discourse time may be understood either as the time it takes for the reader to "consume" the narrative text or as the inner duration of the narrative act. The problem with the first interpretation, why its time cannot be "real" nor steady, is that different readers require different amounts of time to read a text of given length, which makes it impossible to fix one "speed of execution" as the norm (Genette 86). As for the second interpretation, the issue is with the lack of plausibility when it comes to isochrony. Isochrony happens when the duration of the narrating act equals the duration of the narrated story, making it a "reference point, or degree zero" (87). Since narratives normally produce anachronies and anisochronies (that is, variations in order, duration, and frequency on the level of *Erzählzeit*), isochrony remains a hypothetical narrative state (88).

Temporal digressions such as *anachrony* and *anisochrony*, introduced by Genette, highlight time as a definitive thematic and stylistic aspect in the *Recherche* and attest to Proust's technical mastery of managing time in prose (40, 88). More importantly, anachronies and anisochronies are also rhythm-making elements of narrative. Rhythm has remained a notoriously vague concept in narratology as it can describe different aspects of prose poetry. As Fludernik explains, F. K. Stanzel distinguishes between narrative profile and narrative rhythm, where the first is "the ratio of narrative passages to dialogue," while the second is "the sequence of narrative passages, dialogue, comment, and description" (96). Bal notes that "the movement back and

5 Thomas Mann had made a similar distinction as early as 1924, observing the disruption in the fictitious nature of temporality in *The Magic Mountain*. In the novel, he compares the "actual time" of narrative presentation—which he likens to music—to the "imaginary time" of narrative content (541).

forth from present to past to present is the story's basic rhythm" (69). Concerning Woolf, Emma Sutton analyses the literary and musical rhythms of Woolf's early prose in "'Putting Words on the Backs of Rhythm': Woolf, 'Street Music,' and *The Voyage Out*" (2010). Based on Genette's analysis of Proust's text and my own examination of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Genette's concept of rhythm is most suited to describe the temporal structure of Woolf's prose, as it characterises Proust's and Woolf's signature prose style.

Proust's innovation related to narrative rhythm and time contributed to Virginia Woolf's outlook on the possibilities of prose. In 1925, she recommends Proust to a friend as "a modern with a zest," while in 1927, she calls him "far the greatest modern novelist" (*L3* 166, 365). After 1922, her most innovative novels also show the clear influence of his style: *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) with its use of the Bergsonian subjective-objective time scheme,[6] *To the Lighthouse* (1927) with its thematic and formal focus on temporality, and *The Waves* (1931) with its extreme formal experimentation through the intersections of lyricality and narrative rhythm. Still, it is her 1927 novel that is arguably the most directly "Proustian" of her whole *oeuvre*. Owing to the limited nature of this study, I will solely focus on the treatment of time in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), to which, as I argue, Genette's method of analysing *À la recherche du temps perdu* can be applied, showing Proust's influence on Woolf's narrative style.

Genette, Proust, and Narrative Rhythm

According to Genette, anachronies mark "connections between the temporal *order* of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative" (35). Narrative is inherently linear due to the natural sequentiality of its components; words and sentences normally follow each other

6 Time was a definitive subject of scientific and philosophical studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and Henri Bergson was at the heart of modernising the concept of temporality. His most impactful writing is *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), translated to English as *Time and Free Will: Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. In it, he differentiates between external or objectively measurable time and internal or subjectively perceived time, calling the latter *durée*, also known as duration in English (91). Proust knew Bergson personally; he was Bergson's student at the Sorbonne in Paris and later also became related to the philosopher through a family marriage (Bergson married Proust's cousin). Bergson's influence on Proust has been a central topic of academic interest. Among others, Fernand Vial explored the Proust-Bergson connection as early as 1940. In recent years, for instance, Suzanne Guerlac has revisited the topic in her chapter entitled "Proust and Bergson: Fierce Criticality" in *The Proustian Mind* (2022).

in a given order in the written text. Bal explains that narratives continually strive to achieve certain characteristics of visual art, such as "density" or "simultaneity"; and in doing so, they move beyond simple linearity towards more complex structures such as "double linearity" (68). In Bal's words, double linearity is "the text, the series of sentences or sequences" and "the fabula, the series of events" (68). Genette's anachronies are changes in the order of events on the level of Propp and Shklovsky's *fabula* and *sjužet*, establishing a basic textual pulse. As Bal also states, the way linearity is broken relays important information as to the narrative such as the placing of emphasis, effects of aesthetics and suspense, perspectives, and possibilities of interpretation (69). The two main types of anachrony, *analepsis* and *prolepsis* signify retrospective and prospective methods of storytelling. Proust's analeptic narrative technique plays its most significant role in the first volume of the *roman fleuve*, which is probably the reason why Genette did not take anachrony, as a temporal variation, as influential as anisochrony (88).

Yet, the first volume is likely the most impactful in terms of narrative-temporal complexity as well as thematic significance in the series; thus, its anachronous aspect is proportionally all the more emphatic. Proust's prose brims with the purpose of unification through both minuscule and grandiose temporal movements and rhythms. Accordingly, the aging, insomniac Marcel, who is the main narrator and protagonist of the story, starts telling the tale of his childhood by jumping back in time. Admittedly, this would not constitute an irregular narrative in and of itself, but Proust puts his own twist on analepsis. By having Marcel return to his present old age repeatedly from the different stages of the past he revisits, he establishes a "dispatching," rhythmic style of narrative (45). Christian Metz, whose theoretical work admittedly informed Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, argues in *Film Language* that instead of a self-serving stylistic choice, fragmentation and repetition are the central point of the narrative in Godard's *Pierrot le fou* (218–219). This argument also stands for Proust's *Recherche*. As Hugues Azérad and Marion Schmid contend, Proust's novels are "shaped by a productive tension between fragment and whole" (69). Indeed, the temporal fragmentation of the first volume of the *Recherche* creates a powerful sense of continuity despite, or perhaps through, the fragments of an inner sense of wholeness. Accordingly, the anachronous spatio-temporal movement of *Du côté de chez Swann* (*Swann's Way*), which is the first volume of the *Recherche*, presents the protagonist's inner hesitation to start his own story. This points to the "unavoidable difficulty of beginning" (46) which Proust himself would have also experienced when writing Jean Santeuil, an earlier version of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

Anisochrony is presented through the varying speed and tempo of narrative. As Genette puts it, "the speed of a narrative will be defined by the relationship between a *duration* (that of the story, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a *length* (that of the text, measured in lines and in pages) (87–88, emphases added). In other words, speed synthesises the temporal and spatial values of the text and shows the relative slowness, fastness, or even steadiness of the storytelling. Genette creates a systematic list of rhythmical variations in speed in the whole of the *Recherche*. For instance, "Combray," the first part of *Du côté de chez Swann,* covers ten years in about 140 pages, while the following significant section in the first volume, "Un amour de Swann," only covers two years in around 150 pages. Another example is the eighteen-month-long story of Albertine narrated, according to Genette's count, in 440 pages which even contains a description of two days that takes up 215 pages (92). The *Recherche* has an overarching pattern of gradual slow-down. As the narrative progresses, it takes Proust increasingly longer, in terms of number of pages, to have Marcel narrate scenes of decreasing duration in terms of hours, days in the story, producing a sense of "*increasing discontinuity*" (93).

The two types of anisochrony, speed and novel-tempo both have the ability to contribute to narrative rhythm. "Novel-tempo" is the result of the "succession and alternation" of narrative movements such as summary, pause, scene, and ellipsis (Genette 94).[7] The basic rhythm of the novel was understood for long as the interchanging of summary and scene, at times complemented by the occasional use of descriptive pause and ellipsis. Todorov, too, observes in "The 2 Principles of Narrative" (1971) that description and narrative "presuppose temporality that differs in nature" (38). Genette points out, however, that Proust uses these movements unconventionally, noting that the "Proustian narrative does not leave any of the traditional narrative movements intact" (112). Instead of recreating the usual novel rhythm of summary and scene, Proust alternates scenes with ellipses while abandoning summaries almost completely in his work. This replacement adds a contrasting "all-or-nothing" atmosphere to his prose. The nature of descriptive pause is also essentially changed in the *Recherche*. Todorov, for instance, explains that

7 Related to memory narratives, Shipra Tholia and Amar Singh discuss in their article that these movements influence the roles of memory in prose. According to them, the organisation of memory and remembering gives rise to the five fundamental rhythms that shape the progression of narrative.

describing something in itself does not mean creating a narrative. Something has to happen, action needs to take place in the form of a change, for instance, for narrative to be rightly established ("The 2 Principles of Narrative" 38). In contrast, Proustian descriptions are active, narratively imbedded contemplations "highly active in truth, and containing 'a whole story'" (Genette 102). In other words, descriptions in the *Recherche* do not put a stop to the natural flow of the story; instead, they constitute narratives in their own right. They are full of "impressions, progressive discoveries, shifts in distance and perspective, errors and corrections, enthusiasms or disappointments" (102).

Genette thus shows in *Narrative Discourse* that Proust boldly upturned almost all normative rules of temporality in narrative. Proust's innovation in prose is not *l'art pour l'art* in the sense of being self-serving. However, it *is* indeed *l'art pour l'art* from the viewpoint of what he was trying to communicate through the temporal structures of the *Recherche*. Time for Proust is not simply a tool to convey a message, nor is it a segment of structure to manipulate that message; it is both the means *and* the end. It contributes to the discourse and the story of the *Recherche* simultaneously, shaping the structure and the content of the novels. Indeed, *À la recherche du temps perdu* is a series of covert detective novels: Proust's hero seems to have lost something at the beginning of his narrative (time) and finds something at the end (himself), though the two, what he lost and what he finds, admittedly "can either coincide nearly or completely" or "can be a world away," to use Mann's words in *The Magic Mountain* (541). Marcel sets out to retrace "where time went" in *Du côté de chez Swann* through his involuntary memories, and finally finds the answer, to life and to art, in a grandiose moment of epiphany at the end of the seventh and final volume, *Le Temps retrouvé*. Paul Ricœur calls the suspension of time that occurs here in Proust's work "extra-temporal being" (144), which is, as William C. Dowling explains, "the position from which the true artist gazes through ordinary existence to realities that are outside time" (92). I argue that Marcel's epiphany is not truly about extratemporal phenomena but rather about the realisation that life, the self, and narrative are inseparably intertwined with time. The pseudo-time of *Erzählzeit* may "suppress the *now* … or the *here*," it is also a constitutive part of temporality, and vice versa (Metz 22). Be that as it may, the journey through both time and the self could not have been successful without Marcel's unique way of remembering, nor could have been the novels as intensively engaging, perhaps even musical, without the effect of temporal rhythms. The greatest value in Genette's analysis is thus its ability to show the many layers of temporal movement that characterise Proust's style and the effect they have on the story and the discourse of the *Recherche*, shaping the novels both structurally and thematically.

Genette, Woolf, and Narrative Rhythm

Time functions not only as a central theme in Woolf's fiction but also as a crucial aspect of narrative innovation, shaping all levels of narrative in her novels through experimental temporal rhythmic structures. Highlighting the innovativeness of Woolf's subjective temporality in *To the Lighthouse*, Erich Auerbach claims,

> The important point is that an insignificant exterior occurrence releases ideas and chains of ideas which cut loose from the present of the exterior occurrence and range freely through the depths of time. It is as though an apparently simple text revealed its proper content only in the commentary on it, a simple musical theme only in the development-section. (540–541)

In other words, Auerbach notices the rhythm that is created in the text through Woolf's treatment of time, only he ties it to Woolf's use of "multi-personal representation of consciousness" (541). In *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (2012), Martin Hägglund approaches Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* by connecting the significance of temporality, underlined by Ricœur, with the novel's treatment of trauma. He explains that the characters are always "in the process of comprehending past experience (delay)," and "their present experience can be apprehended only in retrospect (deferral)" (63). Jesse Matz notes Woolf's tendency to be "reminded," whereby a sensation induces memories, not only with the influence of Henri Bergson but also with her method of "tunnelling" ("Time" 168). Tunnelling meant a way of recalling the past "by instalments," only as much as necessary (Woolf, *D2* 272). This method was, thus, a naturally occurring form of rhythm in prose for Woolf, a process that can be examined as a form of anachrony. Genette, however, directly associates rhythm with anisochrony, claiming that anisochronic movement is more important to the overall "rhythm" of narrative than anachrony, like in the case of Proust's *roman fleuve*. For Genette, *anachrony* is the disruption in the chronological order of narration, while *anisochrony* is characterised by synthesising different temporal and spatial aspects of discourse time. He contests in *Narrative Discourse* that although anachrony and anisochrony both have the power to separately organise the temporal structure of prose, "a narrative can do without anachronies, but not without anisochronies, or, if one prefers (as one probably does), effects of rhythm" (88). In my view, *both* contribute to the complex web that Genette calls "rhythm" in narrative. Anachrony and anisochrony co-operate in *To the Lighthouse* to magnify the temporal embeddedness of the narrative discourse and create a rhythmic structure that is as perceivable as it is in the *Recherche* for Genette.

The temporality of *To the Lighthouse* is organised by the chronotopic identities of three sections: "The Window," "Time Passes," and "The Lighthouse." The three segments were always intended to be logically interrelated, as an early draft of the novel shows that Woolf's intention with the tripartite scheme was to create "two blocks joined by a corridor" (Woolf qtd. in Goldman 30–31). The different placements in time and space of the various sections can be examined most clearly by looking at the use of anachronies, or "various types of discordance between the two [temporal] orderings of story and narrative" in the text (Genette 36). In *To the Lighthouse*, these discordances help establish a diegetic rhythm through the respective chronotopic stance, or situation in "time space," of the three sections (Bakhtin 84). The specific ordering of events in the first and third sections serve to juxtapose the two mirroring blocks through their opposing anachronous characteristics.

"The Window" is proleptic, or future-focused, and in the question-answer paradigm of the two blocks, it signifies the "question." The very first sentence of the novel refers to a future event which is indeed hardly certain, as Mrs Ramsay says reassuringly, "Yes, of course it's fine tomorrow," referring to the weather, to which Mr Ramsay responds characteristically, "'But,' said [James's] father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, 'it won't be fine'" (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 3). The second part of "The Window" starts with another answer to the unheard question of James as Mr Ramsay says, "No going to the Lighthouse, James" (13). The third section begins with Mrs Ramsay consoling James by saying, "perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing" (14). Martin Hägglund observes the emotional and temporal significance of James's connection with the journey to the lighthouse, noting that James's "double relation to the future" is based on a pattern of hoping and being disappointed (57). On the level of the story, the unfeeling nature of the father's answer stands in contrast with the mother's compassionate approach to the boy's sadness. The difference in how they approach the boy's great "passion" will also be a significant part of why James struggles with his father as an adult, having remained stuck in the past over the pain of never visiting the lighthouse as a child. On the level of narrative, this also establishes, in the present of "The Window," the pattern of young James's recurring, anticipatory, yet unheard questions about when the family would visit the lighthouse. Furthermore, James's proleptic inquiries and Mr Ramsay's monotonous recitals of classical poetry serve as textual rhythm in the novel. Teresa Prudente writes that Mr Ramsay's linear thinking is portrayed "as a circular and aporetic process, whose pattern is underlined by Woolf's … syntactical symmetries and repetitions" (5). Like Mr Ramsay's monotonous recitals of classical poetry, James's unspoken proleptic inquiries strengthen the sense of repetition and immobility that permeate the first section of the novel.

The closing block of the novel is centred around the act of revisiting, even correcting the past, portrayed by the use of analepsis, or retrospection, in an atmosphere of continued stagnation. Despite the apparent physical mobility that characterises "The Lighthouse" on the surface, the mental immobility of the family remains intact. The Ramsay family is significantly smaller now with the passing of Mrs Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue, whose absence is painfully apparent in the small boat. The remaining members of the once lively Ramsay clan wade through the rhapsodic tides into the direction of the lighthouse and reminisce on past wrongdoings, carrying the past in their boat with them, unable to let bygones be bygones. For instance, James continues "dreading the moment when [his father] would look up and speak sharply to him about something or other" (174–175). He still recalls being refused the chance to see the lighthouse: "'It will rain', he remembered his father saying. 'You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse'" (177). Cam is also thinking about Mr Ramsay, but she sees the two versions, past and present, simultaneously:

> Look at him now, she wanted to say aloud to James. (But James had his eye on the sail.) He is a sarcastic brute, James would say. He brings the talk round to himself and his books, James would say. He is intolerably egotistical. Worst of all, he is a tyrant. But look! she said, looking at him. Look at him now. She looked at him reading the little book with his legs curled; the little book whose yellowish pages she knew, without knowing what was written on them. (181)

What she sees now is not the man and the tyrant who could behave with his children in such a detached, unkind manner, but the frail, finite, mortal human being, with his curled legs and little book. Cam knows he posits no danger now and wants to show that to James—but both get lost in the sea of the past.

> The sea was more important now than the shore. Waves were all round them, tossing and sinking, with a log wallowing down one wave; a gull riding on another. About here, she thought, dabbling her fingers in the water, a ship had sunk, and she murmured, dreamily, half asleep, how we perished, each alone. (181–182)

The final boat journey to the lighthouse communicates on the surface that "we are visiting the lighthouse now," yet the presence of past elements is much more definitive than being mindful of the here and now. James cannot forgive, Cam cannot let go, and Mr Ramsay—the man he once was—is gone. Lily Briscoe is the only person who can seemingly free herself from the shackles of the past while also recreating an identity. In a moment of artistic triumph over time, she manages to finish her painting of Mrs Ramsay after her initial struggles. With this, Woolf completes a significant cycle in the text and graces the character of the true artist with a renewed sense of identity.

The ending of the final block strongly resembles the conclusion of the *Recherche*. The question-answer paradigm of the two blocks in *To the Lighthouse* echoes the diegetic structure of the *Recherche*, and the final section of *To the Lighthouse* gives a quasi-answer to the main question of "The Window." In Proust's *roman fleuve*, the main question of the narrative is "where has time gone?" The answer Proust provides, after a journey of thousands of pages and decades of narrated time, is that time can be found in the enclosed circle of the self, as well as in the eternal cyclicality of creation. If the question and the answer were indeed worded in Woolf's novel, they would probably be the following: "When will we visit the lighthouse?" and "We should have," respectively—echoing the chronotopic stances of the two blocks. The real, and quite dire, message of "The Lighthouse," and even more specifically that of the boat journey of the family, is that much gets lost—such as time and identity—in the stasis created by mixing up the past with the present, when there is no willingness to face reality and accept change.

Besides the effects of anachrony, variations in anisochrony also contribute to an overall sense of rhythmicality in *To the Lighthouse*. As Bal writes, "rhythm is as striking as it is elusive" (89). This is precisely why it is significant to acknowledge what Todorov calls "the problem of time" in *Introduction to Poetics*; that is, the duality of the Genettian story (*histoire*) and discourse time (time of *discours du récit*) (29).

While the anachronous patterning provides the basic rhythm of *To the Lighthouse*, especially its *erzählte Zeit*, anisochrony establishes even more complex rhythms on the level of *Erzählzeit* and, by extension, in the whole narrative. The first and third parts of Woolf's novel, or the two "blocks," take up one day each in terms of duration and 110 and 59 pages respectively in terms of length. Organising the story around a single day is a classicist theatrical act and, Paul Sheehan explains, one of modernism's major temporal rhythms (51). For instance, the one-day scheme was used by James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922) and Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Nonetheless, Woolf structures the two "blocks" of *To the Lighthouse* around one day each and refers a separate temporal frame to the middle or "corridor" section—instead of building the whole novel on the classic one-day scheme.

The two blocks of *To the Lighthouse* are rather slow in terms of narrative speed; both the first and third sections take up little time and more space (scenes of small duration are told lengthily). Yet, the fact that the length of the third section (in page numbers) is only half of the first section's length means conversely that the speed is doubled between the two blocks of *To the Lighthouse*. For comparison, the *Recherche* has few scenes; in turn, they are ever growing in textual length and in number of ellipses, resulting in slowing speed and narrative fragmentation. The increase of speed between the two parts of the novel shows that "asking the question" (or stating the problem) in the first part of the novel is twice the effort, twice the length, as finally providing an answer in the last part. This also echoes Proust's thought process in the *Recherche* where the narrator-hero, Marcel, finds it a struggle to start narrating his story, jumpstarting it multiple times in the first volume (Genette 45–46).

As mentioned before, the other major type of anisochrony, according to Genette, is novel-tempo (94). Signifying the variation of narrative movements, tempo is characterised in the two blocks of *To the Lighthouse* by a series of continuous scenes and a lack of summaries. In fact, the scenes of *To the Lighthouse* are artificially lengthened by the adoption of a multi-perspectival narrative method. Chatman argues that while "classical novels exhibit a relative constancy of alternation between scene and summary," "modernist novels, as Virginia Woolf observed in both theory and practice, tend to eschew summary, to present a series of scenes" (75). For example, *Mrs Dalloway* does not adopt the "classical" concept of rhythm based on the alternation of summary and scene, but as a novel of "the modernist rhythm," it makes use of the rhythmical ordering of scenes (Chatman 78). Todorov remarks in relation to Proust that *subjectivation* in a text means that events in the story "serve as pretext for long descriptions of the manner in which the event is experienced by one character or another" (41). Woolf, like Proust, places real focus not on objective reality, on what *happens* in a scene, but on the reflections, memories that that scene *induces* in the minds of characters (Auerbach 541). In the *Recherche*, this is perceivable through the narrativisation of descriptive pauses; that is, transforming description, a movement with otherwise zero story time, into a movement that qualifies as scene based on its narrative value.

To the Lighthouse is permeated by a sense of stasis on the level of the story, creating chronotopic immobility, a narrative state in which spatial and temporal progression is suspended. The first part of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* sketches its matrix through multiple individual and collective perspectives, often with long, detailed presentations of reactions and thought processes. Mieke Bal explains that "the amount of text set aside for each event only indicates something about how the attention is *patterned*," showing "the vision on the fabula communicated to the reader" (89). Indeed, the long scenes of "The Window" without interruptions in the narrative discourse equally dramatise all sentences; none can be easily deemed "less important" than the other. Since scenes are elongated in this segment of the narrative, they feel—as they indeed are—slower: very little time progresses in a great number of pages. Although on the level of discourse, there is no interruption, the long and slow scenes are with a ubiquitous diegetic pause. This stop is due to a dichotomy of temporal omnipotence and suspension in the story. If narrative is a form of time as Sheehan claims, then the suspension of time means putting a stop to the narrative as well––meaning that characters will be frozen in one place, unable to progress naturally (51). Since movement in time or space is not a possibility, the future "does not happen" on the level of story (*histoire*) in *To the Lighthouse*. The family does not visit the lighthouse the next day and characters are unable to move along with their life in time or space. With this narrative technique used in the mirroring blocks, Woolf upholds a constant sense of dramatic tension throughout the novel and emphasises the unavoidable embeddedness of narrative in time.

Similarly to the way scenes form the basis of "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," the middle section of *To the Lighthouse* is organised by the narrative movement "summary." This is a significant change compared to either the rest of *To the Lighthouse* or to *À la recherche du temps perdu* (which notably does not use summary at all). In "Time Passes," summaries are brief, emotionless reports of the unexpected (and often violent) deaths of characters such as Mrs Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue. Summaries are presented in separate paragraphs and are set in brackets, for instance: "[Mr Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before he stretched his arms out. They remained empty]" (122). A few pages later, one short paragraph tells of Prue's marriage: [Prue Ramsay, leaning on her father's arm, was given in marriage that May. What, people said, could have been more fitting? And, they added, how beautiful she looked!]" (125). A dreamy, poetic paragraph describing late spring and early summer comes after, which is then followed by the shocking news of Prue's death, again, in brackets: "[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more]" (126). In terms of narrative and structure, the visible interruptions in the narrated text provide a discourse-level rhythm to the text in a way similar to James's questions and Mr Ramsay's poem recitals. On the other hand, they also function as recurring reminders of objective time. As Metz explains, "reality assumes presence, which has a privileged position along two parameters, space and time; only the *here* and *now* are completely real" (22). By interrupting the natural, inner flowing of time, the interruptions shape the sense of temporal structure in this middle section as much as they make us aware of the ubiquitous position time holds in this section especially.

Time is not merely a tool to express "something" in *To the Lighthouse*; it is *time* that needs to be expressed, on the levels of both narrative and story time. In the second volume of *Time and Narrative,* Paul Ricœur examines time in the Woolfian prose, next to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924). Ricœur claims that

> all fictional narratives are "tales *of* time" inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect the situations and characters take time. However only a few are "tales *about* time" inasmuch as in them

> it is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations. (101, emphases added)

Just like Müller, Ricœur focuses his attention on the temporality of *Mrs Dalloway* as one of these "tales about time." I have chosen *To the Lighthouse* as one of the cornerstones of this paper for the same reason Ricœur chose *Mrs* Dalloway; namely, that as much as it is a novel *of* time, it is also a novel *about* time. As Müller analyses the temporality of *Mrs Dalloway*, he observes that, albeit time is the overarching theme of the novel, it does not become the topic of philosophical musings (273). Time, however, takes centre stage in the musings that characterise *To the Lighthouse*, especially the middle section "Time Passes." Jesse Matz explains, "famously centred on 'Time Passes,' a harrowing evocation of time passing without any significant reference to human subjectivity, *To the Lighthouse* very much recognises the reality of the temporality that has nothing to do with the human spirit" ("Time" 165). In terms of story, the fact that the sudden news about previously important characters get interrupted by aesthetic—and nearly philosophical—descriptions of nature turn our attention to the universal dichotomy of mortality and time. It is a form of narrative rhythm that calls attention to the dark irony in that life and death both perceivably progress in "Time Passes." Even though there is evidence of occasional human presence in space, Woolf seems to suggest that though individual life appears quite precious from one's own point of view, in the grand scheme of things, these lives are nothing more than "occasions." I borrow the term "occasion" from Auerbach who uses it in the context of Woolf's scene writing. In his view, action is only there in *To the Lighthouse* to incite and inspire, to give occasion for, inner thought (541). Similarly, human lives are only occasions for highlighting their own fleeting nature in "Time Passes," which stands in stark contrast with the omnipotence of time. With the human element removed in the "corridor" of *To the Lighthouse*, the world becomes "repetition and return, cycles of declension and regeneration" (Sheehan 53). Woolf shows that in such cases the only rhythm reverberating through reality is the lonely rhythm of time itself.

Conclusion

Temporality and narrative rhythm are central concerns in the works of Gérard Genette, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf. Proust's and Woolf's novels are both novels *of* and *about* time (using Ricœur's words)—meaning that all structural aspects of their prose are directly linked to, and have a consequence on, the nature and role of temporality in the novel. With Genette's theoretical framework of narrative temporality, particularly the concepts of anachrony and anisochrony in *Narrative Discourse* (1983), it becomes apparent that *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is Woolf's most Proustian novel because it is shaped by temporal movements similar to those Genette identifies in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–1927). The narrative levels of story (*histoire*) and discourse (*discourse*) introduce different layers of temporality in prose, which results in the distinction of *Erzählzeit* (narrative time) and *erzählte Zeit* (story time). The varying relationship of narrative time and story time procedures examples of anachrony and anisochrony—which, in turn, can be regarded as temporal movements, or rhythms. Rhythm marks a definitive structural characteristic in Proust's and Woolf's works. Genette regards anisochrony as more directly responsible for narrative rhythm than anachrony in Proust's prose. As shown in this paper, however, anachrony and anisochrony can both trigger narrative rhythm. Anachrony shows up more on the level of *erzählte Zeit*, while the effect of anisochrony can be perceived on both levels of temporality. This structure informs not only the first volume of the *Recherche* but also *To the Lighthouse*, in which anachronous and anisochronous rhythms work in synthesis as they establish the complex temporality of Woolf's novel.

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From Authorial Kinship to Imaginative Sovereignty

Analysing the Influence of Samuel Beckett on Paul Auster's Texts

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DOI: 10.53720/HMRH8919

Abstract: During his early years, Paul Auster wrote three plays: Blackouts *(1976),* Hide and Seek *(1976), and* Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven *(1976/77). Those works, however, are still little known to the general public or to literary criticism. The play* Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven *exhibits close similarities to the dramatic works of Samuel Beckett, who strongly influenced Auster's development as a writer. This paper aims to reflect on the peculiar position of the play in Auster's oeuvre and to highlight its significance by tracing the arc of his creative maturation, in order to substantiate how Auster adopted Beckett's texts into his own writings, overcoming the anxiety of influence and discovering his authorial voice.*

Paul Auster started his career in 1974 as a poet, playwright, literary translator, and essayist. During his early years, he published five collections of poetry: *Unearth* (1974), *Wall Writing* (1976), *Effigies* (1977), *Fragments from Cold* (1977), *Facing the Music* (1980), and the prose poem "White Spaces" (1980); he also produced three plays: *Blackouts* (1976), *Hide and Seek* (1976), and *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* (1976/77), printed in the volume *Hand to Mouth* (1997); and published his seminal first work of prose fiction, *The Invention of Solitude* (1982). This period from 1976 to 1982 not only constitutes a landmark in Auster's *oeuvre*—as he broke away from writing poetry and drama—but it also displays a significant change regarding his style.

In his monograph, *Fehér terek* (2016), Pál Hegyi draws attention to a major shift in Auster's development as a writer:

> His minimalist poems are likened to the poetry of Edmond Jabés, Paul Celan, Charles Reznikoff, and Laura Riding, while his plays are compared to Beckett's; however, this voice [of the poet and the playwright] fell silent with the writing of a memoir, *The Invention of Solitude*, to disappear forever ... (3, translation my own)

Auster first encountered Samuel Beckett's works when he was nineteen years old (Auster, "Albee & Auster Discuss Beckett") and wrote his plays under their strong influence. Even if he described these early plays as "hardly more than spare, minimalist exercises, an initial stab at something" (*Hand to Mouth* 104), they played a prominent role in his creative development and occupy a unique position in his *oeuvre*. *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* exhibits close similarities with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953); it also echoes the two mimes *Act Without Words I* (1958) and *Act Without Words II* (1959), as well as Beckett's prose work *Mercier and Camier* (1974). Still, *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* can be considered one of the fundamental works from which the authorial voice of the later novelist emerges. Julie Campbell has described the connection between the two authors, stating that "Beckett holds an important place in Auster's development as a writer, and this is especially true in the early stages"; meanwhile, she reads *Laurel and Hardy* as "too close to Beckett, too derivative" ("Legacy" 325). Campbell insists on the undeniable influence of "Beckett as a literary father" on Auster's unique poetics ("Creativity of Misreading" 299). In his recent *Samuel Beckett's Legacies in American Fiction* (2021), James Baxter further elaborates on the subject. Baxter's study asserts that Beckett's presence is more emphatic among American postmodern writers than their European counterparts. He argues that the release of the *Grove Centenary Edition* (2006) of Beckett's work "serve[s] as an important entry point into the subject of Beckett's post-millennial legacies. As the general editor of the Grove project, the postmodern writer Paul Auster would play a key role in the curation of Beckett's writing" (212). In Baxter's view, this also contributed to the shaping of *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2006); therefore, he analyses Auster's novel in comparison with Beckett's works. While *Travels in the Scriptorium* bears undeniable traces of Auster's involvement in the *Grove Centenary Edition*, this much later work exhibits a distinctive Austerean poetics, rather than derivations from Beckett's.

In what follows, this paper aims to reflect on the peculiar, *sui generis* nature of the play *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* and its unique position in Auster's *oeuvre*, and to highlight its significance by unfolding the arc of the author's creative progress and maturation. The paper examines the play through its complex systems of signification while expanding the scope by comparing it to Auster's later works. First, I (re)establish the connection between Auster and Beckett by emphasising the presence of similar traits in their works, which could originate from Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd. Then, I point out those elements in the plays that are strictly characteristic of Auster and can be found as recurring components in this early work as well as in his later novels and even in his screenplays (e.g. the figures of Laurel and Hardy, stones, the wall and the variants of walls, etc.). Relying on Bloom's theory to illustrate how Auster overcomes the anxiety of influence by veering away from his literary father to discover his own authorial voice, I also identify early traces of a decisive change in Auster's art: his turn away from European modernism and the avant-garde (including the strong Beckettian influence) toward consistently American themes with a pre-modernist interest.

Samuel Beckett as Literary Father

Auster confesses an early admiration that "bordered on idolatry" for the work Beckett and mentions an exchange of letters describing Beckett's responses to him as "kind and encouraging" (*Collected Prose* 533–534). "I looked up to Beckett in a way," Auster admits, "he was certainly a paternal figure for me" (qtd. in Varvogli 160). Aliki Varvogli deals with the subject of Auster's literary influences—the works of Franz Kafka, Knut Hamsun, French Symbolists, representatives of the American Renaissance, and emphatically, Beckett's trilogy (*Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnameable*)—concentrating on the intertextual possibilities in Auster's texts, although she finds the use of the concept of influence (in the Bloomian sense) problematic (14). She sees Bloom's model as restrictive because it privileges the author as the "sole originator and agent of his or her creation," while, she reasons, "it leaves no room for interpretation by the reader" (14). Nonetheless, many of Varvogli's observations, especially in connection to Beckett, fit the Bloomian model. As we have seen, Campbell also reflects on the authorial kinship between the two writers, stating that Beckett's presence can be detected primarily in Auster's earlier novels ("Legacy" 325). Drawing on Bloom's concept of misreading, she focuses both on "the ties binding Auster to the literary father" ("Creativity of Misreading" 299), and on "the family bonds, especially the bond ... between father and son that both writers explore with poetic intensity" (299): for instance, in Beckett's *First Love* (1973) or Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* (1982). Auster's claim—that Beckett "had a tremendous hold over [him]. In the same sense, the influence of Beckett was so strong that [he] couldn't see [his] way beyond it" (*Red Notebook* 105)—confesses to the anxiety he experienced over writing in Beckett's shadow.

The present paper approaches the creative relationship of the two authors in a way similar to Campbell and Hegyi, for whom Bloom's theory of poetic influence and the mapping of misreading served as the basis for comparative analyses. At the same time, I intend to reflect not only on the connections between texts by the two authors, but also on the transtextual relations of Auster's texts (see Genette, *The Architext* 81–82), that is to say, I study Auster's later works as hypertexts and position Auster's play(s) as their hypotext. Gérard Genette introduced hypertextuality as the relationship that unites a later text ("B" text, or hypertext) with an earlier text ("A" text, hypotext) by transforming and reworking the previous text (pre-text or Urtext). In such instances, the hypertext cannot be a commentary on the previous text (metatext) or a collage of citations and allusions (intertext); moreover, the hypertext cannot exist without a hypotext that it essentially originates from (Genette, *Palimpsests* 5–8). In opposition to Varvogli, I believe that in order to comprehensively and thoroughly cover the "authorial kinship" of Beckett and Auster and to understand Auster's creative development, it is important to employ both and Bloom's theory, Sigmund Freud's concept of regression to childhood, and Donald. W. Winnicott's notion of the transitional object. Additionally, one must consider the intertextual relationships between texts.

The Anxiety of Influence

Young poets experience overwhelming anxiety when attempting to position themselves to their predecessors.[1] Bloom sets forth six "revisionary movements" to illustrate the possible traces of how one poet deviates from another: 1) *Clinamen* or *poetic misprision*: the poet acknowledges the precursor's achievements up to a certain point, then veers into another direction to fulfil what the prior poet was unable to. 2) *Tessera*

1 For ease and convenience, throughout this paper the author uses male (pro)nouns when referring to Bloom's theory, since it examines the creative relationship of two male authors anyway.

or *completion and antithesis*: the later poet aims to "complete the otherwise 'truncated' precursor poem" (66); meanwhile, the successor preserves its terms only to interpret them in a different sense. 3) *Kenosis* or *repetition and discontinuity*: comparable to the *defence mechanisms* the psyche adopts as a response against repetition compulsion. It is a disruption which makes possible the formation of the sort of poem that bare imitation or would not allow (88). 4) *Daemonisation:* the later poet turns against his forerunner's Sublime; the precursor is dispossessed of his originality. 5) *Askesis* or *purgation and solipsism* define the act of self-elimination through which the successor aspires to achieve isolation from the precursor. 6) *Apophrades* is "the decisive ratio" (141) during which the successor's poem generates the "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) effect, caused by the new poem's accomplishment, making it appear as if the successor poet wrote the forerunner's distinguishing work (16).

The Play that Matured into a Novel

The most characteristic and prominent motifs of Auster's early art are those of stones, walls, and flowers. In his poetry, the frequent and conscious use of these images constitutes a link, which leads back to the traces of his primary literary influences. The motifs of flowers and stones are integral to Celan's poetry; the theme of the wall firmly ties Auster to Kafka. It should be noted that Beckett's texts also frequently employ images of walls as in *Endgame* (1957), *Molloy* (1957), *Film* (1963), *Rough for Radio II* (1975), *Ghost Trio* (1976), and of stones as in *Embers* (1957), *Cascando* (1962), *Eh Joe* (1966), and *That Time* (1973). The play *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* (and *Hide and Seek* as well) can be recognised as an *imitatio* of Beckett's drama, also employing the symbol of the wall. Hegyi discovers in Auster's texts different aspects of the interpretative possibilities of the wall, which enable us to see new dimensions of the dialogue with Kafka and Beckett (*Fehér terek* 43). These include language, history, work/labour, and the work of art (*Fehér terek* 44) and the "white space of (poetic) absence" (Hegyi, "A Form that Accommodates the Mess" 108). My discussion will follow the above-mentioned interpretive concepts and wishes to extend and augment them by rethinking the contexts and connections between the individual works, thus expanding the scope of previous research. I argue that Auster adopts elements that are characteristic of Beckett's drama and uses the tools and devices of the theatre of the absurd effortlessly. He masters the writing of Beckett-like play(s);[2] however, he gradually departs from the Beckettian, avant-garde, and absurdist traditions, thus differentiating himself from his literary father.

Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven

This one-act minimalistic play with two characters, little action, few props and a "deserted" interior is much like a piece by Beckett; meanwhile, it can be regarded as the archetype, the hypotext/pre-text of Auster's later novel *The Music of Chance*. Its bare stage is only disturbed by a "heap of stones" (*Hand to Mouth* 133), eighteen in number. The two characters are a "pseudo-couple," similar to Beckettian pairs like Mercier and Camier or Vladimir and Estragon. Auster's Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy are "builder[s] of walls" (133): their task is to arrange the stones into a wall, for which they are provided with detailed instructions in the book. They are ordered to do all this by an unknown outside force, but the purpose of their actions is never explained. The two comic figures are look-alikes: they wear identical overalls, work boots, bowler hats, and both carry matching satchels; they cannot be described as distinct and definite "characters" or "identities," which makes them Doppelgängers of some sort. They can be seen as the counterparts of Vladimir and Estragon: two "clowns, clochards and music hall comedians who demonstrate the clown's special ability to survive under the worst of circumstances" (Simon 111). Throughout the play, one finds elements characteristic of Beckett's drama: physical and verbal "comedy," staggers, totters, falls, amusing language use, vulgar expressions, repugnant incidents, misunderstandings, cross-talks, non-sequiturs, questions that remain unanswered, humiliating situations, the suffering self, nonsensical incidents, the fallacy of memory, a sense of being lost in space and time, and many repetitions.

Similarly to Beckett's *Act Without Words I*, the play begins with a fall: in the dim light Hardy crashes into Laurel from behind and both hit the ground groaning. The very first dialogue poses the question of alterity. Iván Nyusztay asserts that the *homo absurdus*, the man of the absurd is represented "through characters without definite identity, lacking connections and a sense of belonging (e.g. homeless persons, tramps such as Mercier and Camier, Vladimir and Estragon; lonely outsiders such as Krapp, Clov, Watt)" ("Experiment" 30). Hardy touches Laurel's face and inquires, "Is it you?" (134); however, Laurel cannot provide him a firm, positive

2 Auster's other play, *Hide and Seek,* strongly echoes Beckett's *Happy Days* (1961).

answer. He starts touching his own face and asks back: "Is it me?" (134). Laurel seems to be unfamiliar, an "other" to his own self, while he is the "same" as Hardy. This paradox may be explained with their complementary personalities, that is, the slight differences between their conduct and behaviour. Hardy is more confident, he moves swiftly with purposeful "great strides," and is contemplative, while Laurel is more cautious, uncertain (he seems to be uncertain of his own self and identity), moves slowly "as if in a daze" (133), and expresses himself in a more vulgar manner. As in *Waiting for Godot*, where Vladimir is more practical and persistent, more likely to recall previous incidents; he gets annoyed by Estragon's jokes and initiates most of the interactions, while Estragon is "volatile," prefers to share funny stories, and appears to be more defenceless (Esslin 48).

After they conclude that "I'm me, and you're you" and that "It looks like we're both here," Hardy comments that "another day begins" and approaches the heap of stones to see "what they've given us today," while Laurel states, "as if you didn't know already" (134). These phrases are the first signals that they have been building the same wall in the same order for an indefinite period of time. To repeatedly carry and arrange stones are the central theme of the play, a cyclical movement that rhymes with *The Myth of Sisyphus* and the absurd—however, by the end of this play, a wall is built and remains standing. (Even though the play does not disclose the reason for their compulsive wall construction, the notion of punishment emerges when viewed through the lens of the novel *The Music of Chance*.) Hardy's response to Laurel (to "as if you didn't know already") is striking: "Anything is possible. There are nuances … variations … wheels within wheels" (*Hand to Mouth* 135). To say anything is possible means that anything can happen. The options are endless and so are the outcomes; there might be an outer force (e.g. chance) which can intervene in the course of life to enable "variations," different results (either positive or negative). The statement in itself is not compatible with the absurd: if anything is possible, there is a chance to break out from the habitual dullness of existence and even to escape the endless punishment. This notion is heightened by a figure of speech, the expression "wheels within wheels," suggesting that their current situation is more complex and complicated than they may perceive. Furthermore, the word "wheel" bears various connotations worth considering. To spin the wheel results in randomness; this is the law of the "wheel of fortune." There is an equal chance for a lucky outcome as for a negative one. Prefiguring the discussion of *The Music of Chance*, "wheel" is also a commonly used slang term in the game of poker, where it means "the best possible low hand," a set of cards (*Poker Terms*). In light of this, it is clear that Auster, while utilising the tools and devices of Beckettian and absurdist theatre (*tessera*), aims to distance his work (and himself) from the hold of his literary father (*kenosis*, *askesis*), while the play also anticipates terms and elements that will recur in his later novel(s) (and already meant in a sense different from his forerunner's), such as the building of the wall or repetitive labour, while the diversions (*clinamen*) are the motifs of chance and the poker game.[3]

They are about to begin reading the day's orders, when Laurel turns to Hardy: "Do you remember what day it is?" (*Hand to Mouth* 135), but Hardy cannot remember. One way to acquire knowledge is by posing questions; however, since the world is "not reasonable" (Camus 16), these questions are hardly ever answered, and the responses usually do not correspond or correlate to the inquiries. At the same time, the relentless interrogation reflects the individual's need for familiarity, acquaintanceship, and personal history, since the absurd man "is deprived of the memory" (Camus 5). This loss of memory is an integral part of the Theatre of the Absurd. The characters do not seem to remember their own pasts, they are unable to keep track of time, inabilities which are (re)presented and enhanced by repetitive phrases, recurring actions and scenes. Vladimir and Estragon "repeat to fill their endless wait" (Cohn 105), Pozzo "repeats in mechanical commands to Lucky" (Cohn 105), Krapp searches for personal history by listening to his voice recordings habitually. The repetition of sounds, words, phrases, sentences, or dialogue segments is "Beckett's most pervasive verbal devise" (Cohn 96).

After specifying the date, Laurel states that it is his turn to study their book of orders. When Hardy extends the book toward Laurel, he drops it, and the book falls. They simultaneously bend down to pick it up and "butt heads" (137). Laurel tumbles, while Hardy circles around the stage in pain "emitting loud, astonished noises"—an example of a comedic, silent film-like situation. They begin to examine the orders of the day. When the bell rings, they commence work (as in *Happy Days*, where the sound of a bell dictates Winnie's actions during the day). "Each approaches a stone, and after many preparations—in the manner of weight lifters—they lift the stones. Grunts and groans, the strain of total exertion. Tottering under their burdens, they painfully make their way to ... the 'wall line'" (*Hand to Mouth* 145).

3 It is clear that absurd theatre excludes real chance that enables various, differing results. One might consider the tossing of a coin in Tom Stoppard's play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966); however, the coin always lands on the same side, it is stuck in an "absurd habit."

Similarly, the actor in *Act Without Words II* "picks up two sacks, carries them bowed and staggering," creating a comic effect. Exhausted and motionless, they both lie on the ground, considering giving up; yet, Hardy proves to be more tenacious. He dwells upon why not to suspend their labour. He tries to find an excuse for their current miserable state. Eventually, he bursts out in a trance-like philosophical contemplation about the stone and his own position in relation to it:

> I want to *learn*, once and for all, how to do the thing that has to be done. If I have to lift a stone, I want to learn how to *think* of nothing but the stone. I want to *admire* the stone for the strength it takes out of me. I want to *understand* that the energy I have lost now belongs to the stone. I want to *love* the stone. I want to learn how and why the stone is more powerful than I am. I want to *remember*, once and for all, that the stone will continue to exist long after I am dead. (*Hand to Mouth* 146, emphases added)

This passage is a builder's manifesto. It is about the search for answers and for an understanding of energy transformations, that is, how inanimate objects extract power from an animate subject. It tells about Hardy's effort to learn, remember, and master his task. At once, it elevates the stone to the rank of a monument, a memorial which, with its power, is beyond the mortal human and stands against time; the stone becomes history, which bears the memory of the past. On the other hand, one could argue that the stones are words in which case the wall is language in Auster's microcosm; the speech may be read as a self-reflexive confession about the hardships of the act of writing.

Laurel is unimpressed by Hardy's monologue. Instead, he tells a trivial "funny" tale about "two men" (*Hand to Mouth* 147), reminiscent of Vladimir's story of "the two thieves." It is essential to note that Vladimir aims to recall the Biblical narrative of Jesus and the two sinners; in contrast, Laurel's recital is mundane. Laurel asks, "What time is it?" (147), to which Hardy always gives the same answer, "It's late" (147)—a dialogue repeated several times throughout the play. Hardy starts another soliloquy (unlike Lucky's tirade, his speeches are always thought-through and logical), this time about the wall: "A wall can be many things, can't it? It can keep in or keep out. It can protect or destroy. It can help things … or make them worse. It can be part of something greater … or only what it is" (149), during which Laurel falls asleep.

By the end of his speech, Hardy wakes him up, then "Laurel stands up slowly, parodying a somnambulist" (149); he approaches the heap and lifts a stone with unexpected ease. Hardy follows him and he, too, is able to carry one without any effort. The *mysterious* lightness is inexplicable: all stones are identical with the exact same measurements; therefore, their weight should not differ.

Contrary to their expectations, the later stones are just as heavy as the first ones. Laurel "cannot advance in a straight line" under the weight of his stone and he "begins circling and weaving around the stage" (150). The subsequent parts portray their comic struggle to keep Laurel in line while Hardy conducts him. In accordance with the rules of silent films, Laurel mixes up the directions ("to *your* right," "no, the other way"), but finally they manage to place the rock in its assigned position. What should be noted here is that Laurel and Hardy, as characters, start to veer away from the grotesque. Nyusztay specifies the use of the grotesque in absurd drama for instances where "the comic is mixed with the tragic, the ridiculous with pity, dignity with misery, elevation with humiliation" (*Az önazonosság alakváltozásai* 12, my translation); where this mixture takes place simultaneously, it leads to the reader's ambiguous psychological response and incomprehension (12). In Auster's play, the comic is no longer mixed with the tragic, the ridiculous is not combined with pity, and their humiliation is reinterpreted. Laurel and Hardy's suffering is due to their clumsiness and awkwardness. A member of the audience might laugh at them; however, that laughter would be distinct from the uneasiness and ridicule of the absurd. One would root for them to succeed and experience relief (after finishing the wall). In my reading, this instance can be connected with the Bloomian revisionary movements clinamen and tessera, which means that Laurel and Hardy seemingly fit among the Beckettian pairs, however, only to a certain extent. They seem to follow the precursor's terms (in their looks, habits, foolish actions) up to a point, and then they gradually start to veer away from them. They rather start to resemble the original comic duo, the silent-film comedians[4], where laughter is liberating, freeing, and therapeutic—as in the novel *4321,* where they are freed from the grotesque elements. It seems that the play oscillates between Beckettian "aftershocks" and the exertion to escape them; between the absurd drama and something dissimilar to it.

After their ludicrous interlude, Laurel and Hardy collapse showing the physiological signs of extreme exhaustion. Laurel thinks he is "going to throw up," while Hardy says he is "going to crap in" his pants (150), and both agree, while sniffing

4 Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy were a US-based comedy team of silent films between 1921 and 1950.

around, that maybe Hardy already did. This again strongly echoes Beckett: bowel movements, or more precisely, the lack of them (constipation), is a common trait of Beckett's figures, e.g. Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape*, or the protagonist in *First Love* (Nyusztay, *Az önazonosság alakváltozásai* 71). The presence of odours can also be found in *Waiting for Godot*: Vladimir's breath and Estragon's feet both stink.

Hardy notices two trees in the distance (reminiscent of the tree from *Waiting for Godot*; however, they do not consider hanging themselves). The trees are hard to see; therefore, Hardy pulls out a pair of binoculars from his satchel (the pair of binoculars may be reminiscent of the telescope in Beckett's *Endgame*). Two observations must be made here: first, about the origin of the binoculars. Hardy admits that he stole them, which foreshadows the crime of Jim Nashe stealing the two figures in *The Music of Chance*. Second, with the help of the binoculars, they notice a man they believe to be the "inspector" (*Hand to Mouth* 159) coming to supervise their work. In *The Music of Chance*, this position is filled by Calvin Murks, who oversees the work (the building of a wall) of the two captives, Jim Nashe and Jack Pozzi.

Approaching the end of the play, they gradually grow weary of their senseless labours and the idea of rebellion occurs to them. They entertain the thought of fighting their unknown employers, going on a strike, simply giving up, or finishing the wall, only to kick it down later. During these outbursts, their behaviour becomes occasionally violent; they use swear words and are willing to employ physical force, if needed. At one point, Hardy tries to convince Laurel to stop his resistance and continue to work for their "friendship's sake" (162), then Laurel's bitterness slowly turns into "compassion" (160). The absurd theatre, however, does not comprehend love, friendship, or empathy, and does not know compassion (Nyusztay, *Az önazonosság alakváltozásai* 39). Again, the conclusion can be drawn that Auster's play, while showing signs of derivation from the absurd drama, departs from its underlying tenets.

They agree to finish the wall. Before adjusting the final stone, Hardy goes behind the wall and "pokes his head through the gap" (*Hand to Mouth* 170), and they enjoy a brief game of peek-a-boo. It is important to emphasise the infantile attitudes and actions of Laurel and Hardy, and their worrying about an outside but superior (parent-like) governing force.

Infantilism and regression to childhood, as understood by psychoanalysis, occupy an important role in "shaping the life of a human being" (Mann 426). Likewise, the infantile peek-a-boo play may be recognised as a regression to childhood, which points toward Freud's findings about the game *"Fort-da!" ["gone-there"].*

Freud states that after a severe concussion or other trauma, "traumatic neurosis" may occur (*Beyond Pleasure* 10), during which the dreams emerging tend to be nightmares, through which one constantly re-experiences the traumatic event (11). Freud traced back this phenomenon to the earliest "normal" (mental) activities of children's play and identified it as one of the most important moments of psychic formation (12). Monitoring a child's habit of throwing his toy away from him to somewhere out of sight, Freud noticed that it was accompanied by a long "o-o-o-o" expression which "represented the German word 'fort' [gone]" (13–14). Then, the child would pull back the reel from its cover by the string attached to it, and the reappearance of the toy was followed with "a joyful '*da*' [there]" (14). Freud understands the child's actions as a reaction to the separation from his mother, during which the child was making himself accustomed to the trauma of her absence by symbolically "losing her," letting her out of sight, and producing the joyful pleasure of seeing her again (15).

Separation from the mother is a topic that Donald Woods Winnicott also discusses. According to Winnicott, during the phase when infants start to separate from their mothers, approaching what he calls the "not-me" realisation, they substitute attachment to the mother with a teddy, a doll or soft toy, a so-called "transitional object" (1). However, the use of this transitional object does not mean complete liberation from the mother (1–3), but a movement of departures and returns. Both theories illustrate the child's attempts at individuating itself from dependence on the parental force, which in Bloomian terms may be read as the *ephebe*'s endeavour to liberate himself from the precursor's (literary father's) strong hold and overwhelming influence, as a step toward authorial independence and originality. Merging Bloom's and Winnicott's theory seems to provide a rounder, more complex ground for analyses that focus on individuation without the restrictions that Bloom's gendered theory may offer.

As a prolepsis, I consider the play as the transitional object that, on the one hand, maintains a discourse with the Beckettian tradition and links the successor (Auster) to his precursor (Beckett). Temporarily, this holds him back from sovereignty, but on the other hand, it enables the course of separation from the strong hold of the literary father. Laurel and Hardy, as characters, are also in flux between absurdist and non-absurdist qualities: their appearance is tramp-like; their forced-upon labour may be seen as a punishment; their actions and speeches are repetitive and bear a cyclical character; while their strongly infantile attitudes separate them from the absurd as they rather start to resemble the original comic pair. They construct a wall with great effort: the wall into which (metaphorically) the Beckettian heritage is built, which serves as a "membrane" between the "me" (authorial voice) and the "not me" (Beckettian influence)—as an intermediate state of kenosis, where the successor reaches a liberating discontinuity from the precursor.

As indicated earlier, the figures of Laurel and Hardy return, first in *The Music of Chance*, where they are transformed and completed into four distinct "real" characters (tessera, kenosis): as two builders of a wall (Jim Nashe and Jack Pozzi) and two infantile eccentrics (Flower and Stone). Although Auster's interest in silent films and their characters remains constant (see Hector Mann in *The Book of Illusions* [2002]), one has to wait until the 2017 novel, *4321*, to see Laurel and Hardy revive, completely freed from any grotesque traits.

The Music of Chance

Auster describes *The Music of Chance* as "a book about walls and slavery and freedom" (*Art of Hunger* 294). The story begins with the protagonist, Jim Nashe, inheriting an extraordinary amount of money. With the sudden gain of a fortune, he arranges his debts, buys a "red two-door Saab 900" (*Music of Chance* 4), and visits his "long time no see" daughter. On his return to Massachusetts, however, "as it happened, he soon found himself travelling in the opposite direction. That was because he missed the ramp to the freeway" (6). Nashe's life takes an irreversible turn due to a "wrong turn," just like Quinn's life in *City of Glass* is changed by a wrong number: "Much later, when he was able to think about the things that had happened to him, he would conclude that nothing was real except chance" (Auster, *City of Glass* 3). This shows that *chance* (to which *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* contains an early reference) is one of the central organising forces in Auster's novels, as in *City of Glass* (1985), *Mr. Vertigo* (1994), or *Invisible* (2009), among others.

Without any responsibility to hold him back, Nashe explores the limitlessness and liberating sensation of the open routes, with the red Saab serving as a symbol of his liberty and instrument of freedom. This kind of narrative, that is, the road novel (Herzogenrath 160) aligns with the American sense of living and with literary traditions that are vivid parts of Auster's novels. Nashe decides to continue his journey until his money runs out. When the time approaches, his fortune declines, and another unexpected twist seals his fate: he meets a beaten-up hitch-hiker, the poker "wizard" Jack Pozzi (the name may recall Beckett's Pozzo). The pair eventually winds up at the mansion of the two millionaires Flower and Stone to compete in "the chance of a lifetime" poker game (*Music of Chance* 30). "These guys are millionaires. And they don't know the first thing about cards ... it's like playing with Laurel and Hardy" (30), Pozzi asserts. As Auster described in an interview, "Flower and Stone are eccentrics, latter-day version of Laurel and Hardy" (*Art of Hunger* 333). One can notice that Flower and Stone retained the emblems of the play's Laurel and Hardy and those were developed into character(istic)s. However, the power relations changed: Flower and Stone became the (un)known authority that forces labour upon the two builders (Nashe and Pozzi).

They begin the card game: Flower and Stone against Pozzi, while Nashe remains an observer, a "lucky charm" (*Music of Chance* 97). Pozzi seems to stand his ground, even though Flower and Stone prove more challenging opponents than Pozzi expected. Nashe, at one point, leaves the game and wanders through the house. He enters one of the rooms where Stone's utopian miniature—a "scale-model rendering of a city" called the City of the World—is placed (79). It is an autobiography of Flower and Stone's lives, displaying their past selves; a utopia "where the past and future come together, where the good finally triumphs over evil" (79). Four "state administrative bodies" operate there: the Hall of Justice, the Library, the Bank, and the Prison. The convicts, paradoxically, wear a smile on their faces; they are happy and even glad to be punished, because "now they are learning how to recover the goodness within them through hard work" (80). As the title would suggest, *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* may be seen as an earlier version of the same prison, where Laurel and Hardy are the punished convicts: with the allusion to the two thieves in *Waiting for Godo*t, Auster's play offers punishment and the possibility for salvation. Heaven is usually seen as a place or condition of the absolute, highest happiness. Hardy even "enthusiastically" remarks at the beginning of the play: "And so ... another day begins," to which Laurel replies: "You don't have to be so happy about it" (134).

Stone plans to extend this miniature by building another City of the World, "a second city to fit inside the room within the room" (*Music of Chance* 80), "a model of the model" (81), the construction of which would continue forever. Through this composition, Stone would create an even more minuscule replica of the previous model and so on, *ad infinitum*—an instance of the *mise-en-abîme* characteristic of Auster's works (Cf. Hegyi, "Continuity of Interpretation"). Nashe steals two miniature figures of Flower and Stone, to which Pozzi refers later as the decisive movement leading to the decline of their luck.

Pozzi loses the game and they amass an incredible amount of debt; to repay it, they are forced to build a wall from the ruins of a fifteenth-century Irish castle that was once destroyed by Oliver Cromwell. Through their "punishment," they become the captives of Flower and Stone's universe: the two builders of the wall. Jack and Pozzi had been "stripped of their status," "reduced to the level of hired hands, tramps" (112). Their freshly imposed status, the task to build the wall while being inspected by Calvin Murks links back to the play *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven*, while their vulnerable and degrading tramp-like condition may still evoke Beckett's figures to a certain extent. They appear to be similar to the precursor's terms; however, they are distanced from them and completed into true characters with their own identity, past, and memories, in the shaping of which fate and chance contributed equally.

Meanwhile, the stones of the wall are also transformed: they seem to constitute some kind of elevated, beyond-human entity, "a wailing wall" (86). The following passage illustrates Nashe and Pozzi's sublime encounter with the stones when they first witness them from up close:

> It had been one thing to look at the stones from a distance, but now that he was there, he found it *impossible* not to want to touch them, to run his hands along their surfaces and discover what they felt like ... the two of them just *wandered* around the clusters of granite, *timidly* patting the smooth gray blocks. There was something *awesome* about them, a stillness that was almost *frightening*. The stones were so *massive*, so cool against the skin, it was hard to believe they had once belonged to a castle. (*Music of Chance* 118–119, emphases added)

Nashe describes the sublime aesthetic quality generated by the sight of the massive stones as his mind seems to be "bound up" in the movement of "judging of the object" (Kant 85). Since the sublime is at once associated with notions of ecstasy, grandeur, terror, awe, astonishment, and admiration (Doran 1), it correlates with the feelings of awe and fright evoked by the grey blocks. Their primordial nature arouses an experience of transcendence, as sublime objects "raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind" (Kant 100). I identify this transformation as the movement of daemonisation: the act of a Counter-Sublime achieved through a heightening hyperbole.

When they begin their exhausting labour, Nashe initially welcomes the work as it was "almost a relief to have the decision taken out of his hands" (*Music of Chance* 110)—he does not see the wall as "a punishment so much as a cure" (110). Pozzi, however, after an unsuccessful attempt to run away from captivity, is found beaten up, half-dead. He is supposedly transported to a hospital but Nashe never hears from him again. Eventually, Nashe pays off the debt and earns his freedom but continues to work on the wall, since he is impoverished. By chance, one night he happens to be driving his expropriated red Saab 900 (with his ex-inspectors), when out of sudden ire, he crashes the vehicle and supposedly causes a fatal accident. It is almost as if Nashe's life history came full circle: he was liberated by his car and the open road, and then, by disturbing the harmony of fate and chance, he fell into captivity, to be freed at last by an unexpected act in his red Saab 900.[5]

In *The Music of Chance*, the two figures of *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* become four distinct, real characters, each with their own identity, past, and memories—aspects missing from the absurd. During this process, they lose continuity with the tradition of the Beckettian pairs, as well as with the play's Laurel and Hardy characters. Meanwhile, the instrument of the punishment, the subject of hard labour, the wall and its building blocks are transformed in the novel into an elevated, beyond-human entity through the movement of daemonisation. Finally, the novel not only opens additional dimensions toward the play by completing and revising its central elements, such as the characters (punished–punisher, supervised–supervisor, and captive–detainer), themes (punishment, manual labour), or images (wall, stones), but it establishes a new kind of dialogue with the Beckettian heritage as well. In Campbell's view, "reading Beckett 'through' Auster opens up *Endgame* in a direction I have not paid much attention to before: the fear of loss of self through the numbing sameness of day after day, but also the loss of self-worth through lack of love" ("Fathers and Sons" 308). Such a reading may be linked to apophrades,

5 Curiously, the film adaptation of *The Music of Chance* (1993) ends with Nash causing a car accident (probably killing his passengers while he barely survives) and in the next frame, the camera shows him walking down a deserted road, limping, in bloody clothes, when an unknown driver passes him and offers him a ride which he accepts. This adaptation provides another dimension, another frame-story for the narrative, since it vividly recalls Nashe and Pozzi's first encounter. Another intriguing aspect is that the driver is played by Auster himself.

where the strong successor changes the temporal linearity of works and earns himself priority, authenticity, and originality in relation to the predecessor.

As formerly indicated, the symbol of the wall, stones, and even manual labour as a form of punishment are recurring elements throughout the *oeuvre*. The symbol of the wall plays a central role in the third novel of *The New York Trilogy*, *The Locked Room* (1986), *In the Country of Last Things* (1987), *The Book of Illusions* (2002), as well as in the screenplay *The Inner Life of Martin Frost* (2007). Stones occupy a fundamental position in the screenplay *Lulu on the Bridge* (1998), in the novels *In the Country of Last Things*, *Moon Palace* (1989), and *Invisible* (2009). Taking *Lulu on the Bridge* as a representative example, it may be observed that in contrast to the early play, where stones served as tools of punishment through futile, seemingly never-ending work, the screenplay utilises the symbol differently. *Lulu on the Bridge* emphasises two different qualities of the stone: one belonging to the realm of physical life, the other to the realm of the metaphysical. The narrative revolves around missed encounters, chance events, solitude, love, and loyalty all unfolding during the moment when a falling piece of debris strikes the ground, marking the protagonist's demise. "The very same piece of stone is utilised as the metaphor for the healing power of love in the tangent plot that commences after the fatal accident" (Hegyi, "Based on a True Story" 209). The realms of the physical world and the metaphysical intertwine: the piece of stone (rubble) on the one hand, symbolises the fragility of one's life; it can end in an instant, as quickly as a piece of plaster lands on the floor. It represents the material, physical life, and the passing of time (a few seconds) during which the main plot evolves. On the other hand, the magic stone stands beyond the realms of the physical world; it represents the inexplicable, something beyond human understanding: the magical levitating stone that shines with blue light kindles love between the two protagonists and ties their fates together. This example convincingly illustrates that although Auster's later works frequently employ elements that are characteristic of his early dramatic work(s), these show no signs of derivation from the Beckettian traditions.

Conclusion

The present paper sought to describe the early phases of Auster's creative development and maturation by positioning the play *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* and the novel *The Music of Chance* at the centre of comparative analyses. Utilising

Harold Bloom's theorems, the paper attempted to illustrate how Auster adopts Beckett's texts into his writings overcoming the anxiety of influence. It can be concluded that Auster achieves that by yielding up part of his creative endowment at the high price of breaking away from writing drama (and poetry) and finding the proper medium for his creativity in prose (and screenplays). At the same time, another important shift takes place in the author's development as a writer: the turn away from European modernism and avant-garde conventions (and thereby from the Beckettian influence) toward a consistently American pre-modernist direction with an ontological and metaphysical interest that is related to the tradition of humanism (Cf. Hegyi, *Amerikai Fenségesről*).

Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven serves as an excellent example that illustrates Auster's ability to write Beckett-like plays: the minimalistic, one-act play, utilising only a handful of props, displays a comic pair involved in cyclical and futile action. The two tramp-like figures are seemingly sentenced to undergo an absurd punishment that echoes Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The two figures are look-alikes, a pseudo-couple, or Doppelgängers (just like Beckett's Mercier and Camier, or Vladimir and Estragon), who are affected by a sense of being lost in space and time, accompanied by the fallacy of their memory, which is heightened throughout the play by their repeated phrases and expressions. Laurel and Hardy are seemingly doomed to build the same wall every day for an uncertain period (in *Waiting for Godot*, the time span of the characters' wait is similarly undecidable). The play begins in a manner similar to *Act Without Words I*, that is, with a fall; later on, the two characters commence to work after a bell rings, which is reminiscent of *Happy Days*. Further parallels could be drawn between Hardy's monologue and Lucky's tirade, or between Laurel's trivial tale and Vladimir's story of the two thieves.

Despite the numerous similarities between the works by the two authors, and even if Auster does utilise elements of the Theatre of the Absurd, they exhibit significant differences. Laurel and Hardy appear to blend in among the Beckettian pairs, but only to a limited extent. They seem to follow the precursor's terms to a certain degree (in their looks, habits, or foolish actions), but then they gradually start to veer away from them. On the one hand, they start to resemble the original comic duo, the silent-film comedians. During the comic instances, the two characters are liberated from the grotesque elements, which could be linked to the Bloomian revisionary ratio of clinamen. On the other hand, their relationship is based on friendship, compassion, and love, while the absurd theatre does not know about compassion nor does it comprehend love, friendship, or empathy. Thus, this departure could be seen as a version of tessera and kenosis: the "ephebe" follows the precursor's terms up to a point, and then gradually departs from them by at once renewing and reforming them. As explained throughout the paper, this departure reaches a critical point in the novel *The Music of Chance*, when during askesis the successor achieves discontinuity with his own works by completing and developing the play's Laurel and Hardy into four distinct characters. Ultimately, the play oscillates between Beckett's influence and the attempts to break away from it; therefore, it may be seen as the "transitional object" (Winnicott 2) that maintains a discourse with, and links the successor to, the precursor, while enabling the course of separation. Simultaneously, the play not only anticipates the main ideas and central elements of *The Music of Chance*, but it can also be regarded as the novel's hypotext.

Auster's "road novel" (the transformed hypertext of the play) displays key American values such as the freedom of the open road. The figures of Laurel and Hardy are completed into distinct characters: two builders of a wall (Jim Nashe and Jack Pozzi) and two infantile eccentrics (Flower and Stone); furthermore, the wall and the stones are transformed into an elevated, beyond-human unit (a wailing wall) during the movement of daemonisation or the Counter-Sublime, achieved through a heightening hyperbole. Moreover, the novel suggests that chance (to which *Laurel and Hardy Go to Heaven* made an early reference) is one of the central organising forces in Auster's writings (also appearing in later works such as *City of Glass*, *Mr. Vertigo*, or *Invisible*).

As a final step, the paper provided further examples to demonstrate that the symbol of the wall, stones, and even manual labour as punishment are recurring elements throughout the author's *oeuvre*. In spite of the overlap of imagery, the later works bear no signs of derivation from the Beckettian tradition. The screenplay *Lulu on the Bridge* was taken as a representative example to illustrate this: while in the play the stones served as tools of punishment, related to futile and seemingly never-ending work, the screenplay presents two different qualities of the stone: one belonging to the realm of physical life (symbolising the fragility of life), the other to that of the metaphysical (a magic stone that represents the inexplicable, the beyond human unit). It can be concluded that Auster adopted the Beckettian texts into his writing by overcoming the anxiety of influence and, from authorial kinship, reached imaginative sovereignty finding his original authorial voice.

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The "Intimate and Proximate" Beckett

Review of Erika Mihálycsa, *"A Wretchedness to Defend": Reading Beckett's Letters* (Debrecen: HJEAS Books, 2022)

IVÁN NYUSZTAY

DOI: 10.53720/LJPD7343

The letters of Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), an invaluable staple for any Beckett scholar, were edited in four volumes between 2009 and 2016 by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck, George Craig, and Dan Gunn, and published by Cambridge University Press. This extensive and wide-ranging correspondence is, as Mihálycsa claims, "undoubtedly the most important find for scholars, students, and readers of Beckett since the publication of James Knowlson's authorised biography" (13). For an effective confrontation with the Beckett corpus, these letters provide useful guidelines for experts and non-experts alike. Constituting a staggering wealth of information regarding the life and the work, they equip the researcher with Beckett's insights, inspirations, reservations, amendments, clarifications, regrets, and preferences behind the scenes, and with the often interpenetrating private and career-focused decisions that shed unprecedented light on the circumstances of artistic creation and provide crutches for "understanding" the uniquely convoluted and multilayered texts. Ever since the birth of the epistolary novel and the first attempts to capture psychological realism in the eighteenth century, the sequence of letters has invited its readers to eavesdrop on events, ideas, and personal affairs not intended to be made public. Thus, we are offered "an intimate and proximate experience of the voice of this legendarily reclusive author," Mihálycsa says, bypassing, on the one hand, post-structuralist disclaimers of any intimacy and proximity where writing supplants voice, and on the other, the precariousness of the adjective "reclusive" in case of a writer who could never ultimately resist the "obligation to express," and who sought to be staged and published until the end of his life. Nevertheless, the letters do have the potential to elucidate, complicate, and modify widespread convictions and deep-seated critical methods of exegesis. In this capacity, however, they are not texts that boast a closer proximity, but rather a corpus of writing that further complicate any intimacy with, and proximity to, Beckett's work. These qualms aside, Mihálycsa's contribution to Beckett-scholarship is immense and all-important. The correspondence is read meticulously and discussed with impressive expertise.

The letters "recast our understanding of Beckett's texts and their place in the vaster, infinite conversation also called literature" (26), avers Mihálycsa and treats the objects of her study as intertexts, documents highlighting Beckett's positions, reportages of creative engagement with historical and private affairs. Indeed, these letters bear testimony to an astonishingly wide range of interests, influences, and aspirations that signpost Beckett's artistic development.

In the introduction, Mihálycsa anchors her readerly position in two cardinal points of critical orientation. First, the project promises "an overview of the thought processes and the articulation of a poetics, pursued stubbornly and with rare radicalism, evidenced in the letters." Second, together with resisting "the temptation of a reductive biographical reading," the plan is "to highlight the consubstantiality not only of the published work and the letters, but, more broadly, a co-belonging of Beckett's singular work and his exercise of life" (13–14).

As a critical approach, this project follows suit with what the author confidently terms the "archival turn that has dominated scholarship over the two decades" (12). Indeed, a large segment of Beckett scholarship has taken interest in the archival material and resources, the largest collection of which is available at the University of Reading, thanks to James Knowlson. Archival research aspires to uncover ever new aspects of Beckett's writing, examining the telling nuances and neglected minutiae of the work of an author who himself had an astoundingly keen eye for detail. For instance, there are six notebooks of Beckett's wartime novel, *Watt*, and several manuscripts and typescripts to navigate the enthusiastic researcher. Moreover, Mihálycsa is, of course, aware of the non-negligible fact that Beckett wrote most of his works in French (to avoid "style" and the pitfalls of the mother tongue) and (mostly) translated them himself into English. This, to be sure, provides further grounds for the methodical unearthing of textual particulars. Although together with the "archival turn," terms like "archive" and "archival research" are mentioned several times in the book, Mihálycsa does not discuss this field of critical studies and theory. This is unfortunate, since an enterprise that is itself concentrated on the archive of letters would have benefited much from literature that complicates the relationship between performance, art, and archival documentation (see the respective contributions of Peggy Phelan, Diana Taylor, Dennis Kennedy, and others). The lengthy introduction, instead, maps the major trends in Beckett scholarship. Here, Mihálycsa demonstrates what transpires as a long-term personal involvement in Beckett studies, tracing the not-so-recent schools of Beckett criticism of the 1980s–1990s together with the most up-to-date ones, including both the grand philosophical approaches to Beckett, like Badiou's, Blanchot's, or Deleuze's, and a selection of "microtextually sensitive recent readings" (16). This thoughtful and creative summary initiates the reader into the realm of the heterogeneous trends of Beckett studies and forms a useful backdrop to the discussions that follow. Mihálycsa handles the not always reader-friendly texts with confidence and ease, betraying an exuberant enthusiasm for her subject. Reading through the introduction, one (scholar or layman) is left with no doubts as to the greatness and importance of Samuel Beckett for late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century literature and culture.

The scrupulous reading of Beckett's letters finds importance in virtually everything this writer found worthy of writing about. The relevant is seldom distinguished from the irrelevant, showing a reluctance to "separate the grain from the husks," to speak with Beckett's Krapp featuring in the short monodrama, *Krapp's Last Tape*. It is at a relatively late stage in the monograph that Mihálycsa tackles the issue of relevance in terms of the editorial selection of Beckett's correspondence. In a letter to Martha Fehsenfeld, who was to become the principal editor of the corpus, Beckett voiced a preference for the inclusion of "those passages only having bearing on [his] work" (101). As Mihálycsa contends, this "stipulation is uniquely open to debate, for it is easy to see how a wealth of passages apparently personal in content reverberate with the concerns and sensibility of the published work" (101). Although it is perhaps not so unproblematic to apply personal content and information as evidence for artistic sensibility, Mihálycsa leaves it to her readers to consummate Krapp's job and find the grains for themselves. The letters bear testimony to circumstances that are no doubt relevant to Beckett's writing, like the inspiration drawn from a portrait in the National Portrait Gallery for an aborted dramatic fragment on the life of Dr Johnson (31), or when a painting by Caravaggio inspires the idea of the helpless Auditor in *Not I* (96). Indeed, the vast knowledge of art history and his personal encounters and prolonged relationships with artists proved lasting resources for Beckett's work. Yet sometimes the relevance of the letterwright's experiences, like his aversion to "the annoying habit of covering paintings with a protective glass sheet" during his visits to Galleries, is the reader's task to judge. The same applies to determining which authors from the inventoried samples of the "wildly erratic nature of the young Beckett's reading" are relevant to his work (28). The omnivorous contemplation of all the minutiae in Beckett's letters makes not for the dusting of the cult of genius and the consequent lapse into untimely positivism, but rather a painstaking and modest diligence of an author, who invites the reader to cherry-pick the information they need.

What the meticulous concern with the letters reveals and illustrates is the sometimes stubbornly authoritative, sometimes collaborative nature of the process of Beckett's artistic expression, often taking on board suggestions from friends, but frequently remote controlling directors and theatre-makers. Besides the mentioned role of visual arts in his writings and the literary legacies that inform the entire corpus, we also learn a great deal about his taste for music, his concert experiences, and favourite composers. This is all relevant information given Beckett's sustained interest in music, which is conspicuous throughout his career, perhaps mostly in his late minimalism.

On the political and ideological plane (which is never severed from the cultural for Beckett), Mihálycsa highlights Beckett's complicated relationship with Irishness and the Irish artistic tradition, and traces "the delicate process of disidentification with Beckett's native Ireland," which culminates in referring to Paris as his "home" (33). Furthermore, his aversion to totalitarianism, and Nazism in particular, is repeatedly mentioned and collated with developments in his writing, "the journey through Germany is an existential turning point as well as a journey to a sense of writing, to a sense of the failure of all claims to expression and to the ethical imperative of addressing the 'mess'" (27). At these points in the book, the information gleaned from the letters assist the reader in positioning Beckett in a shifting cultural milieu that shaped his art.

Devoted to a chronological unpacking of the contents of Beckett's correspondence, the four chapters guide the reader through a stunning miscellany of subjects which puts a strain on the narrative arc. The author faces this challenge with relaxed idiomaticity and erudite mastery. There are minor flaws that constitute stumbling blocks in reading: for instance, referencing the Beckett-quote, "no symbols where none intended," only 13 pages after its first mention (the last line in the novel, *Watt*'s addenda), or explaining who George Duthuit was only in Chapter 2. (Duthuit was Beckett's new intellectual partner after MacGreevy and the conductor of the famous interview series, "Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit," which contains much of Beckett's *ars poetica*.) In the sections on Beckett's postwar writings, especially in connection with *Waiting for Godot*, absurdism is not examined at all but simply relegated to a passing reference made to Martin Esslin's book, *The Theatre of the Absurd*. This is a lacuna that is surprising, given that Beckett's all other generic contributions, such as full-length and minimalist plays, television and radio plays, mimes and poems, etc., are addressed in some detail.

Despite these reservations, Mihálycsa's thorough excavations of this rich correspondence and her original and inspiringly provocative style make this study a rewarding and enjoyable read for Beckett scholars, students, and all those interested in this singular life and work.

Contributor Details

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A View After the Storm

Review of Katrin Berndt and Andrew Wells (eds.), *The "Second World" in Contemporary British Writing* (Göttingen, V&R unipress / Brill, 2024)

JUDIT FRIEDRICH

DOI: 10.53720/QLWT2441

This collection of essays offers images of the "Second World," understood as Central and Eastern Europe, twice mirrored: as created by British writers after World War II, and as interpreted by academics from the region who currently work in the field of English/British studies. The volume also features a short story by Fiona Rintoul and an interview with historian and journalist Katja Hoyer. We read, with fascination, how those we read read us. Literary scholars, historians, linguists, comparativists and cultural studies experts turn their trained critical gazes on (mostly) British fiction and film examining East-Central Europe.

The volume, a goldmine of references to critical and fictional works on the topic, is dedicated to the memory of Peter Davison (1926–2022), editor of *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, in recognition that "[o]ur need to listen to Orwell is as urgent as ever" (Acknowledgement 9). The purpose of the collection, as editors Katrin Berndt and Andrew Wells explain, is "to discuss British writers' engagement with settings, motifs, and characters of the 'second world' as a particular historical place and period, and to ask about the broader cultural significance of this 'second world' in British writing from the end of the Cold War to the present" (Introduction 11).

The definition of the term the "Second World" is among the primary concerns of the authors. Most essays offer their own definition, including a specification of which areas of the region the term refers to. The focus is on East-Central

Europe, rather than on Post-Soviet States. The contributors focus primarily on Germany, before and after reunification, but there are voices from Poland, Romania, and Hungary as well.

The issues explored by the works covered in the volume are sensitive; for citizens of the region, they reference lived historical experience, while for English-speaking audiences they present results of a not particularly successful social experiment. The essays explore questions of identity, history, and politics, and bring into sharp focus partially processed historical events that continue to shape respective and collective self-images in the region. On the other hand, for the British works discussed here, there is an "idea of a new, imagined community shaped by shared Cold War history" (Introduction 13). The interest in the essays towards their topics is palpable, fuelled by their authors' cultural allegiances; the necessary distance is provided by the eye of the British beholder whose visions are discussed. Time boundaries are significant: the essays were presented at a conference in Halle, September 2022 (Acknowledgement 9), and focus on the Cold War period and after, yet mostly avoid the recent tragedies and upheavals of the region.

In the first section, called "The Presence of the Past: Contingencies of the 'Second World,'" Richard Brown discusses Ian McEwan's Berlin novels, *The Innocent* (1990), *Black Dogs* (1992), and *Lessons* (2022); Betiel Wasihun explores the notion of betrayal in John le Carré's spy fiction; Robert Kusek reads Deborah Levy as a representative of a Central-European cultural heritage; and Katrin Brendt writes about retropian projections in Philip Sington's *The Valley of Unknowing* (2012) and Fiona Rintoul's *The Leipzig Affair* (2014). The region seems to present a time warp for non-locals; here they can enter the past, or an alternative reality, a world that is familiar enough to understand yet sufficiently alien that it can be observed with some detachment. Levy is a South-Africa born British writer who now lives in France but came from a Jewish family who had immigrated from Lithuania (57–58), yet she starts her autobiographical project *Things I Don't Want to Know* (2013) "with a recollection of her visit to Poland in 1988" (64), making her a virtual Central-European, broadening the scope of what "the second world" might mean in terms of transgenerational memory and identification. The section's final piece is Fiona Rintoul's short story "Mitropa."

The second section, called "Second Glances: Retrospective Approaches to the 'Second World,'" starts with a lexicographer's approach to the concept in Ulrich Busse's chapter, contextualising the "second world" in contrast not only to the "first world" but also to the "third" and "fourth worlds." Paul D. Morris presents the historical truth of the Holodomor and its imaginative portrayal as seen in Malcolm Muggeridge's *Winter in Moscow* (1934) and Agnieszka Holland's film *Mr. Jones* (2019). The appreciative exploration of an artistic and imaginative representation of history as opposed to a factually correct one comes with a warning, however, about "the epistemological and moral dangers of subordinating truth to ideology" (130), remembering all those who travelled to the Soviet Union from the West and refused to report the reality they actually found there. Andrew Wells's essay delves into what has become called "file-based autobiographies" after Catherine Karen Roy's work: autobiographical pieces that rely on secret police files as their material, starting point, or structure (139). Wells focuses on Timothy Garton Ash's own *The File* (1997), setting against one another versions of memory as personally remembered and as preserved in documents generated through the gaze and the writing of informers. The closing piece of the section is an interview the editors conducted with Katia Hoyer on how people themselves experienced living in East Germany between 1949 and 1990, and how much actual interest this aspect generates in British audiences now.

The third section, called "Self and Other: Becoming (in) the 'Second World,'" presents three chapters by scholars from Hungary (not necessarily focusing on Hungary) and a chapter focusing on Romania (not by a scholar from Romania). Ágnes Györke's "Affective Encounters" sketches a horizon of a large number of works, then selects three specific pieces (Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* [1988], Tibor Fischer's *Under the Frog* [1992], and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* [1995]—all three extensively discussed elsewhere by Ágnes Harasztos, and *The Unconsoled* also by Melinda Dabis), so as to focus on three cities and to illuminate the affective aspect, the way characters feel when encountering the Central and Eastern European "other." Melinda Dabis returns to Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled,* this time tracing the Western literary portrayal of Central Europe as the "other" to its postcolonial roots and demonstrating how the region's "voluntary self-colonisation is accompanied and challenged by nationalistic tendencies" (195). Therese-Marie Meyer's "Liminal Morality: Complicity in Patrick McGuinness's *The Last Hundred Days* (2011)" considers the unreality of "the Bucharest of Ceauşescu's nationalist Stalinism and systematisation" (206) a special place of liminality. The "city between Orient and Occident, though still part of neither" (207), is shown as an apt setting for the protagonist's moral struggle, centring on the notion of complicity as a human condition but also, specifically, as an inherent element of the system that leaves very little space for individual agency. The last piece of the section and of the volume itself is Ágnes Harasztos's imaginative and heavily theoretical essay "The 'Postmodern Baroque' as a Heterotopia for East-Central Europe in post-1989 British Fiction." Harasztos finds the roots of the region's dependencies on both East and West in the Ottoman and Habsburg subjugation, "the irruption of the latter coinciding with the predominance of baroque art and architecture" (222) and connects British novels about the region to Foucault's notion of projecting one's otherness, producing "heterotopias for the British discursive self" (223).

The material presented in this volume is rich, and the essays offer a great variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Yet the shared critical horizon and the single focus create a strong cohesion. Milan Kundera's "Tragedy of Central Europe" (1984) is a touchstone and a point of departure for several of the essays. The term "retrotopia" appears recurringly, in contrast to nostalgia or a hope for a future utopian prospect, as "a desire to reimagine 'genuine or putative aspects of the past' in view of the utopian prospect that it had once represented" (Zygmunt Bauman's *Retrotopia* [2017] qtd. in Brendt 73). The notion of the Central European "other" emerges several times throughout the collection.

The volume demonstrates that the topics covered are still of burning interest for the region and for the authors. The essays have the momentum of live engagement with the problems discussed. Reading this volume in the region it focuses on, the experience is still unsettling, especially if one considers all that work that was, or should have been, devoted to processing—understanding, evaluating and possibly integrating—the past. Even in Germany, where memory work was a national priority, where the unification of the country after the fall of the Berlin wall made finding a way towards reconciliation an absolute necessity, a lot of questions remained unresolved. Elsewhere, even more of that work was left undone, allowing for further tension to accumulate, perhaps producing further imaginative and scholarly publications.

The book as an object is a physical reflection of its content. Hard cover, stark, with a bleak black-and-white photo of a railway or light rail station, all concrete and functional, presumably from the DDR, with only women visible (N.B. gender issues are mostly left unexplored in the volume). The footnotes offer a complete introduction to critical works in the field. The thirteen pages of the Index present pointers towards authors (of fiction and theory), titles of works discussed, motifs (from "cars" to "surveillance"), key terminology (from "really existing socialism" to "inner emigration"), as well as common critical terms (from "dystopia" to "liminality"). The relative brevity and clear argumentation of the individual essays, as well as the excellent editing work, produce a well-rounded image of the "second world." The volume is an open access publication, but printed copies are also available.

Contributor Details

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Layered Image

Representations of Hungarian Urban Culture and History

Review of Ágnes Györke and Tamás Juhász (eds.), *Urban Culture and the Modern City: Hungarian Case Studies* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2024)

TAMÁS KISANTAL

DOI: 10.53720/ZRPD4868

The photograph on the book cover—taken by István Szitás—suggests an interpretation of, or at the very least an approach to, the subject of this book, edited by Ágnes Györke and Tamás Juhász: urban culture as it is represented in modern Hungarian art and society. The image features several characteristic elements of contemporary Hungarian urban life: an official state building, pedestrians on the street, posters, electric wires, an iconic yellow tram, and a bar where someone is seated, engaging in a defining ritual of modern urban existence—consumption. Notably, due to the photographer's carefully chosen perspective, these elements appear simultaneously in a blurred composition, where the interior and exterior blend and connect. Of course, the observer's cultural background also influences the interpretation of the image. A Hungarian viewer—particularly someone who lives in Budapest—can identify the location and may associate the place and the building with personal memories, meanings, or contextual knowledge (for example, being aware that the building of the Ministry of Agriculture has been undergoing renovation for years). This is especially true for another significant landmark of Kossuth Square, that is, the Hungarian Parliament Building, which is missing from the photo.

In the Introduction, the editors of the book define the central focus of this collection and highlight the potential challenges of urban cultural studies in East-Central European cities: "[t]hough city studies has become an expanding research field in the past few decades, no volume has discussed the role that art and material culture play in imagining the modern city in Hungary" (10). It is worth noting that the cultural aspects of urban life in Hungary began started to receive scholarly attention around twenty years ago with a conference and a collection of essays entitled *Terek és szövegek. Újabb perspektívák a városkutatásban* (*Spaces and Texts: New Perspectives in Urban Studies*, 2005). The volume was heterogeneous, interdisciplinary, and intended as a "groundbreaking" work in 2005, analysing questions of urban life—particularly its representations—through approaches rooted in anthropology and cultural studies. As the first comprehensive English-language collection focusing on the cultural aspects of urban life in Hungary, *Urban Culture and the Modern City* aims not only to introduce local approaches to the historical, cultural, and social dimensions of Hungarian towns and their representations in art and literature, but also to explore specific aspects of East-Central European urban culture. As Györke and Juhász argue, urban studies have primarily focused on Western metropolises (Paris, London, etc.) or, more recently, on postcolonial cities (e.g. Johannesburg, Mumbai), with the Second World often being overlooked. Thus, the book seeks both to highlight recent trends and results in Hungarian urban studies and to emphasise the need for dialogue among Western-centric, postcolonial, and East-European perspectives.

A key methodological issue arises from the Western-centric framework of urban studies, namely, that the theoretical foundations of the discipline are closely tied to Western urban experiences and their cultural or ideological implications. For instance, it is noteworthy that of the three most frequently cited theorists in the book, one is German (Walter Benjamin), and the other two are French (Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau). Furthermore, Benjamin's seminal study analysed the urban experience in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century from the perspective of Baudelaire and the phenomenon of the *flâneur*. All three theorists and their concepts—the *flâneur*, Foucault's "heterotopia," and Certeau's approach to the tactics of resistance—have had a significant impact on Anglo-Saxon cultural and urban studies. Therefore, a book examining East-Central European urban experiences must engage with these theoretical frameworks and methodologies developed in other cultural contexts, while also emphasising the unique characteristics of Hungarian urban processes and developments.

The book's tripartite structure offers an approach to Hungarian urban life that is not organised around different topics, arts, or genres, but instead follows a chronological framework. This strategy implicitly suggests a historical approach, emphasising changes and/or continuities in certain phenomena. These three sections cover the key periods of Hungarian modernity and modern history: the first focuses on the early twentieth century, the second on the mid-century, including the postwar and communist decades, and the third on post-communist and contemporary urban representations and phenomena.

The Introduction, emphasising the specific role of historical circumstances in Hungarian urbanisation and their cultural impact, outlines a brief narrative from the Compromise of 1867 through two world wars and the communist regime to the post-1989 cultural changes and challenges. One distinctive feature of Hungarian culture is the relationship between urban and rural life and its ideological implications. The modernisation of Budapest was defined (or, more precisely, shaped by its planners and inhabitants) not only in relation to other European metropolises and Hungarian towns but also in contrast to rural villages. After the First World War, this urban-rural dichotomy evolved into a pronounced ideological opposition between the "traditionalist" and "urbanist" positions (15–16). These terms already illustrate the challenges to introducing Hungarian historical and cultural developments to international readers, as the original Hungarian words, *népi* and *urbánus*, carry specific meanings that differ from their English equivalents. In the context of Western modernism, the term "traditionalist" typically refers to conservatism or, as the Introduction suggests (citing T. S. Eliot's famous essay), to the modernist notion of tradition. However, in Hungary, the concept of *népi* is associated with a nostalgic and utopian vision of the countryside and peasant societies, where the "true Hungarian spirit" is believed to reside in contrast to the cosmopolitan—and, from the *népi* perspective, predominantly Jewish—culture of Budapest. Another common translation of *népi* is "populist," though this term carries different connotations, rather referring to political discourse or strategy than to folk traditions or folkish ideology. (For an example of this interpretation, see Richard Esbenshade's essay on this dichotomy and debate.)

The introductory essay outlines the history of this dual approach, which persisted through the communist period, was dynamically revitalised after 1989, and has once again become dominant in Hungarian political and cultural spheres. However, according to the book's editors, while this narrative remains broadly relevant, a closer examination reveals "patterns that are more complex than the ideologies of the two dominant antithetical positions" (18).

Three essays in the first section focus on some renowned and canonical Hungarian writers from the early twentieth century. The first chapter, by Márta Pellérdi, examines two plays by Ferenc Molnár, perhaps the only Hungarian playwright whose works were successfully performed in theatres overseas. However, as Pellérdi highlights, when these works were staged in the United States, certain aspects underwent significant changes. In particular, the original settings—closely tied to specific locations in Budapest and depicting typical figures of the city in the early twentieth century—were altered to align with the knowledge and cultural background of Western audiences. Sometimes, Western adaptations preserved the original settings; however, the specific cultural meanings associated with these locations were transformed or entirely lost. In some cases, the setting itself was changed—for example, Molnár's *Liliom* (1909) was relocated to the coast of Maine in the musical adaptation entitled *Carousel* (1945) (48). Thus, Molnár achieved success in the Western world by allowing certain culturally specific layers of meaning in his plays to be altered or removed.

In the next chapter, Tamás Juhász examines Gyula Krúdy's historical novel *Primadonna* (1926), which is a fictionalised biography of Pálma Ilkay, a highly popular actress in Hungary in the late nineteenth century. Although this novel is neither Krúdy's most well-known nor his most significant work (and Ilkay's name has largely faded from Hungarian cultural memory), the essay highlights *Primadonna*'s importance by focusing on the representation of stardom and the star cult in relation to the emergence and formation of the nation-state. Ágnes Klára Papp's chapter scrutinises one of the most canonical and widely analysed novels of the first half of the twentieth century, *Skylark* (*Pacsirta* [1924]) by Dezső Kosztolányi. However, the essay approaches the novel in a relatively new perspective focusing on the function of the setting: the fictional Sárszeg embodied some of the main characteristics of a "typical" small Hungarian town. The name itself is metaphorical, formed by the combination of two nouns: *sár* (mud) and *szeg* (derived from *szeglet* or *szegély*, meaning corner, edge, or margin), signifying the town's "in the middle of nowhere" character. (This "in the middle of nowhere" concept is also the title of an important novel of the era, written by Zsigmond Móricz [*Az isten háta mögött*, 1911], which directly references another famous work of world literature, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, with its archetypal small-town setting.) Kosztolányi was influenced, among others, by Flaubert and especially by Chekhov (whose works he translated and wrote reviews of). However, as Papp argues, his narrative offers an original interpretation of the small town as a chronotope (in Bakhtin's sense), presenting it as a typical scene of stagnation and immobility.

The fourth chapter of the first section is only loosely connected to the book's overall concept, as Magdolna Gucsa does not examine a Hungarian urban location or the relationship between the capital and smaller towns or rural areas. Instead, she explores the place of Hungarian–Jewish painter Emil Szittya within the Parisian art movement, École de Paris. Szittya emigrated from Hungary in the late 1910s and settled permanently in Paris in 1927. Most of his works were written in German and French; consequently, his cultural position within the Parisian artist community was shaped less by his Hungarian roots and more by his cosmopolitanism. As a result, this chapter does not specifically focus on Hungary but rather examines the relationship between French society and Eastern European (or Jewish) migrant artists in general. Through this detailed analysis, Gucsa explores transnational interpretations of urban culture by providing a detailed analysis of migrants in Paris. Nevertheless, Szittya also became a significant figure in Hungarian literary memory. In 1909, he accompanied Lajos Kassák—who would later become Hungary's groundbreaking avant-garde poet—on his journey across Europe. In his seminal poem "A ló meghal, a madarak kirepülnek" (The Horse Dies, the Birds Fly Out [1922]), Kassák claimed that Szittya "was to become a police spy and agent provocateur."[1]

The next section of the book consists of three chapters focusing on the mid-twentieth century, a period shaped by World War II and communist rule in Hungary. The essays examine various aspects of the era's art, including gender, collective memory, and the practices of civility (in both senses of the word). While these perspectives differ significantly, this section does not portray the communist period as a radical break in Hungarian culture. Instead, it highlights certain continuities (or at least similar tendencies) between the socialist era and the preceding period.

The first essay, by Éva Federmayer, offers a comparative analysis of two novels by female writers: *Colours and Years* (*Színek és évek* [1911/12]) by Margit Kaffka and

1 For a comprehensive analysis of Szittya's literary *oeuvre* and his connections with Kassák and other avant-garde movements, see Gucsa (2022).

The Fawn (*Az őz* [1959]) by Magda Szabó. A literary continuity can also be observed between the two authors: Kaffka was part of the same literary circle as Dezső Kosztolányi, a first-generation writer of *Nyugat* (*West* [1908–1941]), Hungary's most significant modernist journal, while Szabó began her career as a poet in *Újhold* (*New Moon* [1946–1948]), a magazine that sought to carry on *Nyugat*'s legacy. Drawing on Foucault's concept of heterotopia, Federmayer's narratological analysis focuses on the novels' use of spatial constructions and oppositions—particularly the contrast between the garden and the town—and, more broadly, the role of nature, the rural world, and urban spaces in expressing female voice and identity.

While the first essay highlights the gendered aspects of spatial representation and narrative voice in works by Hungarian modernist women writers, the second study focuses more directly on recurring patterns of memorialisation in Hungarian culture from the nineteenth century until the end of the communist period. Árpád Bak's case study examines the memory and memorial sites of Romani–Hungarian musician and songwriter János Bihary, whose works (along with some pieces attributed to him but likely composed by other artists, such as the famous *Rákóczi March*) gained symbolic significance in nineteenth-century Hungarian national movements and became important part of national memory. The essay convincingly argues that, although the communist regime's self-image claimed the radical break from the past and especially the nationalist politics (as the lyrics of *The Internationale* stated: "We will change henceforth the old tradition"), it purposefully incorporated the elements of the ideology of the nation state. Consequently, Hungarian communism can be interpreted not merely as an extension of the nationalist tradition; rather, its memory politics had direct links to the reactionary Horthy-regime it aimed to replace.[2]

The third chapter approaches the topic of continuity from a different perspective, analysing one of the most influential Hungarian novels of the twentieth century: *School at the Frontier* (*Iskola a határon* [1959]) by Géza Ottlik. It was a seminal work for the next generation of Hungarian writers (the authors of the so-called "prose turn"). Ottlik became a kind of father figure to them, who wrote countless essays about the novel. Ferenc Hörcher's approach emphasises the significance of symbolic relationships among the novel's temporal and spatial structures. The novel's setting—the boarding military school as a closed space, a micro-society with its power dynamics, and the small town on Hungary's western border, never explicitly

2 On the political roots of this strategy and its connection with the Soviet state's national orientation, see Mevius (2005).

named but easily identifiable as Kőszeg—carries some metaphorical connotations and cultural references. Hörcher connects these to certain aspects of civility (such as the contrast between civil and military spheres, the relationship between civility and adulthood, and the concepts of citizenry and civilisation). The functions of the school and Kőszeg are not only to mark an actual and symbolic border between childhood and adulthood, as well as East and West, but also to serve as the site of a significant historical event. During the siege of the town in 1532, the Hungarian defending forces attempted to stop the Ottoman army; although they were ultimately defeated, the Ottomans were unable to advance and conquer Vienna. Thus, this heroic "defeated but in some sense victorious" attitude, associated with Kőszeg as a symbolic space in cultural memory, becomes a metaphor of the characters' mentality in the novel and, more broadly, of a survival strategy in communist Hungary after the failed 1956 revolution.

The chapters in the last section largely focus on two interconnected issues: firstly, the various ways in which the past influences contemporary culture and its material manifestations in urban life; and secondly, the generally unsuccessful struggle of new generations to find their place in the world after the fall of the communist regime. Perhaps because these essays address contemporary or recent historical phenomena, they contain implicit, or sometimes even direct, references to current political affairs in Hungary—particularly, to the problems associated with official right-wing cultural policy and memory politics. László Munteán, in the first chapter, starts with a criticism of a recent Hungarian book, *The Scars of Budapest* (2019), a photo album with some historical essays published by a government-backed foundation. At first glance, it may seem less interesting to a foreign reader, but as the author argues, it plays a significant role in the Hungarian context because the book conveys an official political interpretation of Budapest's past—one that nostalgically idealises the prewar decades and portrays Hungary as a victim of two foreign dictatorships: Nazism and Soviet communism. The most striking example of this historical narrative—and its questionable accuracy—is the Memorial for the Victims of the German Occupation in Budapest's Liberty Square.[3] Munteán introduces a new term and methodology, "*plaster archaeology*," which is an analysis of traces of the (Nazi) past in the walls of contemporary buildings. Through this approach, he demonstrates that beyond this official representation of Budapest as a wounded

3 For a discussion of this issue, see Horváth (2015).

victim city, there are also other, less acknowledged imprints of the past—ones that reference the perpetrators and their inglorious yet persistent memory.

The next two chapters explore different aspects of how post-communist Hungary and its right-wing turn after 2010 are represented in contemporary literature and film. Ágnes Györke's chapter examines Noémi Szécsi's debut novel, *The Finno-Ugrian Vampyre* (*Finnugor vámpír* [2002]), which is an ironic vampire story set in post-communist Budapest. Györke's examination focuses on how the main character interprets her past and present from the city's perspective where the remnants of nineteenth-century grandeur coexist with the decay and marginalisation of an Eastern European post-socialist metropolis. György Kalmár analyses three Hungarian films that depict key events of recent decades: the fall of communism in 1989 in Ferenc Török's *Moscow Square* (*Moszkva tér* [2001]), Hungary's accession to the European Union in Nimród Antal's *Control* (*Kontroll* [2003]), and the 2015 migrant crisis as portrayed in Kornél Mundruczó's *Jupiter's Moon* (*Jupiter holdja* [2017]). Examining the spatial structures of these films and their metaphorical significance—such as the iconic spaces of Budapest and their connection to regime change in *Moscow Square*, the underground microcosm in *Control*, and the contrast between metaphorical wastelands and spiritual awakening in *Jupiter's Moon*—Kalmár sees these films as "time capsules" that mark different phases of disillusionment in Hungary's post-1989 history. In the final essay of this section—and of the book—Eszter Ureczky analyses Kristóf Deák's film *The Grandson* (*Az unoka* [2022]) in the context of global aging ("greying") and its depiction in contemporary cinema, often referred to as the "silvering screen." The chapter highlights the film's ambivalent nature: while *The Grandson* underscores the growing crisis of eldercare in contemporary urban Hungarian society, it presents the issue through a utopian, Hollywood-like narrative.

It is difficult to identify a single central theoretical or historical approach in the book, as it covers more than a century of Hungarian culture. Of course, a collection of essays with multiple authors and perspectives has both advantages and disadvantages. While it encompasses a wide range of approaches, methods, and research fields, this variety makes it challenging to define a singular central theme—unless that theme is precisely the diversity of the field in question. However, certain recurring themes and motifs emerge throughout the essays: relationships (East and West, local and international, small towns and the capital, rupture and continuity, etc.), as well as historical and political issues (the latent survival of older ideological patterns in later phenomena, post-1989 disillusionment, and the cultural and ideological divisions reflected in urban culture and their representation today, etc.). Through these case studies, the book not only explores Hungarian culture using the methods and theoretical foundations of urban studies but also reflects how contemporary researchers perceive their country's cultural, social, and political issues, along with their historical roots. Like its cover, the book presents a layered image of Hungarian history, where the new and the old, the observer and the observed, coexist simultaneously.

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Queer Reading Pleasures

Review of Zsolt Bojti, *Queer Reading Practices and Sexology in* Fin-de-Siècle *Literature: Wilde, Stenbock, Prime-Stevenson* (Routledge, 2025)

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DOI: 10.53720/ZJMX9532

As scholars of English literature, especially Victorian Studies (a key period in the British empire), we are under necessary pressure to diversify the canon and to discuss exclusionary literatures and reading practices. One of the ways in which we can do this necessary and recuperative work is by thinking outside of national and Anglocentric approaches to texts and literary networks; we must instead engage in the same international and/or polymath/interdisciplinary reading practices as embraced by our queer Victorian subjects, for example. *Queer Reading Practices and Sexology in* Fin-de-Siècle *Literature: Wilde, Stenbock, Prime-Stevenson*, by Zsolt Bojti, provides readers with precisely this kind of interdisciplinary discussion of queer history (combining literature, letters, sexology, legal history, etc.), and better yet, his analysis is not bound by nation—or language, even. What makes this work unique and important is that there is not yet a book which frames this history in the context of a wider, transatlantic–European exchange of literary ideas; indeed, this combined focus on both a global and literary exchanges of queer culture is what sets apart, what Bojti calls, "homophilia" and "hungarophilia" in *fin-de-siècle* literature. Most academic texts in this category tend to come from history and cultural studies, not literary studies. At the same time, many of the competing studies tend to limit themselves to a single nation—British or American, and rarely a wider European context.

The Introduction makes a compelling case for both the ensuing discussion of homophilic literature and for its author, Bojti, as the one to conduct said study. It does so by introducing readers to the key term, "hungarophilia." Put simply, the term refers to an obsession with the figure of the Hungarian as a kind of symbol or shared "code." *Queer Reading Practices* explains how this figure came to occupy an important place in late-nineteenth-century conversations, in both literature and emergent sexology, on male-male desire. These conversations would spread across Europe and into Britain by way of literature and *belles-lettres*. However, because of Britain's repressive legal approach to homosexuality (even limiting the distribution and, thus, knowledge of sexological texts), many English writers would resort to certain codes—like hungarophilia—in order to build a covert community or "anthology" of queer readers. A Hungarian himself, Bojti is thus ideally positioned to trace the evolution of this queer-coded conversation spanning multiple languages as well as continents.

Chapter 1 offers a deep historical dive into late-Victorian sexology and, specifically, those writers (John Addington Symonds) and sexual scientists (Havelock Ellis) working to destigmatise homosexuality at the turn of the century. In this chapter, Bojti also explains his selection of the term "homophilia" to in order to emphasise the way that many of these writers allowed for amorous (or romantic) love between men; this term is then contrasted, throughout the study, with those conversations—in both science and literature—preoccupied with the physical aspect of male-male desire. Bojti's introduction is required reading for anyone interested in late-Victorian homosexuality because of its thorough attention to the historical specifics concerning these conversations among those working in the emergent sciences and, later, literary figures like Oscar Wilde; the introduction traces which scientist coined which sexual term (like Karl Heinrich Ulrich's positive use of the term "Urning" for male same-sex desire), and how and such a term was then taken up and circulated among writers across the continent and into Victorian England. Bojti thus makes a compelling argument for Victorians' late and limited access to sexology's recuperative (or anti-criminal) approach to homosexuality; the introduction then uses this historical context to set the stage for subsequent analysis of literature by writers in English—from Oscar Wilde to Count Eric Stenbock and Edward Prime-Stevenson—and how in these works we can trace the evolution of the conversation, including the eventual integration of continental sexology's positive representation of homophilic love.

The second chapter of *Queer Reading Practices* is focused on Oscar Wilde, who probably still is the first person who comes to mind when thinking of Victorian homosexuality. For this reason, it is wise that Bojti begins with Wilde—both because any queer history must contend with this iconic figure, and also because Wilde did, in fact, play a critical role in disseminating a specific and, as Bojti convincingly argues, negative version of homophilic love at the end of the century. The negative, in this case, refers not only the Victorian public's homophobic response to any discussion of male-male desire following the Wilde trials, but also, as Bojti explains, to Wilde's own aesthetic conception of gay desire. This chapter offers new and compelling historical analysis of Wilde's relationship to emergent queer texts and sexological writings of the time, including Wilde's loose or second-hand knowledge of sexology—mostly Ulrich's writings on the Urning, and only cited explicitly after his imprisonment. Instead, Wilde's notion of male-male love, Bojti explains, belongs within an aesthetic tradition immersed in, or resisting, contemporary degeneration theory and fears of bodily contamination. This chapter thus looks to hungarophilia—including images of olfactory stimulation and Hungary Water in perfume and auditory sensation per the *style hongrois*—as a way to trace this queer-coded conversation in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, along the collaboratively-produced (or queer anthology), *Teleny* (1893). But with their emphasis on aesthetic physicality, these texts ultimately "rehearsed the rather unfortunate idea of neuropathology that men attracted to their own sex were weak, effeminate, and unwholesome" (78).

Chapter 3 is devoted to the queer literature of "half-Estonian British resident" Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock ("a remote member of Wilde's circle" [89]). Titled "Gothic Performance," this chapter does not disappoint, as it weaves in sustained discussion of the vampire as another queer-code that comes to Stenbock by way of European folklore through Goethe (and Polidori's *The Vampyre*). This Gothic "anthology" thus influences Stenbock's notion of male-male love as inevitably doomed, something only to be enjoyed in the afterlife (with vampires). Bojti's writing style results in compelling close readings of both Stenbock's short fiction, as well as Goethe's "Die Braut von Korinth" (The Bride of Corinth, 1797; which "introduced the figure of the vampire into world literature") and Goethe's "Der Erlkönig" (1782; "which is a reworking of one of the most famous Scandinavian ballads, *Elveskud*"). I most enjoyed the chapter's analysis of the latter work, in particular, and its discussion of the homophilic Elf fairyking—who seems to reappear as vampire in Stenbock's "True Story of a Vampire."[1] In addition to the homophilic vampire, Goethe's queer influence is also visible via Carmela, the story's narrator. As Bojti explains, this story gives us a narrator who is too young (thirteen years old) and the wrong gender; as a result, she (the narrator) is simply unable to comprehend the queer coded seduction of her brother, Gabriel, taking place before her eyes. This chapter delivers close and historicist analysis of Hungarian music (hungarophilia) as key to this coded male-male desire driving the plot. Yet, it is Carmela's inability to access those codes (and the community of readers into which her brother enters) which then effectively replicates the "classificatory problem of same-sex desire in the first half of the 1890s" (109).

The final chapter of *Queer Reading Practices* is focused on Edward Prime-Stevenson, author of *Imre* (1906) and *The Intersexes* (1909). It bears noting that Bojti is an expert on Prime-Stevenson, with a new edition of *Imre* forthcoming from Oxford University Press. This expertise is on display in chapter 3, "False Snares and Sexology in Edward Prime-Stevenson's 'Homosexual Romance.'" The chapter offers a richly-researched history of the author's life and his involvement in sexological writings at the end of the century. Bojti establishes Prime-Stevenson's expertise in both Hungarian music and, also, continental sexology as convincing context for reading *Imre* as a kind of corrective response to the negative homophilic literature coming out of Britain (per Wilde and *fin-de-siècle* Decadence). This chapter is also a testament to Bojti's uniquely positioned expertise, as readers are given a thorough history of Prime-Stevenson's hungarophilia. The figure of the Hungarian proves key to understanding the unfolding male-male sexual plot in *Imre* and to appreciating the author's positive (or non-Degenerate take) on this homophilic love (more than physical sex). The chapter ends with a fascinating history of Prime-Stevenson's subsequent work on *The Intersexes* and the author's blend of fiction and science. This chapter teachers us that Prime-Stevenson's fiction borrowed from sexology, just as his sexology borrowed from fiction, allowing for an anthology of readers working from new code. As Bojti beautifully concludes, "Oswald and Xavier Mayne could promote a wholesome conceptualisation of same-sex desire at the beginning of the twentieth century" (137).

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1 As Bojti notes, sexologists also picked up on this queer aspect of Goethe's tale "'Erlkönig' is included, without explanation, in 'Bibliographie der Homosexualität' (Bibliography of Homosexuality) published in the first issue of *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook of Sexual Intermediaries)" (93).

This book provides scholars and students with a much-needed critical resource on queer literature and sexology at the end of the nineteenth century. It changes the way we think about queer literature's contribution to *fin-de-siècle* sexual science, and vice versa; better yet, its bold interdisciplinary analysis pushes us to rethink the confines of period or national literatures—encouraging us to read canonical and non-canonical texts alongside each other in order to gain a richer sense of the modern invention of homosexuality and the polymath reading practices as embraced by our queer Victorian subjects. *Queer Reading Practices and Sexology in* Fin-de-Siècle *Literature* poses a significant contribution to literary studies and queer cultural histories alike.

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