focus

20th Anniversary Issue

Edited by

Csaba Maczelka, Andrew C. Rouse, Lívia Szélpál

Institute of English Studies
Department of English Literatures and Cultures
University of Pécs

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Published by
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Pécs 2018

Editor-in-chief: Mária Kurdi

HU ISSN 1585-5228

FOCUS: Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies XI
20th Anniversary Issue

Issue Editors:
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Printed at
Virágmandula Kft., Pécs, Hungary
Supervisor: Zsolt Erőss

Preface

FOCUS 2018: 20th Anniversary Issue

Focus: Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies is a peer-reviewed biennial journal launched by the Department of English Literatures and Cultures at the University of Pécs, in 1998. The present volume is the 20th Anniversary Issue, edited by Csaba Maczelka, Andrew C. Rouse and Lívia Szélpál, of whom Andrew is an old hand having edited other issues of Focus from 2000 onwards, while Csaba and Lívia are relatively new to the field. Over the years most members of the department have had the chance to take part in the editorial work. Since the inception of the journal the contributors of essays and reviews have been established or aspiring scholars or PhD students from a broad range of universities in Hungary, Great Britain, The United States, Ireland, Austria, Germany, Crete, Croatia, Serbia, and elsewhere. The 2002 issue, focusing on Joyce, was reviewed in *Irish University Review*, the 2004 and 2006 issues on film/video and British Studies and American Studies respectively in the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, the 2008 issue focusing on Anglophone and Hungarian literary and cultural encounters in *EPONA*, while the 2012 issue, devoted to Irish theatre from international perspectives, was reviewed in *Irish Theatre International*. So *Focus* has reason to celebrate: we have published a good number of substantial articles over the years, a thematically structured selection of which became included in the first, rather bulky "*Focus* book" under the title *Encounters, Intersections, Adaptations in Anglophone Literatures, Popular Culture, Theatre, and Film*, edited by Zsuzsa Csikai, Mónika Fodor, Gabriella Hartvig, Mária Kurdi and Gabriella Vöő in 2016.

Through its content, the anniversary issue the reader holds in hand reflects the general directions *Focus* has been following during the last two decades. The section on British culture and literature opens with David Atkinson's essay "Women and the Ballad Trade in Eighteenth-Century England," which offers a rich survey of the divergent roles women took in publishing and selling ballads at that time. As the author suggests, research into this area provides new data and more details concerning ballad repertoires, as well as complicating the general (and sometimes flawed) picture of women's economic activities and social status in the given era. Remaining in the eighteenth century, Gabriella Hartvig's essay, "'The first will serve the bookseller's purpose': Sterne's double title page in *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*" is a piece of philological scrutiny into some telling aspects of the relations between Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and his book of sermons, discussing the ways in which they reflect on each other in spite of representing different types of writing. Throughout her exploration, the author refers to and quotes from numerous brief newspaper notices and advertisements, which are valuable and sometimes revelatory documents from the 1760s. The section closes with Andrew C. Rouse's "'Hark! I Hear the Cannons Roar': Twenty years in the life of a "new tune." Here the author follows the variants of a tune that first appeared in an English street ballad relating the defeat of the Turks at Vienna in the seventeenth century.

The following two sections of the volume comprise four essays on American fiction, drama and film, respectively. Ljubica Matek and Jasna Poljak Rehlicki write about an arguably special campus novel under the title "The (Im)Possibility of Academic Integrity in John Williams's *Stoner*." Here the co-authors discuss *Stoner* as a rather untypical campus novel which, through the eponymous protagonist's tragic fate, transmits the worrying idea that the humanities and the humanist way of thinking are no longer relevant in our era. Thus, Matek and Rehlicki claim, the novel creates a new type of tragic hero, the teacher of humanities. Next, László B. Sári's essay, "Crisis and Literature: Future Imperfect, or the Case of Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*" argues that *Cosmopolis* (2003) marks a new turn in its author's later career by juxtaposing postmodern ideas *and* a poetic use of language while transgressing the confinements of the technological sublime, an aesthetic mode that had characterized DeLillo's earlier work.

The essay on American drama, "Legacies of the Past and the American Family: Sam Shepard's *True West* and Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog /Underdog*" is by Lenke Németh. It offers a comparative analysis of *True West* (1980) and *Topdog /Underdog* (2002), pinpointing that despite the two playwrights' different cultural backgrounds and inspirational forces, both of these works address the devastating effects of the absence of an authentic past. The highly creative use of metadramatic elements in both plays is also explored by the paper, in this way referring to developments in contemporary American theatre. Flanking Németh's contribution Réka M. Cristian's "Journeys Into Night: Agewise Cinematic Constructions in *Cas and Dylan* and *Our Souls at Night*" addresses the imbedding of certain cultural narratives in two recent North American movies in order to investigate the markers of lifecourse identities and the ways in which the (self-)representation of senior citizens are challenging cultural myths of aging through various acts of performativity.

In the third section the only essay on Irish theatre is Bence Gábor Kvéder's "The Witness, the Silenced, and the Rebel—Women in Search of Their Voice: Female Characters in Brian Friel's *Translations* and Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone*." Here the author stresses the importance of Friel's "heroines" as prototypes and forerunners of the problems and ideas embodied by Devlin's three female protagonists, hypothesizing that despite the 150-year difference between their plots, the portrayal of women's experiences in the two dramas sheds light on some of the most acute and devastating social and cultural traumas Irish people have had to face during their troubled history. Kvéder's paper is followed by an interview conducted by Mária Kurdi with Deirdre Kinahan, author of several both socially oriented and formally experimental plays contributing to the treasury of the contemporary Irish theatre. In this interview Kinahan also talks about her latest stage work, *Rathmines Road*, at some length, which premiered during the Dublin Theatre Festival in October 2018, harvesting considerable audience success whereas provoking critical debates at the same time. The anniversary issue of *FOCUS* is closed by two reviews, one of which offers comments on a collection of essays published in honour of the centenary of Arthur Miller's birth written by Lívia Szélpál. The subject of the other is a book which demonstrates in detailed analyses of plays new, philosophically grounded theoretical approaches to figurations of the dramatic character in British postmodern theatre, reviewed by Mária Kurdi.

I would like to express thanks and gratitude to all the contributors for their papers and book reviews which appear in the issue, as well as to the three conscientious working editors, Csaba Maczelka, Andrew C. Rouse, and Lívia Szélpál. Special thanks are due to the invited members of the advisory board for this particular issue, whose valuable help has been instrumental in bringing the text of the submissions into their final form. Hopefully, the journal will celebrate many more anniversaries with collections of essays reflecting scholarly dedication to, and interest in novel readings and interpretations of both earlier and contemporary literary works and cultural phenomena or practices across the vast and extremely productive Anglophone world.

Mária Kurdi
Editor-in-chief

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Essays

Women and the Ballad Trade in Eighteenth-Century England

David Atkinson

Knowing that women sold ballads in the eighteenth-century streets it is but a small step to imagining them as characters out of Hogarth's engravings, impoverished, debased, or defiant. No doubt there is some truth in that characterization, but overall the variety of women's experiences in the ballad trade was very much broader than this. While a good deal of attention has been paid to the women's contributions to the eighteenth-century book trade, comments specifically concerning the ballad trade have been fairly superficial, with the exception of Paula McDowell's studies of some individual women early in the century (cited below). This paper presents some evidence for the different ways in which women were involved with the ballad trade, paying attention to their economic role, and interrogating some contemporary visual and literary representations of ballad women.

Categories of occupation within the book trade in the eighteenth century are not easy to define and were probably never very clearly delineated (Raven 4–5). At one end of the scale were booksellers, who undertook a role more or less equivalent to that of the modern publisher, and may or may not have also been printers, but even within this group there were huge differences in terms of scale of business and economic prosperity. A number of them were women who enjoyed some real independent success, most of them born or married into bookselling family dynasties, which in some instances they effectively headed over long periods of time (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 33–45, 51–58). James Raven likewise points to the critical contribution made by women, especially widows, in the maintenance and succession of individual book trade businesses (361). Isobel Grundy describes more broadly the roles of women as publishers and owners of bookshops and circulating libraries, and as readers and authors, right across the long eighteenth century (146–59). Paula McDowell in a later article infers "a vast network of women printers and publishers" ("Women and the Business of Print" 135).

With specific reference to the ballad trade, an example of a successful female bookseller who issued titles from the core repertoire of prose chapbooks and narrative ballads during the early part of the eighteenth century is Sarah Bates. Her husband, Charles Bates, was apprenticed in 1683 and died in 1716, after which his widow continued the business in her own right until c.1735 (BBTI; McKenzie 46 [no. 1228]; Plomer 26). Sarah Bates was in business for nearly as long as her husband before her. Among ballads with her imprint are titles such as *Fair Margaret's Misfortune*, *Queen Eleanor's Confession*, and *The Unconstant Shepherd*. She also participated with other booksellers in the publication of more substantial books such as *The Queen's Royal Cookery* and *A New Academy of Complements* (sic).

After the 1720s-1730s the ballad trade was dominated by William and Cluer Dicey in Northampton and London, and it is not until the second half of the century that the names of female booksellers come to the fore again. Ann Gamidge, widow of Samuel Gamidge (d.1777), continued trading as a bookseller in Worcester after her husband's death until c.1798 (BBTI; Holmes 21). Susannah Bayley, presumed to be the widow of Thomas Bayley, continued the business as a bookseller/printer in London during the 1790s, and her name appears in a number of imprints. Sarah Butler, probably the widow or daughter of John Butler (d.1796), was still selling ballads in Worcester in the 1830s. A small bound volume of sixteen chapbooks acquired "at Mrs. Butler's shop in Nicholas Street, Worcester a short time before the old Lady's death" survives in the British Library (11622.c.22.). At the end of the century Ann Dunn and Ann Bell were printing chapbooks in Cumbria, in both cases continuing the business in the wake of a male relative (McKay), and Margaret Angus similarly continued her late husband's business in Newcastle at the beginning of the new century (Wood 63). That emerges as a common pattern, but McDowell makes the point that imprints and Stationers' Company records do not necessarily tell the whole story: not only do some women appear to have chosen to remain invisible, even more importantly, widows, sisters, and daughters must have been fully engaged in the business in order to acquire the necessary skills well before they were in a position to take it over (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 38–41; McDowell, "Women and the Business of Print" 139, 145).

The imprints of some of the Dicey ballads printed in Northampton include lists of agents in different parts of the country. Among the names are Mary Timbs in Newport Pagnell (perhaps related to John Timbs in Stony Stratford), and Margaret Ward in Sun Lane, Reading (probably related to Nathan Ward at the same address). Samuel Harward was printing ballads in Tewkesbury from the 1760s and half a dozen of his imprints also include the name of a Miss Holt in Upton-upon-Severn, a small town situated some six miles from Tewkesbury but an important crossing point on the River Severn. Miss Holt is known primarily from these Harward imprints but also appears in newspaper advertisements in the 1780s as a vendor of patent medicines, a trade closely associated with the book trade during the eighteenth century (Feather 83–84; Isaac). Given that she was located not far from Harward's own base in Tewkesbury she was probably named because she provided an important link in the distribution chain. There may well have been many more women like these—local booksellers, stationers, and traders in other commodities—who remain largely invisible. They were not itinerant ballad sellers, and singing was most probably not involved in their business at all, but they were nonetheless intrinsic to the trade.

At the beginning of the century, women played an active part in the wholesale and retail distribution of printed material as trade publishers, mercury-women, hawkers, and ballad singers (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 51–62). Trade publishers were middlemen who undertook the production and distribution of pamphlets and periodicals. The mercury-women constituted a particular category of occupation that emerged during the high Augustan period to facilitate the distribution of political news-sheets and pamphlets, either in the streets or from retail premises. By the 1680s "mercury-woman" (or simply "mercury") had become a gender-specific term (*OED* mercury, n. 4b., C2. mercury woman). While some contemporary sources distinguish

between the wholesale trade of mercury-women and the retail trade of hawkers, in practice those divisions of labour were blurred (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 55).

McDowell describes these roles as opportunities in the "interstices" of the book trade that could be seized by women during the period following the lapse of the Printing Act in 1695, but she also sees the consolidation of the trade as the century progressed as having had the effect of squeezing out much of this "peripheral book trade activity" (*Women of Grub Street* 29–30). She also characterizes the ballad singers and hawkers of this period as predominantly female and less socially moored than any other occupational group within the book trade (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 58). She certainly provides some striking examples of women, some of them very elderly, existing near the margins of society and experiencing "a seemingly endless cycle of quick sales, quick arrests, and repeated periods of detention" (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 61). But she also describes their labour as being "of real commercial importance," and cites the example of a ballad singer who provided the printer Catherine Clifton with a copy for a seditious ballad in return for which she received one hundred further printed ballads to sell on the streets (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 60, 61).

Studies of the trade that do not take a specifically gendered approach find examples of both men and women engaged in singing and selling ballads, although there is possibly some variation between the ways in which they are represented in contemporary press reports and memoirs (Cox Jensen 213 n. 11). Pieces in newspapers complain of ballad singers attracting unmanageable crowds, consorting with pickpockets and prostitutes, acting in a drunken and disorderly fashion, promoting immorality and sedition (Atkinson; citing reports from the British Newspaper Archive and British Library 17th-18th Century Burney Collection). They also record something of the precariousness of ballad singers' lives, like a woman tossed by an "over-drove ox" in Holborn, resulting in an injury to her leg (*Whitehall Evening Post; or, London Intelligencer*, 30 March–1 April 1769). Another woman singing ballads in Southwark when a wagon came by was thrown down by the crowd "and the waggon went over her head and killed her on the spot" (*Westminster Journal and London Political Miscellany*, 3 September 1768). These are events worth recording, but they form only a partial picture.

Sometimes women and men went out together, like Matthew Jackman and his wife who were arrested for singing "disaffected Ballads," although she was released when it was decided she had been "acting under her Husband's Directions" (*Daily Post*, 18 February 1731). A deserted soldier was reported travelling the country in company with a female ballad singer (*Country Journal; or, The Craftsman*, 14 October 1732). Sometimes, too, ballad singers went out with children, a tactic that might be expected to appeal to the charitable instincts of the better-off (Hitchcock, *Down and Out* 117). Several of Hogarth's ballad singers are either pregnant or carrying infants. Paul Sandby's *Fun upon Fun* has a flamboyant male ballad seller in the foreground, while in the middle distance a woman and two children, possibly his family, form a more respectable-looking group of ballad singers. The title-page woodcut from *A Garland of New Songs*, printed in Newcastle, depicts a family group of man, woman, and child singing in the street and holding out for sale a "New Song."

Some "shabby ballad-singers" were reported as having "gone about the streets singing their vagabond sonnets, joined by two or three children, d[e]cently dressed, to attract the idle croud" (*Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 24 September 1772). A singer who was arrested for singing abusive songs in St Paul's Churchyard, "having a young child, and promising the Magistrate never to be guilty of the like offence, was forgiven" (*Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 17 February 1777). Beggars, it was thought, would sometimes borrow children for the purpose, and a woman arrested for singing ballads, "attempting to impose an infant child in her arms upon the Alderman, which she had borrowed for that purpose, was committed to Bridewell for the space of one month" (*Middlesex Journal and Evening Advertiser*, 6–8 February 1776).

Reports of ballad singers outside London mostly start to appear in the press from the mid-century. So, an old woman named Comyns was taken up by order of the mayor of Exeter "for singing a libellous Ballad through the Streets of the City, called 'The Long Comfort and Marygold'" (*Public Advertiser*, 9 March 1769) (the ballad has not been identified). In Bath two women who had been singing a ballad titled "Wilkes and Liberty!" in the streets in an intoxicated state and were being "very abusive" were sent to prison, "where in the Evening one of them hung herself with her Garters, but she was cut down just Time enough to save her Life" (*Public Advertiser*, 24 May 1768).

A particularly brutal and widely reported murder was perpetrated at Congleton, Cheshire, on the person of Anne Smith, a ballad singer, aged twenty-two, by one Samuel Thorley, a vagabond associated with the butcher's trade, who dismembered her in a particularly horrific manner, apparently in order to taste human flesh (*Chester Chronicle; or, Commercial Intelligencer*, 11 April 1777). Three men "in liquor," who had broken the windows of houses and a church in Isleworth, then went into a barn, "where finding a poor ballad woman near 70 years of age, they treated her in so brutal a manner, that she died in the Workhouse" (*London Evening Post*, 25–27 February 1766). In Surrey a poor woman who had been taking shelter under a hay-rick, with the permission of the owner, witnessed robbers entering his property, made her way to a neighbouring house, and raised the alarm, which resulted in the perpetrators being apprehended, after which a collection was made for her, along with a present from the victim and a share of the government reward, which "will enable her to follow some other employ than that of ballad-singing" (*General Evening Post*, 4–7 July 1778). Ballad singing, like any other way of making a living on the streets, could be a dangerous occupation.

It has frequently been noted that it is difficult to gain historical insight into the lives of the poor except where they come into conflict with authority, so that ballad singers are mostly seen through the eyes of the better-off and are depicted, both in writing and in visual representations, in prejudicial terms as rogues and vagabonds. In 1735, we find ballad singing described as "a continual nursery for idlers, whores, and pick-pockets; a school for scandal, smut, and debauchery" (*Grub Street Journal*, 27 February 1735), and the same article was printed again thirty-five years later (*Lloyd's Evening Post*, 8–10 August 1770). Newspapers regularly reported ballad singers brought before magistrates and the City authorities and charged with various offences, often under vagrancy and licensing laws, although in practice the application

of such legislation was rather patchy. The impression is that the authorities were more vigorous where they identified ballads as libellous or seditious than in dealing with mere nuisances in the streets.

Ballad singing sometimes appears as a last resort of the poverty-stricken, closely allied to outright begging (Hitchcock, *Down and Out* 65–70). Thus "a poor woman dropped down dead as she was singing a ballad in Duke's-court, near St. Martin's-lane[.] Her death is said to be occasioned by extreme hunger and cold, having been out in the street all the preceeding [*sic*] night for want of money to pay her lodging" (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 24 January 1767). There is some evidence that most of London's beggars were women, specifically married or widowed women with children, whereas the written sources tend to concentrate on male beggars (Hitchcock, *Down and Out* 4–5). If ballad singing really was so closely allied to begging, then there is a good chance that there were large numbers of female ballad singers who remain out of sight. Nevertheless, the claim that most ballad singers were women (Hitchcock, "Publicity of Poverty" 176), even if true, would be difficult to substantiate.

Moreover, the direct equation of street traders with beggars has proved problematic for historiography, even if contemporaries did frequently describe them in that way (the tension is explicit in Hitchcock, "Publicity of Poverty" 177; Hitchcock, "Begging on the Streets" 489). There is an argument to be made that they should be considered simply as members of the labouring classes, as a precarious element in the eighteenth-century economic infrastructure. Moves to license "Old-Cloaths Men, Chimney-Sweepers, Gold-Finders, Kennel-Rakers, Running-Stationers, Ballad-Singers, Wheel-barrows, Cobblers-Stalls, Herb-Stalls, Fish, or Oyster-Stalls, Hosemending-Stalls, Shoe-Blacks, and Basket-Woman [*sic*]" place ballad singers among a whole host of self-evidently useful street traders (*St James's Chronicle; or, British Evening Post*, 5–8 April 1766). Seen from the perspective of the booksellers and printers, street sellers were integral to the commercial success of the trade at large. Indeed, the description of "ballad singers," which predominates both in contemporary reports and in modern scholarship, tends to mask the primary activity of ballad *selling*, and it is certainly possible that it could provide a viable way of making a living.

The examination of one Mary Rice at Basingstoke at the beginning of the century recorded her working as a gardener, "and at other times she used to buy books and ballads and sell them about the country going from place to place," and she "sometimes begged victuals and sometimes when she sold books or ballads she made her bargain to have some victuals given her and sometimes she got her lodging in barns" (Spufford 43). Her experience may have been fairly typical. The reported earnings of a (male) ballad singer in London who "was heard to say, at a Public-house in Fleet-market, that he earned from 18 Shillings to a Guinea almost every Day during the late City Election, by singing Songs upon Wilkes and Liberty," were probably exceptional, and he may have been in the employ of interested parties (*Public Advertiser*, 4 April 1768). But the press also repeated a complaint that "The Farmers far down in Kent offer five shillings a day and beer, for hands to get in their corn, at the same time that itinerant Players, Ballad Singers, and Beggars swarm all over the country" (*Lloyd's Evening Post*, 27–30 August 1773). So maybe ballad selling really could be more profitable than farm labouring.

Visual and literary evidence has to be treated with a good deal of caution. Ballad sellers were among the street traders depicted in the series of Cries of London which were reinterpreted by different artists over a period of a couple of centuries. Sean Shesgreen contrasts Hogarth's ballad seller in *The Enraged Musician*, "old and abandoned, evoking the class of 'horribly ragged, dirty and disgusting' London prostitutes," with her fashionably dressed and attractive counterpart in Marcellus Laroon's print of *A Merry New Song* (107–08). Yet the different images can just as well be interpreted in terms of the different aesthetic, social, and political agendas of their creators. They can again be contrasted with what looks like the more precise realism of the (presumed) family grouping in Sandby's *Fun upon Fun*. The families of ballad sellers depicted on chapbook title pages were presumably meant to project a sympathetic image, appealing to potential purchasers. Probably, women at both ends of the spectrum of respectability could be found singing and selling ballads in the streets, but none of the visual representations should simply be assumed to be typical.

A slip song of uncertain date called *The Ballad Singer* presents its subject as a beggar —"the strains that beggars chaunt, / Issue from the breast of want"—and makes a mawkish, sentimental appeal for charity: "Then O incline to gentle pity, / Come buy, oh buy the beggar's ditty." The beggar/ballad singer of the text is described as "him" but the woodcut at the head of the ballad shows a female figure, seemingly respectably dressed and carrying a basket, along with a dog which may be a companion or alternatively may be harrying her. What might be a more realistic description is found in a verse dialogue "Between a Ballad-Singer and his Wife" in *The Comforts of Matrimony*, a volume published under the pseudonym of "Ned Ward, Junior" (150–53). The husband remonstrates:

> Peggy, can't you say or sing
> Something better of the King?
> What's Lord North, and all his crew,
> What's government to me or you?
> Let us chaunt our songs nocturnal,
> Tho' State Rogues should hang or burn all:
> Let us sing, throughout the City,
> Every kind of pretty Ditty.
> Tales of Love, in tender song,
> Will the fleeting hours prolong;
> And a bloody cruel murther,
> All our honest views may further: –
> But why should either you or me
> Tempt Newgate, or the Pillory?
> Neither of which I'd wish a glimpse on,
> For all my love for Master Simpson.*

(The asterisk refers to a footnote: "A famous Ballad Printer in 1779." Charles Simpson was an important printer of ballads and street literature in Stonecutter Street, London.) The ballad singer's wife responds that political and seditious ballads, for all

the risk they run of attracting the attention of the authorities, are the most lucrative and it is not their business to concern themselves with the contents:

> Business will thrive if well we tend it;
> Let's get a penny, and then spend it:
> For me, I swear, there's nothing in't,
> Nor dread to sing whate'er they print.

Possibly the main purpose of the dialogue is satirical, but if these observations are true they provide a useful insight into the economic potential of different areas of the trade.

The memoirs of Mary Saxby (1738–1801), sometime vagrant and eventual convert to Methodism, record how at various times in her early life she resorted to ballad singing as a means of supporting herself (Saxby 8–9, 11–13, 15–16, 18). She describes "singing in alehouses, at feasts and fairs, for a few pence and a little drink," singing in company with another woman in Dover, where she narrowly escaped rape at the hands of a group of sailors, and again at Epping market, where she was committed to the Bridewell. Another time when she was pregnant she "took up my old trade of ballad-singing, and soon got plenty of good clothes for myself and my infant; and saved a little money to carry us into the hay country." She also worked as an itinerant pedlar, at one time kept a small shop, and later sold religious tracts. The implied contrast between her earlier occupation as a ballad singer and later as a seemingly more respectable, albeit small-time, seller of drapery and haberdasher's goods may well be something of a generic trope. She mentions, too, the temptations of thieving and prostitution as she wandered through the country in a dirty and hungry state, but credits God with preserving her from such courses.

Mary Saxby's *Memoirs of a Female Vagrant* has been regarded as a valuable, and rather rare, first-hand representation of a woman's life at the margins of society, and in outline it may well be so, but it is also heavily larded with, and structured by, a conventional religiosity, which was evidently the reason for its composition (see Gagnier 346–47). Tim Hitchcock makes use of her account, but also acknowledges the literary convention underlying it ("Publicity of Poverty" 176–77; *Down and Out* 69, 81, 166, 229). A more sanguine view is embodied in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry which comments on the variety and apparent veracity of her story (Carter).

An avowedly fictional account is found in a chapbook called *The Surprising History of a Ballad Singer*, which survives in a Falkirk printing of 1818. The first-person narrator recounts her previous life in the form of a letter to an unidentified correspondent. The salient points are that, left impoverished on the death of her grandmother, she eventually finds herself alone in London, where she is befriended by two ballad singers. At first reluctant to go with them ("I had heard much of the vices belonging to the metropolis, especially in the low classes of ballad-singers and beggars"), she finds they are in fact respectable sisters who endeavour to conceal their occupation of ballad singing from their fellow lodgers ("poor people, but not those of the lowest order"). The sisters, named Jane and Harriet, have both been the victims of unfortunate liaisons, after which Jane "yielded to the solicitations of a ballad-singer, who shared her room, and embraced the profession of an itinerant vocal performer,"

while Harriet was forced into "a course of life disgusting to the female character," involving "illicit commerce with the other sex," before eventually joining her sister as a ballad singer. The narrator's description of their occupation is of some interest:

> [. . .] a life, at best, harrassing [*sic*] a[n]d precarious, tormented by beadles and constables; sometimes flush of money, and at others attacked by cold, rain, hunger, thirst, and poverty, and the insults of licentious men, who think virtue cannot reside in the breast of a ballad-singer. Indeed, most of the set are viciously inclined, and Harriet, Jane, and myself (for I had, alas! no other alternative than to join with them) were obliged to use great caution and reserve to prevent us from forming any acquaintance with others of our occupation; a behaviour which frequently obtained us unmerited abuse.
>
> My voice, and the sprightliness with which I sung, obtained, as the sisters had predicted, much success and emolument; and I have had several sixpences, shillings, nay, even half-crowns, given me of a night, for singing fashionable theatrical songs, particularly by ladies of a certain class, who are noted for profusion and frequent want of true taste, too often making good the proverb of, Light come, light go.
>
> [. . .]
>
> During this time I was initiated by the sisters in all the mysteries of the trade [. . .] which are sedulously attended to by those who regularly follow ballad-singing to procure a living: this is to select popular theatrical songs, and to learn the true air. We used to go three or four times to the house where it was brought out; and I in general remarked, we were most fortunate with those produced by the summer theatres, especially Sadler's-Wells. We were also careful to vary the scene, that our voices might not become too common in any one neighbourhood; and as to our persons, we so carefully disguised them, that I am positive no one would have recognised them when out of our singing occupation.
>
> We frequently went many miles from home; attended the installations, and all manner of public fetes: sometimes we repaired to sea-ports; and once we made a pedestrian excursion as far as Margate, subsisting on the road by singing a fashionable song of Grimaldi's in every town or village through which we passed. We received more money than we expected, and, to acknowledge the truth, spent it as freely; yet I was not happy: frequently reflections would obtrude, and make me disgusted with the life I led. (13–14)

Then Harriet dies, Jane is injured, and the narrator goes out ballad singing alone. She is invited into a house of genteel appearance, but finds that she is not permitted to leave and that she has in fact been procured to become the mistress of a baronet. Eventually, she escapes and gains a place as a nursery maid with a genteel city family, and one day when she goes into a shop to purchase some gloves she discovers that the proprietor is her old friend Jane, whose former lover has set her up in business—"Which shews that a blessing attends virtuous conduct" (24).

The *Surprising History* is fiction, but circumstantial details like the theatre songs learned by ear (the tunes at least), the journeys on foot out of the capital, and their

success with the "fashionable song of Grimaldi's" nonetheless contribute something to our understanding of the ballad trade. Mary Saxby was able to support herself by singing ballads, and the itinerant women in the *Surprising History* find themselves rewarded, sometimes well, for singing (not, it seems, for selling ballad sheets). The *Surprising History* is indeed formulaic, but, with a framework of religiosity in place of the poetic justice of the sentimental novel, Saxby's memoirs follow a pattern that is really quite similar. Both depict ballad singing as precarious and risky, and yet not quite the worst occupation imaginable for a socially disadvantaged woman. There may be truth in both publications, but there is also conventional morality and literary conceit.

Isobel Grundy charts the expansion of women's involvement in all areas of the book trade throughout the century. McDowell argues that Robert Darnton's notion of a "communications circuit" underlying literary production of all kinds will help set women's roles in the book trade within a broader context (McDowell, "Women and the Business of Print" 136). In the 1790s the religious writer Hannah More established the Cheap Repository Tracts and successfully appropriated the structures of the ballad trade to disseminate a series of heavily moralized ballads, some of them of her own authorship. The more representative run of female ballad singers, if not exactly authors, can also be envisaged as having had the capacity orally to "rewrite" ballad texts to political ends when they cried them in the streets, and as having wielded some influence over the publishers as to what they should print and reprint (McDowell, *Women of Grub Street* 82–90; McDowell, "Women and the Business of Print" 143–44). Grundy, however, expresses some scepticism as to whether the mere fact of women being women would have made any real difference to the day-to-day business of the book trade occupations in which they were engaged (152). Sarah Bates and others carried on their businesses, apparently quite seamlessly, in the wake of their male relatives.

There remains much to be uncovered, but researching women in the ballad trade is enlightening because it helps fill out the canvas of economic activity and complicates certain stereotypes that might prevail about such things as impoverishment and lack of agency, and (from a more folkloric perspective) about imagined communities and ballad repertoires. On the one hand, the eighteenth century offers a lurid picture of destitution and prostitution, and on the other, one of small-scale commerce and economic activity. It is still not easy to strike the correct balance between those two poles.

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"The first will serve the bookseller's purpose": Sterne's double title page in *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*

Gabriella Hartvig

When Laurence Sterne, the freshly celebrated author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,* left his home for London in March 1760 to see how his novel was selling, he also took the manuscript of some of his sermons with him. According to Melvyn New, general editor of the Florida edition of *The Works of Laurence Sterne* and editor of *The Sermons*, "he seized the moment of notoriety to persuade Robert Dodsley to publish them, and to pay him the quite substantial sum of £200 for the privilege of doing so" (*Notes to the Sermons*, "Introduction" 1). Sterne's forty-five sermons were published in seven volumes, the last three posthumously by his daughter Lydia and Sterne's best friend, John-Hall Stevenson. The first two volumes appeared on 22 May 1760. The book bore the same format, octavo, as *Tristram Shandy,* and contained a portrait of Sterne, by Sir Joshua Reynolds ("Introduction" 1). It was published with a double title page, the first bearing the name of Yorick—"*The Sermons of Mr. Yorick.* Vol. I"—, the second revealing the real name of the author, and enlisting the author's clerical appointments: "*Sermons* by Laurence Sterne, A. M. Prebendary of York, and Vicar of Sutton on the Forest, and of Stillington near York. Vol. I." In the eye of the critics, the first title page, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, undermined the authenticity of the sermons; many found jest lurking in them, accusing the writer of merely putting on the role of a preacher. In an unsigned contribution (by Owen Ruffhead, see *Critical Heritage* 77) of the *Monthly Review* (May 1760) on the first volume of the *Sermons,* we can read the following critical remarks:

> However, had his *first* title-page *only* appeared, we might have had the satisfaction to have supposed, that some licentious Layman had presumed to publish these Discourses, under this assumed character, as a ridicule on Religion. But what shall we say to the *second* title-page, in which the *Reverend* and *dignified* Author does not scruple to avow his real name . . . (423)

The title, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick,* in the reviewers' eyes, must have had the appearance of that of a literary work, which usually assumed the name of the protagonist on the title page, also being the fictional author of this new work. It might have given the impression that the book was meant for the novel-reading audience, Yorick being the village parson's name in *Tristram Shandy* which Sterne borrowed from Shakespeare. Most critics expressed their view that sermons should not be published under the

name of the king's court jester, and that this was a disgrace to the church and the writer was not serious in his intentions. What elicited this critical tone was, as Tim Parnell points out, that there were too many incompatible roles mixed here, "the Reverend Sterne, Parson Yorick and Tristram Shandy" ("The Sermons" 66). The *Monthly Review* well expresses this confusion of different personae in its criticism:

> If, as the Reverend Writer premises, the name of *Yorick* is more known than that of *Sterne*, we are sorry for it.—More shame to the *Divine*, who has made the *Jester* so noted—A Fool's cap does but ill become a Reverend head. If the order of society requires that there should be a distinction of characters, *Yorick* and *Sterne*, instead of being one and the same person, should have been, in public at least, as utter strangers as *Moses* and *Mahomet.* (424)

That the sermons, except for two, were not originally meant for publication has been argued by New. Sterne's motivation was, rather spontaneously, to grab his chance: he acted on the spur of the moment and when he "rushed to London in early 1760 to capitalize on his success with *Tristram,* he simply culled the best from sermons he had no known intention of publishing prior to that moment" (*Notes to The Sermons,* "Preface" xv). Kenneth Monkman, however, points out that, before he left for London to celebrate his success with *Tristram Shandy,* Sterne had inserted an advertisement in the *York Courant* of 4 March 1760: "To be printed in Two Volumes, Price 5s. and to be delivered to the Subscribers in May next, The DRAMATIC SERMONS of Mr. YORICK. Published by TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gentleman . . ." (qtd. in Monkman 41). Sterne here does not yet reveal his name or clerical position: he signs the advertisement as Tristram Shandy, which shows that he was consciously manipulating the public by thus marketing his sermons even before he would have shown them to his London publisher. "Dramatic," as is explained by Parnell, here means that the sermons raise the attention of the audience by their very colourful tone, as if the preacher was acting out several roles on a stage ("The Sermons" 65). Donating the name of the protagonist of his novel as the fictional author of his sermons also supports the view that Sterne was here possibly relying on an audience which would read his novel. As W. B. Gerard argues, he wanted to exploit the popularity of *Tristram Shandy* and also to tell the world that he was a member of the English Church (15). Later on, from the London newspaper announcements, "published by Tristram Shandy" disappears and, when the sermons are advertised, Sterne's name takes the author's place. Sterne's plan, New remarks, may also have been "to counterbalance the damage he anticipated the bawdiness of his fiction would cause to his clerical reputation, by demonstrating his seriousness as a cleric" (*Notes to The Sermons* 1). He arrived in London as the celebrated writer of a scandalous novel but, by having his sermons published, he suddenly became Sterne the clergyman who had written an indecent book.

This paper intends to demonstrate how the first volumes of Sterne's *Sermons* were marketed and received in early newspaper advertisements, reviews, and even in Sterne's own writings. Furthermore, I would like to show how Yorick's name on the title page of the *Sermons* modified the image of Sterne, not only as the prebendary of York, but also as the celebrated writer of a very bawdy work; how the two types

of Sterne's writing, fiction and homiletics, reflected on each other[1] and how the one helped in the selling of the other in those brief notices in newspapers between 1760 and 1766 (see Brandtzæg et al., "Advertising").

Advertising the *Sermons* in Newspapers

The notices of new publications in magazines and newspapers were part of the marketing policy of publishers. The wording and format of these advertising columns in the, mainly London, newspapers reveal much about the sophisticated manner in which the editors communicated their purpose in marketing newly published books. Besides the reviews, it is here, in these brief notices and advertisements, that we can map out barely noticeable shifts in the early reception of Sterne's fiction and his sermons (see Brandtzæg et al., "Advertising" 28). Digital archives such as *ECCO,* the Burney Collection, and *British Periodicals* are of great help today.

In newspapers, advance notices such as "Speedily will be published" or "This day was published," functioned as "staple headings" and the latter, "this day was published," is "by far the most common advertising heading of the period, echoed in thousands of newspaper advertisements" (Brandtzæg et al., "Advertising" 31). The first installment of *The Sermons of Mr Yorick* was published on 22 May 1760, so the advance notices in the *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* and *London Chronicle* on 19-22 April were ahead of publication, the first by a whole month (also see Monkman 42):

> *Speedily will be published,*
> In Two Volumes, Price 5 s. sewed,
> (With a Portrait of the Editor, engraved from a
> Painting by Mr. REYNOLDS)
> THE SERMONS OF Mr. YORICK.
> Published by the Rev. Mr. STERNE,
> Prebendary of York.
> Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pallmall.
> (*The London Chronicle,* April 19-22 1760).[2]

Besides the usual information on price and location of publication, there are two important elements in this brief notice: the first volume contains an illustration, Sterne's portrait by Reynolds, with whom, as Monkman writes, Sterne had had his "final sitting" on 21 April (42). Reynolds raises the value of the book because, by buying the novel, readers can also own "a little bit of" Reynolds, similarly to Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy,* the second edition of the first two volumes of which was published with a frontispiece by Hogarth: there, as Brandtzæg et al. point out, "readers could

1 On the relationship between Sterne's sermons and his fiction, also see Éva Bús's work, *E diribdarab élet ösvényein. Az életírás mestertrópusai Laurence Sterne műveiben* [On the paths of this fragment of Life. The mastertropes of life writing in the works of Laurence Sterne]. Budapest: Gondolat, 2016.

2 See, *Burney Collection,* Gale Document Numbers: Z2001657872, Z2001671391.

own a little bit of Hogarth" ("Advertising" 34); Monkman also points out that, "The two volumes [of the sermons] came from different printers . . . and, perhaps because of delays over engraving the frontispiece portrait . . . publication took longer than foreseen" (42). This might explain the formulaic headings of the notices: "speedily will be published" (*Public Advertiser,* 29 April),[3] "next week will be published" (*Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* 6-8 May; *London Evening Post* 8-10 May; *London Chronicle,* 8-10 May)[4] and, finally, "This day is published" (*Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 20-22 May, *Public Advertiser,* 22 May)[5] show how a promising work is deployed to market.[6] W. B. Gerard's depiction of Reynold's engraving denotes the Janus face of the picture: Sterne is dressed in his clerical robe, his elbow placed on what seems to appear to be leaves of *Tristram Shandy*: "Sterne's finger, pressed against his temple, possibly gestures to heaven, but also nudges his dress wig slightly askance; his wide, elastic mouth seems to teeter between bemusement and gravity" (15). The irony of the jesting clergyman is clearly foreshadowed by this frontispiece placed before the two title pages: "This image undoubtedly further fostered Sterne's ambiguous authorial persona, visualizing his play between the holy and the humorous" (15). Furthermore, "portrait of the Editor" means that Sterne appears as the compiler of the published sermons: in an "Advertisement" to Sermon 27 (Sermon XII in the fourth volume), on *The Abuses of Conscience*, "the Editor begs pardon of those who have purchased it in that shape [as *Tristram Shandy*], and in this also, for being made to pay twice actually for the same thing" (*Sermons* 255).

Sterne's name cannot be found in earlier advertisements of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*. The novel had been advertised by its title only before the *Sermons* was announced and published. In the *London Chronicle* (19-22 April) and also in the *Whitehall Evening Post* (24-26 April), on the same page,–in the latter, right below the notice on the *Sermons*–we can find another brief notice advertising "Explanatory Remarks" to *Tristram Shandy,* the author wishing his remarks to accompany the novel, although the publisher is different ("printed for E. Cabe, in Ave-Mary-Lane, Ludgate-Street")[7]:

This Day were publish'd, Price 1 s.
EXPLANATOTY REMARKS upon
the LIFE and OPINIONS of TRISTRAM SHANDY.
Wherein the Morals and Politics of this Piece are clearly laid open.
By JEREMIAH KUNASTROKIUS, M. D.
Printed for Edward Cabe, in Ave-Mary Lane, Ludgate-Street.

3 Gale Document Number: Z2001078779.

4 Gale Document Numbers: Z2001657916, Z2000664267, Z2001671622.

5 Gale Document Numbers: Z2001657958, Z2001078968.

6 Siv Brandtzæg elsewhere writes, "My research for the London newspapers has shown that the sentence 'this day is published' is very reliable following its first appearance after an advance notice: 'Next week,' 'next Thursday,' or 'Tomorrow' of the advance notices meant exactly that. However, the heading 'this day was published' was often deployed to continue promoting a 'new' title that could sometimes have been on the market for many months" ("Mercury as Merchant" 274-75).

7 Gale Document Number: CW124594414

N.B. This Explanation is printed in the same Letter and Size of
Tristram Shandy, to accommodate those who chuse to bind it with that Work.[8]

Dr. Kunastrokius is a side-character from *Tristram Shandy* in whose figure Sterne parodied Dr. Richard Mead. *The Life and Opinions of Jeremiah Kunastrokius* was an early, anonymous, imitation of Sterne's novel (see Bosch 119-21).

After the publication of the *Sermons*, there would be joint announcements in newspapers. From April 1760 onwards, the publication of the *Sermons* is simultaneously advertised with the second edition of *Tristram Shandy* (but in both cases, the first installment is meant only). On 5 June, the *Public Advertiser* shifts emphasis on the fact that the second edition of *Tristram Shandy* is published together with a frontispiece by Hogarth.[9] Hogarth was the novelty of this second edition and it of course rendered the work even more saleable, since "booksellers frequently noted frontispieces as selling-points in book advertisements of this period" (Brandtzæg et al., "Advertising" 34); in March, Sterne sent a letter to a friend about Hogarth with the following note: "I would give both my Ears (If I was not to lose my Credit by it) for no more than ten Strokes of Howgarth's [sic!] witty Chissel, to clap at the Front of my next Edition of *Shandy!* – (. . .) the loosest Sketch in Nature, of Trim's reading the Sermon to my Father . . ." (qtd. in Alspaugh 9). "Trim reading the sermon" serves, we know from the novel, to illustrate Hogarth's "line of beauty," the curved "S" line, in Trim's posture. But perhaps Sterne's choice of an illustration related to the sermon in *Tristram Shandy* also foreshadowed his intention of the future marketing of his *Sermons.* The *Sermons* will always be advertised with the added value of the illustration, "a Portrait of the Editor, engraved from a Painting by Mr. Reynolds," in order to enhance the worth of the work for potential buyers.

The advertisement in the *Whitehall Evening Post*, on 24-27 May, was published just two days after publication, so it counted as a fresh notice:

This Day was publish'd Price 5s. sew'd,
In TWO VOLUMES,
With a PORTRAIT of the Editor, engraved from a Painting by
Mr. Reynolds,
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.
Published by the Rev. Mr. Sterne,
Prebendary of York.
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall.
A New Edition of TRISTRAM SHANDY is published this Day.[10]

8 Gale Document Numbers: Z 2001677885, Z2001657885. See Parnell, "Explanatory Remarks" 79. Apparently, as L. P. Curtis writes, "Dodsley thought well enough of the pamphlet to purchase a few copies to sell with Sterne's novel" (qtd. in Parnell, "Explanatory Remarks" 79). Curtis, Parnell recalls, even discovered a copy of *Explanatory Remarks* which was "sewn together with an uncut copy of the third edition of the second volume of *Tristram Shandy*" (qtd. in Parnell, "Explanatory Remarks" 79).

9 Gale Document Number: Z2001079078.

10 Gale Document Number: Z2001657973.

Although "this day was published" as we have seen, was a frequent formula, and in fact the book may have been available for months—here it truly means what it says: it appeared just two days after the actual publication of *The Sermons*; however, the second edition of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* had already been published by 2 April, with Hogarth's engravings, and also with a dedication to Mr. William Pitt (see Ross 10): despite the claim that the work was "published this Day," it had been out for almost two months.

In later announcements, we find that the two works swap places: now *Tristram Shandy,* the earlier published work, is announced first, maybe because the first edition having been sold out, this second edition came out "with a print rise perhaps ten times larger than the first edition" (Ross 10). Sterne's fiction is still advertised without its author's name whereas the *Sermons*, although being the sermons of Mr. Yorick, are always noted together with Sterne's name and his clerical appointments. On 12-14 June, the *London Chronicle* similarly announces that this second edition is out and adds that *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* can also be bought:

This Day was Published,
With a Frontispiece by Mr. HOGARTH,
In Two Volumes, Price sewed 4 s,
a new edition of,
THE LIFE and OPINIONS of
TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gent.
Where may be had,
The SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.
Published by the Rev. Mr. STERNE,
Prebendary of York.[11]

When a new edition is published, a different format of the advertisement may be used, and here again the two works swap places in the announcement. On 26 June the *Public Advertiser*[12] and on 5-8 July the *Whitehall Evening Post* emphasize that a new edition of the *Sermons* "in a few days will be publish'd."[13] On 8 July, the *London Chronicle*, while advertising the *Sermons*, still adds that, simultaneously, a new edition of *Tristram Shandy* had just come out:

In a few Days will be published,
In Two Volumes, Price 5 s. sewed,
(With a Portrait of the Editor, engraved from a
Painting by Mr. REYNOLDS)
A NEW EDITION of
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.

11 Gale Document Number: Z2001671997.
12 Gale Document Number: Z2001079243.
13 Gale Document Numbers: Z2001658091.

Published by the Reverend Mr. STERNE,
Prebendary of York.
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pallmall.
N.B. A New Edition of TRISTRAM SHANDY
is published this Day.[14]

The formula of *Tristram Shandy* being "published this day" was repeated by the *London Chronicle* in the following, 10-12 July issue.[15] The most relevant announcement appears in the 19-22 July issue of the *London Chronicle*, where *The Sermons* and the new edition of *Tristram Shandy* are advertised alike as "this day was published" and "published this day."[16] Almost exactly two months following the first, the second edition of the *Sermons* was published on 21 July, "and six more before Sterne's death in March 1768" (New, *Notes to The Sermons* 3): on that day, the *Public Advertiser* also opens with "*This Day is published*":

This Day is published,
In TWO VOLUMES,
Price Sewed FIVE SHILLINGS,
(With a Portrait of the EDITOR,
Engraved from a Painting by Mr. REYNOLDS)
A NEW EDITION, of
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.
Publish'd by the Rev. Mr. STERNE,
Prebendary of YORK.
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall.
Where may be had,
The Life and Opinions of TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gent. in two Volumes, Price sew'd 4 s.[17]

"Where may be had" is an indication of the same publisher but this does not necessarily mean that it is by the same author, so it seems that Sterne's publishers still tried to avoid explicitly attaching Sterne's name to *Tristram Shandy.* Obviously, the work already enjoyed great reputation and there was a demand for the new edition.

Until 21 October, when the third edition of the first two volumes of the *Sermons* is published (Monkman 55), we can find repeated announcements on the second installment of *Tristram Shandy* (which would come out the following January), the third and fourth volumes: the *Sermons* are jointly mentioned together with the advertising of the second edition of the first installment of *Tristram Shandy*. Emphasis, understandably, now falls on *Tristram Shandy*:

14 Gale Document Number: Z2001672281.
15 Gale Document Number: Z2001672316.
16 Gale Document Number: Z2001672409.
17 Gale Document Number: Z2001079435.

The Publick is desired to take Notice
THAT the THIRD and FOURTH
VOLUMES of TRISTRAM SHANDY, by
the Author of the two first Volumes, will be published about Christmas next.
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pallmall.
Where may be had,
1. A new Edition of the two first Volumes.
2. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, published by the
Rev. Mr. Sterne, Prebendary of York.
(*London Chronicle* 14-16 October, 1760)[18]

The unusual opening of the notice and its length, Brandtzæg et al. argue, might be formulated in this manner because the publisher wanted to call attention to a spurious third volume, emphasizing that this is the genuine sequel to the first two volumes ("Advertising" 37). "By the author of the two first volumes," without revealing the author's name, means that this is the true continuation of *Tristram Shandy.* That the *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* is also available in the shop of the Dodsley brothers, published by the "Reverend Mr. Sterne," still maintains the notion that Sterne appears as the editor of Yorick's sermons only.

From 21 October onwards we can find repeated announcements of the third edition of the *Sermons*:

This Day were published,
With a PORTRAIT of the EDITOR, engraved from a Painting by
Mr. REYNOLDS
in TWO VOLUMES, Price sew'd 5 s.
A NEW EDITION *of*
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.
Published by the Rev. Mr. STERNE,
Prebendary of York.
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall.
Where may be had,
A New Edition of TRISTRAM SHANDY: The Third and Fourth
Volumes of which will be published about Christmas next.
(*Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* 18-21 October, 1760)[19]

After 18 December, those two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* are advertised again, and the *Sermons* appear among the books which "may be had," too, in the Dodsley brothers' shop.[20] This proves that, depending on new publication, Sterne's works swap

18 Gale Document Number: Z2001673352. Also see Brandtzæg et al., "Advertising" 36.
19 Gale Document Number: Z2001658407.
20 Gale Document Number: Z2001658580.

places in the notices. How frequent and formulaic such advertisements were can be supported by similar announcements.

In the 23 December 1760 issue of *The London Chronicle* we can see that the second installment of *Tristram Shandy*, volumes 3 and 4, is advertised together with a new edition of the first two volumes but also with the *Sermons*:

Next Month will be published,
Price Four Shillings sewed,
With a Frontispiece by Mr. HOGARTH,
THE THIRD and FOURTH Volumes of
the LIFE and OPINIONS of
TRISTRAM SHANDY, Gentleman.
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pallmall.
Where may be had,
1. A new Edition of the two first Volumes.
2. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, published by the
Rev. Mr. Sterne, Prebendary of York.[21]

It is a characteristic feature of multi-volume serial editions that an impatient reading public is awaiting the next installment. "Next month will be published" provides them with advance notice: the third and fourth volumes were published by the Dodsleys in January the following year. There is an even earlier advance notice in the *London Evening Post* in September, anticipating the next installment by Christmas (Brandtzæg et al., "Advertising" 36). Again, the frequent announcements of the upcoming volumes of *Tristram Shandy* may also have served as notices against the circulating spurious continuations of *Tristram Shandy* (37). In this notice we can also find reference to a second illustration of Hogarth depicting Tristram's christening, in the fourth volume.

In the *Burney Collection,* we cannot find notices of publication between 1761 and 1765 of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick.* The reason for this might be that the next installment, volumes 3 and 4, was published after a longer period of time, in January 1766. The number of advertisements started to grow again towards the end of 1765. On 5-7 December, the *London Chronicle* announces that

Some Time this Month, will be published,
(Volumes III. and VI. Price 6s. bound, or 5s. sewed.)
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.
Published by the Rev. Mr. STERNE.
Printed for T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, near
Surry-street, in the Strand.
By whom Subcribers Books will be delivered.[22]

21 Gale Document Number: Z2001674170.
22 Gale Document Number: Z2001683220.

The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser,* together with other newspapers, announces the approaching publication of the second installment throughout January 1766:

This day is published,
(Volumes III. and VI. Price 5s. sewed, or 6s. bound)
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK, published
by the Rev. Mr. STERN.
Printed for T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, near
Surry-street, in the Strand.
The Nobility and Gentlemen, who have honoured
Mr. Stern with their subscriptions to the above ser-
mons, are requested to send for their books as above.
Complete sets in 4 vols. may be had either sewed or
bound; \also Tristram Shandy, in 8 vols.[23]

The second installment would be published on 18th January 1766 (New, *Notes to The Sermons* 4). The notice on immediate publication in the *St. James's Chronicle* for 9-11 January is headed, "Saturday next, the 18th Instant . . .". The announcements stress the fact that publication is preceded by subscription for the work. Sterne, as New writes, probably started gathering subscribers a year before publication (4). In the meantime, he also changed publishers: the new publisher is Becket and Dehondt of London. New also quotes Sterne's letter in which he explains the delicate relationship between the two types of works:

> Have you seen my 7& 8 graceless Children [volumes VII and VIII of *Tristram Shandy*, published 23 January 1765]—but I am doing penance for them, in begetting a couple of more ecclesiastick ones—which are to stand penance (again) in their turns . . . These you must know are to keep up a kind of balance, in my shandaic character, & are push'd into the world for that reason by my friends with as splendid & numerous a List of Nobility &c . . . (qtd. by New, *Notes to the Sermons* 4).

The London Chronicle for 27 February-1 March (1766) has a joint announcement for the fiction and the sermons. It is interesting because it still does not name Sterne as the author of *Tristram Shandy* yet it warns the reader not to confuse the work with a spurious ninth volume:

To the PUBLIC.
WHEREAS there has been lately adver-
tised the NINTH Volume of the LIFE and
OPINIONS of TRISTRAM SHANDY, it is
thought proper to acquaint the Public, that the said
NINTH Volume is not written by the Author of the

23 Gale Document Number: Z2000353623 (27 January, 1766)

EIGHT Volumes, printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall Mall,
and T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, in the Strand.
Of whom may be had,
1. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, in 8
Volumes, Price I l. bound.
2. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick, published by the
Rev. Mr. Sterne, 3 Volumes. Price 12 c. bound.
Volumes III. and IV. may be had separate.[24]

One year after the appearance of those disclaimer warnings, *The Public Advertiser* for 29 January (1767) and *The London Chronicle* for 29-31 January[25] start to advertise the real ninth volume of *Tristram Shandy*, which is published in January that year, "by the Author of the first eight volumes."[26]

These short notices and advertisements in the newspapers prove, among other things, that due to the simultaneous publication history of *Tristram Shandy* and Sterne's *Sermons* there is an intriguing connection between the two works, not merely as regards their publication but also how they were very likely conceived by the reading public. Parallel with the newspaper advertisements, we can also find literary reviews, critical essays, and even parodies related to the publication of Sterne's works.

Reviews of *The Sermons*

In June 1760, the *Grand Magazine* (printed for Ralph Griffith, 1758-60) published an account on Sterne under the title "An Original Piece: An Account of the Rev. Mr. ST****, and his Writings. (. . . .)", which, in the form of a dialogue of Sir John, Sir Patrick, the Reverend Mr. Vicarius, and others, discusses the celebrated author's works. Sir John calls attention to Sterne's mixed identities and the confusion caused by them:

> I will readily, Sir, oblige you with the best information I am able. To begin therefore in proper biographical form, I must acquaint you that *Tristram Shandy,* alias *Yorick*, alias the Rev. Mr. *St****, was born–No–I beg pardon–Tristram Shandy is not born yet: *Yorick* is dead, buried, and resuscitated–and the Rev. Mr. *St**** is just beginning to live in his fiftieth year of his age or thereabouts. (. . .) In few words, Sir, and without a figure, *Tristram Shandy* is an obscene novel and the reverend author is a *prebend* of the Church of England. And both are at present in the highest estimation. (309, also qtd. in *Critical Heritage* 96)[27]

24 Gale Document Number: Z2001683692. *The Gazetteer* for 27 February, and onwards, also warns against the spurious ninth volume, see, Gale Document Number Z2000354136.

25 Gale Document Numbers: Z2001115899, Z2001684689.

26 Gale Document Number Z2001684711.

27 Gale Document Number: CB3328927114.

As we have been able to follow from the advertisements earlier, in June 1760, the second edition of the first installment of *Tristram Shandy* and the first two volumes of *The Sermons* were published in May. Yorick the village parson's death (and a black page) concludes the twelfth chapter of the first volume of *Tristram Shandy*; Tristram will be born in the fourth volume only, which was not as yet published. The Reverend Mr. Sterne was forty-six years old at the time of the publication of *The Sermons.* Reading the dialogue, we can obtain an insight into Sir John's opinion on Sterne's *Sermons*:

> You may recollect, Sir, that, in their account of *Tristram Shandy,* when the author was unknown, not a word was said of the indecency or obscenity of this novel: but when *Yorick's Sermons* appeared, when Mr. St****'s merit and good fortune were the standing topics, then forsooth these godly Reviewers found out that *Tristram Shandy* was an obscene novel, and that for a *clergyman* openly to avow such a performance, was an outrage against Christianity, and a mockery on religion. (. . .) (310, also qtd. in *Critical Heritage* 97)

At the time of the appearance of *Tristram Shandy,* the speaker here claims, nobody guessed that the author of such a bawdy book would belong to the established Church. But now that it has come to light, it darkens the reputation of Sterne's fiction to the degree that the later work, the *Sermons*, casts an unfavourable light on the novel, which had had an unprecedented success among readers:

> But when *Yorick's Sermons* made their appearance under the real name of the reverend author, when he thought proper to claim *Tristram Shandy* as his own, in his preface to his *religious discourses,* then circumstances varied, and the *Reviewers* preserved a consistency of character, in reprehending such indecency, and in appropriating proper epithets to that indelicate novel. (310, also qtd. in *Critical Heritage* 98)

The author's true identity was first revealed publicly only in the "Preface" to *The Sermons* and on the second title page, where Sterne himself explains why he decided to print them with two title pages:

> The sermon [in *Tristram Shandy*] which gave rise to the publication of these, having been offer'd to the world as a sermon of *Yorick*'s, I hope the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him, in my continuing these two volumes under the same title: lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title page with the real name of the author:—the first will serve the bookseller's purpose, as *Yorick*'s name is possibly of the two the more known;—and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest was meant.
>
> I suppose it is needless to inform the publick, that the reason of printing these sermons, arises altogether from the favourable reception, which the sermon given as a sample of them in TRISTRAM SHANDY, met with from the world. (*Sermons* 1)

The sermon that was given as a sample in *Tristram Shandy* is *The Abuses of Conscience*, which was first preached in York Minster by Sterne in 1750 and subsequently published in York by Caesar Ward (see, New, *Notes to The Sermons,* 58, 284-85). The dialogue in the *Grand Magazine* makes it clear how authorship in the two works is connected: "When *Tristram Shandy* appeared," says one of the participants, "the author, as you have intimated, was unknown." Later, he explains, "when *Yorick's Sermons* made their appearance under the real name of the reverend author, when he thought proper to claim *Tristram Shandy* as his own, in his preface to his *religious discourses,* then circumstances varied . . ." (310). So it is since the publication of the "Preface" in *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* that the reading public had identified Sterne as the author of *Tristram Shandy,* too. And this is the source of its success too, as the unknown "critic" in the above mentioned dialogue describes Sterne's fame: "Had the author of *Tristram Shandy* remained unknown, the work perhaps would have had few, if any, imitators" (311). That Sterne revealing his identity as the writer of that bawdy work caused its great success is argued as being the reason why there appeared so many imitators in his steps: "But the extraordinary circumstances of its being avowed by a *clergyman,* and . . . being patronized by the *Bishops*, has encouraged every scribler [sic!] to mimic the reverend writer's manner" (311).

The Critical Review, commenting on the publication of the third volume of *The Sermons* in January 1766, begins its essay by drawing a parallel between *Tristram Shandy* and the sermons; also, after six years, it cannot but still maintain the main objection against the incompatible nature of Sterne's two roles: "The author of *Tristram Shandy* is discernible in every page . . . But the author sometimes forgets the dignity of his character . . . and condescends, on the most interesting topics of religion, to excite a jocular idea, or display a frivolous turn of wit" (qtd. in *Critical Heritage* 171).

We can find references, Parnell points out, in the sermons to *Tristram Shandy* and, similarly, references to the sermons in *TS.* The sermons and Sterne's fiction share the common ground of Christian philanthropy (Parnell, "The Sermons"). Sterne himself declares in the "Preface" to his work: ". . . for as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it . . . proceeding more from the heart than of the head" (*The Sermons* 2). There is, for example, an early allusion in *Tristram Shandy* to Sterne's possible plan to publish his collected sermons: Tristram remarks after Trim's reading of the sermon on *The Abuses of Conscience*, if, "the character of parson *Yorick*, and this sample of his sermons is liked, there are now in the possession of the *Shandy* Family, as many as will make a handsome volume, at the world's service" (*Tristram Shandy* 2.17.167, also qtd. in Parnell, "The Sermons" 64-65). In *Tristram Shandy* we learn that it was Yorick's practice to comment on his written sermons, to jot down short remarks on what he thought about each sermon:

> —N.B. *The Excellency of this text is, that it will suit any sermon,—and of this sermon, —that it will suit any text.*—

> —*For this sermon I shall be hanged,–for I have stolen the greatest part of it. Doctor* Paidagunes *found me out.* ☞ *Set a thief to catch a thief.* (*Tristram Shandy* 6.11.514, also qtd. in Parnell, "The Sermons" 74)

If Yorick habitually copies from other sermonists, one tends to believe that perhaps *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* is also full of borrowings; that Sterne was fully aware of this, can be seen in the apologetical "Preface" attached to the first two volumes of *The Sermons*: "there are some other passages, where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty . . . but 'tis only suspicion, for I do not remember it is so, otherwise I should have restored them to their proper owners . . . (*The Sermons* 2). This would explain why Sterne always appears, rather modestly, as the editor, not the author, of *The Sermons.*

In a similar manner, there is an allusion in the later installment of the *Sermons* to Sterne's fiction. *The Abuses of Conscience* appears in the second volume of *Tristram Shandy* as Yorick the village parson's sermon; it accidentally falls out of another book, *Stevinus,* and is read out by Corporal Trim in the Shandy household. Sterne, however, truly preached this sermon in York Minster in 1750, ten years before its second publication, and it was published in York in the form of a pamphlet two weeks after it was preached (see, *Tristram Shandy*, "Appendix 7" 2.946). The sermon, when published in the fourth volume of Sterne's *Sermons* (the third and fourth volumes were published in January 1766), was headed with an advertisement, which explains its dual presence in the novel and among Sterne's sermons:

> As the following Sermon upon Abuses of Conscience, has already appeared in the body of a moral work [ie *Tristram Shandy*], more read than understood, the Editor begs pardon . . . it was thought fit to add it to the collection [ie of the *Sermons*],—where moreover it stands a chance of being read by many grave people with a much safer conscience. (*Sermons* 255)

In its critical essay on the fourth volume of *The Sermons*, *The Critical Review* (February 1766), still questioning whether the author is in earnest, concludes the essay on the *Abuses* sermon with the following words, referring to Sterne's remark above: "All the editor wishes, is, that this may not, after all, be one of the many abuses of it set forth in this discourse" (106). Because the original pamphlet, together with the rest of the sermons, was written in earnest, and Sterne gave his name, together with his ecclesiastical positions, to *The Sermons*, he inserted the second title page to emphasize that he was by no means in jest about his sermons: the first and the last word in this story of the sermons he wanted to be his, Sterne's, not Yorick's—Yorick and *Tristram Shandy*, in this context, might perhaps be taken as a digression in Sterne's ecclesiastical career.

The first edition of *The Works of Laurence Sterne* (7 vols., 1779) has an introductory part with the author's short biography with the title "The Life of Mr. Sterne," which reveals what the author's true intentions may have been. There, we can find an interesting idea about the possible connections between Sterne's fiction and his sermons:

> . . . the manner in which they were ushered to public notice was by some, severely condemned, that such excellent discourses should stand in need of such introduction; and many were of opinion, that he [Sterne] had wrote Tristram Shandy purely to introduce them [the sermons]. ("Life" xii)[28]

What the editor means by this remark is that *Tristram Shandy* was written with the sole purpose of marketing Sterne's sermons, that Sterne knew beforehand that he would ride on the success of his fiction to sell his sermons. Monkman argues that, by inserting the *Abuses* sermon "into the text of *Tristram Shandy* as a 'trailer' to the public," he already did it with the purpose to publish his sermons as well (41).

In a review on the "Character of Laurence Sterne," *The North British Intelligencer* (Edinburgh, 1776—; 4 vols., vol. 4) also expresses its view on the assumed connection between Sterne's fiction and his sermons, suggesting that readers had decided to buy the sermons only because they were written by the celebrated genius, the writer of *Tristram Shandy*:

> Having established the character of an ingenious buffoon, Mr. Sterne ventured to raise his clerical reputation upon a foundation that every one who duly reflected on the essential requisites in a christian pastor, blushed to see any one of that order capable of attempting: But, however that might be, Mr. Sterne did not blush to slip on his black gown over his harlequin's jacket, and step forth with four volumes of sermons in the name of Yorick, a principal character in his *Tristram Shandy*; Novelty again favoured him; . . . his sermons were highly extolled by those, who perhaps would never have looked into sermons as the compositions of a consistent clergyman, though of equal or superior talents as a divine. In short, for a season people perused Yorick's *Sermons* by Mr. Sterne beyond all measure, probably for their own sakes, that they might establish some credit for piety as well as discernment; and be thought read to admire even sermons, if penned by a man of acknowledged genius. (35-36)[29]

That the *Sermons* were sold amid great success can be shown by the figures of newer editions: as Monkman claims, "in Sterne's lifetime the two volumes of 1760 had run into nine (possibly ten) editions (more even than *Tristram Shandy*) . . ." (33). This abundance of editions is supported by the great number of subscribers; as New points out, more than 600 subscribers are named, which counted as a very impressive list at the time (*Notes to The Sermons* 2).[30]

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28 *ECCO* Gale Document Number: CW116502920. It is peculiar that this last sentence is missing from earlier editions of Sterne's life, attached, for example, to John Hall-Stevenson's continuation of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* as volumes 3 and 4.

29 *ECCO* Gale Document Number: CW3306018590.

30 About the subscription lists to the different editions of *The Sermons* and *A Sentimental Journey*, see New's Introduction (XV-XXXIX) to the ninth volume of *The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne* (*The Miscellaneous Writings and Sterne's Subscribers, an Identification List.* Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2014).

Yorick's name certainly served the bookseller's purpose, for the sermons sold even better than *Tristram Shandy*, sales of the volumes in Sterne's lifetime outstripping the "bestselling" *Tristram Shandy* (see Parnell, "The Sermons" 64). Yet many doubted the seriousness of the writer and thought that Sterne had merely "seized the moment of notoriety to persuade" (New, *Notes to The Sermons* xii). Not only his publishers, but many of his readers, too, were of the opinion that his sermons were written in the same manner as his fiction. The large number of joint advertisements on the publication and newer editions of the ensuing volumes of the *Sermons* and *Tristram Shandy* proves how much the two works were intertwined in the eyes of Sterne's reviewers, and also how the contemporary reader was directed by those newspaper notices and reviews to read the one with a knowledge of the other.

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"Hark! I Hear the Cannons Roar": Twenty years in the life of a "new tune"[1]

Andrew C. Rouse

In 1683 the Ottoman Turks were defeated at Vienna in what was to be a last serious bid to extend their empire further west, crushing the Habsburg dynasty as they did so. They had had good reason to believe the venture viable, as there existed no stable unity among the western powers. But for once the Holy League, a pan-European force comprising representatives from a variety of kingdoms, dukedoms and disinherited adventurers, cohered when it needed to do so and the several-century-long Ottoman threat essentially came to an end, or at least the beginning of the end.

The English, whose merchants had enjoyed some profitable associations with the Porte since the Mayor of London had financed that first tiny fleet in the last year of Elizabeth's reign, keenly followed the events. Uninvolved for now in European land warfare and increasingly (though variably) Protestant as the century progressed, the outcome of any military action between the Ottomans and the European Catholic powers was going to be of some interest to them. As Nabil Matar points out,

> the Muslim world, from Salee to Istanbul, provided the English and other Britons with opportunities to work, profit, and improve their social conditions. To many of the Barbary and Turkey traders, along with the soldiers and seamen, the Muslims were employers, partners, and sometimes accomplices. No other non-Christian dominions attracted more Britons to settle and work than Moorish North Africa and the 'Turkish' Mediterranean. (71)

This close relationship between England and the Mediterranean Islam world is further and more recently discussed by Jerry Brotton in his recent work, *The Sultan and the Queen*. Here, although trade existed between the two long beforehand, the author sees a series of pivotal moments leading to the increasingly close mercantile and diplomatic relations: the excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570 by the Pope; the subsequent torture and execution of the Catholic John Felton, who pinned up a copy of the papal bull on the door of the residence Bishop of London; on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572 the massacre of over 3,000 Huguenots in Paris, an event which "sent shock waves through Europe: Elizabeth's court went into mourning" (Brotton 59, 61). The pope's efforts to discredit the Protestant queen and bring her in line backfired: already

1 The original, slightly shorter version of this paper has appeared in Hungarian translation. Andrew C. Rouse. „'Figyelj! Hallani már az ágyúdörejt': Húsz év egy 'új dallam' életében." *Doromb: Közköltészeti tanulmányok* 6. Ed. Rumen István Csörsz. Budapest: Reciti, 2018. 75-86.

in 1566, the Bishop of Winchester had written in support of his Queen and the Act of Supremacy that "the Pope is a more perilous enemy unto Christ, than the Turk: and Popery more idolatrous, than Turkery" (Brotton 61).

Beyond religio-politics and international trade (some of it pretty cut-throat, rarely far away from piracy), the people of Renaissance London were made increasingly aware of the "Turkish" presence through the high incidence of such characters in the swathe of plays following the advent of the purpose-built theatre. The playwrights of the day were working in an environment that

> inhabited a precarious position in Elizabethan London: it was a vibrant new industry, a contributor to London's financial prosperity, watched by thousands from all walks of life... Its practitioners lived and worked in London's poorest areas alongside volatile and marginalized communities of prostitutes, servants, artisans and "strangers" – people escaping religious persecution and slavery from the Low Countries, North Africa, the Ottoman Empire and even the New World. The theater was drawn to the stories reaching London from the Islamic world of enslavement, conversion, piracy and heroic adventure because they held a mirror up to its own practices and people. (Brotton 106)

By the second half of the seventeenth century, the role of the theatre as a repository and distributor of sensational news from and views of exotic lands had been largely taken over by the street ballad. This written form of spreading news and opinion, while already gaining popularity at the latter end of the sixteenth century, had by the time of the diarist and ballad collector Pepys become endemic. This was due in part to the closure of the theatres; but there can be no doubt that the single-sheet ballad was in itself becoming the new most popular, most accessible and cheapest form of both entertainment and information.Writing in 1641, Henry Peacham states, "For a peny you may have all the Newes in England, of Murders, Floudes, Witches, Fires, Tempests, and what not, in one of Martin Parkers Ballads (qtd. in Watt 11).

No wonder, then, that in the same year a street ballad appeared on the streets of London relating the defeat of the Turks at Vienna. *A Carrouse to the Emperor, the Royal Pole, and the Much-Wrong'd Duke of Lorrain*[2] is a whimsical piece penned by the irrepressible Thomas D'Urfey that suggests that had the Islam religion permitted the Turkish soldiers to imbibe something stronger than coffee then the Ottoman host would have pressed on further, at least as far as the Rhine.

2 D'Urfey, Thomas. *A Carrouse to the Emperor, the Royal Pole, and the Much-Wrong'd Duke of Lorrain.* London: Brooksby. ESTC R227004 (English Short Title Catalogue Citation Number). As multiple extant copies from different sources have separate EBBA ID numbers, I shall instead use the citation numbers of the English Short Title Catalogue throughout. Where a printer or author is identified I will name them in the customary manner, but as the dating is anyway contentious and one of the areas I have targeted in this study, I shall refrain from supplying them as dates of publication.

A CARROUSE
TO THE
Emperour, the Royal Pole,
And the much-wrongd DUKE of LORRAIN.
To a New Tune at the PLAY-HOUSE

Hark! I hear the Cannons Roar,
Echoing from the German Shore,
And the joyful News come o'er
That the Turks are all confounded,
Lorraine comes, they run, they run,
Charge with your horse through the grand half-moon
And give quarter unto none
Since Starenberg is wounded.

Close your ranks, let each brave soul,
Fill a lusty flowing bowl,
A grand carrouse to the Royal Pole,
The Empire's brave defender:
Let no man leave his post by stealth,
Plunder the Barbarous Vizier's wealth,
We'll drink a helmet-full, the health
Of a Second Alexander.

Fill the Helmet once again,
To the emperor's happy reign,
And the much-wronged Duke Lorrain,
But when they've beat the Turks home:
Not a Soul the field will leave,
Till they do again retrieve
What the monsieur does detrieve,
And fix him in his dukedom.

Then will be the scheme of war,
When such drinking crowns prepare,
Those that love, the Monsieurs fear,
Their courage will be shrinking.
Loyal hearts inspired with Hock,
Who can form a better Rock,
The French will never stand the shock,
For all their claret-drinking.

Mahomet was a senseless dog,
A coffee-drinking drowsy rogue
The use of the grape so much in vogue

To deny to those adore him;
Had he allowed the fruits of the vine,
And gave them leave to carouse in wine,
They all had freely passed the Rhine,
And conquered all before them.

Coffee rallies no retreat,
Wine can only do the feat,
Had their force been twice as great
And all of Janissaries,
Though he had drunk the Danube dry
And all their profit could supply,
By his interest from the sky,
Brisk Langoon ne'er miscarried.

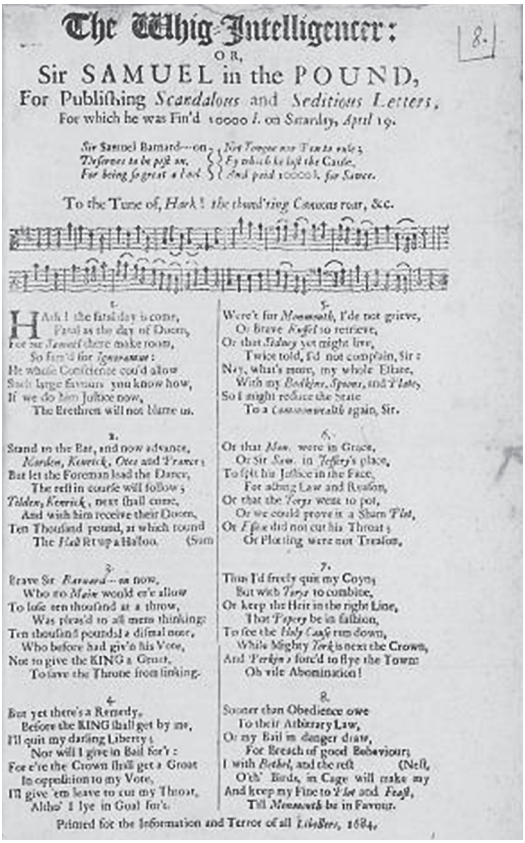
Infidels are now o'ercome,
The most Christian Turk at home
Watched the fate of Christendom
But all his hopes are shallow:
Since the Poles have led the dance,
If England's monarch will advance,
And if he'll send a Fleet to France,
He's a Whig that will not follow.

This was the time when the established drinking houses were feeling threatened by the new-fangled coffee-houses, and the midpoint turn in the ballad which turns to drinking habits in relation to religion and ethnicity is absolutely topical and something we might expect of D'Urfey, who finds space to ridicule weak French wines, too—claret (not the heavy red that we enjoy today, but rather a weaker, rosé-like wine) and the now obsolete white langoon wine (which appears in a 1727 "English Katchup" recipe): "Put therein ... the best White-wine Vinegar; then put in ten or twelve Cloves of Eschalot ... then take a quarter of a pint of the best Langoon-wine; boil it a little, and put to it twelve or fourteen Anchovies ..."[3]

Not all ballads received a new tune; rather, well-known existing ones were recommended as the appropriate accompaniment to particular ballads. Neither were all of them "catchy." But, it would seem, the import of the event warranted the writing of a new tune specifically for this ballad. This was supplied by Christopher Fishburn (see Simpson 287), and while not supplied with a name, by the time, four years later, that another broadside celebrating the steamrollering of the Ottoman host further south, in Hungary (even cautious historical sources estimating Turkish casualties at

3 E. S(mith). *The Compleat Housewife; or, Gentlewoman's Companion.* London: Pemberton, 1727. 70-71. Republished in Smith, Andrew F. *Pure Ketchup: A History of America's National Condiment, with recipes.* Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1996. 160.

around 10,000 as opposed to just 600 Christians),[4] the same tune is used but now has a name–the first line of the earlier ballad: "Hark! I Hear the Cannons Rore."



The Whig-Intelligencer:
OR,
Sir SAMUEL in the POUND,
For Publishing *Scandalous* and *Seditious Letters*,
For which he was Fin'd 10000 *l.* on Saturday, *April* 19.

Sir Samuel Barnard—on { *Not Tongue nor Teeth to rule;*
Deserves to be pil'd on, { *By which he lost the Castle,*
For being so great a fool. { *And paid* 10000 *l. for Sauce.*

To the Tune of, *Hark! the thund'ring Cannons roar*, &c.

1.
HArk! the fatal day is come,
Fatal as the day of Doom,
For our *Samuel* there make room,
So fare for *Tyburnum*:
He whose Conscience could allow
Such large favours you know how,
If we do him Justice now,
The Brethren will not blame us.

2.
Stand to the Bar, and now advance,
Jeoffreys, *Rosewick*, *Otes* and *France*;
But let the Foreman lead the Dance,
The rest in course will follow;
Tilden, *Kenrick*, next shall come,
And with him receive their Doom,
Ten Thousand pound, at which round
The *Hall* Rit up a Hallow. (Sam

3.
Brave Sir *Barnard*—on now,
Who no *Main* would e'e allow
To lose ten thousand at a throw,
Was pleas'd to all mens thinking:
Ten thousand pounds a dismal note,
Who before had giv'n his Vote,
Not to give the KING a Groat,
To save the Throne from sinking.

4.
But yet there's a Remedy,
Before the KING shall get by me,
I'll quit my darling Liberty;
Nor will I give in Bail for't:
For e're the Crown shall get a Groat
In expedition to my Vote,
I'll give 'em leave to cut my Throat,
Altho' I lye in Goal for't.

5.
Were't for *Monmouth*, I'de not grieve,
Or brave *Rugel* to retrieve,
Or that *Sidney* yet might live,
Twice told, I'd not complain, Sir:
Nay, what's more, my whole Estate,
With my *Bookbinr*, *Spoons*, and *Plate*,
So I might reduce the State
To a *Commonwealth* again, Sir.

6.
Or that *Mon.* were in Grace,
Or Sir *Sam.* in *Jeffery's* place,
To spit his Justice in the Face,
For asking Law and Reason,
Or that the *Tories* went to pot,
Or we could prove it a Sham *Plot*,
Or *Essex* did not cut his Throat;
Or Plotting were not Treason.

7.
Thus I'd freely quit my Coyn;
But with *Tories* to combine,
Or keep the Heir in the right Line,
That *Popery* be in fashion,
To see the *Holy Cause* run down,
While Mighty *York* is next the Crown,
And *Perkin's* forc'd to flye the Town:
Oh vile Abomination!

8.
Sooner than Obedience owe
To their Arbitrary Law,
Or my Bail in danger draw,
For Breach of good Behaviour;
I with *Bothel*, and the rest (Nell,
O'th' Birds, in Cage will make my
And keep my Fine to *Fleet* and *Fleet*,
Till *Monmouth* be in Favour.

Printed for the Information and Terror of all *Libellers*, 1684.

The tune was evidently becoming popular and had been used on a number of occasions, possibly actually "at the playhouse," as D'Urfey was by now a known dramatist and had survived his maiden failure with more successful presentations. Using EBBA (the English Broadside Ballad Archive), the Bodleian Library's online Bodleian Broadside Ballads and the Roud Broadside Index I have discovered altogether thirty-five separate ballads with the tune, some of them multiply printed by more than one printer, bringing the total up to fifty-six, and there are others where a keyword search will not reveal anything (i.e., the words do not contain the "cannon roar" formula and the tune is not named but surmised). Simpson states that "more than three dozen ballads were sung to the tune" (287). All but one of the ballads found in BBB and all of those found in ROUD were also found in EBBA. All but one of them were printed in London, suggesting that the tune was composed and became popular here. On one occasion only does the tune appear as a score, on the

4 "The Christians New Victory over the Turks," (ESTC R232972). I shall return to this ballad later on.

sheet containing the ballad *A Dialogue between Bowman the TORY AND PRANCE the Runagado*,[5] printed in 1684 for J. Dean, in Cranhorn-street, near Newport-House, in Leicester-Fields. Significantly, the tune here is unnamed and the broadside dated the year after the *Carrouse*.

List of London printers who brought out ballads with the tune, "Hark the Thundering Cannons Roar"

Printed for J. Blare at the Looking-glass on London-bridge
Printed for P. Brooksby in Pye-Corner
Printed for Phillip Brooksby at the/ Golden Ball in Pye-corner.
LONDON, Printed by G.C. for J. Cox, at the Blue-Ball in / Thames-street.
Printed by N. Thompson at the Entrance into Old Spring-garden near Charing-Cross, 1685.
Printed for I. Deacon, at the Angel in Guilt-spur-street without Newgate.
Printed for J. Deacon at the Sign of the Angel / in Guiltspur-street.
Printed for I. Back, at the Black Boy on the / middle of London-Bridge.
[? Printed for C. Dennisson] [?]
Printed for C. Dennisson, at the Stationers-Arms within Aldgate
Printed for J. Dean, in Cranborn-street, near Newport-House, in Leicester-Fields: 1684.
LONDON, Printed for James Dean, Bookseller, between the / Royal Grove, and the Helmet in Drury-Lane. 1685.
LONDON; Printed for James Dean, Bookseller at the Queens-Head; between the Royal Grove, / and Helmet
in Drury-Lane; Removed from Cranborn-street in Leicester Fields, 1685.
LONDON: Printed for Nicholas Woolfe, at the Leopard in Newgate-street. 1685.
LONDON, Printed for J. Hizzey, 1685.
LONDON, Printed for Jer.Wilkins, in White-Fryars near Fleet-street, 1689.
LONDON, Printed and Sold by John/ Wallis, in White-Friars.
Printed for VV. Thackeray in Duck-lane.
Printed for R. Hayhurst in Little-Britain.
LONDON, Printed for G. I.
Printed for P. Brooksby, J. Deacon, J. Blare,/ and J. Back.

A word about the three online sources. EBBA is by far the most complete in containing considerably more items than the other two sources. BBB has yielded an item not present in EBBA. While one must be inventive in tracking down items in EBBA as the keyword search in each case follows the spelling as given in that particular instance, BBB standardises the tune's spelling, meaning that once this has been established, then every appearance of the tune can be accessed quickly. ROUD of course has a Roud number for each ballad, but not each tune. However, a Roud search does yield results that pass beyond the chronological and even genre limits of the other

5 ESTC Cit. No. R171767

two sources as well as examples that may or may not be the same tune while being remarkably similar and more than likely call upon knowledge of the original tune for appreciation of a later one: hence the 1735 songster *A Collection of Above One Hundred and Fifty Choice Songs & Ballads* containing an item with the title "Hark the Thund'ring Cannons" the first line of which is "Hark the thund'ring cannons roar" (Roud V35094), or "On the foot of yonders mountain where the cannons do roar" (Roud 549), to be found in the second edition of William Owens' *Texas Folk Songs* (1952). Simpson points out that while the initial "vogue of Fishburn's tune was of scarcely a decade's duration ... its continued appearance in *The Dancing Master* and its use in several ballad operas helped to keep the air alive over a total span of more than half a century" (289).

Before progressing, it is important to point out that there are problems regarding the dating of the various ballads. There would appear to be a general over-cautious practice of using where possible the active years of a particular printing house for dating ballads, even where examination of their text would provide far greater accuracy. Several of the ballads to which our tune is attached are historical in nature: they allude to or are specifically about real historical events. It is therefore somewhat disingenuous to provide a date of publication that is, frankly, historically impossible as it precedes the event in question. While a fair amount of time has been devoted to false dating, especially in physical artefacts, it is clear that more energy and focus should be turned to accurate dating through in-text evidence. As part of the present investigation is to determine the popular lifespan of the tune *Hark! I Hear the Cannons Roar*, dating anomalies must be addressed.

EBBA No., Date	Short title	Tune	Comment
21227 (1664-1703)	The True Lovers Conquest	***Tune of**, Hark! the thundring Cannons rore*	Early date unlikely – large gap before the tune appears at all, even longer before it does so with a name
31202, 35815, 33045 (1672-1696?)	A CARROUSE to the Emperor	*TO a new Tune, at the P**LAY-HOUSE.***	Multiple printings, but the ballad cannot precede 1683, the date of the event (Battle of Vienna, 12 September, 1683). It is of course possible that not all the printings were coeval with the battle, but bearing in mind the ephemeral nature of the broadside, it is extremely unlikely that at least one of these did not take place more or less immediately after the news reached England.
34929 (1673-1688)	On the Most High and Mighty Monarch/King JAMES the II	To the Tune of, Hark! the Thundring Canons Roar.	James was crowned in 1685!

34844 (1676-1686)	Monmouth's Downfal	To the Tune of, Hark, I hear the Cannons Roar.	The Monmouth Rebellion was in June-July 1685, when Monmouth was executed for treason. Note the change in the tune's title!
34917 (1679-1685?)	A Song upon the / RANDIZVOUS / ON / Hounsley-Heath	To the Tune, Hark, Hark The Thundring Cannons Roar, &c.	The full title continues: "With a Paralel of the Destruction of our English Turks in the West, and the / Mahomitans in Hungary: How the Christian Army, Compos'd of Forty / Thousand Men, took New-Hassel, relieved Grand, Defeated the Turks / Army of Sixty Thousand Men in two days time." Given the numbers and casualties, the parallel is almost certainly not that of the Battle of Vienna (90,000 v. 140,000) but rather that of Szársomlyó Hill in Sept. 1687 (40,000+20,000 v. 60,000), where 10,000 Turks were lost to just 600-1,000 Christians. Here the dating is problematic because the final date is too early for the event.

One further dating shows how false information can be given through failure to exploit historical information. The very title of The Kingdoms Joy for the proclaiming of King William *in Hungaria near the Drave* (Bod 23621) gives away that it cannot have been about the 1686 Battle of Buda, more than 200 kilometres from the capital; here we have the severally named Battle of Nagyharsány, Battle of Mount Szársomlyó or less geographically accurate Second Battle of Mohács took place.[6] It can therefore not have been written by James Shirley, as the Bodleian Library claims (the same information is given by Roud as it is an automatic import). It was more likely written by John Shirley, whose name is associated with the 1685 work *A true account of the enterprise of the confederate princes against the Turks and Hungarian rebels*, printed by William Thackeray of Duck Lane, London.[7] Although Thackeray is

6 Szita László: "A Szársomyló-hegyi Csata (1687) Villányra Vonatkozó Eseményei. https://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/telepulesek_ertekei/Villany/pages/a_villanyi_regio_tortenete/004_szarsomlyo.htm (accessed 4th March, 2019). László Szita was for many years the Head Archivist of the Baranya County Archives, and it was with his help, experience and knowledge that Tamás Molnár's initial enthusiasm was able to flourish into a passion and mission to place the battle in the local and national consciousness.

7 Thanks go to David Atkinson for drawing my attention to the association. The naming of the battle as the Second Battle of Mohács refers to the 1526 battle of that name, in which the mainly Hungarian troops, led by their king, suffered a disastrous defeat. Mohács is about thirty miles away from Nagyharsány.

among the London printers who produced broadsides with our tune, he did not print this particular ballad, which was issued a couple of miles away from Thackeray's Soho printing house by Brooksby of Pye-Corner. The English Short Title Catalogue observes that James Shirley cannot have been the author of the ballad, and also notes that the date given by Donald Wing predates the Battle of Buda by a year, but does not recognise that the ballad is actually about the Battle of Szársomlyó Mountain, which I mentioned in passing earlier. This is perhaps not entirely surprising. Though evidently news and even details of the battle did filter through to England, its precise location did not and it was evidently surmised that the great victory occurred at Buda. The Turks were anyway suffering a series of defeats at the time. The army of the Holy League was multinational and multilingual, and its soldiers probably had not the slightest idea where they were, any more than American soldiers had any idea where Korea was on the map. Moreover, the battle, not having been led by any Hungarian officer, remained in oblivion until only a few years ago, when knowledge of the battle came to the (sadly late) Tamás Molnár, a solitary winemaker of Villány, who realised that not a square or a street or a monument existed to memorialise the event. He began a crusade to bring it to notice, naming his wines after the Christian generals (Eugene of Savoy, the Elector of Bavaria Max Emmanuel, the Italian nobleman Enea Silvio Piccolomini), and just before his untimely death saw the first academic conference about the battle take place in 2012. I regret that at that time I had not yet encountered the ballad to sing to him.

If, then, we concentrate on evidence within the texts we are able to produce a series of dates for the tune that more reliably display its popular currency. At the same time, the combination of words making up the title appear earlier, and it is quite possible that, like the partial text of the National Anthem which came into being in the following century, there were precursors to the title that were in increasingly popular use: the image of the cannons imposingly roaring at some foreign enemy or other would have been one that could have been happily taken on by the populace. The penultimate couplet of a 1665 poem, "INSTRUCTIONS to a PAINTER / FOR THE / Drawing of a Picture of the state and posture / OF THE / English Forces at Sea, / Under the Command of his Royal Highness in the Conclusion / of the year 1664,"[8] written by Edmund Waller and printed as a broadside, runs

> **Europe** and **Africa** from either shoar
> Spectators are, and hear our cannon roar

The earliest use we find of the tune itself is in the 1683 ballad "A Carrouse ...," where its title appears as the opening line of the song: "Hark I hear the Cannons roar." If we are to believe the information on the sheet, the tune is a new one "at the playhouse"—a good venue for repetition. It is the following year (1684) that the tune appears on another ballad sheet ("Bowman the Tory")[9] in rare score form, though it is given no name. In the same year it is given as the tune accompanying "The Whig-Intelligencer":

8 ESTC Cit. No. R18409
9 ESTC Cit. No. R171767

"To the Tune of, Hark! the thund'ring Cannons roar, &c."[10] In 1685 it is chosen as the tune to a ballad about the coronation of James II[11] while a 1689 date is given for the ballad proclaiming "ENGLANDS Triumph, / OR, / The Kingdoms Joy for the proclaiming of King William, and His Royal Consort, Queen Mary, in / the Throne of ENGLAND, on the 13th of this instant February. 1688."[12] Throughout the 1680s the tune is recommended on numerous ballad sheets.

One way in which we can witness the frequency of and familiarity with the tune is the way in which it becomes modified with use over a very short time. Between 1683 and 1701, the last time it appears in EBBA and published further afield, in Edinburgh (*Captain Gordon's Welcome Home*),[13] it appears under the following variations, some of which are considerably abbreviated:

***Tune of**, Hark! the thundring Cannons rore*
To the Tune of Hark the Thundering Canons Rore
Hark the Thundering Cannons Roar
To the Tune of, The Cannons Roar
*To the Tune, **Hark, Hark The Thundring Cannons Roar,** etc.*
Hark, Hark The Thundring Cannons Roar, etc.
*To the Tune of, **Hark, I hear the Cannons Roar.***
***To the Tune,** hark, hark, I hear the Cannons rore*
*To the Tune of the **Thundring Cannons roar.***
To the Tune of, The Cannons Rore.
Tune of, Cannons rore.
To the tune of, Hark how the thundring cannons roar
*To the Tune of, **Hark the Thuddering Cannons Roar,** etc*
*To the Tune of, **Thundering Cannons roar.***
Tune of the Thundring Canons Rore.
*To the Tune of, **Hark how the thundring Canons roar,** etc.*
*To the Tune of **cannons roar.***

Gradual change in both ballad title and tune, and, indeed, interchange between the two, is a phenomenon that has been noted elsewhere[14]; what is significant here is the short period of time that it takes the tune to become first named and then serially renamed.

Another peculiarity of the tune, and the one that first brought my attention to it, is the fact that four of the 35 distinct ballads bearing the tune have some kind of reference to events in Central Europe and specifically to the demise of Turkish influence. In addition to the ballads announcing Turkish defeats at Vienna and Szársomlyó Mountain, there is the one where a parallel is made between a

10 ESTC Cit. No. R2854
11 LONDONS LOYALTY: / OR, A New SONG on the / Royal Coronation. ESTC Cit. No. R188472
12 At the time of writing this has no ESTC number, though the previous ballad in the Pepys collection, which has a very similar title but different text and tune, does exist.
13 ESTC Cit. No. T186710.
14 In my study of *The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna*, for example, they take place over a century. See Rouse (107-32).

military tattoo at Hounslow Heath and the latter battle, and a fourth, the one about the downfall of the Duke of Monmouth, which makes reference to the followers of the brilliant Imre Thököly, who in 1683 was recognised by Sultan Mehmet IV as Prince of Upper Hungary (approximately a quarter of Old Hungary partly covering today's Slovakia) and who joined the Turkish forces at Vienna, subsequently sharing their fate (Kontler 190-92). Transferred to *Monmouth's Downfall*[15] we find that the British press is sufficiently *au fait* with Central European politics to produce an Anglicized adjectival form of Thököly into Tecklite.[16] Moreover, the Scots who aided Monmouth are hybridized into Presbyter-Turks and inevitably the very Devil himself:

> Rampant Zeal's forever tamed,
> The Tecklite Reformation shamm'd,
> The Presbyter-Turk, and Devil damn'd ...

A quick keyword search on EBBA reveals just half-a-dozen separate ballads containing either Hungary or Hungaria. While this is no more than a cursory search, it does perhaps at least open the suggestion that our tune might have begun to be associated with ballads about events, especially military events, in the middle of Europe, though at this moment it would be too much to unambiguously claim that this was the case. It is equally as likely that the events were themselves coeval with the approximately twenty-year period when the tune enjoyed most of its popularity.

Certainly after 1701 the tune did not sink into oblivion. D'Urfey uses it in his *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, which was first published in the late 1690s and enjoyed reprints for another two decades; we have seen it appear in a 1735 songster. Far more recently, the tune has turned up taking centre stage on a New Zealand joke website.[17] As the punchline of the joke is perhaps somewhat racy for an academic volume, I will leave it to the individual reader to decide whether or not to follow the link. Its existence at all, however, in the modern environment, displays just how resilient the popular tradition is. The heyday of the tune stretched approximately twenty years, from the (for the Ottoman empire) disastrous defeats in the 1680s to the beginning of the eighteenth century, in which time its accompanying texts stretched from "journalese" to lampoon, as in the tongue-in-cheek analogy made between the real battles in middle Europe to a military tattoo just outside London, or the new craze for coffee and the rise of the coffee-house coupled with bad quality French wine imports. After the mid-eighteenth century it is not to be found anywhere, and certainly did not become a "folk" tune, yet astonishingly its title (of which there were many shorthand variants when the tune was current) has survived, even crossed the hemispheres, and become the witty, if scurrilous punchline of a joke accessible

15 ESTC Cit. No. R35052

16 The "y" at the end of the surname is a common change of spelling from "i" in the case of noble families, a suffix meaning "from." Tököl is a Hungarian settlement after which the Thököly family received its name: *tököli* means of/from Tököl. A thirteenth century source has it spelt "Thukul." Ironically, the dictionary of Hungarian place-names states that it is from the Old Turkish Tükäl (Kiss 656).

17 http://www.getfrank.co.nz/funny-jokes/hark-i-hear-the-cannons-roar

on a website. Moreover, for the humour of that joke to be understood, there is a presupposition that not only its maker, but its recipients have some knowledge of its origins, and that this knowledge can be successfully carried without the aid of publication. This phenomenon has been witnessed elsewhere, for instance in the case of the Napoleonic song *McCafferty*, which "enjoyed a very wide circulation, with no assistance from print, for about a century," yet latterly the singing of which was believed by the ranks to be an imprisonable offence and discouraged even in the mid-twentieth century; the history of the song has been set down in detail by the late Roy Palmer. Even such restraints seem insufficient to silence a good song, or, in the present case, "an excellent new tune," as this and so many other ballad melodies were described, without the assistance of any score, on the broadsides.

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The (Im)Possibility of Academic Integrity in John Williams's *Stoner*

Ljubica Matek, Jasna Poljak Rehlicki

Introduction: The Campus Novel

Written in 1965, *Stoner*, the recently re-discovered academic novel by John Williams (1922-1994) deals with a variety of intriguing issues such as the role of literature in the personal growth of an individual, the tension between private desires and social customs, and the role of family in an individual's life.[1] By some, it was read as "an all-American success story ...[about] socio-economic mobility through hard work, individual effort, and merit" (Wald 2). Our paper, however, will focus on the portrayal of issues such as academic integrity and the perception of academics and academic work. Williams's novel, not only through the story it tells, but also as an object, as a work of art, seems to reflect on the worrying idea of the irrelevance of the humanities, the humanist way of thinking, and humanist preoccupations, and does this in a way that is rather untypical of most campus novels.

In the broadest sense, the campus novel (used synonymously with the terms academic novel or college novel) is defined as a genre of academic satire that portrays academics and students in their professional environment (the university), and deals with politics and policies impacting higher education. This relatively new yet distinctive genre of Anglo-American literature developed from earlier works depicting academic life and its conflicts. For example, John O. Lyons states that Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* (1828) represents "the first American novel of academic life" (5), and Elaine Showalter argues that the precursors of academic fiction were also Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (1857) and Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) (*Faculty Towers* 5-6). However, most critics agree that the modern campus novel established its form, content, and conventions in the mid-twentieth century with Mary McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* (1954) and Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954).

By its very generic nature, the campus novel is quite restrictive concerning the setting and the protagonists, which prompted Adam Begley to ponder on its decline asserting that its material would soon be exhausted as "campus novels always cover the same turf" (40). However, in her book on David Lodge, Merritt Moseley stresses Lodge's opposite view of the matter. He claims that "[i]n theory, everybody disapproves of academic novels, as being too inbred and stereotyped. In practice there seems to be a very big public for them. People like reading them" (8). This is no wonder since "the

1 In her review of the novel titled "Classic *Stoner*? Not so fast," Elaine Showalter raises important questions about Williams's misogyny and the problematic representation of Stoner's wife, Edith. This feminist approach to the topic is certainly valid and worth further research.

absurdity and despair of university life; the colorful, often neurotic personalities who inhabit academia; . . . the ideological rivalries which thrive in campus communities" as well as "sexual adventures of all types" (Scott 82), provide a lot of ideas for the writers of such fiction. In fact, in addition to Lodge, some of the most prominent English or American writers such as C. P. Snow, Vladimir Nabokov, J.M. Coetzee, Philip Roth, Kingsley Amis, and Tim O'Brien, to name a few, have tried themselves out in academic fiction, and the readers' appeal to the genre is not solely related to the reputation of these authors. As Showalter notes, campus novels "comment on contemporary issues, satirize professorial stereotypes and educational trends, and convey the pain of intellectuals called upon to measure themselves against each other and against their internalized expectations of brilliance" (*Faculty Towers* 4). Moreover, William G.Tierney notices the didactic function of the genre by saying that it helps "academics think about how academic life has been structured, defended, and interpreted in order to create constructive change" (164). Similarly, Lodge explains the popularity of the genre by asserting that the "university is a kind of microcosm of society at large, in which the principles, drives, and conflicts that govern collective human life are displayed and may be studied in a clear light and on a manageable scale" (34).[2] However, it seems that in its attempt to represent human life on a smaller scale, the campus novel often resorts to certain stereotypes.

The research of Sally Dalton-Brown and Robert F. Scott into the conventions of academic fiction reveal that most novels feature a very similar protagonist. According to Dalton-Brown, the protagonist of the campus novel is hardly an admirable persona: "*Homo academicus* . . . is depicted as a fool, fraud, or philanderer" (591), and Scott adds even more "well-established stereotypes" about professors to the list: buffoon, intellectual charlatan, the absent-minded instructor, the wise simpleton, the lucky bumbler, the old goat, and the fuddy-duddy (83). Moreover, the university setting is usually portrayed as one that encourages "foolishness, fakery, and philandering" and that "requires considerable cunningness if it is to be survived" (Dalton-Brown 591, 592). Janice Rossen sees it as a place of "exclusion and marginalization, rife with class-consciousness, misogyny, competition, and xenophobia" (7). The plot usually revolves around the protagonist's moral dilemma of "whether to opt for the life of the mind or the life of desires [sexual, or power- and status related]" (Dalton-Brown 592). Scott complements these ideas by stating that "these works tend to dwell upon the frustrations that accompany academic existence . . . the antagonistic relationships that exist between the mind and the flesh, private and public needs, and duty and desire" (83). In addition, contemporary campus novels, according to Dalton-Brown, offer an either/or ending–the protagonist might choose to fight for his survival within the institution, or simply escape in order to discover anew "a creative originality once freed from generic confines" (592). Connor, too, detects "two basic plots in academic fiction"–the one that concerns the disruption of the world and ends in the

2 In the second edition of his comprehensive bibliography *The American College Novel* (2004), John E. Kramer lists over six hundred novels written between 1828 and 2002 that deal with American higher education, students, and professors thus affirming the campus novel as a legitimate and popular genre within American literature.

regained stabilization, or the other that focuses on the character who must escape the gravitational pull of the academia" (qtd. in Showalter, *Faculty Towers* 4).

Furthermore, when it comes to the tone of such novels it seems that, despite the general definition of the genre, claiming it to be a satirical one, campus novels are more often entertaining (even comic) than thought-provoking and satirical (Dalton-Brown 597). Accordingly, Scott believes that "campus novels are essentially comedies of manners" that "even when . . . lightly satirical in tone, they nonetheless exhibit a seemingly irresistible tendency to trivialize academic life and to depict academia as a world that is both highly ritualized and deeply fragmented" (83). Furthermore, in his dissertation, *The Academic Novel in the Age of Postmodernity*, Péter Székely states that the attribute "satirical" has been arbitrarily added to the definition of campus novels (18-19). Besides, campus novels often contain auto/biographical elements since many of their authors are actual university professors who fictionalize their own teaching and academic experience (for example, Mary McCarthy, C. P. Snow, John Williams, David Lodge, and others), or professional writers who have taught at universities and "observe[d] the tribal rites of their colleagues from an insider's perspective" (Showalter, *Faculty Towers* 2). Due to this fact, campus novels can be seen as "social documents" (Rossen 3) whose auto/biographical elements might be used as "as part of the serious, systematic analysis of higher education" (Anderson and Thelin 106-07), since many capture social processes and changes of a particular period of time.

Stoner: Beyond the Confines of the Campus Novel

While it is clear that *Stoner* belongs to the body of works comprising academic fiction, this paper argues that it diverts from typical representations of professors as buffoons interested only in the most immediate, base and basic concerns such as their sexual escapades or personal well-being told in a humoristic tone which often accounts for their popularity. In contrast with this, Williams's approach to the subject is far more serious, and instead of opting for quick success, he was more interested in creating something less assuming, but far more significant. Therefore, when Williams presented *Stoner* to his agent, she warned him about not getting his hopes up as she did not believe it could ever become a bestseller. Indeed, once published in 1965, the novel was respectably reviewed and reasonably sold, but soon afterwards went out of print (Barnes) as it probably did not meet the readers' expectations from a novel set within the confines of a campus. Nevertheless, Williams believed that the novel had merit and "in time it may even be thought of as a substantially good one" (qtd. in Barnes).

One of the reasons why twenty-first century readers rediscover *Stoner* as one of the great American academic novels is that it is a serious, beautifully written novel which raises important questions about the social position of teachers, society's expectations concerning the outcomes of the educational process, and the purpose of liberal arts education in general. More specifically, the novel shows Williams's concern about the situation in which education is being increasingly commodified, and portrays Stoner as a tragic hero whose "flaw" is his refusal to participate in faculty

politics and meet corporate demands that have become more important than actual academic merit. By this, *Stoner* may well be a representative of the traditional kind of professor that most teachers may identify with and that most—unfortunately—will see as a dying breed.

In light of Rossen's claim that campus novels can be seen as "social documents" (3), it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the representatives of the genre address certain important social concerns. The issues of the decline of humanist education, of the need for such education, and of the future of education have been the focal points of various philosophical, pedagogical, and sociological texts since the very establishment of academia. The discussion has been intensified in the last decades as a result of changing university politics and policies to suit the fiscal policies of the Western world, and the reluctance of governments to further invest in humanist education.

As one of the results of the intense debate, Friedrich Nietzsche's lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (1872) have been republished under the title *Anti-Education* (2016). Its republication, and under a new title, could serve as a reminder not only of the (relative) relevance of his thoughts on education for the present moment, but also of the relevance of the topic of education itself. In fact, Nietzsche begins his lectures by saying that the topic is "so serious, so important, and in a certain sense so unnerving, that I, like you, would listen to anyone who promised to teach me something about it" (3-4). Among those who reacted to the republication of this text was Ansgar Allen, who criticizes Nietzsche's ideas and argues "against their use in the attempted redemption of the humanities or education" (197). However, as Allen points out certain flaws in Nietzsche's argument, he also reminds the readers of some of its strengths, namely that it tackles the issue of "rebuilding education on an entirely different value base" (199). Although Nietzsche explicitly refers to German culture as completely corrupted and in need of full reconstitution, his views are by extension pertinent to other (that is, most of Western) cultures whose educational systems seem to be in an ongoing crisis, as judged by the amount of attention given to the topic.[3] Allen supports the general notion of a non-conformist education as Nietzsche proposes it, but he also explains that Nietzsche never offers a solution to the crisis of education and that an educational messiah never arrives although educators continue to believe that our "redeemed profession will eventually triumph against everything that debases education" (199). This, in fact, is the problem. Instead of waiting for a "divine intervention" which will change the current culture of consumption and commodification, educators and students should be aware that

3 Here are just a few examples to illustrate the point, starting from 1968: Coombs, Philip H. *The World Educational Crisis. A Systems Analysis*. Oxford UP, 1968.; McLean, Martin. "A World Educational Crisis?" *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. 16.2 (1986): 199-211; Jay, Paul. *The Humanities "Crisis" and the Future of Literary Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Pells, Rachael. "Computers and textbooks will not solve growing global education crisis alone, major report finds." *Independent*, 30 Sept. 2016. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/computers-textbooks-growing-global-education-crisis-alone-report-international-initiative-for-impact-a7340196.html. Accessed 5 Oct. 2018.; Schmidt, Benjamin. "The Humanities Are in Crisis." *The Atlantic*, 23. Aug. 2018. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/the-humanities-face-a-crisisof-confidence/567565/. Accessed 5. Oct. 2018.;

they contribute to or might even be the source of the problem, and that real education comes from within and one's innermost desire to learn (Allen 208). Or, in Nietzsche's words, people would have to be "revolutionized before a revolution could take place" (*Untimely Meditations* 140).

Through his novel, Williams concurred with the above line of thought, as *Stoner* tells a story about an educator who possesses the intrinsic desire (what one might idealistically define as the "pure" desire) to learn and teach, and who finds himself unwilling to conform to the developments in university policies and politics that do not directly (and solely) address such a desire. His noble attitude and general selflessness are rather out of character for typical protagonists of campus novels because his life is not marked by the moral dilemma between life of the mind and life of desires (Dalton-Brown 592); Stoner always does what he knows and believes is right in the greater sense of things, even if it causes his own personal unhappiness. His unpretentiousness and focus on his work combined by his (symbolically) noble death with his own book in hand may even be said to make the reader experience the cathartic effect of classical tragedies. Moreover, the significance of his character is underlined by the fact that he is the eponymous hero of the novel, a convention more typical for tragedies and *Bildungsromans* than for campus novels, which promotes a reading of the central character as a tragic hero.

The Academic as Tragic Hero: Humanist Education and the Constraints of Capital

Aristotle's classical definition of the tragic hero implies that the tragic hero is "better than people are now" (21). Moreover, "the central figure in a tragedy makes the choice that makes him vulnerable to the frightening things that destroy him" (Sachs 6). Stoner is "better" as he displays integrity and intelligence that surpasses those of his peers and shows him an oddity in a world of conformists. This makes *Stoner* a distinct text within the body of campus novels because of its stark departure from humoristic stories of "academic buffoons." Indeed, the novel possesses a certain specific quality of tone and diction that makes it both completely unassuming, and quite moving. According to Morris Dickstein, it is "something rarer than a great novel—it is a perfect novel, so well told and beautifully written, so deeply moving it takes your breath away." For Tim Kreider, Williams's "pellucid prose" does not make the novel trivial or easy to read; on the contrary, the way Kreider describes it one can hardly not be reminded of Aristotle's demand for language of beauty and magnitude that imitates life: "there is something in even those first paragraphs, an un-show-off-y assurance in the prose, like the soft opening notes of a virtuoso or the first casual gestures of a master artist, that tells us we are in the presence not just of a great writer but of something more—someone who knows life, who maybe even understands it." Furthermore, Michael Meyer defines tragedy as "[a] story that presents courageous individuals who confront powerful forces within or outside themselves with a dignity that reveals the breadth and depth of the human spirit in the face of failure, defeat, and even death" (2144). The latter view thematically and formally situates *Stoner*

within the mode of tragedy, even though the novel is not set in the world of classical mythology nor written for the stage. Kreider does not explicitly consider *Stoner* to be a tragic text, and yet he describes it in terms that echo Aristotle's *Poetics*: "The novel embodies the very virtues it exalts, the same virtues that probably relegate it, like its titular hero, to its perpetual place in the shade." Stoner's undoing, that is his *tragic flaw*, is his choice not to comply with the powerful forces of politics and money, which makes him an academic outsider and prevents his success. This certainly evokes both pity and fear in the reader.

It is interesting to find that Eli Wald's reading of *Stoner*, dedicated to the issues of capital, claims that one of the reasons why the novel's protagonist fails to become a world class scholar, despite his integrity, honesty, and hard work, is his lack of "economic, social, and cultural capital" (20). Wald's arguments are compelling and his reading shows that, despite the traditional idealistic (or old-fashioned and outdated, as some might argue) perceptions of the academia as a separate entity, a heaven for free critical thought in which progress and success are based on merit, the world of academia is inextricably tied to the constraints of the capitalist system which exerts a decisive influence on it. For example, Wald points out that, as an academic, Stoner "would have been more likely to succeed professionally, publishing a second and a third book and gaining promotion to full professor" (25), had he been better-endowed with social and cultural capital, which would serve as a cushion against professional and personal challenges. The very idea is unsettling as it implies that the "purity" of scholarly research is a utopian concept and that political savviness is crucial for academic success. Therefore, "[t]he value and purpose of academe is a key concern of the novel, while one of its main sequences describes a long and savage piece of departmental infighting" (Barnes), again proposing that the very existence of academic research is highly dependent on funding and politics. For most researchers, this may seem demoralizing as the myth of academic autonomy is revealed to be a lie.

The idea of merit is also tainted as it turns out to be equally important, if not secondary, to capital: "The point is that sometimes taking a stance and attempting to enforce meritorious standards may result in significant loss of capital ... The lesson is not that one should forego merit in such circumstances but that enforcing standards, at times, can and should be navigated politically to minimize loss of capital" (Wald 33). The priority of capital over merit is a disheartening notion to anyone who dedicates their life to teaching. All the work that teachers dedicate to foregrounding the importance of honest and hard work as a prerequisite for success and personal development is marred by "real" life, which demonstrates that other factors, such as money and connections, seem to be far more important—not only for the students, but for the teachers, too. In fact, "[s]uccess and failure are not a function of individual effort and merit but of capital: relationships, connections, and manipulation of knowledge" (Wald 41). In this regard, the novel further highlights the tragic and possibly futile position of teachers. This is confirmed by the author's widow who explains that with this novel Williams was really "working out what it meant to be a teacher" (qtd. in Livatino 419). Indeed, Stoner's life echoes the struggles between idealism and the market-oriented approach to education, and embodies in fiction the centuries-long (and still ongoing) philosophical discussion on the subject.

In the eighteenth century, Wilhelm von Humboldt maintained the idealistic stance that one should learn to grow and improve oneself as a person, to gain spiritual "substance," whereas those who merely strive for profit or material gain are not to be admired (59). The essential incompatibility between the desire for this kind of education and the demands of the workplace embodied in the dialectic process between the need for individual emancipation and the socio-cultural demands was further discussed by Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno claims in his "Theory of Half-Education" ("Theorie der Halbbildung," 1959) that proper learning requires leisure that is free time (93-121). Konrad Paul Liessmann builds on these theses and offers an etymological clarification, asserting that the word *Schule* (school) comes from the Greek *scholé* (Lat. schola), meaning leisure (62). The idea presupposes having enough time to improve oneself, to read and learn instead of being constantly oriented toward achieving particular material goals. Liessmann maintains that due to a failed educational reform, education has lost its meaning and its reputation. The worker (Arbeiter) did not become knowledgeable (Wissender), but the knowledgeable have become workers (43), and by analogy, universities have become companies that have to apply a specific ranking system and advertise themselves in the market in order to survive (78-82). Liesmann does not recommend that universities should discontinue the teaching of practical skills, but there should be a general awareness and understanding of the difference between learning critical thinking (education) and learning skills, that is, training for practical work tasks (64-66), and the need for both rather than just the latter.

Correspondingly, the moment when Stoner discovers his love for literature in class, which makes him switch his major to English and become a teacher instead of getting his degree in agriculture and returning to his parents' farm ready to continue in their footsteps, seems almost romantic. Material livelihood becomes less relevant than the spiritual livelihood he finds in literature, corresponding to the idea of a Humboldtian Bildung. According to Mel Livatino, *Stoner* "is as heartfelt a probe into academic life and the vocation of scholar and teacher as one is ever likely to read" (419). However, much of the novel's strength and beauty arises precisely out of its tragic quality; on the one hand, the novel shows how reading enlightens Stoner as he realizes there is moral beauty in pure academic study that contributes immensely to a person's moral and intellectual growth. On the other hand, it reveals that much of the university's autonomy is an illusion, since university as an institution now strongly depends on politics and capital, which trump any idealistic search for "substance." Stoner stands for the view of university as a shelter from the material world, and in this he reflects Williams's own opinion that "Once a university becomes what universities often say they are—a reflection of the will of the community . . . it's dead" (qtd. in Livatino 421). However, other characters show that such a perception of the university is naïve because without the community's money, it cannot exist. This dichotomy renders the novel both devastating and inspiring as the reader realizes the extent of Stoner's persistent idealism and noble-mindedness. Thus, his demeanor plausibly supports the thesis that the character of a university professor who insists on his integrity may be the literary tragic hero of our time.

Academic Integrity and University Politics in *Stoner*

The lives and behavior of the faculty and students at the fictional English Department depicted in the novel testify to the fact that the university is not an isolated entity that can exist on its own. The world outside, with the global changes of the twentieth century (brought about by the World Wars) and the rise of capitalism in the United States immensely influence, if not start to dictate, the university politics and academic integrity presented in *Stoner*. Early in the novel, the readers briefly meet Dave Masters—a master of insight and reflection. He, Gordon Finch, and William Stoner form a close friendship as young graduate students just before World War I. During one of their discussions, Masters refers to "the true nature of the University" (28), disagreeing with the notion that the university can serve either as a means for personal growth or material success and economic stability. For Masters, the university is a shelter for those who otherwise would not be able to survive or succeed in the outer world. He sees the University as "an asylum or . . . a rest home, for the infirm, the aged, the discontent, and the otherwise incompetent" (29). Despite his sarcastic, or even negative, portrayal of the University and its staff, Masters claims that the University is "still better than those on the outside, in the muck, the poor bastards of the world" (31). He also insightfully detects the existence of the outside powers, that is, the political and economic forces, but believes that the University is somehow immune to their influence (31). Masters comments on Stoner's vision of the University, summarizing it in three words: "The True, the Good, the Beautiful," and portrays it as a "great repository . . . where men come of their free will and select that which will complete them, where all work together like little bees in a common hive" (28). This kind of University embodies the true liberal arts principles, that is, *Bildung*: the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake, constructive arguments, and critical thinking; it is a place where people work in unison for a greater good.

In Williams's novel, Archer Sloane and William Stoner embody this vision of the University both historically and ideologically. Sloane teaches and Stoner gains knowledge for the same goal: to find some kind of meaning. This is best portrayed in the scene where Sloane asks the young Stoner to explain the significance of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 73." Although Stoner cannot articulate the sense of the poem, it becomes obvious to both of them that the written word means *something*, if not *everything* to Stoner. Moreover, Sloane proves to be a true mentor who recognizes Stoner's love and dedication, and encourages him to become a teacher. The early-twentieth-century University depicted in the novel serves a shelter for Stoner, who has no wish or plan to leave it after graduation, and a place where professors and students together uphold liberal, humanist values. Rather than being a shelter for the "infirm," as Dave Masters maintains, it seems that it is a shelter for pure knowledge, a place where the desire to learn is also a prerequisite for and the goal of the educational process.

However, the utopian vision of the University as separate from all the worldly matters of life cannot hold true. The outbreak of World War I proves that the University is a weak shelter against global affairs that start to bite into the foundations of humanist principles. A true humanist, professor Archer Sloane, withers away,

bearing witness to the madness of the war that has depleted the university of the staff and students. He is crushed by the realization that his teaching must have been futile when the young minds abandoned him overnight and went to make the world "safe for democracy" (Wilson 7), and argues that a war does not just kill people: "It kills off something in a people that can never be brought back. And if a people goes through enough wars, pretty soon all that's left is the brute, the creature that we—you and I and others like us—have brought up from the slime ... The scholar should not be asked to destroy what he has aimed his life to build" (35-36). Feeling in the same way, Stoner easily resists the collective mania to join the war and fulfill his patriotic duty since he "could find in himself no very strong feelings of patriotism, and he could not bring himself to hate the Germans" (37). Instead, he completes his graduate program and becomes a teacher at the Department of English, sharing Sloane's life purpose of a true humanist to create and love, and not to destroy and hate. In the midst of war, such a non-pragmatic, ethical, and idealist attitude illustrates just how at odds with the world Stoner really is: "too weak, and . . . too strong. And [with] no place to go in the world" (30). Stoner finds his calling in literature, research, and teaching, thus continuing Sloane's legacy. Besides, as admirable or close to the humanist ideal as his life may be, the reader senses a constant aura of tragic failure emanating from him, which further underlines the incompatibility between humanist values and the corporate entity that the university slowly becomes.

Two decades later, the havoc repeats itself with World War II, but the post-war period seems to temporarily revive the University and repair the cracks in the foundations of humanist values. The GI Bill enables veterans to enroll and study free of charge, and their maturity and dedication to learn make these post-war years "the best years of his [Stoner's] teaching . . . and . . . the happiest years of his life" (257). Students "were intensely serious and contemptuous of triviality. Innocent of fashion or custom, they came to their studies as Stoner had dreamed that a student might—as if those studies were life itself and not specific means to specific ends" (258). Despite this short spell of the humanities' revival, the novel shows that the transformation of the University from within is inevitable. After Archer Sloane's death, William Stoner remains among the very few to uphold and defend the liberal values of the University. Sloane was replaced by a new department member, Hollis Lomax, whose work ethic and idea of success run counter to Stoner's from the first. Lomax is the representative of the "new" University of cut-throat business politics and intrigues. In a way, he becomes Stoner's opposite as he is portrayed as arrogant, disrespectful, and almost hostile towards his colleagues, for the simple reason that he can afford such behavior: "Somehow Lomax has got his finger in the president's nose, and he leads him around like a cut bull" (171). His strong political connections to the University's President represent valuable social capital, which turns out to be far more important than his professional credentials.

In fact, Lomax's arrival gives *Stoner* a prophetic quality as it seems to predict the changes within higher education, not only in this fictional University, but also beyond the limits of the text itself. Namely, in recent decades and years critical voices have emerged that speak about the ideological change in the sphere of higher education, and interestingly enough, they echo the events foreshadowed in Williams's novel. Rebecca Lave lists five principles of neoliberal science regimes that universities have

been subjected to for decades: (1) reduction in public funding, (2) separation of teaching and research, (3) disregard for peer-review, (4) tyranny of relevance, and (5) intellectual property protection (21-22). The analysis of these processes, as they are described or hinted at in the novel, indicates that universities started to undergo these changes long ago. It could be argued that Williams presciently created the character of Hollis Lomax as a personification of the (future) neoliberal science regime that undermines Stoner who is the embodiment of more traditional humanistic principles. Whereas Stoner teaches to build the character and spirit of his students "for the greater good," Lomax sees education as "as an individual's investment in her own human capital" (Lave 22). As seen above, Wald's analysis of the novel also criticizes Stoner for not possessing or investing into his (social and cultural) capital, due to which he falls prey to Lomax and his like, who are openly adamant to the idea of professionally and personally thriving, even at the expense of their colleagues.

Despite the overt antagonism between Stoner and Lomax, they manage to work independently within the department. However, when Charles Walker, Lomax's mentee and protégé, joins one of Stoner's graduate courses, the conflict between the two ideas and visions of the University and education becomes unavoidable. Walker, too, uses his social capital in order to disrupt the teacher-student relationship when asking for a "favor," and not "permission" (134) to join his classes past enrolment day. Furthermore, all students present their papers on a selected topic for Stoner's graduate course on time, except Walker. And once he finally delivers his presentation, Stoner witnesses an improvisation that leaves him amazed and appalled at the same time:

> However florid and imprecise, the man's [Walker's] powers of rhetoric and invention were dismayingly impressive; and however grotesque, his presence was real. There was something cold and calculating and watchful in his eyes, something needlessly reckless and yet desperately cautious. Stoner became aware that he was in the presence of a bluff so colossal and bold that he had no ready means of dealing with it. (143)

In addition to bluffing, Walker tries to discredit another student's[4] oral report although he has no valid arguments but uses a pretentious and snobbish language and attempts to appeal to the emotions of the audience (141). In order to defend his integrity as a professor, Stoner fails Walker despite immediate threats from his superiors. This act involuntarily involves Stoner into politics and intrigues caused by others' personal interests and lust for power. For the first time in his life, he feels that

4 This other student is Katherine Driscoll, a young instructor at Stoner's department with whom Stoner shares the same passion for knowledge and literature. The fact that Stoner and Katherine soon start an equally passionate love affair might seem as Stoner's lack of professional (and private) integrity. However, Katherine was at the time employed at the University and not technically his student, since she asked Stoner only to "audit the seminar" (138) while she is working on her dissertation. In that sense, their brief affair is not the one based on an exploitative teacher-student relationship as depicted in some campus novels (e. g. *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee). Rather, their relationship is like one between two colleagues.

he must fight for the humanist vision within the University and he is adamant not to allow incompetence, laziness, as well as politics to undermine or destroy its integrity. The little social capital that he has (friendship with Gordon Finch) Stoner uses in order to weed out Walker by reminding Finch of Masters' ideas of the University: "Dave would have thought of Walker as—as the world. And we can't let him in. For if we do, we become like the world, just as unreal, just as . . . The only hope we have is to keep him out" (172). However, Finch only states that "We can't keep the Walkers out" (Williams 171), as he is aware that the University has become a battleground of private professional and financial interests, and those who do not join the game, lose. Another principle that Lave examines in her paper is the disregard for peer-reviews, which can also be seen in the novel; the Preliminary oral comprehensives scene serves as the prime example of this phenomenon. In front of other colleagues (peers), Stoner masterfully reveals Walker's true character, the one that masquerades pretentiousness and nepotism as knowledge. He discloses Walker's laziness, incompetence, shallowness, and lack of knowledge of English literature, which raises suspicion that he made it to the postgraduate level not by learning and researching, but rather with the help of his social and cultural capital. Despite all this, Stoner's arguments and remarks are swept under the carpet, and Walker stays in the program, which openly demonstrates that power and connections are becoming more important than knowledge and integrity even at the highest educational levels.

In fact, the episode with the oral exam infuriates Lomax (now Head of Department), who retaliates against Stoner and not against the student who does not have the bare minimum of knowledge required for postgraduate studies. Namely, Walker changes Stoner's schedule, making him work from dawn till dusk and thereby disabling him from writing and publishing another book. This is what Lave calls the separation of research and teaching, which means that more value (and money) is attached to research since the product of the research might be capitalized upon (22). Through his retaliation, Lomax prevents Stoner from advancement in his field (as he has no time to write another book) and, in spite of his excellent teaching, he is seen as a poor scholar who makes no contribution to science. Lomax's underlying idea, of course, is to disable Stoner's production of knowledge and to advance sooner and gain a better position, that is, more power, for himself. In other words, teaching becomes an undesirable and underprivileged profession entirely irrelevant to science since it results in no physical product to buy or sell. By extension, if one is only teaching, there is little chance of professional advancement, something also evident in the novel: Stoner holds a tenure-track position, but prevented from doing research "he did not rise above the rank of assistant professor" (1).

The tyranny of relevance is another feature of current educational policies that directly undermines the humanities as such, since there is little "applied research" (qtd. in Lave 23) in its fields. As Lave states, knowledge and research are influenced by private interests of corporations who have no need for the "non-commercial research in the humanities" (23). Similarly, when Lomax takes away Stoner's advanced courses, he is directly disabling the curiosity-driven research and exchange of ideas (that should be or had been the core of any research). With this move, Lomax is once again using his position to ghettoize Stoner from the humanities, which are already in an unfavorable

situation. This fictional situation foreshadows contemporary developments in real life, since today's higher education has switched from its humanist principles and introduced "an ideology that reduces all values to money values" (Deresiewicz 26). When suggesting that money is the ultimate value, William Deresiewicz writes about contemporary USA, but his arguments can easily be extended to globalized Western university policies, too. In his view, the true objective of humanist thought is "to learn, think, reflect and grow" while "constructing a sense of purpose for [oneself]" (27-32); he is bearing witness to the fact that today's curricula are predominantly oriented towards some practical vocation and focused on material gain. In this way, academic integrity becomes an irrelevant matter—a sad situation foreshadowed by Williams's novel written more than fifty years ago.

Conclusion

In summary, it seems that Williams's prediction concerning *Stoner*'s delayed success has come true. Much of that success arises from Williams's deep, even prophetic understanding of the constraints of being a teacher in a world where information, not knowledge, is the main currency. In a time of project-oriented research, academic integrity becomes less important than political savviness and project-managing skills. Opposite to this, the novel is substantial in its gravity and reinforcement of the value of reading and academic study as a means to understand life, and as a reminder that current attitudes about the freedom, surveillance, and control of the individual threaten its very core (Barnes).

Importantly, *Stoner* is not a typical campus novel. Rather than perpetuating the image of a professor as a buffoon in a story resembling the comedy of manners, Williams wrote a remarkable piece of tragic literature in the Aristotelian sense. On the one hand, its prose is *pleasing* in as much as it is almost lyrical due to its condensed and emotional quality. On the other hand, the novel is also tragic because it introduces a new type of tragic hero: the teacher of humanities. As a professor, Stoner is genuinely noble, and so focused on his work that he misses his mark when failing to see (or refusing to comply with) the changing environment. He dies holding his book in his hands, aware that its commercial value, the keyword of the economically oriented, is not what is important. The book is a part of him; it is a product of his research, his work and life, and he feels love for it. As he dies, a ray of sunshine falls on one of its pages and the moment is transcendent, possibly cathartic: what he has learned, known and has created cannot be reduced to dollars and cents, and it is irrelevant what the book means to others because it is the embodiment of his (hard and honest) work. Contrary to the general consumerist stance, education and academic work are not products to be marketed, bought, or sold; they are a necessary part of an individual's growth. Stoner's book can therefore be seen as a testimony of a teacher's life, much like Williams's novel, whereas their metatextual relationship highlights just how essential reading and writing are to people. By the end, even if the reader does not experience a traditional catharsis in witnessing the death of Stoner, a man who valued his principles more than money, s/he will likely have a sense of epiphany about life, education, and the fleetingness of time.

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Crisis and Literature: Future Imperfect, or the Case of Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*[1]

László B. Sári

In his afterword to *The Cambridge Companion to Don DeLillo* (2008), Joseph M. Comte makes a strong case for positioning the author as a writer of historical liminality, and citing DeLillo himself, he claims that *Cosmopolis* is a text "poised liminally 'between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Age of Terror'" (183). Not yet aware of the shift taking place in the author's interest from all matters historical to his previous preoccupation with corporeality and writing,[2] Comte goes on to argue that DeLillo's novel of 2003 stages how "[c]yber-capital and terrorism contend within the singularity of global power" (185), inasmuch as the text is preoccupied with what commentators usually identify as "the technological sublime" (186) in DeLillo's *oeuvre*, in this case representing the "interaction between technology and capital, the inseparability" of the two (23). Comte and other scholarly commentators praise *Cosmopolis* exactly for what it was criticized for at the time of its publication, its witty handling of academically embedded ideas,[3] thereby somewhat downplaying how the text, as I will argue, discusses, or indeed embodies, some of these ideas in relation to the white male body and terrorism in a curious temporal structure: written after 9/11, but presenting what one may call reverse *déjà vu* of the terror attacks. Comte's estimation is, therefore, in line with the contemporary reviews of the book at the time of its publication, and stresses the intellectual achievement and poetic qualities of the text.

A similar kind of attention present in the reception of *Cosmopolis* can be illustrated by how Walter Kirn of *GQ*, for example, in *The New York Times* made the following comment about how the novel, in his reading, is intent on driving home various ideas associated with postmodern theory:

> Beware the novel of ideas, particularly when the ideas come first and all the novel stuff (like the story) comes second. *Cosmopolis* is an intellectual turkey shoot, sending up a succession of fat targets just in time for its author to aim and fire the rounds he loaded before he started writing. When a presidential motorcade materializes to hamper Packer's odyssey, we know we're about to be treated to an essay on the illusion of political power in an age of borderless international commerce.

1 The writing of this article was supported by the Bolyai János Research Grant.

2 DeLillo's ultimate late work on the topic is *The Body Artist*, but as Lilla Farmasi suggests this is only a return to his previous, modernist sensitivity present in such texts as "The Ivory Acrobat." On the connection between writing and corporeality in DeLillo's fiction, see Farmasi.

3 On DeLillo's moral take on postmodernism, see Paul Giaimo 1-21.

Kirn and others also find fault with the way in which DeLillo "empties out" language, as his conversations in *Cosmopolis* read "like an unholy collaboration between Harold Pinter and Robby the Robot." Others, like Updike in *The New Yorker*, appreciated his "fervent intelligence and his fastidious, edgy prose." In what follows, I will be suggesting that *Cosmopolis* is, indeed, wrestling with language and ideas, but not in ways suggested by the novel's immediate critical reception or within the confinements of the technological sublime, as Comte would seem to suggest, but in a creative effort to engage with the attempt to grasp and negotiate the critical conditions of the liminality brought about by capital, terror and technology. Thereby, in my view, he provides a fundamentally carnal national allegory in the strenuous temporal structure of the novel, breaching the border between the intra- and extradiegetic.

As reviewers are bent on summarizing, *Cosmopolis* recounts the one-day voyage of prodigy asset manager Eric Packer in his tomb-like limousine through Manhattan to have his hair cut in the salon of his childhood, while he is busy betting against the Japanese yen and losing his own fortune as well as that of his wife, theorizing about local and world events of the day and making decisions by way of meeting and having sex with various people along the way—all these amidst news of a credible threat against his life. Hence the title for Walter Kirn's review, "Long Day's Journey into Haircut." The events of this long day also include a televised assassination of Arthur Rapp, the fictional managing director of the IMF on the Money Channel, the death of Eric's friend and rival, Nikolai Kaganovich, the self-immolation of an unknown man in the middle of an anti-globalist protest taking place in town, the ceremonial burial march of Brutha Fez, the fictional Sufi rap star, the presidential motorcade to an official function, and a host of others on a minor scale. DeLillo's third-person point of view narration uses these incidents as pretexts to meditate on contemporary conditions, and unfolds as a richly *poetic* text—as testified by the reviews—often working against *narrative* expectations. These narrative expectations are further undermined by how DeLillo weaves a reverse plot: the billionaire is quick to lose against the best of advice he can get from his colleagues, and in the self-fulfilling prophecy of Eric Parker's self-destructive voyage it is not the assassin chasing his mark, but the target serving himself willingly up to his murderer. Any of these events, in the spirit of contemporary politics and entertainment, would in itself be worth making the headlines, and some of them indeed do in the course of the narrative. The fact that reviewers often complain about how "nothing happens" in *Cosmopolis* may testify not only to how contemporary (re)viewers are made insensitive by the mass media and how their literary expectations, in turn, are shaped by their daily consumption of mediated images of events, but how the novel itself favors commentary over event, interpretation over action, at the same time insisting, as I will argue, that the two cannot be separated from one another adequately.

This inherent connection between primary and secondary, surface and some supposed deep structure, between the different forms of agency, is elaborated on in the novel in a memorable passage describing Eric's fascination with the flow of data, in his view not only a metaphor for life, but, rather, a part of it:

> He understood how much it meant to him, the roll and flip of data on a screen. He studied the figural diagrams that brought organic patterns into play, birdwing and chambered shell. It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human energies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact, data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere. Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole. (24)

The control-crazed Eric Packer's reading in poetry and science (5), combined with his insomnia and self-indulgence culminate in a heightened sense of sensual presence and *of the present*, and induce a false impression of omniscience and omnipotence, as in the memorable expression "our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole" (24). Eric's distinguished social position, his hypermasculinity and indulgence in speculation, either monetary or philosophical, all indicate an anxiety related to time both on the level of how time appears and passes on the level of narrative content as well as how it informs the very narrative structure of *Cosmopolis*. This anxiety, related to being unable to grasp (the notion of) time, is explained by Peter Boxall as "total obsolescence," an understanding of time in which "technology is obsolete the moment that it acquires a material form, from the moment it is realized as hardware" (222). It is of notable importance here that obsolescence, at least in Boxall's reading, is the precondition of the exposure to capital:

> In the evacuated now of *Cosmopolis* [and of *The Body Artist*] the present disappears continually into the past or into the future, so that to experience time is always somehow to miss it. One can only approach the present through its echo or reflection in a past or a future that lies on the very surface, as time itself, uncorrupted by tenses or by "arbitrary" distinctions, is made available to the cyber market, eminently present, overwhelmingly there, but also somehow ungraspable, stripped of the "clinging breath of presence" [as phrased in *The Body Artist*]. (224)

Boxall goes on to suggest that the lack of a narrative frame, i. e. that mediation and virtualization take over from storytelling is due to this "contamination" of the present and the past by an invasive future, one that exceeds and erases the temporal boundaries necessary for the narrative to proceed (226). What remains, in line with Boxall's argument, is the poetical registering of the present and a mournful remembrance of the past in the face of one's exposure to the future. The first can be exemplified by the deaths occurring and mediated and repeated into meaninglessness to Eric Pecker on his way to the hairdresser's salon of his childhood, the second by his poetic musings about the passing of physical objects and the cultural associations they have with historical time, as in case of the words "skyscraper" or "phone." The irony inherent in

the idea of "obsolescence" is, of course, that even to register the invasion of the future requires certain technologically defined media crystallizing into linguistic forms, only to become obsolete themselves in due time. As the narrator remarks in connection with Eric's habit of "mental" note-taking:

> He took out his hand organizer and poked a note to himself about the anachronistic quality of the word skyscraper. No recent structure ought to bear this word. It belonged to the olden soul of awe, to the arrowed towers that were a narrative long before he was born. The hand device itself was an object whose original culture had just about disappeared. He knew he'd have to junk it. (9)

"Obsolescence," however, is not only a function of culture's materiality, but appears on a conceptual level, as the example of how Eric insists on the "obsolescence" of ideas as suggested and represented by words would indicate. At one point he suggests that "It was time to retire the word phone" (88), indicating that in a culture based on communication words are subject to an ongoing process of inflation–an acute observation for a contemporary writer, expressed by the conceit of the novel's motto taken from Zbigniev Herbert's poem: "A rat became a unit of currency." One may argue, relying on Boxall's observations, that this persistent theme in DeLillo's fiction is related to his constant preoccupation with terror, as well as his life-long attempt to cope with the issue from *Libra* to *Falling Man* and beyond.

This connection between "obsolescence" and "terror" acquires all too much significance in a post-9/11 context, and exerts some major influence on the chronotope of *Cosmopolis*, a novel written immediately after the terrorist attack on the American mainland, but set before that date. Thus, it can be argued that *Cosmopolis*, together with DeLillo's post-9/11 literary and journalistic output, is an attempt to overcome the joint forces of terror and obsolescence, a case made in Marco Abel's "Don DeLillo's 'In the Ruins of the Future': Literature, Images, and the Rhetoric of Seeing 9/11" as well as in Donovan's *Postmodern Counternarratives* (155). In this context it is a matter of urgency that there are two instances in *Cosmopolis*, both related to the body and terror, presenting a rupture in this invasion of the present and the past by "cybercapital." The first is the self-immolation of an anti-globalist protestor, whose radical and self-destructive reclamation of his own body in order to make a political claim through evoking terror *and* sympathy by its mere sight resists, in Eric's eyes, the market's assimilative logic:

> Now look. A man in flames. Behind Eric all the screens were pulsing with it. And all action was at a pause, the protesters and riot police milling about and only the cameras jostling. What did this change? Everything, he thought. Kinski had been wrong. The market was not total. It could not claim this man or assimilate his act. Not such starkness and horror. This was a thing outside its reach. (99-100)

Terror, obsolescence and "cybercapital" are linked here by Eric's existential dread,[4] the fear of death that the terrorist overcomes to make a political claim. The protest "cites" the historical Buddhist resistance, and this time this gesture is not interpreted as a futile historical repetition (as in the self-reflexive, salutary practice of some postmodern intertextual referencing), but evokes genuine sympathy by way of manifesting a radical agency staged as corporeal performance. It is understood as this, that the self-immolation of an individual finds its counterpart in a heap of naked bodies in the middle of the road off Eleventh Avenue, a collectively staged bodily performance in the fictional frame of shooting a movie.

> There were three hundred naked people sprawled in the street. They filled the intersection, lying in haphazard positions, some bodies draped over others, some leveled, flattened, fetal, with children among them. No one was moving, no one's [sic!] eyes were open. They were a sight to come upon, a city of stunned flesh, the bareness, the bright lights, so many bodies unprotected and hard to credit in a place of ordinary human transit. (172)

Ironically, but in line with the taboo against representing victims of 9/11, the movie set is one of the handful of episodes left out of David Cronenberg's otherwise faithful adaptation of the same title from 2011. It is yet another instance of the invasion of the future, but this time extra- and homodiegetic in nature, as it anticipates the memory of 9/11 in the fictitious April of 2000 in the New York of DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* in 2003. What the novel at this point posits is the very certain presence of the future, one tempered by Eric Packer's epiphany of meeting his wife and their consummation of the marriage despite their previous animosity. While the protestor's death was a solitary act, this idealized scene brings together the individuals, again, outside the circuit of "cybercapital," beyond its reach and in or after its temporary collapse. As Eric learns from the woman lying next to her: "the financing has collapsed. Happened in seconds apparently. Money all gone. This is the last scene they're shooting before they suspend indefinitely" (175). The narrator also emphasizes that the experience is the most intimate interpersonal being together Eric Packer has ever had the chance to participate in:

> The bodies were blunt facts, naked in the street. Their power was their own, independent of whatever circumstance attended the event. But it was a curious power, he thought, because there was something shy and wan in the scene, a little withdrawn. A woman coughed with a head jerk and a leap of the knee. He did not wonder whether they were meant to be dead or only senseless. He found them sad and daring both, and more naked than ever in their lives. (173)

These two meaningful ruptures of "cybercapital," the self-sacrifice as a futile but ultimately politically viable possibility for resistance outside the system, and, outside

4 The novel is dedicated to Paul Auster, and a possible explanation may not only take into account how *Cosmopolis* bows its head to an instructive figure in the long history of the city novel, but how DeLillo acknowledges and affirms the existentialist traits of Auster's fiction.

the novel's diegetic temporal frame, the fictionalized memory of the yet-to-happen terrorist attacks of 9/11, signal poetic moments against the monotonous pace of how the imperfect future invades the present and is constantly engaged in erasing traces of the past. The two episodes together and how they may refer extradiegetically to alternative individual reaction to the power of cybercapital and an embodied national response to the events of 9/11 also testify to how DeLillo's narrative in its most poetic moments[5] contests any linear notion of historical time and the sense of a permanent crisis of representation as maintained by the very operation of cybercapital itself. One may even argue, that the latter of these poetic instances is indeed DeLillo's novel way to phrase a national allegory in the face of adversity, acknowledging, yet downplaying individual differences in race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and age.

The above cited two episodes only highlight the need for political agency, but the text also indicates its possible limitations by insisting on how the culture of "cybercapital" hardly allows for any individualized reading of its signs. It is not only that Eric Packer is unable to recognize the asymmetrical patterns of the market coded in his own "asymmetrical prostate."As Richard Sheets a.k.a. Benno Levi, his previous employee and later assassin warns him: "that's where the answer was, in your body, in your prostate" (200). Levi thereby extends the universe of "cybercapital" by reciprocating the otherwise unbalanced relationship between the system and the individual when he subscribes to Packer's claim that "[t]he logical extension of business is murder" (113). In the final scene of the novel, two maxims of DeLillo's fiction seem to converge: the first is that all of his plots are driven deathwards, while the second is the observable tendency that "the oeuvre follows a trajectory of virtualization" (Boxall 223). Eric experiences his own death as if it were a security breach in the system: he sees "things that haven't happened yet" (22). His consciousness redoubles the images of his own death as a reverse *déjà vu*: his own virtualized image looms large in the crystal of his watch over the scene of his murder, virtually a suicide itself. But in a memorable passage, Eric Packer's sense of his body returns through the pain of the self-inflicted wound of his hand, and in the spirit of the self-immolating anti-globalist protester, triumphs, if only momentarily, over the virtual:

> But his pain interfered with his immortality. It was crucial to his distinctiveness, too vital to be bypassed and not susceptible, he didn't think, to computer emulation. The things that made him who he was could hardly be identified much less converted to data, the things that lived and milled in his body, everywhere, random, riotous, billions of trillions, in the neurons and peptides, the throbbing temple vein, in the veer of his libidinous intellect. So much come and gone, this is who he was, the lost taste of milk licked from his mother's breast, the stuff he sneezes when he sneezes, this is him, and how a person becomes the reflection he sees in a dusty window when he walks by. He'd come

5 These themes and their relationship to the body become more prominent in DeLillo's fiction when he returns to them in a narrative of post-9/11 America in *Falling Man*, wherein he connects the figure of the perpetrator and the victim through "organic shrapnel." For an extended reading of the motif in *Falling Man*, see Julia K. Szołtysek.

> to know himself, untranslatably, through his pain. He felt so tired now. His hard-gotten grip on the world, material things, great things, his memories true and false, the vague malaise of winter twilights, untransferable, the pale nights when his identity flattens for lack of sleep, the small wart he feels on his thigh every time he showers, all him, and how the soap he uses, the smell and feel of the concave bar make him who he is because he names the fragrance, amandine, and the hang of his cock, untransferable, and his strangely achy knee, the click in his knee when he bends it, all him, and so much else that's not convertible to some high sublime, the technology of mind-without-end. (207-08)

The passage emphasizes how Eric Packer has recourse to his own body as a fundamental source of identity in an instance that clearly connects self-sacrifice, terrorism, and fictions as generated by cybercapital, only to underline the moment of reflection occasioned by physical pain and, by extension, grief over one's mortality.

If DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* was criticized for conforming too much to conventions and, correspondingly, to critical expectations of the novel of ideas, it may seem evident today how these ideas had been misunderstood by commentators for their lack of comprehending how the novel's form comments on the very ideas it circulates. Thus, it is all the more fitting to mention that a more important charge is brought up against "the novel of obsolescence." Fitzpatrick argues that in the case of the white, middle class, heterosexual male authors like DeLillo the genre reveals "a cluster of anxieties about being displaced from some possibly imagined position of centrality in contemporary cultural life," and provides "access to a number of useful writing strategies that assist the novelist in trying to regain his ostensibly faltering importance as a cultural critic." At the same time these strategies are "employed to obscure other, unspeakable anxieties about shifts in contemporary *social* life that pose a lesser threat to the dominance of the novel than to the hegemony of whiteness and maleness long served by the structures of traditional humanism" (Fitzpatrick 201-02). It is only fair to add that DeLillo in *Cosmopolis* also exposes how some of these ideas, best exemplified by the theorist Vija Kinski, are not only dangerously operative in a cybercapitalist economy (i.e. they make things "happen," the word being almost a catchphrase in *Cosmopolis*), but at the same time are void and can and ought to be resisted by the material acts of the body, be it the cinematically staged body of a national collective, or, as in Eric's individual recognition of how "the market was not total" and how the key to resistance lies in turning to one's body in an existential dread. This is a claim that uneasily opens up the question of the relationship between fiction and terrorism for the white male subject of *Cosmopolis*, who, in turn, sees no other way to reconcile them than his ultimate act of self-sacrifice, a symbolic resignation of power.

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Legacies of the Past and the American Family: Sam Shepard's *True West* and Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog /Underdog*[1]

Lenke Németh

Isolation from societal and historical continuity ingrained in American thought and culture has resulted in an unprecedented economic growth, creativity, and flexibility in all facets of American life. Paradoxically, a constant search for an American past—generated by the lack of a common history—also prevails in American culture and these mutually exclusive trends lead to a sense of "rootlessness, loss of connections, and anxiety about identity" (Menides 607). American literary expressiveness appears to reflect these opposing views on history as well as the impact these attitudes exert on the (in)stability of the American character. Viewed from the "classic" period of American literature a variety of responses were generated by the literary culture. American writers' approaches to history range from evident separation from the constraints and restraints of history and tradition (Emerson, Thoreau) through creating romanticized versions of the American past (Cooper, Longfellow) to the search of a "usable past"[2] (Eliot, Pound) that would explain the causes and impinge on the way how Americans exist in the present (Menides 607).

Theatrical performances are particularly suited to raising searching questions about how the dimensions of the past—individual and collective—occur to us and shape our present. The lack of a valid and available past—personal, cultural, and historical—as well as the distorting effects of this absence on the individual and family level have featured as a central theme in modern American drama since its long-awaited advent at the beginning of the twentieth century. The themes of the aborted legacies of the Cabots in the New England regions (O'Neill, *Desire Under the Elms*, 1921), the misused and abused Dixie inheritance of the DuBois family (Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 1947), Joe Keller's and Willie Loman's thwarted dreams because of the personal and communal sins committed in the past (Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*, 1947 and *Death of Salesman*, 1949, respectively) continue to refigure in postmodern American drama, however, in new ways. As Sanja Bahun-Radunović maintains, "history becomes 'humanized' and workable by/in the very act of performance" as history is understood as "the chronotopic point at which our personal and social being is excited, ex-centered, and . . . brought to awareness of its historical condition" (446).

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1 This essay is dedicated to Professor Mária Kurdi, distinguished scholar, teacher, mentor, and colleague, for her unceasing encouragement and support in my scholarly career and research.

2 The term is introduced by Van Wyck Brooks in his essay "On Creating a Usable Past" published in *Dial*, 1918.

Preoccupation with the absence of a shared and authentic past of the American nation has found compelling expression in two plays selected here for study: Sam Shepard's *True West* (1980) and Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* (2002). Produced more than two decades apart, both plays revolve around sibling rivalries echoing the biblical tale of Cain and Abel, only to deal with disturbing segments and aspects of American history and culture. Shepard's drama laments the loss of paradigm-generating myths—the frontier, the West, the American dream—, essential shaping factors of the American character and identity, while Parks's play is haunted by the erasure of African American history and her people's invisibility in the iconography of American history and culture. In fact, Shepard and Parks dramatize how the loss and/or the erasure of an authentic past history impacts upon the American family and provide highly similar diagnoses of the maladies of American society at around the new millennium: the crisis of manhood and masculinity, the failed father-son relationship, the disintegration of the family, and the misuse of parental heritage. The immense success of a Broadway revival of *True West* at the Circle on the Square in 2000 demonstrates the topicality and the freshness of the play by which Shepard himself was somewhat astonished as he confided in an interview with Matthew Roudané: "the amazing thing to me is that, now, in this time, for some reason or another, the disaster inherent in this thing called the American Family is very resonant now with audiences" ("Shepard" 68).

The comparative analysis of the two plays I am going to offer here rests upon the assumption that the lack of a valuable and functional past leads to the disruption of family manifest in the family members' constant role-playing, which functions as an evasive strategy to confront their own reality. Both playwrights use metadramatic dramaturgical devices to portray their characters as performers with constantly shifting identities.

On first consideration, the late white male dramatist Shepard (1943-2017) and African American female playwright Parks (1963-) seem to be an unlikely pair to compare because of their dissimilarities in gender, background, color, and race. A canonical father of American drama with more than a fifty-year successful dramatic career, Shepard established himself on the theatrical scene in the 1960s avant-garde movement, while Parks shares the sensibilities of the post-civil rights generation and belongs to the postethnic era of the American literary culture. Shepard and Parks come from markedly dissimilar landscapes and rely on different cultural backgrounds. "Shepard speaks from an automatic and safe 'center,'" the Mid-West and the West, as Jeanette Malkin maintains (155), whereas Parks's geographical position cannot be determined with that extent of preciseness not only because she was born into a military family and moved often from place to place in her childhood—like Shepard in his youth—but because she shares the collective history of the geographically displaced black people constantly in search for their own space, home, and identity. Affiliating himself with the vagabond life style of the beat generation, always on the move, Shepard is a "drifter" who "drifted across the continent from California to New York (Bigsby 7).

Despite the differences evident in their socio-cultural and racial background, Shepard and Parks share numerous profound affinities in their dramatic vision, their

language—often drawing on the improvisational structure of jazz and the hard beat of rock—, and in their use of space and spatiality. Parks's own words of admiration in her tribute to Sam Shepard in *American Theatre* touch upon some deep-seated proximity in their understanding of drama: "for me he was always the icon, the beacon, the guiding light of contemporary writers . . . Shepard was one of the greats I wanted to emulate. And yep, he was a white guy—yep" [sic] and she continues that "Sam Shepard was a writer who could trace and track the epic mythic raw American thrum that runs underneath and vibrates throughout so much of this country" ("Sam Shepard"). They both fully exploit the *theatricality* of the theatre—a conscious use of image, space, voice, and rhythm—by deploying dramaturgies that subvert theatrical conventions.

Though Shepard and Parks belong to the postmodern era of American drama, I would suggest that their dramatic vision about the *sine qua non* of a lasting theatrical experience parallels with that of Horace from ancient Rome. In his *Ars Poetica* (c. 19 BC), written in the form of an epistle Horace articulates: "less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through ears than by what is brought before the trusty eyes, and what the spectator sees for himself" (qtd. in Marshall 683). The poet in ancient Rome and the postmodern playwrights selected here share the necessity of creating haunting images on stage. There are numerous examples from both dramatists' works to this claim; suffice here to cite only a few: in Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978) the visual image in the last scene when "Tilden, in his dripping muddy shoes and trousers, ascends the stairs to his mother, carrying in his arms the remains—bones wrapped in shredded rags—of her dead child" (Morse 260); "*Ages of the Moon* (2009) has another arresting image of someone carrying death" (261). Similarly, reading Parks's plays "in the context of historical spectacle" Heidi J. Holder points out that *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* (1989-1992), *The America Play* (1993), and *Venus* (1996) begin with the announcement and/or acting out the 'deaths' of the main characters, which are repeated verbally as well as visually throughout these plays (19).

In the two plays selected for study here Shepard and Parks confront their audiences with the effects and consequences of the absence of the American people's collective past. *True West* and *Topdog/Underdog* have not been examined comparatively so far (to my knowledge); nevertheless, in her book *Memory-Theater and Postmodern Drama* (1999) Malkin addresses Shepard's and Parks' treatment of memory and past histories in their respective dramatic oeuvres up to the closing decade of the twentieth century. She highlights their common feature: "what they do share . . . is a grievous sense of rupture from grounded past—albeit ruptures very differently inflicted" (155). Though Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* was produced after Malkin's book had appeared, her observation pertaining to Parks's treatment of the past is applicable to *Topdog/Underdog*. Shepard wishes to reconstruct the "true" west, whereas Parks intends to rewrite the African Americans' history within the framework of the narrative history of the US. For this aim, theatre is an ideal place. Parks confides, "since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to 'make' history" (qtd. in Schmidt 173-74). Parks's "theater is a conscious effort to make history in the sense of simulating it, transforming it, and going through its undiscovered possibilities" (208). Parks and Shepard both attempt to re-constitute history in their plays by

reclaiming components through rich imagery, performative acts, and paradigmatic shifts. Thus it can safely be claimed that our two selected authors share an essential kinship: both create a metahistorical and self-reflexive level of past histories.

Arguably, the dramaturgy of Shepard and Parks "summons the past(s) and seeks identity, through an appeal to memory and its erasure" (Malkin 155), yet their strategies to recall past(s) markedly differ from modernist practice. In modernist drama the existence of a unified subjectivity ensures that "we can find paradigms of an essentially unified (personal or group) consciousness, employing coherent dramatic enunciations in order that a segment of the past be illuminated and a present explained" (Malkin 21). Accordingly, the protagonists of O'Neill, Miller and Williams recall past histories "in the form of remembered pasts, flashbacks and conjured up moments" (20), which are suitable conventions "to see into the mind, to reconstruct a life, and thus to find an interpretative framework for personal and social failure" (21).

However, in postmodern drama—and in the two plays under scrutiny here—"narrative devices (flashbacks and realistic frames) are abandoned, as are appeals to a teleological understanding of the past" (21). Thus, in *True West* and *Topdog/Underdog,* past history, or rather fragments and elements of past histories appear in the accumulation of multiple spaces and times on stage with each plane/level, evoking—as well as challenging—images, myths, and histories. This theatrical tendency reflects the postmodern impulse to deconstruct inherited "master narratives" as well as reassesses the concept of historiography, which advances a "revised, activist history of events, a continuously re-transcribed history which would . . . examine historical events—recorded and unrecorded—in their complexity" (Bahun-Radunović 447). The multiplicity of times and spaces necessitates fluidity evident in the characters' assuming various roles with constant shifts between them. Accordingly, the postmodern subject is denied remembering the past through teleological stories, linear patterns, and subjective remembrances. Many of Parks's plays invoke the past, "but reading them through the rubrics of a naturalist or mimetic theater obscures their radical character and their focus on the inscriptive act as an event in its own right" (Reed 150). Parks's treatment of history is likened to jazz-like compositional strategy by Attilio Favorini: "Suzan-Lori Parks writes memory riffs," and adds that "embracing fragmentation, Parks practices remembering as a species of dismembering" (10).

The suggestive title of Shepard's play foregrounds and encapsulates its main thematic drive, namely an attempt at a definition of a true West, an iconic element of the American past and a central shaping force of the American character. Embedded in the incessant fight and quarrel between Austin, the civilized Ivy League scriptwriter from Los Angeles and his elder brother Lee, living in the desert, the existence of a "true West" is questioned in terms of geography, characteristic iconic traits, and visions of the west. Lee's life in the desert calls for the image of the self-reliant and resourceful "free agent" (Shepard 8), whereas the urban dweller evokes the image of a successful family man in the city making his living by writing ("true") western stories for Hollywood. Encoded in the spaces relegated to Austin, the city dweller and his elder brother, Lee, the nomad living in the desert, they inhabit two markedly different versions of what constitutes "true west." Nevertheless, as David Krasner claims,

"Austin and Lee represent America's twin paradigms of wealth and individualism" (110) and also "share a characteristically American optimism: for them, success is always within reach" (111). Taking care of their mother's house while she is staying on vacation in Alaska, through feud and dispute the estranged brothers begin to covet each other's vastly differing lives and go through a total role–reversal, whereby the authenticity of each version of "true west" vision is questioned. Gabriella Varró explains: "Austin, the settled man and Lee, the lone ranger, the nomad just back from the Mojave Desert use, and eventually dismantle their mother's place in their contest to acquire each other's position, and along with it also the other's personal characters traits" (64-65).

Geographically, the visions of the true West encompass mosaics of multiple places that all summon up images of various modes of living, past historical events, stories, and fragments from a bygone era and life. The multiplicity of spaces and times evoking different facets of a true West is intricately present in the un-abating verbal and physical fight between the siblings. In a structural arrangement reminiscent of contrapuntal music, their verbal encounters conjure up opposite, yet equally valid and typical aspects of a true West. Lee's direct comparison of Austin writing on his typewriter about the true West with the Forefathers' writing by candlelight juxtaposes different times, spaces, and acts: "Isn't that what the old guys did? ... The Forefathers ... You know ... Candlelight burning into the night? Cabins in the wilderness? (6). His reference to the ancestors calls back a legendary and even heroic past, a mythical West, and the frontier moving forward. J. Chris Westgate states that Shepard "implicitly endorses Frederick Jackson Turner's romantic conviction that the frontier, even if mediated by more than a century of urbanization, cultivates the individuality, self-reliance, and morality, that are essential to the 'American character'" (726).

The romantic and even nostalgic visions of the West, however, gradually collapse since Lee's inventiveness and self-sufficiency—traditionally inherent traits of the western hero—are degraded to his "making a little tour" for electric devices in his neighborhood, which proves to be an ideal site for him to steal: "This is a great neighborhood, Lush. Good class a' people. Not many dogs" (Shepard 7-8). Alternately, the educated and refined Austin turns violent and a drunkard in his attempt to transform into a nomad like Lee.

The spatial positioning of the mother's house on the border, between the vast spaces and the urban world may indicate women's exclusion from true west as well as their marginalization from a patriarchal society. The brothers meet in their mother's house situated on the edge of the desert and the city, in a luxurious suburb in South California, forty miles east of Los Angeles. Located in-between two geographical spaces, the mother seems to be banished to the outside, a nowhere land, a liminal position that apparently does not belong to anyone. Austin is equally perplexed and baffled by his mother's living in the "great neighborhood": well, our uh– Our mother just happens to live here" (Shepard 8). The brothers' struggle to restore the "true west" while surrounded temporarily with the comfort of their mother's suburban house is acutely ironic since it is implied that a woman's presence is needed to re-assert their masculinity. In fact, her haunting presence in the environment manifest in the objects in the house—her furniture, pots and pans, and flowers—also in her instructions she

has given to Austin about taking care of the house illuminates women's significance in contributing to the traditionally male-centered frontier myth. Lesley Ferris argues that during the Westward expansion women shared all the jobs and hardships with men: "in reality of frontier life women pioneered their way west on an equal footing with the men, often, out of sheer necessity, discarding any pretense of 'femininity'" (134).

The inclusion of Hollywood as an actual place—the workplace of Austin and Saul Kimmer, the producer—as well as the site of myths and legends through its movies and film stars completes the (re)construction and the evocation of "true west." With its lure of big money, fame and glamour Hollywood functions as a focal point in the play in the sense that the brothers' penchant for winning Kimmer's approval for their own scripts of a Western movie aggravates the tension between them, and propels them to take on each other's place and profession. The West is evoked in its popular cultural form, the western in Austin's movie script; however, Kimmer drops Austin's project in favor of Lee's story, claiming that "[it] was the first authentic Western to come along in a decade" (Shepard 30).

The authenticity of the western hero as rendered in western movies is refuted by Austin when criticizing Lee's script: "those aren't characters ... Those are illusions of characters. . . . those are fantasies of a long lost boyhood" (40). The figure of the western hero is degraded to dumb riders chasing each other in Lee's script, whereas the heroic deeds are degraded to disgraceful business. The closing scene in Act 2 with the dumb riders chasing each other in the prairie in Lee's script faithfully and ironically imitates the psychological struggle between the two brothers: "what they don't know is that each one of 'em is afraid, see. Each one separately thinks that he's the only one that's afraid" (Shepard 27). Devastated by the news that, according to Kimmer Lee's script, "has the ring of truth," (35) Austin retorts: "There's no such thing as the West anymore. It's a dead issue" (35). Austin's embittered reply refers to the paradox that if true west does not exist, it cannot have a "true" story, either. The realization of the constructedness of a "true West" dawns on Austin: "[W]hat Austin begins to realize during the play, . . ., is that the West, and perhaps even America, exists only in an economy of continually circulated images" (Westgate 738). Shepard's play suggests a direct connection between the violence erupting in Austin and the suspicion that "the vision of the West that underlies American destiny might have, paradoxically, only ever been 'real' in movies, stories, and myths" thus resulting "in a profound ontological uncertainty" (739). In James A. Crank's formulation, "the fantasy of the American West made popular by television and film" explodes in the play (87).

In *Topdog/Underdog* a simultaneity of multiple spaces and times is achieved with the inclusion of characters from various historical times and locations. Parks's technique to recall the past includes "the intertextual inclusion of archival material; ... the presentation of historical events as fragmented, compressed, and disjunctive units; and the compulsive repetition of events and quasi-events in the performative present" (Bahun-Radunović 447). Parks's treatment of history involves evoking and repeating an actual historical event, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the US by John Wilkes Booth (1865). For Parks, "theatre is an incubator for the creation of historical events" and about her dramatic vision and

themes she admits: "I'm obsessed with now. Like memory and family and history and the past" (qtd. in Jiggetts 1). Parks portrays the gritty life of two black brothers called Lincoln, "the topdog" and Booth "(aka 3-Card), the underdog" (3) in "a seedily furnished rooming house room" (7) "here" and "now" in New York. Destined to enact the deeds associated with their names, they repeat the fratricide as well as the historical tragedy: Booth kills Lincoln at the end.

In both plays the characters' constant role-playing disguises their acute sense of rootlessness closely linked to the absence of a valuable and functional past. The compulsive role-playing reinforces that the only possible way of survival in America appears to be by disguising oneself, mimicry, cheating, and conning, which both pairs of brothers in the two plays excel in. With reference to Shepard's characters Marc Robinson emphasizes that the role and the mask they wear may merge and become inseparable: "Shepard's characters succumb to role-playing, not able to know themselves apart from the disguises they've inherited" (81).

Brotherly rivalry in both plays is dramatized through performative acts. Austin and Lee, as well as Linc and Booth, are constant performers. Enacting the archetypal anger and envy induced by the other brother's possessions, skills, and lifestyles, the brothers in each play intend to own and usurp what the other has. The pattern of the inept, uncivilized, and unsuccessful brother constantly trying to imitate the personal traits, talents of the successful one prevails in both dramas, which, by definition, entails a transgressive performative act that crosses borders and lines set by societal, cultural, and historical conventions. In *True West* the complete role reversal between the brothers is achieved through a series of performative acts. Varró describes this process as follows: "[W]hile the scriptwriter Austin annexes the social and emotional territory of his savage and petty thief brother in stages, . . . his good–for-nothing brother, Lee, is avenging himself for his failed opportunities by intruding upon the territory of Austin, imitating the latter's status as established playwright" (66-67).

The masks and roles Austin and Lee assume originate in the images and icons of the west and American urban culture, whereas Lincoln and Booth draw their roles from African American and American culture and history. A former successful 3-card monte player, a street hustler, Lincoln now works as an Abraham Lincoln impersonator enacting the president's death in an arcade. Role-play as a kind of survival is deeply ingrained in African American culture. As Deborah Geis notes, "African-American identity almost inevitably involves disguise and role-playing as part of the effort to function in a hostile culture" (114). The jobless Booth's performances are conspicuously varied. Being eager to imitate his brother, he keeps on practicing his brother's moves and patter at 3-card monte, though his moves are awkward; wearing stolen pieces of clothing he poses like in a fashion show and produces a purely entertaining one-man show; he arranges a candle-lit dinner for his girlfriend Grace, a fantasy woman, who never arrives.

In both plays the characters' masks indicate a deepening gap between the interior self and the cultural representation of the self. After the initial hostility towards each other's life styles, Austin and Lee admit that they have desired the other's position:

> LEE. I always wondered what'd be like to be you.
> AUSTIN. You did?
> LEE. I used to picture you walking' round some campus with your arms full' books. Blondes chasin' after ya'.
> AUSTIN. Blondes? That's funny ... Because I always used to picture you somewhere ... You were always on some adventure. ... I used to say to myself, "Lee's got the right idea, He's out there in the world and here I am. What am I doing? (Shepard 26)

Austin is attracted to Lee's "self-contained individualism, frankness, a sense of rootedness in the land" that represent basic American values the country is built on (Bottoms 194). Contrariwise, disguising and conning appear to be survival techniques in America. Lincoln used to work as a street hustler, Booth desires to be one; Austin attaches the label to Kimmer, the Hollywood producer: "He's a hustler! He's a bigger hustler than you are!" (Shepard 33).

Emulating and assuming each other's roles, however, is doomed to get aborted in both plays. When Lee starts to write the script supported by the Hollywood producer, Austin's self-destructive instinct surfaces: he drinks, steals, and turns aggressive. "Austin demonstrates typically ambivalent behavior, at once fiercely protective of his world," yet when he is challenged by Lee he turns into a "macho-man capable of hard drinking, stealing, and murder" (Kane 145). The tension between the brothers is further aggravated when Lee realizes he lacks the skills to write the script. Lee's refusal to take Austin to the desert and teach him survival skills is perceived by Austin as "a lifetime betrayal" (146) and will "open the floodgates of Austin's rage" (146).

In the final tableau Austin chokes Lee with the telephone wire until Lee is motionless. However, suddenly Lee springs to his feet—another instance of betrayal from Lee—and blocks Austin's exit. Stephen Bottoms compares this scene to a maelstrom: "the descent of both men from controlled, ordered ego opposition into undifferentiated chaos is completed in the final scene when . . . Austin erupts in a fit of frantic rage and tries to kill Lee by wrapping the telephone cord around his neck" (195). He adds that in this moment the personalities of both "prove to be highly unstable compositions of shifting, conflicting desire, devoid of any reliable sense of self and thus capable of extreme volatility" (195). Leslie Kane's interpretation of this last scene places it in a broader perspective by stressing humans' inability to learn from the past: it "conveys an enduring 'truth,' namely, that we are largely unsuccessful in affixing meaning to the past, in understanding its connection to the present, in breaking free of its vise-like grip" (146).

Austin seems to cherish the idea that a relationship between brothers should mean something. "Lee argues that familial violence is the most authentic kind" (Crank 98): "You go down to L.A. Police Department there and ask them what kinda' people kill each other the most. What do you think they 'd say? ... Family people. Brothers" (Shepard 23-24).

The role-play pervasive in the two plays evokes and reinforces the notion of a constantly transforming American identity. Similarly, the rivalry between the brothers

entails betrayal in *Topdog/Underdog* and generates violence, anger, and finally murder. With no authentic and functional past available, the American character must be produced through performative acts discursively, which allows for the construction of fluid, unstable identity and race. Enikő Bollobás's conceptualization of the performative illuminates the process of how identity is constructed. She contends that the performative

> has provided a pragmatic form whereby certain constitutive processes can be conceptualized in non-essentialist thinking. To take the example of identities, the performative refutes the essentialist position by showcasing gender, sexuality, or race as produced by language. Independent of whether the identities in question are stable or unstable, unproblematic or problematic, intelligible or unintelligible, dominant or non-dominant, the performative establishes the ways they all come about as effects of discourse.

Accordingly, performative subjectivities are "new discursive entities," as Bollobás claims, and "they come about against or in the absence of existing conventions. Therefore, the subjectivities performed will be multiple, unfixed, unstable, and mobile, and mutable [...] allowing for a new possibility of agency."

The sibling rivalry endures throughout the two plays. Performativity of identity is manifest in transgressive acts, whereby the subject acquires agency. In his performative act to become as skilled as Lincoln at cards Booth proves to be a failure. "His moves and accompanying patter are, for the most part, studied and awkward" (Parks, *Topdog* 7), and not even by adopting a new name, 3-Card, does he achieve success. So the new moniker fails to change his fate. By contrast, Lincoln's performative act to work as an Abe Lincoln impersonator is not only convincing but also successful. Adopting the signifiers of identity change by whitefacing himself and putting on the Lincoln costume, a stovepipe top hat, the beard and the coat, Lincoln gains agency by crossing the color line between blacks and whites.

Marc Maufort distinguishes "two kinds of performance motifs, which force audiences to question their established assumptions about reality. First, Parks uses the metaphor of the 3-card monte scam as a symbol of the capitalist tendency to cheat human beings out of their 'inheritance,' spiritual or otherwise, via performative hustling. Second, she resorts . . . to a parodic reinterpretation of blackface minstrelsy, a notoriously racist form of performance in nineteenth century America" (*Labyrinth* 93). This move illustrates the constructed nature of concepts like blackness, whiteness, and race.

The absence of a strong legacy is palpable in the portrayal of dysfunctional parents. Conspicuously, neither pair of brothers has family names, which indicates their disconnection and alienation from their families, irrespective of whether they are white or black. In both plays the brothers have been betrayed by their parents since their youth, thus they are unable to trust anyone, including (and especially) each other. Austin and Lee's father is an alcoholic who abandoned the family long ago to live in the desert. "What the brothers share that supersedes all of their petty differences of personality is a connection to their father and an inability . . . to escape their father's emotional inheritance," as Crank maintains (94). Their mother—on vacation in Alaska—is just as

debilitated and unreliable as the boys' father. Her insignificance, or just the opposite, her downgraded, unappreciated significance, is effectively underlined by her passing physical and brief textual presence in the play. Her blindness to and unawareness of reality is evident in the closing scene of the play. After returning from Alaska only to see Picasso—whom she conflates with his works, thus blurring the boundaries between art and the artist—in the town she sees her sons fighting in her own house and says: "You boys shouldn't fight in the house. Go outside and fight" (Shepard 56). She feels completely alienated and emotionally detached in her own house.

Similarly, *Topdog* provides "a bleak, disturbing vision of familial disruption and devastation in black urban America" (Dawkins 90). Parks's view of the family seems to be even more distressing than that of Shepard. Laura Dawkins maintains that "Parks deploys the metaphor of fratricide to demonstrate that her characters have lost the African American ideal of brotherhood through assimilation into a hierarchical American society—a society based upon capitalistic rather than communal values" (90). Whenever some remnants of familial attention, brotherhood, and communal values surface, they are invariably linked to and tainted with the central role of money, thus stressing the destructive power of money on familial relations.

Booth's desire to work together with his brother in the three-card-monte scam is a faint attempt to restore the close bond between the brothers they used to have after their parents leaving: "I'm hooked on us working together. If we could work together it would be like old times. They split and we got that room downtown. . . . It was you and me against thuh world, Link" (Parks, *Topdog* 70). According to Maufort "the feud between the brothers takes its roots in the very ruthlessness of capitalism" (93), which signifies the loss of communal values. In the brothers' past there are "two almost identical financial transactions related to their parents and parental heritage. One day, when the boys were adolescents, their mother gave five hundred dollars to Booth and left forever. Two years later their boys' father gave five hundred dollars to Lincoln and was never again seen by his sons. She gives Booth the money and leaves him forever: "she had my payoo-my inheritance—she had it all ready for me. 5 hundred dollar bills rolled up and tied tight in one of her nylon stockings" (105). The personal and even sexual nature of the object his mother uses to wrap the money—an object which calls to mind the stocking as emblem of sexual exchange in Miller's masterpiece *Death of a Salesman*—underscores the close relation between money and sexuality for Booth. Booth has never spent his money, unlike Lincoln, who received the same amount of money from his father in ten fifties in a clean handkerchief and "blew" it immediately. In fact, Booth has never even taken it out of the stockings to count it. Both parents warn their children not to spend the money, essentially denying its function as money. When Booth reveals that he still has the inheritance, Lincoln points out that in effect, his inheritance is not money as long as he refuses to do anything with it: "That's like saying you don't got no money cause you aint never gonna do noting with it so its like you don't got it" (21-22). It is Lincoln's attempt to cut open the stocking and verify the existence of the five hundred that propels Booth toward his last violent act at the play's end.

The representation of the strain and tension between the brothers evident in their role-reversal in Shepard's play is analogous to themes modulating in a carefully composed musical structure as Stephen S. Bottoms suggests:

> the opposing brothers [Austin and Lee] effectively act as statement and counterpoint, to be played off against each other with differing degrees of intensity in the play's nine scenes, which thus become akin to nine movements. Indeed, the brothers' 'themes, 'which start off at diametrically opposed extremes, are eventually blended and blurred to the point where they cross over completely, in a role reversal which is as much a musical device as it is character development. (185)

In line with the compositional parallels from music, the concluding scene in *True West* with the brothers pitted against each other creates a sense of immense continuity similar to the endless reiteration of leitmotifs in operas by Wagner. In Shepard the violent antagonism re-occurring between the brothers features as thematic leitmotif:

> *They square off to each other, keeping a distance between them . . . lights fade softly in to moonlight, the figures of the brothers now appear to be caught in a vast desert-like landscape, they are very still but watchful for the next move, lights go slowly to black as the after-image of the brothers pulses in the dark . . . .* (59)

Similarly, the changing dynamics between Lincoln and Booth in *Topdog/Underdog* also follows modulating themes in a musical piece, though this is composed of six movements (scenes). The final clash between Lincoln and Booth in *Topdog/Underdog*, however, ends with fratricide, in an enactment of the historical tragedy. Unlike in *True West*, "where the play clearly moves into the archetype" (Morse 260) with the image of the never-ending fight between the brothers, Parks' play finishes with a coda. This emotionally charged part concluding the play provides a glimpse of hope that a sense of community and brotherhood so seriously disrupted within the black families may be restored. On a verbal level Booth still justifies killing Lincoln insisting the money inherited from their mother was his: "It was mines anyhow, even when you stole it from me it was still mines cause she gave it to me" (110). In his gesture and moves, though he truly repents his deed: "*He bends to pick up the money filled stocking. Then he just crumples. As he sits beside Lincolns body, the money-stocking falls away. Booth holds Lincolns body, hugging him close. He sobs*" (110).

The setting in both plays encodes a sense of confinement and restricted space. The vast Western prairies and open spaces evoked in Shepard's play are contrasted with the actual physical space where the acts are located: "all nine scenes take place on the same set: a kitchen and adjoining alcove" (Shepard 3). Crank also highlights the contrast between the externally evoked space and the actual inner physical space: "because escape and freedom are huge themes within *True West*, the fact that we witness the entire play within this small space underscores the frenzied nature of the two characters' interactions" (81-82). Austin and Lee "are caged like animals," which is further reinforced by their actual presence on the stage: "other than one single moment, both brothers appear onstage together for the entirety of the play" (Crank 82). The lack of space, a sense of isolation and segregation so readily evoked by the setting in *Topdog* also accentuates the limits and restrictions the brothers face in their lives as well as in the history of the Americans. "Chaudhuri calls this set 'not just a

room, but an archetypal room, a room with vengeance . . . [and the] very emblem of limits and boundaries" (qtd. in Geis 113).

Lincoln and Booth's flat is a claustrophobic and suffocating space containing only one bed, one reclining chair and one small wooden chair. The characters not only become closed into a small place, but this space holding them captive gradually narrows down on them, and the isolation of this closed system causes an explosion that leads to the murder. Varró's claim referring to suffocating sets in several Shepard plays also applies to Parks's play: "the respective settings in the plays also predetermine the kinds of values that are bound to clash" (64).

Parallels exist in the mode that the passage of time is shown in the plays. *True West* begins at night and concludes "with dusk four days later," and the passage of time in this play is reflected in the sunrises and sunsets, the accumulating junk, the death of the house-plants, and the growing pile of empty alcohol bottles" (Kane 142). As a consequence of the lack of a functional past and a sense of homelessness pervades both dramas. The house in Southern California Austin and Lee inhabit belongs to their mother, while Lincoln and Booth are merely tenants in the rooming house. They are all nomads, wanderers, in exile, and only temporary settlers, be it the black ghetto of New York or the white exurbia of Los Angeles.

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Journeys Into Night: Agewise Cinematic Constructions in *Cas and Dylan* and *Our Souls at Night*

Réka M. Cristian

Agewise in the Contemporary Film World

Ashton Applewhite, American writer, activist, blogger and expert on ageism, the author of *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism* (2016), remarked in her 2017 TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) series lecture "Let's End Ageism" that today when the aged population is, according to the United Nations statistics, at its highest level in human history, in most societies, including developing and the developed countries alike, "people are living longer and societies are getting grayer; you read and hear about it on all media platforms and outside of them." This essay will be about a slice of these platforms tackling cultural narratives involving longevity and ageing—and their subsequently increased visibility on the silver screen. In order to investigate ageing as a marker of life course identities in two cinematic matching and mismatching journeys into ageing, I have chosen two North American movies presented in the past five years, the Canadian-made *Cas and Dylan* (2013) directed by Jason Priestley and with Richard Dreyfuss and Tatiana Maslany in leading roles, and the US-produced *Our Souls at Night* (2017), directed by Ritesh Batra, featuring in the main roles Jane Fonda and Robert Redford. I am interested to see the ways in which the representation of senior citizens—in the above-mentioned movies all being members of the North American Baby Boomers generation—is challenging the cultural myths of aging through various acts of performativity.

Talking of media platforms, Applewhite brought up the example of the 2017 Best Picture nominations at the American Academy Awards and found that only twelve percent of speaking or named characters in nominated films were aged sixty and up. As she argued, most of them were paradoxically portrayed as "impaired." As with previous misrepresentations of women, racial and sexual minority groups, a change in regard to a negative, biased filmic representation of seniors as disabled, medicalized, or simply silenced had to occur sooner or later worldwide. Or, as Jane Fonda earlier claimed, this was not really a simple change but rather an ample revolution, a longevity revolution for what Fonda called "life's third act." Six years before Applewhite's empowering speech, the American actress, writer, and political activist had already called for a change in her "Life's Third Act" TED Conference talk in regard to how ageing was seen at that point in most societies. Fonda said that there had been "many revolutions over the last century, but perhaps none as significant as the longevity revolution" which needs yet to be realized by the society at large because now people are living on average "34 years longer than our great-grandparents did," which adds

up to "an entire second adult lifetime that's been added to our lifespan." Fonda stressed that "yet, for the most part, our culture has not come to terms with what this means" because we are "still living with the old paradigm of age as an arch. That's the metaphor, the old metaphor." And the old metaphor is still wrapped under various forms of ageism, coined in 1969 and characterized, as the World Health Organization (WHO) defines it, by discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping and pathologizing on the basis of age; in this sense, ageism has become the new global glass ceiling.

The cultural critic Margaret Morganroth Gullette was among the first to call for distinctive age or ageing studies in the 1990s (Bouson 6), following immunologist Élie/Ilya Metchnikoff's idea of ageing and longevity from *The Prolongation of Life. Optimistic Studies* (first published in 1908 and then republished in 2004) and, among many other writers in various fields, Simone de Beauvoir's opinions from her quintessential but largely neglected book, *The Coming of Age* (1970) by challenging the so-called "narratives of decline" (Whelehan in Jermyn 113) pertaining to ageing, and by fighting the "cultural assaults" of ageism in her books, *Aged by Culture* (2004) and the smartly titled *Agewise. Fighting the New Ageism in America* (2011). Gullette labeled ageism after Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963) as a crisis "that doesn't *yet* have a name" (emphasis added) by stressing that "[T]he ignorant call it aging, and the enemies make it a scapegoat for others. We must learn to call it ageism, argue that it *is* a crisis, and fight back" (*Agewise* 17). This crisis has been eminent already, not only from direct life facts but quite predominantly from the linguistic realm, especially in English-speaking countries. Critical of the "vast shadowy context of American age culture" (*Aged by Culture* 5, 7), Gullette highlights the fact that

> English has an inadequate vocabulary for discussing either age or decline. Like the term "age" itself, "ageism" has too many referents. It's broad and slippery. Aside from referring to nasty characterizations of older people, it can be used about the serial killer in scrubs who decimates a nursing home. Mortgage vendors who scam older homeowners. The embarrassingly unfunny *Saturday Night Live* skit about "cougars." The twenty-eight-year-old man in a novel who shrieks at the seventy-year-old narrator, "Crawl back into your hole and die . . . old man." The drugstore items purring "anti-aging." The ridiculous tabloid headline, "Look *seven years* younger." Too many disparate things, at disparate moral levels, fall under the rubric. This level of generality makes ageism deniable: nursing-home murders are rare; realtors defraud people of all ages; the humor and the curse and the products are trivial. (Indeed, someone's usually ready to defend any of these instances: "That's not ageism." Or even make it invisible or tabooed: "Ageism doesn't exist"). (7)

To counteract such critical situations in real life—and beyond—there have been various anti-ageist talks, papers, and books, civil and political activism amplifying especially in the second decade of the twenty-first century. This joint effort included, among many academic and non-academic forums, the founding of The European Network in Aging Studies (ENAS) in 2010 with the mission to facilitate international collaboration within the study of cultural ageing alongside its North American counterpart

(NANAS) that was established three years later, with both networks publishing as of 2014 the open access online journal *Age, Culture, Humanities* (*An Interdisciplinary Journal*). To highlight the current global importance of issues in age and ageing, the World Health Organization has also started its anti-ageism initiative with the global strategy and action plan on ageing and health Resolution WHO 69.3 as of 2016.

In terms of filmic representation of senior citizens, *Aging, Popular Culture and Contemporary Feminism: Harleys and Hormones* (2014) is currently a milestone book on the phenomenon of an increasing number of newly produced films (by big and independent studios alike) that tend to focus on the exploration of various narratives of ageing and its place in a given culture. It seems that these visual forms of longevity representation drew in a "silver tsunami" (Whelehan and Gwynne 2) that has been sweeping over the western film world, producing a "graying" of filmmaking over the past decade or so, with moving images especially celebrating the ongoing zest for life instead of adopting previous cultural scripts on aging as regime of decline. These films challenge aging stereotypes and interrogate essentialisms, directing one's attention to age as a marker of identity of various golden age life-courses. Such competent and sensibly structured scenarios made in the past decade include, among the two target movies of this essay, many other films and series, such as *The Expendables* (2010), *Sex and the City 2* (2010), *Red* (2010), *Cloudburst* (2011), *Quartet* (2012), *Amour* (2012), *Hope Springs* (2012), *Song for Marion* [*Unfinished Song*] (2012), *Last Vegas* (2013), *Nebraska* (2013), *4 Länder* (2013*), The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared* (2013), *Le Week-End* (2013), *5 Flights Up* (2014), *Avis de Mistral* (2014), *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2011) and *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2015), *The Intern* (2015), the Netflix series of *Gracie and Frankie* (2015), *The Second Time Around* (2016), *Book Club* (2018), *Mamma Mia 2: Here We Go Again* (2018), to name some eloquent examples. Moreover, as Imelda Whelehan and Joel Gwynne have claimed, many previous filmic representations of golden-agers refused to critique essentialist notions of gender by showing "how fear about age disrupting gendered distinctions between men and women becomes the basis for ageism" (12) or simply avoided doing so. In the light of the released films in the past decade, this seems to change. The visual realm of North American contemporary visual culture that "colonized romance as the province of the young" (Jermyn 114) is now on its path to revamping agewise plots, mostly in the form of gerontodramas and gerontocoms that resonate with wider audiences not only on the American continent but also on the global scene. In this context, popular culture in general and film in particular

> is entirely responsive to the vicissitudes of trend and taste regarding age and ageing, and whilst often cast as conservative, reactive and shoring up 'traditional' norms and values**,** the very business of tapping into winning formulae and representational tropes exposes the cracks and fissures in our comfortable assurances that we know what ageing means and is. (Whelehan and Gwynne 4)

But do we? Or do we simply need to watch more "agefully."

In *Cas and Dylan* and *Our Souls at Night*, the films I have chosen to investigate, I look for various perspectives on age and ageing and the manner in which age is acted

out in the celluloid world; moreover, I will explore, with the help of Enikő Bollobás's theory of performativity, the narrative assumptions about age and the challenges in its representations in the field of normative age-effects. Performativity, according to Bollobás, "has the ability to signal the borderline, ambivalent and receding between the text and outside it" significantly contributing "to the understanding of the constructedness of the real and the reality of the constructed world and how we can know, if at all, where the boundaries are" (202). In the realm of age representation, to understand the constructedness of the characters ("the real" versus the projected ones) one needs to understand the dynamics at work between the visual-cultural parameters of the intradiegetic or the "constructed world" and the extradiegetic context, that is, the "reality" of the contemporary North American context and to spot the more or less discernable thresholds between these. In these circumstances, it is extremely helpful to hunt for the characters' performances to see the performative aspect of their identity. In Bollobás's formulation, perfor*mance* (with emphasis in the original) is "a particular mode of performativity, characterized by a mimetic replaying of norms and the replaying of ruling ideologies when constructing the subject" while the perfor*mative* aspect (with emphasis in the original) is the one that "refers to another mode of performativity characterized by a resistance to ruling ideologies and the bringing about of new discursive entities in subject construction" (21).

Performing Agewise in *Cas and Dylan*

The Canadian buddy-comedy-drama and Montefiore-produced film directed by Jason Priestley from a screenplay by Jessie Gabe was released for the Atlantic Film Festival in 2013 and distributed later on, mostly for a limited release and video on demand. Its restrained success was measured mostly on review aggregation websites (for example, the Tomatometer was 4.7 out of 10 on *Rotten Tomatoes*; 32/Mostly negative on *Metacritic*; and on *IMDB* it reached a rating of 6.6 out of 10). As critic Susan Wloszczyna wrote on *RogerEbert.com*, this film "isn't so much a road trip as roadkill," a one-way Trans-Canadian odyssey starting from Winnipeg through the Rocky Mountains and ending in Vancouver, peppered with dashed dreams and last chances where two "incompatible travel mates," coupled with the "makings of generational clash," join in a journey that opens their eyes to various issues in order to accept and respect each other's foibles, age and, ultimately, death. One of them is Dr. Cas Pepper (Richard Dreyfuss), a white-haired, lonely, sixty-one-year-old widowed Winnipeg oncologist with a tight, conservative attire and with a terminal brain tumor; knowing what he has to face soon, he has been contemplating suicide but is unable to write his farewell note due to an unexpected writer's block. He, therefore, decides to drive his orange Volkswagen Beetle to his summer cottage on Vancouver Island to cross the great divide with dignity by leaving behind only a "legacy note." But as Stephen Holden claims, Cas is "bound for the Pacific Coast and a resting place not only for himself but for his dead dog, whose corpse he keeps in a cooler in the back of his car." Dr. Pepper (sic!) is thus on a dual death march and the movie follows his journey into his chosen night. The other character is Dylan

Morgan (Tatiana Maslany), a twenty-two-year-old "flibbertigibbet," opportunist young woman, a social misfit with a go for broke attitude, "who thinks hanging around hospital wards filled with people in pain is a good way to become a writer" (Wloszczyzna). Moreover, she is an eccentric, talkative figure living with an abusive-aggressive boyfriend whom Cas accidentally hits with his car (when he gives Dylan a ride home after they accidentally meet in the doctor's hospital) thus finding himself a fugitive from the law. Dylan gladly joins the elder physician and embarks on a testy camaraderie during which she sings, lies, mocks people, shoplifts, smokes, and disrespects Cas to a certain point. And, similar to Cas, she also has a writer's block and is fit for a voyage of self-discovery.

The combination of two so mismatching people, a free-spirited, hippie young woman, and a grumpy, elderly scientist, both faced with a writer's block, can only end in a successful inner and outer journey, an unusual endeavor on both sides, especially if age is the central structuring element. As Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera observes in his book on recent American Studies, where he sheds light on the paradigm of "Age" as the new, viable trope that can best surpass trasnationalized notions of identity that function as variants of former exceptionalism, in terms of age and ageing

> [W]e tend to understand, respect, and appreciate those with whom we share meaningful life events—and this phenomenon creates a sometimes unspoken affiliation that confers a dimension of stability and constancy to a relationship. In the same way that the transnational idea constructs imagined shared histories and underscores them through cultural ceremonies (these would include public rituals that celebrate certain concepts, heroes, values, and so on), Age as a new structure would construct links that bind strangers to one another through a more universal index. (177)

The meaningful life events Cas and Dylan share are of intergenerational and interage matter; however, their encounter bridges even class and gender divides by focusing more on agewise patterns what binds the two characters together than on what separates them: death—and birth (since, as it transpires, fugitive Dylan is pregnant and gives birth to a baby girl and so she becomes a single mother, who ultimately inherits Cas' waterside retreat as a real home). Dylan at first does not understand, respect or appreciate Cas, but the voyage into the unknown with him creates a kind of affiliation that first converts their initial opportunism into camaraderie and then into a veritable parent-child dyad. The cultural ceremonies they share include running away from their previous life and an ad hoc dining together, peppered with some hitchhiking, when they meet an aging couple suffering from Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, resetting their stance on human connections. Throughout the entire journey, Cas is aware of his proximity to death and acts agewise while Dylan is not—though she has to finally learn to recognize it, especially when she helps Cas find peace. The invisible presence of death as an agewise trope pervades most of their moments. When Dylan asks about the theme of Cas's "note," the latter simply replies "Death. The Theme is death." Age as a structuring principle that binds these two strangers to each other is made visible in this movie less through the typical iconology of decline ideology of

an elder man (versus a young woman) but rather through the cultural ceremony of an agewise journey—and death/birth as balancing act.

Performing Agewise in *Our Souls at Night*

In 2017, the young(er)-skewing platform Netflix issued the autumnal romance *Our Souls at Night* directed by Ritesh Batra, written by Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber, based on the novel of the same name by Kent Haruf (2015) and starring age activist Jane Fonda (who played in *Gracie and Fankie* and in *Book Club* with Richard Dreyfuss, to name only a couple of roles from the inventory of agewise films enlisted previously) and Robert Redford. This was the fourth collaboration between Fonda and Redford, who were both over eighty when the film was produced. The movie had a reasonable box office success; moreover, on the review aggregation websites this movie achieved also quite good scores: the Tomatometer was 7.5 out of 10 on *Rotten Tomatoes*; 69/100 on *Metacritic*; and on *IMDB* it reached a rating of 7.5 out of 10), indicating that a(nother) film on aged people could be a crowd pleaser.

The movie is set in a small town in Colorado and begins with Addie Moore (Jane Fonda) paying a sudden visit to her shy neighbor, Louis Waters (Robert Redford). Addie's husband died long ago, and so did Louis' wife; the two elder people have been alone, living in neighboring houses for decades with their children far away. For years the two, seemingly old-fashioned people had merely greeted each other and lived close by. But for Addie, this type of life becomes uncomfortable and, having nothing to lose anymore, she decides to take on a proactive role inside and outside her home and goes against culturally expected roles. So she knocks on her neighbor's door to finally establish a more viable connection with him. She is tired of being forsaken and is afraid to be alone in the darkness, so she visits Louis with a strange and crushingly sincere proposition: she suggests they spend their future nights together—just lying beside each other. This is how she phrases her heartfelt idea:

> "I want to suggest something to you", she says, with a soft smile on her lips. "It's a... proposal of sorts. Not marriage. It's a kind of marriage-like question, actually, but umm... I'm getting cold feet." Louis shuffles in his seat and chuckles. "Would you be interested in coming to my house sometime to sleep with me?" He arches his eyebrows. "Did I take your breath away?" "Yeah," he says. "See... we're both alone. We've been on our own for... for years. And, uh... I'm lonely. I'm guessing you might be, too." He looks at her, not saying anything. "Louis, it's not about sex. I lost interest in that a long time ago." Taken aback initially, Louis eventually agrees.

And so they start an encounter of a close kind. During their first night, Addie asks Louis to just talk to her and once they are sitting in bed Louis opens up and tells delicate instances from his life, leading to a liberating discussion. Addie, in turn, tells about her traumatic life after her daughter's death, and the dialogue continues in a series of counseling sessions during which both are unexpectedly candid—except when

Addie, feeling at once safe and secure with Louis in her house, falls instantly asleep after he reaches her bedroom. They become confidants, who, at first, try to hide from the eyes of their neighbors but then decide to make their relationship public. As Xan Brooks has noted, "in the dark, Louis and Addie murmur their secrets and tend their wounds" and "when they step out, hand-in-hand, into the daylight, they look just as beautiful as they ever did;" the pair are a secret for a while, then become a scandal for the people of their town, but suddenly "they're not news anymore, just another elderly couple pottering down Main Street." Addie and Louis are first hesitant acquaintances, then vulnerable friends and companions through the night and age to finally become lovers who act like teenagers, especially when they are apart, being connected only through their smartphones. And indeed, as Guy Lodge wrote, "[T]here is a certain irony, however, in the web distributing a film in which the characters themselves take a decidedly circumspect attitude to new technology – at least, until smartphones bring the old dogs closer to the possibilities of the late-night 'u up?' text."

The movie "praises of the basic decency of ordinary American folk in search of a measure of happiness, even as they make choices that go against social norms and make tongues wag" (Young) because of their age. Nevertheless, as Tanul Thakur writes, this movie is "a beautiful tribute to the power of second chances"–and of reinventing lives at any age. The story of Addie's and Louis' journey into night(s) is an instance about something that can hardly be defined at any age, about something that exists because it feels right and comforting regardless of social mores, judgment or years passed by an agewise filmic narrative.

Agewise Journeys into Night

The representation of aged characters, Cas, Addie and Louis in these films focuses on the events of unusual change in their lives and can be best understood through various acts of age performativity connected to those changes. These occur in both films mostly at the borders of the character's in/visibility within its own life, an intradiegetic narrative setup that exposes a cycle of performativity. For example, Dr. Pepper seems deserted and is thus made invisible at the level of his community (colleagues, patients); he has no family and nobody is calling him up or seeking him out. Nevertheless, in a perfor*mance*[1] attitude characteristic for most of his widowed life, miming his living in the style of "business as usual," Cas is paying for his wife's cell phone long after she is gone so that he can have someone to call and to hear her voice, live, over the voicemail box. This act of calling makes him alive and helps him escape a reality that is too harsh to live alone. Moreover, in an act of veritable courage, he decides to give up his secure place in his home and at the hospital (both as doctor and future patient), all this against the commonsense attitude of his generation peers by hitting the road in a perfor*mative*, subversive way: taking his dead pet in a cooler with him to the end of the road adds extra spice to this perfor*mative* aspect. Dylan's

1 In the rest of the essay the terms perfor*mance* and perfor*mative* appear like this, applying Enikő Bollobás's way of spelling them in her cited book.

stance is mostly perfor*mative* before the journey: she resists societal norms and can hardly fit in the mainstream cultural script. Cas and Dylan meet in the space of the fugitive perfor*matives*: during these events of change the physician cooks pasta sauce for Dylan in a motel and becomes a veritable hippie with a huge, blond wig flowing in the wind after Dylan, realizing Cas's situation, wants to ease his pain by sprinkling a drug into his coffee, thereby making him happy—and howling like a wolf. Cas has a number of other numerous perfor*mative* turns on the road, such as when he writes his final note into a testament through which he leaves his house to Dylan, who finally finds her place in the world. However, the end of the perfor*mative* "road" is death for Cas and partial perfor*mance* for Dylan, who as a single mother, starts complying with societal norms—but does not return to her child's abusive father. The end of the perfor*mative* road for Dylan is the birth of her daughter, who will be brought up in Cas's summer cottage. Both Cas and Dylan are caught in a cycle of performativity that leads them to closures bringing them in balance not only with the age in which they are living but also with their own age.

Addie and Louis, due to their age, are less visible to the people of the city before they decide to "sleep" together, since their presence (or non-presence) and public image melt into the culturally expected scripts of a widow and widower. This is their perfor*mance*: the Colorado octogenarians are "invisible" only while they keep their relationship a secret; then they become quite "visible" as agents of local gossip and scandal when they become perfor*mative*. And then, all of a sudden, they're not news—and perfor*mative*—anymore. These changes in the waves of the "silver tsunami" exhibit a subversive perfor*mative* attitude under the mask of the mimetic replaying of norms, making it a neo-perfor*mative* attitude. And this neo-perfor*mative* attitude of Addie and Louis living together (and next to each other) lasts also after a hospitalization period when Addie moves to her son, Jamie. Although Addie and Louis are miles apart towards the end of the film, they are still close by never ceasing to talk to each other: each night before going to bed, they have intimate discussions on the cell-phone Louis sent Addie as a gift. Through a technological barter in which the smartphone takes the role of bed, the two remain connected by transcending the space between them. And so, the neo-perfor*mative* spirit is nested in for the rest of the intradiegetic narrative—and, in an agewise strategy, perhaps even beyond.

The progress narratives in the two films discussed above are, if summed up, mostly perfor*mative* by dismantling ageism in various ways, and are connected to various rites of passage: an intergenerational dialogue of death and birth in *Cas and Dylan* and the same-generation dialogue of "nuptials" in *Our Souls at Night*. All characters counteract cultural expectations of the old by transcending norms, rules, standards, and even filmic stereotypes. They either combine perfor*mance* and the perfor*mative* in a cycle of performances (Cas and Dylan) or end up with a neo-perfor*mative* stance (Addie and Louis) in their journeys into night across Canada or the US. Cas's cycle of agewise performativity ranges from the last stage of his terminal cancer to an adventurous road trip, and from suicide to dying with dignity; thus he does away with the ageist paradigm of decay as such by dismantling it through his last journey into eternal night. Addie's and Louis's cycles of agewise performativity extends from their culture's social expectations of loneliness and vulnerability through secret meetings and scandal to fitting into

the scripts of unusual romance plots; their journey into nights together roams from fear to pleasure by showing that it is not ageing but, as Applewhite has shown, age discrimination which is the problem in a fluid culture where age is a spectrum from which each can choose its journey. Age performativity in these two movies shows that it is possible to transgress stereotypical or ironical representations of the aged in various cinematic scripts, making these visual stories more about what Bob Stein, one of the founding fathers of the new media, calls in the "A Rite of Passage for Late Life" TED talk, an agewise opening of "a door to whatever comes next."

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The Witness, the Silenced, and the Rebel—Women in Search of Their Voice: Female Characters in Brian Friel's *Translations* and Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone*

Bence Gábor Kvéder

Introduction

It appears to have become a commonplace of Irish literary criticism that in *Translations* (1980) Brian Friel dramatizes largely national and historical issues. Referred to as his "most obviously postcolonial play" (Bertha 158), it is known for having the "nineteenth-century plot and setting [that] bore on Anglo-Irish relations in the present" (Roche, *Theatre and Politics* 2). Raising communal awareness, the play concentrates on the "key transitional moment when Irish gave way to English, when a culture was forced to translate itself into a different linguistic landscape" (Pelletier 68). In such a collectively damaging situation, personal problems could easily be overlooked. However, Ondřej Pilný emphasizes that Friel in general was "interested predominantly in individual people and their emotions, in their micro-narratives and their position within the surrounding discourse" (113). Whereas the hardships and traumas depicted in *Translations*, and especially their consequences, are suffered by the characters as members of a community in the first place, this does not necessarily mean that personal issues are missing from the drama.

Even though Martine Pelletier observes that "*Translations* problematizes the relationship between language and identity" (69), it is relatively rarely considered that the latter term can be extended (or narrowed down) to the female characters of the play. It is widely accepted that "the critical interest in *Translations* continues to gain momentum, eliciting increasingly subtle and diverse readings" (Boltwood 151), but scholarly reflections concerning the women in the drama are scarce. Lauren Onkey points out that "critical analyses [. . .] have rarely studied the play's women characters or the issues about women and colonialism that the play raises" (162) and continues her argumentation by suggesting that "*Translations* resonates into the volatile symbolic and real history of women in Ireland" (162). In this sense, despite the constant presence of communal problems, Maire, Sarah, and Bridget do have their own personalities, characteristic (therefore examinable) features, and potential connotative roles—not only as Irish but also as female human beings.

Translations is a drama that deals extensively with the onset of a new cultural-historical era, connecting the theme of language to that of voice and the ambition to express one's ideas and basic points of view. These issues, along with women's rights in general, underwent considerable changes during the one and a half centuries

leading up to the time when Friel wrote his play. For this reason, a 1980s drama depicting the lasting consequences of the type of colonization that takes place in *Translations* and also portraying women as its central figures might offer a relevant point of comparison. Since Friel's work is an example, albeit a very unconventional one, of the "Troubles play," Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1985), where the Troubles era actually serves as the backdrop, seems to be a suitable choice for a comparative inquiry. Mary Trotter notes that the Devlin play "recounts the lives of three Northern Irish women whose experiences are shaped by both their own ideologies and those of their fathers, brothers, and husbands" (122), resulting in a personalized plot in the drama. Indeed, the stories of Frieda, Donna, and Josie in *Ourselves Alone* imply presuppositions, circumstances, and conclusions as socially and culturally critical, albeit more detailed, as those in the case of Friel's female characters.

This essay will concentrate on the possible common grounds between *Translations* and *Ourselves Alone*, focusing upon their female characters. The main scope of the analysis is going to be their corresponding, at some points opposing, features and the similar motives conspicuous in the six women both on public/social and on private/individual levels. I attempt to argue the importance of Friel's "heroines" as the prototypes and forerunners of the ideas embodied by Devlin's three female protagonists. Although they are wide apart from each other in time, emphasis will be put on the two plays' contribution to the effective depiction of women's situations and (dis)abilities, as well as on the (im)possibilities of the creation, identification, representation and protection of the individual self within conflict-ridden Irish contexts. In underlining the relevance of the plays, my comparative analysis will search for evidence for the claim that not only *Ourselves Alone* but also "*Translations* [. . .] was a product of the contemporary situation in which it was composed" (Grene 34). My hypothesis is that, despite the 150-year difference between their plots, the portrayal of women's experiences in the two dramas shed similar light on some of the most acute social and cultural problems Irish people during the onslaught of the colonial oppression of their country and Northern Irish Catholics during the Troubles had to face.

Witnessing and Clairvoyance

In spite of having relatively little theatrical space, as her character is far from being central, Friel's Bridget fulfils the minor but indispensable role of the alert witness and analyser of changes taking place in Baile Beag. A piece of evidence for Bridget's significance as a cultural "prophet" is that the physical symptoms of an imminent calamity are shown through her figure. She constantly smells the sweet but menacing odour of the potato blight, a potential sign of the Great Famine, which took place in Ireland a decade after the action of *Translations*. Thus, Bridget stands for "the doomed sense that the potato blight *will* hit Baile Beag, like all the other poor western seaboard areas where the famine was most acute, and that the disaster-mongers are to be proved all too right" (Grene 38; italics in the original). Her importance is increased by the fact that it is her words that draw attention to the approaching disaster:

> BRIDGET. [. . .]
> [. . .] (BRIDGET *runs to the door and stops suddenly. She sniffs the air. Panic.*)
> The sweet smell! Smell it! It's the sweet smell! Jesus, it's the potato blight!
> (*Translations* 63)

Readers and spectators of the play "may have had little knowledge of the National Schools or the Ordnance Survey, but everyone would have been aware of the Famine" (Grene 38), so the connotation here is significant.

Similarly to Bridget's mediating role in *Translations*, Josie, "the serious voice" (Olinder 547) of *Ourselves Alone*, "resides in a kind of political middle ground between Frieda's radical spirit and Donna's faithfulness, as she is one of relatively few women actually working in the IRA" (Trotter 122). Regarding the female characters' participation in the conflicts depicted or foreshadowed in the two plays, both women, Bridget and Josie can be seen as remarkably active. Despite her somewhat superficial role as a kind of comic-relief character, Bridget's connection to Doalty (whose innocent-looking mischief early in the play turns out to prefigure the conclusion of the drama) can easily make her the "manliest" of the three women in the hedge-school—and this particular feature carries some implications for her possible future beyond the plot. Similarly, in Devlin's drama Josie "is the fighter [. . .], the conscious socialist, the woman who has tried to be as good and patriotic as a man in the guerrilla warfare, but who has mainly been used as a courier" (Olinder 547). However, her figure evokes certain historical questions concerning the potential negligence and misrepresentation of female members of the IRA. As Colin Coulter summarizes women's participation in the ongoing Troubles, "it has been comparatively rare for women to have directly assumed the role of combatants during the troubles [sic]. While the role that women have played in the political violence of the last three decades has been strictly secondary, their participation nonetheless should not be overlooked" (131). Even though women were indeed involved in the conflicts, their collective image and the tasks undertaken by them suffered distortion and marginalization.

Summarizing the general picture concerning female duties in the IRA, Britta Olinder notes that "in the Republican struggle the role of women is mainly as the messengers and sexual comforters of the real fighters" (547). This is exactly what Josie continuously intends to defy—unsuccessfully. Specifying the problem she experiences, Mária Kurdi highlights that "Josie's gendered marginalisation [. . .] is accentuated without comforting illusions about her paramilitary service. Josie has been involved in nationalist activities since her childhood, sent out on dangerous errands mostly at night; she took up the inferior job of a courier out of duty to her family as well as to the Catholic community she belongs to" (170–71). The paradox of her situation is that the more she is involved in the actions of the IRA, the less independently can she handle her own personal life and identity as a Catholic woman in Northern Ireland.

Regarding the potential clairvoyant function of Bridget's counterpart in Devlin, it should be highlighted that Josie "is sleepwalking and feels sick all the time" (Olinder 548; see also *Ourselves Alone* 15), which can be interpreted as the unsettling signs of the psychological damage the Troubles brought about. The negative effects this era had on female members of the Northern Irish society are also emphasized by Coulter:

"The various emotional and material costs associated with the troubles [sic] have evidently taken their toll upon the minds and bodies of many women. The upheavals that recent generations have endured have encouraged nervous disorders that would appear to afflict women with particular regularity" (134). Certain symptoms of this can be traced in Josie's behaviour as well. Since the Great Famine and the Troubles are undoubtedly perceived as tragic events in the collective Irish mind, the characters of Bridget and Josie reveal the sorrows and hardships Ireland and many of *her* people had to go through.

Woman as Symbol of Ireland—The Silenced Shout

In *Translations* Sarah is the female character whose role can be interpreted in several ways. Approaching her significance in Friel's play from the most evident perspective, Margaret Llewellyn-Jones notes that "language's function as a prime element in identity is manifest in Manus' teaching Sarah, the dumb girl, to speak through naming herself" (24). Besides the relationship between language and identity, the motivating force behind Sarah's determination to speak is also very personal. Despite the fact that she "loves her teacher but can barely speak her own name, let alone communicate her love" (FitzGibbon 75), Sarah is not discouraged—as long as she has Manus at her side. Considering the cultural importance of speech, critics highlight that "Sarah, only once, manages to use her new-found ability to communicate through language. When Owen asks her who she is, she can state her name and the place she comes from—she can state her identity" (Niel 209; see also Andrews 169). The following are the only words uttered by her without Manus' aforementioned supervision and help:

> Owen. That's a new face. Who are you?
> (*A very brief hesitation. Then.*)
> Sarah. My name is Sarah.
> Owen. Sarah who?
> Sarah. Sarah Johnny Sally. (*Translations* 28)

Such an act of self-identification can happen on multiple levels: by speaking, one can profess to be a person, as well as member of a certain group. In Sarah's case, her achievement to utter her name confirms her identity as a female human being and as one of the Irish people. Anthony Roche highlights that Sarah and Manus even share a kind of code language: when she sees Maire and Yolland kiss, Sarah lets Manus know about what she saw "through some combination of speech and mime but in a language of her own that he is uniquely equipped to interpret" (*Theatre and Politics* 139).

Roche also examines the abrupt turning point in the relationship of Sarah and Manus, and concludes that "Manus has taught her well, and it is a deeply ironic tribute to his pedagogic artistry that what she manages to articulate is not her own name, Sarah Johnny Sally from Bun na hAbhann, but his: 'Manus ... Manus!'" (*Theatre and Politics* 139).[1]

1 For detailed analyses of Sarah's role (as a mediator between private and public spheres of life and as a spy for her tribe) in the love triangle of Maire, Yolland, and Manus, see Onkey 169 and Pine 172.

Onkey takes this line of thought one step further: "Her [i.e. Sarah's] success at speech is new, and has only been motivated by Manus' encouragement; without Manus, she has lost her ability and inspiration to speak" (170). At the end, being commanded to speak in Manus's absence by Lancey, Sarah's muteness testifies that indeed "he [i.e. Manus] is her only route to language" (Onkey 169). It is at Manus' departure that she utters her last words in the drama:

> (*He addresses her as he did in Act One but now without warmth or concern for her.*)
> MANUS. What is your name? (*Pause*) Come on. What is your name?
> SARAH. My name is Sarah.
> MANUS. Just Sarah? Sarah what? (*Pause*) Well?
> SARAH. Sarah Johnny Sally.
> MANUS. And where do you live? Come on.
> SARAH. I live in Bun na hAbhann. (*She is now crying quietly.*)
> MANUS. Very good, Sarah Johnny Sally. There's nothing to stop you now— nothing in the wide world. [. . .]
> SARAH. (Quietly) I'm sorry ... I'm sorry ... I'm so sorry, Manus ...
> (*Translations* 56–57)

Both her "*waiflike appearance*" and the fact that "*she has been considered locally to be dumb*" (*Translations* 11) suggest that Sarah is not likely to overcome the loss of Manus in the foreseeable future, and her "muteness indicates her silenced status as both woman and colonized individual" (Llewellyn-Jones 24). As a subject of the double oppression women in the colonies usually had to face, Sarah can also be associated with the process of attaching feminine attributes to the colonized. Nicholas Grene convincingly states that "there is no doubt that opening the play with the almost dumb Sarah trying to say her name is a potent image for a nearly stifled Irish-speaking community" (38). Sarah is a member but also a representative of her language group. Therefore, when Maire compliments her dress by saying that "green suits you" (*Translations* 60), the connotation of the colour as an Irish symbol is apparent.[2]

Reflecting the calamities the Irish have to endure, "if Sarah represents the nation's difficulty with speech, then she is either silent in defiance or fear of the colonizer" (Onkey 170). When she finds herself interrogated by someone who not only represents a menacing power for her but also talks in a foreign language whereas she struggles to speak even her own mother tongue, she remains silent:

> LANCEY. [. . .]
> (*Pointing to* SARAH) Who are you? Name!
> (SARAH*'s mouth opens and shuts, opens and shuts. Her face becomes contorted.*)
> What's your name?
> (*Again* SARAH *tries frantically.*)
> OWEN. Go on Sarah. You can tell him.

2 I am indebted to Mária Kurdi for drawing my attention to the potential significance of this sentence.

> (*But* Sarah *cannot. And she knows she cannot. She closes her mouth. Her head goes down.*)
> (*Translations* 62)

Since "her ability to speak leaves her when the situation changes" (Niel 209), Sarah's silence appears to be both accompanied and *enhanced* by her situation. Attributing her muteness to the theme of English colonization, Pelletier notes that the moment when she "reverts to silence upon being questioned by Lancey [. . .] suggests a possible symbolic reading of this character as Ireland, struck dumb through fear and the imposition of English" (67–68; see also Andrews 156 and 169, as well as Roche, *Theatre and Politics* 142). The smile on her face (see *Translations* 63) might contradict total hopelessness, but the fact that then she "*shakes her head, slowly, emphatically*" (*Translations* 63) as a response to Owen's reassuring words suggests that her muteness might be irredeemable.

The question whether Sarah eventually refuses to speak because she indeed does not have any other chance or because she intends to "exploit" her disability as a kind of passive protestation leads Onkey to note that "her many silences and ambiguous gestures require that we must remain open to a range of explanations for her behavior, especially in a play about ambiguous translations and the problematics of language" (169). In view of her complexity and the apparent symbolism related to her, Sarah has even been likened to the mythical Cathleen ni Houlihan,[3] or analysed as one particular example of "a long line of idealized female representations of Ireland" (Harris 35). Lionel Pilkington refers to Sarah as "the shawled girl or Cathleen Ni Houlihan figure" (*Theatre and the State* 212), which is a pertinent observation, all the more so because she is introduced by Friel as a woman of uncertain age (see *Translations* 11). In this interpretation Sarah is an allegorical character deprived of her ability to speak and represent herself on stage at the end of the play—both in theatrical and in national terms.

The smile Sarah has on her face before leaving "could be nothing more than a simple gesture of farewell to Owen. But it may also be read as a refusal to be simplified" (Onkey 170), an allusion to the fact that the fight is not over just yet.[4] In fact, she is the only character who leaves the stage without haste and not in an upset mood (see *Translations* 63). Bidding a terse farewell, Manus, as mentioned before, leaves "*briskly*" (57). Lancey, having threatened the Irish, "*goes off*" (63) with notable vehemence. Frightened by the ominous events, Bridget "*runs off*" (63). Doalty, hinting at his knowing "something" concerning the Donnelly twins' whereabouts, "*leaves*" (64) in a stern and fierce temper. Being perfectly aware of Lancey's intentions, Owen also "*exits*" (67) in a hurry. Even Maire, who later returns, briefly walks out in a highly disturbed state of mind (see *Translations* 60). It is notable that Owen decides to join Doalty and the Donnelly twins against the British after Sarah has smiled at him (see *Translations* 66–67). This enhances her role as Cathleen ni Houlihan, the mythical woman figure motivating her men never to stop fighting for what belongs to them. Paradoxically, while she departs with dignity Sarah also serves as the embodiment of an oppressed, muted nation.

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3 See, for instance, Kurdi 93.

4 I am indebted to Mária Kurdi for this possible reading of the stage instruction.

In Devlin's play, in contrast with Josie, Donna "plays a more traditional role for women linked to the IRA, as she raises her infant child and waits for her partner, Liam, to be released from prison" (Trotter 122). The predicament she is expected to cope with can be highlighted by a quotation from Coulter's book on contemporary Northern Irish society:

> Since the late 1960s tens of thousands of Northern Irish men have been killed, incarcerated and incapacitated. The wives and girlfriends of these men have often had to shoulder the burden of holding entire families together. Women have frequently had to raise children alone and on minuscule incomes. Inevitably, many have had to endure acute and sustained financial hardship. (134)

Donna functions as a fitting example of this. Her plight is further worsened by the fact that she "must handle not only the economic and emotional demands of raising her child without the help of its father, but also her partner's unjustified jealousy and distrust, despite his own affairs" (Trotter 122). Although Friel's Sarah has neither a husband nor a child, her subjugated position and the lack of hope for any actual "breaking out" finds a relevant parallel in the figure of Donna, since both women can be looked at as sufferers of undeserved deprivation, powerlessness, and enforced passivity.

Donna is usually analysed as a victim who is confined to the domestic space—which she hardly ever leaves in the play. She "is [. . .] the long-suffering, patiently waiting woman, [. . .] the comforter, the person who has learnt to adapt herself to a lack of power" (Olinder 547) and one who "draws inspiration from values other than the internalised roles and duties of the unhomely public sphere" (Kurdi 104). What is more, at the end Donna has to remain "bound by domestic ties" (Kurdi 103), which makes her situation even more similar to that of the muted Sarah. Ironically, the home as the source of values most appreciated by Donna eventually proves to be the space she has been imprisoned by all along. However, it is also true that she "incarnates the domestic centre of the play, offering tenancy and support to Frieda's and Josie's more nomadic lives" (Cerquoni 164), creating and strengthening a bond between them which is not yet characteristic of the women's relationship in Friel's drama set well over a century earlier.

Unlike Friel's Sarah, Donna's figure has no allegorical dimension. Closer to herself, Sarah has another counterpart in *Ourselves Alone*, in the off-stage character of Aunt Cora. The sardonic manner in which Frieda describes her points to the harsh ambiguities of the nationalist ideology:

> Joe. What happened to your aunt when she was eighteen?
> Frieda. Oh, the usual. She was storing ammunition for her wee brother Malachy—my father, God love him—who was in the IRA even then. He asked her to move it. Unfortunately it was in poor condition, technically what you call weeping. So when she pulled up the floorboards in her bedroom—whoosh! It took the skin off her face. Her hair's never really grown properly since and look—no hands! (*She demonstrates by pulling her fists up into her sleeves.*)

> [. . .]
> They stick her out at the front of the parades every so often to show the women of Ireland what their patriotic duty should be. But I'll tell you something—it won't be mine!
> (*Ourselves Alone* 29)

The McCoys' disabled but respected relative Aunt Cora is characterized by Kurdi as follows: "To underscore the potentially destructive impact of the ultra-nationalist ideology on women in contemporary Northern Ireland, the [. . .] play incorporates an offstage *personification of the Mother Ireland* figure in a mute and crippled woman who used to work with explosive materials to serve the goals of Republican patriotism" (216; italics added). Despite only being talked about, this present-through-absence impersonation of Cathleen ni Houlihan in Devlin's play offers a further parallel between *Translations* and *Ourselves Alone*. Commenting on the complex socio-cultural context in which the aunt is mentioned, Kurdi observes that "it is a shocking paradox that as a woman Cora deserves respect for serving the purposes of male-dominated sectarian ideology best in a state of being physically impaired and silenced forever, objectified into a passive icon" (102–03; see also Olinder 546). In this sense, Friel's Sarah, being a character from a play concerned with communal processes foreshadowing their outcome, prefigures both the *ideologically* paralyzed Donna and the *physically* paralyzed Aunt Cora in that she is the combination of these two types of gendered human inefficiency generated by colonialism.

Rebellion and Emigration

In Friel it is not only Sarah who can personify Ireland in a rather obvious and effective way. Llewellyn-Jones highlights the other option by pointing out that Lieutenant Yolland "falls in love with Maire, Manus' sweetheart, partly due to his over-romanticised and thus feminized view of Ireland" (23; see also Roche, *Theatre and Politics* 140). Being the hopeless idealist he proves to be, Yolland "is the only English character who truly appreciates the looming loss of a centuries-old way of life in the parish" (Russell 169) and "describes his encounter with the Gaelic language as a revelation" (P. Müller 110), so he is eager to find the (nearly) perfect embodiment of the culture he has been enchanted by. It is emphasized by Onkey that "Friel's depiction of Maire should keep us from evoking the symbol of woman as nation without also enumerating its problems for women in national and colonial rhetoric" (171). As an alternative embodiment of Cathleen ni Houlihan—a figure who has to face aggression, too—, she is the female character in *Translations* who becomes the most aware of harsh, and apparently even lethal, physical violence emerging between the locals and the intruding forces. The fact that she "is bereft when her man is needlessly taken away from her" (Murray 105) indicates the cultural and personal shock she undergoes due to the imminent, escalating conflict between the Irish and the colonizing army. Maire's incoherent, rhapsodic, rambling thoughts and fragmented sentences after Yolland's sudden disappearance express the effect of this on her:

> MAIRE. [. . .]
> Something very bad's happened to him, Owen. I know. He wouldn't go away without telling me. Where is he, Owen? You're his friend—where is he? (*Again she looks around the room; then sits on a stool.*)
> I didn't get a chance to do my geography last night. The master'll be angry with me. (*She rises again.*)
> I think I'll go home now. The wee ones have to be washed and put to bed and that black calf has to be fed...
> My hands are that rough; they're still blistered from the hay. I'm ashamed of them. I hope to God there's no hay to be saved in Brooklyn. (60)

Although Maire clearly alludes and directly refers to recent events, the stage instructions unmistakably describe her movements as hectic, signalling that she is in a temporarily unstable state of mind. Furthermore, the way she organizes (or rather fails to organize) her words and her speech lacks cohesion indicating that she is deeply shaken by the situation.

Looking at Maire as a possible impersonation of Ireland suggests a parallel with "Frieda, the youngest and wildest of the characters" (Trotter 122) in *Ourselves Alone*. Similarly to Maire, in Devlin's play "Frieda, who is most explicitly against violence, is the character we see exposed to violence repeatedly" (Olinder 549). The acts of abuse she suffers mainly from her father (see *Ourselves Alone* 26, 38–40, and 86) and her lover, John McDermot (see *Ourselves Alone* 81–82) "are violent expressions of men's frustration when their power over a woman's, whether a daughter's or a lover's thoughts, words or actions, is challenged and they feel threatened in their fundamental beliefs and experiences" (Olinder 549). As a woman Frieda is, not unlike Cathleen ni Houlihan, hurt and dispossessed by male intruders, but dares to protest against their mistreatment.

One further common feature between Maire and Frieda can be noticed in the ultimate responses to their plight. The former, after Yolland's presumable death[5] and Manus' leaving Baile Beag, stays alone. She wants to start learning English, which shows that Maire is the most independent-minded one of the three women in *Translations*: even though her success depends on Hugh as her tutor, she is willing to start a completely new chapter in her life—which will probably end with her becoming an emigrant. Frieda's behaviour bears resemblance to Maire's from this perspective, too: in *Ourselves Alone* she is the one who, "at the end of the play, [. . .] arrives at the conclusion that she will rather be lonely than suffocate" (Olinder 548; see also *Ourselves Alone* 90). Raising the comparison onto a communal-national level, it is the hardships, within the cultural frames and connotations of 1833, that Maire intends to abandon since "her wish to learn English is not to reforge it within an Irish context, but to escape to America" (Llewellyn-Jones 24; see also Andrews 171 and *Translations* 20). Regarding Frieda, "it is the political situation in terms of sectarian warfare, social conflicts, and the victimization of women that she is leaving" (Olinder 550), as she

5 Richard Rankin Russell strongly suggests that Yolland is murdered by two off-stage characters, the Donnelly twins (see, for instance, 24, 27, 84–85, 155, and 188).

does not want to follow in her "aunt's self-sacrificing footsteps" (Trotter 122). Thus, in the end, both Maire's and Frieda's paths lead them away from their homeland and from the crisis their people are troubled by—although their future remains uncertain.

Among the opposing characteristics in Maire and Frieda, the most obvious one might be that Maire is unable to act on her own: men like Manus, Yolland, and eventually Hugh prove to be indispensable helpers in her world. Unlike her, Frieda "demands to be acknowledged as a person in her own right" (Olinder 548). The reasons behind their decisions to emigrate are also different. Her main source of income being agricultural work, Maire's wish to leave "is no doubt motivated by Baile Beag's strained economic and social conditions" (Boltwood 172), while Frieda, as an urban artist, seeks a spiritual kind of liberation abroad. Furthermore, Frieda also represents feminist ideas, being "the one to realize that the present fight for freedom and independence is a fight for men's freedom and independence, leaving the women out of account" (Olinder 549). To state that Maire's personal conviction has such a gender-specific element would be an exaggeration since she is a tormented lover rather than an early propagator of female rights, but her free-minded decision anticipates Frieda's choice of a new life. The step Maire is planning to take is coupled by her eagerness to overcome the obstacle of a foreign language:

> Hugh. Yes, I will teach you English, Maire Chatach.
> Maire. Will you, Master? I must learn it. I need to learn it. (*Translations* 67)

Unlike for Maire, this linguistic barrier is non-existent for Frieda's generation, due to the language change which was starting at the time when *Translations* is set:

> Donna. Have you somewhere to go?
> Frieda. England.
> Donna. Why England?
> Frieda. Why not? It's my language. (*Ourselves Alone* 89)

Maire's decision "articulates a free-floating readiness to abandon Ireland if not her Irishness" (Boltwood 172), which, in comparison, appears to take great courage and determination: as the title of Friel's drama also suggests, at this point in history Gaelic language was still an organic, indispensable part of Irish identity. In the 1980s the element of language was no longer a marker in this aspect, so Frieda does not deny her Irishness when she considers English her mother tongue. Her character as an aspiring independent artist can also imply that women were gaining more space within society 150 years after the era in *Translations*.

Maire's intention to emigrate is her "revolt" against the lasting changes brought about by colonization, which also makes her the most enlightened, broadest-minded person within her community. Richard Pine says that she is "one of Friel's most successful creations" (115), while Elmer Andrews considers Maire "the character who most strongly and consistently questions the traditional 'Irish' habits of mind, the conventional ethic of 'belonging,' the primacy of 'nation'" (173), underlining that she

"is the play's principal spokesperson of the forces of modernisation" (174).[6] Arriving at a similar conclusion, Grene refers to her as "the moderniser, the advocate of English and progress" (37; see also Russell 161). Frieda is given a similar role by Kurdi, who summarizes her character and importance as a peaceful propagator of development:

> Of Devlin's three women characters it is Frieda who succeeds most in awakening herself and trying to awaken others to the fixities of the system which promotes the reproduction of stereotypical attitudes and responses. Emphatically, she protests against outdated customs and practices of the nationalist heritage like the cult of martyrdom for their potential to destroy lives, women's and men's alike. (102)

Both Maire and Frieda can therefore be considered the leading "social philosophers" in their own cultural environment. The former belongs to the people of Ireland on the verge of total suppression, while the latter to the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, but both are the representatives of something innovative and forward-looking. Furthermore, "emigration is a constant temptation" (Lojek, "Sense of Place" 186) to overcome the respective, politically generated crises in both plays, reflecting the answer thousands of the Irish sought or gave to the challenge of poverty and ideological deprivation. In this regard, deciding "to leave her birthplace for the loneliness necessary for an artist to create original works away from the asphyxiating limitations of the milieu ruled by militant ideologies" (Kurdi 103), Frieda proves to be a descendant of Maire in *Translations*.

From Subjugation to Sisterhood

The marginalization of female characters is more emphasized in *Translations*. As exemplified above, they can very rarely be seen acting on their own: their space is restricted by the constant presence of men, thus none of the three can actually be given a comprehensive description without also mentioning their respective male companions in some detail. At the same time, a kind of double colonization of women appears in both plays, so the three heroines cannot achieve ultimate freedom in *Ourselves Alone*, either. As Kurdi notes, "by focusing on a female trio with their personal differences the Devlin drama reveals that a radical break with the society which entangles them in various confining nets can never be an option for all women" (103). While Frieda manages to leave, both Josie and Donna are doomed to remain in Northern Ireland—and take responsibility for the consequences of their situation, comparably to the two staying female characters in *Translations*. For instance, although "she denies being brave" (Olinder 547), Josie's fate is similar to the unseen (but subtly implied) future of Bridget in Friel's play: both women are likely to remain close (if not necessarily directly connected) to the traditionally masculine principle of military activity and public conflicts, mainly influenced by significant male characters, Doalty and Malachy,

6 For a detailed analysis of Maire's principles concerning progress, see Andrews 173–74.

respectively. Indeed, "the pregnant Josie is taken home by her father, which raises doubts about her freedom in the future. Yet it seems that she is no longer just his 'mate' in the organisation, a shift is taking place towards the private in their relationship" (Kurdi 103; see also Kurdi 172). The following exchange supports this possibility:

> MALACHY. Take your hands off her!
> (LIAM *lets go of* JOSIE*'s arm*.)
> MALACHY. I'm the father here, son!
> LIAM. What's wrong with you? She's carrying Conran's baby!
> (MALACHY *puts his arm around* JOSIE.)
> MALACHY. My baby now. (*Pause while he looks around.*)
> Josie's going to live with me from now on. Isn't that right, love?
> JOSIE. (*Hesitant*): Yes.
> MALACHY. This baby's my blood. If anyone harms a hair on its head...!
> (*Ourselves Alone* 88)

Although she has presumably always been closer to her father than Frieda, Josie's reconciliation with Malachy is a climactic moment in the play. Olinder comments on this scene by highlighting that "her [i.e. Josie's] father steps in to protect her. To save her child, to save life which is now her priority, she does not resist getting into his power again" (548). At this point Josie is aware of the fact that loosening the ties with the official activities of the IRA is the only way for her to strengthen her relationship with her loved ones: instead of spending time with or craving for Joe Conran or Cathal O'Donnell (see, for instance, *Ourselves Alone* 15–17), now she has to take responsibility for her baby. Thus, "it is true that she returns into her father's patriarchal power, but at least she manages to get away from the power of her two lovers as well as her commitment in the Republican movement" (Olinder 548). By this time she must have realized that it is in her private life, rather than in a public or national role, that she needs solidarity, assistance, and solace. Friel's Sarah has from the very beginning depended completely on Manus, while Donna is hardly able to separate her life from that of Liam, which makes these women stay and inevitably accept the presence (and burden) of male superiority. However, it does not automatically mean that their voice is destined to be totally suppressed—and silenced—in the late twentieth-century Northern Irish context, as proven by Josie, who stays but takes her life in her hands.

The on-stage female characters, altogether six in number, in Friel and Devlin can rightfully be seen as exploited and/or forsaken by men. In *Translations* none of the three can cope with their plight without the assistance of men. The paradox of their situation is that the problems caused by the false decisions and sometimes downright aggressive behaviour of the men around them can only be solved or moderated with the help of male characters. In *Ourselves Alone* "all three women survive these 'treasons,' relying on their individual and *communal* strength as women to see them through these personal and political crises" (Trotter 123; italics added). The reason behind their eventual success from this point of view is to be traced through the way in which "Devlin constructs a close-knit collective of the three women in the play: Frieda and Josie are sisters while Donna is their childhood friend and also their

brother's partner" (Kurdi 100). The growing sense of being sisters to each other is further enhanced by the fact that "the women's trio organises itself on the basis of equality and solidarity" (Kurdi 100), indicating that Devlin's play argues for the idea that outer violence can be balanced and compensated by inner peace—which is most likely to be achieved through the experience of sisterhood.

Even though "numerous women have participated in the campaign of insurgence orchestrated by republicans since the early 1970s" (Coulter 131), "Devlin's women" are right to "seek [. . .] palatable fulfilment: a place to be themselves, a place where they will not be perpetually waiting for their men, and a place far away from the Provos [i.e. the Provisional IRA], the UDA [i.e. the Ulster Defence Association], and British soldiers battering on their doors" (Watt 33). Llewellyn-Jones also highlights the ambiguous connection between military activity and women's life when she notes that in Devlin's play "an atmosphere of 'tribal' conflict makes separation of emotional and political loyalties virtually impossible, although the women want to resist it positively" (84). This is the step that female characters in Friel's work are practically unable (or disabled) to take: they either join the ensuing fight (Bridget) or accept the role of witness by remaining largely passive (Sarah) or leave the homeland (Maire).

The feeling of sisterhood that could help female characters find a kind of remedy against their (present and impending) miseries is missing from *Translations*: in Friel's play, except for when Maire says to Bridget that she "saw your Seamus heading off to the Port fair early this morning" (21) and the compliment she makes on Sarah's green dress (see *Translations* 60), they hardly even talk to each other. This suggests that the observation that "Friel's women may occasionally flout authority, but they rarely perform it" (McMullan 143), can be applied to *Translations* as well. The "heroines" in Baile Beag have to endure the imminent calamities separately, i.e. literally on their own. The absence of a unifying force, accompanied by a sense of uncertainty, is reflected through Hugh's final words addressed to Maire:

> Hugh. [. . .] I will provide you with the available words and the available grammar. But will that help you to interpret between privacies? I have no idea. But it's all we have. I have no idea at all. (*Translations* 67)

While "in *Ourselves Alone* women are confined within physical and ideological rooms, but carve out more permeable rooms of inner existence" (Cerquoni 161), none of Friel's female characters can yet create such interior spaces for themselves, therefore their options and chances are far more limited than those of Devlin's heroines a century and a half later.

In *Translations*, as Christopher Murray notes, "the key scene [. . .] is when Maire and Yolland exchange place names as an expression of their lovemaking. [. . .] Most Friel critics have seen this love scene as the heart of the play" (103). In *Ourselves Alone* the most significant, central moments are those during which the three women have the opportunity to enjoy some privacy and talk freely about themselves, each other, and their connections with the rest of the (male-dominated) cast. Frieda's monologue about their transcendent solidarity provides the most fitting example of this:

> Frieda. [. . .]
> I remember a long time ago, a moonlit night on a beach below the Mournes, we were having a late summer barbecue on the shore at Tyrella.
> [. . .]
> We three slipped off from the campfire to swim leaving the men arguing on the beach.
> [. . .]
> And we sank down into the calm water and tried to catch the phosphorescence on the surface of the waves—it was the first time I'd ever seen it—and the moon was reflected on the sea that night. It was as though we swam in the night sky and cupped the stars between our cool fingers.
> [. . .]
> We lay down in the sandhills and laughed. (90)

Not only does the above comparison allude to the importance of language barriers in Friel's work, but it also draws attention to the fact that his women are unable to form any kind of alliance; Sarah, for example, even spies on the love scene and betrays Maire's choice to Manus (see *Translations* 52–53). In contrast, Devlin's female characters can always count on one another and, to an extent, manage to escape from total subjugation.

Conclusion

The fact that Devlin's female characters are much more likely to find some remedy for their hardships than the women in *Translations* can be explained by the considerable time gap between the two plots. Friel ends his play with a rather pessimistic tone as regards his "heroines," which might function as a further sign of ultimate suppression as the whole country is threatened by becoming "translated" into a British identity.[7] Although Bridget will presumably follow "the insurgent figures in *Translations* (Owen, Doalty and the Donnelly twins)" (Pilkington, "Reading History" 506) and have some role in the impending fights between the Irish inhabitants and the British troops, Maire's determination to leave for America and Sarah's helplessness signify that in the 1830s women did not have the opportunity and means to unite against double oppression in an efficient way. The respective situations in which the three female characters find themselves at the end of *Translations* are not as promising as those in *Ourselves Alone* and their presumable fates imply less confidence and hope.

Devlin's heroines, through "their loving companionship and the strength of their shared memories" (Kurdi 104)—and despite the tempestuous, unstable conditions caused by the Troubles—, can make paths in life potentially successful or, at least, moderately bearable. As Trotter points out, "there is no question that these women will continue to fight" (123). Accordingly, the ultimate tone of *Ourselves Alone* can

7 I am indebted to Zsuzsanna Csikai for this comment.

be considered positive, since "not only does it give voice to women's perspectives, it finally shows their emotional, psychic solidarity with each other" (Llewellyn-Jones 84). Projecting this conclusion to the public spheres of life, Kurdi notes that "*Ourselves Alone* [. . .] sets a final scene in which the young female characters [. . .] share an epiphanic, also lyrically charged experience of transcending the gender constraints of the self-fragmenting sectarian society in which they live" (100). In contrast, the potential fates of Friel's female characters ominously suggest a future of loneliness and/or further subjugation.

If the oppression of women in Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth century can indeed be portrayed by a "Troubles play" written in 1980, the analysis of Friel's three female characters may also add some fuel to "the frequently impassioned critical debates" (Boltwood 151) about *Translations*. Despite not being the protagonists of the drama, the experiences embodied by Maire, Sarah, and Bridget can be compared with the experiences of women who suffer from the long-lasting consequences of the nineteenth-century colonization of Ireland. Helen Lojek notes that in 1985 "Devlin created an ensemble piece, with major roles for women" (335), accentuating that "her forthright exploration of parallels between social/political patriarchy and familial patriarchy was unusual at the time" ("Troubling Perspectives" 335). Thus, the connotations of the intricate system of father-daughter, brother-sister, and male lover-female lover relationships in the drama are worth looking at in other analyses. Outlining a general framework for the play, Enrica Cerquoni remarks that "theatrical presentation [. . .] succeeds in laying bare the operations of power, and the omissions and divisions involved in the construction of womanhood within an Irish historical and cultural context" (168). Consequently, not only can Frieda, Donna, and Josie represent diverse attitudes towards the circumstances of the Troubles, but they also inspire an examination of rendering Irish women's subjugation during the earlier periods of colonial history. As this essay has attempted to highlight, Devlin's heroines may be considered the cultural descendants of Friel's female characters.

In conclusion, it can be noted that, at some points in history, a nation's state of political affairs and its people's collective mind can be analysed quite effectively by taking account of the plights and chances of women as represented across time. Regarding Irish communities past and present, the ways in which the six female characters depicted in Friel's *Translations* and Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* are enabled (or disabled) to cope with the prescribed gender roles imposed on them, their nationality, and their lives as human beings are highly expressive of the main cultural and social concerns generated by colonialism and its aftermath.

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Interview

A Talk with Irish Playwright Deirdre Kinahan

Mária Kurdi

Q: What or who inspired you to write your first play?

DK: My first play was *Bé Carna, Women of the Flesh* produced in 1999 by Tall Tales Theatre Company. It was a play about prostitution in Dublin, a monologue play exploring how women working the streets were deeply affected by the stigma and illegality of their profession. It was not at all voyeuristic but showed these women had lives as mothers/daughters/sisters/lovers, that they come from every walk of life and are not "other." I wrote it because I was working as an actress at the time and gave occasional classes with Ruhama Women's Project which offered support to women working in prostitution. I got to know the women over two years and they asked me to write a play about their lives that would highlight their humanity and show the dreadful exploitation rife within that industry. I had never considered writing before that!

Q: Then came the play *Attaboy, Mr. Synge!* The title including the name of a hugely acclaimed iconic figure in Irish theatre, does your piece perhaps embody a kind of response to playwriting traditions? What is your relation with other Irish playwrights, classical or contemporary?

DK: *Attaboy* grew out of a one-woman show called *Summer Fruits* which I wrote and performed for my theatre company Tall Tales. It centres around a highly unconventional amateur drama enthusiast who joins a traditional rural theatre group and causes ructions with her overtly sexual and highly unorthodox interpretations of revered classics. It was a comic exploration of social divisions, class, rural/urban, artistic/lay, etc. The conceit was that the group were celebrating their 25th year with a production of the Irish classic *The Playboy of the Western World* and our friend positions herself and her revolutionary approach, front and centre. I suppose the most obvious inspiration would come to me from Lenox Robinson's *Drama at Inish*.

As far as my relationship goes with other Irish playwrights, I love them. I was pretty much reared on them as my mother and I trotted along to pretty much everything in Dublin when I was a teenager. My mother loved the theatre and was delighted to have an enthusiastic partner. I saw all the great traditional productions at the Abbey and many more contemporary ones at the Project and Peacock. Big influences would be Tom Murphy and Marina Carr. I also love Brian Friel, particularly his *The Freedom of the City*. These plays impacted on me enormously as a teenager. I ate up everything Dermot Bolger wrote for theatre or as a poet and novelist, he was a voice I immediately connected with. I loved companies like Barabbas who told stories in a physical rather than literary way. I am also a huge fan of contemporary dance. There

are lots of interesting new and mid-career writers whom I love like Caitriona Daly, Karen Cogan, Nancy Harris. Conor McPherson, Martin McDonagh, Mark O'Rowe and Enda Walsh have surely left their mark on me too. I particularly relate to Conor's work. I love craft. I love the word.

Q: Could you describe your working method and give an account of the major steps of how you develop a drama from the first idea and preliminary draft to the final form?

DK: I write all the time. I usually have anything from three to eight projects in full swing. I work with theatres and artists both national and international, collaborating in many different ways and creating a huge variety of plays. In 2018, for example, I have had seven new pieces of work premiere: *The Unmanageable Sisters* at the Abbey Theatre, *Wild Notes* in Washington DC, *Renewed* in London, *Me & Molly & Moo* touring Ireland, *Rathmines Road* in Dublin, *Crossings* in the UK touring and *House*, a project as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival. So there is no absolute formula in how I approach a play because sometimes I co-write, sometimes I work with musicians, etc. Generally, however, plays ferment in my head for a long time before I actually create the commission and sit down to write. I am usually a four to six draft woman. Plays often start with a question for me or a strong idea/storyline/character. I think about this for a while. Place it somewhere in my head and come back to it.

Once I start writing, I can write quickly. I wrote *The Unmanageable Sisters* in four weeks. I have just started writing a new play for Landmark Ireland to be finished in 2019, yet *Rathmines Road* has been a luxurious three years from commission ... it depends on the time-frame and what else I have spinning. I find a lot of the magic for me starts when I actually put pen to paper. Plays are very dynamic living organisms in my mind and I find out a lot about my characters when I get into their socks and shoes and trousers. I get right into that room with them and feel it. I laugh a lot when writing, also cry a lot. I used to think that might be nuts until a great film-maker said to me: well, if you don't feel it, how do you expect an audience to feel it? I absolutely get into the mindset of each character and hit that emotional journey. Structure comes once I know what the big questions are and who the characters are. I don't usually think about structure, it is just a means to unleash the story/exploration.

I really enjoy writing. There are times when I feel like I'm going through a mangle and I can't, just can't get the scene to go where I want it to go, then I go for a walk or go to bed and it irons itself out. I might have to jump up or run home and just write the scene fast as it flashed into my head. I kind of fall in love with my characters and they haunt me until I do them justice. I am all gut and instinct ... I think I am and have always been a storyteller. The gift in spinning a number of projects is that when I am researching/focusing on one, I do one and only one with the other projects dropping out of my head entirely. I then hand in the draft and move onto the next project. When I come back to the original, I am very fresh in my approach. I almost always work with a director or a trusted dramaturge, I love to take notes and have conversations after each draft. I type up the conversation immediately and then leave it a week or two before I come back to re-read notes and start writing. I am collaborative in that way but once the play is finished, I feel it is finished. I let it go. I love to let the others, the

theatre people bring the magic and I kind of like to disappear so that the experience is between the play, the actors and the audience. I shouldn't be visible at all.

Q: Do you weave personal experience, events or incidents that have happened to or affected you during your life into your plays?

DK: Absolutely. I am very dangerous to be around. I seem to have a knack of getting people to talk to me. Maybe I'm a listener. I soak up the experiences of people around me and often think ... wow, that's a play. I am curious and a total people watcher, I have been one since I was a child, so the idiom of language, the quirks of character all come from real life. Similarly, I often wonder what it is like to be that person, particularly if I know a person has suffered or survived a great trauma and in trying to understand what it feels like, I write a scenario, put myself in there and feel it. There is a lot of my family in my plays. *The Unmanageable Sisters* was entirely inspired by my Mother and her sisters and that extraordinary generation of women I knew in my childhood. There is certainly a lot of my own story and experience wrapped up in the characters. With a play like *Spinning*, I get into Susan's headspace and imagine the agony of losing a teenage daughter. I have had the experience of losing a baby and I think that grief haunts a lot of my writings.

Q: Does it help to find the most suitable language registers and form to your plays that you are also an actress?

DK: Yes, certainly. When I write, I literally play all the parts. I read the script aloud and know how it falls or doesn't fall off the tongue. I think theatre is kind of in my DNA, I've been obsessed with it since I was about eight years old. I went to a drama school when I was ten and acted in plays all the time as a teenager and right through into adulthood. I think in terms of theatre, that is just how stories become presentable. I also really trust actors in the rehearsal room and will tweak the script to fit their instincts. I often write for particular actors too, knowing their art and performance.

Q: Once you said that the early play, *Hue & Cry*, which was first produced by Tall Tale Theatre Company in association with Bewley's Café Theatre in 2007, has a special place in your work. Could you elaborate on its significance?

DK: *Hue & Cry* is a play about grief and how it can define us, particularly when repressed. I suppose it was inspired by the experience of a very good friend of mine who lost her mother when we were young girls. I was always very conscious as to how that trauma completely shaped her as a person and how she interacts with the world. When I wrote *Hue & Cry* I was seven years into writing but I feel it is the play where I really found my voice. It is very funny, sparse and emotionally charged. It features two men, which is actually unusual for me but I felt I really knew these men and their emotional constipation, I enjoyed setting that dysfunction to music in a sense ... to the music of their dialogue. The play is set at the night of a funeral and appears initially familiar but then spins into a very different place. I know one reviewer in

Edinburgh admired the "off the wall originality" of the script and that pleased me. It also received a Critics Pick in *The New York Times* at a small festival in 2009, which helped put me on the map internationally. I remember I had a vision of these two men dancing from the very outset and really wrote the entire play to get them to that point. I'm delighted to say that it is being revived in January in Dublin with two rising stars of Irish Theatre in the roles. I suppose it is just one of those plays I remain incredibly fond of, Kevin and Damien are always with me, they still make me smile.

Q: Your play *BogBoy* had its premiere and a very successful run in New York as part of the 1st Irish Theatre Festival there in 2011. According to a critic it "has the kind of voice that stays with you."[1] In a sense it seems to be your "Troubles play" yet more than that in addressing the aftermath of the sectarian war interwoven with another deep-rooted trauma of the Irish society in its plot. Could you speak about the genesis of this play? Were you aware of the resonances with Heaney's poetry while writing it? Was the audience in Ireland also enthusiastic about this drama?

DK: Yes *BogBoy* was much loved I think though it has only had one production, it is still my Dad's favourite. *BogBoy* is an exploration of our deeply conflicted relationship with Northern Ireland and the sectarian violence that exploded into war in the late sixties. Belfast is only 136 kms from my door. Members of the disappeared were buried in a bog not two miles from my cottage in County Meath and I remember thinking "you don't find your way down that lonely bog road unless you are local." So it is entirely possible that local Irish people were involved in those murders/burials. That is one of the many brutal truths surrounding the Troubles that are shrouded in silence and that haunt us as a society and a nation. No matter how we turn our face away, we are complicit in and deeply affected by what happens not too far from our front door. Northern Ireland is Ireland and the partition and border still hurt and still resonate deeply in our politics. The story of the disappeared in particular seemed like an excellent way to explore that relationship and also point to the other disappeared members of our society, beautiful broken people like Brigit.

The form of *BogBoy* allowed me to soar in terms of language, the mix of monologue and action opens up possibilities for style but for me as long as the language is truthful, it works. *BogBoy* was also a radio play so that emphasis on language probably sat at the front of my consciousness when writing it. As for poetry, I do love Heaney, I wouldn't have drawn on him directly but I think bogs lurk in the Irish imagination and creative impulse to a strong degree so any similarities are not surprising to me. The genesis of the play was one day when I was out walking on the bog, I saw a bright bunch of flowers, so tramped over to investigate. Tied to the flowers was a photograph, half faded, of a young man. I knew by the polaroid colours that is was probably 1970s and I wondered who is that boy and why are these flowers here. I then read that they were digging in the bog for bodies of the disappeared (civilians kidnapped and murdered by the IRA in the early 1970s) and I began to picture what might have happened to him.

1 Rachel Saltz. "A Lost Girl of Ireland, Dealing with Its Lost Boys." *The New York Times* Sept. 16, 2011. https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/17/theater/reviews/deirdre-kinahans-bogboy-review.html

The boy Kevin McKee was recovered from a nearby Bogland in 2015.

Q: *Halcyon Days* was your first play to have its Irish premiere as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2012, and was very well received. It is a play set in a nursing home with action involving an elderly man and an elderly woman talking to each other, which does not sound very dramatic when described in such brief terms. What do you think made it a success? Did it perhaps strike a chord with many audience members?

DK: On the surface it might appear that it is just two people talking, but the beauty of *Halcyon Days* is that it is always moving, their interaction is always shifting as they grow to know each other and impact enormously on each other. The characters are based very much on my uncle Sean and my mother Patricia. The stories are different but personality traits and language are the same. It is a play about resilience and how there is always hope once the heart is beating. I kind of set it up like a love story until you find out that it is doomed because she is dying and he is gay. It is funny and tragic ... you think you know it until it spills away from you. I think audiences recognized something fundamental in the interchange and the characters, because it is very alive and poignant without being sentimental.

Q: In two of your other plays, *Moment* and *Spinning*, one of the main characters killed a child in the past and served a prison sentence for some years before the action begins. What is the significance of this kind of background to the respective characters and does it join the two plays somehow? Can one think of them as family plays, the form characteristic of twentieth century modern drama inflected, recharged and reshaped here by certain acute contemporary problems?

DK: *Spinning* and *Moment* are certainly in the same vein. They are family plays in a way and plays that expose dysfunction, denial and the pressures of social convention. I think you will find that *Rathmines Road* also fits into this batch of my work. Fraught, tight, contemporary dramas that feel familiar but then spin into new territories. I like writing in this way ... when you put characters into a pressure pot it makes for eruptions and eruptions make for strong drama. They both reveal episodes from the past and how these episodes have shaped the characters' present and future but they are not reveal plays ... they are not about the incident, the murder, they are about the aftermath and how the aftermath ripples out to the destruction of multiple family members.

Q: *Spinning* is my favourite and perhaps a favourite of many other people among your plays; its exceptionally powerful emotional charge really grabs us by the throat. Can you agree with the observation that the two protagonists, Conor and Susan, both benefit from their meeting and the recollected scenes that introduce them to each other's life and feelings? Does it offer, at least tentatively, a positive ending?

DK: Yes, I think they absolutely impact upon each other. I wanted in *Spinning* to try and understand what might bring an ordinary man to such a point that he would

consider murdering his own child. It is inconceivable to most of us, yet it is a live issue that presents itself in times of great crisis for many reasons. As an Irish phenomenon it seemed to me that there were an increased number of cases during the recession and research seemed to indicate that the social revolution in Ireland and the rattling of the patriarchy were contributing factors. As I said, plays for me are often a question or a means of trying to reach an understanding of people's behaviour and so I created a scenario where we watch a man slowly disintegrate because he cannot accept the end of his marriage. We follow the journey and begin to understand if not forgive this man; we see that he is controlling and selfish and full of denial in his reading of the world both during the breakdown and afterwards.

What happens in *Spinning* is that Susan, the mother of a young girl inadvertently killed during this episode forces him to recognize his role in the disaster, forces him to take some responsibility. Susan is part of a new generation of single mothers who have reared their children with great love and courage, so the loss of her daughter is crippling. Conor is entirely responsible but in his patriarchal dysfunctional reckoning it was outside events that brought about the tragedy ... yet here in the play he is confronted with her grief in a whole new way and it forces him to do something altruistic, and he lies to her. He lies and tells her that she was the last face her daughter saw before she plunged to her death; it is possible but I think we all know it is not true. He lies in this instance not for himself but to bring Susan some relief. It is cold comfort but comfort all the same. Susan forgives him and actually prevents his suicide, another act designed to hurt those around him. There is a forgiving and both change utterly as a result of their meeting.

Q: Your plays have been translated into some other languages, including Hungarian. Do you think your plays can travel easily to other countries and cultures? What is your experience in this field, the international reception of your works, so far?

DK: Yes, my plays travel widely and I think it is down to the universality of our humanity. I tackle large social issues through a domestic setting and whilst they are uniquely Irish in their voice and dialect, the response of the characters to their experiences is rooted in our common humanity. I love seeing my productions received by different cultures and see the audience laugh knowingly in exactly the same places or shift uncomfortably exactly as I anticipated and hoped they would. The response to my plays by audiences is the same at home and abroad but the critical response is remarkably different.

Irish reviewers in general remain resolutely underwhelmed by my dramas despite international accolade and awards. I find it incredibly curious and believe it is caused by a number of factors. I am a woman writing in a male dominated literary tradition. I embrace the domestic and often use it as a springboard and the plays are often dismissed as simple realism or kitchen sink (a dilemma rarely experienced by male writers). I think there is also a frantic desire amongst Irish theatre critics for less literary and more experimental theatre, they no longer recognize or celebrate craft. Internationally I find my plays are taken totally on their own merit, they are free of the peculiarities of that patriarchal Irish response. I also find that international reviewers

are more inclined to compare me to the great Irish traditionalists like McPherson, Murphy, O'Rowe and more inclined to compare my plays with theirs. There is a poor level of reviewing in Ireland to my mind, with critics often writing about the plays they want to see rather than actually responding to what is in front of them. I think this tendency is very destructive and has contributed to a lost generation of playwriting in Ireland.

Q: What do you mean by "a lost generation" in this context? Do you think that a more subtle level of theatre reviewing in Ireland would help playwrights' work in substantial ways?

DK: I think that literary theatre is often dismissed out of hand in Ireland simply because it is literary theatre, and this has been happening for about twenty years, not only with journalists but in many other realms. This has obviously been deeply damaging to young literary voices. I believe that the gatekeepers of Irish theatre, for instance festival directors, producers, independent companies, academics, like journalists simply missed some great writing and didn't actively encourage it. There is, as you know, a bastion of hugely celebrated men in the Irish tradition and it is very difficult to either add to or to dislodge that. London, as a much larger theatre community, was always active in finding new Irish voices but the last round of interest in the Irish voice took place in the 1990s and that's when O'Rowe, Carr, Walsh, McPherson emerged. As London moved on and Ireland stopped appreciating the actual craft of script writing, it is my opinion that strong voices fell by the wayside or often moved into television.

Q: Your adaptation of the French Canadian Michel Tremblay's 1965 play, *The Unmanageable Sisters* has had a mixed reception in spring 2018, and the division seems to lie chiefly between male and female critics and audience members. Was its subject, perhaps, considered to be dated by some of the critics? What do you think about the potential importance of this play set in 1970s Ireland for both men and women in our time?

DK: I found the response to *The Unmanageable Sisters* to be remarkable in its resistance to the themes and issues highlighted. I don't believe it fell foul because of a sense of nostalgia nor because of the production (which was excellent), I think the resistance is far more complicated and a real testament to how Tremblay's play still discombobulates today. *Les Belle Soeurs* is a truthful picture of how a patriarchal culture is deeply repressive with disastrous consequences for women. I could feel the rage at the centre of the play and brought it home to Ireland, a country still fighting its way out of a deeply conservative, Catholic and patriarchal past. I changed a lot of the back stories to make them work in the Irish setting but remained absolutely true to Trembley's remarkable observations. I honestly think some members of our audience and most reviewers still find the realities so richly observed in this play to be deeply disturbing. The first remarkable thing to note is that a number of reviewers focused on the musical choices made by the director which seems like a total waste of brain-space

considering that this play explores dark realities such as the lack of availability of abortion, institutional abuse and marital rape ... it feels like some reviewers wouldn't, couldn't, refused to engage with the truths revealed ... it was much easier for them to concentrate on ridiculous period trivia or music.

I also think that a lot of the reviewers could not possibly have read the original play or indeed have any idea what it is to write "a version of" because their criticism displayed a complete lack of knowledge of the original. They were therefore attempting to give an expert opinion on something to which they share no expertise. Audiences responded far more favourably, packing out the auditorium and honestly engaging with a truth they immediately recognized. I don't believe anyone who appreciated this play felt they were engaging in some exercise in nostalgia, because the issues at the core of *The Unmanageable Sisters* still exist and play out today despite huge social shifts in this country. Another interesting attack from some reviewers was that I didn't present women in a supportive, succouring light. In doing this they questioned my own feminist credentials unhappy with a picture of women who are not saints. I find this reaction to be deeply flawed because the truth of repression is that it lands like a lead weight on those who live under it. The repressed often misdirect their frustrations and anger, tearing at each other rather than taking on those who actually repress them because they are overwhelmed by their own reality. There is a *great* denial at the heart of their resistance and a sense of bitterness and desperation that infects many interactions. This is the behaviour Tremblay observed and I recognized it immediately. It is a brutal truth and a brilliant device through which to keep the oppressed fighting each other and therefore forever subdued. Tremblay calls out this truth. I call out this truth. He got criticized for it and fifty years later so did I. This play still has the power to provoke a deeply embedded patriarchal response. To me, that means we are both doing a good job because what is theatre if not provocative? What is the point of it except to invoke empathy, challenge prejudice or expose truth?

Q: Do you like to attend the premieres of your new plays? Are you sometimes surprised by seeing how they act out what you have written, perhaps differently, though not necessarily in the negative sense, from how you thought the play would work on the stage?

DK: I love attending premieres or any performance of my plays. I find it a deeply humbling, invigorating and a delightful experience. I am usually very involved in the premiere production and delight in the genius brought by other artists to the drama. I am a big fan of actors, directors, dramaturges, designers, choreographers. I believe theatre to be collaborative, it only comes to life with the genius of others and it only matters when it sits in front of an audience. I write entirely for my audience. It is all about their reaction, their response so watching that teaches me a great deal. I have attended performances further on in the life of a play when a director might have thrown a particular slant at the production and again I find that invigorating because as an instinctive writer I am not always analysing what I am doing. An outsider might see connections that were key elements in my subconscious but I was not necessarily aware of. Productions teach me a great deal about playwriting.

Q: Let us now get to your new plays which had their premiere in 2018. How did *Crossings* fare in England, where it was first shown by Pentabus, the company that had commissioned it? Through the transgender character, Grace, some kinship can be seen here with *Rathmines Road*, which played at the Peacock as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival of 2018. On the other hand, at the ending of *Crossings* the two characters change each others' lives, which happens in *Spinning* too. Your plays make up what is like a live, moving organism with all kinds of connections throbbing across it, some of them related to the potential, yet not always realizable healing role of art as in *BogBoy* and *Crossings*.

DK: *Crossings* is currently on tour in the UK and audience reaction is terrific. As Pentabus are a touring company the reviews come later in the run when they hit bigger towns. The play was written to tour to village halls and small studio theatres and commemorates the end of war. Once again, the play looks at trauma and the extraordinary resilience of human beings, how they rebuild themselves, find a place for themselves, reconnect and heal. I loved writing the play and Grace in particular has been a joy, she is not transgender as in 1918 such an aspiration would not have been presented as possible to her. I think the first experimentations in surgery came later in Berlin. Her impulse is to move away from the carnage she witnessed on during World War I embracing the soft fabrics of femininity but with no notion of the limitations or conventional pressures upon that sex. Like in *Rathmines Road*, I think I am exploring gender convention and how it impacts on our lives and yes, you have found my secret, characters like Grace in *Crossings* or Brigit in *BogBoy* will appear in different plays and in different guises, they haunt me until I truly excavate their potential and experience. Themes and characters naturally start to float across the sea of my work: crossing histories, crossing victories, crossing traumas, crossing joys. It is a real privilege for me to have this opportunity to find and live with these voices.

Q: *Rathmines Road* had a mixed critical reception, yet on the whole the balance was rather in the positive. All who reviewed the play agreed that it is heavy stuff regarding its central subject, sexual harassment and rape, which is deeply disturbing as well as very timely. To my mind, however, the play is as much about a sensitive personality's, a writer's creation of an imaginary, also rather brutal, outspoken alternative to what happened during the evening in reality, which ruffled only the surface and did not disclose the truth save to the old friend, David/Dairne. I think there is a play within the play here, authored by the main character, Sandra and acted out in her imagination. Her being a creative artist is little emphasized in the play, Ray, her husband refers to it once and then she herself when saying that among other things, "writing"[2] helped her move away from the haunting of the trauma she had suffered at that student party in a house on Rathmines Road. The play keeps the audience uncertain about what may have actually happened in the past and also what really happens on stage in front of their eyes. With this the drama fits into the broad definition of postmodern

2 Kinahan, Deirdre. *Rathmines Road.* London: Nick Hern, 2018. 72.

experimentalist theatre and it cannot be approached from the conventional standpoint of what theatre ought to do, for instance stage a plot which offers sympathy to victims of similar traumatizing experiences. What are the challenges of engaging with the internal world of a character on stage for the playwright?

DK: I originally wrote *Rathmines Road* and the accusation of rape as a straight up drama but the truth is that most women do not get their reckoning. The truth is that every social, cultural and judicial impulse is programmed to deny them, not to believe them, not to face the fact that sexual harassment and assault are endemic in Irish life. I know the truth. I know the appalling statistics where less than a third of survivors ever report their assault/rape to anyone and I struggled with that. I decided to reflect the awful reality that rape stays hidden and eats away at the survivor, that they "suck it up" rather than inflict the pain of their victimhood on close family so as to protect people they love from the shame of what happened to them because these crimes are always surrounded by shame and silence. I therefore devised exactly what you describe, what we witness in *Rathmines Road* isn't what happens, it is a quick imagining by Sandra at the point when she recognizes the man in her mother's front room as one of three men who gang-raped her at a party.

The trauma of that night re-assails Sandra, she knows it is him and she plays out a reckoning where she confronts him. Her husband's pain at this revelation and the other characters' natural pattern of denial, disbelieving, threatening and cajoling all convince her that if she confronts him she will "destroy everything." Sandra has rebuilt herself, she has won her own victory but if she confronts her attacker that confrontation might cost her her marriage and therefore destroy her all over again. This is a brutal truth but a truth none the less. The device is to play two scenarios, the one where she imagines she confronts him and the real one where she just pretends not to feel well and asks him and his wife to leave. So in a way I give Sandra her reckoning but point up the awful truth that such a satisfaction, at this point in social development, is simply fantasy. Most perpetrators of rape or sexual assault walk away from their crimes and never have to face their actions. The point is that we are all complicit in keeping survivors silent until we accept that truth. Getting into the inner machinations of a character is never difficult, in fact I think I play with that inner/outer life all the time because I am always examining how we behave, how we are expected to behave and how that behaviour often breaks us.

Q: I can also see symbolism in my wording in the play-within-the-play section of *Rathmines Road*. The music playing in Sandra's head and not heard by the others calls Blanche's torment in *A Streetcar Named Desire* to mind, which is another family play. In contrast with Sandra's psychological trauma is Eddie's down-to-earth "punishment" in *Rathmines Road*; he is unable to stand up, "he gets caught in the chair" in Sandra's old family home, which suggests his inability to get away from his past deeds easily. What do you think about these observations?

DK: Yes, I think *Rathmines Road* is working on many levels, there is a metatheatrical dimension with the chimney going on fire and the chair. When I was writing it, I was

surprised at the kind of comic awkwardness rolling into the early scenes and then I realized, this is a farce, they are all locked into this room until they find resolution, it is a boiling pot, it is therefore fraught and might be funny. Even though the question at the heart of this "how do we respond to accusations of sexual assault and rape" is not something I want to laugh at, our response is governed by convention, governed by cultural impulse and that impulse is the burial of trauma. They are all physically trying to stuff that accusation back into the fabric of the sofa because it is too hard to listen to or to understand or to accept. Eddie is caught in a "booby trap," an observation he himself makes in the play about old houses. He won't get out until he faces his guilt.

Q: How do your family relate to your work? Could you mention some characteristic details about this?

DK: My family are hugely supportive of my work, both my birth family and my husband and kids. There are often parts of them featuring in characters or stories, for example Sean's farm in *Halcyon Days* is my Dad's farm and the names of fields he wistfully recites are the fields my Dad grew up in, Bailey's Gate, Railway Field, etc. It is lovely to immortalize little pieces of our lives. I have two brothers. They don't work in theatre but do enjoy my work. I think they are sometimes surprised by the darkness, we lived a very stable and happy childhood but I suppose I was the gawker in the family, always watching and wondering about other people's lives. My husband is a great right-hand man, he listens a great deal and really engages in what I am writing. I often read him passages and he loves the work. He doesn't work in theatre either but has a great eye, he is the real psychologist in the family, I think I have learned a lot from him as to how people tick.

My daughters are eighteen and fifteen and both love theatre. They kind of look at the work as audience members, I don't know that they really see their mammy in there but they come and they are generally very appreciative. *The Unmanageable Sisters* is their out and out favourite to date. They wish I would write more comedy! I write plays most of the time for my mother Pat Kinahan, she was my partner in crime going to the theatre, she gave me the passion and I am really sad to say that she died just as my career was taking off so has missed so much of it. She would have swanned around the world with me and loved meeting all the amazing artists I work with. She would have kept them entertained, she was a very astute and funny, funny woman. She is in a lot of my plays, particularly as Patricia in *Halcyon Days*.

Q: In addition to the number of the plays you have written so far, around thirty, as well as to the "crossings" across individual works, the variety in your oeuvre is remarkable, even awesome. Are there any plans for the publication of a volume of your plays including at least the most successful ones, perhaps complete with a selection of those which are not available in print yet? For instance, *BogBoy* definitely deserves to appear in print. What are your current projects, what kind of new work is on the way to the stage in 2019?

DK: No volumes are on the way that I know of. I have a new play, *The Companion* with Landmark Productions, it is an exploration of the influence of religion in Ireland old and new and a kind of moral conundrum, quite funny I hope although it really isn't funny at all. I am also working with a group of New York Musicians and Irish artists on a play inspired by Ettie Steinberg, the only Irish citizen to be murdered in the Holocaust. There are one or two other small projects but I am trying to slow down a bit next year for fear my head might just fall off my shoulders.

Q: What do you think about the future of drama and theatre in our increasingly digitalized and depersonalized world?

DK: I have no fears for the future of drama. I still see it as one of the most vital, immediate and imaginative forms of human activity. It is a live art. It remains deeply dynamic because it always questions, questions, questions. I love to see new audiences gape and shift and laugh and cry at all sorts of plays as I do. Theatre is alive and well.

Q: Amen. Thank you for the talk.

Reviews

Miller in Focus: New Perspectives in Hungarian Miller Studies

Mária Kurdi, ed. *Arthur Miller öröksége: Centenáriumi írások műveiről* [The Legacy of Arthur Miller: Centennial Writings about His Works]. AMERICANA eBOOKS, University of Szeged, 2015. ISBN: 978-615-5423-18-5 (.mobi); 978-615-5423-19-2 (.epub); 978-615-5423-20-8 (PoD)

Lívia Szélpál

October 17, 2015, marked the centenary of Arthur Miller's birth. Arthur Miller (1915-2005) is considered to be one of the greatest American playwrights, whose work served to define the moral, social and political realities of the contemporary U.S. (Bigsby 1). His plays continue to be popular among readers and audiences across the world, and he remains a defining voice in American literature. Miller dramatized his social conscience into political action by bringing together the public and the personal in his writings. Among the central points of his plays are issues of personal responsibility, the human psyche in the complexity of family relationships, class and race relations, the failure of the American Dream, and the burden of the past disclosed in the present. Miller believed that one of the purposes of contemporary theatre was to face the past and to manifest repressed memories (Bollobás 556). Besides his writings, his legacy also includes his public activities. He always believed in civil liberties, the rights of artists, the freedom of speech, and expression of one's views. Moreover, he was committed to progressive causes and democratic rights. His oeuvre was shaped by the major events of his lifetime—the Depression, World War II, McCarthyism and the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and the Cold War anxieties of the Reagan era (Dreier). Miller valued his public responsibility as an active citizen and an advocate of human rights, therefore he set an example with his ardent resistance to the House Un-American Activities Committee of the 1950s and his open rejection of the Vietnam War (Dreier). Moreover, he took the position of president of PEN International[1] (1965-69), an organization representing writers,

1 As the PEN International website states, the organization PEN International was founded in London, UK, in 1921. The association was one of the world's first NGOs and amongst the first international organizations supporting human rights. It was the first worldwide international body of authors, and the first organization to specify that freedom of expression and literature are integral (PEN International).

and, he was dedicated to its principles by leading the organization into what he called "the conscience of the world writing community" (Dreier).

Miller's centenary legacy had been honored with productions, articles, events, and festivals by reaching diverse audiences worldwide. *Arthur Miller öröksége: centenáriumi írások műveiről* [The Legacy of Arthur Miller: Centennial Writings about His Works] is a pivotal contribution to the Hungarian field of Miller studies, advancing his oeuvre by attention to new theoretical approaches. It focuses on writings, including Miller's novel *Focus* (1945), and plays such as *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1991), *After the Fall* (1964), and *Resurrection Blues* (2002), which had not been in the limelight before. Moreover, no similar volume on Miller has been published in Hungary in the last decades.

Mária Kurdi, professor emerita, the editor of the present volume, specializes in modern Irish literature and English-speaking drama. Among others, she has guest-edited issues of the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* on Brian Friel and Arthur Miller respectively, as well as guest-edited a themed block on Caryl Churchill in the same journal. The Miller issue of *HJEAS* comprising a collection of essays under the title *Representations of the Family in Modern English-Language Drama in Memory of Arthur Miller* came out in the fall of 2005, not long after Miller's death in the same year. As Kurdi says in the "Preface" to this collection, the "contributors are from Hungary, the United States, Great Britain, Greece, India and Ireland, whose interest in and interrogation of Miller and the genre [the family play] he excelled in are informed by a variety of cultural as well as critical traditions" (5). Recently, Kurdi's new book *Approaches to Irish Theatre through a Hungarian's Lens: Essays and Review Articles* was published by the Institute of English Studies at the University of Pécs (2018), in which some of the pieces discuss the interface between Irish and American drama, including references to Miller.

The present volume includes six critical essays focusing on Miller's oeuvre, bracing new critical perspectives. Meanwhile, the essays rethink many of the persistent themes of Miller criticism such as the issues of anti-Semitism, the family play paradigm, the memory play, the narrative techniques of the absurd drama and the intercultural relationships of the American and Irish theatres; they do so in an ingenious manner, challenging and transgressing former assumptions, calling attention to current, potential areas of research. The collection is not and cannot be a complete analysis of Miller's multi-faceted oeuvre. However, as Kurdi argues in the "Preface," it does not endeavor to act as such (2).

The strength of the volume lies not only in the content of the book but its modern format, reflecting the increasing importance and changing trend of digitalized academic publications. Kurdi's free-access e-book—issued in .prc and .epub format to make it available not only to PCs but also to other technological gadgets—was published by *AMERICANA eBooks*, which is related to *AMERICANA – E-Journal of American Studies* in Hungary, published by the Department of American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. The general editors, Réka M. Cristian and Zoltán Dragon, as their publishing information implies, are strongly committed to open access publication and dedicated to providing a quality forum for young scholars and researchers who aspire to contribute inventive and new methodologies and approaches to the field of American Studies (*AMERICANA eBOOKS*). Kurdi's digital-born edition, published

in Hungarian, pertinently contributes to the novelty of the book by its very mode of publication, addressing an expanded audience, something which was also decisive to Miller who, as Elysa Gardner quotes him, "hated the idea of theater being an elitist art form for wealthy people."

The essays of Tamás Kisantal and Mária Kurdi provide a solid and cohesive theoretical framework for the collection. Tamás Kisantal, in his thought-provoking essay "Tükör által homályosan ... Az antiszemitizmus ábrázolása Arthur Miller *Gyújtópont* című regényében" [Through the Distorted View of a Mirror... The Representation of Anti-Semitism in Arthur Miller's Novel *Focus*], traces how anti-Semitism became intensified in the postwar United States. Kisantal, an expert on Holocaust literature and film studies, primarily places the issue of anti-Semitism in the historical and cultural context of the US by showing parallels with two film adaptations: *Gentleman's Agreement* (dir. Elia Kazan, 1947) and *Crossfire* (dir. Edward Dmytryk, 1947). Secondly, he scrutinizes the symbols of sight and perspective with a close reading of the novel and challenges the contemporary critical reception of Miller's *Focus* by arguing that its classification as a "thesis novel" is controversial since the work is more complex; it is rather a grotesque and ironic story. Therefore, the protagonist, Newman is not becoming a "new man;" rather he consciously chooses only one role, an ideological viewpoint from the many to face racism.

The studies of Ákos Attila Seress and Lenke Németh attempt to (re)define the paradigm changes in Miller's family plays. Seress in his study "A család és a bunker: A család szerepe Arthur Miller drámáiban" [The Family and the Bunker: the Role of the Family in Arthur Miller's Dramas] reveals that there is a striking difference between Miller's essay about the role of the family ["The Family in Modern Drama"] and what is depicted in his dramas. In his analysis of Miller's early plays from the 1940s, such as *The Man Who Had All The Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947), and *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Seress claims that the family is not a protective bunker of the subject anymore, rather a medium which focuses and reinforces social expectations upon the subject (50). Németh in her essay "Az amerikai családdráma megújul: Arthur Miller *Lefelé a hegyről*" [The Renewal of American Family Drama: Arthur Miller's *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*] concentrates on a later play by Miller, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1991), and argues that this play is a detour from the American family play conventions as it depicts the identity crisis of the middle-class American man in the 1980s and thus renews the American family play model by injecting it with current themes and changing its dynamism (Németh 55).

Another dimension is added to the complexity of Miller's drama techniques with two studies by young scholars. Zsófia Balassa in her essay "Narratív (tudat) határokon. Arthur Miller: *A bűnbeesés után*" [Transgressing the Narrative Borders of Consciousness. Arthur Miller: *After the Fall*] highlights the genre of the memory play and compares it to the conventions of the monodrama. In her innovative study, she reveals the traces of a modernist narrative technique, the stream of consciousness in the play through the medium of the *mise-en-scène* by revealing the delicate border of drama and prose (Balassa 75). Meanwhile, Márta Ótott in her study "Az elzavart Messiás: Rituálé és abszurd problematikája Arthur Miller *Feltámadás blues* című drámájában" [The Rejected Messiah: the Problematic Relations of the Ritual and

the Absurd in Arthur Miller's *Resurrection Blues*] focuses on elements of the absurd drama in the play and highlights its relations with ironic rituals presented in the play as a political satire. According to Ótott, Miller compares the TV constructed reality of the new millennium with the one formulated by ideology. As a closure of her essay, she points to the ironic twist in the drama when the ritual of redemption is transforming into the ritual of expedience by the free choice of people to reject the Messiah Ralph/Charles and redefining their roles in the constructed reality of the dominant ideology (Ótott 106).

In the final essay of the collection, Mária Kurdi focuses on the intercultural relations between the American and Irish theatres. In her essay "Arthur Miller és az ír színház" [Arthur Miller and Irish Theatre], Kurdi provides a well-documented background for the mutual relationships of the American and Irish theatres by presenting cultural historical details such as the story of the "Boys," namely, Micheál MacLíammóir and Hilton Edwards, the founders of the Gate Theatre in Dublin, or the 2015 centenary performance of *A View from the Bridge* (1965) in that renowned theatre (Kurdi 125).

Noémi Albert's work "Bibliográfia Magyar szerzők Arthur Millerről szóló írásaiból 2005-2015" [Bibliography of Hungarian Authors' Writings on Arthur Miller] is the closing chapter of the volume and a skillful indicator for further research on the topic. This bibliography continues Lehel Vadon's earlier work, who compiled a large-scale bibliography about Miller's reception in Hungary up to 2004 inclusive for the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* in 2005 (Kurdi, "Preface" 4).

The novelty and relevance of Kurdi's edited book lie in the careful and focused selection of essays in a way that the whole highlights the development of Miller's drama techniques, his constant revitalizing and rethinking of ideas. The volume is assuredly a stimulating and invaluable re/source for students and scholars interested in current trends of Miller studies. Furthermore, the book is undoubtedly a noteworthy contribution to Arthur Miller's centenary celebrations.

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The Resurrection of the Dramatic Character

Delgado-García, Cristina. *Rethinking Character in Contemporary British Theatre: Aesthetics, Politics, Subjectivity*. **Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015. 224 pages. e-ISBN 978-3-11-033391-6.**

Mária Kurdi

For centuries, the character in drama was considered to be the backbone of works for the stage, until the appearance of a wide-scale subversive experimentation with it in postmodern theatre and performance. The writing of *Rethinking Character in Contemporary British Theatre* was prompted by the recent publication of books and studies that seriously question the presence and dramaturgical role of character in view of the brand-new developments within the genre. Cristina Delgado-García's point of departure is that the dismissal of dramatic character in this bulk of theoretical literature can be challenged on the grounds that most theorists look at the term "character" in inconsistent ways, their methodology being problematic and their concept of subjectivity too narrow (XI). Surveying the prescriptive considerations about character, Delgado-García posits the hypothesis that by redefining "character" a new, workable approach to investigating certain puzzling character formations in the postmodern British theatre can be achieved (XII). She assumes that "the character cannot be reduced to the impersonating work of the actor" (8) but other aspects of the dramaturgy also contribute to its fictional existence. Contemporary British playwriting, the author continues, exposes "a discontent with ideas of subjectivity formulated around a solid idea" (11). After clarifying its own theoretical positions the study includes the analysis of four British playtexts by major playwrights as well as their performances from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s.Through these analyses, Delgado-García intends to verify "a widening of what character and subjectivity may mean ... [and] begin to undo the hermeneutical stranglehold that liberal-humanism has placed on our examination of theatre's aesthetic and political engagements with human ontology" (22). Indeed, it is a both intriguing and promising introduction to what follows in the book.

The inseparable connection between concepts of subjectivity and character presentation in theatre is no news to those interested in scholarly discussions of work for the stage. Drawing on various theories and debates, Delgado-García summarizes that in our era "the subject is no longer seen as a unified, self-contained, self-mastered and rational individual 'I' defined by the hierarchical dichotomy of mind and body"

(20). In the given discursive context and influenced by the realities grounding such contentions, character portrayal in contemporary theatre tends to reflect the instability of subjectivities which constantly change and show their different, even conflicting sides to the audience who often feel called upon to re-evaluate their impressions of and sympathies with them. Delgado-García's undoubtedly new core idea is that she defines the dramatic character as "*any* figuration of subjectivity in theatre" (emphasis in the original, 14) and describes character "as an 'auto-aesthetic category,' because it is the aesthetic *form* that theatre gives to a particular *form of being* or notion of subjectivity: it is the form through which theatre thinks, produces and encounters subjectivity" (emphasis in the original, 19). For the most part, the theoretical framework of the present study is provided, although without appropriating them exclusively or in all respects, by Judith Butler's, Alain Badiou's and Jacques Rancière's work on subjectivation, regarded as alternatives to the Cartesian liberal-humanist paradigm (14).

A welcome, reader-friendly merit of Delgado-García's book is its clear structure with a succinct conclusion to each of the chapters as well as the testing of her theory on a group of carefully selected plays which persistently challenge both critics and audiences. Arguing with other scholars, the first chapter, "The Life, Death and Second Coming of Character," dissects critical notions announcing the crisis, even death of the dramatic character. Predictably, this part of the book offers a critique of the central assumption of the book *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theatre after Modernism* by Elinor Fuchs, according to which in modern drama character portrayal has undergone a radical transformation and "there are clear signs that autonomous character is in retreat from its Hegelian apogee" (31). Delgado-García thinks that Fuchs's view is "negatively synecdochic: it presents the disappearance of the cogent and autonomous, humanist character as the demise of character in absolute terms." In contrast, Delgado-García's own position is that by

> defining character as a flexible and contingent figuration of ontology, [her] research on *character-less* plays aims to show that it is possible to rethink these non-humanist voices as a proliferation rather than a death: as an excess that contests individuality or independence as a prerequisite for being and that rejects the (normative) limitations proposed by representational structures. (29)

At the same time she claims to side with scholars like William E. Gruber who underscore the performative element in drama enacted through live bodies, which may give a new dimension to the theatrical character since "text and performance, as different modes of production, may converge and diverge in their configuration of character and subjectivity" (32). Justified by her analytical practice displayed in the book, for Delgado-García it seems imperative to examine them together, given the fact that even disembodied speakers of the text usually become embodied in the theatre.

Under the chapter title "Figuring the Subject without Individuality," the nature of *character-less* drama is more fully explained: the term, intentionally italicized by the author, refers to works in which speech is not attributed to individuated characters. Reinforcing her view that an interdisciplinary analysis of character should inevitably

draw on theories of the subject and subjectivation, here a discussion of the relevant ideas of Butler, Badiou and Rancière is sampled largely against Louis Althusser's theory which focuses on interpellation and recognition as forms of objectification preceding subjectivation (52). In contrast, the ideas of Butler, Badiou and Rancière on the process of subjectivation allow for agency, buttressing Delgado-García's central line in this study that "theatre can make a political intervention by stretching our understanding of subjectivity through its experimentation with character" (54). Regarding Butler, the author takes on her dismantling of "the unity and individuality of the subject" and "her commitment to rethinking the subject as relational and intersubjectively constituted" (63). Badiou's and Rancière's thoughts are quoted as going further than Butler, being less interested in the "corporeal and psychic life of the subject" and "direct[ing] their interest towards notions of equality, universality and disruption" (63). For Delgado-García, Badiou's theory of the unforeseeable "Event" is central, since it marks "a fissure in the given ontological order," bringing about a rupture in an individual's world as a prerequisite for subjectivation. The Subject's existence is post-Evental while its nature is collective, Delgado-García interprets Badiou (68).[1]As for Rancière, his "account of subjectivation also offers theatre studies an understanding of subjectivity that transcends ideas of individuality, identity and ideological subjection" and exists "in terms of relations and practices" implying collectivity, Delgado-García says. Furthermore, she continues, by considering "Rancière's definition of the aesthetic aspects of politics and the political force of aesthetics," the shifting of subjects in *character-less* plays can be found acquiring political implications (81).

Applying aspects of post-Althusserian theories of subjectivation, Chapters Three and Four contain the analysis of the selected four plays: Sarah Kane's *Crave* (1998) and *4.48 Psychosis* (1999), Welsh writer Ed Thomas's *Stone City Blue* (2004), and finally Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* (2007). Both chapters begin with a survey of the critical literature on the dramas, followed by an analysis of the playtexts as well as a comparative discussion of several productions of them in and outside Britain. Delgado-García identifies strategies as used by Kane in *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis* to create non-interpellated, non-individuated characters. The plays' speakers are not identified by names: in *Crave* there is "faux dialogue," and in *4.48 Psychosis* "unattributed speech" is used along with an "overt challenge to heteronormative definitions and alignments of body, gender and desire" (93). Jacques Lacan's "extimacy," "a neologism" coined from blending "exteriority and intimacy" to undermine the fixity of the division between exterior and interior realms in understanding the subject (95) is also quoted. Delgado-García opines that in *Crave* "the choral deployment of speech" by four voices without a dialogue serves to present "the subject as opaque, irremediably relational, and composed of an inextricable – and sometimes inexplicable – extimacy" (98). The unattributed monologue, fragmentation and apparent un-narratable nature of the subject in *4.48 Psychosis* present aspects of the general human experience "in a fictive universe" the author claims, suggesting that "subjectivity is always-already contingent – provisional, subject to change" (100,112).

1 The terms Event and Subject are capitalized in Badiou's works.

The main difference between Thomas's *Stone City Blue* and Kane's plays is found in the protagonist, Ray's (split into R1, R2, R3, R4) experiencing and suffering from the lack of intersubjective relations (124-25). Early in the book Delgado-García states that her "project not only endeavours to vindicate the persistence of character in theatre: it also aims to demonstrate that theatre may have the ability to redefine subjectivity and intersubjective relations towards positive social change" (13). Accordingly, her detailed analyses of plays demonstrate that positive change, or at least the realization of barriers to it, is possible. The protagonist of *Stone City Blue*, Ray is "ultimately presented as longing for the restoration of the intersubjective laces that define and ground the subject" (116), which is an evidence for the relational nature of subjectivity. Ray is not able to experience filial love because his father had become estranged from his family in the past and in the fictional present world of the play he is already dead. Delgado-García stresses the irony of Ray's realization that to be and to love is "an opening-up to the other, a mutual exposure and contagion, but this realisation only arrives to him negatively, through the relation of non-relation to others" (129). The theme of the dead father and the living son's (unfulfilled) bond in *Stone City Blue* has an interesting near parallel in the Hungarian Péter Nádas's *Encounter* (*Találkozás*,1979), a play which, according to Enikő Bollobás's discussion, allows the son to recognize his dead father in the intersubjective space created by the latter's one-time lover, whom the son encounters in the present. Reading the drama partly with theorists of intersubjectivity other than Delgado-García, Jessica Benjamin and Maurice Merleau-Ponty among them, Bollobás claims that in *Encounter* "[t]hose who formerly lived in disjunctive worlds that never meet offer mutual recognition to each other" (34), including the son's emotional bonding with his till then condemned father, a secret police officer during the communist era. Bollobás's analysis chimes with Delgado-García's suggestion throughout her book that good theatre is capable of showing that through encounters mutual recognition of the other might occur (or at least become envisioned as a potential) and lead to decisive changes in the characters' affective relations. These kinds of encounters can be seen as similar to the Badiouian Event.

Chapter Four discusses Crouch's *ENGLAND* which, unlike the three plays dealt with in the previous chapter, is treated as an example of dramatizing collective subjectivity. This drama, the author states, displays "a wide breadth of characterisation techniques, ranging from the actors' sharing of roles and the direct address of the audience as a fictional persona, to the non-fictionalising characterisation of spectators as subjects of consumption and consent within a capitalist regime" (147). Of the four works under scrutiny in the book, *ENGLAND* is the most complex one, partly because of the way it foregrounds the dramaturgical function of public spaces as well as the shifting of singular subjectivities in the construction of collective subjectivities. Her analysis of *ENGLAND*, the author claims, takes a new path in that it highlights the implied political concerns of the play operating jointly with its focus on art, enabled by her novel view of figuring subjectivity on stage (153), which relies mostly on Badiou's concept of "the Subject as a collective figure emerging from practices," for instance *through a doing* and not necessarily by impersonation (196). However, this being the most complex contemporary British play of the four, the author's argument tends to overcomplicate the stages of her interpretation, for instance when referring to the

"mis-characterisation" of the spectators (194). Surprisingly, the book has a relatively short "Conclusion" for its weighty interventions into mainstream views on dramatic character. A form of compensation for readers is the "Appendix," which offers food for further scholarly considerations by surveying the unique treatment and figuration of character in many other plays conceived in Britain and Europe (Germany, Spain, France etc.), from the advent of modernism until today.

In sum, informed by relevant theoretical assumptions, Delgado-García's monograph offers a viable methodology for addressing highly experimental contemporary plays. Originally from Barcelona, Delgado-García takes on board the ideas of and argues with a number of theatre scholars chiefly from France and Spain to contest the limiting categories of Anglo-American scholarship on character, which results in a study governed by a critical position open to interdisciplinarity. The book's chief value lies, at least for this reviewer, in achieving a positive outlook on the potential power of even the most opaquely experimental postmodern theatre in contributing to the reinforcement of trust and hope in humanity. The author's contention, that although "theatre may have become post-humanist or post-anthropocentric, it seems necessary to admit that alternative figures of the character and the subject exist" (31), provides new inspiration for researchers of contemporary drama to discover that the genre still continues to teach us about ourselves as both individual and social beings. It is no exaggeration to say that this book is a must for all interested in diverse ways of approaching the drama of our time.

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Book series published by the University of Pécs, Institute of English Studies
ISSN 2063-0085
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