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The Ethical Stance in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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Abstract Harper Lee portrays racial conflicts in the southern United States through her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird,* which is based on the "Scottsboro Boys" case and has been celebrated as the "moral Bible" of the United States. However, scrutinizing the novel from the perspective of the ethical literary criticism, we may discover that the work reflects an ethical stance which pins hope of resolving racial conflicts on the high morality of the upper-middle-class whites. This stance is apparent in Harper Lee's rewriting strategies of vulgarizing the underclass whites, muting the collective voice of black individuals, and constructing a "moral myth" of the white mainstream. This ethical position not only reflects the widespread belief among the southern middle and upper classes that a few degenerate poor whites are responsible for racial conflicts, but also aligns with the public opinion in the South during the Civil Rights Movement and the political needs of the United States to resolve the crisis of "Americanness" during the Cold War.

Keywords Harper Lee; *To Kill a Mockingbird;* the "Scottsboro Boys" case; ethical stance; ethical literary criticism

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Introduction

Harper Lee (1926-2016), a contemporary American female writer, portrays racial conflicts in the southern United States in her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) based on the "Scottsboro Boys" case, which has been hailed as a "moral Bible" of

the United States. The novel not only won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961 but also has been translated into 40 languages, and has become one of the must-read books for children worldwide.

Since the publication of the novel, critics have analyzed its different themes, including race, gender, and education, mostly focusing on its moral significance. They either discuss questions of "the origin and development of racial liberalism in the novel, as well as the relationship between race and gender identity" (Jay 2015), or pointing out that "the novel, by depicting the psychological and moral growth of adolescents within the context of social and familial morality, reflects the author's sense of social responsibility" (Rui and Fan 2006), or emphasizing that moral education plays a crucial role in the growth of children (Jiao 2010); yet few critics have attached importance to Harper Lee's ethical stance in rewriting the "Scottsboro Boys" case. Examining the novel from the perspective of ethical literary criticism can help uncover the author's ethical stance and the racial attitude of the middle and upper classes in America.

Ethical Stance in Rewriting the "Scottsboro Boys" Case

The "Scottsboro Boys" case, a famous wrongful conviction in American history, serves as the creative blueprint for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The case took place in Scottsboro, a small town in Alabama, USA. On March 31, 1931, on an open freight train through rural Alabama, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, two white girls who worked as prostitutes, falsely claimed to have been raped by nine black men on board. It was not until April 2013 that the "Scottsboro Boys" case, wrongfully convicted for more than 80 years, was completely vindicated. However, in the aftermath of the case, many whites in the Southern society regarded the black miscarriage of justice as a dire consequence of racial prejudice: Jonathan Daniels, an editor of the *Raleigh News & Observer*, called the sentence "shocking and outrageous," and an editor of the *Richmond News Leader* said that a black man was sentenced to death "primarily" because he was "black" (Goodman 163). As a prominent lawyer in Monroeville, Harper Lee's father, A.C. Lee, held the same righteous view. The "Scottsboro Boys" case and her father's attitude towards it left such a deep impression on Harper Lee that it became the blueprint for her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Harper Lee spoke candidly about her creation: "I'm more of a rewriter than a writer" (Boyle 11). Her rewriting of the "Scottsboro Boys" case reflects her ethical stance that pins hope of resolving racial conflicts on the high morality of the upper-middle-class whites. According to the theory of ethical literary criticism, "ethic"

refers to the abstract moral codes and norms formed in literary works based on moral behavior (Nie, *Introduction* 254), and the ethical stance of a literary work reflects the moral codes and norms to which the author subscribes. In the novel, Harper Lee's ethical stance is reflected through vulgarizing the lower-class whites, muting the collective voice of black individuals, and establishing a "moral myth" of the white mainstream.

The vulgarization of the underclass whites is the first major tactic of Harper Lee's rewriting. According to ethical literary criticism, the ethical choice consists of free choice and moral choice. Free choice refers to the external expression of instincts originating from one's animal factors (Nie, "Ethical Selection" 21). In the novel, the underclass whites always make free choices to obey their animal factor when faced with ethical choices, reflecting the ugliness and degradation of human nature. Mayella Ewell serves as a representative of the underclass whites. She succumbs to her animal instincts by violating ethical taboos to seduce a black man. While taboo is the basis of the ethical order of mankind in ancient times, it is also the guarantee of the ethical order. And the formation of taboos is the result of controlling the animal factor of the human body, to be more specific, the human instinct (Nie, *Introduction* 261).

The image of Mayella is a rewriting of Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, the white girls who were prostitutes in the "Scottsboro Boys" case. By portraying a poor white girl who was driven by animal instincts to seduce a black man, Lee ignored the plight of the poor underclass women in the context of the Great Depression. Bates and Price chose to be prostitutes not because of the depravity of human nature, but because they needed to survive. Prior to prostitution, they worked at Margaret Mill in Huntsville, north Alabama. In 1929, they were paid approximately $2.40 per day; by 1931, their wages had shrunk to $1.20 per day. To make matters worse, the mills had been running so slowly since "hard times" had come that they could work only two days a week or at the most three. And they were laid off every other week, which meant that they worked only five or six days a month (Goodman 20). "Poverty almost crushes the spirit of man, makes him see no hope, gives himself up, and leads him to degradation and crime" (Li 66). By highlighting the moral degeneration of a white lower-class woman while neglecting her extremely harsh living conditions, Harper Lee reveals the limitations of her class perspective.

The second tactic of Harper Lee's rewriting is muting the collective voice of black individuals. Foucault emphasizes the relationship between discourse and power. He points out that "discourse must be seen as a series of events, as political events through which it transports the regime and through which the regime in

turn controls the discourse itself" (Foucault 465). In other words, discourse is a form of power, and power must be achieved through discourse. In the novel, black characters do not consciously resist the white's oppression, they were merely passive objects, being talked about and observed. When the underclass white wanted to lynch the black boy Tom Robinson, none of the black individuals dared to stand up to blame or stop the whites' atrocities. On the day of the trial, the crowd outside the courtroom was buzzing, "It was a gala occasion[...]In a far corner of the square, the Negroes sat *quietly* in the sun..." (Lee 176). This quietness implies that blacks were unable to resist or save themselves, who could only silently endure the oppression of the white.

In fact, the black men in the "Scottsboro Boys" case were not silent throughout. Faced with the unfairness of the judicial process, the black boys' appeals were crucial to the retrials of the case. Black farmers spoke out for the unjust sentence of the nine black boys: "They had gathered to air sharecropping grievances and draft a letter to the governor protesting the Scottsboro verdicts" (Goodman 70). Additionally, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Scottsboro Defense Committee were instrumental in bringing the case to light and helping the black boys regain their freedom. Yet in Harper Lee's novel, black people were silent, and their suffering was reduced to evidence of the high morality of whites in mainstream society.

The third tactic of Harper Lee's rewriting is to construct a "moral myth" of mainstream whites. Moral choice is an external expression of rationality, originating from the human factor (Nie, "Ethical Selection" 21). When faced with ethical choices, the mainstream whites always make moral choices based on the human factor, reflecting the goodness of human nature. Atticus Finch serves as a representative of the mainstream whites. To the residents of the town, "he's civilized in his heart" (Lee 109). Faced with the racial conflicts, Finch set aside the violence and coercion of ethical customs with his rational will and made an ethical choice to help the black people, becoming a symbol of integrity in the complicated ethical environment of the South. His defense of Tom Robinson delayed a trial that would have otherwise ended in minutes by several hours, and was seen by the mainstream as a step forward in the treatment of racial equality in the South. Atticus Finch, as the spokesman of the white ideology of the upper-middle class in the American South, is created based on Harper Lee's father, A.C. Lee, and Samuel Leibovitz, the lawyer who exposed the injustices in the "Scottsboro Boys" case. Lee combined and elevated two figures in her creation of Atticus Finch, portraying a perfect southern white Lawyer with romantic and idealized strokes. She depicted his qualities of

perseverance, courage, elegance, honor, dignity, and integrity, establishing a moral myth of the southern white people.

Harper Lee's rewriting of the "Scottsboro Boys" case is neither an accidental or isolated act of literature. The main purpose of her creation is to expose and criticize racial discrimination in the southern society. However, in the process of rewriting, she attributes the goodness of human nature such as honor, integrity and courage to the mainstream whites, and endows the degradation and ugliness of human nature to the underclass whites. The image of black people is portrayed as ignorant and powerless, as a tool to highlight the moral glory of the upper-middle whites. Lee's rewriting reveals clearly her ethical stance of pinning hopes and solutions on the high morality of the white middle and upper classes.

Ideological Connotations of the Ethical Stance

Harper Lee's ethical stance reflects the ideology of the upper-middle class in the United States, which, at the time, held that the upper class holds a high moral lustre. As we know, when Lu Xun debated with Liang Shiqiu about class nature and human nature, he pointed out that in class society there is neither humanity beyond class nor literature beyond class. He observed, "the poor will never be annoyed by the loss of capital in the exchange; how can the king of kerosene know the bitterness of the old woman who picks up coal slag in Beijing, and the victims of the famine area will probably not plant orchids" (Zhang 551-558). And Harry Crews argued that class structure of the Old South is so rigid that people of one particular class are unable to cross the barriers therein to understand the real lives of other classes (193). The ethical stance behind Harper Lee's rewriting reflects her upper-middle-class ethical identity and ideology. By vilifying the characters of lower-class whites and blacks, she constructs a moral myth of upper-middle-class whites.

Decent family background and well-fed life experiences shaped Harper Lee's class identity and ideology. Lee was born in 1926 in a small town in Monroeville, Alabama, USA. She was the fourth child of Frances Cunningham Finch and Amasa Coleman Lee. Her father, A.C. Lee, grew up on a farm in Florida, where her grandfather was a Confederate soldier; her mother, Frances, was part of the Finch family in Finchburg, Virginia. After their marriage and settlement in Monroeville, Alabama, A.C. Lee taught himself law and passed the state bar exam, and became a partner in the law firm of Barnett & Barger. Even during the Great Depression, the law firm prospered; in 1929, when most companies in America were on the verge of bankruptcy, A.C. Lee bought the local newspaper, *The Monroe Journal*, and won a seat in the Alabama House of Representatives (Cep 149). A.C. Lee, just like the

protagonist Atticus Finch in the novel, was a well-known and popular man in town. And several black maids were always employed by the Lee family, "instead of managing the household, Lee's mother gave the job to her older two daughters and several black maids" (Cep 150). Family background shaped Lee's ethical identity, as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defines the concept of class "habitus" to be a subjective social structure of the individual after internalizing the objective structure of society(88), the influence of the family plays a crucial role in the construction of an individual's subjective social structure, nurturing his or her ideology and mode of thinking about life, society, and the world. And Althusser also emphasizes that the family is the key institution through which the bourgeoisie promotes its ideology (282). By internalizing the external social norms and ideologies of the upper middle class, Lee developed an ethical stance that the high morality of the upper-middle-class whites is the best path to resolving racial conflicts.

Lee's ethical stance aligns with the popular value held by the middle and upper classes of the American South, which claimed that a few degenerate poor whites are responsible for racial conflicts. In his critically acclaimed book, *Stories of Scottsboro Boys* (1994), Harvard historian James Goodman documented the attitudes of white southerners toward the case at the time:

> Most white southerners agreed, but most white southerners were not *all* white southerners. A significant number of white southerners believed that the jury had made a tremendous mistake [...]. The white southerners who criticized the Decatur verdict, like the interracial leaders and antilynching activists who two years earlier had expressed doubts about the Scottsboro trials, were mostly middle-class and upper-middle-class men and women from cities and towns. Few of them were wealthy, but none of them were millworkers or miners, sharecroppers or tenant farmers, clerks or unskilled laborers, uneducated or poor. Their position in southern society was important to them and to their understanding of Scottsboro. What bothered them most about northern opinion and criticism was not that it came from northerners, which was what bothered most white southerners. It was that the critics, ignorant of the class structure of the South, did not distinguish among southerners, but assumed that southerners were monolithic in their attitudes and behavior toward blacks. (Goodman 163-164)

Most of the whites who held this attitude were descendants of the plantation owners of the Old South. Burdened by the generational guilt of enslaving black people,

their families were imbued with a sense of guilt and compassion toward the black community—a complex emotion that plantation-born southerners often described as a "mental heritage." Over time, attitudes toward black people became a key marker of the southern white identity. "In fact, nothing more immediately establishes the outlook and background of a southern white man than his attitude toward the Negro" (Cason 84-85). In their opinion, it was the poor whites—the sharecroppers and mill workers, descendants of the independent farmers who had been driven to hills and poor lands by slavery—who mistreated black people (Goodman 164). Faced with the stigma brought to the southern society by the "Scottsboro Boys" case, the white middle and upper class attributed racial conflicts to the underclass whites whose lives were degraded by excessive poverty. By expressing sympathy for the black community, they sought to establish their "moral myth" and distance themselves from the responsibility for racial tensions. In political practice, a political entity often requires that its individuals maintain a high degree of consistency with its leading group, ensuring that its will and behavior remain highly unified. As a member of the upper-middle class in the southern society, Harper Lee's rewriting of the "Scottsboro Boys" case was not merely an act of personal interpretation. It reflects the ideological framework of the upper-middle class, serving as a reinforcement of their moral narrative and an expression of their political and social cohesion.

To Kill a Mockingbird was published on July 11, 1960. Immediately after its publication, the novel received widespread acclaim. "It hit the best-seller list immediately, then kept moving up it, propelled by glowing review after glowing review. In December, it made all the end-of-the-year roundups and rankings" (Cep 191). Publishers in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Czech Republic bought foreign rights. The year following its publication, the novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and was adapted into a successful movie, and even became required reading book in many high schools. Lee believed that her novel represented a universal moral standard: "My book has a universal theme [...] a novel of a man's conscience, universal in the sense that it could happen to anybody, anywhere people live together" (Allison 13C). The critical and commercial success of the novel appears to validate Lee's aspirations, but an analysis of its ethical stance reveals a deeper layer of the class ideology masked by its high moral tone. Such ethical values, rooted in the vulgarization of the underclass whites and the silence of black people, are far from universal. Instead, it only reflects the ideological framework of the upper-middle class. This raises a critical question: why did *To Kill a Mockingbird* become an instant hit?

The Political Motivation behind the Ethical Stance

To Kill a Mockingbird was published in the 1960s. Its bestseller is inextricably linked to the political environment of the time in the United States. In the United States, the "1960s" remains a distinctive term to this day, which represents a specific era. During this period, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was in full swing, and the deep-rooted racial conflicts made the South a target of public criticism; Concurrently, the Cold War extended these domestic conflicts into the international arena, tarnishing the United States' global image and creating a crisis of "Americanness," or American national identity. This dual pressure—domestic and international—necessitated narratives that could reconcile these tensions. The publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird* did not happen in a vacuum. Before its release, it took two years for editor Therese von Hohoff Torrey to convince Lee to make the necessary structural, political, and aesthetic changes (Cep 174). These changes were instrumental in aligning the novel with the sociopolitical expectations of the time. Within the context of the domestic Civil Rights Movement and the international Cold War, the novel constructed a "moral myth" of the whites. This myth not only satisfied the public opinion in the South but also catered to the broader political needs of the United States in addressing its crisis of "Americanness."

Racial inequality has a deep-rooted history and complex cause-and-effect relationships in the South. Compared to the North, the traditional southern societies were less urbanized, less industrialized, and less educated. For ordinary people, achieving wealth through intelligence or hard work was exceedingly difficult. Instead, wealth was typically preserved through family assets and hierarchical exploitation, particularly of black people, who occupied the lowest position in the social hierarchy. As a result, racial inequality has become a major "historical legacy" of the southern society. With the Civil Rights Movement in full swing, the South became the epicenter of the storm. Faced with a series of social changes brought about by the Civil Rights Movement, white southerners reacted in two different ways: strong resistance from the southern hinterland states, and symbolic reforms by the moderates in the so-called "progressive states," and moderates dominated local political life. Rather than resisting changes in race relations outright, they had adopted symbolic reforms and responded less violently to the local black community's demands for equal rights. For them, desegregation was a long-term process of cultural change, and the alternation of generations would eventually eradicate racial prejudice, but it would take generations (Jackson 99).

At the cusp of the Civil Rights Movement, *To Kill a Mockingbird* addresses

the sensitive issue of race relations, and its ethical position must have been carefully considered to avoid sparking controversy. By rewriting the case of "Scottsboro Boys," the theme of criticizing racial discrimination aligns with the demands of the era. Meanwhile, its ethical stance—placing hope on the moral choices of the mainstream whites and advocating a gradual resolution of racial tensions—catered to the reformist attitudes of southern moderates, "Atticus Finch won't win, he can't win, but he's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that...we're making a step—it's just a baby-step, but it's a step" (Lee 265). At the same time, through a successful portrayal of Atticus Finch as a moral model, Harper Lee established a heroic image of the southern whites, which conveyed the idea that "there are noble white men in the South and that good men could remain that way even in bad times" (Cep 197). Such a depiction resonates strongly with the public opinion of the white southerners in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Cold War brought racial conflicts into the international arena, exposing the inherent contradictions between "Americanness" and the United States' racial policies. These conflicts not only jeopardized America's global reputation but also became a pressing political issue that demanded resolution. In *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "It is indeed a bitter irony that the United States defends freedom abroad, but fails to secure freedom for its own 20 million Negroes" (Washington 523). Similarly, in July 1950, Walter White, the executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), testified before the Senate that "news of discrimination against Negroes in the United States is widely disseminated throughout the world[...] and serves as evidence that America is not what it seems. The result is that today our noblest principles are not only ignored but even ridiculed" (161). Such criticisms underscored how domestic racial injustices undermined the nation's ideological battle with the Soviet Union, which frequently highlighted these inconsistencies as evidence of American hypocrisy. The U.S. government, recognizing the detrimental impact of racial conflicts on its international image, began to address these issues rhetorically. In 1960, during the presidential campaign John F. Kennedy stated, "The eyes of the world are upon us[...] We should reshape our image abroad by rebuilding our image at home" (Sorensen 183-185). This statement encapsulated the intertwining of domestic and international concerns, which indicates that addressing civil rights was not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity in the Cold War context.

The "moral myth" created by *To Kill a Mockingbird* alleviated, to some extent, the conflict between the unpleasant reality and the lofty international image

of the United States, catering to the urgent political needs of the government. Eagleton highlights the intricate relationship between literary works and ideology: "Literature was in several ways a suitable candidate for this ideological enterprise. As a liberal, 'humanizing' pursuit, it could provide a potent antidote to political bigotry and ideological extremism" (22). Through American cultural institutions and the mass cultural markets, the moral values of *To Kill a Mockingbird* have been effectively disseminated. In 1961, *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, which is based on the criterion of "excellent fiction by an American writer, preferably reflecting American life," and closely related to "Americanism" as a symbol of national identity. As a cultural institution, the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction plays an important role in the construction of "Americanness"; it acts as a vehicle for expanding the influence of American values through the resonant effect between literature and society (Shi 109-113). After receiving the Pulitzer Prize, the novel was made into a film in the same year. As an important medium of communication for popular culture, film has long been an effective tool for cultural expansion and the transmission of "Americanness." "The expansion of American popular culture has, for the most part, been non-government and driven by large profits. In practice, however, it is supported by the government and has become inextricably linked to U.S. diplomacy, especially in terms of foreign propaganda" (Wang 226). The adaptation of the novel into a film reinforced its implicit ethical appeal, emotional orientation, and value judgments, embedding ideological messages within a compelling narrative. Henceforth, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a moral myth of the United States, has been disseminated worldwide, contributing to the political objectives of resolving the crisis of Americanness during the Cold War.

Conclusion

Racial inequality is a fundamental issue that touches on the social, political, economic, cultural, and moral fabric of the South (Xiao 80). Harper Lee's critical attitude toward racial problem is undoubtedly progressive, yet her approach to resolving it remains conservative, for her ethical stance merely reflects the dominant discourse of the upper-middle whites. The seemingly uplifting resolution and moral sublimation of the novel largely obscure the underlying ethical discourse and the racial conflicts. On the one hand, Harper Lee opposes racial discrimination and advocates racial equality; on the other hand, her rewriting reinforces inequality concealed within a façade of moral principles. By rewriting the "Scottsboro Boys" case, Harper Lee turns the real *history* into a *story* that foregrounds class ideology. She attributes the virtues of human goodness to the mainstream white characters,

casting them as "saviors" in resolving racial conflicts, which ultimately reveals the limitations of her class perspective. Moreover, her ethical stance aligned closely with the political climate of the United States during the 1960s, contributing to the novel's canonization. Literary criticism often celebrates the meaning of the moral teachings of novels, yet this affirmation frequently obscures the biases inherent in the author's ethical stance. Under the guise of a "moral Bible," *To Kill a Mockingbird* has become a tool for American cultural expansion and ideological dissemination abroad.

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War, Child and Wartime Holidays in Latvian Writers' Childhood Memory Narratives

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Abstract Autobiographical memory narratives reveal not only subjective perceptions of reality, individual or family history and recollections, but also function as historical evidence that provides an overview of the shifts in public discourse, political objectives, and cultural paradigms. This paper focuses on depictions of World War II as seen through from the perspective of a child in childhood memory narratives written by Latvian writers born in the late 1920s and early1930s. The research analyses depictions of holiday celebrations during turbulent times of war in the territory of Latvia and examines the role these narratives play in representing the experiences of child characters and their sense of (in)security. In the prose works of the selected authors'—Harijs Gāliņš, Diāna Skaidrīte Varslavāne and Andrejs Dripe—literary portrayals of wartime holidays are presented in the context of both surviving the dramatic events of the present and nostalgia—a yearning for the past that attempts to restore "normality" and offers a way to improve children's feeling of safety and psychological wellbeing. Literary texts of war memories may be studied in conjunction with factual historical documents and life-story interviews to gain a holistic picture of the traumatic events, experiences, and resilience of the so-called "fatherless generation."

Keywords autobiography; war; trauma; festivities; continuity; psychological safety

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I. Introduction

Dedicated to Rudolf Karl Wendt
1932-2021

Since 24 February 2022, almost eight decades after the end of the wars in Europe, such notions as "orphans," "displaced children and refugees," "the missing" and "the dead" have recaptured global attention. The open wounds of Russia's war in Ukraine have shattered the once intense hope that the children of World War II would be "the last witnesses"[1] of such brutal hostilities. They have also triggered painful reflections on the destinies of wartime children, as well as the role childhood experiences and memories play in survivors' lives and creative writing. War is not merely a man-made disaster; due to being so common in human history it has been defined as a "core human activity" (Leaning "Radcliffe Examines...") causing immediate-term harm (death, separation of family members, loss of physical assets, destruction etc.) and longer-term damage (subjection to ongoing fear, threats, intimidation, violence, hunger, etc.) (Leaning "Understanding War Trauma…" 34-35). Although the human brain tends to edit out negative experiences (Bogdan et al.) and "[b]ig ideas trump details, peripheral features concede to central ones, and specific moments are cut loose from their context" (Dolcos in Kurtzweil), the longevity of painful memories, including those of turbulent war years, is influenced by the magnitude of negative stimuli and increased physiological arousal during negative experiences (Kark and Kensinger).

Memory has typically been viewed as a faculty of acquiring, encoding, storing, retaining and retrieving information and a repository of multi-layered associations. However, it represents more than recollection within a stimuli-response model and it is "much, much more than an archive of the past; it is the prism through which we see ourselves, others, and the world" (Ranganath 7).

1 A reference to the 2015 Nobel Prize-winning writer and oral historian Svetlana Alexievich's collection of reminiscences of war as seen through the innocent eyes of children *Poslednie svideteli* / *Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories (An Oral History of the Children of World War II)* (first published in Russian in 1985, translated into English in 2019). In 2021, it was translated into Latvian and is known under the title *Pēdējie lieciniekі: Bērni Otrajā pasaules karā* [Last Witnesses: Children during World War II] (Aleksijeviča; Sprūde).

Remembering is a process of "imaginative reconstruction, or construction built out of a relation of our attitude towards the whole active mass of organised past reactions and experience"[1] (Barlett 213), whereas forgetting is a functional, goal-directed and strategic process (Bjork et al; Conway; Harris et al.) "where certain memories are actively gated from consciousness" (Harris et al. 256). Both remembering and forgetting are major components of the self and participate in identity formation (Conway). Therefore, considering memory scholars' statement that "[i]n a world of constantly changing environment, literal recall is extraordinarily unimportant" (Barlett 203-204), instead of asking why we forget, we should be asking why we remember (Ranganath; Robson). The shift in approach from focusing on accounts of what events occurred to why and how they were remembered, reconstructed and filtered by time—that is, the shift in focus towards how memories are interpreted and transmitted—testifies to a cultural shift in how we see our relation to the past and contributes to the debate on cultural memory as "a shared storehouse of collective experience, skill and knowledge" (Donald 19).

By fulfilling directive, self and social functions[2], autobiographical memory plays a significant role in perceiving and understanding each given time and space over multitude of timescales. It gives shape to the epoch lived by the author from narrative, philosophical, psychological, and anthropological perspectives (Brockmeier; Wang).

Autobiographical remembering has been viewed as "mental time travel" (Tulving) in which people relive "the best, the worst, and the everyday occurrences" of their lives (Harris et al.). From the perspective of cultural dynamic theory, autobiographical memory is a cultural practice unfolding in the developmental dynamics of the interplay between memory, self and culture (Wang and Brockmeier;

1 According to a theory of reconstructive memory, remembering involves "1) An original sensorial pattern; 2) An original psychological orientation, or attitude; 3) The persistence of this orientation or attitude in some setting, which is different from the original at least in a temporal tense; and 4) The organization, together with orientation and attitude, of psychological material (Barlett 195).

2 Most researchers agree on the tripartite function model of autobiographical memory. The directive function is related to past experiences and lessons impacting and directing the future behaviors. The self-function is associated with identity formation that begins in adolescence and refers to "the use of personal information to maintain a sense of being the same person during one's lifetime or to update the self while maintaining continuity," thus, autobiographical memories are the means for expressing conveying one's sense of identity to others. The social function is viewed as "umbrella dimension" and is generally being associated with social interaction—facilitating and building bonds (Vranić et al. 2).

Wang); thus, "it develops in the process of children acquiring cultural knowledge about the self and the purpose of the past through early socialization" (Wang 295).

Early childhood memories are episodic and "almost exclusively family memories"; they represent simple family routines and may include sounds, smells and images (Shore and Kauko 94). As a child gets older, these emotionally charged sensory memories are evoked not only by the repetition of family events but assessed within the binary opposition "common/ expected" *vs*. "unique/ unexpected." It is the latter that may produce vivid positive (joy, happiness, peace) or negative (fear, terror, anxiety, frustration) emotions, or both. Such memories of experiences and feelings can selectively be included in autobiographical writing. They not only reveal subjective perceptions of reality, individual or family history and recollections, but also function as historical evidence that provides an overview of the shifts in public discourse, political objectives, and cultural paradigms. Thus, autobiographical accounts and their fragments are a medium and a symbolic form of social and cultural memory (Erll).

Similar to oral history sources, autobiographical memories may present tragic life events and depict war-related trauma in the interconnectedness of remembering and forgetting. Trauma—defined as a feeling of lost security— is the result of violence and destruction of the individual (and collective) harmonious and orderly world (Hernández). Trauma influences the author's choice of themes, narrative structures, and representation of human within the juxtapositions "life" *vs.* "death," "now" *vs.* "then," and "times of psychological, emotional and physical pain" *vs.* "the golden era of the past." Autobiographical narratives of pain "are designed not only to elicit response in the reader, but also to develop and refine the readers' own sentiments and sensibilities" (Dwyer 2).

II

Twentieth-century Latvian literature is rich in diverse depictions of childhood memories, testifying to the great interest in questions of the self, identity, and history through the decades. As guides "for interpreting life narratives" (Freadman), autobiographies focus on representations of real-life human experiences in specific geographical topoi (spaces) and at one particular historical time. Time, in the frame of autobiographical identity-building, has been viewed as both "a structure and object of construction" that reveals diverse "temporal orders of natural, cultural, and individual processes" (Brockmeier 51).

This paper focuses on depictions of World War II as seen from the perspective of a child in childhood memory narratives written by Latvian writers born at the end

of the 1920s and early 1930s. It investigates the role of celebrating festivals during turbulent times of war in the territory of Latvia and how such celebrations impact the dynamics of the child's sense of (in)security. The selection criteria were as follows:

- authors born in the late 1920s and early 1930s in various regions of independent Latvia;
- authors with personal experience of growing up in wartime under Soviet and German occupations;
- authors with personal experience of growing up and living under the second, post-war, Soviet occupation;
- where possible, personal experience of growing older in post-independence Latvia after the 1990s—this was the case with two of the three authors;
- autobiographic prose containing episodes on wartime holidays.

This approach was determined by the following factors:

1) The complexity of the notion of memory and the aspect of authenticity which is context-dependent—In the context of authenticity, memoirs have traditionally been viewed as works that fall "between two worlds, between truth and fiction, between primary and secondary source, between reality and imagination" (Dwyer 4). As there are no significant neurological differences between remembering and imagining, the fallibility of autobiographical accounts needs to be recognised: "Each time we revisit the past in our minds, we bring with us information from the present that can subtly, and even profoundly […] alter the content of our memories" (Ranganath 141).

2) Social, cultural and historical context—After years of independence (1918-1940), Latvia was subjected to Soviet occupation and incorporation into the USSR in 1940. During World War II, Latvia experienced both Soviet (1940-1941) and Nazi (1941-1944/45) occupations before the final Soviet advance in 1944 and a long period of colonialism that lasted until 1991 (Lumans). In the first years after Latvia regained its independence, Latvian literature still "remained defensive and disoriented positioned against the greater outside powers that had defined its fate" (Chakars and Peel 57). The legacy of persecution and dependence left strong marks on Latvian literature: "Narrative forms blur the actual and the fictional and, in so doing, transcend matters of forensic 'truth' and instead pursue a higher 'mystic' truth" (Jirgens 273). The autobiographic works written after Latvia regained its independence blend "memoir and history, fiction and non-fiction" (Chakars and Peel

57). This stream of memoir literature[1], much like Latvian literature-in-exile, developed exponentially as reflections on the collective past aimed at fulfilling the role of identity-building (Chakars and Peel).

The autobiographical prose of three Latvian authors—Harijs Gāliņš (1931-1983, born in Liepāja/ Kurzeme region), Diāna Skaidrīte Varslavāne (1932-2020, born in Rēzekne/ Latgale region) and Andrejs Dripe (1929-2013, born in Valmiera / Vidzeme region)—was selected for the current study. All three writers were born during the interwar period in Latvia; as children they experienced the occupations and the war and remained living in Latvia until they died. Due to the war, all of them lost at least one close family member (one parent or both, or a sibling[2]) and throughout their lives they lived with the consequences of physical or emotional trauma inflicted by the war. Their testimonies reveal individual and collective traumatic experiences and can be considered the life stories of a generation. Tragically, even in post-war Latvia, the so-called "fatherless generation" was never able to regain their lost childhood.

> Because there is a time when everything, absolutely everything turns upside down—ideas about life and people, people's fates, everyday life. This upside-down world is created by war. And then it also happens that naughty children turn unimaginably quickly into adults, into people quite torn by the storms of life, into 'young little old men'. (Sokolova "Iepazīsimies ar Hariju Gāliņu" 135)

Gāliņš's creative writing, which takes the form of both poetry and prose works published from the mid-1950s onwards, focuses on the true essence of meaning and the course of human life. His works gradually attain a more self-reflective, contemplative, and philosophical character (Dombrovska) which reveals his attempts to reach a deeper understanding of reality and the self. His autobiographical short story cycle, *Nāves ūtrupe* [The Auction of Death] with the subtitle *Priekšpilsētas stāsti un hronikas* [Suburban Stories and Chronicles], is written mostly as first-person nar-

1 For some writers, including Dripe, interest in memoirs was also driven by the influx of low-brow foreign literature and reaction against it ("10 jautājumi …").

2 Varslavāne's parents tragically perished in front of the girl's very eyes during Russian air strike in 1944 (Salceviča) and she herself was injured and suffered from the hearing impairment for all her life. Dripe's brother died in the result of accidental gun death (Dripe). Gāliņš lost his father at the end of the war (Sokolova "Iepazīsimies ar Hariju Gāliņu").

ratives. It was published in 1968[1] when, despite being increasingly censored, Latvian writers attempted to expand their range of themes and artistic approaches. The work depicts the beginning and two final years of World War II from the perspective of the main character, Hažus—first as a small boy and later as a thirteen-year-old mobilised for trench construction work in the Courland Pocket[2]. The boy experiences hunger, poverty, the taste of raw alcohol, and love/ sex with a woman twice his age. By creating meaning through juxtapositions in the process of documenting the events, the author reveals the story and destiny of a whole generation trapped between two powers as if between two millstones. In Latvian literary criticism of that time, *The Auction* of *Death* was perceived as "a discovery," partly because the war was shown "without a frontline" (Sokolova "Karš bez frontes līnijas") and through the eyes of a child, but mainly due to the child's embodiment of curiosity, innocence and boundless imagination set against the harsh encounter with war that provokes his inevitable transformation.[3] The impetus to set down his memoirs was Gāliņš's work on the translation into Latvian of the Lithuanian writer Balys Sruoga's memoir *Dievų miškas* [Forest of the Gods] on the Stutthof concentration camp (Sokolova "Karš bez frontes līnijas"), published in Latvia in 1968 (Sroga)—the same year as Gāliņš' *The Auction of Death.* Two years after the short story collection was published in Riga, it was also introduced to Latvian readers in exile. Gāliņš's characteristic feature, as noted in the exile periodical *Jaunā Gaita*, was "his great desire to tell stories, to tell stories loudly, to tell stories boldly and with clear gestures and dialectics" (Silenieks).

Varslavāne engaged in writing early but her works were not published until the second half of the 1960s. They attracted wider attention after the publication of her autobiographical story "Cilvēks spēlējas ar lāčiem" [Human Plays with Bears] (Salceviča). The work, written continuously over a period of decades, was

1 By that time, a number of prose works (e.g. *Trīs šķūnīši* by Anna Sakse (1905-1981, published in sequels in 1944 in the newspaper *Cīņa*), *Edžiņš* (1942/48) by Vilis Lācis (1904-1966), etc. (Čākurs)) had focused on depictions of a child during World War II. However, many of these works were written during or soon after the war by authors born at the beginning of the twentieth century; in addition, such works represented Soviet children's literature and corresponded to the ideological demands of the Soviet power.

2 The Courland Pocket is an area in western Latvia where German forces and Latvians were cut off and trapped by the Soviet advances (1944-1945).

3 Among the iconic works published in the first years after regaining independence is Vizma Belševica's second book, *Bille un karš* [Bille and War] (1996), from her autobiographical trilogy *Bille*. Similarly to the authors selected for this study, Belševica reveals the transformation of a child under the impact of the war and occupation (Belševica).

published in 1972 in the literary magazine *Karogs* [The Flag] and in 1975 as a book. The story depicts the period of German occupation in Septiņkalne [Rēzekne] from 1942 to 1944 and the Soviet return, and contains flashbacks from the time of independent Latvia and the first year of the Soviet occupation. The structure of the story resembles a cinema montage: the narrative frame, which starts and ends with reflections on the funeral of the parents of the heroine Skaidrīte Varkalne, is permeated by interludes of the girl conversing with toy bears which represent her family and herself after having witnessed her parents' tragic death during a Russian airstrike in 1944). As the cinematic shots change, these interludes function as brief respites from the tragic plotline, offering moments for contemplation and recovery, and serve as narrative transitions that tie ideas together (Kacane and Kovzele).

Dripe entered the Latvian literary scene at the end of the 1950s with stories for children and youth, who remained at the centre of his attention throughout his literary career; his other contributions were journalistic works and documentary novels that gave the impetus for documentaries and fiction movies[1] (Vite). The first volume of the writer's memory book *Bez skaistas maskas* [Without a Beautiful Mask], titled *Kara laika puikas* [Wartime Boys], as the author has noted, are "memory drawings" from his life. It consists of several layers—fragments of a diary and letters, notes left by the father, news of events captured outside the diary, and extensive commentary on them. It can be considered the oldest of the writer's works (Viese) as it was started in the author's teenage years in January 1943 (Valtere) but published fifty years later, in 1993, when the "moment of euphoria"[2] represented by the Singing Revolution and the Third Awakening of Latvia ("10 jautājumi…" 173) was over but the restoration of spatial and temporal normality, including Latvian traditions and values, was still ongoing (Stukuls Eglitis). The documentary evidence, compared by the author to "hot horseradish" (Mārtuža 1993), reveals dramatic scenes of the era with scrupulously accurate details and offered, for the first time since Latvian independence, a truly genuine account of a boy's perspective on war.

The selected works on wartime childhood represent only a part of the authors' memories through the course of their lives, and each of them published subsequent volumes (see Table 1). For example, the most famous contribution, Gāliņš's trilogy, depicts approximately 20 years of his life; the first short story cycle, *The Auction of Death* of his war experiences, was followed by the collection *Karūsām jāķer līdakas*

1 E.g. "Cela zīmes," "Cāļus skaita rudenī," "Tavs dēls," "Sieviete, kuru gaida?."

2 The Singing Revolution or the Third Revival (1986-1991)— social movement that led to the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991 (Šmidchens).

Author's name, surname, years of life	**Autobiographical narratives depicting the time of World War II (*primary focus of the study*)**	**Subsequent volumes of autobiographical works depicting the post-war period**	
Harijs Gāliņš (1931-1983)	*Nāves ūtrupe* **(1968)** [The Auction of Death]	*Karūsām jāķer līdakas* **(1972)** [Crucian Carps Must Catch Pikes	*Jāsēj rudzi* **(1976)** [Time to Sow Rye]
Diāna Skaidrīte Varslavāne (1932-2020)	*Cilvēks spēlējas ar lāčiem* **(1972/5)** [Human Plays with Bears]	*Dzērvinīki* **(2001)** [Cold and Red Feet]	
Andrejs Dripe (1929-2013)	*Bez skaistas maskas. Kara lai ka puikas* **(1993)** [Without a Beautiful Mask. The Wartime Boys]	*Bez skaistas maskas. Pirmie pēckara gadi* **(1993)** [Without a Beautiful Mask. The First Post-war Years	*Bez skaistas maskas. Skolotāja darba gadi* **(1994)** [Without a Beautiful Mask. The Years of Work as a Teacher]

Table 1. Authors selected for the study

[Crucian Carps Must Catch Pikes] (1972) and a long story *Jāsēj rudzi* [Time to Sow Rye] (1976). The post-war years are also presented in Varslavāne's autobiographical long story, *Dzērvinīki* [Cold and Red Feet], written in 1977-1992 but published in 2001. On the other hand, Dripe's memoir, *Bez skaistas maskas* [Without a Beautiful Mask], consists of three books published in 1993-1994; it focuses on the war in Book 1 but the post-war years in Book 2 (*Pirmie pēckara gadi* [The First Post-war Years]) and Book 3 (*Skolotāja darba gadi* [The Years of Work as a Teacher]). Because the publication of works inconsistent with Soviet ideology was subject to censorship or bans under the Soviet occupation, some autobiographies on wartime or post-war childhood reached readers or were written decades later. This was the case with Varslavāne's autobiographical stories, which were written during various stages of her life under the Soviet occupation (e.g. *Dzērvinīki* [Cold and Red Feet], *Timseņa ausa... Veļtejums Latgolys pēckara bārnim* [Darkness Descended... Dedication to the Post-war Children of Latgale]) but were only published after Latvia regained its independence and at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Kacane and Kovzele).

The structure of autobiographical memory and the relation between memory and identity stems from one's knowledge of one's life and is "organized hierarchically across three levels of increasing specificity: lifetime periods […], general events […], and event-specific knowledge" (Harris et al. 256), which may

naturally include the celebration of holidays.

III

In Latvian literature, depictions of national, ethnic and religious holidays hold a deep-rooted significance and traditionally fall within a broader debate on identity construction and preservation. Representations of festivities and their traditional celebration provoke reflections on who we are and "contribute to self-identification processes" (Kovzele and Kacane 398).

Shared values, beliefs and rituals help to form society itself; "individuals' survival and well-being rest on cultural resources and social belonging that must be revived periodically in collective assemblies" (Rimé and Páez 1306). As "residues of the past" (Popelková 173) and manifestations of social norms and standards of behaviour that serve as action-guided rules, festivities are usually depicted within the binary opposition "mundane/ profane" (everyday life/ experience) *vs.* "the festive/ the sacred" (extraordinary life/ experience). This fundamental duality between the profane (ordinary casual activities) and the sacred (extraordinary or transcendental ceremonies and rituals, shaping the beliefs and values of communities) is typically employed for depictions of time. In this framework, the sacred is looked upon as an interruption, offering a break from the homogeneity of mundanity (Eliade 20). Although both the mundane and the festive constitute the cultural fabric of the society and are by nature predictive due to their repetitive cycles, the first evokes the feeling of the monotony of routine life, whereas the latter elicits feelings of serenity, solemnity, reverence, order, and peace to the soul, thus it is often characterised as spiritual or "untouchable, inviolable, inaccessible, and unalienable" (Cova et al. 1).

From a psychological perspective, autobiographical memories of wartime childhood reflect adult preoccupations with human evil and the author's experiences dealing with it. The new "disorder," the "unexpected" (loss or transformation of the family landscape) is often juxtaposed with the old or pre-war "order," for example, through nostalgic memories of and expectations for repeated routines (both mundane and festive), thereby revealing attempts to bring normality back into the abnormality of a twisted world. In this way, narratives of tragic experiences and physical and psychological consequences of, for example, bombings, demolished lives, pursuit, violence, escape, displacement, hunger, or the death of a loved one are complemented by depictions of episodic memories of wartime holidays.

In the selected autobiographical narratives, the duality between "the mundane" (the grim reality of the war, adapting to new circumstances, work and duties,

suffering, survival, pain and death) and "the festive" is blurred, as war not only destroys the sacred value of human life but also makes it hugely challenging to live a mundane life and, even more so, to celebrate festivals. In the selected authors' works, war is presented as the "iron present" (the time "now") in sharp contrast to the "golden past" (the time "then"). For the depicted children, life seems confusing; the city is no longer a fairy-tale but an enchanted space (Varslavāne 33).

Although rarely depicted, wartime holidays and celebrations of festivities play a crucial role in the analysed works and are presented within the frame of the wartime present, survival, and loss, as well as in the context of the past, nostalgia, and longing for bygone times.

The most vivid portrayal of celebration in Gāliņš's *The Auction of Death* is found in the introductory story "Kāzas" [The Wedding]. The story vividly reveals how, a day before the Midsummer Eve on 22 June 1941[1] in a rural farmstead in Kurzeme, joy is transformed into sorrow and the comic becomes the tragic. During a reunion of extended family and friends a day before the wedding scheduled, on the very eve of the summer solstice[2], a curious city boy sees a plane falling and associates it with an air festival, and therefore expects candy canes to be thrown from the air. Instead, having learned that the war has started, the boy delivers the news to the intoxicated wedding guests who are happily engaged in singing and celebrating. The third-person narration (which the author uses only in the introductory story) suddenly changes to a brief dialogic perspective, thus the focus from the depiction of a celebration is diverted to that of how the war is being perceived and how swiftly it changes the festive landscape and the celebrants. The war, from the perspective of a boy in Gāliņš's collection, is shown through dramatic contrasts—the main hero's healthy vitality and rather naive objectivity are juxtaposed with the adults' preoccupation with the futility of the war (Silenieks). Although the children initially see the war as a game, as something unknown, incomprehensible, and therefore captivating, a change in their perception of it is indicated by reintroducing the title phrase "the auction of death," which refers to one's own and others' lives and childhoods being bargained. Gunshots are compared

1 On 22 June 1941, Germany started its surprise attack of the Soviet Union, which since 1940 (after Soviet occupation and annexation) included Latvia. It bombed the territory of Latvia from early morning; "Blitzkrieg troops reached the Latvian border by the 26th June" (Pabriks and Purs 27; Lumans 2006). The German occupation of Latvia was completed by 8 July 1941 and lasted until 1944, when then country was re-occupied by the Soviet Army.

2 For more on summer solstice and transformations in Midsummer's Eve celebrations after 1940, see Kovzele and Kačāne (2023).

to the auctioneer's hammer to symbolize a change of times, a change of destinies, and a change of behaviours. The sudden presence of war in the festive yard of a Latvian farmstead is symbolically revealed through the outwardly incompatible key concepts "child—war—celebration"[1] and enhanced by the use of the Russian and German languages within the mainly Latvian text to depict the state of being caught between two powers. The boy's first traumatic experience is depicted as a moment of awareness of the threat to life or physical security. The dramatic and swift shift from a state of joy to one of sorrow is exemplified by the employment of two important rites of transition—wedding (celebration) and funeral (death), as the planned wedding ceremony is eventually replaced by a funeral sermon. Such dynamics are exemplified by the following examples:

> Kāzas bija noliktas **pašā Līgo vakarā** [...] (Gāliņš 8)
> [The wedding was planned **on the very eve of Midsummer**]
> Maļčik…**voina** [a phrase in Russian] (ibid. 16)
> [Little boy…**war**]
> […] mēs te svinam **kāzas**… **Hochzeit**… [the last word is in German] (ibid. 22)
> [we are celebrating a **wedding** here…**Wedding**…]
> Kāzinieki ātrāk nešķīrās, kamēr sadabūja divus zārkus un **pašā Līgo vakarā** rīkoja divējas bēres. (ibid. 23)
> [The wedding guests didn't part until they got two coffins and **on the very evening of *Līgo*** held two funerals.] (Bold is mine—I. K.)

Disruption of the formerly known order and sudden chaos are introduced by combining the notions of beginning and ending: the story is set at the time when the sun is at its highest position in the sky and when traditionally life is celebrated—but when everyone expects the light, the darkness descends. The story prompts the loss

1 Child, war, and Midsummer's Eve are also brought together in Antons Stankevičs' autobiographical story cycle *Puikas neraud* [*Boys Don't Cry*] (1982), where *Līgo* (Midsummer's Eve) of 1941, or "vasara, kurā salūza likteņi" [summer when destinies were broken], is mentioned in the context of the binary opposition of "holidays" associated with movement and freedom (joyful travelling across the country for Midsummer Eve's celebration) *vs.* "war" (the news of the beginning of the war a day after reaching the destination), associated with feelings of lost security and being caught in a trap (Stankevičs). *Vasara, kurā salūza likteņi* [Summer When Destinies Were Broken] (1998) is also the title of an autobiographical prose work by Gunārs Birkmanis' (1931-2011) on the observations and experiences of a thirteen-year-old boy in the fateful summer of 1944.

of childhood innocence and the character's maturation.[1] In other stories by Gāliņš that end with the death and funeral of a child or mother or both, the author tends to exclude festivities from the narration but preserves the leitmotif of a wedding transforming into a funeral and repeats it in multiple stories (e.g. "Tēvs un dēls" [The Father and the Son] or "Tikšanās" [Meeting]), referencing the first story of the collection, "Wedding." This is also the case in volume 2, *Crucian Carps Must Catch Pikes* (1972), where the triad of Midsummer—wedding—death (the leitmotif "Uz Jāņiem bija paredzētas kāzas" [A wedding was set on the Midsummer Eve]) is also found in the introductory story, "Bez mugurkaula" [Without a Backbone]. This is the first of three stories in the collection that still depict the war (in particular the Holocaust), while the rest of the stories focus on the representation of the post-war years.

Joy and sorrow in the context of the summer solstice celebration are also combined by Dripe, whose intoxicated sixteen-year-old protagonist Andrejs, on 25 June after the *Līgo* celebration and the Midsummer's Eve green ball, learns of his little brother's accidental death by gunshot. Repetitions of the phrase "I remember…" act as flashbacks, reliving an aspect of a traumatic memory. For Andrejs Dripe as a child, war offers a fabulous life, a time of grenades and pistols when everything around seems extremely interesting and tempting. Instead, the mature Dripe sees the war as "one of the craziest times in human history" (Dripe 120) and "the greatest curse of mankind" (ibid. 38). The transition from childhood innocence to adulthood as a result of external and internal factors reveals itself gradually. A shifting perspective is also included in the depiction of the perception of the end of the war, as in May 1945 only "one disaster is over," but "insanity" under Soviet occupation continues for the next decades (Dripe 144).

Christmas—one of the most remembered religious and family festivities of celebration, hopes, and dreams—is included in all the selected authors' writing. In Varslavāne's and Dripe's works, Christmas, is presented within the binary opposition "the iron present" *vs.* "the "golden past." The present is the time of pungent stenches, it stinks like chlorine and carbol (Varslavāne 71, 72, 74), whereas the past was a time when "aspens were small" and "the trees rustled nicely" (ibid. 95); the past smelled like bread. If "then" is the time when "birds were chirping" (ibid.) and mother was singing, then "now," even during holidays, "mama smiles

1 It is also reflected on in Gāliņš's poem "Bērnība" [Childhood] from the collection of poems "Akmens dzirkstis" [Stone Sparks] (1967): "Basām kājām pēc zemenēm saldām,/ Rokās tverdama pīlādža zaru./ Tanī mežā, kur ragana valda./ Kuru cilvēki dēvē par karu,/ Mana bērnība nobrāza kāju./ Viņas piemiņu glabādams tīru,/ Jākļūst bija pirms laika par vīru."

differently" and "there is no real music" as "[t]he untuned guitar is crying silently, the mandolin is squealing, the gramophone is croaking. Some bass buttons of the garmon [accordion] do not work"[1] (ibid. 152).

However, in the story, Christmas is the happiest of times for the small heroine. The author devotes three chapters to a detailed description of the last family Christmas choosing the titles of Christmas carols ("O Come, Little Children..." and "O Christmas Tree...") for two of them. Memories of Christmas as manifestations of family warmth and safety come flooding back to Varslavāne's main character, Skaidrīte, after her parents' tragic death. The focus on Christmas is the demonstration of the author's Christian faith and religious identity, therefore among its central aspects is participation in the Holy Mass, and the feeling of Christmas is exemplified by emphasizing a sense of inclusion (for example, by decorating a fir tree and lighting sparklers out in the forest, or decorating the Christmas tree at home). In this way, Christmas is associated with colourfulness, lightness, and serenity. Early childhood memories from the period of independent Latvia emerge like flash photographs in the darkness of fear, confusion, and separation. From these bursts of light, Christmas is presented as a nostalgic moment in the slow flow of the present time.

> THEN
> […] before war, mother too came to the forest, father decorated a fir tree with sparklers and lighted them. The sparkling needles and snowflakes were falling. We tried to catch them, and clapped our hands. Mammy's eyes glittered like stars. Alas! Then she laughed differently! (Varslavāne 136)
>
> NOW
> A festive table. We all have put on the best clothes [...]. The father looks at the mother with unusually bright eyes, takes out a bottle of cognac, pours a glass for himself and her […]. (ibid. 147)

According to Harris et al., recollections of specific past episodes are selective. Christmas under Nazi occupation and shortly before the Soviet re-occupation is depicted as a unique and happy family time, but takes place in the atmosphere of the inevitable change and approaching tragedy. A symbolic farewell to her childhood is revealed through the image of a piece of Christmas decor—a small copper

1 In Latvian: "Paklusu raud izskaņojusies ģitāra, strinkšķ mandolīna, ķērc patafons and […]. Ermoņikām daži basu kauliņi nedarbojas […]" (Varslavāne 152).

bell. Both "the symbol of a bell and the semantics of ringing it are related to the accentuation of transformation and to the relationship and distinction between the polarities, i.e. between the spiritual and the secular, the past and the present" (Kacane and Kovzele 11-12). When Christmas carols have been sung, presents exchanged, and a traditional Christmas meal held, the family takes a journey through personal memories via the family photo album, only to realise that the photo of the family's last Christmas will be missing; however, the sense of emotional communication and socio-cultural traditions will forever be kept in their memories, creative reflections, and imaginations.

For Dripe, too, Christmas of bygone times is associated with calm (parents singing Christmas carols, such as "Silent Night"), ritual (decoration of the Christmas tree), and both excitement and fear of the Christmas Man, along with parental reassurance and protection (Dripe 44). The image of the mother, who radiates the feeling of safety and contributes to the festivities being associated with stability and security[1], is an integral part of Christmas. However, the home space is secondary in Dripe's story, as during wartime the young hero is attracted by the dangerous outside world (collecting shrapnel and other war souvenirs, using abandoned bombsites as places to play).

While representing Christmas, Gāliņš mainly focuses on the harsh reality of the time "now" from the perspective of a mobilised teenager. Christmas of 1944 is associated with food shortages; instead of candles of peace and hope on the Christmas tree there are only rocket shots—"little candles in the sky" (Gāliņš "Konservu budža," 176-181)[2] and a strong will to stay alive. The same as a deadly explosion and fire provoke a birch tree flowering in winter, also the war turns a child into a "little old man" without the possibility to gradually transition from childhood to adulthood. A comparison of Christmas within the juxtaposition "then—now" is also sketched in Gāliņš's story "Tēvs no Dancigas" [Father from Dancig], where the holiday of the past is associated with the presence of the boy's father and chocolates, whereas the time "now" reflects the absence of both.

IV. Conclusion

Contrary to classic childhood memoirs (written at the beginning of the twentieth

1 A reference to the significance of festivities in the Interbellum period in Dripe's book is also exemplified by the inclusion of a Mother's Day photograph from 1936 (Dripe 134).

2 V. Belševica's heroine also thinks the explosions lighting up the night sky are Christmas lights and is impressed by the miracle—"Christmas trees" hanging in the sky and falling down, slowly illuminating all the details of the outside world (Belševica 292).

century and in the 1920s-1930s)[1], which are linear narratives containing both impressionistic glimpses and panoramic overviews of Latvian history, ethnography, and culture representing harmonious world order (Kačāne 66), the more recent stream of autobiographical prose relies on episodic memory and photographic or cinematic style to depict the brutality of real life. However, alongside portrayals of death, emphasis is laid on not only transformation and destruction of human life but also cultural heritage, rituals, and traditions, thus emphasising the transformative nature of the war.

Although the three writers first entered the Latvian literary scene at roughly the same time (the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s) and their testimonies of wartime childhood reveal individual and collective traumatic experiences that can be treated as the life stories of a generation, the specificity of their autobiographical works was impacted by the times in which they were written and published, as well as by the identities of the individual authors. Gāliņš focuses on the meaning and the course of human life, gradually attaining a more self-reflective, contemplative and philosophical character (Dombrovska) and a deeper understanding of reality and the self. While revisiting the past, Varslavāne reflects on violations of individual, national, and religious dignity, as well as socio-cultural deprivation and resilience. As a textual and visual narrative, Dripe's work highlights the writer's journalistic style and provides documentary evidence; at the same time, it falls within a tradition of autobiographical writing in Latvia just after it regained its independence that focuses on the reconstruction of the past. All analysed prose works are stories of self-transformation and although they make readers question the relationship between memoir and fiction, they also dwell upon the question of why specific events are remembered.

"Autobiographical memories are relatively good at retaining explicitly negative emotional events, and this refers to both the event itself and its details" (Kaprāns, Zelče 24), thus, the subject of trauma in literary narratives can be simultaneously "personalized and contextualized, fictionalized and historicized, as well as psychologized and metaphorized" (Schönfelder 29). The depictions of remembered wartime holidays largely depend on the emotional content of the experience and received stimuli. While the wartime Midsummer's Eve is mainly associated with

1 E.g. Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš's (1877-1962) *Baltā grāmata* [The White Book] (1914; 1921). Ernests Birznieks-Upītis's (1971-1960) trilogy *Pastariņa dienasgrāmata* [Pastariņš' Diary]: *Pastariņš mājās* [Pastariņš ar Home] (1922), Pastariņš skolā [Pastariņš at School] (1924), Pastariņš dzīvē [Pastariņš in Life] (1924); Aspazija's *Zila debess* [Blue Sky] (1924) and *Zelta* mākoņi [Golden Clouds] (1928). Anna Brigadere's (1861-1933) trilogy, etc.

the beginning of the war and death, and mainly depicted in the context of Kurzeme region, Christmas is presented by these authors in various circumstances and under changing powers.

Revisiting the past, rethinking family history and re-constructing wartime childhood memories have become central to the literary re-creation of collective traumas. On the one hand, the stories of childhood in the shadow of war "assist the critical cultural work of truth telling, remembrance, and healing" (Goodenough and Immel 11). On the other hand, "[m]emory is more than just who we were, it's who we are and what we have the potential to become, as individuals and as a society" (Ranganath 7). To get a holistic picture of the traumatic events, experiences, and resilience of the so-called "fatherless generation," childhood memory narratives must be studied in conjunction with life-story interviews.

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Subjective History in the Wartime Diary *Notabene 45* by Erich Kästner

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Abstract The diary *Notabene 45* (1961) by the German writer Erich Kästner (1989-1974) is a unique historical and literary document that provides a profound insight into the human experience at the end of the Second World War and in the first post-war period. Kästner uses personal observation and introspection to capture both the public mood and individual emotions as Germany undergoes dramatic change. This diary serves as a historical record in which a person's daily life and experiences are closely linked to historical events. The writer not only documents the chaos of war and post-war life, but also offers an in-depth look at the inner world, identity and existential dilemmas of man.

Based on the theory of cultural memory, which considers memory as a selective system of information transmission, the study reveals the importance of the Kästner's fixed sense of time and space in the context of war. This subjective experience allows one to better understand how a person interprets and adapts to extreme circumstances, and how these processes influence the formation of his identity. Kästner's diary highlights not only historical events, but also the mental state of humans, manifested in the contradictory struggle between survival and the attempt to preserve one's humanity. The phenomenological approach allows one to explore how individual experience shapes subjective history, focusing on three significant categories of the artistic world: space, time and the human.

This paper analyses how time and space are treated as important shapers of human experience and identity in Kästner's diary, and how his reflections on historical events influence the collective memory and cultural understanding. Kästner's diary (as a transformation of subjective experience and perception into an existential document) not only adds to the understanding of historical events, but also deepens comprehension of how a human being experiences his existence under extreme conditions, revealing the interplay between the categories of space, time and human.

Keywords cultural memory; subjective experience; phenomenology; historical reflection; war experiences

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Introduction

Autobiographical diaries as a representation and interpretation of experience are based on subjective perception and stream of consciousness. Traditional history often focuses on major events, political decisions and collective processes, while subjective history pays attention to how these events affected individuals. During war, people experience intense emotional and psychological trauma that traditional history may not reflect. The study of subjective history allows us to delve into the inner world of the individual, understanding the fears, hopes, moral dilemmas and other emotional nuances shaping the experience of war. The wartime experience is often fraught with complex moral and ethical issues that only emerge in subjective narratives. The individual stories of wartime writers thus help to shape a broader collective memory of the war. These stories complement the official narratives, providing a more diverse picture of historical events. They also help to understand how the war experience is perceived and remembered across generations. Subjective history offers a deeper and more human perspective on the war experience, adding personal and emotional layers to the understanding of history that often remain outside the boundaries of traditional history. This approach allows us to understand history from a personal perspective, which is often more nuanced and emotionally richer than official historical narratives.

Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, explores how people witness and perceive the world from their personal perspective, focusing on the subjective aspects of experience. The phenomenology of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), which focuses on the analysis of existence, existential experience and the relationship between time and a being, offers a deeply rooted existential philosophical

perspective on human life. His approach emphasizes individual experience as a key source for understanding how people form relationships with the world and themselves. Existence or *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) is the central concept describing the existential state of man: man is not a mere observer but an active participant in the world. Applying Heidegger's approach to existential perception is essential for the analysis of Kästner's diary. In this context, the phenomenological approach is used to analyze how Kästner's diary *Notabene 45* records his personal experience and how this experience has become a significant historical testimony. Kästner's diary offers a personal perspective on the events of the final months of the Second World War and the immediate post-war period from the perspective of a civilian who is also an intellectual observer. It is the perspective of a man witnessing and documenting the daily chaos and collapse.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how a human being experiences his existence in extreme conditions, discovering the categories of space, time and human. The phenomenological approach helps reveal how subjective experience is formed and memories are reflected in the individual historical document.

Erich Kästner and the Content and Structural Framework of the Diary *Notabene 45*

Erich Kästner (1899-1974) is a German writer who became famous mainly due to his children's books (*Emil and the Detectives* (1929), *Lisa and Lottie* (1931), *Dot and Anton* (1949)). With his stories, he transformed the world of children's literature, combining serious themes with humour. As Spichiger notes, "In the 1930s, Erich Kästner modernized children's and young adult literature. Until then, it was common to portray children as docile heroes" (Spichiger). In his stories, he gave children an active role, allowing them to be self-sufficient, clever and able to solve adult problems. His view of childhood was realistic, with a subtle knowledge of children's inner world and a rejection of traditional didactic teachings. *Fabian* (1931) is the only novel he addressed to adult readers, which is why it is also referred to as an "adult novel" in the research literature; the novel is also mentioned in the diary *Notabene 45* (Kästner 93).

In 1933, when the National Socialists came to power in Germany, Kästner's publications were placed on a list of so-called "undesirable works" as part of a wider campaign against intellectuals and writers whose output did not conform to Nazi ideology. As Marcel Reich-Ranicki pointed out, Kästner "was not a political poet. He was against all ideologies. He was basically an apolitical writer. However, he wrote a number of poems criticizing the era, which were already approaching

the political ones. Although he did not really want to achieve that" (Reich-Ranicki, 36). Consequently, Kästner's works were also banned—his poetry had made him undesirable among the National Socialists. Unlike many of his fellow writers, Kästner did not emigrate during the Nazi period and, by coincidence, he was present at the burning of his works (Weidermann 172-173). He continued writing under a pseudonym. He was only able to publish his novels *Three Men in Snow* (1934) and *George and Incidents* (1938) abroad. After the war Kästner published other works, including children's books. He received several literature awards and remained a significant name within German literature. He died in 1974.

In early 1945 Kästner escaped from Berlin, first to Bavaria, then to Mayrhofen in Tyrol. He captured this period of the war (from February to August, 1945) in his diary *Notabene 45* (first published as a book in 1961). At the time, he recorded it as shorthand notes in the last months of the Third Reich.

Today, Erich Kästner's diary *Notabene 45* tells the story of the last months of the Second World War, with a time frame from February 7, 1945 to August 2, 1945. The diary raises several topics in the context of the war. The destruction of war and its impact on everyday life is the central theme of the diary. The chronological sequence of events describes daily life between air raids in German cities, the destruction of buildings and infrastructure, and people's fear and despair. The core of the diary is the author's escape to Tyrol with a film crew and his personal emotions concerning his parents, who stayed in Dresden at a time when there were regular air raids on the city and civilians. As a banned writer, he was not allowed to leave the country: without a pass he would be sent back to his hometown or arrested. Therefore, a friend obtained a fake pass for him and took him along with a film crew to Mayrhofen.

Kästner describes the atmosphere among the people after the war's end, at least in large parts of Germany. He describes the difficulties of the immediate post-war period, the adjustment to a new life and the first attempts to build a new society. He captures how the population was sometimes misinformed by fake news, how propaganda was carried out by the incoming power, and how soldiers from warring countries treated each other. These descriptions illustrate the extent of the material and emotional devastation. The discussion of guilt and responsibility runs like a continuous thread through the diary entries. Kästner reflects intensely on the end of the Nazi regime and questions the guilt of the German people. He criticizes opportunism, repression and the collective responsibility of those who supported or at least tolerated the regime. Alongside the major political events, Kästner also describes the details of everyday survival in the last months of the war. Topics such as

food insecurity, power cuts and the uncertainties of everyday life give an authentic insight into the living conditions of the time. As the war ends, the focus turns to the first steps of reconstruction and the question of what and how should happen next in Germany.

The diary entries are arranged in chronological order, covering a specific period of time (on average less than seven months). The diary is structurally divided into chapters, each chapter beginning with the place and time period of the event (e.g., Berlin, February 7 to March 9; Mayerhofen, March 22 to May 3, etc.). This structure creates a timeframe that reflects the events and atmosphere in the last months of the war, up to the immediate post-war period. In addition, at the beginning of each chapter, the writer creates a historical chronicle of that particular episode, giving the date and events (e.g., May 15—Prague Uprising, bloody riots against the Germans; May 23—The German government is captured near Flensburg and Himmler is arrested and poisons himself; May 31—the Norwegian government returns to Oslo from London, etc.) (Kästner 64). The specific structure of the diary is a kind of transition from wartime to the post-war period. The entries are clearly dated, which makes it easier to place the events and ideas described in the timeline, but they are irregular. When describing events, the entries are made irregularly. There are daily entries, the longest lasting ones with a one-day break being March 1-9, May 1-10 and June 18-22, but there are gaps of up to a week or more: from March 10 to 21 or June 6 to 14. There are only a few days' entries for July and August. The irregularity shows that Kästner did not stick to making daily notes. Entries are often omitted, but there are periods when the author was clearly motivated to write more frequently about the events and emotions relating to the end of the war, perhaps because those experiences and emotions were more intense and he felt compelled to document them. Kästner's diary forms an authentic and immediate narrative that gives its reader the feeling of witnessing events in real time.

Description of the Method

According to its author, "The diary portrays the present. Not as an inventory, but in snapshots. Not in an overview, but through insights. The diary contains illustrative material, amateur photos in the note format, randomly arranged scenes, snapshots of the past when it was still called the present" (Kästner 12). Although a diary as a genre is classified among autobiographical texts such as letters, memoirs, autobiographical poems and novels, it cannot be completely merged into the same category of autobiography, as their functions and approaches to documenting life differ. "These genres are distinguished by the fact that they describe the life of 'I' in

the long-term perspective, while a diary usually covers recent events" (Barniškiene 66.). The analysis of the concept of autobiography points to common elements in the concept of autobiography: "memory," ""personal life," "history," "personality." It involves a linear, more-or-less chronological presentation of a life story from birth to the present moment of the narrative. This understanding of autobiography revolves around the notion of identity, assuming that it reflects the process of individual identity formation until a person accepts and realizes his social role, i.e., successfully integrates into society, shaping his/her life story as part of a broader history (Wagner-Egelhaaf 50-51).

Theoretically, diaries can be linked to autobiography, but they cannot be completely merged into the same category, as their functions and approaches to documenting life differ due to the specificities of the genres:

- While an autobiography is a retrospective reconstruction of the author's life story in which he/she often reflects on past events, experiences and self-development, a diary is a more intimate, direct and less edited format in which the author documents events and feelings almost in real-time.
- While an autobiography may contain a broader narrative structure, attempting to create a coherent and cohesive life story, frequently adding philosophical and artistic reflections, a diary is not for the public but more for self-reflection, self-expression and thoughts, which are often spontaneous and without a broader editorial purpose.
- While autobiography is reader-oriented and the text is often designed to convey a particular message or offer a particular interpretation of the author's life, a diary lacks the retrospective awareness of developments that characterize autobiography because it depicts thoughts and emotions at the moment of their expression.

Both wartime diaries and autobiographies reveal the phenomenon of memory, but they do so from different perspectives. Diaries offer a snapshot, where events are recorded immediately after they have occurred, reflecting emotions and reactions at the time. Autobiographies, on the other hand, provide a retrospective reflection in which the past is contemplated from a temporal distance, allowing the author to revisit and rework emotional pain. As autobiographical texts, the diaries of wartime writers reveal the phenomenon of memory, providing unique insights into individual experiences. "In literary studies, the terms 'memory' and 'remembrance' are not used uniformly and consistently. However, it is appropriate to use the term 'memory'

when referring to the act in which the autobiographical 'I' recalls the events of his life. 'Memory' is also the result of this act of recollection: a constructed image of the past that can be portrayed and described" (Wagner-Egelhaaf 193).

Literature in this context becomes a powerful tool that captures memories and transmits the experience of otherness, especially in conditions that change over time and space. The narrative of a diary not only allows the transcendence of temporal and spatial boundaries but also facilitates the transformation of individual memories into collective memories, which are further preserved in cultural memory. Texts, especially wartime testimonies, are an essential part of the overall cultural repository, helping to preserve era-specific experiences that might otherwise disappear with the passing of generations. In addition, social and political upheavals can significantly affect and reshape cultural memory, giving testimonies even greater significance. As Wagner-Egelhaaf points out, "Although the time of the event seems important, especially in terms of historical phenomena, the psychology of memory suggests that time is less structuring in autobiographical memory. The time of the event is often forgotten, but the event itself persists if it was unique, unexpected, important or emotionally charged" (Wagner-Egelhaaf 194).

While autobiographies reconstruct memories, creating a deeper understanding of past events in which the significance and emotional content of events become more important than the flow of time, wartime diaries document memory during the event, allowing the reader to directly experience the author's self-identity at the time and the changes brought about by extreme circumstances.

"Autobiography analyses time both as a narrative moment and as a chronology of events. A writer can play with different time periods, for example, using flashbacks, chronological or fragmented narratives to create different narrative tones and purposes. The manipulation of time can highlight how past and present experiences influence a writer's identity and life journey" (Smith and Watson 18).

Both genres, as subjective self-reflection, document an analysis of writers' life, but their structure differs. Diaries, like individual memory recorded in literature, provide a current perspective on events, while autobiographies create an opportunity for a deeper reassessment of the past, thus also ensuring the passage of collective memory into cultural memory.

Memory is a consequence of human existence and its relationship to time—past, present and future. In his phenomenology, Heidegger focuses on how a person exists and forms his perception of the world through experiences that are subject to time and closely linked to memory. He stresses the individual's essential experience of "being-in-the-world," in which memory plays an important role in the context of

human existence. Individual memory is the way in which a person re-experiences his past, making connections with his present existence. Heidegger refers to "existence in time" (*Sein und Zeit*), where a person is constantly constructing the meaning of his being by interacting with his past and future possibilities. Historical existence (*Geschichtlichkeit*) marks human existence and shapes cultural understanding of the world. Memory helps individuals to understand themselves and the context of their lives.

Cultural memory, which includes historical events, traditions and myths, is an important aspect of how people make sense of their identity and history. Cultural memory is the way societies inherit meanings and structures that affect their present and future existence. Phenomenology here helps to understand how cultural memories relate to historical situations and how they are interpreted or reformulated at different times (Heidegger 27-39). Thus, Heidegger's phenomenological approach allows us to understand Kästner's subjective history not as a static collection of facts but as an existential experience in which the individual constantly interacts with the past and the present in order to make sense of himself and the world.

A Phenomenological Approach to the Study of Kästner's Diary

The diary *Notabene 45* by Erich Kästner is his reflection on the Second World War and the situation in post-war Germany. Through personal experiences, he reveals how these historical events and the post-war situation appear in human consciousness and how they are felt from within. The preservation of historical space and time in the diary entries creates cultural-historical phenomena. According to the writer, the diary is preserved in its original form, including the errors, misinformation and misjudgements that occurred to him while writing it. He explains that it was impossible to know everything correctly at that time, because people often drew wrong conclusions from incorrect assumptions. He makes it clear that he has deliberately refrained from changing or "whitewashing" the content of the diary later, because it had to be honest, even with its mistakes. Trying to turn it into a work of art or afterwards idealizing it would destroy its true meaning and authenticity:

> I did not write down everything I was experiencing at the time. It goes without saying. But I experienced everything that I wrote down at the time. These are the observations from the perspective of a thinking ant. And they are notes that sometimes consist only of keywords, half-sentences and allusions. That was enough, because the notes were only intended for me, only to be fuel for my

> own memory. (Kästner 10)

Time. As he analyses everyday life and human emotions in these wartime conditions, Kästner reflects on historical events, and these reflections become part of his personal and collective memory. Lotman explains that memory in culture functions as "a system for storing and transmitting information, linking the past with the present and the future" (Lotman 133-137). He also points out "that cultural memory is selective: it not only preserves certain elements of the past, but also interprets them from a contemporary perspective, thereby influencing a society's identity and perception of the world" (Lotman 133-137). Kästner's perception of time is not only a linear sequence of past, present and future, it is also an existential category that shapes man's relationship to his own existence, preserving the "Past as an inhabitant of the Present" (Lotman 135). In Kästner's diary, the changes caused by the war and its aftermath create a sense of the lost and the unpredictable. The sense of time is distorted and each day becomes an existential value:

> This past, the unresolved one, is like a restless ghost that wanders through our days and dreams and, according to ancient spiritual custom, waits for us to look at it, speak to it and listen to it. It does not help that we, scared to death, pull a sleep cap over our eyes and ears. It is the wrong method. It helps neither the ghost nor us. We have to look it in the face and say: "Speak!" The past must speak and we must listen. Before that, neither we nor it will find peace. (Kästner 12)

Kästner uses everyday details to illustrate larger historical contexts. Describing everyday situations, he creates a space of the era, and the details help to keep memory alive and make subjective experience comprehensible to a reader.

> Today is Election Day in England. It is expected that the Labour Party will win and that Attlee will form the new government. In any case, Churchill will attend the Potsdam Conference on July 10th. Truman, Stalin and the Big Three will also be in Berlin. They will be looking "at the ruins of a slave town," as the Innsbruck newspaper, run by the American military government, likes to say (Kästner 108).

Time in Kästner's diary thus becomes the creator of subjective experience, in which each moment reflects not only a historical situation, but also an inner feeling of the

world. *Notabene 45* captures not only the experience of wartime but also a feeling of time and the individual's perception of it. By reflecting on the experience of war, the writer creates his own identity and his memories become part of the culture of collective memory.

Space. As an autobiographical text that uses space as a reflection of identity, a diary displays various forms of self-representation where, as in autobiography, "a writer positions himself socially, geographically and ideologically. Narrators can use different places (e.g. cities, houses, foreign countries) as vehicles of identity, linking themselves to specific geographical or cultural locations, e.g., in an ecobiography. The text also analyzes space as a border area where interaction between a person and others takes place across social, gender, ethnic and national boundaries" (Smith and Watson 17).

The space Kästner presents is not only a physical place but also an existential environment in which people live, act and feel their presence. Space becomes a metaphor for the reality affected by war, where the familiar environment of peacetime is distorted and dehumanized. In his notes of May 8, 1945, Kästner describes the post-war space and time as "*Niemandsland*" and "*Niemandszeit*" (Kästner 83)—as a transitional period between the end of the old order and the beginning of the new order. Uncertainty and disorientation prevail in this state, as the old rules are no longer in force and the new ones have not yet entered into force. The only thing that is valid in this phase is a "higher power," i.e., external, uncontrollable forces that determine the situation.

> People walk through the streets in a daze. The short break in history lessons makes them nervous. The gap between the "no longer" and the "not yet" irritates them. The stage is bright, but empty. Where are the actors? Is the play not going on? The stores are closed. There are signs and notices in the shop windows and on the doors: "Sold out!" (Kästner 74).

Kästner shows the apparent chaos and contradictions of life at the end of the war. He depicts the contrasts of everyday life—the beauty of nature and the brutality of war, simple moments and ominous events that seem random and disjointed. But like a kaleidoscope, where apparent chaos creates certain patterns, the confusion of events in life creates a certain illusion of meaning (Kästner 52).

Human. Kästner writes the diary not only as a record of political or historical events, but also as research into human nature and existence during the war. Phenomenology focuses on how individuals become aware of and interpret their experi-

ences, and Kästner's diary is an example of how a person subjectively perceives and experiences the conditions of war. It gives insight into his thoughts, fears, hopes and reflections, which are typical study objects of the phenomenological approach.

From the very first entry in the diary, the wartime human is presented in a contradictory manner, caught between the brutal reality of war and the desperate clinging to a normal life. The writer captures the contrasts: "While the war rages on in the immediate vicinity, Russian tanks are on the Oder and lines of refugees are heading into the unknown, people celebrate, dance, drink and play poker. They ignore the danger for a while and concentrate on enjoying the moment" (Kästner 16-17).

In the aftermath of the collapse of the war, people are confused—depression and hopelessness turn into irritation and mutual recriminations. There is distrust in society; people shirk their responsibilities, try to adapt to new circumstances, but they do so only to avoid more trouble (Kästner 68-69).

The diary captures the existential dilemmas of a man at war—identity crisis, guilt, survival and morality. These experiences reveal how human nature and existential reality are transformed by war. The account creates the image of a person involved in the absurd and chaotic reality of war, where everyday activities and duties are carried out in spite of the obvious danger and futility. In the entry for May 5, 1945, the story of the *Feldwebel* (non-commissioned officer) presents a prime example of this absurdity—the meticulous duty-doer registering goods eight times, even though the enemy is already on the doorstep and he knows the goods will soon be destroyed. The story shows the tendency of a human puppet to stick to the rules even in extreme circumstances which calls into question the sense of this action (Kästner 72). *Notabene 45* criticizes society, especially intellectuals and leaders, for their role in causing and perpetuating the war, as well as for their lack of responsibility. This critique analyzes the "hidden" structures of reality and their reflection in human actions and social processes.

Conclusion

The diary *Notabene 45* by Erich Kästner is a valuable document on the social turmoil in Germany at the end of the Second World War. It documents how the writer, who lived in "inner exile" for a prolonged period, experiences and processes external circumstances. His observations are often accompanied by skepticism and disappointment, and they offer a critical perspective on new beginnings. In his reflections on responsibility and guilt for the war and Nazi atrocities, he makes a self-reflexive examination that sheds light on the moral and intellectual state of

people at that time. To process the events on a subjective level, Kästner uses irony and sarcasm as a defense mechanism against the brutality of reality and his inner expression of the documented events, highlighting the absurdity of war and the contradictions of the post-war period.

It is a profound reflection on the human experience during war, combining both personal and collective dimensions of memory. He depicts not only the course of historical events but also the existential dilemmas that people face in the chaos and uncertainty of everyday life. Time in Kästner's diary becomes the creator of subjective experience, where each day carries historical significance and shapes personal existential reflections. His writing reveals the contrast between the brutality of war and people's attempts to preserve everyday life, even under the harshest conditions. Space becomes a symbolic border area between the old order and the new uncertainty, where one feels disoriented and unable to control events. Life is contradictory and individuals become involved in an absurd reality where rules are observed and duties fulfilled even as the system is on the verge of collapse. In war, human nature is transformed and survival instincts are exposed. Kästner criticizes society, denounces the instigators of war and their lack of responsibility, and develops a sharp analysis of social structures and the role of the individual within them. In conclusion, Kästner's diary not only records the historical processes that took place during the war but also deepens our understanding of the existential reality of humanity. His experience and reflections show how the war distorts the perception of time and space, and how it influences human identity and collective memory.

The study of subjective history, especially the experience of war, helps develop historical empathy—the ability to understand and empathize with people who lived in different times and circumstances. This approach is relevant from today's perspective because it presents readers not only with dry facts but with a sense of the depth of human experience behind the historical events. All in all, Erich Kästner's diary, *Notabene 45*, is a unique literary and historical document that goes beyond recording the events of the time, providing a deep insight into the human condition during times of war.

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Individual Memories on the Background of Historical Events in Astrid Lindgen's *War Diaries*

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Abstract Autobiographical diaries, as the representation of the memory culture, record the individual emotional experiences and thoughts of the authors and thereby contribute to the preservation of individual memories. They reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they were created while providing access to individual perspectives and experiences and can become part of the collective memory culture. Testimonies of World War II have survived to the present day not only in the form of documents and chronicles but also through the many autobiographical diaries of that time. The aim of the research presented here was to analyze the role and the function of individual memories on the background of World War II in the diaries of Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren, in order to form, maintain and reconstruct memories of the World War II period. Textual analysis, analysis of historical context and the hermeneutics approach have been applied in doing the research. The theoretical basis of the research lies in the concepts of cultural memory, time and existence, autobiographical memory and subjectivity, as well as life stories and self-expression.

Keywords memory; diaries; life writing; an individual.

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Introduction

Life writing, such as diaries and personal narratives, serves as an essential reservoir of cultural memory, capturing individual perspectives and experiences that offer personal insight into historical events. World War II diaries are particularly relevant in this context, as they not only document the harsh realities of war but also preserve the personal reflections, emotions and struggles of those who lived through it. These writings transform individual memories into durable records that help us understand the past.

The war diaries of Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren reflect the experiences, emotions and opinions of the people during the war. The availability or inaccessibility of information not to mention disinformation, affects how the people perceive the war. Fear, hope, and survival reflect human war perception through the prism of the woman's vision. Fear, survival, and spiritual resistance depict people's emotions, and experiences and strive for spiritual values. Nature is as the reflection background of human emotions: the sun and the warmth reflect positive human emotions. An individual has been researched on the background of the World War II.

Diaries as a Literary Genre of Life Writing

Diaries are also known as memoirs and life writing. They describe various ideas in the moment so as not to lose them. Writing diaries sometimes becomes second nature to the writer. Diaries might be used to describe how life changes or to describe just-noticed details. They are individual reminiscences.

Life writing texts can act as sources for cultural memory. Patricia Smart suggests that life writing as a literary genre began at the moment when the concept of the individual appeared in Western culture (Patricia Smart, *Writing Herself into Being: Quebec Women's Autobiographical Writings from Marie de l'Incarnation to Nelly Arcan* 193).

Life writing is an ancient and common practice. Autobiographies and diaries have been widespread since the 18th century. Margaretta Jolly emphasizes that in the 20th century life writing required a new explanation. As the capitalism brought individualism to the fore and globalization led to new ways of communication, life-writing texts started focusing more on the anxieties of the age (Margaretta Jolly, *Encyclopedia of Life Writing* 1). Today, a wide variety of scientific fields explore life writing in order to investigate the reflection of life in the text. There is a strong and clear link between life writing and history. People are more likely to write diaries during crucial points of their lives and important historical events.

One common feature of diaries is the attempt to record experiences in time. The concept of time underpins the writing of a diary. Paul Ricoeur points out that time, as experienced by people exists as complex structures understood through language. Language structures narrative, which in turn structures time. Time and narrative are thus inseparable (Hayden White, *Ricoeur's Philosophy of History. The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* 169-184). People often start writing diaries when something extraordinary happens in their lives or in the world, marking a transition from a previously well- arranged social situation with clear social norms and a new, extraordinary situation. According to Jacek Leociak, war time diaries certainly fit into that category, but their writers had additional goals: to bear witness, to sound the alarm to the world, to set down the basis for future revenge, or to leave traces of their existence (Jacek Leociak, *Why Did They Write? Text in the Face of Destruction: Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto Reconsidered* 77-104). Alexandra Garbarini points out that diary writers employ various literary models, including fiction, confession, lamentation, journalism, jurisprudence and correspondence (Alexandra Garbarini, Num*bered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* 11-12).

Two main types of diaries can be distinguished: chronicles and personal diaries. Chronicles recorded daily external events—such as essential statistic, issues relating to daily duties, etc.—and exclude personal topics. Personal, or intimate, diaries include details of the writer's private life as well as events relating to historical or the wider community. Lindgren's diaries belong to the second group.

In the 1980s, James Young applied a critical approach to analyze diaries not as documents containing objective facts but rather as reflections of the writers' subjective perceptions of the world and their experiences, mediated by language, culture, religion, political views and even the tropes and structures of the narrative style applied (James Young, *On Reading Holocaust Diaries and Memoir Writing and rewriting the Holocaust, Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* 15-39)

According to Philippe Lejeune, the author acts as a witness: their point of view is individual, but the object of their topic goes far beyond the individual; it is the story of the social and historical groups to which they belong (Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary* 63). Gender also influences life writing style, as Ruth Hoberman points out:

Drawing upon psychoanalytic theories of women's development, feminist critics have shown how women often have a far more rational sense of selfhood, in which their identity is felt to be intertwined with that of others: mothers, friends, lovers or children. Similarly, women's identity may be experienced collectively,

concerning a whole community (Helena Grice, *Gender and Life Writing: Encyclopedia of Life Writing* 359).

The issue of identity is also essential in life writing. It is a topic that runs through all life, including its most crucial moments. Writing a diary is a self-referential experience in which the writers try to find answers to questions about the essence of their identity.

Memories in Literature

Latvian Literary theorist Guntis Berelis notes that literature represents, in its own way, self-awareness of history. He emphasizes that literature also recognizes the present, or at least attempts to do so (Guntis Berelis *Latvijas literatūras vēsture* 204).

The issue of the reliability of memory is always topical. Agatha Christie wrote in the preface to her autobiography that it cannot be fully relied upon, as people remember only what they want to remember (Agatha, Christie *Autobiography* x). Life writing relies on historical, cultural and personal memory. Memory gathers, preserves and compiles a lot of autobiographical narratives. It cures pains and heals losses. It restores the eternal continuity of life. Time passes by, but memories are timeless and permanent. Vladimir Nabokov, in his work *Speak, Memory*, refers to the power of memory and "the masterly use it makes of innate harmonies when gathering to its fold the suspended and wandering tonalities of the past" (Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* 286).

All forms of life writing are dependent on memory. Life writing texts are unthinkable without experience and encouragement of personal memory. Pain, difficulties, and disobedience—characterize the Western autobiographical tradition. Jean-Jacques Rousseau notes that there is a disparity between the author's formal line on memory and the real process the reader may see in his works. He claims that the essential issue in life writing texts—the selectivity of memory—is not a problem for him because anything he forgets is unimportant. He credits memory with a positive editorial role that keeps what is crucial and discards the rest (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions* 67). One of the advantages of life writing is its ability to make the reader privy to the writer's relationship with his/her memory.

Different types of community—families, nations—construct their identities through cultural memories, manifested through artifacts, monuments, traditions, documents, and so on. Every story belongs to its place and time. The development of cross-cultural links between life writing, history, anthropology, psychology, and many other disciplines has led to the greater inclusion of documentary material into

the life writing quest. Memory nevertheless retains its central place in life writing. The diversification of memory forms has generated new possibilities for researching the individual and communal past.

Creation of *War Diaries* by Astrid Lindgren

Astrid Lindgren has written 34 books and 41 picture books. Her books have been translated into more than 100 languages and more than 170 million copies have been sold all over the world. Using a language style that is easily understandable to children, she covers topics such as a loving upbringing without violence, children's rights, and humanism. *Pippi Longstocking*, *The Brothers Lionheart* and *Ronja, The Robber's Daughter* are among her most outstanding publications. Between 1944 and 2003, Lindgren was awarded 76 literary prizes, including the Right Livelihood Award, sometimes called the "alternative Nobel Prize."

As academics such as Edström and Metcalf describe, Astrid Lindgren's work broadened awareness in both the academic community and the general public of the opportunities offered by children's literature (Vivi Edström, *Astrid Lindgren: A Critical Study*; Eva-Maria Metcalf, *Astrid Lindgren*).

Before the world knew Astrid Lindgren as a writer of outstanding books, she was living in Stockholm with her family and making her first steps into the world of writing. When World War II broke out, Lindgren wrote diaries in which she recorded the horrors of the war. These diaries reveal the daily experiences and emotions of an ordinary Stockholm resident who was both a young writer and mother.

The book reflects Lindgren's perceptive, serious and wise vision. The motto of the book is that "Our poor planet in the grip of this madness!" (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries*, 15). As the title indicates, the book is about the war. From the point of view of a modern reader, it highlights how nothing has changed in politics and human thinking and deeds since the wars of the mid-20th century. Lindgren's diaries are both emotional and precise reflections of life during the war period and represents the sequence of historical events very precisely.

Although the topic is deeply tragic, Lindgren's narrative style is not depressing—rather, it vividly expresses the optimistic and bright personality of the future professional writer. Lindgren's characteristic sense of irony can already be found in the diary:

In England, Churchill has announced that intelligence has reached them about German intentions to use gas on the eastern front. Churchill is preparing the Germans for the fact that if this is true, gas will immediately be released over

German port cities and war-related industrial sites. This is going to be a lovely spring and no mistake (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries* 135).

She demonstrates an amazing clairvoyance about the Baltic states: "Russia's making a whole series of demands in the Baltic states—and getting what it wants" (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries* 20). She also describes the cruelty of Russians in the Baltic States:

From time to time we get appalling reports of Russian rampages in the Baltic during the year they were in control there. Eighty thousand people were sent to Siberia and God knows where. Had a letter from Riga today, smuggled here. The writer said we presumably wouldn't believe the accounts from there—but he swore they were true. Even women and children were shoved into cattle trucks and carried off; children were separated from their mothers, husbands, and wives from each other, and so on (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries* 131).

She also foresees the future occupation of small countries by the Soviet Union. Lindgren criticizes war and violence and observes world events carefully. Events in her private life are intertwined with public ones: the diaries describe everything from her horror at the deportation of 1,000 Norwegian Jews to Poland to her heartbreak after a crisis in her marriage. Descriptions of the war are followed by descriptions of daily life and family events: moving to better place of residence, visiting relatives, celebrating Christmas and birthdays, and going to the countryside. Her role as a mother, caring for her children, is intertwined with her despair about the disaster of war in the world. She was a humanist though and through, and presents her opinions with courage, love and humor. She documents the events of the war with the help of newspaper articles and letters.

In 1940, Lindgren started a new job as an employee of the Swedish Mail Censorship Office. She had to read German letters for the Swedish Intelligence service, which gave her a deeper insight into the war which is reflected in her diary. Although it was forbidden to do so, she copied a few letters to go in her diary. During this terrible period she was also starting to write her book about Pippi Longstocking, one of the most widely translated children's books of the twentieth century.

An Individual on the Background of Historical Events in Astrid Lindgen's *War Diaries*

The individual is a central component of any world model. The most essential principles in the conception of the individual are personality harmony, integrity or contradictoriness, and disintegrity. Different conceptions of an individual have

been topical at different periods. Modern literature offers up a variety of such conceptions of the individual, and the depiction of an individual's personality becomes more complex in it. In literature, as its history testifies, a human has been described in a close context with the world around him/her. The external, practical deeds of individuals provide their material existence, but the internal - their mental awareness. In realism literature, the postulates of historicism and determinism form the basis of an individual's conception. An individual is a part of history's flow, he/she depends on political, social, and economic reality. Protagonists tend to be like real-life individuals. Bringing to the fore of daily life deeds and typification of reality characterize realism literature.

Lindgren starts writing the diary on the first day of the war. She and other people cannot believe it is happening. People hate and curse Hitler. Many people consider the war a*s* "the fall of the white race and of civilization" (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries 1939-1945* 16). She praises British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's attempts to prevent war up to the last possible moment. She expresses her terror that 1,500 people have been killed during the first two days of the war. Tragic information is received almost every day. The Germans sink a British passenger steamer with 1,400 people on board; 128 of them die. The first bomb is dropped on Denmark. All Swedish ships are looted and sunk. When Germany invades and occupies Poland, it causes her deep sorrow. She expresses her strong hatred for Hitler: "It's a shame nobody's shot Hitler" (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries* 20).

Social and emotional problems emerge immediately. People start stockpiling food and other necessary goods. But people also become more communicative—particularly about war. Public transport is limited and it is forbidden to use cars, so the streets are empty. The female point-of-view is evident—she comments that it is not possible to buy white cotton thread for mending clothes anywhere. The unemployment rate rises. They go to a restaurant for dinner but there are few people there; the empty restaurant feels uncomfortable.

She describes severe emotional problems—she experiences depression and every day she is gloomy about everything and everybody. As she notes, people all over the world desire peace, but the violent events continue. Sometimes she does not even want to live: "Eli, Eli, lemi sabachtani! Who'd want to live in this world! Today the Russians bombarded Helsinki and several other places in Finland" (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries* 23). She is very emotional and cries a lot when she hears that the men will be mobilized.

She describes the wartime policies of various countries. The English drop

leaflets instead of bombs from their airplanes, stating that their fight is with fascism, not with the German people. She writes about allies' opinions—the English hope that a revolution will take place in Germany, since Hitler also terrorizes his opponents in Germany. She notes the paradox that Chamberlain addresses the German nation but it is forbidden for them to listen.

She expresses happiness that the Polish fight, that they do not give in to Germany. Lindgren's language is emotional, she adopts a conversational style, sometimes using jargon. The leaders of Nordic countries visit King Gustav V of Sweden. People have high hopes of this visit and it is supported by sunny weather. But paradoxes are frequent; it is spring but people are killing each other.

Lindgren hears various rumors, but she deals with them critically. She trusts information from the newspapers. She listens to a lot of lies. Lindgren links positive emotions with nature and sunshine. The morning is beautiful and England and France declare war on Germany. Social activities continue.. Her friend comes to visit and wants to talk about something but cannot; instead they drink cognac. It does not help much. But despite everything, life continues: Princess Juliana is expecting her third child. Lindgren's family celebrate Christmas, their daughter's birthday and Mother's day. They have enough good food and their daughter receives birthday presents. They start becoming accustomed to war: "Today it's been a year since the beginning of war. We're starting to get used to it. At least those of us who live in a place where it isn't exactly raining bombs all the time" (Astrid Lindgren, *War Diaries*, 23). She describes historical celebrities and events are described, for example, Chamberlain's speech to Parliament.

Conclusion

Lindgren's diaries demonstrate a clear identification between protagonist, author, and narrator. She often speaks of herself indirectly through her different roles: as a mother, wife, daughter or resident of Stockholm. She describes having to subordinate her own needs and desires for others. Lindgren's war diaries represent a valuable piece of contemporary history and offer a perspective on the Second World War that is unusual for Scandinavia. Astrid Lindgren's wartime diaries mainly focus on the war and its impact on her and her family. She praises the qualities of courage, hope, love and resistance. The diaries show that her preoccupation with these qualities was already in evidence long before she achieved fame after the war.

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Multiplicity and Irony: Hawthorne's Poetics of Historical Critique[1]

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Abstract Nathaniel Hawthorne's historical writing addresses cultural conflicts and social contradictions in America, and the mechanism of his historical writing also expresses his skepticism about the development of national history. Revolving around Hawthorne's significant literary images such as the "House of the Seven Gables," the "Scarlet Letter," and "Grandfather's Chair," this paper examines how the novelist clarifies the historical origin of national culture and showcases his historical concepts and historical writing mechanisms through six coupled aesthetic elements: the "new" and the "old," the "real" and the "unreal," and the "individual" and the "collective." It argues that Hawthorne not only investigates and represents important events in national history but also explores strategies for historical writing, challenging contemporary mainstream discourse from various perspectives. On this basis, Hawthorne's historical poetics, by including multiple perspectives and satirizing authoritative ideas, exhibits his careful contemplation of national issues and sharp criticism of nineteenth-century American official history.

Keywords Nathaniel Hawthorne; historical poetics; colonial history; multiplicity; irony

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Introduction

Although Hawthorne was not regarded as a historical novelist by his contemporaries in the same way as James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, or Catharine Maria Sedgwick, his consistent historical consciousness and discourse construction

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that evoke a sense of history and trace historical processes have, to a considerable extent, imbued his works with a historicity similar to that of traditional historical novels. Curiously, one of the earliest critics to identify the historical nature of Hawthorne's novels was the conservative bishop Arthur Cleveland Coxe, who accused the novelist of disregarding social morality. Despite his strong disapproval of the transgressive themes in *The Scarlet Letter*, Coxe did not deny certain artistic qualities of the novel, recognizing its attempt to elevate itself from "petty" tale to "historical novel." He opined:

> It [*The Scarlet Letter*] may properly be called a novel, because it has all the ground-work, and might have been very easily elaborated into the details, usually included in the term; and we call it *historical*, because its scene-painting is in a great degree true to a period of our Colonial history, which ought to be more fully delineated. (Crowley 181-182)

In contrast to Coxe's highly restrained comments, the positive evaluations from Henry T. Tuckerman and E. P. Whipple further reveal the correspondence between Hawthorne's historical writing and traditional historical novels. For this reason, we should return to Whipple and through the lens of his thoughts, reconsider the historical dimensions of Hawthorne's fiction:

> For many of these stories are at once a representation of early New England life and a criticism on it. They have much of the deepest truth of history in them. "The Legends of the Province House," "The Gray Champion," "The Gentle Boy," "The Minister's Black Veil," "Endicott and the Red Cross," not to mention others, contain important matter which cannot be found in Bancroft or Grahame. They exhibit the inward struggles of New-England men and women with some of the darkest problems of existence, and have more vital import to thoughtful minds than the records of Indian or Revolutionary warfare. (Crowley 342)

By comparing Hawthorne with other established historians of his time, Whipple perceptively recognize the exceptional qualities of Hawthorne's historical fiction, which were absent in official history. For a long time afterward, however, many critics failed to sustain attention to the historicity of Hawthorne's fiction. As Henry James put it, Hawthorne's novels "had few perceptible points of contact with what is called the world, with public events, with the manners of his time, even with

the life of his neighbours." (James, *Essays* 319) In the eyes of critics like James, Hawthorne escaped into a realm of artistic imagination, detached from historical reality. In this regard, Michael Davitt Bell points out that there was the cognitive oversight because those scholars still adhered to the "rigid distinction between 'art' and 'history'" — they believed that Hawthorne's timeless literary artistry couldn't be compatible with his unique historical awareness, thus necessitating the dismissal of the latter. Therefore, Bell advocates for thinking in the "middle ground," viewing the relationship between history and art with a more inclusive mind, or more precisely, considering history as a part of art (Bell, *Hawthorne* vii). At the same time, to address the shortcomings of historical methods in Hawthorne studies, Bell suggests shifting focus from a comparative study at the level of story (contrasting Hawthorne's historical romances with historical records) to a narratological analysis at the level of discourse (exploring how the past is interpreted and reproduced in Hawthorne's works) (Bell, *Hawthorne* viii). Following Bell's paradigm, this paper attempts to conduct a systematic study of Hawthorne's historical poetics by examining his historical concepts and aesthetic principles in both fictional and non-fictional texts.

In effect, Hawthorne has discussed his ideas of history and historical writing mechanisms on different occasions, and these concepts find expression in the following literary images. First, the historical heritages that connect old and new cultures, such as the Pyncheon house and the May-Pole recall the forgotten history, which has still haunted Hawthorne's time, albeit imperceptibly. Second, the historical reconstruction of the Scarlet Letter, the Red Cross, and the show box embodies the aesthetic realm where the real and the unreal blend harmoniously, and thus serves as an alternative to official history which unjustly prioritizes fact over fiction and deliberately disregards historical contradictions. Third, the old oaken chair, the autograph letters from historical figures, and the old women's tales present a historical panorama from both individual and collective perspectives and a revision to the grand but highly problematic national history. Although these aesthetic elements and cultural images deal with different historical issues, they complement and resonate with each other, collectively forming the poetic foundation of Hawthorne's historical narrative. More importantly, this poetic construction which includes multiple and ironic discourses engages in dialogue with contemporary official history, challenging its authority by exposing social conflicts and historical contradictions that have often been omitted or deliberately embellished, thus creating a complex and multifaceted historical field for readers. In this sense, Hawthorne is concerned about not only national history but also writing

about it. And his poetics of historical critique, characterized by multiplicity and irony, well exemplifies this.

The Interplay of the Old and the New: The "House of the Seven Gables" and Remembrance of the Forgotten History

The dialectical relationship between the old and the new is a core theme in Hawthorne's historical writing. According to the writer, his works are termed "romances" because they attempt to depict the contrast and resonance between distant ages and the fleeting present, or "to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us" (*Novels* 351). From this perspective, historical writing not only enables Hawthorne to honor the past but also provides him with an important perspective to trace and clarify the historical roots of contemporary social phenomena. Therefore, while most of his contemporaries (represented by Transcendentalists like Emerson) eagerly shed the burdens of the past, embraced the present, and looked forward to the future, Hawthorne instead took a different approach by pointing out that the forgotten history might come back to haunt the present and reminding people to reflect on the past. In comparison, Hawthorne's concept of connecting the past with the present displays a conservative and nostalgic sentiment, leaving the impression of being unrelated to current affairs, especially in the face of the progressive discourse predominant in his time. However, it constitutes the fundamental principle of Hawthorne's historical writing, which further evolves into his cognitive basis for observing and intervening in social life, and reflects his responses to contemporary issues.

In this respect, *The House of the Seven Gables* holds significant symbolic importance. Revolving around the enmity between the Pyncheons and the Maules, the novel tells a lesser-known truth, that is, "the act of the passing generation is the germ which may and must produce good or evil fruit, in a far distant time" (*Novels* 356). Following Hawthorne's carefully crafted theme, readers can easily discern that from the Puritan era to the eve of the American Civil War, history seemed not to have ruptured but astonishingly displayed a cyclical pattern. In the colonial period, Colonel Pyncheon capitalized on the witchcraft hysteria to falsely accuse Matthew Maule, and finally took possession of Maule's land. Centuries later, Colonel Pyncheon's descendant, Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, similarly fabricated evidence to frame his cousin for personal gain. Therefore, despite the passage of time, Judge Pyncheon, by perfectly inheriting the ruthlessness, hypocrisy, and greed of his ancestor, could be seen as the latter's reincarnation, which meant past tragedies were destined to be reenacted in contemporary times. Corresponding to the novel's

moral, the Pyncheons' "hereditary" violent tendencies and the family feuds indicate that if historical sins were not absolved in time, they would eventually merge into the family's bloodline and profoundly affect the destinies of future generations. To one's relief, the Pyncheons' evil does not constitute the main theme of the novel. Although history's curse has cast a heavy shadow over the House of the Seven Gables through Judge Pyncheon, this vicious cycle was ultimately broken by the younger generation, Phoebe and Holgrave, which hinted at a reconciliation to some extent between the past and the present. In this regard, the novel's conclusion carries the nuanced logic of dialectics between the old and the new: after the sudden death of the Judge and the revelation of all truths, the decision was made to move from the dark ancient mansion to the Judge's rural villa, somewhat as a gesture to bid farewell to the regrettable past. However, the past was not completely forgotten because, on the one hand, Uncle Venner, the town's old man full of ancient wisdom and practical insight, was invited to reside in the new home, implying that historical memory received due respect. On the other hand, Holgrave, who had originally advocated for the abandonment of everything past, later transformed from a staunch reformer to a conservative, and willingly embraced the existing system. His shift in stance actually embodies Hawthorne's ideal historical view that the "tattered garments of the Antiquity" are "gradually renewing themselves by patchwork," instead of being directly "exchanged for a new suit" (*Novels* 507). Within this framework of gradual change, Hawthorne manages to establish an organic connection between the past and the present, thus providing readers with a unique perspective to glimpse into the origin and development of American history and culture.

It is notable that in Hawthorne's fictional world, the past and the present not only indicate the sequence of events but also refer to the transformation of local identities. In connecting the past with the present through historical writing, Hawthorne considers both dimensions of time and space—not only contemplating the rupture and continuity between ancient and contemporary times from a diachronic perspective, but also examining the similarities and differences between England and American colonies in lifestyles, values, and beliefs from a synchronic perspective. In other words, Hawthorne's historical writing not only outlines the changes in events but also portrays the clashes between different regional cultures (i.e. English and American cultures), or to put it another way, the cultural anxieties during periods of social transformation (see Pennell 18). In this regard, "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" is particularly noteworthy. The tale is based on Endicott's raid on Merry Mount and uses highly allegorical methods to reenact the conflict

between new and old values in early colonial periods. In the scarcely trodden and perilous American wilderness, Merry Mount stood as a utopia where residents inherited the festive customs of old England and spent their days in revelry around the May-Pole. Unfortunately, the frivolity of Merry Mounters provoked the Puritans led by Endicott, who strictly adhered to asceticism and couldn't bear the frivolous entertainments of old England spreading to the new world. When their contradictions became irreconcilable, the Puritans acted preemptively, ruthlessly toppled the May-Pole and forced the Merry Mounters to leave their joyful haven. Although the tale on the surface depicts the conflict between Revelers and Puritans as a clash of mentalities (the struggle between "joy" and "gloom"), it allegorically alludes to the confrontation between two ideological orientations and ways of life in the new and old worlds. More precisely, the tale attempts to reveal the gains and losses in the formation of New England's character. This is particularly evident in the story's end—when contemplating how to do with the newlyweds Edgar and Edith, Endicott showed mercy, merely ordering the discipline and assimilation of the young couple and even placing rose wreaths from the destroyed May-Pole on them. Thus, for Edgar and Edith, though "the moral gloom of the world overpowers all systematic gaiety," the "purest and best of their early joys" did not perish, but forever resided in their emotional bond (*Tales* 370). From the overall plot of the tale, it appears that the Puritans have won decisively in the struggle, but the victory was mitigated by Endicott's leniency, which symbolized compromise, and foreshadowed the formation of New England's regional identity and intellectual tradition under the interaction between new and old cultures.

Compared to "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," the entanglements of the past and the present seem more complex and thought-provoking in *The Scarlet Letter*. In the novel, although the early immigrants of New England frequently deplored the Church of England as corrupt to justify their unique mission in abandoning the old culture and creating a new world, they still maintained spiritual ties with old England in many ways. In terms of thought, emotion, and cultural tradition, they were not very different from the English. For example, the "old home" in Hester's eyes was not just a reminder of the static past, but a vibrant and dynamic cultural symbol. It not only carried unique individual memories but also profoundly affected her perception of the present—whether Hester looked back on the past on the scaffold, pondered gender issues in solitude, or considered her escape with Dimmesdale in the woods, the old England always appeared before her eyes, and prompted her to reflect on the differences between old and new lives. On a larger scale, both the common people and the nobility in the colonies cherished longing

for their motherland to varying degrees. The novel begins by explaining that, compared to their delicate descendants, the Boston women watching Hester's trial in the marketplace were more akin to their English counterparts because they were raised in their native land and perfectly inherited the physique and temperament of their countrywomen. Their derision of Hester and Pearl—on the one hand, jokingly referring to Hester's use of "heathenish adornment," and on the other hand, labeling Pearl as "demon offspring" (*Novels* 162, 202)—actually betrayed their own contradictions. Although the Puritans bragged that the novelty and superiority of the colony lied in its abandonment of the home country's obnoxious customs, their fetish for symbols (using the scarlet "A" to symbolize sin was itself a way of Catholic symbolism) and fine clothing (Hester's exquisite needlework was highly valued in the colony) seemed to indicate that they secretly retained many old habits, and hence they were not yet purely Puritan (see Bercovitch 57).

Therefore, in the chapter "The New England Holiday," readers are treated to not only a panorama of the customs of New England, but also a glimpse of English cultural traces. The novel mentions that at the inaugural ceremony of the new governor, although "popular merriment […] in the England of Elizabeth's time, or that of James" was prohibited, certain recreational activities from the old world (such as wrestling matches) continued, adding much enjoyment for the common people (*Novels* 317). As for the upper classes, on the one hand, they publicly expressed dissatisfaction with extravagant customs like bonfires and banquets, but they still clung to some old ways, including procession to celebrate the Election Day. These facts indicate that the earliest European colonists were not "born to an inheritance of Puritanic gloom"—quite the contrary, they selectively inherited many folk rituals from their motherland and thus could be called "native Englishmen" (*Novels* 316). In such case, it is not difficult to understand that even Governor Bellingham himself found it hard to let go of his feelings for the motherland. Not only did he decorate his colonial mansion "after the residences of gentlemen of fair estate in his native land," but he vainly hoped to transplant the flowers and vegetables from his homeland to the new environment (see *Novels* 206-209). In a sense, this "contrapuntal" historical perspective breaks contemporary reader's expectations and sets *The Scarlet Letter* apart from contemporary historical narratives, since unlike the latter, it does not view the New England Puritans as the forebears of the American Revolution or "proto-Americans," but rather as the English people who found it difficult to sever cultural traditions of and emotional ties with their homeland. Hence the novel offers a unique view of the formation of the American nation and its dual impact (Pennell 18, 29).

Overall, whether delineating the residue of Puritanism in nineteenth-century America, or portraying the enduring attachments of American colonists (and even their descendants in the United States) to their "old home," Hawthorne excels in capturing pivotal moments in national development, thereby clarifying the causes and effects of national culture and spirit, and envisioning the destiny of the nation. From this perspective, the wise old man in *Grandfather's Chair* who tells national history can be regarded as Hawthorne's mouthpiece. His story ranges from John Winthrop to George Washington and covers the two-century journey of American colonization and nation-building. He guides young audiences inside and outside the story to revisit the national epic and inherit ancestral spirits, so his storytelling makes possible "the past speaking to the present, or rather to the future." Through the vivid historical imagination of Grandfather, the innocent children can not only "know anything of the past," but also recognize the present and "provide aught for the future" (*Grandfather* 478). Therefore, Hawthorne's advocacy of connecting the past with the fleeting present is of great significance here.

The Integration of the Real and the Unreal: The "Scarlet Letter" as an Alternative to Official History

In "The Custom House—Introductory to *The Scarlet Letter*," Hawthorne metaphorically describes the ideal creative environment as "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other" (*Novels* 149). To practice this aesthetics, Hawthorne claims to be the "editor" rather than the author, pretending that the manuscript of *The Scarlet Letter* was "discovered" rather than "created" by him. He further lists various "factual evidence" to create the illusion of objectivity, asserting that Hester's story is based on historical facts. Moreover, he candidly claims that his "editorship" is not a mechanical retelling of previous records but an active exercise of imagination, adding embellishments to the story at critical moments (see *Novels* 146-147). It is worth noting that this poetic strategy of "integrating reality and fiction" is not unique to *The Scarlet Letter.* Instead, it runs throughout Hawthorne's entire creative career and forms a unique feature of his historical poetics. In works such as "Endicott and the Red Cross," "Roger Malvin's Burial," and "The Gentle Boy," the narrator tends to provide a detailed historical background at the beginning of the text, or even deliberately reveal the historical sources or creative materials of the story. Take "Legends of the Province-House" as an example. The narrator creates the illusion of true events and urges readers to suspend their disbelief, while simultaneously admitting that

the stories have "a tinge of romance approaching to the marvellous," not hiding the fictionality of the tales (*Tales* 641). To borrow the paradoxical rhetoric of *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne's historical writing, is essentially like a "day-dream," but it also has a sense of "reality"—it is this both-real-and-dreamlike quality that constitutes the unique poetic foundation of his work (*Novels* 634). In summary, this deliberate technique of obscuring the real and unreal has the following effects: (1) it makes clear the historical correspondences referred to in the story, thus guiding readers to the best path into the text; (2) it adds a sense of reality to fictional narrative, thus resolving the traditional opposition between reality and fiction; (3) it questions the authority of official history and gives voice to suppressed discourses.

Obviously, this narrative characteristic carries strong meta-narrative implications and displays Hawthorne's self-reflexive awareness of the mechanisms of historical writing. According to Harry E. Shaw and Wallace Martin, most Western scholars since Aristotle have often defined the novel from a negative perspective (i.e. in contradistinction to history, reality). Paradoxically, the novel, often synonymous with "fiction," often exhibits a "truth to reality" (Shaw 30; Martin 57). This contradiction is particularly pronounced in historical fiction—what literary genre embodies the artistic tension between fact and fiction more than historical fiction? Unfortunately, because history has always been held as a model and a significant measure of the value of novel, the inherent aesthetic qualities of the latter (let alone historical novels) have long been neglected. Therefore, even though the historicity of the novel is recognized and the narrative characteristics of historical fiction are explored, some critics remain confined to the mindset that prioritizes fact over fiction and fail to recognize the creativity of such genre in balancing historical truth and artistic truth. It is no wonder that renowned critics like François-René de Chateaubriand and Georg Brandes were quite dissatisfied with the "transgression" of historical novel and accused it of disregarding facts and blurring the lines between reality and fiction, thus being "a false genre," or even worse "a bastard species" (Chateaubriand 530; Brandes 125).

From this perspective, Hawthorne consciously explores the dialectical relationship between truth and fiction in historical fiction to correct the bias of realism mentioned above, and thereby justify the legitimacy of historical imagination. In guiding his close friend Horatio Bridge in writing travelogue, Hawthorne straightforwardly points out the necessity of imagination:

I would advise you not to stick too accurately to the bare fact, either in your

> descriptions or narrations; else your hand will be cramped, and the result will be a want of freedom, that will deprive you of a higher truth than that which you strive to attain. Allow your fancy pretty free license, and omit no heightening touches merely because they did not chance to happen before your eyes. If they did not happen, they at least ought — which is all that concerns you. This is the secret of all entertaining travellers. (qtd. in Mellow 227)

Hawthorne sees imagination as the key to writing travelogue, which somewhat recalls his later confession to Bridge about his mindset while writing the campaign biography *The Life of Franklin Pierce*: "though the story is true, yet it took a romancer to do it." (qtd. in Stewart 133) It applies to non-fiction writing, even more so to fiction writing. In the historical sketch "Sir William Phips," Hawthorne openly speaks of the limitations of mere historical records and then goes on to note that a proper exercise of imagination can correct narrative deficiencies and make up for biases:

> The knowledge, communicated by the historian and biographer, is analogous to that which we acquire of a country by the map, minute, perhaps, and accurate, and available for all necessary purposes, but cold and naked, and wholly destitute of the mimic charm produced by landscape painting. These defects are partly remediable, and even without an absolute violation of literal truth, although by methods rightfully interdicted to professors of biographical exactness. A license must be assumed in brightening the materials which time has rusted, and in tracing out the half-obliterated inscriptions on the columns of antiquity; fancy must throw her reviving light on the faded incidents that indicate character, whence a ray will be reflected, more or less vividly, on the person to be described. (*Tales* 12)

To highlight fancy's "reviving light," Hawthorne consciously breaks the barriers of historical writing and instead employs literary techniques to depict historical figures: after outlining Phips's early experiences, he explicitly states that the events to be described henceforth have no historical basis, thus asserting a distinct departure from historical fidelity. Accordingly, the text intentionally deviates from the conventional biographical writing and embodies a distinct artistic character. On the one hand, the main text focuses solely on one day in Phips's life by succinctly compressing major events of his tenure (such as the Salem witch trials and Indian warfare) into a single day. On the other hand, the sketch embeds micro-details

within its grand narrative to further showcase the personal traits of this grassroots governor through specific vignettes. Evidently, Hawthorne maintains a high degree of artistic autonomy by integrating imaginative elements to make the work multivalent, and convey the "truth of human experience" not yet accommodated in official records but more closely aligned with human experience (Pennell 18).

It can also be seen from the historical inaccuracies in "Endicott and the Red Cross." Hawthorne customarily opens with the pseudo-historical style ("There is evidence on record" [*Tales* 542]) to create an unquestionable sense of historical authenticity. However, as noted by some scholars, the tale exhibits several traces of tampering with historical materials: the narrator expends much effort describing the severe punishments imposed by Puritan authorities on heretics, yet certain specifics (such as being punished for toasting the English King's health) lack substantiation in colonial judicial history. Even where historical basis exists, the timing (certain penalties listed in the tale preceded their historical documentation by many years) and frequency (Salem's crime rate, as depicted by Hawthorne, was shockingly high just six years after its founding) diverge significantly from historical accounts. More prominently, Hawthorne diminishes the young Separatist Roger Williams into a feeble peacemaker in the presence of the indignant and uncompromising Endicott (see Doubleday 102-103). Through the reconstruction of history, "Endicott and the Red Cross" is less about the exploitation of colonies by England than about the discipline and oppression of the marginalized groups (including Williams) by the colonial authorities (represented by Endicott). With this reversal of power dynamics, Hawthorne shifts his focus from Endicott, who has been lauded by nationalist discourse, to the minorities forgotten and suppressed by national history, thereby satirizing the official American history and opening up historical possibilities.

However, we cannot conclude from Hawthorne's advocacy of using imagination to inspire creativity that he seeks only fiction and disregards historical fact. As Michael Colacurcio has pointed out, the enduring charm of Hawthorne's historical fiction lies in its artistic tension that is "historically, disparate without being in all senses perfectly opposed" (Colacurcio 226). In other words, while Hawthorne primarily aims to unearth figures and events obscured in history through imagination, it does not mean that he ignores the principles of truth in his works. On the contrary, he respects objective reality and accurately depicts historical events. Thus, despite its advocacy for imagination, "Sir William Phips" does not abandon historical authenticity; it even shows a desire to conform to authentic records and establish itself as credible history. For instance, when depicting the horrifying details of white people massacring Native Americans, the narrator clarifies the truthfulness

of his descriptions, dispelling readers' doubts with a rigorous tone: "we would not venture to record without good evidence of the fact" (*Tales* 15). In the end, he even solemnly cites authoritative sources to substantiate the reliability of the narrative. This seemingly contradictory strategy precisely demonstrates Hawthorne's endeavor in reconstructing historical events—to achieve an organic unity of historical truth and artistic truth. As he suggests, imagination could be used to reconstruct history "without an absolute violation of literal truth" (*Tales* 12).

To better grasp Hawthorne's views on reality and fiction, one must revisit *The House of the Seven Gables*, especially its preface concerning creative flexibility. Given the prejudices of nineteenth-century American mainstream society towards fiction (see Bell, *Development* 11-13), Hawthorne positions his own work within the realm of romance, hoping to carve out a place for artistic imagination with this established literary genre:

> When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude … The former [Romance] while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart, has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the Public. (*Novels* 351)

At first glance, Hawthorne seems to defend imagination throughout, and even earnestly plead with readers who are adept at seeking factual accuracy not to "assign an actual locality to the imaginary events of this narrative." Instead, he asks them to regard the novel merely as the crystallization of artistic concepts, a "castle in the air" (*Novels* 352-353). However, upon closer examination, *The House of the Seven Gables* actually advocates a coexistence between reality and fiction. Certainly, as novelist, Hawthorne seeks to maintain artistic self-discipline, but this does not mean he neglects the real world. The limiting terms such as "a certain latitude," "rigidly subject itself to laws," and "a very moderate use of the privileges" in the preface strongly demonstrate that Hawthorne neither purely emphasizes unfettered flights of fancy nor slavishly reproduces facts. Instead, he organically blends realistic and

imaginative strokes by deftly transforming social life into artistic elements.

What needs to be clarified is that Hawthorne's writing strategy of blending reality with fiction not only signifies the dialectical unity of historical facts and literary imagination, but also involves the creative process and artistic logic intrinsic to historical fiction, and thus showcases his strong sense of innovation and introspection. This meta-construct is prominently presented through juxtaposed writing, which openly reveals its "sources" while constructing a bizarre stage, thereby creating a scene where reality and fiction intermingle and mutually illuminate each other. "Fancy's Show Box: A Morality" perhaps provides an excellent commentary on this. The tale begins with the question "What is Guilt," and then explores whether guilty thoughts are equivalent to guilty deeds by introducing the story of Mr. Smith, a so-called moral exemplar, confronted directly by three uninvited guests—Fancy, Memory, and Conscience. These three intruders respectively expose Mr. Smith's lesser-known aspects: Fancy operates the show box to reveal Mr. Smith's cruel moments, though they never occur in real life. Memory flips through her volume, finds one record of Smith's sinful thought which corresponds to Fancy's picture, and reads it to the gentleman. Conscience, after the first two reveal stains on Mr. Smith's soul, always strikes a dagger to his heart. The tale aims to suggest that even if one has not committed heinous acts, harboring malevolent thoughts would also render him sinful. In such cases, the sinner (whether in action or thought) must deeply reflect, sincerely repent, and thus purify his souls.

On the surface, "Fancy's Show Box" focuses on moral discussion and seems unrelated to creative principles. However, if one considers the abrupt "aside" in the latter part of the tale, a hidden literary allegory emerges. After Fancy, Memory, and Conscience have exposed Smith's base thoughts and left him to repent in solitude, the main plot ends and the narrative then returns to moralization. Unexpectedly, the narrator at this moment equates the novelist with the criminal by focusing on their hidden similarities. That is, to enhance the realistic elements of a tale (to make it "seem, in the glow of fancy, more like truth, past, present, or to come, than purely fiction" [*Tales* 454]), the novelist's thought processes in crafting antagonists mirror those of the real-life villain who meticulously plans his crimes before acting. From this perspective, the "novel-writer" and the "villain of actual life" are only a step apart (the key lies in whether there is a constraint of moral conscience), and they often "meet each other, half-way between reality and fancy" (*Tales* 454). On the formal level, this passage is a kind of critical commentary, clearly distinct from the preceding fictional narrative. On the thematic level, it focuses on the similarities between the villain's scheme planning and the novelist's creative writing, which

bears no direct relation to Smith's midnight adventure. However, given the broad definition of sin at the tale's beginning, Hawthorne's discussion on novel writing here is not digressive but rather closely connected to the theme. At the meta-linguistic level, it mirrors the symbolic identities of the three visitors in Smith's story, who echo the core elements of writing respectively: "Memory" which records actual thoughts is akin to reality; "Fancy" which constructs possible scenarios and subtly reflects reality can be considered the artistic elaboration; and "Conscience" serves as the ethical and ideological framework bridging both. Hawthorne's artistic representation of these creative elements recalls Henry James's metaphors when the latter discusses the poetics of romance:

> The balloon of experience is ... tied to the earth, and under that necessity we swing, thanks to a rope of remarkable length, in the more or less commodious car of the imagination; but it is by the rope we know where we are, and from the moment that cable is cut we are at large and unrelated: we only swing apart from the globe – though remaining as exhilarated, naturally, as we like, especially when all goes well. The art of the romancer is, "for the fun of it," insidiously to cut the cable, to cut it without our detecting him. (James, *French* 1064)

Although Henry James's conception of the art of romance differs significantly from Hawthorne's, the three vivid images James uses to illustrate the fabric of romance writing resonate similarly with the three allegorical figures in Hawthorne's tale. Thus, "Fancy's Show Box" encapsulates the operational mechanism of artistic imagination. Namely, the morality play centering around Mr. Smith turns out to be an implicit allegory of (historical) novel aesthetics: past events are documented; the novelist reconstructs existing historical records in accordance with his own moral values, and creates an artistic world that appears detached from social life but is imbued with the spirit of the times.

Echoing "Fancy's Show Box," "Alice Doane's Appeal" explores the dialectical relationship between reality and fiction in historical writing with a high degree of self-awareness. It should be noted that Hawthorne not only employs first-person narrative perspective in the tale, but also introduces a frame narrative structure. This narrative construct not only represents a dialogue between Hawthorne and contemporary readers, his interaction with mainstream historical discourse, but also produces an aesthetic effect of mutual illumination between fiction and reality. As implied by the two mirthful female listeners, the narrator "I" lamented

that the entire nation did not pay attention to its history. Even if someone did, he (implicitly referring to the famous historian at the time, Charles W. Upham) has treated this dark history "in the only desirable connection with the errors of our ancestry," by "converting the hill of their disgrace into an honorable monument of his own antiquarian lore" (*Tales* 206). Thus, through the narrative mechanism of the frame story, the tale utilizes the interaction between "I" and his audience to teach those blindly optimistic readers and historians a lesson about historical truth. Moreover, regarding the relationship between fiction and reality in "The Appeal of Alice Doane," Colacurcio argues that the tragic story of the Doane siblings and the wrongful cases in Salem are merely two different narrative forms of the same material, with the latter even being more "true," "literal," and "reductive" (Colacurcio 92). However, these two narratives are not superficially similar. Hawthorne arranges the coexistence of literary fiction and historical reality on the same stage to vividly reveal the generative mechanisms of artistic imagination. Contrasting the fictional and factual elements in the tale, one will perceive that the morbid imagination of Leonard Doane, the incestuous love of the Doane siblings, and the malicious instigation from outsiders in the Doane narrative all to varying degrees echo the chaos in the Salem narrative, thus artistically reproducing the causes of the historical tragedy. Therefore, the story of Doane is not as absurd as described by the two ladies; on the contrary, based on historical facts, it artistically represents the hidden logic of the Salem tragedy, thereby pointing towards a higher truth that official historical narratives fail to attain. To borrow the ironic rhetoric of the narrator "I," one could say, "fiction is more powerful than truth."

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne similarly employs a writing strategy of juxtaposing the real and the unreal to further highlight the self-referentiality and self-creativity of historical imagination. This is particularly evident in the intertextual correspondence between "The Custom-House" and the body of the novel. Notably, "The Custom-House" is not only a personal biography or a memoir of Hawthorne's political career, but also a ticket to his imaginative world since it contains the poetics of his historical writing. From this perspective, one may better understand why the sketch, in its comprehensive portrayal of lives at Salem Custom House, digresses to explain the origin of the scarlet letter and Hester's story. Considering Hawthorne's advocacy for creating a neutral territory between the real and the fictional, the narrative digression helps establish an implicit correspondence between the author and the female protagonist, thus mapping the structural relationship between social reality and artistic imagination. In this regard, a detail is worth noting. When Hawthorne found the scarlet letter among the belongings of the

former Surveyor Jonathan Pue and wore it on his breast, a burning sensation struck him with a shock, and the letter fell to the ground. This extraordinary "emotional resonance" (in the novel, it seemed as if the scarlet letter, the "badge of shame," was "burning" on Hester's chest) was not entirely a physiological response. As the plot progresses, this seemingly unreasonable tremor and its underlying emotional drive turns out to be a key thread connecting "The Custom-House" and the body of the novel: Hawthorne, who was falsely accused and removed from his post due to party strife, must have felt a deep sense of desolation similar to Hester's. Therefore, he entrusted his unspoken emotions to Hester, or expressed his perceptions of social reality through the writing of her story. In other words, by means of a "structural repetition" of his own situation and that of Hester (Baym 104), Hawthorne was able to practice his poetics of historical writing–connecting the past and the present, and fusing the real and the unreal. Correspondingly, to navigate the neutral territory constructed by Hawthorne's works, readers must possess a perspective that integrates both ancient and modern knowledge, and embraces both reality and fiction.

The Juxtaposition of the Individual and the Collective: "Grandfather's Chair" and Revision of the Grand National History

In an essay titled "On Solitude," young Hawthorne pondered the relationship between individuals and society with the statement: "Man is naturally a sociable being ... It is only in society that the full energy of his mind is aroused. Perhaps life may pass more tranquilly, estranged from the pursuits and vexations of the multitude, but all the hurry and whirl of passion is preferable to the cold calmness of indifference" (qtd. in Matthiessen 238). However, judged from Hawthorne's career over the years, he seemingly did not stick to this social declaration. Instead, he often gave the impression of a hermit. While addressing public misunderstandings, Hawthorne added a preface to the revised edition of his collection *Twice-Told Tales* and hoped to reshape his image. In his view, the works in the collection are simple and clear, demonstrating his own goodwill toward the public and a desire to "open an intercourse with the world." Therefore, if readers can set aside their preconceptions and approach the works in a "proper mood," they can establish "most agreeable associations," and even "imperishable friendships" with him (*Tales* 1152-1153). No matter how sincere these words may sound, they at least help reveal Hawthorne's desire to step out of his study and integrate into the world. This even provides an important perspective to consider Hawthorne's aesthetic principles in historical writing.

In fact, Hawthorne's emphasis on the interaction between the individual and the collective not only influences his social habit, but also permeates his historical writing, resulting in narratives that integrate multiple perspectives and considerations. Overall, its influence is mainly reflected in two aspects: thematic conception and discourse construction. In Hawthorne's historical writing, the relationship between individual and society is a significant theme. Lawrence Buell believes that the Puritan society in Hawthorne's works is a "monolithic entity," within which the protagonists are more or less out of sync with their surroundings (Buell 268). Buell's viewpoint certainly warrants discussion. Indeed, works like "Young Goodman Brown," "The Man of Adamant," and "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" portray misanthropic figures who looked down upon others, but equally significant are texts like "The Gentle Boy," *The Scarlet Letter*, and *The House of the Seven Gables*, which tell stories of rebels who eventually repented and reconciled with communities. From this perspective, Hawthorne's representation of human sociability is quite complex, for it contains profound ethical concerns and moral admonitions—as seen in the semi-autobiographical tale "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," where in his dying moments, the "solitary man" Oberon warns one "not to follow an eccentric path, nor, by stepping aside from the highway of human affairs, to relinquish his claim upon human sympathy" (*Tales* 499).

The contemplation of interpersonal relationships and social dynamics not only provides Hawthorne with cognitive foundations for developing plots, but also exerts a significant influence on his historical poetics. According to literary theorists M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, the historical novelist is tasked not only with "mak[ing] the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters and narrative," but also with "us[ing] the protagonists and actions to reveal what the author regards as the deep forces that impel the historical process" (Abrams and Harpham 230). Thus, adopting a dual perspective that considers both individual choices and societal environments is integral to the creation of historical novels. Hawthorne responds to this challenge both thematically and formally. In this regard, *Grandfather's Chair* serves as an excellent example. The work presents a superb panorama of American history before the founding of the nation through an ancient oaken chair, while simultaneously examining the chair's vicissitudes within specific historical contexts. The storyteller Grandfather vividly exemplifies the writing strategy. Aware of the expectations of his youthful audience, Grandfather chooses the chair as the vehicle for his national history to connect events across different eras and thus offer "picturesque sketches of the times" (*Grandfather* 429). Simultaneously, Grandfather knows well that excessive emphasis on individual

experiences without addressing social history could render the story superficial and personalized, which damages both the authenticity and uniqueness of historical narrative, and hinders the purpose of historical education. Therefore, prior to narration, Grandfather claims that the colonial history constitutes a prerequisite for the unfolding of the chair's story. Later, he intermittently reminds the audience that to understand the fate of the chair, they must also consider social background of the times. When the attentive listener Laurence hears about the chair changing hands repeatedly during the American Revolution, he couldn't help but wish that this precious historical artifact could be protected from the incessant entanglements of human affairs. In response, Grandfather comments that throughout its varied life, the chair has been long engaged in "general intercourse with society," making society its optimal stage (*Grandfather* 625). Later, as Laurence comes to embrace this perspective, viewing the chair's link to history through the correct lens, he changes from a mere listener to narrator. In a tone reminiscent of Grandfather's, he concludes the chair's story: "After its long intercourse with mankind, —after looking upon the world for ages, — what lessons of golden wisdom it might utter! It might teach a private person how to lead a good and happy life, or a stateman how to make his country prosperous" (*Grandfather* 631). Through the "ideal reader" Laurence, Hawthorne not only summarizes one basic tenet of historical writing, but also highlights the ethical significance and social value of his historical writing in particular, and literature in general—giving "instruction with life examples and experiences," and "counseling against fault in the physical and spiritual realm" (Nie 14).

Clearly, just as Hawthorne seeks to find an optimal balance between the new and the old, the real and the imaginary, he also aims to bridge the gap between the individual and the collective, and invest his works with both the analysis of human nature and the observation of society (see Matthiessen 239). To achieve this, Hawthorne often employs several poetic strategies in his writing: (1) embedding micro-narratives within a macro-background; (2) fusing official records with folk rumors; (3) combining a global perspective with a personal viewpoint; (4) addressing both mainstream and marginalized groups.

First, the narrative focus shifts from the environment to the people within the environment, and conversely reflects the macro environment through the specific facts of human life. As previously mentioned, Hawthorne typically begins his work by carefully detailing the historical background of the story's events. This not only enhances the authenticity of the work and gives the reader an immersive experience, but also establishes an organic connection between characters' experiences and

the societal environment in the work. In "Roger Malvin's Burial," the interplay between personal experience and collective narrative is portrayed with utmost subtlety. The tale boldly introduces Lovewell's Fight of 1725, and repeatedly emphasizes the heroic aspects of the white soldiers. Yet, just as readers are about to applaud the heroic deeds, the narrator abruptly shifts the narrative focus to the post-war aftermath by focusing on the ethical dilemma of the retreating soldiers and highlights the tragic life of the survivor, Reuben Bourne.[1] At first glance, the story seems far removed from the "heroic" theme, as it not only fails to celebrate Lovewell's Fight but also portrays the antihero Reuben and uses his disgraceful deeds to further undermine the epic color of the war. In fact, given Reuben's remorseful abandonment of his comrade Roger Malvin, his subsequent lies to preserve his reputation, and the tragic killing of his own son, the tale never deviates from the theme of war but rather reflects on the aftermath of this unjust fight. As Colacurcio analyzes, Hawthorne not only uses Reuben's concealment of truth to allude to the glorification of the Lovewell expedition's deplorable conduct (the bloody massacre of Indians for selfish gain), but also reveals the vicious cycle of interracial conflicts (the ongoing wars between white settlers and Indians), implying that the peace proclaimed at the beginning of the tale was merely a pipe dream. Through this short story, therefore, Hawthorne calls on the American people to learn from history and tell "the unlovely truth about their national experience" (Colacurcio 121).

Second, there is an organic integration of official records with popular discourse in Hawthorne's historical writing. In "Edward Randolph's Portrait," the colonial politician and historian Thomas Hutchinson expressed his unequivocal disdain for popular rumors: "These traditions are folly, to one who has proved, as I have, how little of historic truth lies at the bottom" (*Tales* 645). In this regard, Hutchinson criticizes his predecessor Cotton Mather: "too implicit credence has been given to Dr. Cotton Mather... [he] filled our early history with old women's tales, as fanciful and extravagant as those of Greece or Rome" (*Tales* 645). For Hutchinson's style of asserting official authority and disregarding folk traditions (in line with his contempt for the people and extreme loyalty to the Crown), his niece Alice Vane's questioning is quite telling: "may not such fables have a moral?" (*Tales* 645) If Hawthorne, in "Edward Randolph's Portrait," reveals tensions between official and unofficial histories through the disagreements of his main characters,

1 As Professor Nie Zhenzhao aptly suggests, "The ethical choice made out of ethical dilemmas, more often than not, leads to tragedy," (Nie 192) Reuben's tragic ending primarily results from his ethical choice of abandoning Malvin and not telling the truth.

he also attempts to reach a compromise elsewhere by blending these two types of sources to broaden his historical perspective. He not only extracts necessary materials from official records but also probes valuable marginal information found in unofficial histories. Throughout Hawthorne's historical romance, it is evident that he not only utilizes the "old women's tales" scorned by Hutchinson as creative materials but also explains the use of those sources in such works as "The Wedding-Knell," "The Feathertop," "An Old Woman's Tale." Certainly, the "old woman's tale" is not often, as its literal meaning suggests, confined to women's talk. In a broader sense, it refers to folk discourses that are not officially recognized but contain vast narrative potential. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne not only actively incorporates public rumors and family legends to enrich the plot, but also critically reflects on such creative process. This is particularly evident in the characterization of Colonel Pyncheon and Judge Pyncheon. Highlighting their shared duplicity, the novel often steers towards the rumor and hearsay to reinforce its satirical undertones. Furthermore, unlike contemporary official history, the novel not only alludes to the Salem witch hunt through Colonel Pyncheon but also evokes the traumatic memories of historical victims like Thomas Maule to challenge the grand national history which has invariably excluded those marginalized figures. Significantly, the novel reveals a strong self-referential awareness of the profound efficacy of such unofficial and personalized narratives in semantic enrichment. That is, appropriately invoking folklores not only "preserves traits of character with marvellous fidelity" but at times also "brings down truth that history has let slip" (*Novels* 365, 458).

Third, Hawthorne switches between a global perspective and a personal perspective to fully depict the interaction between historical figures and their social milieu. This narrative technique is evident not only in "Sir William Phips," but also in Hawthorne's other works. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the portrayal of Dimmesdale is achieved not only through his public speeches and confessions but also through his inner monologues and private conversations (with Hester and Chillingworth) which subtly reveal his internal conflicts and complex emotions towards Hester and the Puritan regime. Thus, Hawthorne not only places his characters under the spotlight of the social stage and portrays their outward characteristics, but also delves into their inner worlds to uncover their lesser-known aspects. However, this does not mean that Hawthorne glosses over the historical contexts in which his characters lived. On the contrary, the portrayal of multiple facets of characters often manifests Hawthorne's attempt to explore the social causes of characters' fate from a broader perspective and examine the dialectical relationship between the individual and the

collective. In this regard, "A Book of Autographs" makes a brilliant example. In the sketch, Hawthorne creatively employs a unique narrative medium—the personal letters of historical figures. From his perspective, unlike printed works, perusing the handwritten letters of historical figures not only allows readers to immerse themselves in the historical milieu and feel the spirit of the times between the lines, but also facilitates a friendly conversation of readers with the writer himself and offers a glimpse into his inner thoughts through every stroke of the manuscript. More importantly, it is precisely because of the informal and personal nature of autograph letters that readers can see the true face of the letter-writer and discover significant differences between his handwritten signature and printed name, as well as between "the actual man" and "his historical aspect" (*Tales* 966). Take John Hancock's signature as an example: his hasty and blurry signature on a document pales in comparison to the grandeur of his name inscribed on the Declaration of Independence, thus suggesting that Hancock himself may not be as majestic as most history books proclaim. Perhaps his elevation to the status of a great man is primarily due to "an ornamental outside" rather than "intrinsic force or virtue" (*Tales* 966). Here, through the interchange between public and private perspectives, Hawthorne not only reveals the complexity and multiplicity of historical figure but also articulates the constructiveness of historical narrative. The writing strategy endows Hawthorne's historical writing with both social examination and exploration of human nature, and reinforces its self-referentiality and critical acumen.

Finally, Hawthorne gives voice to the marginalized groups and engages them in pointed and even conflicting dialogue with the mainstream. In the preface of *Peter Parley's Universal History, on the Basis of Geography*, Hawthorne clearly points out to readers the harsh truth of the past and the necessity of studying history:

> As you lift the curtain of the past, mankind seem from age to age engaged in constant strife, battle, and bloodshed. The master-spirits generally stand forth as guided only by ambition, and superior to other men in wickedness as in power […] It is necessary that history should be known, that we may learn the character and capacity of man; but in telling of the vices and crimes that soil the pages of the past, I have taken advantage of every convenient occasion, to excite hatred of injustice, violence, and falsehood, and promote a love of truth, equity, and benevolence. (*Peter* viii)

Hawthorne is keenly aware that history is a memory field built upon countless disasters and tragedies. To re-create the past means touching upon the power

structures of the time, revealing the ideological clashes of interests therein. Thus, we often see social elites and lower-class figures taking turns on Hawthorne's historical stage, where different ideologies and political discourses intersect and collide. For instance, in foregrounding the ruthless colonial regime, Hawthorne leaves, albeit subtly, traces of marginalized groups in the background. Through passive observers (such as the powerless Native Americans witnessing colonial intimidation in "Endicott and the Red Cross") or sufferers (like black slaves in "Old News"), he can highlight the authority of the Puritan (Federal) government. On the other hand, Hawthorne also writes directly about those marginalized groups subjected to disciplinary power. For instance, "The Gentle Boy" focuses on Puritan persecution by depicting the tragic experiences of Quaker Ilbrahim and his family's ruin. And "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" in essence criticizes the authoritarian mindset of Puritans, who victimized Merry Mounters through "forced acculturation" on both physical and psychological levels (Mielke 54).

Certainly, the marginalized groups in Hawthorne's historical writing do not always appear as the silenced other. They often accumulate significant disruptive power, break through the shackles of power structure, and address their accusation. Whether they are the criminals who dared to question and criticize Puritan regime in "Endicott and the Red Cross," the artists single-handedly refuting public prejudice in "The Prophetic Portrait" and "Drowne's Wooden Image," or the descendant of the victimized family who practiced hypnosis for revenge in *The House of the Seven Gables*, these persecuted heretics are empowered to challenge or even break the rigid hierarchical systems. In this regard, Hawthorne's depiction of Tories within American society stands out prominently. His Revolutionary narratives like "Old News," "Legends of the Province-House," and *Grandfather's Chair* all end with the "dilemma of the loyalist," infused with a sympathetic touch (McWilliams 556). Evidently, this narrative structure embodies a strong humanitarian spirit, indicating Hawthorne's critical view of historical gains and losses. While constructing national history and eulogizing Revolutionary heroes, he does not leave unheeded the "victims" and "losers" in social development and instead reflects on the negative impacts and heavy costs brought about by national rise (Brown 123).

Conclusion

In Hawthorne's historical narrative system, diverse couplings merge into one and unfold a tapestry that intertwines and complements each other. As one navigates these historical scenes and embrace the aesthetic elements, Hawthorne's poetics of historical critique is to be seen: through interplay of the old and the new,

integration of the real and the unreal, juxtaposition of the individual and the collective, Hawthorne innovates his own historical writing, explores the origin and development of the American nation, and satirizes mainstream historical concepts. Reading in this light, one could explore the multifaceted poetic logic of Hawthorne's historical critique, identify the links between his aesthetic principle, historical ideas, and ethical concerns, and thereby fully grasp the internal coherence of Hawthorne's historical writing.

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Philosophy and Aesthetics Interaction in S. Aseyev's Book *The Light Path*

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Abstract The article analyzes the book of Stanislav Aseyev, a Ukrainian writer and journalist, dedicated to his memoirs and philosophical reflections related to the author's imprisonment in the concentration camp "Izoliatsia," located in Donetsk that is occupied by Russia, from 2017 to 2019. The purpose of this article is an attempt to characterize the philosophical and aesthetic mechanism of the transformation of memoir discourse into a phenomenon endowed with undeniable artistic content and potential, using hermeneutic and comparative-typological methods. Hence, Aseyev's book is studied in a comparative context along with J. Améry's books *On the Other Side of Crime and Punishment. Attempts of the Defeated to Defeat*, P. Levi's *Is It a Human?*, L. van Eeckhout's *This was in Dachau*, V. Frankl *Saying's Yes to Life: A Psychologist in a Concentration Camp* and V. Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*. As a result, the conclusion was made that, unlike the books of the writer's predecessors, using literary techniques and artistic symbolism, Aseyev's testimony has acquired the character of a particular artistic essay the content of which aims at both witnessing the monstrous crimes and, at least partially, recovering after the severe post-traumatic syndrome, but also at looking into the ontological depths of man and his fate.

Keywords Concentration camp "Izoliatsia"; memoir discourse; comparative context; artistic essay.

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Може, саме це – наш острах, наша зневіра
і пояснюють цю несамовиту мовчанку гірких очевидців,
котрі бачили все, котрі мають свідчити,
співом виказуючи убивць…

Introduction

The book by Stanislav Aseyev, a Ukrainian writer and journalist, *"The light path": the story of one concentration camp,* literary, can hardly claim the status of a work of fiction because the text presents reminiscences and related reflections concerning the author's captivity under the occupation – according to Ukrainian law (see, for example, Reintegration of Donbas) – of the Russian Federation administration in the occupied part of the Donetsk region of Ukraine or, in otherwise stated, as a captive of the terrorist group called "ДНР/DPR".

Aseyev ended up in captivity due to the fact that as a journalist he contributed to such media outlets as the newspaper *Zerkalo Nedeli*, the magazine *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden*, and Radio Svoboda under the pseudonym Stanislav Vasin, truthfully reporting the news of the events which took place on the territory of the "DPR" since 2015.

On June 2, 2017, Aseyev was arrested for his professional activities and charged "with espionage", whereupon he was imprisoned for 31 months, until December 29, 2019, twenty eight months of which he was in "Izoliatsia". As the author writes in the introduction to his book, "'Izoliatsia' [is] a secret prison in the Russian-controlled part of Donbass which is turned into a concentration camp"[2] (Aseyev 221). Therefore, this book does not simply refer to "a secret prison in the heart of Donetsk", but to "a prison that was called the 'Donetsk Dachau'" (223) and in which Aseyev depicted his experiences in Russian, later the text was translated into Ukrainian by Victoria Stakh and published as a separate book, containing both language versions.

It should be highlighted that, according to Aseyev, "this book was conceived as a dry reportage without neither evaluations nor emotions", "but once he was free, [he] realized the impossibility of dry journalism", hence, "when he began writing this book, [he] himself had no idea how many questions it [would] raise", and "when he finished writing it, he could not believe that he had never answered any of them" (224).

1 Perhaps it is our fear, or our disbelief
which explains the heartbreaking silence of the bitter eyewitnesses,
who have seen everything, who must testify,
by singing out the murderers...
Serhiy Zhadan. *Perhaps it is the very moment to start* (Ukr.) (The translation is mine. – F. Sh.)

2 Hereinafter the translation is mine. – F. Sh.

The specific content of Aseyev's book appears sufficient to define the purpose of this article as an attempt to characterize the philosophical and aesthetic mechanism of the transformation of memoir discourse into a phenomenon endowed with undeniable artistic content and potential on the basis of hermeneutic and comparative-typological methods.

Comparative and Theoretical Context

The list of literary works written by former concentration camp prisoners or devoted to this tragic topic is relatively long. However, the choice should be made on the books that are relevant to Aseyev's work to a feasible extent, such as, *This was in Dachau* by Ludo van Eeckhout, *On the Other Side of Crime and Punishment. Attempts of the Defeated to Defeat* by Jean Amery, *Is It a Human?* by Primo Levi, *Saying Yes to Life: A Psychologist in a Concentration Camp* by Viktor Frankl, and Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*.

To explain, such choice is justified by the fact that all these texts, first, are devoted to the experience of staying in concentration camps, second, they are written directly by people who survived these inhumane conditions, and third, in genre terms they are memoirs or testimonies (Malyshev; Ardamatskaya, and others) about their experiences namely genres of documentary-fiction prose or close to it, for instance in Shalamov's work.

From my personal standpoint, it is inappropriate to delve into theoretical studies concerning this complex genre problem, but it is still worth noting that, according to specialists in the field, "the literature of memories, letters, and reflections is a direct conversation about the person". Moreover, "it is like poetry due to the open and insistent presence of the author", therefore "its sharp dialectic is in the freedom of expression and the unfreedom of fiction, limited to what really happened" (Ginzburg 63; see also: Mestergazi 3–4, 8; Kostyukova, and Saini 243; Kryvoruchko 32 etc.)

Comparatively, in his seminal monograph on the Stalinist camps, which is widely reflected in Polish literature, Tadeusz Suharski argues that "the creative act does not deny the credibility of the evidence, although it relieves one from the obligation to adhere strictly to the facts" (125).

To summarize the points of view presented above, it can be concluded that the genre of testimony, despite its obvious documentary nature, nevertheless almost doomed to use a variety of techniques that contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the fictionalization or, more precisely, the implicit de-documentalization of the events presented in the narrative.

Markedly, this is not the first experience of a comparative study of testimony

literature. For this reason, Alain Parrau's monograph *Ecrire les camps* should be mentioned, in which the author turned to a comparative reading of the texts of Primo Levi, David Rousset, Robert Anthelm, Varlam Shalamov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Parrau) and which, according to Françoise Carasso, "requires our moral, political and aesthetic reflection because it concerns both history and memory, and also the need for artistic and philosophical reflection" (244).

Aseyev's book gives new meanings to this problem, even though the scale of the violence depicted in his text is incomparable to the books on Stalinist and Nazi concentration camps. For example, Aseyev asserts that "in 'Izoliatsia' there were only eight cells, not counting the punishment cells, the 'suite' (a narrow cell without ventilation for two) and the basement". But even when "a second tier of bunks, built in the basement, the prison could hold up to 80 people. However, in the worst times, when people were literally thrown into the cellars wave after wave, no more than 70 people were kept here" (349).

In addition, in the concentration camp in the center of Donetsk, there was no question of the prisoners' national or social background, their political preferences, or even a "death factory", since the physical destruction of prisoners was not one of the tasks of the officially non-existent and institutionally unidentifiable institution.

In this regard, we can conclude that Van Eeckhout's Dachau, Levi's Auschwitz, Frankl's Amery and Shalamov's Kolyma are topoi of embodied death, places the only function of which was to ensure that the more prisoners the better would remain there forever. In contrast, prisoners were not taken to the "Izoliatsia" in order to stay there, but in order for the "Izoliatsia" to remain indelibly in them, despite the fact that they faced neither gas chambers nor grueling labor in forty-degree frost, nor even death from starvation and exhaustion. Nevertheless, Aseyev's book, like those of his predecessors, is an attempt to overcome what cannot be eradicated.

Apparently, unlike his predecessors, Aseyev was not directly threatened with death, but he experienced fall and dehumanization nevertheless. Once free, it took time for him to recover, returning to his human form both mentally and physically. In spite of the obvious difference in the experience, there is a similar cause that gives rise to such a situation. This reason is fear, a phenomenon to which Aseyev devoted an entire chapter with the same title in his book.

Ontology of Fear

In Dachau or Auschwitz, for obvious reasons, fear inevitably determined the condition of the prisoners, moreover, van Eeckhout argues that "the SS men maintained this fear, and their henchmen in the camp followed the method of the

masters" (244).

The paradox, however, was that, as Levi reports, the cultivation of fear in concentration camps led the opposite result in many cases because when the prisoners became "muselmanner", that is "goners", then it was difficult even to "call them alive, it is difficult to call death their death, in face of which they felt no fear, because they were too tired to realize it" (111).

Anyway, this paradoxical dependence, albeit on the contrary, is confirmed by Shalamov, with no mention of prisoners' fear, except for one episode in the story *Typhoid Quarantine* in which the protagonist named Andreev only then "realized that he had no fear and did not value life" (630) when he had a fairly ghostly chance to save his life.

Contrariwise, Aseyev highlights that "fear occupies a special place in the prisoners' life system" in "Izoliatsia" (258). We think that this is not accidental, as there was no immediate and unavoidable threat of death here, although it was not excluded as a result of torture, for example, as it happened when one of the prisoners "had his spleen beaten, with his internal organs damaged", then "three days later the guy passed away" (405). However, the prisoners still had reasons to hope that they would not die, that they would also be released-if not completely, then at least they could be free from "Izoliatsia" due to their supposed future transfer to other places of detention.

Without exception, all authors argue that the flip side of fear was the loss of human dignity. For instance, van Eeckhout, comparing an ordinary prison and a concentration camp, insists that "the concentration camp is primarily and basically designed to suppress human dignity" (8). Nevertheless, even he was forced to admit that, despite the titanic efforts to "preserve dignity", "all of us experienced a moment when preserving that dignity became impossible" (248).

This disappointing conclusion is echoed by Levy, who believes that "there are few people capable of meeting death with dignity" (18). Comparativly, Shalamov ignores the use of the word "dignity" as completely irrelevant one to virtually all Gulag inmates.

On the contrary, Frankl and Amery actively use this concept, offering in one way or another quite slender concepts, the basis of which is human dignity (see, for example, Smirnov; Anastasieva; Galysheva).

As for Aseyev's book, the writer introduces this problem at the very beginning, in the short chapter "For Reference", which precedes even the "Preface", let alone the main text, and dispassionately informs the reader that during the existence of "Izoliatsia" "hundreds of people passed through it, most of whom were subjected to

electric shock torture, rape, humiliation of human dignity and heavy forced labor" (221).

At the same time, in the content of the book, this notion occurs infrequently and mainly in those episodes in which, paradoxically it may sound, the problem of death is discussed not only in the form of suicide, which would be quite natural, but also in the chapter devoted to reflections on the "Experience of Death and Freedom".

Moreover, the specificity of the interpretation of the theme of fear and dignity, their interdependence and mutual influence, proposed in Aseyev's book, unlike his predecessors, is not conditioned by the inevitability of death and the direction from it, but, on the contrary, by the direction toward it. Or, to use philosophical terminology, the authors who left accounts of the Stalinist and Nazi death camps were guided by the principle of teleology, justifiably seeing in death the purpose of the existence of the camp prisoner. Aseyev, in contrast, appeals to the principle of causality, believing beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was through "freedom to leave life", that is to say the possibility that "seemed to [him] the only drop of dignity that each of the prisoners still had here" (299).

Another fundamental difference in Aseyev's views is that if fear can be overcome by the prisoner's desire to regain his human dignity at least partially, then this act is seen by him not as a spiritual feat or as an act of self-sufficiency, but as a possibility of "infinite freedom, which [he] feels while choosing the basement rather than the shard of glass in his hand" (389), in other words, not suicide. Correspondingly, the paradox is that "freedom is a leap into death, which is always one step before it", but this freedom "is only possible when one remains alive. Such is the strange basement dialectic" (388).

It is noteworthy that, using such philosophically motivated inferences, Aseyev does not limit himself to the individual level of the particular prisoner, he formulates broad socio-political or even national-ontological generalizations, according to which "a similar course of thought is also true for the state – if we return to the metaphysical [...] side of the question". We are talking, in particular, "of a State which is consciously prepared to die in a struggle with a stronger rival. A struggle in which, on the face of it, the country has no chance" (390). Yet,

> from the democracies of antiquity to today, also including Ukraine, the highest form of freedom has been connected precisely with the phenomenon of death: either of the whole state or its individual parts. In fact, the basement prisoner, deprived of a chance to win the situation, differs from the ancient Greeks,

ready to die here and now, only by the collectivity of their common experience. (390)

Imaginary Devaluation of Words

As can be seen, no matter how accurate the memories of surviving eyewitnesses may be, their testimonies are not dry documents or dispassionate statistics. On the contrary, they are always a narrative, an account of the events and characters involved in these events, even if they remain nameless, as, for example, in Aseyev's book, who mentioned only the name of Palych, "the master of 'Izoliatsia'" (262), and deliberately, but for various reasons, concealed the names of other executioners, along with the names of prisoners.

Apparently, the absence of names in Aseyev's text can be explained, in particular, by the impossibility for the reader to understand what the concentration camp prisoners had to endure. Thus, Aseyev writes that one of the few cellmates with whom throughout his captivity he "could afford a fairly frank and professional conversation, once told [him]: 'All these phrases they prepare for us on the other side-especially «we understand» are all utter nonsense'" (379). For this reason, the author's cellmate "sometimes feels that after liberation it is better to keep quiet at all" and even "not give any interviews – so as not to confuse people" and not to "put [...] labels" (380) on themselves.

There is another episode in the book in which Aseyev, already freed, "went down to the Kyiv subway for the first time" and experienced "a shock" or "what Buddhists call satori – only in reverse" because he "suddenly realized that [their (prisoners')] experience is not known to anyone" and "moreover – useless, because people do not want to live torture and basement". On top of all that, it "suddenly seemed to him that all those years of screaming and moaning had stretched into one mocking smirk" (400).

This perception echoes the statement of Amery, who wrote that "society is concerned only with self-preservation, it is not moved by a traumatized life, it looks forward, at best wishing that nothing like this would ever happen again" (121).

Thereupon, the desired collision becomes more complicated, as the concentration camp inmate inevitably tries to live out the terrible and humiliating experience, only occasionally resorting to words, but even words are powerless before the incredible task that they must solve.

Nevertheless, in the proposed context it is not quite clear what task we are talking about. In particular, even in chronological terms, in the first of the analyzed

books, Frankl's book *Say Yes to Life! Psychologist in a Concentration Camp*, which was published in 1946, its author specifies in the preface that "it is a story more about experiences than about real events", and that "the purpose of the book is to reveal, to show the experiences of millions of people", to show "the concentration camp seen 'from within', from the perspective of someone who personally experienced everything that [...] will be told about" (27) in this book.

Similar motifs can be found in Levi's book *Is It a Human?*, which came out only a year after Frankl's book, in 1947. Besides the author's statement that his book "was not written to make new accusations; rather, the facts it contains can serve as a dispassionate study of certain features of the human soul" (8), Levy states that "the main impetus for writing the book was an attempt at inner liberation" (9).

Van Eeckhout, in his book *This was in Dachau*, written in 1976, focuses even more on the individual experience because he is convinced "that even the life of a single person in the camp deserves attention" (7). Therefore, having survived a concentration camp, he later concluded "that [his] duty is to be a witness" (7).

Whereas, Amery, who had remained silent for more than twenty years after the end of World War II, admitted in the preface to his 1966 book *On the Other Side of Crime and Punishment…* that he "planned an unhurried, rational essay, instead, a confession full of subjective reflection has emerged" (10). As a result, "confessing and reflecting, [he] came to explore or, if you will, to describe the essence of existence in the role of the victim", to describe "how it is to deal with a trampled, enslaved man, that is all" (10).

The searches of Shalamov lie on a completely different plane, for whom, according to Diana Ardamatskaya, "literature is an event, a way of life of the author in a literary text" (142). Therefore, Shalamov does believe that "the death, the collapse of the novel, the story, and the novella is the death of the novel of characters, descriptions. Everything invented, everything 'composed' – people, characters – everything is rejected...", as a result of which there is "an inevitable gap between the reader and the writer" (132).

Consequently, another similarity between the books under the analysis is the desire of their authors both to tell about the events they participated in and witnessed and also to try to share their inner individual experience gained in connection with those events. However, it turns out that this experience of impossibility can become possible only owing to the unlimited artistic potential of the word.

The aforementioned things, combined with Aseyev's assertion that "borderline experience can hardly be comprehended" (407), can help to follow, at least partially, this author's narrative strategy of making philosophical sense of traumatic

experience, which claims that it can be understood, paradoxically, does not guarantee the latter, since "knowledge is not enough to understand" (410). For this reason, philosophical reflections themselves become a weighty element of Aseyev's discourse, for

> we have to understand that life is not totally unfair, perhaps the situation is even worse [...] Well, you used to live within a set of meanings understandable to most, namely home, career, family. Then suddenly, one day, you find yourself in a basement, stripped naked, with wires in various parts of your body. This does not fit into any generalization, no theory explains why this happens [...] So, several years go by. And, then a bright light comes: this is freedom. It is a situation that may be in some ways more complicated than yesterday's basement. A person who has experienced such a thing is completely devalued in time: he does not understand either the past or the present, which was once taken from him, and taken away in a single day. Do you have to start all over again? What for? And how, if no one, even your dearest and nearest, can picture what you have been through, while the 'new life' fits into a travel bag and offers to fill out a couple of formal papers? (409-410)

In this situation, when the author "fails to force himself not to think", he realizes that he has "another salvation-these words", with which he "can write it all down". Of course, "it's not much, but it's something. To reconcile oneself to this absurdity, to become part of it, and to absorb it with your life, making yourself to create meaning in it, is the general plan" (Aseyev 412). Equally important, the concrete realization of this plan requires a detailed analysis, which should begin, first of all, with the composition of "these words", framed in a certain way.

Repertoire of Composition

The first feature that characterizes the composition of Aseyev's book is the preservation of the general chronological sequence of the chapters that make up the book, in the sense that the narrative begins at the beginning, that is, with the author's arrival in an "air conditioned concentration camp" (230), and ends when he is already at liberty both physically and metaphysically, as the author ends his narrative by being "in Europe", where in general "another world, and it is in a way luxurious" (413).

At the same time, the internal arrangement of the chapters is not determined by chronology but by the key themes and knots of meaning, that are important

both in terms of the author and his attempts to reflect on his experiences, and in terms of informing the potential reader of what the author has gone through. In this regard, the seemingly chaotic arrangement is compensated for by the significance of questions, for example, about "absolute evil" or "humor in captivity", "why there was no rebellion", or about "sex in 'Izoliatsia'", included in the chapters of the same name in Aseyev's book.

One cannot but notice the similarity between this composition and that of the books by Primo Levi, Viktor Frankl and Jean Amery, the only difference being that the latter does not describe events, but presents only reflections on "resentment" and the "necessity and impossibility of being Jewish" or the question of "how much homeland does one need?".

The fundamental difference between Aseyev's book and Ameri's one is that the latter pushes back from his own experience to address certain universal problems, which, for example, "in connection with the social function of the spirit or its absence, a Jewish intellectual with a German cultural basis has" because "whatever he turns to, nothing belongs to him but to the enemy" (Ameri 29). Or, "that resentment is unnatural, also logically contradictory" (Amery 118-119), because "it nails us firmly to the cross of a ruined past", moreover, it "makes the absurd demand to make the irreversible reversible, the accomplished to the undone" and "blocks the exit to the human dimension proper, to the future" (Ameri 119).

On the contrary, Aseyev seeks universal formulas to make sense of his own experience. Thus, it is particularly evident in the chapters of the books with almost identical titles – "Torture" in Ameri's work and, respectively, "Torture: How It Was" in the book by the Ukrainian author.

In particular, Ameri, first, asserts that "when talking about torture, it is inappropriate to brag" (50). Second, despite the fact that he "has not had red-hot needles driven under his fingernails, nor burnt cigars extinguished against his bare chest", Ameri is still convinced that "torture is the most terrible thing a man can keep within himself" (51). Third, "with the first blow that [...] strikes" a man, "he loses something", and "tentatively, perhaps, one might call it trust in the world" (59). Fourth, "torture was not an invention of National Socialism. But it was its apotheosis" (59), because "Hitler's fascism was not an idea at all, but only evil", unlike communism, which, according to Ameri, "was able to de-Stalinize", whereby "today there is no more torture in the Soviet sphere of influence, according to unanimous reports" (64).

It appears unlikely that Aseyev could agree with the latter thesis, because in fact, "in the Soviet sphere of influence" no one and never, except in words, refused

to use torture. Apparently, the forms and scale of torture may have varied, however they never ceased, being poorly masked by hypocritical and brazen lies, as it was evidenced precisely by the book by the Ukrainian author, which attests that in "the 'underground [world]' Donetsk" "Ninety-nine out of a hundred people are tortured" (Aseyev 314).

Nonetheless, the most important conclusion that emerges from Aseyev's torture experience is that, in the world he describes, torture is not some anomaly, aberration or deviation, on the contrary, it is an integral and largely defining part of this world, the "Russian world" (231) which occupied the Ukrainian city of Donetsk. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Aseyev "was stunned when [he] was seated in handcuffs on a chair next to a window overlooking one of the central boulevards" (312). And "this absurdity, placed on a single piece of urban space, will strike [him] more than once more", for "while [his] muscles will painfully contract" under the influence of the electric current, "trees will still be visible outside the window (they will even remove the bag from [his] head before torture), the May sun will still shine, and people will wait for their bus at the bus stop a little further away" (313).

As explained by Aseyev, "the task of those who torture is not so much to cause physical suffering as to break you as a person, above all, your will" (318). "Of course, if we are not talking about outright sadism, that is, torture for the sake of torture, which was quite often practiced both in 'Izoliatsia' and in general in the 'MGB'[1]" (318) and which seems to be another proof of not only the absurdity, but also the absolute evil embodied by the "Russian world".

In other words, Aseyev, unlike his predecessors, depicts an evil that is not placed far to the outside, which takes time to reach by some form of transportation, since in the case of this type of evil, the latter is nearby, in the city center, without hiding, because it is the very center that determines the life of all of society.

These circumstances reveal another fundamental difference between Aseyev's book and those of his predecessors. The matter is that, while describing the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, both Ameri and other authors constantly kept the pre-camp world in mind, and their books could also be possibly written because they themselves were lucky enough to find themselves in the post-camp world, which of course had nothing to do with the world of the concentration camp. Shalamov's prose stands out in this sense because in his view – in the view of a man who spent a total of 16 years in prison at Kolyma – a non-camp world does not exist.

1 "MGB" is the name of the "secret police" in the Russian-occupied part of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine; the name corresponds to one of the names of Stalin's NKVD, which was called "Ministry of State Security" in 1941 and from 1943 to 1953.

As Galina Zhilicheva articulates, perhaps Shalamov sees hell in the camp and therefore resorts to the "strategy[s] of Pluto" of "getting out of Hades and taking it with him" and then "dissolving" it by "transforming it into literature", because "one cannot aestheticize hell by traditional means" (101).

Aseyev does not even think of anything like that, because even as a so-called "minus-perception" (Zhilicheva 98), the image of hell in relation to "Izoliatsia" is neither relevant, nor simply appropriate. In Aseyev's description, the cruelty of the world that has come to the Ukrainian land is immanent to the essence of this world and, at the same time, daily in its form, and therefore devoid of mythological or, even more so, poetic potential, which is paradoxically further demonstrated by the fact that Palych had another nickname, "Hades". Therefore, Aseyev is inclined to a completely different choice, explaining that "a man who has long wandered in the labyrinths of depression and despair, sooner or later still comes to the need to sum up ontologically, philosophically..." (309).

In many ways, this is the result of the book under analysis, for from the very first sentence, in which the author confesses that he "is still not sure he is choosing his words correctly" (223), he is in a relentless search for the meaning of what happened to him. But he finds no answer, because

> people cannot [continue to film [on video cameras] their crimes for six years with impunity, with the irony of every UN report. Or can they? Or if they can, 'Izoliatsia' is the answer to what our world is all about. All the senselessness, all the cruelty and injustice is concentrated right here at 3 Bright Path Street. Without punishment, without retribution, with laughter at us, the defeated. (227)

In the meantime, this answer, concerning "Izoliatsia" and "our world", only partially addresses the question of one of the defeated. Another problem is that "many amuse themselves with future eternal judgment", but Aseyev is not one of them as he believes only "in the laughter of those people in the basement when they tape someone to a table" (227). On the other hand, he is also alien to resentment since his "feelings for them are not just hatred: they are deeper. One can forgive those people whom one hates, but this place stands outside all meanings, including forgiveness" (227).

Typology of Symbolic Collisions

In this connection, Aseyev's text unfolds the endless mystery of a man either waiting to be taped to a torture table or already lying on that table, for example,

"with an electrode in his anus" (304). If one turns to the titles of the chapters that make up Aseyev's book, without knowing the content or going deeper into the text, one might get the impression that the reader is not facing a story about the "Donetsk Dachau" (223), but rather a philosophical treatise that addresses issues related to the terminological apparatus (Chapter 2. "'Izoliatsia' and 'concepts'") and with the categories of time (Chapter 5. "Time of the Quiet", Chapter 7. "Time in Captivity"), evil (Chapter 4. "Absolute Evil"), God (Chapter 16. "God Behind Bars"), death and freedom (Chapter 21. "Death Experience and Freedom").

Moreover, a third of the chapters are titled as polemical questions worthy of the highest worldview debates (Chapter 8. "The Blue Lamp: Kill Yourself or Not?", chapter 14. "Why There Was No Revolt", or Chapter 18. "Who Are These People?"), and the remainder, such as chapter 3. "Fear" or chapter 12. "Escape", are problematized substantives that also open up an endless philosophical discourse for interested disputants.

But the main content of the discourse sought is found, of course, in the text of the book, on one of the first pages of which Aseyev categorically states that "here [in 'Izoliatsia'] everything is symbolic" (231). It is difficult to accept such a characterization for a concentration camp, but in this case it is exactly one of those narrative strategies that the author of the book under analysis chooses, differentiating them into appropriate types.

Given these points, the first type of symbolism, subject to philosophical reflection, could be defined as *socio-historical*, because "if you walk through 'Izoliatsia' without a bag or bag on your head [....] you will see pictures of Lenin hanging right at the bottom of the basement" and which irrefutably testify that "with the arrival of the 'Russian world' and the FSB to Donetsk Lenin and his 'Shining Path' won", whereby "the road to communist paradise once again turned into a basement and hell" (231).

With certain reservations, the "criminal world in its harshest forms, like the 'special' regime", should be included in this type too, because, according to Aseyev, "it is as much a world of symbols as, say, a temple" (240). After all, the reference to this specific community was necessary for the author because some of the prisoners in "Izoliatsia" were convicted not under "political" but under criminal articles, besides emphasizing to an even greater extent the cardinal difference between concentration camps and ordinary places of confinement. In particular, as follows from the text of Aseyev's book, even the absurdity of the "notions" adopted among the criminals was no comparison with the fact that "any order or rule of the administration-even an absurd one-should be strictly obeyed" (243).

On this basis the author makes quite a philosophical conclusion that "the rules of the familiar [...] world did not work here", and "the prisoner's identity was being destroyed", and "he no longer understood who and where he was, how to behave in a place where the outward form resembled a prison and the content a mixture of a madhouse and an army" (245).

Significantly, the key word in these reflections should be defined as "absurdity", which generated "the greatest hatred of 'Izoliatsia'" (Aseyev 252) even among criminals. The outlined disposition forces us to recognize that in this case we are talking about an implicit refutation of existential ideas by one of their most talented adherents, Albert Camus. The fact is that, as Alexei Rutkevich professes, the French philosopher's essay "*The rebellious man* is a story of the idea of rebellion, metaphysical and political, against the injustice of human destiny" (Rutkevich 17). But the problem is that in the "Izoliatsia" "not a single case of mass disobedience of the administration ever occurred" (Aseyev 307), although it would seem that injustice as well as absurdity did not abound in the fate of the Izoliatsia's prisoners. Yet, regarding the category of absurdity, Aseyev's book categorically rejects the position of Camus, who argued that "accepting the absurdity of life allows one to become completely immersed in it" (Camus 89), and "it may happen that a sense of absurdity is born of happiness" (Camus 19).

In the Donetsk Dachau, the concept of "justice" was totally annihilated, and absurdity was indeed born out of happiness – out of the happiness associated, for example, with the fact that when at some point "several people" had to be transferred from "Izoliatsia" "to the Donetsk 'central prison'", that is, sent to just an ordinary prison, "there was an atmosphere in the cell comparable only to Christmas" (Aseyev 225).

To be fair, it should be noted that Aseyev refutes the philosophical constructions of Camus, as well as the concepts of many other authoritative intellectuals. Particularly revealing in this respect is the failure of the certainly interesting and noteworthy ideas of Konrad Lorenz, a former concentration camp inmate, who devoted one of his works to the problem of aggression.

In particular, Lorenz writes that "one can probably only truly hate something that one once loved and still loves, even though one denies it" (276). But such a maxim does not stand up to criticism even after we learn that both the criminals and Aseyev himself have an incomparable "hatred of 'Izoliatsia'" (252), that is, of an institutional phantom that "officially did not exist" (253).

Thus, we can speak of another type of symbolism namely the *absurdist-existential*, which serves to characterize existence in "Izoliatsia", which is deprived

of even elementary meaning, because here "linear logic did not work, there was no 'if A, then B'" (Aseyev 351), but existence that is more than significant for both prisoners and their executioners.

To demonstrate, it is particularly revealing in this sense the episode of Palych's arrest, who "in February 18 [...] was finally locked in the cellar himself" (Aseyev 262), and such parallel multivalent symbolic details as a balaclava or a plastic bag on his head.

Balaklavs were used by representatives of the concentration camp administration, hiding their faces for security reasons, so that prisoners could not identify them and later themselves or with the help of their relatives or friends would not avenge these executioners for all their suffering, since "most of them were united in one thing: if given the chance to take revenge, no one would think for a second" (Aseyev 307).

As for the sacks and plastic bags, this was an obligatory attribute for a large proportion of the prisoners, who were not allowed to remove these bags from their heads even when they had to move around outside the cell, and who, with the bags on their heads, were disoriented the whole time, their sense of fear increased exponentially.

Besides, this was not the only link between the executioners and their victims because, as Aseyev accentuates, "in the faces of these men in balaclavas you reflect yourself, realizing that in a moment of torture or just their laughter you are ready for even harsher things than they do to you" (307).

From these observations we can conclude that the configuration of the relationship between the two, conventionally speaking, social groups in this type of concentration camp differed significantly from the Nazi or Stalinist concentration camps in both the different social structure and the existential nature of the relaying between them namely relays whose participants posed mutual and real mortal danger to each other.

To put it differently, the meaning of this existential disposition was that all those involved in it were inevitably divided into two categories, one of which was to torment the other, but they could easily swap places at any moment. Thus, in the outlined perspective, it was no longer a question of differentiation into the so-called "superior" and "inferior" or "insiders" and "outsiders", but of a certain way of life that initially assumed precisely this kind of relationship and reminded us that they could be or had once been different, only balaclavas, bags and sacks concealing faces and eyes.

In this regard, another extremely important type of symbolism in Aseyev's

book is the *ontological* type, expressively presented throughout the text, but most vividly in the chapters "Absolute Evil" and "God Behind Bars". Given the common meaning of these two titles, indicating a kind of implicit absolute, it is perhaps worth beginning with the last chapter, because "the scraps of wallpaper on the walls, the dim light, the screams and groans" all "proved to weigh more heavily than all Kantian ontology", because, according to Aseyev, that is, the man in the concentration camp at the time, "if God is ubiquitous, then he stands now also in the 'monitor'. [...] and just watching people being tortured with a smile" (362). Nevertheless, the author offers his own essentially blasphemous understanding of religiosity, believing that "by religion" one should "mean being filled with meaning" (365), for "meaning is the key to freedom", and therefore "it does not matter what exactly to believe in a place where, apart from faith, there is nothing left at all" (364).

But if Aseyev had confined himself to these reflections, his philosophical efforts would not have been as convincing as they appear after the story that illustrates these philosophical theses and tells the story

> how a man was once handed a piece of paper from his beloved wife. It was a small note with words of encouragement, which he could not read without his glasses. In the first evening alone, [the narrator] read the three sentences to him a dozen times. What's more, his spouse guessed to lipstick her mouth and pressed her lips to the sheet of paper in several places as if she had been kissing him. What happens to a man when he gets here such a seemingly small thing! Everything around bothered him no longer because he literally glowed as he was looking at the note and listened to her words. No prayer or icon here achieved such an effect. (365)

Something similar can be observed in the chapter "Absolute Evil", in which the one who embodies such evil, "that famous sadist" (Aseyev 267), that is, Palych, appears as some "man lounging around on the couch in shorts, a T-shirt and some shower slippers" (Aseyev 266). But it is he, who at first glance seems non-threatening and even amusing, who, in Aseyev's opinion, is the ultimate evil, because we are talking about "people who before this war walked with us on the same streets [...] people who even now walk on these streets without balaclavas, not giving away the fact that yesterday someone was tortured" (376).

However, the author of the book extends it, recalling Palych's words that "this whole war is held by people like [him (Palych)]. Those who can get over everything, such as yelling, sniveling, articles..." and that he is "a god, a head, and a judge

here" (271). Yet, Palych's "god" was somehow ambivalent, because as an alleged celestial, the temporary, as it turned out, "master" of the "Izoliatsia" "hated [the prisoners] for being a prisoner here himself: wallowing in [their] blood, he could not afford to go even outside the factory, fearing the revenge of those he had once tortured", and so "he lived on the second floor, just above [the prisoners], repeating from time to time: 'It's not you who are sitting with me, it's me who's sitting with you'" (263).

This example of either dialectical thinking or black humor, which correlates quite well with something similar, but already authored by prisoners, when "someone even suggested opening an 'Izoliatsia' cafe after liberation – in some basement, where waiters would wear masks and camouflage, and visitors would be banged on the iron doors with a cry: 'Beasts, come alive!'" (Aseyev 373). In short, a correlation of this type allows extremely complex issues to be viewed not only from a philosophical perspective, but also to give them obvious artistic meaning.

Conclusion

"Surprisingly", Aseyev's "philosophical education" "came in handy" in "Izoliatsia" (Aseyev 359), then for writing a book that, through numerous philosophical reflections and, unlike the books of his predecessors, acquired the character of a kind of artistic essay. Its content, on the one hand, testifies to the crimes against humanity and to the criminal and misanthropic nature of the "Russian world", which extrapolated the metaphysics and meaning of its own existence into some complete social form of a concentration camp, as a natural and adequate continuation and realization of the foundations of national existence of this world. On the other hand, the content of Aseyev's book asserts a completely different ontology.

Aseyev reasons that the meaning of this "new" ontology is defined, first, by the total impossibility of elementary social, let alone ethical, norms, and, second, by the indiscriminate brutality as something self-valuable or, better said, as a modern "thing in itself. And, the indivisibility and triumph of this brutality is due both to the power of the entire state machine and to the intents of ordinary, unremarkable citizens, because concentration camp, torture and mockery – "it was not done for 'state security', on national or religious grounds, it was done to the military, carriers, businessmen and doctors-it was done to everyone. And just like that" (Aseyev 377).

In the final analysis, Aseyev's book is a philosophical and artistic attempt to bear witness to the monstrous crimes, at least in part to overcome the consequences of the severe post-traumatic syndrome and, perhaps most importantly, to use literary techniques and artistic symbolism to look into the ontological depths of man.

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Illness Narrative and Temporal Reversal in Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*

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Abstract In *Time's Arrow*, Martin Amis crafts a labyrinthine and surreal portrayal of the Holocaust through the reverse narrative of the soul of Odilo Unverdorben, a Nazi physician. Unlike the conventional academic focus on the narrative form, this paper delves into Unverdorben's double identities as both a perpetrator and a psychological victim of the Holocaust, and explores his post traumatic stress disorder characterized by heightened vigilance, recurrent re-experiencing of the genocide, avoidance behaviors and psychic numbing. It concurrently illuminates the intricate interplay of environmental and psychological mechanisms that underpin this suffering, thereby revealing the banality of evil and the profound distortion of humanity and morality within the Holocaust framework. Furthermore, this paper uncovers social criticism and humanistic concerns embedded in Amis's postmodern realist narrative, through scrutinizing the interconnection between temporal reversal and the manifestations, metaphorical depth, and broader implications of this illness. Not only does this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological complexities of the individual involved in the Holocaust, and of the nature of his crimes, but it also innovatively explores the way the temporal reversal serves illness narrative, in which Amis's proposition for postmodern realism is embodied.

Keywords Martin Amis; *Time's Arrow*; post traumatic stress disorder; the banality of evil; temporal reversal

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Introduction

Martin Amis, the Godfather of British Literature, has been criticized as a "bad boy" by some critics, feminists in particular, for the recurring themes of death, violence, and sexual promiscuity in his works across various stages. As Kiernan Ryan asserts, this negative literary reputation stems from Amis's profound fascination with societal morbidity (212). Indeed, societal morbidity not only reflects significantly the contemporary culture but also provides a unique perspective from which Amis observes, ponders on and portrays illness. For instance, the climactic mass murder in *Dead Babies* is committed by Johnny—the split personality of Quentin. Likewise, the brutal violence *in Lionel Asbo: The State of England* embodies Lionel's symptom of anti-social personality, while Self's ruthless exploitation of women in *Money: A Suicide Note* is closely linked to his inability to identify emotions, a manifestation of alexithymia[1].

In his illness narratives Amis delves deeply into society, culture and history, particularly scrutinizing the intricate relationship between "individuals and the lingering shadows of the twentieth century history" as Richard Bradford notes in *Martin Amis: The Biography* (40). Varieties of illnesses in Amis's works, such as the time perception disorder in *Einsteins Monsters*, the trauma in *London Fields* and the paranoia in *The Zone of Interest,* have become the media through which he reflects on the distortion of humanity and moral decay in the haze of nuclear war and the Holocaust: "a central event of the twentieth century" (Bellante 16). *Time's Arrow* emerges as a notable example. With temporal reversal as a unique narrative technique, it is hailed as "Amis's most ambitious technical achievement to date and, indeed, one of the most extraordinary narrative experiments in existence" (Brown 121), garnering nominations for the Booker Prize and the Pulitzer Prize for Literature. Furthermore, as " a prototypical novel for the literature and medicine canon" (Marta 43), *Time's Arrow* addresses profound questions concerning the identity and professional ethics of the Nazi doctor Unverdorben, as well as his troubled psychological and spiritual ecology. However, despite the academic focus on the temporal reversal, the illness narrative and its underlying profound

1 Despite that alexithymia, a focal point of medical research in recent years, is not an independent mental disorder, it significantly impairs individuals' health and life. Its primary symptoms include difficulty in identifying feelings and describing feelings, extroverted cognitive style, and constricted imagination. The protagonist Self in *Money: A Suicide Note* by Martin Amis exemplifies alexithymia. See Philip Tew, "Alexithymia and a Broken Plastic Umbrella: Contemporary Culture and Martin Amis's *Money,*" *Textual Practice,* vol. 26, no.1, 2012, pp.99-114.

implications unfortunately have not gained the attention they deserve.

This lack of attention may stem from Amis's consistent style in illness narratives. Illness, a pivotal motif in literature, assumes multifaceted landscapes across diverse works. In contrast to the overt descriptions of illnesses —such as cholera, epidemics, and tuberculosis by George Eliot, Abel Camus, and Thomas Mann; the psychiatric disorders delineated by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Edgar Allan Poe, and Virginia Woolf; and the contemporary scrutiny of medical ethics concerning euthanasia and organ transplantation by writers like Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro—Amis deliberately refrains from explicitly labeling illnesses, thus largely cloaking his patients in a veil of normalcy. For instance, the pervasive emotional estrangement in contemporary society greatly shrouds the alexithymia of Self in *Money* and the depression of Jennifer and Mike in *Night Train*; likewise, the omnipresent sense of doom amidst the haze of nuclear war clouds the psychological trauma and paranoia of Nicola in *London Fields*. In *Time's Arrow*, the temporal reversal cleverly transforms the Holocaust into a life-miracle, thus eradicating Unverdorben's sufferings and expunging the label of his mental illness. This avant-garde postmodern narrative experiment not only challenges readers' perceptions but also garners considerable criticism. McCarthy, for example, contends that "any reader expecting revelations about the nature and origins of the evil committed by the Nazis will be disappointed" (295). However, as indicated by the subtitle: "the Nature of Offence," this paper argues that it is precisely through Unverdorben's mental illness that his complex identities (both a perpetrator and a psychological victim) and the corresponding humanity and ethics are unveiled, thereby delving into the core of the nature and origins of evil in the Holocaust. Moreover, the technique of narrating illness embodies humanistic care and social critique, resonating with Amis's proposition that style is morality.

This paper undertakes a comprehensive exploration of *Time's Arrow* from the illness perspective. Initially, it identifies and elucidates the textual manifestations of Unverdorben's illness and reflects on Martin Amis's stance towards Holocaust literature. Subsequently, it delves into the banality of evil embedded within the illness, excavating the roots of the atrocities. Ultimately, by focusing on the interplay between illness and temporal reversal, this paper uncovers the critical and humanistic dimensions in Amis's postmodern realist narrative.

The Nazi Doctor Afflicted with PTSD

With the progression of psychology and modern medicine in the twentieth century, trauma has emerged as a significant research field and a prominent medium for

contemporary writers to explore human psychology, contemplate sufferings, and articulate a profound concern for humanity. As a fundamental component of trauma studies, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) garners escalating attention due to its complexity, scientific nature and distinctive psychological perspective. Originally termed "shell shock" or "war neurosis" in medicine, PTSD was perceived to be associated with the mental disturbances experienced by veterans following World War I. In 1980, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Third Edition) officially delineated PTSD as the delayed onset and persistent mental disorder that may arise after an individual experiences, witnesses, or confronts actual or threatened death, serious injury, or a threat to their physical integrity (American Psychiatric Association 1980). Over the past half-century, extensive research into this disorder has brought about revision and refinement in diagnostic criteria, thereby encapsulating its core clinical manifestations: recurrent re-experiencing of trauma, persistent hypervigilance, avoidance behaviors, and psychic numbing (American Psychiatric Association 2022).

In *Time's Arrow,* the disturbed psychology and behaviors displayed by the Nazi doctor Unverdorben conform strikingly to the clinical manifestations of PTSD. Not only is Unverdorben hyper-vigilant to everything around during his escape, frightened at the slightest movements in the train carriage like a startled bird, but he also persists in monitoring the environment with suspicion and caution, wary of each approaching individual, even in a safe haven far removed from Germany. The persistent restlessness and tension have become his constants. And his actions—incessant changes of addresses, meticulously crafting every hiding place as a "fortress of safety" and the use of fictitious names and identities—bear witness to a profound insecurity. These elements collectively construct a stress response dominated by fear, further underscoring his hypervigilance.

There is no doubt that the heightened vigilance Unverdorben exhibits has an inextricable link to his participation in the Holocaust, a past that emerges every night from his subconscious, transforming into nightmarish visions: dark terrifying cabins that symbolize gas chambers where Jews are ruthlessly poisoned; bald women walking helplessly who represent those shaved and toyed by the SS; and the long line of numerous souls trapped beneath white coats and black boots, evoking the genocide carried out by Nazi doctors in uniform within Auschwitz. Manifested in the form of nightmares, these traumatic memories, or the return of the repressed, compel him to "revisit" repeatedly the scenes of the genocide, rendering him "a big depositor in the bank where fear is kept" (Amis 54).

Due to the profound fear, Unverdorben finds himself incapable of maintaining

eye contact with others, fearing that such a gaze may unlock the memories of the eye wall, a grim reminder of his criminal harvesting living organs during the "human experiments" conducted in Auschwitz. He endeavors to avoid the sound and smell of fingernails being burned into flames, as they evoke the harrowing spectacles of Jewish cremations. Rather than gaze into a mirror, he prefers to groom himself by touch alone. And he even burns medical texts, prescription pads as well as his medical license. In essence, everything associated directly or indirectly with Auschwitz is shunned deliberately, Unverdorben himself included. Moreover, with his passion for medicine waning, he transforms into a ruthless onlooker of patients' suffering and demise, accepting their impending deaths without compassion. Burdened by the unspeakable past, he "cannot feel, won't connect, never opens up" (Amis 52), so that he is not only alienated both from others and from his family, but also rejects all forms of emotional interaction, even showing no care to anyone. As the psychologist Robert Jay Lifton observes, "psychic numbing is a form of dissociation characterized by the diminished capacity or inclination to feel" (13). It is conceivable that Unverdorben has suffered from psychic numbing, driven out of the world of feelings and emotions.

From the analyses above, it becomes unequivocally evident that Unverdorben does not live a normal life as some critics have contended (Glaz 111), but is deeply afflicted with PTSD. Indeed, The portray of Unverdorben serves as a conduit through which Amis conveys his stance on Holocaust narratives in literature. Firstly, *Time's Arrow* effectively counters those questioning the legitimacy of Holocaust fiction. Theodor Adorno once contended, "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Bach 78), and some critics have questioned the authenticity of Holocaust narratives due to the fictional nature of novels. However, Holocaust narratives should not be confined solely to the testimonies of survivors or onlookers; novels, as a literary genre, have the power to unveil truths, thus counteracting the oblivion of the Holocaust in unique ways. In fact, since the second world war, Holocaust novels have evolved significantly and become an indispensable part of the twentieth century literature. By examining and portraying Unverdorben's PTSD from the perspective of psychiatry, Amis not only infuses scientific authenticity into *Time's Arrow*, but also firmly advocates for the legitimacy of writing on the Holocaust. Secondly, the trauma narrative concerning the Nazi doctor aligns with the latest trend in Holocaust novels—perpetrator narratives, which have emerged in the last two decades following the dominance of victim narratives and bystander narratives. Transcending the demonization of perpetrators prevalent in the other two types, perpetrator narratives in novels—such as *The Reader* (1997), *The Kindly Ones* (2009), and *The*

Dark Room (2007)—primarily explore the motivation behind their participation in the Holocaust and ethical and psychological dilemmas confronted when their crimes are exposed. By portraying the Nazi doctor, *Time's Arrow* without doubt shares some commonalities with perpetrator narratives; however, its uniqueness lies in the fact that Unverdorben is concurrently a psychological victim of the Holocaust. Through this dual lens, *Time's Arrow* not only discloses the intricacies of trauma, deepening readers' understanding of humanity, but also enhances the profundity of the novel, leaving ample scope for introspection on pivotal issues linked to the Holocaust, including history, ethics, and human nature. In this sense, *Time's Arrow* pioneers a new direction for Holocaust novels.

The Banality of Evil Embedded in PTSD

In *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt examines the motives of Adolf Eichmann[1], a notorious Nazi perpetrator, and contends that it is not hatred or malice towards Jews but an absence of independent thought that drives him to commit abominable crimes. She defines this phenomenon as "the banality of evil,"[2] which refers to individuals in totalitarian regimes submitting blindly to authority and participating unwittingly in atrocities, devoid of any reflective thought. The Nazi doctor Unverdorben exemplifies this banality of evil. As a member of SS, he "does what everybody else does, good or bad, with no limit, once under the cover of numbers" (Amis 157), holding the steadfast belief that "I am a healer, everything I do heals" (Amis 77). Being convinced that he is one of the "children of God, empowered to destroy and kill on behalf of their higher calling," as noted by Robert Lifton (449), Unverdorben not only harvests living organs in Auschwitz but also remains engaged in "his invasion, his conquests, his quiet annexations" (Amis 53) far removed from Germany. Even during intimate encounters with his girlfriend Irene, his mind is filled with words of aggression. Essentially, his actions mirror both the logic of war and the omnipresent power dynamic, in which he abandons independent thought, and blindly succumbs to the Nazi regimes, unaware of the crimes he has committed.

It is noteworthy that despite participation in the Holocaust serving as the immediate trigger for his PTSD, Unverdorben unexpectedly avoids contemplating

1 Adolf Eichmann, a senior official in Nazi Germany, played a pivotal role in the Holocaust. By organizing and implementing systematic expulsions and killings, he directly caused the deaths of thousands of hundreds of innocent Jews. During his trial, he denied his guilt and claimed that he merely carried out military orders, irresponsible for the genocide.

2 See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2006, pp.20-36.

it, thereby creating a striking discrepancy with his medical identity and expertise. This resulting tension propels readers to reassess the absurd Holocaust world crafted in the inverted time, reversing "the arrow of time" once again, and reordering the facts in a logical sequence. It is precisely in this intricate process that readers garner "one partial glimpse into the complexity of the perpetrators" (Lothe 138), achieving upon introspection "the (re)discovery of horrors we already know but must acknowledge yet again" (McCarthy 302). These horrors extend beyond death tolls to encompass both the banality of evil embedded within PTSD and the underlying mechanisms fueling the Holocaust.

In the context where "National Socialism is nothing more than applied biology" (Amis 150), Unverdorben resolutely joins the SS and becomes a Nazi doctor, which reflects to a certain extent a dimension of Nazi ideology. The German populace, including Unverdorben, blindly adheres to Hitler and the Nazi regime, and perceives "Jews as the bacillus and ferment of social decomposition" (Fisch 349). This perception of "social decomposition" suggests that Jews are considered destructive and subversive to German society, thereby equating the eradication of the "Jewish toxins" with the purification and self-preservation of the German nation. In this way, the acts of killing are "sublimated into a sacrificial paradigm for the good of the race" (Virdee 241) and doctors, convinced by such an inverted ideology, feel duty-bound to eliminate Jews.

Provided that Unverdorben's violation of the Hippocratic Oath stems from the fact that "the perpetrator's individual will is supplanted by that of the regime and race" (Badrideen 65), then the pseudo-medical milieu further impairs his reasoning and judgment. In Auschwitz prisoners, regardless of their health status, are designated as patients, while the camp facilities adopt the nomenclature and practices of a hospital system. The entire Auschwitz is disguised as a central hospital, with gas chambers labeled as showers, and the laboratory for human experimentation posing as the Institute for Health Research. Having fabricated the semblance of a medical environment, the Nazi regime deliberately conceals and erases the traces of the Holocaust and the atrocities. Furthermore, this pseudo-medical milieu penetrates into their daily work and personal life. Nazi doctors' duties in Auschwitz mirror their routine responsibilities in a real hospital—evaluating substances to be applied, calculating dosages, administering injections, observing patients, and documenting data. Outside of work they can pursue hobbies and interests, and take vacations to visit family; everything seems to go as normal as before. In summary, what they experience in Auschwitz is cloaked within the guise of medical research and daily life, as if having nothing to do with the Holocaust.

It is undeniable that Nazi ideology, coupled with its illusion of a medical milieu, can numb individuals to some degrees. However, in the face of inhumane atrocities, the immense psychological shock that most individuals may experience in similar circumstances has the potential to propel Unverdorben towards deep contemplation of these atrocities. Regrettably, such a shock never occurs and the potential for introspection is suppressed by a psychological split that develops unconsciously. On one hand, Unverdorben is a considerate and responsible husband and friend, yet on the other hand, he transforms into a ruthless and reckless executor trampling on lives in Auschwitz. The split selves vividly illustrate, in a literary form, Robert Lifton's finding that Nazi doctors usually exhibit a psychological pattern of doubling—the Auschwitz self, who kills mercilessly and mindlessly, and the original self, who possesses a common conscience and conscientiousness. As Robert Lifton asserts, the psychological pattern of doubling is "the doctors' overall mechanism for participating in evil" (417), through which Unverdorben becomes accustomed to and turns a blind eye to the atrocities in Auschwitz, devoid of any inclination to explore the truth behind them. Moreover, the doubling, to some extents, diminishes Unverdorben's introspection on his personal responsibility during the Holocaust, as it implies a cognition that the original self which is inherently good is extraneous to the killings, while the Auschwitz self merely fulfills tasks assigned by military superiors.

In his interviews with Nazi doctors, Lifton further uncovers that "the Auschwitz self depends upon radically diminished feeling, upon one's not experiencing psychologically what one was doing" (442). This underscores the crucial role of psychic numbing in allowing the Auschwitz self, despite functioning as "a working machine" and existing as "a walking dead," to keep a comparatively stable spiritual equilibrium and endure the Holocaust. In *Time's Arrow,* what the weeping babies in gas chambers elicit from Unverdorben is not his compassion, a normal response for any individual with a conscience, but rather great concerns about the potential disruption of carbon monoxide absorption and the success of the experiment. The eyes of individuals of various races that occupy the entire wall do not invoke his fear; rather, he focuses coldly on studying their colors, dissecting their features, and even crafting new human forms with them. For Unverdorben, prisoners in Auschwitz have become thoroughly dehumanized, reduced to mere subjects for his "scientific research." It is in this understanding that he successfully avoids guilt, "maintaining that internal sense of numbed habituation in order to fend off potentially overwhelming images of its relationship of guilt, death and murder" (Lifton 446). To put it simply, Unverdorben has forgone any introspection on the nature of his crimes, cloaked in a veil of psychic numbing.

As evident from the preceding analyses, a multitude of factors have resulted in the banality of evil embedded within Unverdorben's PTSD. On a superficial level, his banality of evil seems to be the consequence of "rationalization" nurtured by national bioengineering ideology and the pseudo-medical milieu. However, upon deeper introspection, it is not difficult to find that this "rationalization" has deliberately misinterpreted and abused medicine, or in a broad sense, scientific rationality—a cornerstone of modernity since the Enlightenment. Undeniably, scientific rationality, which thrives in the realms such as technology, medicine and economy, has significantly promoted societal prosperity and advancement. Yet, when it expands to all domains or goes to an extreme, becoming a societal hegemony, its excessive emphasis on science and logic, coupled with a disregard for values and emotions, can bring about dire consequences and even catastrophic disasters. The Holocaust is indeed a poignant exemplification. Doctor Unverdorben, who should have healed the wounded and preserved life, transforms into an indifferent and insensitive executor of state machinery, disregarding ethics and morals. Given his moral and intellectual conviction before the Holocaust, Unverdorben would have fiercely resisted participating in the Holocaust, without the forceful propaganda and infiltration of the biomedical engineering that closely aligns with the scientific rationality embedded in medical beliefs. Through the portrayal of the banality of evil in *Time's Arrow,* Amis critiques the hegemony of scientific rationality, resonating with the profound insights of social criticism. Having examined the mechanisms underlying the Holocaust from various perspectives, scholars in the field of social criticism assert that the hegemony of scientific rationality is a crucial impetus for the occurrence of the Holocaust. Zygmunt Bauman, a renowned critical sociologist, elucidates in *Modernity and the Holocaust* that the Holocaust is the other side of modernity (265), revealing that scientific rationality, as an integral aspect of modernity, bears an inescapable responsibility for such heinous atrocities.

Furthermore, *Time's Arrow* elucidates individual responsibility in the Holocaust through the description of Unverdorben's psychology and mental states. Both the psychological pattern of doubling and psychic numbing, as previously analyzed, exhibit the morbidity that is intertwined with Unverdorben's forfeiting independent thought, moral judgment, and fundamental humanity during the dehumanization of Jews. If he had been able to counteract the forces of doubling and numbness, the acts of killing might not have unfolded so smoothly despite the ideology's potent influence. In Amis's narrative, the occurrence of the Holocaust is not only driven by the Nazi ideology but is closely linked to individual responsibility. This resonates

profoundly with Hannah Arendt's contention that perpetrators are not the "cogs"[1] forced by national machinery but rather the ones accountable for their crimes in the Holocaust. Moreover, the banality of evil discloses the chilling essence of the Holocaust—any individual, regardless of their malice, could potentially relinquish their critical thinking and moral judgment, becoming a ruthless killer in similar circumstances. In this way, the Holocaust, transcending the confines of the Nazi regime and perpetrators, extends to any ordinary and benevolent individual, thereby reminding readers to uphold their capacities for independent thought to prevent such atrocities from recurring.

PTSD and the Temporal Reversal

In literature, narrative experiments with time have increasingly been associated with the theme of violence. For example, in stream of consciousness—a prominent narrative style of the twentieth century—writers utilize the stagnation, compression, and dilation of time as pivotal tools to deconstruct the world wars. In postmodern literature techniques such as the temporal fragmentation, collage, and looping are often employed to examine the profound interconnections between violence, power, and politics. Following this trend, *Time's Arrow* explores the paramount social issue of the twentieth century, the Holocaust, through a radical reversal of time—a technique once considered improbable in literature narrative by Vladimir Nabokov and numerous other novelists and critics. With all the events and actions unfolding in an inverted sequence, Unverdorben's life is depicted from death to birth, like a videotape played in reverse. Despite that temporal reversal in war narratives is not unfamiliar to modern novelists—Kurt Vonnegut, for example, portrays a bomber attack on a base in reversed temporal order in *Slaughterhouse-Five,* enhancing the effect of black humor—it remains a significant and adventurous challenge for Martin Amis to employ the radical temporal reversal throughout *Time's Arrow*. Unsurprisingly, this narrative strategy has garnered widespread attention from scholars at home and abroad, among whom some argue that it is "wholly appropriate to the subject matter" (Bentley 68), while others criticize it as "a blasphemous way for Amis to profit from the horrors of the Holocaust" (Will 144). Regardless of these different interpretations, the academic debate itself highlights the significance of temporal reversal in understanding *Time's Arrow*. This paper contends that temporal reversal not only exposes the banality of evil embedded within Unverdorben's PTSD, as discussed in the preceding chapter, but also

1 See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: Dilemma of modern Ethics*. New York: Penguin, 2019, pp. 55-56.

resonates with illness narratives, reflecting to a certain extent the manifestations, metaphors, and broad implications of this mental disorder.

Situated in a backward world since the outset, Unverdorben's soul, the narrator of *Time's Arrow,* finds itself deeply ensnared in confusion when confronted with something inexplicable, such as illogical conversations in which answers precede questions, the reverse reading order adopted by traditional Japanese readers[1], and Unverdorben's astonishing transformation from decrepitude and frailty to youthful vitality. The temporal reversal underlying these "inexplicable" phenomena has significantly created a profound chaos within the soul. Likewise, chaos plagues Unverdorben, who suffers from PTSD. He repeatedly "revisits" the scenes of the Holocaust in the guise of nightmares, experiencing inexplicable fears of eyes, flames, and babies even in his waking hours. This indicates his inability to discern between dreams and reality, or the past and the present, leading to his disarray. As Shoshana Felman observes, the narratives of PTSD patients seem to "be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of frames of reference" (5). Unverdorben similarly exhibits disordered perceptions of time and causality. In this sense, the chaos experienced by the soul in temporal reversal mirrors one aspect of Unverdorben's PTSD symptoms, thereby illustrating a manifestation of this disorder.

Nicolas Tredell argues, "The soul's futile attempts to make sense of experience fail, therefore, because without the crucial knowledge that time is running in reverse, all of its theories or perceptions prove incorrect[...]" (131). Indeed, the soul misinterprets all movements as their diametric opposites, leading to a radical reversal of causality. For instance, "Forward, unwrapping, and cleaning" are perceived as "backward, packing, and soiling," while donating transforms into taking money from a charity box, purchasing medicine into withdrawing drugs from patients, and giving birth into a farewell between mother and child. Owing to causality reversal, morality is inverted as well. In Amis's words, "Almost any deed, any action, has its morality reversed, if you turn the arrow around" (DeCurtis 147). In Auschwitz violence, destruction, and killing are disguised as benevolence, creation, and healing. Consequently, the soul concludes that the preternatural

1 The traditional Japanese are accustomed to reading from right to left, whereas other peoples read from left to right. In the case of temporal reversal, the sequence of reading that the soul has witnessed in traditional Japanese culture shifts from "right to left" to "left to right," which is distinctly different from the order the soul has observed in non-Japanese cultures.

objective is " to dream a race. To make a people from the weather, from thunder and from lightning. With gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire" (Amis 120). Evidently, the soul's perception reflects the inverted Nazi ideology, which transforms the Holocaust—an endeavor aiming at the annihilation of the Jews—into a righteous pursuit for national and racial rejuvenation. Brian Finney notes, in *Time's Arrow* "the dual reversal of chronology and causality perfectly portrays the Nazi's reversal of morality" (Keulks 107). Similarly, Harris Greg asserts, "by progressing backwards, the narrative style in and off itself comments on the Nazi's paradoxical version of 'progress'—that is, the revitalization of archaic myths in the name of national renewal" (489). Through this logical and moral reversal in inverted time, Amis satirizes the Nazis' distorted ideology, which, as analyzed in the preceding chapter, is a contributing factor for Unverdorben's abandonment of independent thought, his engagement in the banality of evil, and his subsequent affliction with PTSD.

Notably, while the soul is capable of perceiving Unverdorben's subconscious, it remains unable to decipher the implications, particularly when entangled in the terrifying visions of nightmares. As Gavin Keulks states, "deprived of life experience, driven to a symbolic limbo from which to view his alter-ego's life in reverse" (110), the soul is repudiated and excluded from Unverdorben's thought. In this context, the repulsion encountered by the soul reflects the Nazi ideology which excludes and eliminates Jewish others. Furthermore, in stark contrast to the Nazi ideology, the soul holds diametrically opposite beliefs and values, embracing "unconditional love for others" (Diedrick 141), demonstrating profound empathy for their sufferings and opposing Unverdorben's prejudices and indifference towards minorities. In essence, this dichotomy between the soul and Unverdorben underscores the latter's psychological self-division. The soul largely embodies the ethical and moral facets of Unverdorben—a "healing angel in white" before participating in the Holocaust—while the Nazi doctor Unverdorben is cold and numb, regardless of ethics and morality. Self-division, as discussed before, serves as the psychological mechanism that nurtures the banality of evil, while the banality of evil is deeply embedded within the protagonist's mental disorder. From this perspective, the split between the soul and Unverdorben within the inverted time establishes a subtle connection with PTSD.

As John Dern elucidates, "joining bodies and souls back together is the purpose of inverted time in *Time's Arrow*" (200). Despite the great divergence, the soul persists in striving for fusion with Unverdorben. Ultimately, it reverts to the womb—a cozy and nurturing home—where a nascent life is being conceived, liberated from Nazi ideology and rejuvenated with ethics. This narrative embodies

Amis's aspiration to undo the Holocaust and subvert historical narratives in a sense. It is noteworthy that in the inverted time, the soul's journey is actually not moving away from but progressively approaching the Holocaust. Instead of experiencing dread, it witnesses a renaissance of the victims, as though the genocide had never taken place, thereby poetically undoing the notorious Holocaust in form. As Amis states, with time's arrow running in the opposite direction, what readers encounter is an absurd and regressive world, where the atrocities of Auschwitz are thus symbolically undone (DeCurtis 146).

Regardless of Amis's aspiration, history is not mutable, nor is truth deniable. James Diedrick observes, "in his descriptions of breathing life back into the victims of Nazi genocide, the narrator effects a poetic undoing of the Holocaust, all the more poignant for the reader's knowledge that it can never be undone" (134). Indeed, this "knowledge" is profoundly reinforced in the narrative of temporal reversal. In the face of the absurd Holocaust in a backward world, readers in the post-Holocaust era are compelled to deeply engage with the text, and to "deal with all the morality because these horrific events are presented as philanthropic" (Reynolds 21). They are called on to do the moral reordering, and "constantly supply all the tragedies" (Diedrick 134). In this endeavor, while reconstructing the meaning, readers foster a profound reflection, thus becoming acutely aware of the perverted Nazi ideology and the brutal atrocities committed against humanity. Furthermore, through the lens of temporal reversal, readers garner insight into "how the minds of young doctors like Unverdorben are warped by Nazi ideology; otherwise they might have approached patients with compassion and humanity" (Tang 78). In other words, by shedding light on the psychological trauma inflicted on the protagonist, the temporal reversal in *Time's Arrow* prompts readers to recognize the paramount importance of upholding independent thinking and judgment.

Last but not least, in temporal reversal the soul's journey toward what it perceives as future paradoxically transforms into a regression to the past in which the Holocaust unfolded. In this regard, Amis artfully establishes an effective equivalence between the future and the past, implying that individuals in the post-Holocaust era are likely to confront violence, slaughter, or even extinction. This grim destiny echoes the potential plight of humanity under the threat of nuclear war. Nurtured in the aftermath of the Cold War, Amis harbors a profound anxiety about nuclear annihilation, which not only constitutes a central theme in his literary oeuvre, but also serves as a conduit for his warnings to humanity. As McCarthy elucidates in his commentary on *Time's Arrow*, "the Holocaust of the Second World War and the fear of nuclear destruction seem to come together in Amis's

imagination around the metaphor of time: both represent the disappearance of hope, of belief in the future" (310). Through this temporal metaphor, Amis strives to evoke contemplation on the Holocaust and to forestall the descent towards the brink of nuclear catastrophe.

Conclusion

When questioned about the creative motive of *Time's Arrow*, Amis responded, "I am writing about the perpetrators and they are brothers, if you like" (Wachtel 47). Rather than depicting perpetrators as cold-blooded monsters as most writers usually do, he makes them patients with mental disorders. By delving beneath the textual manifestations of Unverdorben's PTSD—recurrent re-experiencing of the genocide, persistent hypervigilance, avoidance behaviors, and psychic numbing, Amis discloses how an ordinary individual, deceived profoundly by the Nazi bioengineering ideology, abandons independent thought and moral judgment in a state of psychological division and numbness. This "brother" unknowingly transforms into an agent of the banality of evil, becoming a psychological victim, unable to escape the grip of the Holocaust. In this regard, Amis's exploration of Unverdorben's dual identities and morbid mental states transcends the stereotype of perpetrators in traditional Holocaust literature, thereby endowing his character with depth and complexity.

Amis noted, in an interview discussing the temporal reversal in *Time's Arrow*, "I am pretty sure [...]. I have got something to say with it" (Morrison 99). Through the inverted narrative, he crafts an illusion of a benevolent Holocaust, addressing both the banality of evil and the nature of offence, which resonates strongly with contemporary scholarly researches on this subject. Furthermore, *Time's Arrow* invites readers to transcend the barrier of inverted time, participate actively in reconstructing meaning, and reflect deeply on the underlying mechanisms of the Holocaust. With readers contemplating the text, the inverted Nazi ideology, the nature of offence embedded within PTSD, Amis's aspiration of undoing the Holocaust and concerns for humanity emerge in their minds to varying degrees. In this way, Amis infuses the temporal reversal—a quintessential postmodernist technique—with authenticity, critical insight, and humanistic concerns, thereby fulfilling a realist function to a certain extent. This approach, as Catherine Bernard notes, "reaffirms the necessity for fiction to shoulder reality" (122). Through the temporal reversal narrative, Amis proposes a version of postmodern realism, which seeks to restore the connection between literature and reality, and to re-endow literature with depth and meaning by compromising between realism and

postmodernism. Such postmodern realism sheds the excessive nothingness often associated with postmodernism, and represents the latest trend in contemporary literary creation, serving as a pivotal technique for Amis to explore and critique society. As the Marxist Fredric Jameson asserts, "while postmodern culture struggles with its isolation from history, it seeks out its style in an attempt to create an identity that is new and independent even as it is anchored to some sense of historical authenticity" (17). In *Time's Arrow*, Amis successfully combines historical authenticity with postmodern style. Through the lens of PTSD and temporal reversal, he not only uncovers the nature of the Holocaust, but also explores the potential of postmodern realism to forge a new path for postmodern literature.

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Asian Literature in Transition: A Comparative Analysis of Three Diverse Short Stories

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Abstract Asian Literature, a diverse and dynamic field, has long been at the center of a multifaceted debate that continues to evolve. This debate revolves around questions of definition, representation, and cultural authenticity. At its core, the discourse seeks to (re)define the boundaries of Asian Literature in English while simultaneously(re)visiting the specter of Orientalism. Scholars and writers grapple with determining what qualifies as Asian Literature and how it intersects with the broader spectrum of global literature. A central question emerges: Can literary works authored by individuals of Asian heritage living outside their native countries genuinely encapsulate the diversity of Asian experiences? Simultaneously, this discourse grapples with the intricate legacy of Orientalism, scrutinizing how literature can simultaneously challenge and perpetuate stereotypes about Asia and its diverse cultures. The debate questions whether works authored by individuals of Asian descent living outside their countries of origin can authentically represent Asian experiences. Simultaneously, it engages with the complex legacy of Orientalism, examining how literature can challenge and perpetuate stereotypes about Asia and its diverse cultures. Through a critical analysis of selected works, this study contributes on this ongoing debate, exploring how literature shapes our perceptions of identity, authenticity, and representation within Asian Literature.

Keywords Asian literature; Authenticity; Postcolonial; Orientalism; Self-Orientalism

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Introduction

The definition and boundaries of Asian Literature have been a recurring subject of debate and redefinition in literary studies. This discourse is characterized by a complex interplay between cultural identities, linguistic diversity, and postcolonial perspectives. One school of thought argues that Asian Literature should encompass works produced in Asian languages, focusing on culturally significant issues within the region. Advocates for this view stress the importance of acknowledging linguistic and cultural nuances, emphasizing the significance of original texts and authors from Asia. Asian literature is intended to represent Asian people, values, and experiences associated with Asian society from the past to the present (Dewi, "In Search of Contextual and Humanistic Southeast Asian Literature in English" 138). In contrast, an alternative perspective posits that Asian Literature in English may be written by authors of Asian descent, translated into English, or foreign writers writing about Asia (Guntarik 9-10). This stance highlights the global accessibility and reach of English as a medium for expressing diverse Asian experiences, contributing to the ongoing evolution of Asian Literature and shedding light on the dynamic nature of literary categorization and the intersection of cultural and linguistic identities. In his preface of *A Rainbow Feast: New Asian Short Stories*, an anthology of Southeast Asian short stories, Quayum addresses the possibility of employing English as a means of cross-cultural interaction:

> Literature in English is not confined to the culture-tight compartment and, therefore, can help establish a better understanding between various ethnic groups and nations by articulating each other's values, histories, and cultures. (25)

The introduction of Asian Literature to World Literature has also led to the translation of numerous significant Asian works into English, broadening the scope of Asian Literature and giving rise to Asian Literature in English. As early as the 1910s, the famous Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize in literature by translating his poems, such as *Gitanjali, Manasi,* and *Sonar Tori* (Indriyanto 23). This latter category expands the definition of Asian Literature to include Western authors who write about Asia and the translation of Asian Literature into English. This transformation signifies a pivotal shift in the understanding of Asian Literature, acknowledging the global resonance and influence of Asian literary traditions and crossing the boundaries of geography and ethnicity. The dynamic interplay between cultures underscores the transformative power of literature, transcending traditional boundaries and fostering a more inclusive perspective on what constitutes Asian Literature in English.

The heterogeneity of Asia, with its diverse cultural backgrounds, poses a complex challenge for translators of Asian literary works into English. Asia is not a demarcated location but a contested idea that invokes multiple geographies and histories of conquest, struggle, and self-determination. This complexity necessitates more than just bilingual proficiency; it demands an intimate understanding of the intricate cultural references interwoven within the texts. Translation, much like democracy, operates on principles of equity and the absence of linguistic bias, making it a particularly intricate task when it comes to rendering Asian literary works into English (Gokhale and Lal 246). Successful translation in this context necessitates more than just bilingual proficiency; it demands an intimate familiarity with the diverse cultural tapestries interwoven within the texts. Translators of Asian Literature must possess extensive linguistic skills and a profound understanding of the specific Asian cultures portrayed in the translated text. For instance, if a translator aims to convey the essence of Pramoedya's short story, a profound grasp of Javanese culture becomes imperative (Dewi, "Women of Will for Nation Building in Pramoedya's Three Early Novels" 8). This situation underscores the intricate challenge translators face as they navigate the complexity of Asian Literature.

The expanded definition of Asian Literature highlights translators' multifaceted challenges and prompts a critical examination of its intricate aspects, such as

representation, authenticity, and cross-cultural dialogue. This inquiry raises questions regarding the portrayal of Asian experiences by non-Asian writers and the influence of translation on preserving the subtleties of original texts. It is imperative to acknowledge that Asian writers occasionally affirm the idea of essentialism in their endeavors to depict Asia. These inquiries stem from a critique of Western Orientalist narratives, historically depicting Asia as the "Other" – uncivilized and inferior due to colonial constructs (Chandran and Vengadasamy). Stephanie Lawson aptly articulates this by highlighting how the "regionalist narrative" simplifies the cultural complexities of Asia into a vague set of values, primarily to create a positive contrast with the West, in which Asia is seen as the Exotic Other (26-27) In this pursuit, the West tends to amalgamate the diverse cultures of Asia into a singular "East," inadvertently giving rise to essentialized and overly simplified representations. Paradoxically, this mirrors the issues of Orientalism, as it perpetuates a false homogenization of Asia, a perspective that both Asian and Western scholars sometimes embrace to support their anti-Western viewpoints (Nandy 147).

The prior section summarized some defining characteristics of how Asian scholarship perceives Asian Literature. In summary, the perspectives within Asian scholarship regarding Asian Literature are intricately shaped by Asia's diversity and the historical backdrop of Western colonialism. These factors contribute to common themes in Asian Literature that are rooted in the processes of nation-building, anti-colonialism, and responses to colonial conditions. These themes manifest in many Asian authors' works, where they address the impact of colonization on their nations and actively counter Western narratives and stereotypes about Asia. Authors such as Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Amitav Ghosh use their literature to critically examine the impact of colonization and challenge Western narratives about India, South Asia, and Japan (Thornber; Gokhale and Lal). This critical examination of the intersection between historical context and literary representation forms a fundamental aspect of Asian Literature scholarship, providing valuable insights into its multifaceted nature. Within this context, using English as the medium conjures a distinctive creative space, resisting and reflecting imperial governing powers' reiterations. As Lim et al. articulates,

> Asian literature in English shows the creative and critical potential of the language beyond instrumental uses. Instead, Asian writers use English within their terms to recollect histories, remember journeys, and represent conflicts within and between the communities and nation-states situated throughout the

> Asian region. (790).

The act of appropriating and transforming dominant forms of representation for self-determination is a central theme in postcolonial literature. Language plays a pivotal role in this process, as it becomes a medium for postcolonial societies introduce themselves to a global audience. Using English as a medium for cultural expression underscores the significance of language as cultural capital. Postcolonial writers who often write in English, engage in a dialectical relationship with the language itself; as Ashcroft summarizes,

> this dialectical relationship is most potently revealed in the use of the English language itself. The relationship between the colonizer and colonized becomes dialogic when the master tongue is appropriated. This is the insistent message of postcolonial writing and the principle of interpolation in general: that the colonized can enter into dialogue only when they acquire the cultural capital of imperial culture to make themselves heard. (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 147)

The prior statement explores the dialectic the colonized can enter into meaningful dialogue when they appropriate the master tongue, acquiring the cultural capital of imperial culture to make their voices heard. Another avenue explored in postcolonial studies is the dispersion and movement of diasporic populations who adopt English as a means of cultural articulation. This form of articulation rejects the process that grants 'authenticity' to specific categories of experience favored by the colonial center, often at the expense of marginalized voices (Ashcroft, "Transnation" 74)

The term 'appropriation' encapsulates how postcolonial societies assimilate aspects of imperial culture, such as language, writing forms, film, and even modes of thought (Ashcroft et al. 15). These appropriations are essential for postcolonial communities in articulating their unique social and cultural identities, thereby offering a means of resistance against the prevailing Orientalist narratives. The concept of authenticity, particularly concerning culture, has been a significant aspect of contemporary debates in postcolonial cultural production. These appropriated tools serve as instruments for postcolonial communities to assert their unique social and cultural identities. Within postcolonial literature, a significant form of resistance emerges as authors challenge the process of conferring "authenticity" upon specific experiential categories, often marginalizing particular perspectives. Consequently, the discourse of postcolonial literature often witnesses effective resistance through transformative appropriation and the redefinition of the colonizing language by

postcolonial writers (Ashcroft, "Unlocking the Future: Utopia and Postcolonial Literatures" 45).

Another defining characteristic of Asian Literature is its critical examination of Orientalism, whether the literary works are authored by Asians in English, translated into English, or written by Western authors focusing on Asian topics. Here, Orientalism, redefined by Edward Said, denotes a pervasive Western tradition encompassing academia and the arts. The development and preservation of any culture require an alternative and rival counterpart. The formation of identity, whether for the East or the West, involves creating opposing "others" whose nature is continually defined through the ongoing interpretation of their distinctions from "us" (Said, *Orientalism* 332). This tradition is marked by prejudiced outsider interpretations of the Eastern world, significantly influenced by the cultural attitudes of European imperialism during the 18th and 19th centuries. Said's critique extends to contemporary scholars who perpetuated the tradition of outsider interpretation, notably Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami (Said, "The World, the Text, and the Critic" 78-80). He argues that Western depictions of the East are fraught with false prejudices, leading readers and viewers to develop a distorted image of the East. Furthermore, Orientalism highlights the West's tendency to essentialize Eastern societies as static and undeveloped, resulting in the fabrication of a view of Oriental culture that can be systematically studied, depicted, and reproduced (Moore-Gilbert 10), Asian literature often presents unique cases where authors, consciously or unconsciously, confirm the discourse of Orientalism in their works. This phenomenon, known as self-Orientalism, represents an extension and reconfiguration of Orientalism. Self-Orientalism challenges Said's critique by asserting that the Orient actively participates in constructing, reinforcing, and disseminating the stereotypes created by the West (Yan and Santos 297). This active engagement is closely linked to how Asian societies, or the Orient, frequently engage in self-Orientalization for various reasons, often driven by the desire to capture Western attention. In this context, self-Orientalism takes on various forms, and one illustrative example can be found in the case of Arab-Americans attempting to market their cuisine to Americans. Employing Arabian Nights-style imagery, although anachronistic and disconnected from the reality of Arab American life, they strategically engage in self-Orientalization to appeal to Western sensibilities (Stiffler 119).

Self-Orientalism introduces contradictions in postcolonial societies' aspirations—they aim to voice perspectives from the margins yet find themselves assimilated into the mainstream. They seek to deconstruct the binary of a European

Self and its designated Others but often inadvertently contribute to the creation of cultural Otherness. As Huggan asserts, they aim to voice marginalized perspectives but often become assimilated into the mainstream. It can be observed how in the attempt to deconstruct the European Self and its designated Others, they sometimes unintentionally contribute to the creation of cultural Otherness (64). This dialectic of exoticism reveals the complex relationship postcolonial societies have with the West. Additionally, some authors strategically employ a form of self-empowering exoticism that plays to an international audience, serving as a mechanism of cultural translation to the Western world. Similar instances of self-Orientalism also arise in the literary works of Asian authors. Some of the works discussed in this paper exhibit signs of self-Orientalism, which may seem to reflect a belief in the superiority of Western culture over the East. However, it is crucial to critically reevaluate such instances, as authors often employ self-Orientalism as a narrative tool to satirize and depict how their societies historically perceived Westerners. The subsequent analysis in this paper identifies and examines instances of self-Orientalism within the short stories under examination.

To contribute toward the discussion of Asian Literature, this paper examines three Southeast Asian short stories with different historical and cultural backgrounds. The first is a short story written by Asian writer Consorcio Borje's, "Big Sister" from Philippines Literature. Secondly, this paper provides a reading on a short story written by an Asian writer translated into English by seeing Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Jongos + Babu" that is translated into English as "Houseboy + Maid" by Julie Shackford-Bradley. The third and last is a short story written by a non-Asian writer about an American author, Robert Olen Butler's "Fairy Tale," in which Vietnam is the setting. By analyzing and comparing these three short stories, each representing different facets of Asian Literature, this paper aims to make valuable contributions to the ongoing discourse. It seeks to shed light on the complexities of defining Asian Literature in English, addressing questions related to authenticity, representation, and cross-cultural dialogue. By exploring these diverse narratives, the study contextualizes how constitutes Asian literature is redefined in the context of using English language.

This analysis explores the themes of authenticity, appropriation, Orientalism, and self-Orientalism in postcolonial Asian literature through the analysis of three distinct short stories: "Big Sister" by Consorcio Borje, "Jongos + Babu" by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and "Fairy Tale" by Robert Olen Butler. These narratives unravel the intricate relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, the struggle for cultural identity, and the impact of Western influence on the East. These

short stories underline how identities and perceptions of both the colonized and the colonizer is respahed.

Examining these narratives, we delve into the struggles for authenticity in a world profoundly influenced by Western dominance. In "Big Sister" by Consorcio Borje, we witness the authentic representation of Filipino life amidst the challenges of American colonialism, exploring how economic hardship and educational aspirations intersect. Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Jongos + Babu" focuses into the appropriation of Dutch culture by the Javanese and the resulting internalization of colonial values. Lastly, Robert Olen Butler's "Fairy Tale" contextualizes the tenous intersection between local identity and Orientalism, illuminating how Vietnamese culture is perceived through Western eyes. These stories underscore how literature is employed by postcolonial authors to navigate the historicity of colonialism and the enduring legacy of Orientalism.

Translation, Identity, and Authenticity: Reading on Selected Southeast Asian Postcolonial Stories

Southeast Asian postcolonial literature navigates the preservation of cultural authenticity and the necessity of making narratives accessible to a broader audience. In this shared endeavor, authors draw from common themes while embracing cultural specificity's nuances, highlighting the similarities and differences across their narratives. They infuse their storytelling with local dialects, place names, and historical events, grounding their narratives in specific times and locales. While this specificity enriches the stories, it may also present challenges for readers unacquainted with the cultural context.

The cultural specificity and locality in Consorcio Borje's "Big Sister," set in the 1930s Philippines, exemplify the delicate balance between preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring narrative accessibility in Southeast Asian postcolonial literature. The story immerses the reader in the lives of the Inciang family, emphasizing their rural struggles in the Philippines as they strive to secure a scholarship for Itong. The narrative introduces numerous culturally specific elements such as the naming of Vigan and *Nagpartian* city (who currently change their name into Burgos), centavos (Philippines Peso), *Tampipi* (a box-like container made from strips of bamboo or like material), often without additional explanations. This problem in transmitting information poses challenges for non-Asian and non-Filipino readers, underscoring the tension between authenticity and reader accessibility in postcolonial storytelling. This paragraph illustrates the use of some unfamiliar terminologies which is left untranslated:

> Her father had never married again, being always faithful to the memory of Inciang's mother. The farm which he tilled produced enough rice and vegetables for the family's use and such few centavos as Lacay Iban would now and then need for the cockpit he got out of Inciang's occasional sales of vegetables in the public market or a few bundles of rice in the *camarin*. Few were the times when they were hard-pressed for money. One was the time when Inciang's mother died. Another was now that Itong was going to Vigan. (Borje 3)

Translators hold a crucial position in the discourse of postcolonial literature, acting as mediators who navigate the delicate balance between preserving cultural specificity and ensuring global accessibility. Translation becomes a means of connecting cultures and narratives, fostering understanding across linguistic and cultural boundaries. As exemplified by Julie Shackford-Bradley in her translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's work, specific translators incorporate explanatory endnotes to elucidate cultural terms and practices. Dewi argues that this strategy allows for translating Pramoedya Ananta Toer's culturally rich work while maintaining accessibility for readers interested in mutual language and cultural learning ("Translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toers Inem: Enhancement of Local-Global Communication" 123)unique, and distinctive piece of work in the translated language so as to evoke the same feelings and responses as the source language. Examining a number of translation strategy used in the translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toers short story Inem into English, this study shows that the translation product is to be applauded for two reasons. First, transnational translation of Prams work, that is rich in local culture, can connect and define both Indonesian and English cultures better in order to enhance global-local connectedness. Secondly, thanks to the translator, the (recreated. In essence, translation becomes a conduit for connecting cultures and narratives through the transfer of cultural specificity.

The translation of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Jongos + Babu" underlines the intricate dynamics of Indonesian identity within the historical context of colonialism while preserving authenticity. The story revolves around a family perpetually serving different masters from the Dutch colonial era to the Japanese occupation, seeking advantages in societal positions. This pattern of servitude extends to Sodi and Imah, with Sodi already in service and Imah facing uncertainty due to the lack of a master to serve. This narrative intricately explores Indonesian identity within the context of Western colonialism and the influence of Javanese culture.

Throughout colonial history, Indonesian self-identity has been intertwined with Western concepts, with the Dutch representing the dominant "Other" concerning the indigenous identity (Schlehe 498). This complex interplay between European/Asian people and Christian/Muslim religions was shaped and formed by the colonial boundaries (Laffan 2). Nonetheless, the concept of locality and the preservation of an authentic Indonesian heterogeneous identity are expressed within the narrative, as seen in the subsequent quote:

> *Empok* Kotek was faithful to her heritage –a true servant! Loyal to the last hair. Because of this, even though she was just a maid, her *tuan* said:
> 'Tomorrow, *njonja* has to go to Kopeng to rest for a month. And *Njai* will have to stay in the house with *tuan*, okay?'
> A wooden *bale* took up half the room. Two young people sat on top of it.
> "Do you like working there, *kak?"* asked Inah with sadness in her voice. (Toer 6)

Prior utterance foregrounds profound lens to explore the complexities of postcolonial identity, appropriation, and authenticity. Within the narrative of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Jongos + Babu," the inclusion of culturally specific terms like "Empok," "njonja," "tuan," "njai," and "kak" draws from the vocabularies of Javanese and Betawi cultures. While integral to the story's authenticity, these terms may pose challenges for readers unfamiliar with these cultural nuances. Different with Consorcio Borje's "Big Sister," where such cultural references remain unexplained, Julie Shackford-Bradley, the translator of "Jongos + Babu" addresses this issue. She provides explanatory endnotes that elucidate the cultural elements employed by Pramoedya Ananta Toer. These endnotes reveal that "Empok" signifies "elder sister" in the Jakartan (Batavian) dialect, "tuan" and "njonja" are respectful titles for Dutch males and females, "njai" denotes the concubine-housekeeper of a Dutchman, and "kak" translates to "elder brother" or "elder sister" in the Jakarta dialect (Toer 6). Shackford-Bradley's strategic use of endnotes, not only aids readers in comprehending the narrative but also facilitates a more immersive reading experience in Javanese and Batavian cultural intricacies. In conclusion, translated postcolonial literature with supplementary information enhances readers' understanding of local identity and authenticity while ensuring global accessibility.

In contrast to the previous stories, Robert Olen Butler's "Fairy Tale" was authored by an outsider yet profoundly connected to the insider/locality which problematizes the issue of authenticity. Robert Olen Butler's intimate knowledge

of Vietnam gained during his service from 1969 to 1971 as a counter-intelligence special agent and translator influenced his writing. His experiences led to the Tu Do Chinh Kien Award from the Vietnam Veterans of America in 1987, and his short story collection "A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain," which includes "Fairy Tales," earned the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1993 (Wyman) "Fairy Tales" revolves around Miss Noi, a Vietnamese prostitute brought to the United States by American soldiers with the promise of a better life. The narration is loaded with the nuances of the Vietnamese language, such as the importance of tones in conveying meaning. Butler, a Vietnam vet writer, served as a translator during his service in the war. His work is characterized by the prominence of Vietnamese characters, imagining their voice(s) and inviting the reader to understand the transnational realities of the war (Naito 15).

"Fairy Tales" is narrated from the first-person perspective of Miss Noi, a narrative technique that allows readers to experience *qualia*, or what it is like for a particular focalizer (Indriyanto and Darmawan 67). Readers are permitted insider insight into Noi's inner thoughts, particularly about the difficulty communicating using Vietnamese. Vietnamese language is a tonal language in which the meaning of each word depends on the 'tone' in which it is pronounced (Tham). The language barriers between Miss Noi and the G.I. soldiers attempting to communicate with her results in misinterpretations of spoken words,

> He wanted to say in my language, "May Vietnam live for ten thousand years." What he said very clearly, was, "The sunburnt duck is lying down." Now, if I think this man says that Vietnam should live for ten thousand years, I think he is a certain kind of man. But when he says that a sunburnt duck is lying down—boom, my heart melts. (Butler 50)

Two Vietnamese expressions that appear the same prove vastly different in meaning: "May Vietnam live for ten thousand years" is written *Viet Nam muon nam*! and can be easily misread as *Vit nam muon nam*, or The sunburnt duck is lying down (Dam and McCarron 2). This language play, seen from the perspective of a Vietnamese character highlights the dialectical relationship with the language itself, as both Vietnamese and English are employed to convey the historical circumstances of wartime Vietnam. While the war itself is rarely the central focus, the story unfolds in Saigon, South Vietnam, providing readers with further insight into the cultural influence of Buddhism in the region:

> She leaves everything in her place. Even her Buddha shrine to her parents. Very bad. I live alone in Saigon. I have a double bed with a lovely sheet. Two pillows. A cedar closet with my clothes, which are very nice. Three ao dais, one apple red, one blue like you see in the eyes of some American man, one black like my hair. (Butler 51)

These excerpts vividly depict the cultural heritage of Vietnam, such as the Buddha shrine and *ao dai*, a traditional Vietnamese garment predominantly worn by women. Robert Olen Butler's narrative deviates from the anticipated focus on the devastation and horror of the Vietnam War, instead emphasizing the nuances of language and specific aspects of Vietnamese culture. In doing so, Butler underscores an insider's perspective of Vietnam, employing textual cues that navigate the interplay between Vietnamese and English, allowing readers to engage with the story's cultural depth and authenticity.

Critique of Representation: Orientalism and Self-Orientalism in Southeast Asian Stories

The prior section has delved into the dialectics in preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring narrative accessibility. Continuing the argumentation, we discuss another aspect of Southeast Asian postcolonial literature—the presence of orientalism and self-orientalism. Self-Orientalism entails the deliberate (re)actions of non-Western individuals and institutions in which they adopt and perform the role of "the Other," employing Western depictions of the non-West for various purposes (Kobayashi et al. 161). These themes prompt us to delve deeper into the representation and perception of Southeast Asian cultures. In this section, we will delve into the narratives to examine how Orientalism, the Western lens through which the East is often viewed, and Self-Orientalism, the internalized cultural perspective within the region, intersect with issues of authenticity and accessibility. This examination contextualizes how these stories navigate the complex terrain of identity and representation in a world shaped by historical power dynamics and cultural exchange.

Borje's short story "Big Sister," set against the backdrop of the 1935 Rice Crisis in the Philippines and American colonialism, may not initially appear to embody Orientalist tendencies. The narrative primarily revolves around the hardships faced by Inciang, an 18-year-old older sister, and her 12-year-old brother, Itong, showcasing how some impoverished families must rely on their agricultural endeavors. Upon examination, it reveals a facet of self-orientalism through the

emphasis placed on Western values and outlook, particularly the importance of English language proficiency and education. An event that illustrates this issue occurs when Itong's English proficiency sets him apart, leading to preferential treatment within the family and reinforcing the internalization of Western discourse: "When he was in the second grade and could speak more English words than Inciang, her father began to laugh at her; also, her Tia Orin and her brood had laughed at her" (Borje 3). Itong's Westernized education and English-speaking abilities garner him preferential treatment within the family, reinforcing the internalization of Western discourse. Moreover, the story delves into the pragmatic aspects of why Itong's family favors his pursuit of a legal career, an occupation associated with the accumulation of higher social and economic capital:

> Lacay Iban, on the other hand, wanted Itong to become a lawyer because lawyers were big shots and made big names and big money for themselves if they could have the courts acquit murderers, embezzlers, and other criminals despite all damning evidence of guilt. People elected them to the National Assembly. (Borje 4)

Toer's narrative offers a more profound exploration of the dialectical relationship between Orientalism and Self-Orientalism. While Pramoedya's works avoid simplistic characterizations and lack clear-cut heroes and villains, they unequivocally condemn the colonial system for its tyrannical oppression, human rights violations, and economic exploitation (Teeuw 255). In a sense, what is criticized in Pramoedya's narration is both the colonial apparatus and discourse, which the Indonesian indigene internalizes. Foulcher theorizes about the 'slave mentality,' in which generations of colonial servitude have indoctrinated the indigenous to be admitted into the rank of the master/colonizer, which they believed would automatically discard all their prior subordinate, indigenous characteristics (165). This aspect of Self-Orientalism, characterized by a superior/inferior binary, is prominently portrayed in "Jongos + Babu (Houseboy + Maid)," as exemplified by the following quotation: "Ever since the time of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, this family had servants' blood—from generation to generation, servants without reserve" (Toer 6).

The narrative in "Jongos + Babu (Houseboy + Maid)" centers on the servant mentality of Sobi and Inah; Sobi aspires to become Japanese, donning a cap and a samurai sword, while Inah desires a blue-eyed tuan. Their aspirations and desires reflect the internalized colonial ideologies that persisted even after Indonesia's independence., as servitude and subservience were all they knew their whole life.

The narration remarks how Sobi, who remained a houseboy, believed himself superior to other houseboys because he worked "for the Dutch and Japanese colonizer" (Toer 4) while the others merely worked for Chinese and *pribumi*. His perceived higher social standing is rooted in his association with non-Indonesian masters, even though he was only their houseboy. Similarly, Inah's obsession with Western beauty standards, such as white skin and blue eyes, reveals the enduring impact of colonialism on her self-image.

> Her eyes were a clear blue. Furthermore, this pleased her immensely. No Indonesian had eyes like those she possessed. Because of that, no Indonesian had the right to dictate to those eyes. And her eyes were straight and thin. Indeed, she was quite pretty. Moreover, for her, beauty was a woman's capital. And she would use this capital to control her destiny. (Toer 5)

Her distinction of the Indonesian as an outsider, hence, as the Other marks her Westernized outlook due to her half-white descent, which distances her from *pribumi*. She becomes fixated on finding a *tuan,* preferably a White one, who would give her orders as she was uncomfortable taking orders from a non-White *tuan*. Toer's short story underscores this theme of slave mentality to expose the prevalent ideology of Self-Orientalism, which indoctrinates the natives about their correct social status and standing. Moreover, the narration posits how the Self-Orientalism paradigm compels Inah to marry a White *tuan*, have a child with bluer eyes than herself, and presumably continue their family's proud history of servitude:

> For a houseboy, it is truly a blessing, *kak.* But as for me…" Inah began dejectedly, and her beautiful blue eyes clouded over. Her pretty face grew disturbed. "I haven't found a *tuan* who's right for me." She hung her head. And in a low voice, as if praying, "I want so much to have a child whose eyes are bluer than my own. (Toer 6)

Compared to other stories, Fairy Tale is the most problematic as it deals with the issue of representing the natives from the perspective of a White author. In one aspect, Butler's depiction of Vietnam considerably differs from conventional American representation of Asia and Vietnam in that it describes the city of Saigon extensively and portrays it as a harmonious society consisting of diverse individuals (Neilson 89). This contrasts with Euro-American portrayals that often reduce Asian locales to negative stereotypes, such as filthy villages waiting to be liberated by

American forces (Rambo 68). The text engages political issues of literary authority, ethnic identity, and the nature of representation within a cosmopolitan framework. Nevertheless, on the other hand, his narrative remains loaded with stereotypical depictions of Vietnam/Asian women in its representation.

Popular representations of the Occident often have gendered notions of the exotic and foreign, and the protagonist of this short story is not an exception. 'Miss' Noi, whose full name remains undisclosed, initially worked as a prostitute in Vietnam, and she continues the same profession in America. In the U.S., she dances naked at a club and later engages in sexual encounters with men at her apartment in exchange for money. The text repeatedly emphasizes how many men go out of their way to see Miss Noi again. Her inner monologue, depicting how "I am a dancer in a bar on Bourbon Street, and everybody likes me to stay a Vietnam girl" (Butler), conjures the exoticism of Asian women as Noi's primary selling point. In this aspect, Butler's story affirms Orientalist discourse by pronouncing the feminine allure of the Occident and Self-Orientalism, primarily through the first-person protagonist's voice. An event in the story where Miss Noi meets Mr. Fontenot for the first time further affirms this discourse.

> "You come often and see me dance and buy me drinks, okay?"
> "You look different," he says.
> "Miss Noi is a Vietnam girl. You never see that before."
> "I seen it," this man says. "I was in Vietnam."
> Many men say they were in my country, and they always sound funny, like they have a nasty secret or a sickness that you should be careful not to catch. Sometimes they call it "Nam," saying that word with broken glass in their voice or saying it through their noses, and their noses wrinkle up like the word smells when it comes out. (Butler 54)

This passage underscores the affirmation of Orientalist discourse, emphasizing the exotic nature attributed to Miss Noi, who does not only acknowledge but also embraces the "Vietnam girl" stereotype. Furthermore, the passage highlights the condescending notion of referring to Vietnam simply as "Nam," particularly in historical wartime circumstances. This abbreviation carries a sense of discomfort and disdain, reflecting the complicated Western relationship with Vietnam during the war (Clayton 192). To rephrase, reading "Fairy Tale" underlines how Butler affirms Western perception of the East through Orientalism and Self-Orientalism. This effect is achieved through the story's stereotypical portrayal of exoticism and

the female protagonist's Self-Orientalizing as a Vietnam girl in the United States.

Conclusion

The discourse of Southeast Asian postcolonial literature contextualizes the polemics concerning how to preserve cultural authenticity and making narratives accessible to a broader audience, especially regarding translation into English. This balance is characterized by the infusion of local dialects, place names, and historical events into the stories, enriching them with cultural depth while potentially challenging readers unacquainted with the specific context. Translators play a pivotal role in bridging cultural gaps by employing explanatory endnotes to facilitate cross-cultural understanding, thus serving as a conduit for preserving authenticity and ensuring global accessibility in postcolonial narratives. We have argued that some translations might hinder readers' immersion due to untranslated words, while other translations enhance the reading experience by providing relevant cues and contexts.

In the analysis, we discuss the themes of authenticity, appropriation, Orientalism, and self-Orientalism in postcolonial Asian literature through a comparative reading of three short stories. Self-Orientalism, as the deliberate adoption of Western depictions of the non-West by non-Western individuals and institutions, prompts a critical examination of how these narratives intersect with issues of authenticity and accessibility. Through case studies like Consorcio Borje's "Big Sister," Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Jongos + Babu," and Robert Olen Butler's "Fairy Tale," we explore the interplay of identity and representation in a world shaped by historical power dynamics and cultural exchange. While these stories offer glimpses of cultural authenticity, they also reveal instances of self-Orientalism and Orientalist tendencies. The analysis of three Southeast Asian short stories problematizes the intricate dynamics of authenticity, appropriation, Orientalism, and self-Orientalism in postcolonial literature.

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Social World Order in the Artistic World of Russian Burlesque in the 60-70s of the Eighteenth Century

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Abstract The study is mainly based on the material of Russian burlesque poetry in the 60s and early 70s of the eighteenth century. The fact that a new type of literary character (a marginal) appears in the Russian literature is being established. This marginal hero tells us about deep changes in artistic representations about the social world order. This hides a nascent understanding of mobility and variability of the social world order, which is not observed in previous Russian literature. The purpose of our study is to conceptually describe the model of the social world order in Russian literary burlesque works in the 60-70s of the eighteenth century as a result of a great change in the artistic picture of the world during this historical period. The theoretical significance of the work lies in the justification of the fact that a fundamentally new type of character for the Russian literature is formed in the Russian burlesque poetry in the 60-70s of the eighteenth century. It is a marginal hero, who differs in its values and motives of its actions. It seems to be important for understanding and describing the deep processes that determine the growth vector of the Russian literary process of the era. The work makes a contribution to the formation of different approaches to the description of specific mechanisms for changing the artistic world picture in the historical process with the help of local material.

Keywords the Russian literature; the eighteenth century; a comic poem; the world picture; a marginal hero[1]

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Introduction

The period of the 60s and early 70s in the eighteenth century was marked in the Russian literature with the appearance of a new and very bright phenomenon, burlesque poetry. The study is based on its material. The most systematic information related to the history of this genre is presented by Tomashevsky B.V. in the collection *An Ironic and Comic Poem* (Tomashevsky); various issues of theoretical, literary and historical nature are covered in the dissertation of Nikolaev N.I. (Nikolaev 1986), in the book by Ermolenko G.N. *The Russian Comic Poem of The Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries and its Western European Parallels* (Ermolenko), the monograph of Vacheva A.I. *The Poem-Burlesque in the Russian Poetry of the Eighteenth Century* (Vacheva), as well as in the study of Kazakova L.A. *The Genre of a Comic Poem in the Russian Literature of the Second Half of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: Genesis, Evolution, Poetics* (Kazakova).

Actually burlesque works in the era of classicism initially announced themselves in France. They were based either as "some parodies on the principle of a travestic reduction of the elevated subject of a heroic epic" (Prutskov 608), or in the form of "using the attributes and the style of an elevated heroic epic in relation to a trivial everyday situation" (Prutskov 608). Two of the above-mentioned techniques in the history of literature were given names of burlesque and travesty.

Sumarokov A.P. presented a theoretical description of both types of burlesque in Russia in the poetic treatise *The Guidance to Those Who Want to be Writers* (Sumarokov, *Poems* 123). For a long time the research literature devoted to the Russian comic poem has focused on the issues related to the understanding of the stylistic processes of the Russian literary era as well as the issues of literary and social and political polemics. However, in the studies of recent decades, the fact that in the Russian comic poem they stop to see only the product of the literary struggle and polemics of the era deserves special attention. The researchers are increasingly confident that it is distinguished by "an independent image object" that the previous

Russian literary tradition did not know earlier. That new vector in understanding that literary phenomenon identified itself both in the study of Kazakova L.A. and somewhat earlier in the study of Nikolaev N.I.

It is obvious that the characters of the heroes of the Russian comic poem in the 60s-70s of the eighteenth century differ from the characters of their European predecessors. The heroes of the poem *The Lectern* by N. Boileau are a prelate and psalmist of one of insignificant churches. There is a quarrel between them about where the church table (a lectern) should stand. From the point of view of hierarchical ideas of the era of classicism, these are undoubtedly base heroes, who, however, have a completely definite social status. The discrepancy between the subject and the style of presentation gives rise to a comic effect in the work.

The heroes of P. Scarron (*Typhon, or Gigantomachy*) are Olympian gods and titans, the representatives of the sacred world, the highest instance in the ancient hierarchy. The English poet A. Pope in *The Stolen Curl* depicts the mores of the elite aristocratic circle - the English salon of the eighteenth century. The card game lomber, a typical element of the salon life, is turned here into a means of winning the “lady of the heart” and is contrasted with noble knightly fights in this capacity. The substitution of knightly tournaments with salon flirting creates a background to the sophisticated irony of A. Pope. This is a mockery of the rights of modern nobility. The social status of the heroes of *The Stolen Curl* is clearly defined: they are representatives of the highest level of the social hierarchy.

The Russian burlesque poetry in the 60s and 70s of the eighteenth century does not allow establishing the social belonging of its heroes with the same certainty. The prototype of *The Ode to the Fist Fighter* by Barkov I.S. could be the kabatsky yaryzhka and Count Grigory Orlov, the Catherine's favorite and a great lover of fistfights. And the hero of Maykov's poem *Elisey, or Irritated Bacchus* so easily and rapidly changes his place, his way of life as well as the profession that it is simply not possible to talk about his social status. It is impossible to say anything definite, except that he is a card player even about the hero of the *The Lomber Player* by Maykov V.I.

The uncertainty of the social conditions of the hero of the Russian burlesque poetry is his distinctive feature against the background of similar examples of the European poetry.

What was the reason for the birth of the Russian burlesque? The answer to this question is most often sought in the literary and social conjuncture of Russia in the 60s and 70s of the eighteenth century. Tomashevsky B.V. considers that the reason for the emergence of the comic genre in the Russian literature lies in the surface

of the intra-literary struggle of the era. He emphasizes that the date of occurrence of the first Russian ironic and comic poem (*The Lomber Player* by Maykov V.I.) coincides with the enthronement of Catherine II.

In the above-mentioned work, Kazakova L.A. also points to a fierce literary debate as the reason for the introduction of a comic poem in the Russian literature. The very fact is that the author singled out two types of Russian comic poems ("base" and "salon" ones), which is the key idea of the proposed historical and literary concept, in understanding their interaction with each other in various periods. There is an attitude to the description of purely literary, style processes as the reason that generates some interest in a comic poem in the Russian literature.

In our opinion, some interest in this genre during the reporting period of history is based on the fundamental process of changing the artistic world picture in that era. It was that profound change that required the search for new artistic solutions, which were adequate to that process. We believe that fundamental historical changes in the Russian artistic worldview had begun before the appearance of the burlesque poetry. And its birth in the Russian literature was due to that process.

The Social World Model in the Russian Literature in the 40s and Early 50s of the Eighteenth Century

In the artistic world created by Lomonosov M.V. all the social elements are built into the religious and ethical vertical as well as they are subordinate to basic ideas that form a single hierarchical system. At the same time, it goes without saying that there have been some changes in the approaches. Already in the times of Peter, the artistic concept of the world dominating in secular literature begins to feel the essential role of something "accidental,"meaning what is not defined in the world by divine providence or by the logic of preset events. It has become one of the most significant discoveries of the era: some space where there is no higher predestination has been found.

Something "random" as a systemic factor of everything external to the hero of the world destroyed the model of the universe traditional for the Russian Middle Ages and brought it out of its common balance. The world whose concept allowed the presence of something "accidental,"excluded God from it in that way but it could not be indisputably accepted in conditions when traditional religious and ethical beliefs maintained the enormous power of their influence on human consciousness. However, it does not mean at all that the sacred component has disappeared in the new artistic picture of the world. It can only be about changing its position in the structure of new ideas.

The new concept of statehood actively forming in the era of Peter the Great

noticeably transformed the system of Russian ideas about the class structure of the society. The nobility as the dominant class was assigned the obligation to serve the Fatherland. The necessity of a new identity was determined by completely new tasks set by the era.

It is against this background that the Lomonosov model of the world is gaining special historical relevance. Lomonosov M.V. makes his artistic world harmonic and harmony becomes the main characteristic of his world image, which determines the style and ideological structure of Lomonosov's artistic world. Everything is thought out here and there is no chance and sporadic. The agreed elements are added together into a single system. The organic integrity of being in the artistic literature before Lomonosov turned out to be beyond rational knowledge. The world harmony was thought to be preinstalled and incomprehensible, while Lomonosov, insisting on the integrity and epiphany of the world, at the same time recognizes its cognoscibility.

The unique position of the scientist found in Lomonosov's poetry made it possible to interpret the nature of something "accidental" in the world as the expressions of subjective views of a "mortal person" and allowed to find the most elevated meaning and its integration into the global world order in each coincidence.

The predominance of causal relations in the concept of Lomonosov's world is mentioned in many scientific works devoted to the literary heritage of the Russian poet.

The world of Lomonosov's ode represents the unity of sacred meanings, goal-settings and a social order. Their hierarchical subordination creates a sense of completeness of universal harmony. Thus, "random" is included in Lomonosov's concept of the world not as a factor in the world order, but as a way to emphasize the difference in the points of view on the world, their predetermined hierarchy. The strict hierarchy of the world, apparently, is an act of his harmony for Lomonosov M.V.

Lomonosov integrates a model of the social world order with its central issues (man and power, service and serving) into the organic and sacred hierarchy of the world. In the ideas of Lomonosov and in the practice of his era, the scientist whose position in the world is interpreted as being as close as possible to the position of the Creator is a serving person built into the state hierarchy and aimed at bringing practical benefit to the one who serves.

In solemn odes addressed to the successors to the throne, Lomonosov emphasizes the godly establishment of tsarist power. At the same time, he places strict requirements on the duties of the tsar. The solemn ode of Lomonosov M.V.

interprets the position of the autocrat on the Earth as a direct messenger of the Creator, his representative in the world. In the best Lomonosov ode, *The Ode on the Day of Her Majesty Empress Elizaveta Petrovna's Accession to the All-Russian Throne in 1747*, this direct participation of God in the structure of Russian life is presented as follows:

> Terrible with wonderful deeds
> The Founder of the World from of old
> With his own fates
> To glorify himself these days;
> Sent a Man to Russia,
> What has been unheard of for ages.
> Through all the obstacles He lifted
> The Head crowned with victories,
> Russia, condemned with rudeness,
> He raised it up to heaven. (Lomonosov 199-200)

Peter the Great, who is under discussion here, is, according to Lomonosov, the direct messenger of the Supreme Will, its representative on the earth. Through this "representation,"the sacred nature of his efforts to change the life of Russia is confirmed in the Lomonosov world. Further, the relay of Peter's affairs and therefore the function of "representation" of the higher powers are inherited by Catherine "Accepts them with her generous hand" (Lomonosov 141). And finally, Elizabeth becomes the next "representative" of God on the earth by inheritance:

> The Great Peter's Daughter
> Who exceeds the generosity of her father
> Makes Muses' satisfaction deeper
> And fortunately opens the door. (Lomonosov 202)

The continuity of power coming from God is an extremely important circumstance for Lomonosov. Therefore, he prescribes it in such detail.

A decade and a half later, in the *Solemn Ode…,* dedicated to the next empress, Catherine II, Lomonosov will return to the topic of inheritance of the "representative" role on the earth again:

> Heed all the limits of the world

And know what God can do!
Elizabeth was resurrected to us.... (Lomonosov 772)

In Lomonosov's concept, the social and global physical worlds represented in spiritual odes are connected. They have a single source (the Divine Will). Only in the social world order is it embodied through the "messenger" and the "representative" consistently embodying this will in earthly projects. The main task of the solemn ode is to indicate this "messenger,"which Lomonosov M.V. earnestly does in his different texts.

From a formal point of view, it is somewhat different, but, in fact, in the same conceptual vein, Sumarokov A.P., Lomonosov's contemporary, solves the issues. He quite often uses the technique of opposing a certain ideal world order, miraculously revealed to the author, to the realities of the Russian life familiar in its manifestations to every reader.

In the satire *The Choir to the Wrong Light* Sumarokov writes about the ideal ("overseas") state and the orders in it, worth of praise; he contrasts them to the disorders of the Russian life:

They do not take their skin off the peasants there,
The villages are not placed on the maps there,
People are not traded over the sea. (Sumarokov, *Selected Works* 280)

A special place in Sumarokov's heritage is occupied by his utopia *The Dream "Happy Society"* which was first published in 1759 in the magazine *A Hardworking Bee*. The author describes an ideal society that can only be seen in a dream: "I was in a dreamy country and considered the dreamy well-being in detail" (Sumarokov, *Dream* 33). A "great man,"a perfect ruler who takes care of the welfare of his citizens, rules the country. This ideal monarch rules graciously and fairly.

The following human vices are despised and condemned: parasitism, gambling (cards) and drunkenness. The artistic world modeling in the work of Sumarokov is based on the same principles, which the concept of Lomonosov is based on.

At the heart of the social world order is a sacred ideal by its nature. It is carried out in the real world only through the "messenger" and the "representative" of the higher forces, consistently realizing their will. But if a vicious and willful person takes its place, then the ideal of social harmony becomes unattainable. Sumarokov consistently implements this scheme in the tragedies, where a willful ruler frequently becomes the cause of disharmony in the world. The extreme

manifestation of this type of hero is Dmitry Pretender (tragedy *Dmitry Pretender*).

Both a positive character of Lomonosov's ode and a negative hero of Sumarokov's tragedy are included in the same system of value attitudes and meanings, although they belong to its various poles. The interconnectedness and interdependence of the world of something sacred and social form the foundation of this system. All this characterizes the artistic picture of the world, revealed in the work of the two largest writers of the era in the 40-50s of the eighteenth century.

The artistic world of Lomonosov is a unified world. It is clearly planned, it reports to one vertical of meanings. The concepts of good and evil as well as the actions of the character, which are united with sacred texts, prevail here, especially if this hero is entrusted with the burden of state power.

The next era in the Russian literature (the 60-70s of the eighteenth century) will make significant adjustments to the artistic picture of the world. The introduction of a new character here in the burlesque poetry of Maykov V.I. and Barkov I.S. radically changes the plan of the existing social world order, which seemed immutable in the conceptual decision of Lomonosov M.V. earlier.

Social World Order and Literary Character in the Comic Poem *The Lomber Player* by Maykov V.I.

The creation of the first Russian ironic and comic poem *The Lomber Player* brought its author (Maykov V.I.) success and fame among the reading public, although its position in the Russian historical and literary process of the era is still not completely clarified. Its role in its modern literary discourse remains obscure.

There was a prevalent interest in the household details of the era of Maykov V.I. (a card game and its role in the life of the Russian nobility) in the assessment of the interpreters of the poem of the twentieth century (Tomashevsky B.V., Bukovsky G.A., Kukulevich A.M., Lotman M.J., Zapadov A.V., Kazakova L.A.)

At the same time, the opinions of the researchers differ in the question if the author blames its character that is fully absorbed in gambling passions or not. However, the main feature of the Maykov's poem is hidden from the researchers in the very non-obviousness for the participants while searching for an answer to this question.

In recent decades, there has been a tendency to comprehend the place and role of the poem in the logic of the actual Russian historical and literary process. So, Kazakova L.A., as it has already been noted before, considers the Russian comic poem in its two varieties: “grassroots” and “salon” ones. In such kind of development, she discovers the originality of the Russian literary process. If the

researcher considers the later poem by Maykov V.I. *Elisey, or Annoyed Bacchus* to be "grassroots,"then *The Lomber Player* is referred to "salon" type. Moreover, here Kazakova L.A. sees the influence of A. Pope (Kazakova 253). The semantic settings of *The Lomber Player* by Maykov V.I. differ significantly from the settings of Pope's poem.

It is aimed at depicting the aristocratic pole of the social life of the society that is quite legal, but incomprehensible and inaccessible to the uninitiated, unelected people. Contrasting what is actually portrayed and what is "ideal" as something base and elevated underpins Pope's presented model of the world. However, in the Maykov's poem, as we have noted before, the unequivocal nature of such a contrast gave rise to great doubts among the researchers of the twentieth century who do not find "condemnation of card players" here (Zapadov 24).

Maykov has an obvious focus on the image of shadow, exotic and forbidden life of the Russian nobility that flows beyond the line of everything transparent and common. It is the life dominated by another language (the language of card players), other goals and meanings, other values and means of achieving them.

Maykov V.I. in his first comic poem *The Lomber Player* uses completely different approaches and principles of world modeling. According to external signs, it seems to repeat the settings of the European comic poem in the spirit of N. Boileau, telling us about the obvious base passions of the bomber player, the young nobleman Leander, in a sublime style:

> The spirit strives to sing the card hero,
> That deprived himself of peace for the game. (Maykov 55)

He has been playing cards for several days non-stop and he finishes by making mistakes and loses everything. And, tired of a long, unsuccessful game, the hero falls asleep and dreams about entering the underground kingdom, where the judges decide the fate of card players.

In the world of card passions and goal-settings, there are its heroes and its villains, their moral code and their impartial superior court. It generally exists as if it has been separated from a common life; it is a self-sufficient world with its own moral coordinate system. Its correlation with the world, for example, of Sumarokov's ideals and values is completely obvious even in details.

In the poem of Maykov V.I., the court is presented in the following characteristic:"Who will bring us into the underground kingdom, / Where virtues are rewards, evil is judgment" (Maykov 67). It also almost literally repeats the

Sumarokov's formula from his utopia *The Dream "Happy Society"*: "There is a reward for a virtue and an execution for lawlessness" (Sumarokov, *Dream* 34).

This coincidence tells us about the hidden polemic, which Maykov's poem is full of in relation to its modern literary mainstream. However, this polemic character does not find itself in the rearrangement of semantic accents, when everything base seems to be elevated as in European burlesque poetry, where changing poles does not change their systemic opposition itself.

The novelty of Maykov's approach is that beyond the world of the meanings and values, which are familiar to a reader, he discovers a completely different world, based on completely different principles of morality. The absence of signs of "condemnation" of the hero in the poem, which the researchers of the twentieth century drew attention to, is due precisely to this peculiar "bi-worldliness": the moral principles which are typical for one sphere of being lose their relevance when moving to another one.

In the Maykov's poem, Sumarokov's "ideal society" and the vicious world of card players are correlated (opposed to each other). But here these are not different poles (elevated/base) in a single value system (like Sumarokov's), but, in fact, they are different parallel worlds. In the world of Leander's dream, there are some ideas about elevated "service,"about what "a vice" is and about "a virtue" as well. But they are completely different than in the Sumarokov's world. This is the world living with its own independent values, the world beyond the common values and meanings, that is, a marginal world where a marginal hero has "settled down."

The first comic poem by Maykov V.I. *The Lomber Player* tests new approaches in artistic world modeling, which will be fully revealed at the next stage of Russian literary development, including the work of the poet himself.

The Model of the Social World in the Poetry of Barkov I.S. and the Poets of "Russian Barkoviana"

A kind of experience of frank and demonstrative transformation of Lomonosov's world picture is the poetry of Ivan Barkov - a unique figure for the Russian literature, who is worth of special attention. Barkov's poems strike us with an amazing combination of sarcasm, rudeness and foul language. He is considered to be the instigator of scabby poetry in the Russian literature.

From reliable sources it is known that Lomonosov M.V. during the work on *Russian History* asked the chancellery of the Academy of Sciences to send him a technical assistant. It was the time when the student Barkov was sent to him in order to rewrite the Lomonosov's manuscripts. So, Barkov I.S. became the student of M.V. Lomonosov.

Barkov I.S. is considered to be the main creator of a handwritten collection called *The Girl's Toy*. Although the texts included in its composition apparently belong not only to him but also to other creators of Barkoviana (Elagin I.P., Ruban V.G., Chulkov M.D.) including unknown authors. It contained more than a hundred poetic works.

The collection is preceded by the introduction *The Offering to Belinda*. And this is its very important component. It is the introduction that makes the collection a single and holistic text, not a mechanical combination of various works.

In the appeal to respectable Belinda, the character of A. Pope's poem *The Stolen Curl*, as it was noted by A. Plutzer-Sarno (2001): certain approaches to the perception of the text were laid down: as entertainment literature, pornographic literature, a remedy for loneliness, as a humorous text.

The fourth approach is indicated in the statement "But I see with this that you laugh internally..." (Barkov), and we can feel a certain orientation to the "ridiculous" origin, to the fact that there is a humorous text in front of its reader in fact. In our opinion, the introduction indicates another very important focus of the compiler—on the non-public nature of the presented literary texts, their relevance and functioning in a closed social group that accepts those moral principles, which seriously conflict with generally accepted norms.

In the article by Makogonenko G.P. *The Enemy of Parnassky Ties*, which had presented the only scientific analysis of the *The Girl's Toy* for a very long time, the contents of that collection and the works of its main author, Barkov I.S., were assessed solely as a parody of the genres of Russian classicism. The comic effect was achieved by contrasting the elevated poetic style with extremely base themes.

A very fruitful thought of the researcher about the role of depicting "new aspects of life" in Russian literature according to Makogonenko comes down to the idea of depicting "common phenomena" from the life of "ordinary people." At the same time, the researcher does not take into account the fact that both "common phenomena" and "ordinary people" are not rejected either by literary theory or by the practice of Russian classicism. And what the obvious originality of Barkoviana is remains unclear.

But the fact is that in the Barkov's world we do not find the "common phenomenon" and "the life of ordinary people" at all. First of all, these are forbidden topics and his characters are frank and daring destroyers of prohibitions. What Makogonenko G.P. considers to be some kind of weakness, some deviation from the poet's original intentions ("turned out to be able to create... only naturalistic and believable scenes"), was, in fact, a part of the poet's conscious attitudes and his

artistic strategy.

Barkov's statement "I despise wealth, glory, splendor and honor" (Makogonenko 39) is not a protest of a certain representative of lower social strata at all, as Makogonenko G.P. believes. In his message there is no desire for a revolutionary renewal of the world. He only says that the world does not come down to a well-known hierarchy of values.

It is everything forbidden, not base that makes up the content of Barkoviana; in other words, that is beyond the permissible line, which fits into the idea of something normal in the social world. At the same time, something "forbidden" is in some sense the world order that is parallel to the common (normal) one, focused on its values and authoritative judgments. It has its internal integrity. That is why *The Girl's Toy* relies on the entire genre arsenal of classicism (from odes to fables), although, in fact, it is focused on the same subject, and its poetry is primitive and of the same type in this quality.

In the genre system of Barkoviana tragedy also takes its rightful place, whose first two experiences of reposition *Ebihud* and *Durnosov and Farnos* are sometimes attributed to Barkov himself. The plot of *Ebihud* overlaps with *Khorev* by Sumarokov and stylistically relies on the tragedy *Tamira and Selim* by Lomonosov. From time to time, direct quotes from this work of Lomonosov are heard in the replicas of the heroes.

> Lomonosov's: "Tell me, my dear son, tell me everything in detail..." (Lomonosov 360).
> Barkov's: "Tell us, a faithful slave, tell us everything in detail!" (Barkov 252).

Or, for example, Lomonosov describes the beginning of a new day in *The Ode to the Day of the Accession to the Throne of Empress Elizaveta Petrovna of 1748*:

> The dawn with a scarlet hand
> From the morning calm waters
> Leads with the sun
> A new year of your empire.
> Blessed beginning for
> You, the Goddess, shone. (Lomonosov 215)

A very close description in the Barkov's ode is proposed in the key of "forbidden topics":

From the Calm Waters of the Morning
The dawn on a scarlet chariot
Febov shows us the sunrise,
Holding his b... in the right hand,
And pulls the Feb's d... to the pont,
So that it lights up our horizon,
We all rejoice in its brilliance. (Barkov 50)

For example, in the ode to *Bacchus* Barkov's poetic delight is led by the very fact of some changes in the world order, a deviation from what is perceived as a social norm:

The source of much kindness,
Suddenly making up swearing and peace,
From small you make a great,
And change your sackcloth with a tunic. (Barkov 97)

Another ode that lacks foul language is *The Ode to the Fist Fighter*. A connoisseur and frequent participant in fistfights between regulars of taverns, Barkov managed to vividly and colorfully convey the mood of the two fighters overshadowed by alcohol and fury:

A scythe stepped on a hard stone,
A dock stepped on a dock here,
The fury and flame are glittering in their eyes
Like both terrible lions roar.... (Barkov 87-88)

There are no negative connotations in the description of an ordinary drunken fight. In *The Ode to the Fist Fighter* there are all the traditional elements of the odic composition; however, instead of Parnas, a tavern is mentioned, and instead of a lira, "duda" and "balalaika" sound, which find themselves in the hands of authoritative ancient poets:

Homer, with your balalaika
And you, Virgilishka, with the dooda
With a quarrelsome Trojan Greek gang

Were fighting as hard as the chickens in front of the wall. (Barkov 83)

The burlesque poetic technique used in the works of Barkov I.S. and his supporters ("Russian Barkoviana") is aimed at establishing a kind of border between various world orders found in a social life. The Lomonosov and Sumarokov's model, based on the ideal whose origins lie in the field of sacred meanings and values, is not rejected in the poetry of Barkov I.S. But it stops to be perceived by him as the only possible in the world. According to Barkov, there is a different life beyond the line of this social life. It is different in its ideological and semantic characteristics, with its heroes and its constitution. It is absolutely real, although fundamentally incompatible with the Lomonosov and Sumarokov's social model, which is beyond its scope and indicated by the prohibition stamp. However, it is important for the Barkov's world modeling that the introduction of this forbidden sphere in his artistic picture of the world changes the content of the Lomonosov and Sumarokov's model that was original for him. The ideal underlying it stops to be considered as the only possible foundation of the social world order.

Its noticeable desacralization occurs, a transition from the position of a moral imperative to something that positions itself as a social "norm" is taking place. And everything that finds itself beyond the line of this norm is considered to be marginal. The phenomenon of this marginal world and its marginal hero in the poetry of Barkov is due to this extremely important process for the history of the Russian literature of the eighteenth century.

The Social World Order and Literary Character in Maykov's Poem *Elisey, or Irritated Bacchus*

The poem by Maikov V.I. *Elisey, or Irritated Bacchus* has been in the center of attention of the researchers of the Russian literature in the 60s and 70s of the eighteenth century for a long time as one of the most original examples of travestic poetry. However, when creating the poem, Maykov undoubtedly departs from the traditions of the European understanding of the genres of burlesque and travesty, at least from those ones that identified themselves in the French literature in the eighteenth century.

In the research literature of the twentieth and the beginning of the 21st centuries the work of Maykov was considered to be one of the first Russian poems in the genre of burlesque ironic and comic poem. For some literary scientists (Zapadov 1966), the poem, full of humor and satire, plain and vulgar vocabulary, was created only to shock and overwhelm a decent reader.

Directly, the problem of the originality of the artistic world of *Elisey* by Maykov was first identified in the work of Zapadov A.V., who put a protester, a rebellious hero from the "social bottom" at the center of his historical and literary concept. Many modern researchers, who saw Maykov's satire from time to time turning into a political pamphlet aimed at exposing the ruling elite, supported this interpretation of *Elisey*.

Elisey by Maykov in this context has the features of a Protestant hero rebelling against an unfairly arranged world. This point of view requires some clarification today. What sorrows does Elisey face? Who does he enter into conflict with, showing his protest social position? Who are they, these authorities preventing the "happiness" of the hero from the "bottom"?

He is an owner of a drinking establishment, on whose head Elisey breaks a beer mug, the head of the Kalinkin House, where promiscuous women stay under guard. It is the head of the guard, who, seeing Elisey dressed as a girl in the chambers of his cohabitant, orders to take him under arrest. Or the merchant who the hero of the poem enters into fist fights at the drinking house with.

Can they all be referred to the social "top,"to the organizers of the social order that causes protest inside the hero? Obviously not, despite the fact that Maykov clearly emphasizes the social inocrity of his hero in relation to all of them. However, this feature of him cannot be understood in the logic of contrasting the social "bottom" and the social "top."

Modern researchers analyzing the poem of Maykov V.I. tend to present it in the context of similar topics that gave rise to that kind of poem in the Western European literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, Kazakova L.A. (2009) defines it as a product of the evolution of the comic poem genre, due to the interaction of its two manifestations in the Russian literature of the era ("salon" and "grassroots" poems). At the same time, she refers Maykov's texts to the samples of "grassroots" comic poems. And the fact that it combines the features of completely different phenomena of the French literary tradition of the seventeenth century fades into the background.

The stylistic game proposed by the French authors (N. Boileau and P. Scarron), meaning the change in the poles of "elevated" and "base" in fact, did not change the system of contrasting polar phenomena itself. Something "elevated" could appear to be "base" and vice versa, they changed places, but the border separating them did not collapse.

The hero of Maykov's poem as a representative of the "revengeful" Bacchus on the Earth should be perceived as part of the "elevated" world, although stylistically

reduced, and here the author of the poem follows the installations of P. Scarron. However, the “fist fighter” Elisha, who is simultaneously entering the fights, seems to be a “base” character for us, beaten in a high stylistic manner. All this undoubtedly introduces chaos into the elevated or base system of values, breaks down the semantic boundaries that divide them.

Maykov's poem and its hero represent the irrational aspects of a social life in a ridiculous form, everything that does not fit into any systemic ideas about it and that is fundamentally out of system. At the same time, we note that any ideas about the social “bottom” are of systemic nature and are correlated with the ideas about the social “top,”which they make up this stable system with. A “base” hero does not destroy the established (dominant) social world order, but, on the contrary, asserts it by the fact of its existence. Elisey is not just a hero from the social “bottom.” During the poem, he constantly changes his social status, but the vector of his movement is directed differently. This is a vector, in the strict sense of the word, of a limitless social decline as it flows beyond any conceivable line of regulatory and understandable moral restrictions for its reader. This, in our position, is one of the first frank marginal characters in the Russian literature. The plot of the poem is built in such way in order to show us a scene of its marginalization.

Already the first scene takes place in the tavern, where he defiantly refuses to pay for a drink, shows him as a person who frankly avoids following any social norms of behavior. The story of his life is a typical story of marginalization of the villager and his loss of his social status. In the ideas of the middle of the eighteenth century, a coachman, who became our hero at the very beginning of the poem after his escape from Zimogorye, is a profession that does not determine the social status of a person at all. It rather tells us about his uncertainty. His occupation is a seasonal work of peasants outside their constant place of living. They had to leave their villages to do it.

But it is not the extreme degree of his moral and social decline. Being under the cover of an invisible hat given to him by the Olympic gods, he finally falls out of the sphere of any social responsibility. Absolute independence from the conditions regulating the social life is what characterizes the position of the hero and the motives of his actions from the moment of his stay in the walls of the Kalinkin House. Although in fairness it should be mentioned that he never coincided unequivocally with his social role - he also parted with it very easily.

Elisey is unpredictable in his actions not only for chumak, but also for his family: his mother and wife, who he constantly throws to her fate. He is unpredictable for the head of the Kalinkin House. The departure from that place

was not determined by any adequate reasons. He was unpredictable even for the Olympian gods. The total unpredictability of Elisey as well as the inability to explain the motives of his behavior with socially determined meanings and goals are his fundamental features.

Social uncertainty is a feature of Maykov's hero. He lives by some of his ideas about happiness and luck, which do not coincide with the generally accepted ones, even if we take into account the thesis about his historical mobility (Nikolaev 2008). The greatest punishment for him (it overtakes the hero at the end of the poem) is his violent socialization. Thus, Maykov's hero is persistently discharged as an asocial type of person, exotic in his fate, habitat and life attitudes. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the author has no intention of condemning his character. On the contrary, sometimes we even feel frank sympathy for his "feats." In fairness, it should be noted that medieval Russian literature also knew Kabatsky regulars, but they invariably became the subject of condemnation there. The model of the world, which those characters fit into, was built considering the Christian commandments. Everything that followed them was evaluated positively; everything that contradicted them was condemned.

The artistic accents placed in the poem by Maykov V.I. open up completely new opportunities for literary modeling of the social world. His hero does not belong to the social "bottom,"as many commentators of this text believe: he is driven by the motives that do not fit into any known (accepted) norms of social behavior in his actions. This is a hero living outside, beyond the line of social foundations, so to say, a marginal hero. The introduction of this type of character, as we have already noted, shades the concept of a social norm by the fact of its existence, as marginal things in the social world are what is beyond the normal line. "Marginal" things in the social world and a "social norm" are becoming new tools for the world modeling in the poem by Maykov V.I.

Conclusions

The study, based on the analysis of literary monuments of the burlesque literature of the 60-70s of the eighteenth century, allows us to claim that this period in the history of the Russian literature is characterized by deep changes in the artistic picture of the world.

The main vector of these changes is due to the desacralization of the ideas about the social world. The model of the social world order that prevailed earlier in the Russian literary consciousness is based on the ideal that goes back to sacred meanings and values. Following this ideal or deviating from it determined the

place of a literary character in the socially significant hierarchy of the world. This principle is followed when creating the works of various genres, which are relevant to the literature of that era.

The formation in the Russian literature in the 60-70s of the eighteenth century of new genre phenomena (the burlesque poetry) was accompanied by the introduction of a fundamentally new type of a literary hero (a marginal hero). The very fact of its introduction tells us about a great change in the social model in literary representations. A marginal hero is the bearer of an alternative point of view on the social world order. Its appearance in the Russian literature contradicts the statement of the only possible concept of the world order based on a certain ideal. This marginal character actualizes the idea of a social norm in the literary consciousness. It replaces this inviolable ideal and is associated with an understanding of mobility and variability of the social world order.

The analysis of artistic texts of the Russian burlesque poetry in the 60s and early 70s of the eighteenth century allows us to claim that sometimes despite their significant differences, they all have some features that unite them. The focus of the authors of this poetry is on those aspects of the social life, which the stamp of forbidden topics is "imposed" on, or those ones that are assessed as being beyond the line of a social norm. The characters of these works are different in the uncertainty of their social status as well as the motives of their actions do not fit into the prevailing ideas about morality.

Their images are realistic, but at the same time incompatible with the ideas about this social order. The artistic world of the Russian burlesque poetry includes marginal elements in its model. The problem of changing the model of the social world order in the Russian burlesque literature has been touched upon in the study for the first time, as well as the problem of a marginal hero who declares itself as an independent literary type here.

Russian burlesque works of the 60-70s of the eighteenth century allows us to think about the concept of a social binary world which is embodied in them, which assumes the existence of another sphere where the influence of these values and meanings is not necessary along with the social sphere of life, built on the basis of sacred values and meanings.

The introduction of this marginal character tells us about the possibility of a different social world order beyond the dominant ideas concerning this subject. An emerging understanding of the mobility and variability of the social world order hides under this fact. It was not admitted by previous Russian literature. These are completely new artistic performances with far-reaching historical consequences.

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Shylock's Ethical Choice of "a Pound of Flesh" and Racial Identity Reconstruction in *The Merchant of Venice*

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Abstract *The Merchant of Venice* focuses on the issue of racial identity reconstruction through the contract of "a pound of flesh", intertwining with economic, legal, and religious concerns associated with that identity. The development of the emerging capitalist economy in Venetian society prompted Shylock to become a usurer. Shylock's ethical identity as a usurer enables him to leverage the power of money to reinforce his interdependent relationship with Christians, striving for a place and means of survival within Venetian society. However, economic and religious conflicts between Jews, represented by Shylock, and Christians have led to deep-seated animosities. Therefore, in order to avenge Antonio and, by extension, to retaliate against the entire Christian society, Shylock insists on claiming a pound of Antonio's flesh under the guise of honoring the contract and the law. The "pound of flesh" choice essentially symbolizes the commodification and objectification of individuals against the backdrop of capitalist emergence and social transformation, while also representing Shylock's efforts and attempts to reshape his personal and racial identity.

Keywords *The Merchant of Venice*; Shylock; ethical choices; a pound of flesh; identity reconstruction

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Introduction

Written around 1596-1597, *The Merchant of Venice* is a controversial comedy from Shakespeare's early days. For a long time, the play has become a hot spot in the study of Shakespeare's plays because of its rich economic, political and cultural

connotations, semantic fuzziness and contradictions. The play's multiple themes are highly summarized by James Shapiro, who argues that the play is not only a play about religious rituals and racial significance, but also a play about "usury, marriage, homosexuality, tolerance, trade, cross-dressing" (121). Although the play deals with multiple themes, this paper argues that the play mainly explores issues of ethical choices and identity reconstruction.

From the late sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century, British society was in a period of political, economic, and cultural transformation, gradually transitioning from a society based on class and status to a society more dependent on money and property. This transformation means a change in social and moral norms. In a society with constantly changing economy and culture, people's social status and hierarchical concepts have also been challenged by the development of the emerging capitalist economy. Identity is constrained by economic forces and increasingly becomes an inseparable whole from each other. In the context of this societal transformation, the issue of identity reconstruction influenced by economic and religious factors becomes a focal point in *The Merchant of Venice*. As Avraham Oz remarks, "The question of identity looms constant through the major tensions, conflicts, and crises informing *The Merchant of Venice*" (94-95). This article intends to place *The Merchant of Venice* in the historical context of the rise of emerging capitalism, using the "pound of flesh" contract as the main clue to analyze the close relationship between economy, law, and identity in depth, in order to elucidate the identity anxiety that was prevalent in early modern British society and its underlying economic and religious reasons.

Shylock's Ethical Identity and the "Pound of Flesh" Contract

Shylock possesses a dual ethical identity as both a moneylender and a Jew. As a Jew living in a Christian society, he is marginalized due to the "devilish" image that comes with his racial identity. However, the development of the emerging capitalist economy in Venetian society provides Shylock with a space for survival, prompting him to become a usurer. Economic status determines identity status. Shylock, with the support of money, is able to establish himself and maintain his place within Venetian society.

Shylock's Jewish ethical identity makes him an otherness in Venetian society. According to Jeremy Hawthorn, "To characterize a person, group, or institution as 'other' is to place them outside the system of normality or Convention to which one belongs oneself" (249). Shylock's "otherness" in Venetian society is primarily cultural, specifically derived from his ethnic and religious identity—his Jewish

identity. As a Jew living in a Venetian society dominated by Christians, Shylock is inevitably constrained and marginalized by social traditional norms and mainstream ideology. It should be noted that although Shakespeare set his play in Venice, the ethical, political, and economic order of life in the text alludes to the English society of the Renaissance. Jews were rarely seen in Elizabethan England (they did not return to England until Cromwell's reign, after being expelled by Edward I in 1290). But Jewish identity carries historical and cultural imprints. The Jewish image of the "big-nosed, red-winged monster" has long been popular:

> The Jew of medieval myth was not just a devil in some abstract or generalized sense. His devilishness could take ail to specific forms. He was a poisoner, as we have seen, and a sorcerer, he was accused of committing ritual murder, crucifying children and desecrating the Host. (Gross 17)

As a Jew, Shylock is also seen as a symbol of evil, and his servant Launcelot comments on him: "The Jew is the very devil incarnation" (2.2.25).[1] Shylock's social identity as a Jew and the "devil" image that came with that identity determines that he will not be accepted by the mainstream society in Venice and will inevitably be discriminated against and rejected by Christians. This can be seen in his indictment of Antonio, "He hates our sacred nation, and he rails (even there where merchants most do congregate)" (1.3.46-47). Paradoxically, Shylock's identity as a Jew both subjects him to discrimination and exclusion by Christians and positions him as an indispensable figure in Venetian society, as his Jewish identity enables him to assume another social role—that of a usurer.

The development of emerging capitalism in Venetian society, along with his Jewish identity determines Shylock's another ethical identity—usurer. Venice is a capitalist society dominated by the emerging bourgeoisie. In this commercially or production-based society, money lending is an inevitable commercial activity essential to the development of the capitalist economy and serves as an important force in the rise of emerging capitalism. Although the practice of interest-bearing loans has existed since ancient times, the issue of the legitimacy of interest has always been controversial. In 1571, the English Parliament finally legislated the interest rate and made a clear distinction between legitimate interest and usury.

1 The number of acts, sessions and lines indicated after the citation are based on Ann Thompson, David Scott Kastan & Richard Proudfoot, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare Completed Works* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011). The following citations are only marked with page numbers and will not be explained individually.

Therefore, from the legal perspective, when the loan interest rate exceeds the maximum interest rate allowed by law, it is considered usury; From the moral standpoint, Usury is an immoral economic behavior in which usurers take advantage of others' predicament to gain profits; From a Christian point of view, lending with interest is condemned as an immoral, even evil act, because usury contradicts the Christian doctrine of "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:19). Therefore, for Antonio and other Christians, usury is not a desirable economic behavior, while lending money without interest is an ethical choice. However, from the economic point of view, usury is the inevitable product of the commercialization trend of the Renaissance era and the development of the new capitalist economy. The social and economic development of Venice is also inseparable from the existence of loan capital. In this ethical and economic context, for Shylock, there are two other reasons for choosing usury: On the one hand, as a member of the marginalized Jewish community living in a Christian society, Shylock is unable to compete with the Venetian merchants who are protected by political, economic, and legal means. On the other hand, the Old Testament, which is central to Judaism, does not prohibit Jews from lending at interest to non-Jews. Therefore, the Jewish community, represented by Shylock, naturally becomes the usurers in Venetian society, "it is not so much the Jews who chose the usury business as the usury business chose the Jews" (Li Jiang 114). The ethical identity of usurers determines the significant role of Jewish characters like Shylock in the socio-economic development of Venice and their inseparable relationship with Christian merchants like Antonio.

Shylock's social status as a usurer enabled him to leverage the power of money to strengthen the interdependent relationship with Christians and to vie for his status and space for survival within Venetian society. For Shylock, a Jew who makes a living as a usurer, money is not only a means to maintain his personal livelihood, but also an important resource for maintaining his ethical identity and ensuring his social standing. When Antonio guarantees a loan for Bassanio from Shylock, despite the animosities between them, Shylock still decides to grant his request. Shylock's decision to lend to Antonio is based on the following three points: First, Shylock seeks to ease the conflict between Jews and Christians by lending money to Antonio; Second, he wishes to demonstrate the generosity and kindness of the Jews, as Shylock states, "I would be friends with you, and have your love, Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with" (1.3.137-138); Third, by lending money to assist Antonio, Shylock can help the Christians — Bassanio needs financial support to court Portia — while also showcasing his importance as a moneylender

in Venetian society. This serves to uphold his identity as a usurer and fight for his status and rights as an alien in Christian society. Therefore, Shylock signs a loan contract with Antonio, stipulating that if Antonio fails to repay the loan on time, he must "have his fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of his body" (1.3.149-150). By having Antonio sign this contract, Shylock intends to demonstrate that he is not the profit-driven, malicious person depicted by Christians, but rather someone willing to extend a helping hand and provide assistance in critical moments. For Shylock, the contract clause regarding a pound of flesh penalty is merely his jest, as a pound of flesh from a person holds no value for him and he only wishes to show that he genuinely wants to assist them. Shylock states: "A pound of man's flesh taken from a man, is not so estimable, profitable neither as flesh or muttons, beefs, or goats, —I say to buy his favor, I extend his friendship" (1.3.164-167). In fact, this "pound of flesh" contract serves as an important bargaining chip for Shylock against the Christians. It intensifies the conflicts and tensions within the drama, promotes the development of the following plot, and foreshadows Shylock's revenge and racial identity reconstruction.

"A Pound of Flesh" Choice and the Name of the Law

When Antonio's merchant ship encounters misfortune at sea and cannot repay the loan on time, Shylock ostensibly uses the law as a weapon to assert his rights, insisting on taking a pound of Antonio's flesh in the name of upholding the contract. In reality, his true intention is to take this opportunity to end Antonio's life as an act of revenge, thereby achieving the goal of retaliating against the entire Christian society and reconstructing of his racial identity. Little does he realize that the law itself is an expression of the ideology of the ruling class and elite. Taking a pound of Antonio's flesh, while appearing to be Shylock's freedom protected by law, also becomes the basis for the law to punish him.

The elopement of his daughter Jessica with the Christian Lorenzo is the catalyst that prompts Shylock to demand a pound of flesh. For Shylock, his daughter is his own flesh and blood, a part of himself. Her marriage to a Christian and conversion to Christianity represents a betrayal of their race and religion. As Shylock says, "My own flesh and blood to rebel" (3.1.31), the elopement of his daughter with a Christian is a profound humiliation and injury to him. Graham Midgley argues that Jessica's flight is the key moment that ignites Shylock's desire for revenge. He points out that "because of Jessica's escape, everything Shylock values—his ethnic pride, the dignity of family life, and the sanctity of the bonds between family and ethnicity—has been undermined" (198). The flight of his daughter Jessica prompts

the eruption of long-suppressed religious and racial hatred within him. Shylock's attention thus begins to shift from his personal interests to the suffering of the Jewish race. At this moment, what Shylock desires more than anything is the power to control Antonio's fate and the superior position over the Christians, rather than wealth. Therefore, Shylock vows to take a pound of flesh from Antonio, declaring, "To bait fish withal,—if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge;" (3.1.49-50) He insists on abiding by the law and strictly fulfilling the stipulations of the contract—to take a pound of flesh from Antonio as punishment.

Shylock's demand to claim a pound of flesh according to the contract ostensibly adheres to the laws of Venetian society, seeking to assert his rightful claim. In reality, he wields the law as a weapon of vengeance against Antonio and the entire Christian society. Shylock is fully aware that "the foundation of law in Venetian society lies in the economy" (Bloom 14). Venice is a commercial city, and its prosperity and economic development require the law to embody objectivity and stability, upholding fundamental principles such as free competition, the supremacy of rights, and the freedom of contracts, while equally protecting individual rights. Therefore, when Salarino seeks the duke's intervention to alter the law to protect Antonio, Antonio bluntly stated, "The duke cannot deny the course of law: for the commodity that strangers have with us in Venice, if it be denied, will much impeach the justice of the state, since that the trade and profit of the city consisteth of all nations" (3.3.26-31). Subsequently, when Shylock and Antonio stand trial, Shylock invokes the positive development of Venice's economy to insist on the enforcement of the punishment, exercising his right to claim a pound of flesh from Antonio. He threatens the duke: "If you deny it, let the danger light upon your charter and your city's freedom!" (4.1.38-39) Shylock is convinced that his right to claim a pound of flesh will be protected by the law, not because Venetian society inherently understands that individual rights are the basis of legal legitimacy, but because of its economic development and policies. Therefore, Shylock has no doubt that the law will protect his ownership of a pound of flesh on Antonio. In fact, For Shylock, the pound of flesh represents both the dignity and social status of the Jewish community and the life of Antonio. His choice to claim a pound of flesh signifies his struggle for and defense of the dignity and status of the Jewish people, while also symbolizing his desire to take Antonio's life. Furthermore, the ownership of a pound of flesh symbolizes Shylock's control over Antonio. The choice to take a pound of flesh signifies Shylock's assertion of power over Christians at this moment. Ironically, while the law grants Shylock the right to claim a pound of flesh under the contract, it also serves as the basis for his legal punishment.

Shylock wields the law as a weapon, insisting on claiming a pound of flesh from Antonio, unaware that the law is a product of ideology. Ideology represents the values that govern society and reflects the interests and aspirations of specific groups (Hodge 12). The laws of Venetian society inevitably represent the interests of its Christian subjects. Shylock's choice to claim a pound of flesh exposes his purpose of killing Antonio and retaliating against the Christian society, which contradicts Christian interests and will therefore not receive legal support. Instead, it becomes the basis for legal sanctions and punishment against him. When Shylock insists on enforcing the punishment that threatens Antonio's life, Portia, disguised as a lawyer, turns Shylock's own weapon against him. She counters his strict adherence to the literal text of the law by pointing out, "This bond doth give thee here not jot of blood, The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh' [...]Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh, — Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more but just a pound of flesh" (4.1.304-324). She then cites a law favorable to Christians, which states:

> If it be proved against an alien,
> That by direct, or indirect attempts
> He seek the life of any citizen,
> The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive,
> Shall seize one half his goods, the other half
> Comes to the privy coffer of the state,
> And the offender's life lies in the mercy
> Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice. (4.1.347-354)

Obviously, this law safeguards the interests of Christians and upholds their rights. Rights are defined as "the qualification of a specific subject to make demands concerning a specific object that relate to their own interests or will" (Feng, 130). In essence, rights ultimately reduce to a form of "qualification" (Feng 130). The law cited by Portia applies to Christians, not to Jews. As a Jew, Shylock is excluded from the protections of this law. He has neither the right nor the entitlement to impose the punishment of claiming a pound of flesh from Antonio. On the contrary, Shylock's choice to claim a pound of flesh exposes his murderous intent and vengeful purpose, making him the target of the law's punishment.

The Ethical Essence of "Pound of Flesh" Choice and the Reconstruction of Racial Identity

Shylock seeks to leverage the law's fairness and justice to ensure his right to a

pound of flesh from Antonio, which effectively commodifies Antonio, thereby securing ownership over his body and life. This is part of Shylock's aim to assert dominance in Venetian society, reconstruct his own identity, and redefine his Jewish identity. Therefore, the choice of the "pound of flesh" reflects the ethical nature of people's attempts to reshape their identities through the power of money amid the backdrop of emerging capitalist economic development and social transformation.

The choice of the "pound of flesh" essentially represents the objectification and commodification of individuals against the backdrop of the rise of capitalism and social transformation. As a moneylender, Shylock refuses compensation equivalent to multiple times the principal amount and insists instead on ownership of a pound of flesh, essentially commercializing Antonio and using the purchasing power of money to exercise control over his body and life. By doing that, he aims at transferring the Jews from a long-standing position of being subjugated and oppressed to a dominant position of having the power of life and death over Christians. For Shylock, the pound of flesh is less a penalty for a defaulted loan than a high-priced commodity. The pound of flesh is essentially a metonym for Antonio's life and value. Scott notes that "Shylock's claim to the pound of flesh from Antonio effectively transforms the loan transaction into a commercial purchase" (290). Therefore, Antonio becomes a commodity with exchange value. Ironically, despite Bassanio's strong emphasis on the unique value of Antonio's life, which cannot be measured and exchanged in money, his actions contradict this and he attempts to "buy" Antonio back from Shylock. He first offers twice the total amount for Antonio's life, then offers "ten times the amount" (4.1.207). Ultimately, he even proposes to exchange "his own life, his wife, and the entire world" (4.1.280) for Antonio's life. However, Bassanio is unable to persuade Shylock to relinquish control over Antonio's life. Instead, the way he seeks to preserve Antonio's life through monetary means further reinforces the perception of Antonio and humanity itself as potential commodities.

Shylock emphasizes that the pound of flesh on Antonio is his own property, purchased with his own money. The concept of private property in capitalism originates from slavery. Shylock extends the notion of slavery in Venice to his claim of ownership over Antonio's body,

> You have among you many a purchas'd slave
> Which (like your asses, and your dogs and mules)
> You use in abject and in slavish parts,
> Because you bought them,

[...]
The pound of flesh which I demand of him
Is dearly bought, 'tis mine and I will have. (4.1. 90-100)

Shylock changed the ethical identity of himself and Antonio by comparing his ownership of Antonio's flesh to the ownership that a slave master has over a slave. Antonio becomes the slave purchased by Shylock, "The slave was a slave not because he was the object of property, but because he could not be the subject of property" (Patterson 28). As a slave of Shylock, Antonio loses control of his own life and freedom. And Shylock is no longer a marginalized group in a disadvantageous position, but a slave owner who occupies a dominant position. As Bailey puts it, Shylock reinterprets his identity and place in Venetian society "not by ethnicity or religion, but by what he owns" (18). What Shylock possesses—the "pound of flesh" on Antonio, not only represents Antonio's life but also symbolizes the desired equal social identity and rights of the Jewish community.

Moreover, the ethical choice of a "pound of flesh" is Shylock's violent accusation against the denial of humanity faced by Jews and a means of seeking racial identity recognition. Shylock asserts the humanity of the Jewish people, delivering a harsh condemnation of the injustices and inhumane treatment they have long endured:

Hath not a Jew eyes?
Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?
fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons,
subject to the same diseases,
healed by the same means,
warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?
[...]
If a Jew wrong a Christian,
What is his humility? revenge!
If a Christian wrong a Jew,
What should his sufferance be by Christian example?—
Why revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute,
and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.（3. 1. 54-67）

Shylock's vehement accusation aims to emphasize that Jews, like Christians, are also flesh-and-blood beings with emotions and desires. When Jews are treated

unjustly and subjected to humiliation, they also experience the desire for revenge. Desire is a fundamental physiological requirement and psychological activity that arises from instinct and is driven by human instincts or motivations. And Shylock's desire for revenge essentially stems from the ethical identity of the Jewish race, which has long been regarded as "non-human" (such as Antonio calling him a dog, Launcelot regarding him as a devil, etc.) and from their marginalized position of exclusion and humiliation. The choice of the "pound of flesh" is a concentrated manifestation of Shylock's vengeful desire arising from the long-standing injustices faced by the Jewish people. Through the execution of his revenge, Shylock intends to achieve two main objectives: firstly, through revenge to warn everyone that Jews and Christians are both human beings, a combination of human and animal factors[1]. When they suffer injustice and abuse, they also develop a desire for revenge, driven by free will[2]. Therefore, in order to maintain order and harmony in Venetian society, Jews should be treated equally; Secondly, killing Antonio would serve as a deterrent, establishing the authority of the Jewish race, upholding the dignity of the Jewish community, and elevating their status within Venetian society.

Although Shylock's ethical choice of "pound of flesh" fundamentally aims to reshape his self and racial identity, he does not recognize the essence of humanity from an ethical perspective, nor does he ethically resolve the issue of human identity. Because solving the issue of human identity ethically requires "not only distinguishing humans from beasts in essence, but also confirming human identity from values such as responsibility, obligation, and morality" (Nie 263). The ethical choice of "a pound of flesh", although in line with the laws of Venetian society, does not conform to ethical morality. Shylock's insistence on taking one pound of flesh on Antonio is essentially no different from that of a beast. Although Shylock's choice of "a pound of flesh" is not truly enacted, it is precisely the choice and persistence in taking the pound of flesh that prevent him from ethical confirmation of his identity as a human being, let alone reshaping the ethical identity of the Jewish race and elevating the social status of the Jewish people. On the contrary, driven by the irrational will of revenge, Shylock is punished by Venetian law for

1 "Human factor" is the ethical consciousness of a person, embodied by the human head, and its manifestation is in the form of rational will. "Animal factor" is the remnant of animal instincts in humans during the process of evolution, and its outward manifestation is in the form of natural will and free will. See Nie Zhenzhao. *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*. Beijing: Peking UP, 2014: 38-39.

2 [2] "Free will" refers to the unconstrained will of a person and is the outward manifestation of human desires. See Nie Zhenzhao. *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*. Beijing: Peking UP, 2014: 42, 282.

attempting to kill Christians. Punishment does not destroy his body but rather deals a blow to his spirit. Forced to convert to Christianity, Shylock not only fails to reshape his self and racial identity, but his racial identity has instead disintegrated and been deprived. As a result, the social identity and status of Shylock and the Jewish race were further marginalized.

Conclusion

Literature not only needs to point to texts and history but also to life and humanity itself, thereby fulfilling its moral teaching function. *The Merchant of Venice* introduces attention to ethical identity and the essence of humanity through the "pound of flesh" contract. A person's ethical identity determines their ethical choices, while those choices reflect his essence and have a significant impact on the shaping of his identity. As the initiator and executor of the "pound of flesh" contract, the choice Shylock makes to claim the flesh reflects his beastly nature. He is unable to ethically confirm his identity as a human being, let alone reshape his racial identity. At the end of the play, Shylock's response to being forced to convert to Christianity is, "I am content" (4.1.392), suggesting that the conflict between race and religion seems to be alleviated. However, the underlying issues of self-positioning and identity anxiety beneath Shylock's new identity remain unresolved. It is precisely these unresolved issues, along with the audience's multifaceted interpretations and paradoxical reflections on these questions, as well as the play's open-ended conclusion that imbue the drama with tension and leave considerable room for interpretation.

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The Theater of Resistance in Jordan: Jibrīl Al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat Zarīf Al-Tūl* (*Zarīf Al-Tūl's Alienation*) and Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead*

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Abstract The play *Tagrībat Zarīf al-Tūl* (*Zarīf al-Tūl's Alienation*) (1984) by the Jordanian playwright Jibrīl al-Sheikh is an exemplary model of the theater of resistance in Jordan. The main protagonist Zarīf al-Tūl resists the British Mandate for Palestine from 1922 to 1947 which endeavored to realize the Belfour Declaration in 1917, in which England promised to establish a national home for Jews in Palestine. Zarīf al-Tūl is a hero of resistance, who believes in armed resistance as a means of liberation from the British Mandate for Palestine, or in "violence," as termed by Frantz Fanon. Staging Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* (1936) (*Idfinū al-Mawtā*) at the University of Jordan in 1972 represents the cultural, political, and intellectual mood of Jordanian playwrights and directors, who advocated the necessity of resisting the injustice of wars and colonial politics. This paper aims to analyze the plays from a postcolonial vantage, examining the concept of resistance and bringing to light the experience of the Jordanian theater in addressing Arab regional concerns.

Keywords Jibrīl al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat Zarīf al-Tūl*; Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead*;

Jordanian theater; post-colonialism; resistance; Frantz Fanon; Edward Said

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Introduction: Jordanian Theater and the Search for a Theater

Professional theater in Jordan, albeit its early non-professional school attempts, and theatrical performances, was born as late as 1965. This way it came very late compared to other Arab countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. However, it aligned with the mainstream of Arab theater and added a significant complement to the Arab theater movement and culture in general.[1] It quickly responded enthusiastically to the cultural and political challenges and threats facing the Arab nation, such as the oppression of the late reign of the Ottoman Empire and the Western colonial conspiracies against the Arab world, in general, and Palestine, in particular, in the twentieth century, along with its engagement with local social and political concerns.[2]

1 In his book *al-Masraḥ fī al-Urdun* [*Theater in Jordan*] (Amman: Manshūrāt Lajnat Tārīkh al-Urdun, 1993), Mufeed Hawamdeh considers the year 1965 as a turning point in the history of Jordanian theater because it was the year, in which theater appeared as an independent institution of professional stage acting, direction, and drama writing (17).

2 See Hawamdeh, *al-Masraḥ fī al-Urdun* (Amman: Manshūrāt Lajnat Tārīkh al-Urdun, 1993), pp. 14-15.

According to Mufeed Hawamdeh, theater in Jordan, like the Arab theater in general, has developed through three stages: 1) Birth within "al-Tabaʿiyyah" (dependency) on the European theater. In this stage, the writers of the invaded cultures admire and look up to the invaders' literary achievements and imitate the form with total respect. 2) The stage of gathering a sense of nationalism and anxiety towards "al-Tabaʿiyyah," when writers remain bound to the colonizer's model, yet not without an aspiration, though weak, to develop a native counterpart to it. 3) The stage of independence of native literature from "al-Tabaʿiyyah."[1]These three stages of development are analogous to the three phases of "adopt," "adapt," and "adept," which Peter Barry considers as the phases of development of postcolonial literature (Barry 196). According to Barry, the "adopt" phase indicates the writer's acceptance of the European literary form because it has a "universal validity" (196). The "adapt" phase refers to the "partial rights of intervention in the genre" because writers in colonial/postcolonial contexts adapt the European literary form to their contents (196). The "adept" phase includes a "declaration of cultural independence," in which writers "remake" the European literary form to meet their local needs and subject matters (196).

Similarly, Frantz Fanon, an anti-colonial activist in his numerous writings, elucidates three stages of the development of resistance literature. Firstly, the stage of "full assimilation" to Western culture, values, and literature (Fanon 158-159). In this stage, originality is restricted to the imitation of Western literature and a total detachment from the colonized native culture. Here, the colonized writer's "inspiration" is not established yet because it remains European and connected to the "well-defined trend in metropolitan literature" (159). This stage of "full assimilation" of Western form is equivalent to Barry's "adopt" and "al-Tabaʿiyyah" stages. Secondly, the stage of "precombat literature," in which the colonized writer remains detached from his native cultural reality but tends to look back and remember the pre-colonial past by using the "borrowed aesthetic" (159). Nevertheless, at this stage, the colonized intellectual remains an "outsider" to his/her native culture and does not yet advocate resistance against the invading culture. He/she retrieves the pre-colonial memories of his/her native culture, which were not influenced by colonial thoughts and formulas. This stage is like the "adapt" phase and anxiety towards "al-Tabaʿiyyah" because it includes a slight break from the "full assimilation" or "al-Tabaʿiyyah" to the Western canon and metaphysics. Finally, the phase of "combat," in which the colonized intellectual evolves from the status of the "outsider" to a "spokesperson" of his/her own native culture and an advocate

1 See Mufeed Hawamdeh, "al-Masraḥ al-ʿAraby wa Mushkilat al-Tabaʿiyyah" [Arab Theater and the Problem of Dependency], *ʿĀlam al-Fikir*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1987, p. 63.

of resistance (159). He/she is no longer immersed in the memories of the pre-colonial past but is fully integrated into the reality of the colonized nationals. This phase witnesses the emergence of new literary genres, such as "combat literature, revolutionary literature, national literature" (159), that neither praise nor assimilate the colonizer's culture but instead call for an end to colonization and a declaration of cultural independence. This stage is the counterpart to the "adept" or independence from "al-Tabaʿiyyah."

Likewise, Edward Said expounds on the importance of "ideological resistance," which comes after decolonization or "recovery of geographical territory" (209). He analyzes the nature of the response to colonialism and points out two sequential types of resistance against colonialism in search of independence: "primary resistance" and "secondary" resistance. The former involves combating and "fighting against" colonialism till the regaining of the geographic land; whereas the "secondary" resistance is the cluster of cultural activities in the aftermath of liberation and freedom, including what Said calls "ideological resistance" (209), a stage in which the natives restore their past and reconstruct their cultural independence. However, this process of cultural renovation is not immune from interaction with Western colonial discourse by integrating and altering it "to acknowledge [the] marginalized, suppressed, or forgotten histories," or what Said calls the "voyage in" technique (216). Said acknowledges the "partial tragedy of resistance" because it interpolates "recover[ing] forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of empire" (210). As a humanist, Said justifies this cultural intervention as a natural phenomenon because cultures intermix and borrow from each other. Culture for him is not a "matter of ownership of borrowing and lending," it is rather a "universal norm" of "appropriations," exchanging human experience, and "interdependencies" among diverse cultures (217). For Said, colonialism, which is based upon oppositional dichotomy and the Western view of supremacy over the cultures of the Other, endeavors to ban cross-cultural communication. Therefore, "ideological resistance" erodes the colonial ideologies of oppositional and negating perceptions, resurrecting and reconstructing the feeble voices of the indigenous independent identities.

Resistance in Jibrīl al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat Zarīf al-Tūl* (*Zarīf al-Tūl's Alienation*)

Jibrīl al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat Zarīf al-Tūl*, *Tagrībat* hereafter, represents Hawamdeh's notion of independence from "al-Tabaʿiyyah," Barry's "adept" phase, and Fanon's "combat stage." Indeed, al-Sheikh transforms the European form of drama into a cultural expression of resistance to the British Mandate in Palestine from 1918 to

1948.[1] As an anti-colonial work of art, the play dramatizes the British activities as a colonial conspiracy to enable the Jewish infiltration and occupation of a significant share of Palestinian land by the Jewish migrating settlers. In his book *al-Masraḥ bain al-ʿArab wa Israʾīl 1967-1973* [*Theater between Arabs and Israel 1967-1973*], Sāmiḥ Mahrān points out that it was only after the Arab swift defeat in the 67-war with Israel that the Arab theater of resistance responded with devotion to the issue of the occupation of Palestine and brought to the fore the need for a new Arab Renaissance to recover the sense of victory and overcome the devastating results of the defeat (140-141).[2]

In the play, Zarīf al-Tūl, a plowman, warns everyone about the dangers of British practices: "الانجليز طردوا الحراثين وصادروا الاراضي" 'The British expelled the plowmen and seized their lands!' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 156).[3] Asmar al-Laun, another Palestinian young farmer, revolts angrily that "للأرض أصحابها" 'the land has its owners!' (our trans.; 156). For Asmar al-Laun, resistance is the only option available to the Palestinians to combat British aggression: "بعت بقرتي، يا سلمان، كي أشتري بارودة. اسمع شوباش وزريف الطول جمعا مالا كثيرا من الناس وسوف نشتري بوارید' I sold my cow, Salmān, to buy a gun. Listen, Shū Bāsh and Zarīf al-Tūl have collected a lot of money from people, and we will buy many guns' (our trans.; 157). Like Salmān and Asmar al-Laun, al-Ghanām, a Palestinian shepherd, refers to the agonies of not only the Palestinians but also the animals from the British confiscation of the land: "سرحت بالغنم فطردوني! وكأن الربيع الذي تنبته الأرض ملك أبيهم!' I grazed the sheep, and they expelled me! As if the spring that the earth produces is their father's property!' (our trans.; 158). Al-Ghannām explains that "الأنجليز أقاموا سياجا حول الأرض!!" 'the British erected a fence around the land!!' (our trans.; 158), depriving the Palestinians of the right to cultivate and inhabit their land. Everything now belongs to the British colonizer. ʿAtābā, a Palestinian young widow, complains that even flowers and firewood are confiscated by the British: "أحضرت هذا الحطب من الأرض المسيجة، وميجنا تخيرت ازهارا كي تهديها الى شباب الجليل، في جمعة البنات، ولحق بنا الخيالة كي يلقوا علينا القبض، ويسلبوا الازهار والحطب' I brought this firewood from the fenced land. Mījana[female cousin of ʿAtābā] chose flowers to give to the young men of Galilee at the girls' gathering. Then, the police followed us

1 For more information about the British Mandate in Palestine, see D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

2 Also, in his book *al-Masraḥ fī al-Watan al-ʿArabī* [*Theater in Arab World*] (Kuwait: al-Majles al-Watanī lil Thaqāfah wal Funūn wal ʾĀdāb, 1999), ʿAlī al-Rāʿī explains that theater of resistance appeared in the Arab world after 1967 (June War) (291).

3 Jibrīl al-Sheikh, *Tagrībat Zarīf al-Tūl* [*Zarīf al-Tūl's Alienation*], in *al-Baḥthʿan Masraḥ* [*Search for a Theater*], edited by Mufeed Hawamdeh (Irbid: Dār al-ʾAmal, 1985), pp. 121-239. All citations to this play are to this edition and in our English translation from Arabic.

to arrest us, confiscating both the flowers and the firewood' (our trans.; 159).

In the colonial ideology, the colonizers give themselves the right to become the real inheritors of the colonized people's land, while, ironically, they perceive the colonized people as a gang of robbers. ʿAtābā and Mījana are considered by the British as thieves for their attempts to collect flowers and firewood. Salmān refers to the assumed crime of ʿAtābā: "اترك عتابا في همومها، يا محمد العابد. انها مطلوبة لحكومة بريطانيا العظمى!" 'Leave ʿAtābā in her concerns, O Muhammad al-ʿĀbid, she is wanted by the government of Great Britain!' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 160). Al-Ghannām soothes the pain of ʿAtābā by alluding to his intention to buy a gun in order to fight against the colonizers: "سأشتري بارودة، يا عتابا" 'I will buy gunpowder, O ʿAtābā' (our trans.; 160). Asmar al-Laun declares the time of the Palestinian revolution against British colonization: "سنقوم بثورة، يا جملو، وصوت البارود سيعلن عنا" 'We shall start a revolution, O Jamlū [Asmar al-Laun's fiancée], and the sound of gunpowder will speak on behalf of us' (our trans.; 163).

Zarīf al-Tūl and Shū Bāsh lead the Palestinian revolution. They collect money from the Palestinians to buy guns from Egypt, and insist on the option of "primary resistance," in Said's expression, as the only solution for independence. Asmar al-Laun reports the efforts made by Zarīf al-Tūl and Shū Bāsh to support the Palestinian revolution:"سوف نخسر بلادنا ان لم يشتر كل واحد بارودة. سأقول لك شيئا. شوباش وزريف الطول جمعا كثيرا من الشباب، واتفقنا على ان نحارب الانجليز ونطردهم" 'We will lose our country if everyone doesn't buy gunpowder. I'll tell you something. Shū Bāsh and Zarīf al-Tūl have gathered many young people, and we agreed to fight the British and expel them' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 163). For Zarīf al-Tūl and Shū Bāsh, decolonization cannot happen using peaceful negotiations with the British colonizer, but rather by military confrontation which is equivalent to "violence," in Fanon's concept. Shū Bāsh asserts that the British will not leave the country till they steal it and give it to the foreign Zionists. The only solution to their dilemma is resistance. He adds that young people have collected enough money to buy weapons (176). Zarīf al-Tūl and Shū Bāsh thus ignite the Palestinian vigor and awareness of the value of unity and combating the British colonizer. For Zarīf al-Tūl, it is a shame not to fight the aggressors.

Even though the Palestinian revolution in the play is almost male-oriented, Palestinian women characters play an important role in the resistance. With no exception, all females demonstrate their zeal for combat with the British and show resistance to the colonial existence and practices. They support any steps decided and taken to protect the land and the people. Many women donate their jewels to support the revolution against the British. For instance, Dalʿūna gives away her bracelets and rings in exchange for freedom: " خذ يا زريف الطول انه ذهبي اشتر به سلاحا. اه!. اه!. لا اريد شيئا" سوى ان املك حريتي 'Take it, Zarīf

al-Tūl, it is my jewelry; buy yourself a weapon. Ah! Ah! I want nothing but to have my freedom' (our trans.; 180). Some of them, like Dalʿūna, are worried that Shū Bāsh may fail to bring weapons from Egypt.

The Palestinian female characters are shown as wise, mature, and patriotic enough to stand side by side with their male counterparts in defending their country and liberating the confiscated land. Palestinian women insist on having a role in the battle at least by supplying the warriors with food and water. Liyyah, Shū Bāsh's fiancée, for instance, calls for an active role of women in the revolution and refuses the passive role of observing the sound of the battle and the smoke of fires in the far distance. She suggests that women can at least supply freedom fighters in that fierce battle with water and food (215). Women also show courage and responsibility as they see the martyrs carried by the other warriors. Liyyah, for instance, shows bravery and steadfastness as she celebrates the martyrdom of her husband Shū Bāsh. For her, he is an iconic symbol of resistance and heroism. She does not mourn his death because he dies for the honorable causes of national freedom and dignity (216).

Zarīf al-Tūl plays the role of the savior of the Palestinian people. After the death of Shū Bāsh, the co-leader of the revolution, the British colonizers and Zionists confiscate more lands and build more colonies. The victory of the British and the Zionists in military combat is the result of the division among the national fighters. Zarīf al-Tūl laments the split among the Palestinian warriors, who have not fought united (220). The Palestinian disarray encourages the British to inflict further injustice and cause more damage to the Palestinian natives. The dismayed Palestinians look to Zarīf al-Tūlas as the only remaining hope of liberation and relief. To him, they express their pain and agony. To him, they resort to help. Al-Jamāl, for instance, complains to Zarīf al-Tūl about the confiscation of his camel and the wheat he brought back from Jordan by the British colonizers (221). Zarīf al-Tūl is disappointed by the weakness of the Palestinians against the might of the British colonizers and promises everyone to find a solution to the national predicament.

He plans to travel away to Aleppo in Syria, hoping that he will find wisdom: "باسمكم أخرج من أرض الجليل باحثا عن حكمة جديدة" 'In your name, I depart from the land of Galilee in search of new wisdom' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 222). The writer chose Aleppo for the exodus of his protagonist probably because it was the capital of the heroic Muslim ruler Sayf Al-Dawla Al-Hamadani (916-967), whose armies protected the Arab states from the Byzantine attacks in the North of Syria.[1] The writer possibly wants his protagonist to be inspired by the vogue of victory and glory permeating the

1 For more information about Sayf Al-Dawla, see R. Stephen Humphreys, "Syria," *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, edited by Chase F. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), pp. 537-540.

place. Also, Aleppo was the city of Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854-1902), the pioneer of the modern Arab Renaissance in the 19th century.[1] Again, Zarīf al-Tūl can acquire the spirit of revival and be recharged with hope and optimism of a new Arab restoration. The two possibilities are valid.

The Palestinian people are frustrated by their leader's long absence in Aleppo as they see their lands crowded with Jewish settlements built under the protection of the British forces. Salmān, for instance, bewails the absence of Zarīf al-Tūl, which brings ruin and damage by the British colonizers and Zionists: "الانجليز فعلو العجائب في غيابه، وأرض فلسطين امتلأت بالمستعمرات، ونحن ما زلنا ننتظر! ننتظر!" 'The British made a lot of havoc in his absence. The land of Palestine became filled with settlements, and we are still waiting! Waiting!' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 237).

Zarīf al-Tūl returns home with the new wisdom of "المحبة" 'love' (our trans.; 235) among the factions of Palestinian freedom fighters. Only with united people can the victims of colonization challenge the aggressor. He asserts that fraction and disruption among the fighters are the certain way to defeat. Zarīf al-Tūl preaches his prescription for triumph and glory which he has acquired from the land of the triumphant Hamdani State in Aleppo and has been ignited by the vogue of hope and optimism emitted by Al Kawakibi's writings.

Zarīf al-Tūl is finally murdered by traitors from his nation by "اشباح بثياب عربية" 'ghosts in Arab clothing' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 236). In his will, he calls for love and unity among Palestinians: "خذوا عني الحب، واحملوه الى وطني فلسطين. ليكن مطرا ينبت منه الربيع والنماء، وبيتا يملأ ساكنيه بالوداعة، لا تكرموا مثواي، بل أكرموا روحي' Take love from me and carry it to my homeland, Palestine. Let it be rain that sprouts spring and growth, and a home that fills its inhabitants with love. Don't honor my grave, but my soul' (our trans.; 236). Zarīf al-Tūl becomes an embodiment and a timeless incarnation of "love" as a method of resistance. His spirit dwells inside the conscience of the Palestinian freedom fighters and instigates them to continue the paths of glory of "love" and resistance.

Zarīf al-Tūl's philosophy of the ideals of "love" and resistance is analogous to Fanon's conceptualization of "violence," as a "cleansing force" (Fanon 51). For Fanon, "violence" brings equality and "self-confidence" to the colonized people because the colonizer is no longer superior: "It [violence] rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It empowers them and retrieves their self-confidence" (51). Violence brings happiness, brotherhood, and love among the colonized natives because it "unifies the people" (51). Just as the colonizer uses "violence" to erode the natives' precolonial past, the colonized will

1 See Joseph G. Rahme, "Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi's Reformist Ideology, Arab Pan-Islamism, and the Internal Other," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1999, pp. 159-177.

use the same tool of "violence" to countermand the colonial ideology and dialectic to restore their confiscated past. In this context, "violence" correlates with liberty, equality, and love. Decolonization is described by Fanon as a process of "creation" since it re-creates "new men," who do not fear the colonizer, nor do they feel inferior (2). Zarīf al-Tūl incarnates two corresponding concepts of "violence" and "love." His efforts to arm the Palestinian revolution with smuggled guns from Egypt indicate Zarīf al-Tūl's awareness of the value of decolonization as a process of "creation," in Fanon's expression, and as a technique of "love" and deliverance. For Zarīf al-Tūl, the principles of resistance and "love" complement each other. His last will of "love" manifests the value of the continuity of resistance as a spring of life and happiness.

Colonialism supports the tribal chieftains against the majority of the colonized peoples to maintain hegemony and control. For Fanon, "the elimination of the *kaids* and the chiefs is a prerequisite to the unification of the people" (51) because the "chiefs" conspire against their people in exchange for materialistic benefits, endowed upon them by the colonizer. Therefore, Fanon describes colonialism as a "separatist" (51) system, which marginalizes the majority and supports few chiefs of tribes. Edward Said refers to the "bourgeois" natives' cooperation with the colonizer for materialistic gains, as represented by the character of Ariel in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "As a willing servant of Prospero; Ariel does what he is told obligingly, and, when he gains his freedom, he returns to his native elements, a sort of bourgeois native untroubled by his collaboration with Prospero" (214). Muhsin Al-Musawi explains that the colonizer's authority is based upon the established power of the native elite and class divisions: "The colonizer also helped in the process, for, leaning on oligarchy and establishing additional strata of landowners and community leaders from among the native elite, the colonizer set the pattern for further exploitation while creating explosive issues and schisms behind, too, especially in Palestine, Iraq and Sudan" (Al-Musawi 49).

Al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat* presents many Palestinian traitors who work against the interests of Palestine by supporting the Turks before the British Mandate. When the Turks were defeated and left Palestine, the same traitors allied with the British invaders, continuing to act against the interests of their own people. The list of traitors in the play includes Sharīf al-Saif, ʿAlī al-Muḥtad, Faraj Allah, Iqtāʿī, Multazim al-Darībah, and Wujahāʾ, who convert their allegiance from the Turks to the British colonizers. These "chiefs," in Fanon's term; and Ariel-like, in Said's comparison, abstain themselves from all sorts of resistance against the colonizer and prefer submission to whoever dominates the country. They wield fortune, power, and dominance over their people as they follow the colonizer.

The Palestinian natives, however, are aware of these traitors and their betrayal of their country. For example, Zarīf al-Tūl rebukes the hypocrisy and treason of Sharīf al-Saif, whose name ('honor of the sword') is very ironic, with a rhetorical question: "هل اشرع سيفك مرة واحدة في وجه الغرباء؟" 'Have you ever raised your sword against strangers?!' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 146). For Zarīf al-Tūl, Sharīf al-Saif is merely a murderer and a traitor to Palestine and his fellow men. Those chiefs get annoyed when a messenger announces the defeat of the Ottoman Empire: "سقطت تركيا في الحرب! . . . سأنطلق الى عموم فلسطين لانشر الخبر" 'Turkey has fallen in the war! . . . I'll head to all of Palestine to spread the news' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 148-149). Salmān relishes the termination of the Turkish colonization and injustice in Palestine. He is happy that nobody will confiscate their wheat and goods anymore. Whereas Zarīf al-Tūl and his friends celebrate the end of the Turkish annexation of Palestine to the Ottoman Empire, the chiefs are worried and terrified by the defeat of their Turkish masters. At this point of uncertainty and feeling of loss among the malicious characters, Sharīf al-Saif appeals for reconciliation and forgiveness from Zarīf al-Tūl and the Palestinians: "لا تنبشوا الماضي وليكن التسامح" 'Don't dig up the past, Let there be forgiveness' (our trans.; 150).

However, the chameleonic chiefs change their color quickly and welcome the arrival of the new British colonizer as they believe they can restore their lost authority. The second messenger warns against the disobedience of Great Britain, which has taken control. Unfortunately, new arrangements are made, and the new "Bāsha" (pasha) seeks to meet with the pillars of society (151). The Machiavellian Sharīf al-Saif quickly confirms his cooperation with the new rulers. He happily declares that he and the rest of the chiefs will be pleased to meet with the new rulers because they are the pillars of the country. "من يأخذ امي يصبح عمي" 'He who marries my mother becomes my uncle' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 151), says Sharīf al-Saif. His use of the notorious Arabic saying indicates his treacherous compliance with the orders of the new uncle/master. Likewise, ʿAlī al-Muḥtad pledges allegiance to the new British master: "وأمر الطاعة واجب" 'Obedience is a duty' (our trans.; 151). The Palestinian chiefs avoid the warriors' calls for resistance lest they lose influence and the favors of the colonizer. The citizens urge them to side with the national revolt. Salman, for instance, asks whether the chiefs would side with their fellow countrymen in their endeavor to expel the British from their land (166). Sharīf al-Saif, like the other chiefs, feels haughty and declines Salmān's request, saying: "نحن نقف معكم؟! أنتم ستقفون معنا" 'Should we stand with you?! You are the ones who should stand with us' (our trans.; 166). Iqtāʿī, feudal lord, too, supports Sharīf al-Saif's attitude: "كلام السرايا لا يوافق كلام القرويين" 'The words of authorities do not match the words of villagers' (our trans.; 166). For

the chiefs, the option of resistance is naive and suicidal because the British colonizers are too powerful to be defeated. Wajīh, another chief, expresses his view of the absurdity of resistance against Great Britain. He advocates the use of diplomacy rather than power.

The treacherous chieftains of society harbor no resentment towards submitting to the invaders or the loss of their countries' freedom when it comes to protecting their personal interests and social influence. They sustain their privileges by submission to the colonizer. The writer dramatizes them as deprived of dignity and honor and presents them as parasites feeding on the calamity of their people. Their willingness to collaborate with the colonizer is highly condemned by Zarīf al-Tūl and other Palestinian revolutionaries. For instance, ʿAtābā, a Palestinian woman, rejects the submissive approach of the chiefs and insists on resistance as the only way to liberation. Thus, ʿAtābā wonders: "بريطانيا العظمى تلاحق عتابا على حزمة حطب من الأرض المسيجة، فهل تتخلى عن الأرض نفسها بالكلام الطيب؟!" 'Great Britain pursues ʿAtābā for a bundle of firewood from the fenced land. Will it leave the land itself with kind words?' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 167)

Al-Sheikh enhances the dialectics of political and historical struggle in his play by introducing the preternatural element of ghosts, adding an artistic dimension to the narrative. The writer was influenced by Shakespeare, who has been always admired by Jordanian writers.[1] Shakespeare's major tragedies had been translated into Arabic by Khalil Mutran, Muhammad Hamdi, Sami al-Juraydini, and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra long before Al-Sheikh wrote *Tagrībat* in 1984.[2] Al-Sheikh possibly picked the idea of introducing the ghost from Shakespeare's tragedies. The ghosts of Hamlet's father, Julius Caesar, and Macbeth are the spirits of victims. In *Tagrībat*,

1 For more discussion on Arab Jordanian writers' adaptations/appropriations of Shakespeare, see Hussein A. Alhawamdeh and Ismail Suliman Almazaidah, "Shakespeare in the Arab Jordanian Consciousness: Shylock in the Poetry of ʿArār (Mustafa Wahbi Al-Tal)," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2018, pp. 319-335. See Hussein A. Alhawamdeh, "'Shakespeare Had the Passion of an Arab': The Appropriation of Shakespeare in Fadia Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep*," *Critical Survey*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2018, pp. 1-21. See also Hussein A. Alhawamdeh and Feras M. Alwaraydat, "The Dramatization of the Shepherd Warrior in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and the Jordanian Drama Bedouin Series *Rās Ghlaiṣ* ('*The Head of Ghlaiṣ*')," *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2022, pp. 171-172.

2 For more information about translating Shakespeare's tragedies into Arabic, see Sameh F. Hanna, "Decommercialising Shakespeare: Mutran's Translation of *Othello*," *Critical Survey*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2007, pp. 27-54. See also Sameh F. Hanna, "Shakespeare's Entry into the Arabic World," *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, edited by Bruce R. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016), pp. 1387-1392.

however, Al-Sheikh expands on the functions of ghosts given in Shakespeare. He introduces ghosts as murderers and as victims. Al-Sheikh's apparitions appear twice in the play. Firstly, the "ghosts" take the role of murderers in the scene which shows apparitions in Arab clothing beating Zarīf al-Tūl to death with batons (236). In this scene, the ghosts symbolize Arab or local traitors who conspire with the British and oppose the Palestinian revolution. They refer to the chiefs, who decide to take revenge upon Zarīf al-Tūl because their authority and privileges wane due to his insistence on spearheading the revolution. Secondly, ghosts appear in the role of victims, as depicted in the scene towards the end of the play, where the "ghosts" of Zarīf al-Tūl and Shū Bāshat are welcomed by the Palestinian people. This time the ghost functions as a murdered victim, as those of Hamlet's father, Banquo, and Julius Caesar.[1] Furthermore, victim ghosts in the last scene play the role of champions. Indeed, the ghosts of Zarīf al-Tūl and Shū Bāsh are celebrated as heroes. Their return home symbolizes the revisit of heroic spirits to further ignite and inflame the Palestinian resistance to the British Mandate. Ghosts in al-Sheikh's play do not function as supernatural intangible phenomena detached from the natural world, as in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Rather, they are perceived and dealt with by the community as real and natural entities. They dwell in the minds of men and become the source of their inspiration for liberation and independence.

Al-Sheikh expands the ghost's function in a way that blurs the dividing line between fantasy and reality. Salmān feels elated at the return of Zarīf al-Tūl's and Shū Bāsh's ghosts: "لقد عادوا الينا جميعهم بعد الغياب" 'They have come back to us after a long absence' (*Tagrībat*; our trans.; 239). Al-Jamāl asks everyone to celebrate the return of the heroes: "لنغني على نغمهم وقد عادوا" 'Let's sing their tunes as they have come back' (our trans.; 239). All the characters join the chorus in chanting the song of the heroes' homecoming and the resumption of resistance. Furthermore, in al-Sheikh's play, all characters can see the ghosts, not just one as in Shakespeare's plays. The ghosts communicate with other characters and share the national celebration of victory. The dramatization of the ghost in al-Sheikh is more like that in Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* (1936) than in Shakespeare's tragedies.

The Staging of Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* (1936) in The University of Jordan

The American playwright Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* (1936), which was translated into Arabic as (*Idfinū al-Mawtā*) or (*Thawrat al-Mawtā*), was directed by Hānī

1 For more discussion about the Shakespearean dramatization of the ghost, see F. W. Moorman, "Shakespeare's Ghosts," *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1906, pp. 192-201. See Kristian Smidt, "Spirits, Ghosts and Gods in Shakespeare," English Studies, vol. 77, no. 5, 1996, pp. 422-438.

Ṣanaubar and performed by Jordanian actors and actresses at the theater of the University of Jordan in 1972.[1] *Bury the Dead*, as an anti-war play, reflected Arab Jordanian anti-war consciousness, especially after the Arabs' defeat in the 1967 war, which resulted in significant losses and causalities for them. Israel managed to occupy the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and the Golan Heights from Syria.[2] The Arab sentiments after that war were like the state of the six dead soldiers in Shaw's play, who refuse to be buried due to their outrage at the principle of fighting in a meaningless war.

Bury the Dead dramatizes a historical period between the end of World War I and a potential war in the 1930s. The play warns against World War II and the American engagement in another destructive conflict. Christopher J. Herr explains that American playwrights in the 1930s were staging a pattern of anti-war drama: "The dangers of fascism had become obvious to most of America by the late 1930s; however, fears of another world war made many playwrights anxious to avoid American involvement in defiance of Hitler. Several important anti-war plays were written in the 1930s" (Herr 291).

The play foreshadows the possibility of another war that could be disastrous for America and the world. The ghosts of the six dead soldiers lament their deaths and their participation in a meaningless fight. Neither the American Army generals nor the six dead soldiers' women succeed in convincing the dead soldiers to be buried in a formal military funeral. The six dead soldiers' ghosts believe that the American Army deceives them by waging war for other people. The fifth corpse is offended by the notion that the American Army trades him away for a meager sum: "They sold us" (*Bury the Dead* 46). The second corpse expresses his willingness to die for the sake of an honored cause rather than fighting for others' cause: "A man can die happy and be contentedly buried only when he dies for himself or for a cause that's his own and not Pharaoh's or Caesar's or Rome's" (*Bury the Dead* 47). The fifth corpse shows that war has been imposed upon them by force rather than by free will: "Nobody asked us whether we wanted it or not. The generals pushed us

1 In their book *al-Masraḥ fī al-Urdun* [*Theater in Jordan*] (ʿAmmān: Rābiṭat al-Masraḥiyyīn al-Urduniyyīn, 198-?), ʿAbd al-Latīf Shamā and ʾAḥmad Shuqum show that Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* was staged on the theater of the School of Business at the University of Jordan in 1972 by a group of students (135). See also Mufeed Hawamdeh, *Wathāʾq al-Masraḥ al-Urdunī* [*Documents of Jordanian Theater*], vol. 3 (Irbid: Yarmouk UP, 1988), pp. 15-16.

2 For more information about the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, see Eric Hammel, *Six Days in June: How Israel won the 1967 Arab-Israeli War* (New York: Scribner, 1992). See also Muḥammad Hasanain Haikal, *Al-Infijār 1967: Ḥarb al-Thalathīn Sanah* [*The Explosion of 1967, the Thirty-Year's War*] (Cairo: Markiz al-ʾAhrām li-al-Tarjamah wa-l-Nashr, 1990).

out and closed the door on us" (*Bury the Dead* 47).

Like in *Tagrībat*, the ghost in Shaw's play is not portrayed as a detached, intangible supernatural phenomenon, but rather as a tangible individual perceived by other characters. Alan E. Bernstein takes Shaw's *Bury the Dead* as an example of the "belief that bands of the dead display themselves in order to inspire or frighten the living" (Bernstein 115). Mark Dollar refers to the function of the "returning ghosts," in Shaw's play, as "powerful reminders of a cataclysmic experience" (Dollar 238). Shaw expands the significance of the ghost from a mere supernatural element to a real individual who resists politics and criticizes social hypocrisies. In Shaw's play, the ghost, liberated from the metaphysical hold, communicates fully with all characters as a real individual. The ghost becomes a hero of resistance and a savior of future generations. Therefore, the Arabic translation of Shaw's *Bury the Dead* as *Thawrat al-Mawtā* (*Revolution of the Dead*) indicates the translator's awareness of the significance of the ghost as a man of revolution and resistance.[1]

The conversations between the six soldiers' ghosts and their women diminish the dividing line between reality and fantasy. John Schelling, the ghost of the first corpse, refuses his wife's appeal to be buried: "I don't know. Only there's something in me, dead or no dead, that won't let me be buried" (*Bury the Dead* 54). Bess, Schelling's wife, is confused about whether her husband is dead or alive because he still talks about his plans to see his "kid" and the "farm": "That say you're dead, John" (*Bury the Dead* 54). John Schelling does not give up reality easily because he still has many plans to finish before burial: "Later, Bess, when I've had my fill of lookin' and smellin' and talkin'. A man should be able to walk into his grave, not be dragged into it" (*Bury the Dead* 55). Henry Levy, the ghost of the second corpse, renounces his beloved's demand to be buried: "Joan: Yes. Then why__ why don't you let them bury you? / Levy: There are a lot of reasons. There were a lot of things I loved on this earth" (*Bury the Dead* 58).

Levy thinks he is still young to be buried and insists on resuming his life on earth rather than in the "grave's solid mud" (*Bury the Dead* 59). Walter Morgan, the ghost of the third corpse, informs his wife, Julia, about the triviality of wars and the falsity of patriotism: "There are too many books I haven't read, too many places I haven't seen, too many memories I haven't kept long enough. I won't be cheated of them" (*Bury the Dead* 61). Morgan believes that war ends his dreams and profession

1 In the 1960s, Fuʾād Dawwārah translated Shaw's *Bury the Dead* into Arabic as *Thawrat al-Mawtā* [*Revolution of the Dead*]. See Fuʾād Dawwārah, translator. *Thawrat al-Mawtā* [*Revolution of the Dead*]. By Irwin Shaw (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, al-Muʾassasah al-Misrīyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Taʾlīf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Tibāʿah wa-al-Nashr, 196-?)

as a poet. For him, the army generals deceive him into participating in the war and losing his life in exchange for nothing. Tom Driscoll, the ghost of the fourth corpse, tells his sister, Katherine, that he wants to become a savior and an anti-war advocate for future generations: "I got things to say to the people who leave their lives behind them and pick up guns to fight in somebody else's war" (*Bury the Dead* 63). Driscoll, like all other ghosts, thinks that he belongs to the "living" rather than to the "dead": "I didn't get up from the dead to go back to the dead. I'm going to the living now" (*Bury the Dead* 64). Jimmy Dean, the ghost of the fifth corpse of a twenty-year-old soldier, ignores his mother's request to be buried because he has neither enjoyed life nor fulfilled his ambitions: "I was only twenty, mom. I hadn't done anything. I hadn't seen anything. I never had a girl. I spent twenty years practicing to be a man and then they killed me" (*Bury the Dead* 66). Webster, the ghost of the sixth corpse, declines his wife's call to be buried because he prefers the hardship of life to death: "But I guess I was happy those times" (*Bury the Dead* 68). He is determined to "stand up" (*Bury the Dead* 70) against wars and to establish new opportunities he has not achieved yet. For example, he wishes to have a "kid": "It's good to have a kid. A kid's somebody to talk to" (*Bury the Dead* 68).

Just as the ghosts in Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* are determined to resist the injustice of war, the ghosts in al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat* resist the oppression of colonialism. In both plays, the dead warriors are not buried but become symbols of resistance and strike against the hypocrisy of politics. In both plays, the ghosts are not excluded from real communication with all characters because they are given both realistic and imaginary elements. In the two plays, the switching between fantasy and reality empowers the ghost with more potential and influence to criticize and dismantle the colonial discourse. The ghosts, appearing as the saviors of their nations and perfect models to be imitated, show the triumph of soul over body and morality over materialism.

Conclusion

Theater in Jordan responded actively to the politics and challenges in the Arab world. The dramatization of Jibrīl al-Sheikh's *Tagrībat* and Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* represents the cultural and political awareness of Jordanian playwrights and directors to the significance of Arab cultural resistance to Western colonialism and the disorders of wars. The Palestinian issue and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have intensively taken great attention from Jordanian playwrights and directors to

reveal the legitimacy of the Palestinians' rights to independence and human dignity. The Jordanian theater adopted world drama, such as Shaw's *Bury the Dead*, that attacked the injustice of wars to address local Arab concerns. The ghost technique, used in both *Tagrībat* and *Bury the Dead*, produces a more complex dimension of the concept of resistance since it empowers the ghosts to transcend the colonial materialistic limitations and to become spokesmen of freedom and liberation.

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