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Slovenian World Literature after 1960

Edited by Darja Pavlič

Ethnic Narrative in the Global Context

Edited by Liu Yan



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1960 年以来的斯洛文尼亚世界文学

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Slovenian World Literature after 1960: An Introduction

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Abstract In this article, I present a brief outline of Slovenian literature, combining its history with the history of Slovenians. Although the generally accepted theses referring to the development of Slovenian literature include the lateness thesis, its development has nonetheless proceeded in the same rhythm as that of the rest of Europe. After 1960, the main literary movement became modernism, which was followed by postmodernism and, after 1990, a period of diverse authorial poetics. In Slovenian literary history, Goethe's concept of world literature has been discussed since the first decades of the twentieth century. Today, there is a growing belief that synthetic presentations of world literature are impossible.

Key words Slovenian literature; world literature; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; Anton Ocvirk

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The story of Slovenian literature begins about a thousand years before the 1991 foundation of the independent Republic of Slovenia. After the Slavs settled the eastern Alps in the sixth century, very few Slovenian texts were created during the Middle Ages; the majority were texts that Christian priests used during

their rituals. The oldest known Slovenian text and at the same time the oldest text written in Latin script in any Slavic language is the Freising manuscripts (*Brižinski spomeniki*). The text was created around 1000 and includes two general confessional forms and a sermon on sin and repentance. Literary history ascribes it aesthetic value. Slovenian secular texts from this period have not been preserved, but this does not mean that Slovenian was not used by the upper classes as well; for example, it is well known that the ritual of enthroning Carinthian dukes was conducted in Slovenian until 1414.

In 1550, the Lutheran reformer Primož Trubar published the first two Slovenian books: *Catechismus* (Catechism) and *Abecedarium* (Abecedary). Trubar is considered the father of standard Slovenian, which, according to his own words, he fashioned after the language spoken in his home village. During the Reformation, the Habsburg Monarchy, which included the majority of present-day Slovenia, strengthened its centralist policy. From the mid-seventeenth-century onwards, members of the nobility, including the London Royal Society fellow Johann Weikhard von Valvasor, became increasingly interested in science outside theology. They primarily wrote genealogical, historical, and geographical works in Latin and German, through which they sought to demonstrate the importance of their social class. The majority of the lower classes remained illiterate until the 1774 introduction of compulsory education.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the share of ethnic Slovenians increased in towns. The most important members of the Enlightenment, including the pioneer of Slovenian playwriting, Anton Tomaž Linhart, and the author of the first Slovenian poetry collection (i.e., *Pesme za pokušino* “Poems for Sampling,” 1806), Valentin Vodnik, were also of urban middle-class descent. During this period, the Slovenian national movement was formed, demanding the introduction of Slovenian into public life and schools. Initially, the movement was not extensive, with individual intellectuals being its main promoters. After 1848, when demands for uniting the Slovenian lands into a Kingdom of Slovenia were presented, the time arose for the Slovenian people to form a political union of the Slovenian people. The Slovenian rural population supported the nationalist demands, whereas the nobility and the urban middle class began to increasingly divide into Slovenian and German camps.

France Prešeren (1800–1849) — the first and, according to the general belief, the greatest Slovenian classic writer — himself connected his poetry writing with nation-building efforts. In the seventh sonnet of his “Sonetni venec” (The Wreath of Sonnets), with which he created a unique literary genre at the global level (the

wreath includes fourteen sonnets, in which the last line of each sonnet repeats in the first line of the next sonnet, with the repeated lines forming an additional, fifteenth sonnet) — he expressed his wish for a new Orpheus to unite Slovenians of all backgrounds. Based on Prešeren's poetry, the Slovenian literary historian Dušan Pirjevec developed an influential thesis that "in Slovenian history poetry established itself as the foundation of the nation" and that "until the beginning of the twentieth century . . . literature has been the only body of our national identity, self-establishment, and legitimation" (Pirjevec 58). According to Pirjevec, literature took on the responsibilities of a nation-state and its bodies because the Slovenians did not have their own state. As established by younger literary historians (cf. Juvan "Slovenski"), this was not something typical only of Slovenians because similar processes took place across all of Europe during the nineteenth century.

The generally accepted theses referring to the development of Slovenian literature also include the lateness thesis. For example, Anton Ocvirk, the author of *Teorija primerjalne literarne zgodovine* (*Theory of Comparative Literary History*), a seminal work published in 1936 — that is, during the early period of the constitution of comparative literature as a scholarly discipline, wrote the following: "Among us Slovenians, who have always been a little late to adopt foreign stylistic initiatives, the reactions to individual styles have also been late, weaker, and less pronounced. However, our literary development has nonetheless proceeded in the same rhythm as that of the rest of Europe, from which we cannot separate it completely; we cannot get to the bottom of it merely from our own cultural perspective" (62–63). Hence, it is not surprising that studies of the development of Slovenian literature follow the development of European literary movements and that discussions on literary works are often based on determining the characteristics of individual movements. Thus, for example, in the first Slovenian novel, *Deseti brat* (*The Tenth Brother*, 1866) by Josip Jurčič, literary historians identify the characteristics of romanticism and realism, and in the works of poets and writers (Ivan Cankar among them) from the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century they recognize the characteristics of naturalism, decadence, and symbolism.

Ivan Cankar, a classic Slovenian narrative author and playwright, developed a political critique and satire that are still relevant today. Just like Prešeren's lines from his poem *Zdravljica* (*A Toast*) — "God's blessing on all nations, / who long and work for that bright day, / when o'er earth's habitations / no war, no strife shall hold its sway, / who long to see / that all men free / no more shall foes, but neighbors be" (which became the Slovenian national anthem after Slovenia gained

independence) — Slovenians also internalized Cankar's words from his play *Hlapci* (*Servants*, 1910): "Servants! Born to be servants, raised to be servants, created to serve! The master keeps changing, but the whip remains and shall remain forever because the back is bent, used to whipping and longing for it!" (54-55)

However, Slovenian political history could reject the eternal serfdom hypothesis. After Austria-Hungary's defeat in the First World War, Slovenians declared ethnic independence and joined a new state together with the Croats and Serbs. After the Second World War, during which the Communist Party led by Josip Broz Tito assumed control over the Partisan armed struggle against the Axis powers, Slovenia was among the founding members of the new Yugoslavia. Initially, the one-party state was officially named the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and later on it was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After Tito's death in 1980, the economic situation in the country deteriorated and there were growing demands to end the centralist system and introduce democracy to Yugoslavia. Because agreement on this was practically impossible, Slovenia proposed that Yugoslavia be dissolved. In the Slovenian plebiscite held in December 1990, 88.2% of voters were in favor of Slovenia's independence. After declaring independence in June 1991, on its way to international recognition Slovenia had to first thwart the Yugoslav People's Army's attempt to discipline it by force. During the Ten-Day War, seventy-six people lost their lives, and after a temporary ceasefire the Yugoslav army withdrew from Slovenia.

Today Slovenia is a democratic country, a member of European Union with a capitalist economic system. The country has a population of approximately 2.06 million, with ethnic Slovenians predominating by far. The majority of population enjoys a relatively good standard of life; according to official data, the rate of inequality is relatively low compared to other developed countries and the at-risk-of-poverty rate stood at 14.3% in 2015. Slovenians like to think of themselves as hardworking and fair; they are proud of their country's natural beauty and internationally successful athletes, and they are critical towards politicians, the judiciary, and greedy managers. Particularly on anniversaries of Slovenia's independence, comments can be heard that Slovenians have indeed fulfilled their millennium-old dream of having their own nation-state, but they have failed to become a "second Switzerland."

With the establishment of independent Slovenia, according to some publicists, Slovenian literature lost its nation-building role and hence its former social importance, but, on the other hand, it attained complete aesthetic freedom. Today's

literary works are published in small print runs, but more novels (around one hundred a year), poetry collections (around 250 a year), and works of other genres are being issued than ever before. Taking into account the theory of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, according to whom politics is a combination of living, ways of acting, and ways of uttering, literature also maintains its political role throughout.

So where does the story of Slovenian world literature start? In this thematic issue, which has been prepared for the prominent journal *Forum for World Literature Studies* at the kind invitation of Professor Shang Biwu, its beginnings are placed in 1960. Of course that does not mean that prior to that Slovenian literature was not part of world literature. As already determined by Ocvirk in 1936, “without a doubt, today individual national literatures are only passages in overall human creativity and European literature is only one part — of world literature” (70). In his understanding of world literature, Ocvirk relied heavily on Goethe, emphasizing the connection between national and world literature. According to him, world literature is “no shallow, atypical international literature, but a profound universally important art that originates from the bases of the ‘internal nature’ (Goethe) of individual national organisms” (71). In this regard, the representatives of Slovenian world literature include all poets and writers that are not only considered the classic or best Slovenian authors, but also that promote general or universal values. The first two places among them are taken by Prešeren and Cankar, already mentioned above. However, the more recent past proves to be a harder nut to crack and it is by no mean easy to determine which Slovenian writers belong in the national canon and subsequently among the world’s top authors. Slovenian literary history associates the year 1960 with the beginnings of Slovenian modernism, which was followed by postmodernism and, after 1990, a period of diverse authorial poetics. The wealth of various literary orientations and personal poetics presents a special challenge for literary evaluation, which largely relies on aesthetic, cognitive, and ethical criteria. In addition to the authors presented in this thematic issue, many others would also undoubtedly deserve to be covered as well.

By relying on Goethe, Ocvirk expanded the concept of world literature as the selection of the best literary works of individual national literatures with the concept of a developmental interconnection of all literary creations. He placed the study of international influences at the forefront, highlighting the fact that a literary historian must also reach into Asia. As far as Slovenian literature is concerned, since its very beginnings it has formed the strongest links with western cultural circles (i.e., European and recently especially American). In his *Primerjalna*

zgodovina slovenske literature (*Comparative History of Slovenian Literature*, 1987), the literary historian Janko Kos summarized the studies of these types of relationships, and studies on reception have also continued in more recent times. Here it should be noted that, despite intense international exchanges, contacts between Slovenian and Asian literatures are still relatively rare and understudied.

One of the challenges that the Slovenian literary historians face is the issue of unilateral influences, or the question of what influence (if any at all) Slovenian literature has on other national literatures. Ocvirk was convinced that international influences do not belong only into this or that national history because they operate collectively and can therefore only be understood within a broader or global context. Among the questions that comparative literary historians have to deal with, he highlighted the question of “whether a cause-and-effect relationship exists between all literatures in the world” (73). An answer to this question was provided by the Slovak (not Slovenian!) literary historian Dionýz Ďurišin through his concept of interliterariness. According to Ďurišin, literary phenomena are connected genetically or typologically. Literary contacts are the precondition for the development of literature, in which a distinction can be made between those that do not have a special influence on the literary process (external contacts) and those that have a direct influence on literary creativity (internal contacts). The exploration of typological similarities between literatures reflected in the use of similar topics and literary procedures reveals non-causal forms of interliterariness; in this case, the reasons for similarity between literary works are economic, political, social, or psychological.

Ďurišin’s concept of interliterariness and interliterary communities met with a positive response in Slovenia; in their works on the modern concepts of world literature, both Tomo Virk (*Primerjalna književnost na prelomu tisočletja* “Comparative Literature at the Turn of the Millennium,” 2007) and Marko Juvan (“Svetovni literarni sistem” “The World Literary System,” 2009) mention it favorably. Theoretical discussions on the relevance of the term “world literature” in the modern globally connected world and various proposals for updating it (as presented by Pascale Casanova, Franco Moretti, David Damrosch, and others) naturally influence literary-history studies. There is a growing belief that synthetic presentations of world literature are impossible because the use of any method would “yield only the most general structures and development principles of world literature” (Juvan “Svetovni” 205).

A fragmentary approach that focuses on individual authors and their works is something that all of the articles collected in this thematic issue have in

common. The authors largely follow the established concept of world literature as the selection of nationally and universally important works. However, there is no uniform answer to the question of whether translations into the major world languages are a necessary precondition for inclusion in world literature. In her article, Alenka Koron shows that the precondition for the writer Boris Pahor becoming part of world literature was his “consecration” in Paris as one of the centers of the world literary system. According to Darja Pavlič, the Slovenian poet Dane Zajc experienced national canonization and translations of his works, but his international profile has remained limited to narrow poetry circles. In her article on three Slovenian novelists (Vitomil Zupan, Berta Bojetu Boeta, and Lojze Kovačič), who belong to the very apex of Slovenian and world literature, Alojzija Zupan Sosič advocates the expansion of the world literary canon through representatives of minority literatures, including Slovenian. Tomaž Toporišič focuses on Dušan Jovanović, the most important author of Slovenian neo-avant-garde plays, and Matjaž Zupančič, who is one of the leading modern Slovenian (post)playwrights and also the Slovenian playwright with the most frequently staged plays both in Slovenia and abroad. Toporišič’s article and the contribution by Mateja Pezdirc Bartol, who analyzes the works of the most important Slovenian female playwright, Simona Semenič, show that Slovenian (post)playwrights belong to world literature because of the quality of their works. In contrast, the works by modern Slovenian poets discussed by Varja Balžalorsky Antić become part of world literature primarily because of their intertextual links with the works of more or less canonized authors from other areas of world literature. In conclusion, it can be summed up that Slovenian world literature is simply the best works that Slovenian writers have produced.

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Boris Pahor's *Necropolis* and World Literature

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Abstract The present contribution addresses the question of how the novel *Necropolis* (1967) by Boris Pahor, a Slovenian minority author (with Italian citizenship) born in 1913 and living in Trieste, is placed in world literature. It sheds light on the novel's path from the semi-peripheral Slovenian literary system to the canonical works of Slovenian (national) literature via various actors in the informal social networks of the globalised literary market and through its consecration in one of the prestigious intellectual and artistic centres of the world literary system (Paris), as well as through the mediation of translations into the dominant world languages. Attention is also given to the uniquely poetic character of this novel of memory about life in a concentration camp, which is a glocalised version of one of the world's major literary testimonies of the Shoah.

Key words Slovenian literature; novel of memory; testimony; concentration camp literature

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Boris Pahor is a focus of life energy and a true witness to the 20th century.

— Miroslav Košuta

Necropolis by Boris Pahor, a Slovenian minority writer from Trieste, where he was born and still lives today, is not the author's only work representing his experience

of life in a concentration camp, but it is widely regarded as “his best work on this topic” (Latković and Kovač 27). The author himself considers the novel to be a digested version of his autobiographical writing about concentration camps; in the first edition, on the opening pages (following the motto), he added a clarification for his revisiting the topic: “I have included some previously published pages in this testimony, in which they acquire their final form” (Pahor, *Nekropola* 6, Transl. by Mojca Šorli and Neville Hall).¹ In the opinion of historiographer Marta Verginella, the statement “is of no small importance as it confirms that the autobiographical narrative of *Necropolis* had evolved into a true testimony” (“Boris Pahor” 62). Nevertheless, it is a specific testimony delivered through the filter of a novel of memory² rather than conveyed by way of a simple chronological sequence. Only being familiar with the entire opus of the writer enables the reader to put together the master narrative from the individual “pieces” in works such as *People Beyond Hell* (*Onkraj pekla so ljudje*) (1958), *A Difficult Spring* (*Spopad s pomladjo*) (1978), *Jours Obscurs* (*Zatemnitev*) (1975), *In a Horizontal Position* (*V vodoravni legi*) (1997) and *Oberdan Square* (*Trg Oberdan*) (2006) — Pahor’s comprehensive testimony of internment. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that experts on his work have recently started to seek parallels between Pahor and other famous witnesses, such as Jorge Semprún (Latković and Kovač), Primo Levi, Imre Kertész, David Rousset, Shlomo Venezia (Verginella, “Boris Pahor”), Jean Améry, Robert Antelme, Vasilij Grossman, Kertész, Levi, Semprún, Varlam Šalamov,³ and again Levi,⁴ Levi and Kertész, as well as the two predecessors, Fyodor M. Dostoevsky with his *Notes from the Dead House* and Silvio Pellico with his memoirs *My Prisons*,⁵ etc.

Although, in recent times, it may seem self-evident for Slovenians to relate Pahor’s *Necropolis* to the important works of European “concentration camp literature,” our goal here is to reflect on the positioning of this work in the universal space of world literature. Following Goethe and, in the contemporary spirit, perceiving world literature as literary works that have crossed the language and cultural borders of their literary systems, spreading — whether as originals or translations — into the transnational cultural space, we must, of course, be concerned with translations and the international reception of texts. Only in this way will it be possible to create an impression of the “active presence” of this work in the literary system beyond its culture of origin, which, according to David Damrosch, is necessary for the “inclusion of a work in world literature” (4). A query in the COBISS.SI system, the Slovenian co-operative online bibliography database, revealing that *Nekropola* had been translated into as many as 16 European languages by 2016,⁶ as well as Esperanto (1993), does indeed offer

grounds for optimism. Nevertheless, a comparison of the global rate of translation for Pahor, Levi and Kertész provided by UNESCO's *Index Translationum — World Bibliography of Translation* for the period 1979–2009 paints a sobering picture: while 19 of Pahor's works were translated into foreign languages in this period, as many as 301 translations are recorded for works by Primo Levi and 242 translations of works by Imre Kertész. As the latter originally writes in Hungarian, which, as a non-dominant world language, is more comparable with Slovenian as the language of a small nation, we can assume that the consecration of the author by the Nobel Prize in 2002 contributed significantly to the translation rate of his works.

Pahor's positioning in the international literary market has not been easy. He comes from Trieste, a city located in the border area between Italy and Slovenia, with an ethnically mixed population and a predominantly Slovenian hinterland, which, together with a third of the Slovenian ethnic territory, became part of the Kingdom of Italy upon the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy following the First World War and the Rapallo Peace Treaty in 1920. With the rise of Fascism to power in 1922, all of the minorities in Italy, including the Slovenian minority, were subjected to violent processes of linguistic and cultural unification,⁷ which represented an extremely traumatic experience for the young writer, about which he later often reported in his texts. Although he studied mostly in Italian schools and, as a largely self-taught Slovenian speaker, was bilingual in his cultural formation, he defied forced assimilation into the dominant Italian culture from the very beginning of his literary career, including with his first publications from before the Second World War in the Primorska clandestine press, the *Mladika* journal from Celje and the *Dejanje* literary journal edited by Edvard Kocbek in Ljubljana, all of which were in Slovenian, as were all of the subsequent literary works and diaries,⁸ as well as the vast majority of essays and other works.⁹

After the Second World War, Trieste once again found itself in Italy. With the end of Fascism, the Slovenian language was no longer prohibited, and the literary production of authors from Trieste and other Slovenian authors in Italy, including Pahor, flourished. As the literature of an ethnic minority, it was nonetheless stuck on the periphery of two semi-peripheral literary systems: the Italian system centred in Rome and the Slovenian system centred in Ljubljana. This had multifaceted implications for the reception of Pahor's work and his literary engagement in both cultural and linguistic spaces. During the Cold War and the bloc division of Europe into the democratic West, of which Italy was a part, and the socialist East, which, despite Tito's principled policy of non-alignment, included the former Yugoslavia and Slovenia as one of its republics, the chances of success in both

(semi-peripheral) centres were modest due to political and ideological prejudice and a distrust of ideas that could, through the authors and their works, spread from one side of the iron curtain to the other. For Italians — who, unlike the Germans, had failed to collectively process their responsibility for Fascist crimes, instead suppressing it in the unconscious — Pahor's literature and other writings and public appearances expressing condemnation of Fascist violence at all stages of its existence, including his persistent and consistent commitment to the rights and protection of the Slovenian minority in Italy and minorities across the world,¹⁰ were correspondingly disconcerting. The response on the Slovenian side, however, was marked by disruptions owing to a number of issues that must be examined in more detail. During the period of declarative Communist internationalism, even Pahor's nationalism and fervent support of Slovenian identity was problematic for the Yugoslav authorities, but his opposition to the real-socialist totalitarianism of Yugoslavia was especially controversial, as was his general commitment to democracy and pluralism in society and politics.

While post-war Yugoslav cultural policy was supportive of the artistic endeavours of the Slovenian ethnic minority in Italy, and the publication of Pahor's books was permitted not only in Trieste and its Italian hinterland, but also in Slovenia, the impression was still maintained that this was regional production, peripheral with regard to its central Slovenian counterpart. Thus, Pahor failed (with a few exceptions) in his attempts to establish himself as a writer in the broader Yugoslav space; he was twice awarded the rather marginal Slovenian Writers' Association Prize¹¹ for his novels in the 1950s, rather than, for example, the central republican Prešeren Prize, which eluded him right up until 1992, when Slovenia gained its independence. Initially, the critiques of his work were ongoing and current, appearing in periodicals throughout the Slovenian territory, not just on the periphery, but in the later decades they became few and far between.¹² Thus, *Necropolis*, which was first published in 1967, only received three Slovenian literary reviews, two in Trieste and one in Ljubljana, with the second being rather positive, but nonetheless expressing reservations regarding the aesthetic characteristics of the work.¹³

In 1975, Pahor fell from grace with the Slovenian and Yugoslav Communist Party leadership due to an interview that he and Alojz Rebula conducted with Edvard Kocbek, published in the Trieste journal *Zaliv*, in which Kocbek, as a representative of the highest wartime authorities of the Resistance, spoke publicly about the post-war killings of more than ten thousand home guards ("domobranci").¹⁴ The journal was subsequently banned in Yugoslavia and Pahor

was not allowed to enter the state for two years.¹⁵ In addition, as a writer, he was pushed into even greater isolation on the outskirts of the Slovenian cultural space; for example, his novel *Jours Obscurs (Zatamnitev)*, which was published in 1975 in Trieste, did not receive a single review in the cultural centre according to Legiša.¹⁶

It was not until the 1980s, which, in the ongoing process of democratisation, brought a cultural and political thaw that Pahor's books once again began to be published in the centre of the Slovenian semi-periphery and the absence of critical reaction was finally broken.¹⁷ Furthermore, a glance at the writer's bibliography reveals that Pahor, who wrote the bulk of his short stories and novels in the 1950s and 1960s, was not entirely overlooked by literary criticism. The coverage of the author is captured in encyclopaedic entries and historical overviews, while the thematic characteristics of his writings received scholarly treatment in individual studies. Pahor was, however, frequently discussed in the context of the cross-border Slovenian literature of Trieste, while, in the 1980s and 1990s, Lojze Kovačič and Drago Jančar were canonised as the most important Slovenian post-war writers in the central area, and as such, unlike Pahor, even made it into high school curricula.

In the 1990s, there was a turnaround in the evaluation of Pahor's opus, which coincided with the independence of Slovenia and the writer's 80th anniversary; he was finally awarded the (state) Prešeren Prize and the monograph *Proceedings on Boris Pahor (Pahorjev zbornik)* (1993) was published, with contributions from a number of Slovenian literary scholars and cultural workers, shedding new light on Pahor's personality and work, and on his place in Slovenian literature. However, more critical for the positioning of *Necropolis* in the context of world literature than its ranking within the national literary field was the role played by the 1995 "denationalised" universal capital of the Republic of World Literature (Casanova), Paris, where, on the publication of the novel *Printemps difficile (Spopad s pomladjo)*, Pahor gained accolades from literary experts and readers alike. The consecration that occurred as a result of Pahor's recognition by autonomous critics, prominent translators and cosmopolitan mediators was defined by Pascale Casanova as a "crossing of a literary border" (126), which was extremely effective and had real consequences for the reception of the text, and which was due by definition.¹⁸ Indeed, the crossing of this invisible line is interpreted by Casanova as a unique kind of transformation, almost a type of alchemical transmutation. In her view, the consecration of a text is as good as a magical metamorphosis of the ordinary to "gold," to absolute literary value, "In this sense the sanctioning authorities of world literary space are the guardians, guarantors, and creators of value, which is nonetheless always changing, ceaselessly contested and debated, by virtue of

the very fact of its connection with the literary present and modernity” (127). The consecration,¹⁹ which at the same time denationalised and universalised Pahor and retroactively “gilded” *Necropolis* (Bavčar 15) — published in 1990 under the title *Pèlerin parmi les ombres* — also, of course, provoked responses in the Slovenian media.²⁰

In thinking about world literature, one should, according to Marko Juvan, be aware of its paradoxical principle of *ex pluribus unum*, a pluralist multiplicity of literatures in one system. “World literature is composed of multiple related planes,” says Juvan (11), without the functioning of which the integration of *Necropolis* into the space of world literature would not have been possible. In his essay *Boris Pahor: The Ethics of Slovenianhood*, Parisian Slovenian Evgen Bavčar, who is among the most deserving of credit for Pahor’s breakthrough in France, reports, for example, on a number of connections that he established in order to activate media and institutional support, the publishing apparatus and the cultural market, as well as the archives and practices involved in global circulation, memory expansion and retention of literary works; but without the transnational social network of writers, critics, translators, editors, literary experts and other individuals, who paved an informal way for the author and his work by forging links between them, he would, of course, never have succeeded. Bavčar also reports how, in establishing contacts with the French publisher Phoebeus, which had already published a commercially successful translation of the novel *Alamut* by Slovenian writer Vladimir Bartol, he referred to this novel precisely because its author had already transcended his home language and literature and become firmly established in international circulation through translation.²¹ It should be remembered, however, that, following the successful breakthrough of *Necropolis* in France, without the related contemporary literary production and the globalised publishing distribution that relied on the elite readership of international works in global cultural markets, translations of this same work into other European languages might have been few and far between. Speaking of translations, it should be pointed out that only three translations of *Necropolis* into European languages (French, English and Italian) and Esperanto were published in the 1990s, while all of the others only appeared after 2000, mostly, in fact, in the last decade.²² It is quite possible that the growing number of translations into foreign languages in recent times reveals a growing interest in Pahor on the wider European and global scale and, with this, the active presence of his work in the literary system beyond its original culture; it would seem that Slovenian actors on the international cultural and translation market no longer play a decisive role in the emergence of the latest translations of Pahor’s work.

“World literature also consists of segments of translated literature, which are highlighted in the domestic literary field as examples of the major current global literary phenomena or canonised as the ‘timeless’ classics of humanity,” states Juvan (11). In this respect, it should be noted that Pahor had access to numerous original and translated works addressing the theme of camps, and he even lists some testimony bearers in the novel itself: Franz Blaha, Primo Levi, David Rousset, Edith Bruck, André Ragot and Vincenzo Pappalettera. While these authors may have been important role models for Pahor when he was writing *Necropolis*, there were still others a few decades later when the novel was making its way to global cultural markets. By mentioning them, I seek to draw attention to the fact that, with the aging and dying generation of survivors of Nazi prison camps, their verbalised experience, in addition to becoming an example of the current major global literary phenomena consecrated with the highest awards,²³ also became a kind of a niche market. Whereas, for Pahor as a minority author, the Italian book market remained hermetically closed, so to speak, right up until his consecration in Paris,²⁴ Pahor’s success in France was due to his personal commitment, his cosmopolitanism and a great desire to establish a name for himself in the very centre.²⁵ Of considerable importance were, and still are, his willingness to appear publicly, and the fact that, thanks to his longevity, he has preserved a living link with historical events that are increasingly transferred to the younger generations purely through memoirs.²⁶

Pahor’s success in France, his series of translations into foreign languages, and the fact that he was increasingly classified by international literary criticism as one of the classics of the 20th century — all of which the Slovenian public was informed about in the domestic media — accelerated the canonisation of his works in the Slovenian literary system, as did the solid readership of these works, the multiple Slovenian reprints of *Necropolis* and shifts in the perception of reputable experts in Slovenian studies, who have written a series of discussions about the work.²⁷ Pahor has been nominated several times as a candidate for the Nobel Prize, with the most public attention being focused on the proposal made by the University of Ljubljana, which followed the initiative of the Faculty of Arts in 2009. Whereas, in *Proceedings on Boris Pahor* of 1993, the author was regarded as an important citizen of Trieste, but still only a regional and thus peripheral Slovenian author, he is introduced in the preface by the editors of the monograph *The Poetics of Slovenianhood (Poetika slovenstva)* (2011) as a “writer of European stature,” the author of *Necropolis* and *A Difficult Spring*, which form part of “the fundamental works of world literature’s treasure house” (Pregelj and Kozak 7). The editors invited both Slovenian and foreign literary experts, philosophers, historians

and other scholars²⁸ and translators of his oeuvre to participate in the monograph, thus enabling — and in some contributions actually establishing — a broader comparative perspective. A typically revised perspective on the writer can also be detected in two articles by Boris Paternu, a renowned Slovenian literary historian, who, in 1993, contributed a favourable and well-balanced overview of Pahor's opus to *Proceedings on Boris Pahor*, in which he highlighted four novels as central, including *Necropolis*; he listed its translations, as well as recognising the favourable French reception and breakthrough to the wider world.²⁹ In the first sentence of another article published two decades later (2014), Paternu immediately classified *Necropolis* as Pahor's central work³⁰ (29) and, comparing it to other works of the world literature on prison camps, thoroughly analysed its unique artistic character.

Necropolis is undoubtedly one of those works in which universality is always subtly intertwined with singularity.³¹ The central problem in the novel — how to survive, how to preserve one's "bare life" in a state of exception, in a camp as a place "in which the most absolute *conditio inhumana* that has ever existed on earth was realized" (Agamben 166) and the environment that Pahor refers to as a "world of ultimate negation" (*Necropolis* 88) — again concerns the question of memory and, more generally, the ability as such to revive and communicate the experience of a camp. To survive the terrible violence and dehumanisation, and to express them, is a truly great universal theme of all testimonial literature. Where the struggle for bare life is so ubiquitous and (almost) unthinkable cruel and depersonalising, interpersonal communication is itself reduced to a minimum. Levi, for example, in his *If This Is a Man* writes of Auschwitz: "[N]o one here speaks willingly" (35). All the more so for a witness/protagonist in the process of memory reconstruction, who, after 20 years, returns (as a tourist) to the former concentration camp Natzweiler-Struthof in Alsace, and who, in dealing with the camp, must also be faced with the restrictions of memoiristic narrative. The latter unfolds in the novel on two mutually intertwining temporal planes. The first chronologically follows the most recent turn of events, covering a time span of approximately 24 hours during the author's visit to the camp as part of a tour. The bulk of the narrative reaches 20 years back to the wartime period (1944–1945), and, especially in the second part of the book, deals with its traumatic core elements more stochastically.

Although it seems that the chances of survival in the camp are decided by pure coincidence, the narrator imagines that of crucial importance for him was the conscious erasure of all beautiful memories and past images from his consciousness and the rejection of any thought of the future. Setting aside anxiety and focusing

on bare life developed a sort of numbness in him, “a defence system which would not allow the emotion to get to the human core and erode its compressed, self-defensive powers” (Pahor, *Necropolis* 125). Nevertheless, how does one express the horror of a concentration camp experience? It repeatedly occurs to the narrator that the reality presented could perhaps be better captured by a movie camera, but he also has doubts about that:

The celluloid of a movie camera could certainly capture the early-morning shoving of striped uniforms in their cramped beehive as they jump down from their three-tiered bunks and jockey position in the washroom, each hoping to stake claim to a pair of clogs with the canvas intact so they won't come off that day in the snow, mud or deep puddles. And film could capture the firm hand shoving the bowling-ball head of a walking skeleton under a stream of water, the rib cage creaking like a dried-out wicker basket as the hand pushes the spine down even more firmly. [...] Or this moment: the shaved heads all bent over their wooden spoons. Or the zebra-striped anthill as it prepares to turn in at night, tying its rags in bundles before it can run into that freezer full of ticks. But not before each one steps up on a stool so a man holding a caged light can examine his crotch. [...] Maybe it's just as well there was no camera; for who knows what people today might think of that herd of half-naked creatures taking turns stepping up on the stool while the rest look on fearfully incredulous that this member, floodlit, exposed, and withered, is the begetter of all the countless specimens of their two-legged breed. A good thing there was no film—today these wizened creatures with their crotches on display could be taken for a pack of trained dogs, taught through hunger to stand on a stool on their hind legs and sniff each other's parts. (Pahor, *Necropolis* 14-15)

The narrative of the witness gives space to questioning and doubts about the possibilities and meaning of the transmission of the concentration camp experience to those who lack this experience, with his reservations digging into the very nature and character of his memories. In the process, he seeks comparison with other writers:

For a long time now I've been aware that my own experiences were modest compared to what others described in their memoirs. Bláha, Levi, Rousset, Bruck, Ragot, Pappalettera. And that I wasn't observant enough. I was trapped in my dark world, a hollow world populated by shadows. I saw with my eyes,

yes, but did not allow those images to reach my heart. This was not a matter of will; at my first contact with the reality of the camp my spirit was submerged in a fog that filtered events, that bled them of their power. Fear deadened me, but also protected me from the greater evil of accommodating myself to that reality. And so it never occurred to me to take an interest in the names of our superiors, or to join the circles of the influential, or to participate in camp politics. I learned about this only later, when I read the testimonies of others. Even as an interpreter, and later as a medic, I remained one of the herd, another cell in the body of mass fear. (100-101)

Despite doubts in his own strength, Pahor's narrative develops producing an "absolutely realistic" or "radically realistic" (Paternu, *Pahorjeva* 31, 32) memoiristic narrative, which opens up the traumatic totality of camp life and the world, and depicts it in powerful, direct and haunting details; it could be said that reading is made difficult for the reader due to the writer's unsparing directness. The images of the miserable prison accommodation, cruel working hours, devastating hunger, complete exhaustion, fear and apathy regarding everyday events, penal executions and cremations of the dead are raised before the reader's inner eyes. In addition, the narrator, as a nurse in the crematorium world, is faced with unbearable odours having to deal daily with the mass diarrhoea of emaciated prisoners, with their lumpy, smelly growths and bruises, accompanied by a general lack of medicines, minimal means for hygiene and very basic medical equipment. Among his tasks is removing the dead, and the fact does not escape him that their bodies are piled up in front of the furnace in which the water for bathing living prisoners is heated. Not only does Pahor's testimony give form to his personal story, but also to many portraits of his fellow sufferers of different nationalities, highlighting first and foremost — and this is the characteristic singularity of *Necropolis* — the fate of his compatriots from Trieste and Istria, as well as that of Slovenian and other Slavic prisoners, rather than Jews.

Particularly disturbing are the ethical insights of the novel driven by primal egotism; among others, the insight into the ambivalent aspects of the prisoner's instinct for self-preservation. Thus, Pahor both admits (to himself) and self-reproaches the fact that nurses also survived on the bread of their deceased patients: "When the stretchers carried the corpses to the storehouse, their squares of bread stayed on our table. Yes, we ate them. I know what you're thinking. That the crime wasn't in eating them but in counting on eating them. We knew exactly whose bread would stay" (132). Examining his conscience, he reveals the sense of shame

and guilt of a survivor, which, according to Agamben, is the very “*locus classicus*” (cited in Latković and Kovač 33) of the literature about camps: “I want to say something to my former companions, but cannot. I am alive, and that fact makes my best thoughts insincere, my best feelings impure” (Pahor *Necropolis* 68). Later, he adds: “Yet, no one can deny that somewhere deep down it is comforting to see the other being in danger rather than oneself. In a gesture of comradeship, when offering drink to the condemned, there is, despite all of the goodness, a tinge of gratitude for the order of things that has determined that you are the one offering and not the one being offered drink” (Pahor, *Nekropola* 137, Transl. by Mojca Šorli and Neville Hall).

What saves the narrator from the infinite emptiness and all-embracing flood of nothingness, which he resists with all the power of his consciousness, is his modesty and timeless belief in survival. His inner strength is derived from the fact that, being a nurse, he must care for others. Caring for others gives a feeling of usefulness and meaningfulness: “Maybe I owe it to my peasant nature, who knows, but I never had a problem dealing with pus, feces, and blood. While attending befouled bodies my only wish was for them to be clean and lying in bed again, as though a body put to rights externally would be put to rights internally, too” (106). Caring for others or for another, therefore, is manifest in Pahor as a self-sacrificing care for the weary, starving, diseased, decaying and humiliated *bodies* of prisoners. In all probability, the writer’s focus on the body and the corporeal comes from different backgrounds, including the ideological background, as noted by Marta Verginella (*Boris Pahor* 63-65), but it paradoxically transcends the focus on “bare life” in exceptional circumstances typical of camp prisoners, testifying to the resilience of Pahor’s humanist ethos and human solidarity. The very ability to think the body in the most extreme conditions of camp life is, according to Verginella (*ibid.* 64), the specific character of Pahor’s work, distinguishing him in terms of content from the rest of the eminent witnesses of the Holocaust.³²

Furthermore, *Necropolis* is special for its unique expression of style and rich metaphorical language, which builds on and elaborates the realistic representation of events by which testimonial narrative is typically characterised. An example of the metaphorical supplementation of a veristic description is the scene of the mass washing and shaving of prisoners in the camp bathrooms:

But many can’t stand up, because with their rags they have removed their last strength. They sit on their bundles. The light bulb above the entrance etches agitated shadows on callused skin stretched over ribs. On this harp of a human

chest the wind's cold fingers play a quiet requiem. (Pahor, *Necropolis* 29)

The description of events can also be more radically detached from reality, creating drastic and terrifying images:

Then I saw the men who had given up waiting for help and had risen from their mattresses on their own. Or maybe it was the unusual silence that got them out into the sun—frail phantoms whose bare feet made no sound. Naked, their shirts barely reaching their hollow crotches, they groped their way over the narrow terrace. Flapping their arms to keep their balance, like blinded birds whose feathers had been singed off. They went to the steps and began training uphill, as if to escape the fire that would have ravaged the last cells of their bodies. They hung onto the steps and crawled up on all fours, spindly water striders, scorched, knock-kneed spiders as if each excruciating move was the last. (47)

The narrator concludes the reminiscing part of the novel by depicting a scene charged with an unmistakably humanistic point, in which, bracing his strength, he calls on his memory for help. The scene is part of a larger reflection on the collective responsibility of the German people for the existence of concentration camps, about which the writer once again has some doubts, despite the fact that it is from humans that he experienced the terrible humiliation of his body (and soul and spirit). The narrator tries to recall at least one compassionate gesture by the perpetrators that he experienced in the fourteen months spent in camps; it was when a German non-commissioned officer, who noticed him tending to a pus-filled lump on an inmate's leg, provided him with a portion of rice:

The blond noncommissioned officer, who was sitting at the base of a fieldpiece as he ate from his mess tin, looked up and pointed at me with his spoon. I gave him a slight, tired nod, took a small carton, and returned to my corner. It was half full of rice. Ludicrous of the young Siegfried to think he could redeem himself with it. I sat on my blanket and squeezed the warm, pliable carton in my hands. [. . .] And as I tried to divine his thoughts, I felt as if I had some small, live creature in my hands, a young white rabbit, and the warmth that slowly rose from my hand and up my arm seemed familiar. I closed my eyes and with all my strength forced memory to come to my rescue. (137)

The metaphors and stylistic expression that merge in the novel with the essentially realistic depiction upgrade the documentary narrative about concentration camps with a poetic quality. This is characteristically peculiar and unique among the testimonies of the Shoah. For this reason, as well, it seems likely that Pahor's placement in the canon of world literature is far from complete.

Notes

1. In the subsequent editions of *Necropolis*, including the English translation, this note is omitted. All quotations from *Necropolis* are from Biggins's translation of this novel, if not marked differently.
2. One of the greatest novels of memory written in the 20th century is Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–27).
3. See Simona Škrabec. "Ostrina pisave: Boris Pahor v evropskem okviru." *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 139–155.
4. Marta Verginella. "Pahorjev odnos do telesa – ogledala 20. stoletja." *Pahoriana 2013*. Ed. Zdravko Duša. (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2014) 17–32.
5. See Boris Paternu. "Pahorjeva *Nekropola*." *Jezik in slovstvo*, 59.2–3 (2014): 29–41.
6. There are records of translations into Romanian (2015), Albanian (2014), Swedish (2013), French (1990), Spanish (2010), English (1995), Russian (2011), Serbian (2009), Macedonian (2014), Portuguese (2013), Croatian (2012), Dutch (2011), Italian (1997), Finnish (2006), Catalan (2004) and German (2001).
7. For more on the denationalisation of Slovenians under Fascism, see Verginella. *Meja drugih: Primorsko vprašanje in slovenski spomin*. Trans. by Tea Štoka (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2009.).
8. Interestingly, Pahor never translated his works into Italian.
9. Pahor graduated from a classical grammar school in Koper, but his qualification was not officially recognised by the state. After two years, he abandoned the study of theology at the Roman Catholic Seminary in Gorizia and was recruited into the Italian army in 1940. He was sent to Libya, where he completed his matriculation exams. On returning to Italy, he began studies at the University of Padua. While pursuing his studies, he worked in the area of Lago di Garda as an interpreter in a camp for captured officers of the Yugoslav armed forces. Upon the Italian capitulation in 1943, he returned to Trieste and joined the Slovenian National Liberation Front movement. He was, however, betrayed. In January 1944, he was arrested by home guards, who extradited him to the Germans. In 1944, he was taken to the Dachau concentration camp, and from there to the camps Natzweiler-Struthof, Dora-Mittelbau, Harzungen and Bergen Belsen,

where, at the end of the war, he was liberated by the Allies together with the other inmates. He then spent 18 months convalescing from tuberculosis in a French health centre, Villiers-sur-Marne, close to Paris. By the end of 1946, he was back in Trieste, and he graduated in Italian in Padua the following year. He worked as a freelance writer for some time. Then, after marrying Slovenian Radoslava Premrl and until his retirement in 1975, he held teaching posts at Slovenian high schools in Trieste. In the meantime, he wrote, edited and co-edited the literary journals *Sidro*, *Tokovi* and *Zaliv*. He has remained faithful to writing up to this day.

10. Pahor was a member and a vice-president of AIDLCM, an international association for the protection of endangered languages and cultures (Association internationale pour la défense des langues et cultures menacées).

11. The awarded novels were *Vila ob jezeru* and *A Difficult Spring*.

12. See Martina Legiša. "Bibliografija Borisa Pahorja." *Pahorjev zbornik*. Eds. Marija Pirjevec and Vera Ban Tuta. (Trst: Narodna in študijska knjižnica v Trstu, 1993) 240–246.

13. See France Pibernik. "Boris Pahor: *Nekropola*." *Sodobnost*, 15.8 (1967): 927–930.

14. For more details on the role of Boris Pahor in the publication of this famous interview and the consequences for all three participants — Pahor, Rebula and Kocbek — see Tine Hribar. "Pahorjevo prijateljevanje s Kocbekom." *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 115–123. And Igor Omerza. "Boris Pahor ob jamboru: Pahorjev vpliv na Edvarda Kocbeka v primeru objave povojnih likvidacij in odnos uradne slovenske politike do Borisa Pahorja." *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 105–113.

15. Due to their critical positions towards the Slovenian Communist Party leadership, two collaborators of the *Zaliv* journal — Viktor Blažič and Franc Miklavčič — were sentenced to imprisonment in Slovenia at the time.

16. See Martina Legiša. "Bibliografija Borisa Pahorja." *Pahorjev zbornik*. Eds. Marija Pirjevec and Vera Ban Tuta. (Trst: Narodna in študijska knjižnica v Trstu, 1993) 245.

17. In the entire Slovenian territory, as many as nine reviews were published about the novel *V labirintu* (1984).

18. For more details on the critical response in France, see Meta Klinar. "Odzivi medijev na objave Pahorjevih del v Franciji." *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 190–192.

19. We cannot, of course, at this point enter a polemical debate with Pascale Casanova, who was accused on many occasions of being Gaul-centric in her claims that consecration in Paris

was inevitable for the authors from dominated literary spaces, because Paris enjoys the status of a kind of literary central bank, in which books subject to independent critical assessment and transmuted may become denationalised, and their authors “made” universal (cf. Casanova 127).

20. More about critical reception of Pahor's books in France in Meta Klinar. “Odzivi medijev na objave Pahorjevih del v Franciji.” *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 189, 198–200.

21. See Bavčar, 2011, 15–19.

22. Reflecting on the positioning of *Necropolis* in world literature, it would be interesting to investigate how many translations are, in fact, a result of endeavours on the part of Slovenian mediators and translators, and which translations, on the other hand, are a result of the response of cosmopolitan actors to the developments in the globalised book market.

23. In 2002, the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to the now deceased Imre Kertész, a Hungarian writer of Jewish descent who was himself a testimony bearer for the Auschwitz Nazi camp.

24. On Italian reception of Pahor's work see Martina Ožbot. “O prevodnem posredovanju slovenske književnosti ob besedilih Borisa Pahorja.” *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 157–168.

25. According to the Cobiss online bibliography service, ten works by Pahor have been translated to date: nine novels and a collection of short stories. Some of the works have also been reprinted, with *Necropolis* (*Pèlerin parmi les Ombres*) seeing the most reprints. As noted by Meta Klinar (189), Pahor is the most translated and best-known Slovenian writer in France.

26. In addition, Pahor received the following awards in France: in 2006, he was appointed a Knight of Arts and Culture by the French Minister of Culture; in 2007, he received the highest French decoration, the Knight of the French Order of the Legion of Honour, awarded by the President of France; and in 2011, he was appointed a Komtur of the Order of Arts and Letters (Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres) of the French Republic (Klinar 196).

27. See, for instance, Ivanka Hergold. “Zapiski o Pahorjevi *Nekropoli*.” *Pahorjev zbornik*. Eds. Marija Pirjevec and Vera Ban Tuta. (Trst: Narodna in študijska knjižnica v Trstu, 1993) 160–174. And “Bivanjska muka in upornost nesvobodnih ljudi v opusu Borisa Pahorja.” In: Boris Pahor, *Nekropola*. (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1997) 195–228. Also see Franc Zadravec. “Od povratnikovega vitalističnega dialoga do njegove spominske slike o *Nekropoli*.” *Pahorjev zbornik*. Eds. Marija Pirjevec and Vera Ban Tuta. (Trst: Narodna in študijska knjižnica v Trstu, 1993) 118–132. And “Slovenski roman o nasilju: Na primeru romana *Nekropola*.” *Individualni in generacijski ustvarjalni ritmi v slovenskem jeziku, književnosti in kulturi*. Eds. Marko Juvan and Tomaž Sajovic. (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1994) 409–417.

28. See René de Ceccatty. "Pahor, dostojanstvo, identiteta, spomin." Trans. by Krištof Jacek Kozak. *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. Koper: Univerza na Primorskem (Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 21–26. And Thomas Poiss. "Razumevanje bolečine: pogost motiv v opusu Borisa Pahorja." Trans. by Gašper Malej. *Poetika slovenstva: Družbeni in literarni opus Borisa Pahorja*. Eds. Barbara Pregelj and Krištof Jacek Kozak. (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2011) 43–49.
29. See Boris Paternu. "Pisatelj Boris Pahor." *Pahorjev zbornik*. Eds. Marija Pirjevec and Vera Ban Tuta. (Trst: Narodna in študijska knjižnica v Trstu, 1993) 111–115.
30. See Boris Paternu. "Pahorjeva *Nekropola*." *Jezik in slovstvo*, 59.2–3 (2014).
31. On singularity see Derek Attridge. *The Singularity of Literature*. (London and New York: Routledge, 204) 63–64.
32. Verginella (65) adds: "In his capacity to either relive the camp experience through the body and physical changes or the exposition of camp atrocities in their physical determinedness, Pahor comes closest to Shlomo Venezia, a member of Sonderkommand in Auschwitz, who testifies about shifting corpses from the gas chambers to the crematorium furnaces."

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The Presentation of the Mind in Dane Zajc's Lyric Poetry¹

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Abstract Dane Zajc, one of the most prominent Slovenian poets of the twentieth century, repeatedly thematized man's solitude, desperation, and other states of mind. This paper analyzes three selected poems by Zajc. In "The Giant Black Bull" he combined two types of speech, which could be ascribed to one or two different speakers. The main character, the bull, is characterized with a single act that invites different interpretations. In the fourth poem from the cycle "Two," narration is combined with direct speech; again, characters and their dispositions, revealed by actions, speech, and figurative descriptions, are essential for understanding the poem. The poem "The Ear of the Mountain" diverges because the speaker's consciousness tries to merge with some mysterious force that surrounds and transcends it. This article applies some narratological findings about the presentation of the mind in novels to lyric poetry through the study of Dane Zajc's poetry. Traditionally, interpreting lyric poems includes (re)construction of the speaker, and narratology can provide useful tools to broaden the analysis. I propose that studying the presentation of the mind in lyric poetry raises two questions: 1) Who attributes states of mind to whom? and 2) What techniques are used to attribute states of mind? In lyric poetry, (implied) authors, speakers, and (implied) readers usually attribute states of mind to speakers; compared with narrative fiction, characters' consciousness seems to be represented less often in lyric poetry (most obviously in dramatic monologues), and it is not usual for characters to attribute states of mind to other characters. Regarding techniques, one should observe categories for discourse presentation and the use of figurative or literal expressions.

Key words lyric poetry; narratology; mind; Slovenian poetry; Dane Zajc

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Introduction

In recent times, the literary presentation of the mind has been studied in detail by representatives of cognitive narratology (Alan Palmer and Lisa Zunshine, among others), with a focus on literary characters in novels. They are interested in what the mind encompasses in the first place (internal speech, thinking, perceptions, emotions, moods, dispositions, memories, beliefs, etc.), what narrative techniques make its representation possible in first-person and third-person narratives (internal monologue, free indirect speech, descriptions, etc.), how a character's mind is presented in the minds of other literary characters, what the role of readers and various contexts is in constructing minds, what parallels can be drawn between literary characters and real-life persons, and so on. This article connects some findings by cognitive narratologists with the theory of lyric poetry, which is traditionally considered the most subjective literary genre, and then applies these findings in an analysis of the presentation of the mind in some selected poems by Dane Zajc.

Dane Zajc (1929–2005), a charismatic person of rare words and a brilliant presenter of his own poems, excelled as a poet, playwright, and essayist. He became part of the Slovenian national literary canon by the 1960s, and he received the highest national award for lifetime achievement in 1981. In the last decades of his life, he was considered the greatest living Slovenian poet. A public secret (because information about candidates is not officially revealed) was that he was repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Prize by certain Slovenian institutions. However, his international reputation, unsystematically built on translations of his selected works into several languages and on his readings abroad, remained more or less confined to certain prominent poetic circles, as is usual in the cases of many other Slovenian poets. For example, when he was a Fulbright fellow at Columbia University in New York in 1982, Joseph Brodsky is said to have praised his poems as the great work of a small nation.

Some Theoretical Perspectives

The first question I focus on in this section is what it means to define lyric poetry as the presentation of the mind, and how important the fictiveness of the presented mind is in this regard. In his article "The Lyric: Problems of Definition and a Proposal for Reconceptualisation," Werner Wolf summarized nine alleged traits of lyricism (or poetry, because he acknowledged that no distinction between these terms seems to be appropriate any longer). Among them, "the existence of a seemingly unmediated consciousness or agency, perhaps even of a 'persona' as the fictional origin of the text" (27), is one of paramount interest for this article. According to Wolf, the fictional persona is often addressed as the lyric I. He admits, however, that for some critics the lyric I is not a constituent generic feature of lyric poetry, given that many poems do not contain it. The impression of the immediate presence of a consciousness can be explained as the result of speaking in the first person. If the poem is conveyed in the second or third person, the origin of the text obviously cannot be addressed as the lyric I; for this reason, names such as *speaker*, *voice*, *lyric subject* (German: *lyrische Subjekt*), or even *narrator* seem to be more appropriate. Mediated consciousness is not included in Wolf's taxonomy of lyric or poetic traits, probably because it is supposed to be typical for narrative fiction. However, there is no doubt that poems conveyed in the second or third person can produce the effect of representing the mind or consciousness (in this article, I use both of these terms as synonyms). Whether consciousness is mediated or seemingly unmediated does not change the result; the access to the mental states of an alleged person can be gained anyway.

There is a long tradition of questioning the identity and ontological status of the person whose consciousness is supposed to be represented in lyric poetry. Broadly speaking, when a text is conveyed in the first person, the speaker is also the protagonist of the poem (or, to put it in narratological terms, its autodiegetic narrator). Peter Hühn, a theorist that promotes mapping narratological concepts onto poetry, noticed that "romantic poems, for example, often suggest the identity of narrator (speaker) and protagonist" (153). Romantic poems are one example of this model, but it can also be found in poems from Antiquity. Plato and Aristotle identified it as the mode of speech that allows the poet to speak in his own name. Theoretically equating this mode of speech with lyric poetry was surpassed when the new critics introduced the concept of the fictive speaker. As the result, in the twentieth century lyric poetry has usually been considered as "the dramatization of thoughts and feelings of a speaker whom one reconstructs" (Culler 76).

At this point, it is appropriate to address the problem of speakers' fictionality. Does it matter whether the speaker is fictive or the poet himself or herself? According to Sabine Coelsch-Foisner, "The question whether the poetic self is a fictional persona or the poet speaking in his or her own nature is a flawed question" (72). Fictional or nonfictional, according to the theory of the narrative self, the self is always constituted by narration, and therefore "we are not dealing with a different ontology" (72). Regarding the function of the empirical or biographical author, it should be emphasized that Hühn recently recognized this author as one of the four mediators of incidents (or the story) in poetry as well as in narrative genres (the other three agents of mediacy are the textual subject, or implicit author, speaker or narrator, and protagonist). More importantly for this article, "the empirical author is relevant merely as a criterion for determining the historical (and cultural) plausibility of possible frames and scripts" (152).

The central role assigned to the speaker in recent theories of lyric poetry can lead to the conclusion that the speaker, and not some other agent, must be in focus when discussing lyric poetry as a presentation of the mind. As mentioned at the beginning, narratological investigations of the literary presentation of the mind mainly focus on characters in novels. Alan Palmer's most important methodological tool is attribution theory; he examines how narrators, characters, and readers attribute states of mind to characters and, where appropriate, also to themselves. Lisa Zunshine² similarly grounded her analysis on the Theory of Mind (or mind reading). The basic definition of Theory of Mind was given by Baron-Cohen: the concept describes people's ability to explain behavior in terms of underlying thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions. Both theories seem to fit well into the realm of lyric poetry, although this is traditionally regarded as a genre that does not represent actions, but feelings. The investigation of the presentation of the mind in lyric poetry therefore could focus on two questions: Who attributes states of mind to whom? What techniques are used to attribute states of mind?

Regarding the first point, only slight modifications of Palmer's taxonomy are needed: in lyric poetry, (implied) authors, speakers, and (implied) readers usually attribute states of mind to speakers; compared to narrative fiction, characters' consciousness seems to be represented less often in lyric poetry (most obviously in the dramatic monologue), and it is not usual for characters to attribute states of mind to other characters. However, two additional observations, already suggested in this article, should be considered: 1) in lyric poetry, speakers often merge with the role of protagonist; and 2) the assumption that the first-person narrator, so long as he remains unnamed, must be the poet himself is still "the chief rationalization

in any reading experience" (Rifatterre 255).

As far as techniques are concerned, I assume that the same techniques can be used in narratives and lyric poems; however, some of them are more common in one or the other genre, and, furthermore, their frequency changes in different periods and personal styles. Linguistic models of discourse presentation, which are often applied when discussing the presentation of the mind in novels, include several categories that are also relevant for the analysis of presenting consciousness in lyric poetry. First-person expression of thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions in free direct speech (or, rather, free direct thought if one considers romantic theories about lyric poetry) is probably the most common lyric model because it can be found in countless poems written by Sappho, Catullus, Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Prešeren, not to mention contemporary poets. In modernism, the interior monologue (a type of first-person free direct thought) prevailed as a mode of representing the "stream of consciousness," which includes subconscious or pre-speech levels of consciousness (Humphrey 3).

Another applicable linguistic category, introduced by Elena Semino and Mick Short in their seminal volume *Corpus Stylistics*, is "internal narration" or "narration of internal states." They described it as a technique for representing a "character's cognitive and emotional experiences without presenting any specific thoughts" (46). For example, in "For a moment she didn't know where she was," "we are told that one of the characters experienced a moment of cognitive disorientation, but no thoughts are explicitly reported" (46). Semino and Short stressed that internal narration is the most frequent of their thought presentation categories, and that it also occurs in first- and third-person narration. In their definition, internal narration "does not include reports of characters' perceptions, whether those stimuli are internal ("She felt a pain in her stomach") or external ("She felt the softness of his hair"). Examples such as these were coded as Narration (N)" (46). Because they defined narration as "presenting states, events and actions in the fictional world" (10), they do not discuss it as a part of speech or thought presentation. On the other hand, action descriptions are of primary interest from the viewpoint of attribution theory. As Palmer stressed, "What appear to be simple action descriptions in novels often contain a good deal of explicit information about characters' consciousness" (85). Again, this technique could also be useful when analyzing the presentation of the mind in lyric poetry.

When discussing different modes of the presentation of the mind, it must be noted that states of mind can be conveyed not only literally, but also figuratively. Particularly in romantic poetry, feelings are often represented through metaphors

and symbols, and the concept of projecting feelings into the outer world, not necessarily nature, is still deeply rooted in some contemporary poetry. Among the poets related to the idea that lyric poetry does not only represent feelings, as was emphasized in romantic theories, but instead different experiences, I would like to highlight Stéphane Mallarmé. In his well-known definition of the symbol, he stated: "To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which derives from the pleasure of step-by-step discovery; to suggest, that is the dream. It is the perfect use of this mystery that constitutes the symbol: to evoke an object little by little, so as to bring to light a state of the soul or, inversely, to choose an object and bring out of it a state of the soul through a series of unravelings" (trans. by Roger Pearson 164). As Roger Pearson noticed in his volume *Stéphane Mallarmé*, "often 'état d'âme' is translated as 'mood' or 'feeling,' but Mallarmé very specifically has in mind the way in which a particular object or experience, however banal or apparently meaningless, in fact serves a function for a 'state of soul' of which we may be only subliminally conscious" (164).

At this point I would like to expand my topic with yet another problem that demands at least some brief attention. So far I have not questioned how the mind or consciousness is defined. I silently followed the idea that the mind is an interior domain, opposite to the outer world. However, as the literary theorist David Herman noted, the so-called Cartesian model of the mind was recently replaced by models of the mind as distributed across the brain, body, and world. According to post-Cartesian research frameworks, "minds are inextricably embedded in contexts for action and interaction, and arise from the interplay between intelligent agents and the broader social and material environments that they must negotiate" (9). Enactivists have claimed that cognition is not the recovery of a pre-given outer world or a projection of a pre-given inner world, but an embodied action. Cognition is "the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs" (cited in Herman 256). Mental states can be viewed as both shaped by and contributing to action possibilities, and they are more or less tightly imbricated with local environments for acting (257). Herman claims that modernist writers have already pointed to the inseparability of perceiving and thinking from acting and interacting (253). In his analysis of a selected passage from *Mrs Dalloway*, he demonstrated how "the passage anchors intentions, desires, inferences, and emotional responses in possibilities for action that are shaped by — and also shape — the characters' sense of what is going on" (263). Without any further research, I can only assume that applying the enactivist model of the mind to modernist poems would lead to similar conclusions.

A Brief Survey of Dane Zajc's Books of Poetry

Zajc's first four books of poetry — *Požgana trava* (The Burnt Grass, 1958), *Jezik iz zemlje* (The Tongue Made of Earth, 1961), *Ubijavci kač* (The Killers of Snakes, 1969), and *Rožengruntar* (Rožengruntar, 1975) — can be read as a narrative whole.³ The story of the speaker begins with his youthful disillusion, continues with attempts to rebel against God, and ends with the individual's dissolution. In the book *Ubijavci kač*, the collective steps to the fore, but the crowd of people is looking in vain for their savior. The cycle of poems titled "NO svet," which stands at the end of *Rožengruntar*, summarizes some basic findings about the world and human beings: God is absent; time runs cyclically; life is a theater in which players wear masks; and reprobates disable individuals that have noble objectives. Zajc's poetry published after the volume *Rožengruntar* is thematically different. The speaker is more mature, and he has come to terms with the world, thinks about the transience of life, and intensely accepts sensory impressions. When he looks around for the first time, he wonders about everything he sees and hears; hence the title of the book: *Si videl* (*Did You See*, 1979). What is most important seems to be his discovery that a mountain is a sacred place. The speaker in *Zarotitve* (*The Spells*, 1985) experiences ecstatic moments on the mountain, whereas in the book *Dol dol* (*Dawn, Dawn*, 1998) he admits defeat when he realizes that the altars of the mountain cathedral are empty.

In the first books, metaphors and symbols often indicate the mood of the speaker, in particular his loneliness and existential dissatisfaction. Frequent are also projections of emotions in nature, which is a feature typical of the romantic poets, who did not describe emotions directly but posed them as features of outside world, especially the landscape. In some poems, the speaker's desire for fusion with nature is thematized; this is also a romantic feature. Dane Zajc returned to this theme in the book *Zarotitve*; for example, the poem "Razfrčiš se gor pa dol" describes fusion with a tree after the addressee reaches a bodiless state in which thoughts do not switch on or off. Experience is ecstatic, comparable with mystic experience.

With poeticizing unusual, liminal psychological states, Zajc departed from traditional themes of poetry, and so many of his images are also unusual. A motif analysis of Zajc's imagery would show that he used and varied topoi (e.g., man is a tree, life is a journey, or love is fire), but his creative energy focused on the aesthetics of the terrible. In the books *Požgana trava* and *Jezik iz zemlje*, images of bloody physical violence are typical (adders devour hearts, saints are burning, birds are falling apart). In *Ubijavci kač* and *Rožengruntar*, he intensified the

psychological pressure; the images of violence became increasingly grotesque and sophisticated (corpses beat the living with their sacrifice, and babies are raped in their heads). The aesthetics of the terrible can also be found in the books after *Rožengruntar*, but the images are less direct, and the creepy merges with mystery.

The aesthetics of the terrible, typical for the first four books, arises from engaging with man's consciousness. Images of hostile animals and cruel physical violence intimate what is happening in the personal and collective unconsciousness. The German romantics already stated that man is not only a beautiful soul; the symbolists dealt with the subconscious, encouraged by the discoveries of psychoanalysis; and the expressionists observed subject dissociation in the modern city — and, although their images were different in their motifs, they also implied the disintegration of the single consciousness. Some of Zajc's images are similar to expressionist projections of states of mind; a similarity is also evident in relation to transcendence because the so-called atheism of expressionist literature was actually a pro-vocation of a hidden, unknown God. Zajc's poem "Upor" (in *Požgana trava*) and his cycle "Gotska okna" (in *Jezik iz zemlje*) are typical examples of provoking an absent God. The attitude towards transcendence later changes: in the cycle "NO svet" (in *Rožengruntar*), the speaker accepts that God is unknown, in the book *Si videl* he recognizes the signs of its presence in nature, in *Zarotivte* he experiences ecstatic moments while mingling with the infinite, and in the book *Dol dol* he cannot repeat this experience, and therefore he contemplates God's existence in terms of negative theology. Modern poetry is usually associated with the evanishment of the authorial speaker; moreover, some poems are difficult to understand as (someone's) utterance. When a poem is composed of many anonymous voices and intertwined with allusions and quotations from various texts, the reader cannot easily assemble a coherent narrative or lyrical experience. Dane Zajc did not write poems that could not be attributed to a speaker. In *Požgana trava* and especially in the books *Jezik iz zemlje*, *Ubijavci kač*, and *Si videl* he frequently addressed another person, but he also wrote in the third and first person. Some poems from *Rožengruntar* appear at first glance to be completely depersonalized, but more detailed reading indicates that they can be understood as coming from the decomposed, uncentralized consciousness because the images indicate its status. The process of depersonalization in Zajc's poetry is not radical; it is mainly the authorial speaker that is erased. This happens in the second-person poems, in poems that are uttered by a dissolved consciousness, and in narrative poems.

“The Giant Black Bull”

This poem, composed of four stanzas of different lengths, appeared in the book *Požgana trava* in 1958 and has remained one of Zajc's most often anthologized poems to this day. It is also part of the curriculum in the last grades of secondary schools. As is typical for Zajc, it is written in free verse, with many repetitions and parallelisms as the main rhythmic devices. Much of the poem's rhythmic impact is due to its short and syntactically undemanding lines. The verses in the first stanza each consist of one sentence, and enjambment is deliberately used for semantic emphasis in the rest of the poem. The speaker remains undisclosed. Although he does not reveal anything about himself directly, the reader is able to construct one or possibly two speakers by analyzing the utterances. Linguistically speaking, two types of speech, which could be ascribed to one or two different speakers, are combined in the poem: 1) free direct speech in the third person with no specific addressee, and 2) free direct speech in the second person with the giant bull as the addressee. There is another figure — namely, the personified sun with a butcher's axe — that is briefly mentioned at the end of the poem, but there is no doubt that the bull is the main character.

The first verse, repeated at the beginning of the second and fourth stanzas, is a simple report of the poem's main event: the giant black bull roars in the morning. Characterization, based on this single act, does not reveal anything about the bull's motives or intentions. The reader can activate different scripts at this point, assuming that the animal is loud out of pain, anger, joy, or excitement. More clues that help in interpreting the bull's behavior and comprehending its mental states are inserted in the speaker's words, addressed to the bull. Twice he asks whom the bull was calling and, when he does not receive any answer from the animal, he offers his own assumption: that the bull was trying to reach someone in order to surmount its solitude. Because there is nobody that could hear the bull, the speaker even suggests that the animal enjoys listening to the echo of its own voice. Eventually he commands the bull to be quiet.

In order to interpret the bull's action, the speaker has to work out its disposition. The reader's job is doubled because he has to comprehend not only the bull's mind, but also the speaker's mind. So far, one can assume that the ideal reader thinks that the speaker believes that the bull is lonely. However, the states of mind ascribed to the bull can easily be interpreted as projections of the speaker's own mood. In this case, the reader's interpretation grows from the assumption that the speaker sensed an analogy between the bull and himself,

and, when addressing the bull as deserted and unheard, he actually revealed his own existential desperation. In the context of the late 1950s, when the poem was published, existentialist interpretation was more than plausible and it can be still supported with other poems by Zajc with similar themes. However, for some readers the interpretation does not end at this point. They would argue that the speaker has to be Zajc addressing himself metaphorically when speaking to bull in the second person because he as a poet must have been personally concerned with the possibility that nobody would listen him or respond to his poems. Another interpretation, which seems to be similarly farfetched, occurred when Zajc submitted the book to the prominent publisher Cankarjeva Založba. Ivan Potrč, the editor and a writer himself, believed that the bull might represent Boris Zihlerl, a Slovenian political leader at that time, who was known to shout very loudly. Potrč asked the poet to drop the poem; Zajc declined to do so, and he decided to publish the book on his own.⁴

Because the poem does not contain any firm explanation of the bull's behavior, the question of why it roars remains the key one for different interpretations. One of them recapitulates the motifs spread through the poem and related to the Mithraic rite, which was popular among Roman soldiers and also known in some parts of what is today Slovenia in the first centuries AD. According to the scene depicted in Mithras's temples, the god Mithras slaughtered a bull. Because there are no original written documents to explain this scene, its meaning is uncertain. As far as is known, the main ceremony was a feast, which followed the example of Mithras and Sol (the Sun), who shared a meal over the dead bull's body (Hinnelis 92). In Zajc's poem, the very act of slaughtering does not take place, but several hints point to what is supposedly going to happen. As mentioned before, the personified sun honing an axe appears in the last verses. Intertextually, one can recognize an allusion to Appolinaire's enigmatic verse "Soleil cou coupé" (in *Zone*). Meaningful is also the comparison in the second stanza, in which the third-person speaker compares the sound of the bull's roar with blood jetting towards the apexes of spruces. Once again, attribution theory proves to be a helpful tool to fill many gaps in the poem. The reader can assume that the bull roars because it expects to be slaughtered. In order to activate this script, the ancient myth does not even have to be mentioned. When Mithras killed the bull at the Sun's command, he caused the emergence of plants and animals. If Zajc's poem is read as a reinterpretation of this myth, killing the giant black bull is a precondition and symbol for the cyclic renovation of life. Part of the poem's timeless appeal is that other interpretations are possible when the bull is regarded as a symbol of virility or fecundity apart

from the Mithraic myth.

“Two”

“Two” is a cycle of six poems in the book *Jezik iz zemlje*, and it relates to the motif of two lovers thematized in them. The individual poems do not have any titles besides numbers. The fourth poem is one of Zajc's best-known poems, although it does not present the love theme in a traditional manner, as a source of eternal bliss and happiness. Slovenian is one of the few modern languages that uses the dual as a grammatical number, and it is already able to emphasize the intimacy of two lovers with minimal effort at the grammatical level. Zajc used the dual in an equally persuasive way to express how solitude disappears and then alienation grows again between two persons in love. Again, characters and their dispositions are essential for understanding the poem. Unlike “The Giant Black Bull,” the speaker's states of mind are not in the foreground and he is not part of the story that he narrates in the present tense. An omniscient perspective allows him to describe precisely what is happening and to penetrate the two lovers' minds. As is usual in many of Zajc's poems, narration is combined with direct speech. In this poem, the sentences uttered by the two lovers are tagged with the verbs *say*, *answer*, and *whisper*, although quotation marks are absent.

As far as the vocabulary is concerned, the two lovers and the speaker use similar figures of speech — namely, metaphors and comparisons. The poem begins with the speaker's metaphorical description of physical intimacy — when the man touches the woman, the ice of her body melts away. Presenting emotional detachment in terms of low temperatures or even ice is not unusual because love as the opposite feeling is conventionally equated with fire. Zajc managed to revitalize the metaphor “emotional disinterest is ice” when he replaced the abstract term with the concrete noun *body* and added a secondary, semantically connected verbal metaphor: “melts away.” At the same time, he also emphasized the link between emotions, thoughts, and the body. Once her body is free of ice, it is associated with autumn, rich with fruit. Again, the speaker reveals the woman's changed mind by using a metaphor. When the man addresses the woman, he presents his feelings and inclinations similarly, by comparing the smell of her body with the smell of moss under fruit. His words cause further emotional unifying, which is expressed with a metaphor of two forests of thoughts running in two different directions, and a metaphor of knocking down the rocky walls between their eyes. After the climax, their emotions start to cool very fast: they are both so quiet that they can hear two forests fettered in ice, and a dam growing between them, with cold water falling

over it.

“The Ear of the Mountain”

Actions, speech, and figurative descriptions are essential for constructing speakers’ and characters’ minds in “The Giant Black Bull” and in the fourth poem from the cycle “Two.” In both cases, there seems to be a firm dividing line between preexisting minds and the surrounding world, whereas in “The Ear of the Mountain” (published in *Zarotivte*) the speaker’s consciousness tries to merge with some mysterious force that surrounds and transcends it. While the sun sets in the mountains, the speaker gives instructions addressed to no one specific, or possibly to himself (with the verbs in the infinitive); he recommends minimizing physical presence by breathing inaudibly and stopping the heartbeat, which could reveal one’s presence. One has to watch very tentatively, with eyes on all four sides of the sky at once, and even open the sight on the vertex in order to recognize the signs that start to appear. In addition to the usual audible and visual sensations, there seems to arise something unknown and overwhelming that one could possibly comprehend only when paying special attention. However, suddenly the situation changes when the wind starts to blow. The person, represented only synecdochally with the head, heart, eyes, and vertex in the first stanza, becomes more recognizable in the second stanza, where the eyes and breath are marked with the pronoun *yours*. Sensations are now personalized; they are in charge to establish one’s mind, not to dissolve it. The special moment is over because of the sounds produced by the wind, which reestablish the person’s sense of singularity and fill the personified ear of the mountain.

Because Zajc enjoyed mountain hiking, the experience described in “The Ear of the Mountain” could easily be read as his personal one. One cannot ignore the fact that his background, especially during the Second World War — when two of his brothers were killed by the Nazis and the house where he was born was burned — shaped his worldview in a very distinctive way. Nevertheless, disillusionment and a deep sense of everlasting solitude, as his most prominent themes, are universal and connect this “dark modernist” with other great poetic voices of the twentieth century.

Notes

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2. See Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction, Theory of Mind and the Novel*, (Columbus: The Ohio State UP, 2006).
3. Zajc's books of poetry, except *Dol dol*, were republished in: Dane Zajc, *Pesmi*, Ljubljana, Emonica, 1990. For his last collection see Dane Zajc, *Dol dol*, (Ljubljana, Nova Revija, 1998).
4. See Dane Zajc, *Intervjuji*, Ljubljana, Emonica, 1990.

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Otherness and the Contemporary Slovene Novel

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Abstract In this paper, three contemporary Slovene novels are discussed in which the otherness of the literary figure is closely linked to the otherness of the literary language used: Vitomil Zupan's *Journey to the End of Spring*, Berta Bojetu-Boeta's *Filio is Not at Home* and Lojze Kovačič's *Childhood Things*. The otherness of these novels is not only confirmed primarily within the context of the contemporary Slovene novel, but also in comparison with the world stage, where the Slovene novel represents a minority literature. The novel *Journey to the End of Spring* is different because of the main character Tajsí, who is an erotomaniac, a compulsive writer and a picaresque figure; as well as the otherness of the protagonist, the dynamics of the poetics is also shaped by the modernist narrative connected with the universal category of the neo-picaresque. The contribution of the novel *Filio is Not at Home* to the sense of otherness lies in the generic syncretism of dystopia, as well as in the eponymous female character whose name, Filio, indicates a vision of the female and male principles being brought together. In the new millennium, the greatest sense of otherness has been brought to the Slovene context by the autobiographical novel *Childhood Things*, particularly the child's perspective, the unreliable narrator and enigmatic descriptions. The very technique of this autobiographical novel is also different, combining realist and modernist poetics into realistic modernism; this connects smoothly with the difference of the main character Bubi, who in spite of his young age (from newborn to eleven years old) expresses himself with merciless candour, an innovative critical stance, radical provocation and consistent nonconformism.

Key words otherness; contemporary Slovene novel; erotomaniac; dystopia; autobiographical novel

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She has published many articles in reviews and collections of papers in Slovenia and abroad. She is the author of six books, including: *Robovi mreže, robovi jaza: sodobni slovenski roman*, 2006 (*Edges of the Net, Edges of the Self: The Contemporary Slovene Novel*); *Na pomolu sodobnosti ali o književnosti in romanu*, 2011 (*On the Quay of Contemporaneity; Literature and the Novel*); *V tebi se razraščam. Antologija slovenske erotične poezije*, 2008. (*I am Growing Inside You. An Anthology of Slovene Erotic Poetry*). Her fields of expertise are: the contemporary Slovene novel, Slovene literature in a comparative context, Slovene love poetry, theory of narrative text, theory of gender and gender identity, interpretation in literature. She has led a number of projects, including “The Other in Slovene and Bosnian Literature.”

In recent times, the primarily ethically related theme of literature as a space of the Other, of otherness and differentness has been tackled by a great many theorists, from Bahtin, Camus, Iser, Derrida, Blancot and Lévinas to Nussbaum and various critics of multiculturalism. Unlike many literary theory studies in this area, my contribution does not deal with otherness as a largely ethical problem. My starting point is Peggy Kamuf's¹ thesis that literature is capable of opening up otherness precisely because of its fictional character, which has no references and thus no firmly fixed (linguistic) borders, but because of the semantic breadth of otherness restricts itself to the otherness of the main literary characters, as well as of the otherness of the whole narrative. The following discussion also takes into account the novel as a space of otherness in the context of European or world literature. Even a cursory glance at various surveys, anthologies and canonic list shows that very few Slovene novels are included in the European/Western canon. This is partly due to the newly established (1991) Slovene state, which has not entirely found its way into the European consciousness; Slovenia is often dealt with only as part of the former Yugoslavia (because of the Nobel Prize, Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina* was well known). In this article I discuss three contemporary Slovene novels in which the otherness of the literary figures is closely linked with the otherness of the literary language used: Vitomil Zupan's *Journey to the End of Spring*, Berta Bojetu-Boeta's *Filio is Not at Home* and Lojze Kovačič's *Childhood Things*. The otherness of these novels is confirmed primarily in the context of the contemporary Slovene novel, but I also draw attention to their otherness through comparison with similar world novels. I shall refer to two great shifts in Slovene literature that strongly marked the cotemporary Slovene novel: the first is the birth of the modernist novel in the mid-20th century, and the other is the appearance of the new

national state and of transitional literature at the end of the millennium.

Before I turn to these works, which represent the peak of Slovene novel writing and undoubtedly belong among the world literary canon,² I shall briefly present the contemporary Slovene novel. This is a multi-layered phenomenon that since the 1950s has been marked by different cultural factors, social changes, literary currents and trends, and by both groups and individual authors. Its beginnings coincide with the appearance of modernist strivings, particularly the modernist and existentialist novel, which brought a significant shift within Slovene literature. The appearance of the modernist Slovene novel can be placed in the 1950s, when the most powerful literary current in Slovenia was social realism. After the end of the Second World War Slovene society underwent fundamental changes that also conditioned the writing of literature. The early post-war years were marked primarily by the rebuilding the devastated homeland, the leadership of the Party in every domain of life and the doctrine of Soviet social (and socialist) realism. Slovene literature followed the demand for socialist realism rather inconsistently and after the *Informbiro* resolution of 1948 its influence waned. As well as internal reasons, initiatives that represented a break with the realist tradition were also encouraged by events on the European and international scene, particularly encounters with the existentialist, modernist “new novel” and the theatre of the absurd.

For literary historians, Dominik Smole’s *Black Days and a White Day* (1958) is usually cited as the first contemporary Slovene novel, although mention is also made of Vitomil Zupan’s *Journey to the End of Spring* (1940, 1972), which was written in 1940 but for both objective and subjective reasons was published only in 1972. I chose to analyse this novel by writer, dramatist and poet Vitomil Zupan (1914-1987) for a number of reasons. The first is that Zupan’s existentialism reflects Slovene literary existentialism in general: there is rarely an appearance of the nihilistic, hopeless variant of this creed that developed in France (e.g. Céline’s *Journey to the End of the Night*), rather it is characterised by a vital resilience, although the existential anxiety arises from an existentialist understanding of the world and of life which in Slovene literature was linked primarily to the works of Sartre and Camus. The other reason has already been mentioned: that in the context of contemporary Slovene literature, Zupan’s main character is very different, as is the language of the novel. More than in other Slovene novels, Zupan’s heroic-picaresque figures decide for the “arena,” for constant struggle against the absurdity and apathy of a society in which adventure is identified with woman, woman with the erotic, the erotic with writing and writing with life. The erotic is Zupan’s

central theme, the characteristic narrative perspective and the source of the novel's dynamism.

The dynamic poetics of *Journey to the End of Spring* differs from that of Zupan's contemporaries, for in his novels the erotic is not only a literary record of sensuality, but pervades the existential and essential anguish of modern man. It speaks not only of erotic dimensions, but presents an outline of the individual's fate and the collective one. In the Slovene literary context, the exceptional vitality of this erotic perspective still seems unusual and even demonic, and Zupan differs from other erotic poets and writers above all in a romantic experiencing of the erotic as something essential, transcendental and heroic. This narrative intensity was undoubtedly influenced by the author's literary models, among which, in addition to Russian and French classics, he mentions Greek *kalokagathia* and the erotic-heroic model of Casanova, while literary historians compare his erotic activism with the rebellious stance of Henry Miller,³ whose metaphysical interpretation of sexuality raises the meaning of art in a similarly romantic way. Both writers put sexuality in first place and made use of certain psychoanalytical (primarily Freudian⁴) concepts, although they did not explore physicality in order to uncover its pathology.

A comparison of Zupan's novel with Miller's work is justified only at the story level, not that of the narrative, for the narrative procedures used by the initiator of Slovene modernism are much more radical in the sense of loosening traditional (realist) models. His poetics of the fragment shattered the linear narrative line and loosened the causal logic of the essayistic and lyrical approach, while leaving realism to descriptive elements, as is characteristic of the modernist approach, which no longer adhered to the principle of imitation but rather emphasised Wilde's maxim that "life imitates art." This novel is connected with modernism also by the temporal manipulation that is labelled as a typical modernist characteristic; in his view, time offers literature more opportunities for manipulation than does space. The narrative innovations, such as multilinearity, fragmentation and associativeness, can be connected not only to modernism and existentialism, but also certain generic models within the overall category of the picaresque. While Zupan's modernist narrative is sometimes a "collage" of mental, emotional and sensory states underlain by the stream of consciousness, it is the unusual and diverse events that form the dynamic elements connected with the picaresque. This is not presented as the application of generic formulae to Zupan's narrative, but rather as a unit of basic structures that form into the generalised and suprahistorical dimension of the picaresque.

Today some literary historians (e.g. Will 1991) refer to the neopicaresque and as a synthesis of defining traits of picaresque novels in the 20th century do not measure it only against traditional picaresque novels (from, for example, the 17th and 18th centuries). Since the contemporary label picaresque is extremely wide and made up of contradictory properties, let me first list the essential features of the picaresque situation, the conditions for the phenomenon including the updated or neopicaresque: a picaresque perspective, a panoramic structure or loose episodic nature, first person narrative with a narrative gap between the experienced and narrative self; the *picaro* as a pragmatic and isolated protagonist is a protean figure, the relationship between the *picaro* and the environment switches from exclusion to inclusion and back again, and there is implicit parody of other types of novels and of the picaresque itself. In the novel by Zupan discussed here there are quite a number of basic picaresque situations, as well as the characteristic picaresque themes of vanity and freedom. The first of these speaks of the vapidness of life and is connected with the portrayal of moral perversion, while the theme of freedom actually involves exploring the paradox of being trapped by freedom. The categorisation of Zupan's novel as (neo)picaresque also suits the selection of the two main characters, who come closer to each other through erotic adventures.

The main characters of *Journey to the End of Spring*, an unnamed professor and his pupil Tajsi, are not only picaresque figures, but also erotomaniacs and compulsive writers, whose neopicaresque perspective is captured through satire and irony. Their neopicaresque character is connected to the nihilism of intellectuals who critically judge both society and themselves, and see as the greatest value the will to strength. The unnamed professor is not satisfied with himself, with his profession or his marriage, and so Tajsi teaches him to tear down the established norms and look at the world differently, i.e. in a neopicaresque way. The pupil Tajsi rebels against petty bourgeois morals by writing unusual (modern) narratives and through erotic adventures, among which his attachment to the professor can be interpreted as a suppressed homosexual inclination. In the desire for a different identity, the professor joins his pupil (as his antipode) on alcohol fuelled erotic journeys, where the theme of dualism and the title of the novel point to what it has in common with Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932).⁵ In that French work, also a mixture of picaresque novel and Bildungsroman, Bardamu (a traveller and the main protagonist) imitates Robinson, his travelling companion, but at the same time fears, hates and avoids him. The ambivalence of dualism differs between the two novels, for Tajsi is led by a vitalist will to strength⁶ as in lines, "To live! That is the cry! / To live in spite of everything, above everything, to live! To forget

everything!” (Zupan *Potovanje* 57) and rebellion, given meaning by sensual beauty.

Postmodernism could be described as the second shift in the contemporary Slovene novel, but I did not mention it at the beginning of my paper and I will not go into this new literary direction in the 1970s in any detail here since it did not influence the two novels that I shall present below. I prefer to discuss literature at the end of the century, connected with a number of social tremors, such as the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the appearance of the new Slovene state, and membership of the EU and NATO. These changes are labelled by the terms post-Yugoslav, post-communist, post-independence, transition and post-modern literature, as well as literary eclecticism, new emotionality and transrealism. Among these sociological, culturological and literary labels, the ones that best define the specificities of the Slovene novel in this short period of time are the last three: literary eclecticism, new emotionality and transrealism. The first expression embraces findings about the lack of unity of the latest Slovene literature or rather the complex of different currents, tendencies, directions, groups, individuals and poetics, while the second covers the common features of texts with regard to the formation of personal identity and a new type of emotional literary subject. The third term — transrealism — referring to the new literary current following post-modernism is a possible way of describing the phenomena visible in Slovene literature since 1990 as facets of post-realism: the prevalence of realistic technique, method or style, and a link to the previous tendency within European realism, renewed through a new position for the literary subject, i.e. new emotionalism.

In the final decade of the 20th century the novel that stands out as most different is *Filio is Not at Home* (1990), by writer, poet and actor Berta Bojetu-Boeta (1946–1997). Where does its otherness lie? The very choice of the genre of dystopia, which is not an established one in Slovenia (although right at the end of the 20th century five Slovene dystopian novels appeared), points to the special sensitivity with which the author reflected the sense of apocalypse at the end of the century, marked by fear at the disintegration of the old state, the possibility of war as its consequence (as in Bosnia) and unease at all the other social changes taking place. As her narrative model Berta Bojetu took a modified traditional novel, but enriched it with generic syncretism, an allegorical structure and symbolism; *Filio is Not at Home* is a fusion of dystopian, psychological, erotic, socio-critical and allegorical novel. The main setting for the events is an island, the established meaning of which (isolation from the world, inaccessibility, lack of openness) becomes a symbol of totalitarianism. The dystopian message about the harmfulness of technical advance that wants to change people into machines is compressed

by Bojetu into a truth about the damage caused by any kind of violence to the individual, which makes her novel different from the usual European dystopia. The very absence of the literatisation of certain ideas (such as Huxley's criticism of behaviourism and psychoanalysis in *Brave New World* and *Island*) differentiates Bojetu from other dystopian writers and her characters are not bearers of technical ideas (as in Zamyatin's *We* or Orwell's *1984*), but rather the main evil originates from the social system itself and from dysfunctional families, not from technical inventions. In her whole literary oeuvre, not only in this work, the author uncovers the world as a place of violence, in which the most important relationship is that between man and woman. She offered a vision of the "right" path — the connectedness of (not the distance between) the male and female principles, which the author symbolically marked with the name of her main character. For Filio (in Italian "figlio") means son and this common name became the name of the main heroine.

An allegorical and symbolic reading of *Filio is Not at Home* undermines the established binary male and female principle: the female in women and men is eternally longing, its unrealisability speaks through the symbolism of the bird, the house and rape. Bojetu does not condemn the male sex, but the prevailing principle that assigns to it extremely destructive properties: dominance and the aggression connected with it, parvenuism, materialism, the preference of rationality over emotionality and so on. The positive aspects of the "masculine" principle (such as courage, action, creativity, pride, overcoming monotony) represent a sharp alternative to the despised determinants of the "feminine" principle: resignation to one's fate, passivity, non-sublimated instinct, persistence in everyday monotony. Of all the symbols, the most frequent is the bird, the symbol of cagedness, conventionality and lack of innovation; in the image of the bird Filio sees her psychological burden, men and almost all women. The child rulers in particular, because of their uniform (a tight blouse with short sleeves, a short skirt gathered at the waist; thick stockings in soft, thin slippers; an untied head scarf) and appearance (thin, aged hands; a sharp profile with a long, thin nose and neck; a high forehead, baldness), are reminiscent of large, dangerous birds and almost all the groups scenes on the island are connected with bird images. Various symbols balance the relationship of the literary and the didactic in the novel with considerably more success than in classical European dystopias, although the presence of didactic elements in such works as novels of ideas or thesis novels is not at all surprising, for in the dystopian novel the main hero is always an idea. Thus Huxley referred to his novel *Brave New World* as a fable, that is a story with an overt moral purpose⁷,

for he did not see it only as a work of literature, but also as a means of expressing general philosophical, religious or social ideas.

Symbolism and didacticism are also combined in the role of woman who, as in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*⁸, is reduced to a womb. Both writers place utopian attempts to do away with the family at the heart of their novel, whereas in other European dystopias it is only one of the themes of alienation. In this way they radicalise Plato's idea that women's equality⁸ could be achieved by doing away with the family (but his proposal for controlled sexual relations also conceals a desire to root out personal interests, which would lead to a totalitarian society). The two authors rejected the one dimensional role of women in dystopias: self-sacrificing wives, daughters and lovers who are companions to clever men, dreaming clairvoyants. They ironize the stereotype of women in the kitchen, the salon or the bedroom — their merely decorative role. They do not preserve their heroines from pressures in a revolutionary way, but retain the generic traumatic tension. Attentive listeners to what is absent or hidden, they weave into their description of social sadism minimalist descriptions of domestic life, where female vitalism takes on a metaphysical scope. It is no coincidence that Berta Bojetu chose the dystopia as the main genre for her novels (the work discussed here was followed in 1995 by the dystopian *Bird House*). In the 1990s, a time of political change in Slovenia, she joined the wave of other dystopian novels that appeared during this transitional period. Her message was clear: the imaginary island warned of social errors, the grotesque struggle of the main protagonist was intended to awaken awareness of the importance of individualism and the clear references to the worst effects of violence (the real war in former Yugoslavia) was meant to shock readers into condemning or even preventing any kind of sadism. In its engagement and advocacy of activism her novel is similar to Zupan's *Minuet for Guitar*. The next novel I shall discuss, by Lojze Kovačič's *Childhood Things*, which appeared in the new century, is easier to compare with Zupan's *Journey to the End of Spring*. Although the two works are very different, autobiography plays a key role in both of them: Zupan and Kovačič are the two writers that attracted most attention to the Slovene autobiographical novel.

The novel *Childhood Things* (2003) by Lojze Kovačič (1928-2004) continues the poetics of the writer's best received novel *Newcomers*, thanks to which he was referred to abroad as the "Slovene Proust." So why did I choose a less well known work? Because of the otherness that is more obvious in *Childhood Things*: Kovačič deepened his constant theme of childhood⁹ and the age of the main character Bubi "stops" at eleven, just before puberty, which brings a number of consequences

such as the special perspective of the child, an unreliable narrator, and enigmatic descriptions which I shall present in more detail below as markers of otherness. Although it is hard to precisely define the autobiographical novel, as De Man's relativisation of autobiography holds: "Autobiography is thus not a genre or mode but a figure of reading and of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts" (921), the very technique of this autobiographical novel¹⁰ is different in the way that it blends realist and modernist poetics into an individual style. This can be referred to as realistic modernism, where metaphysical nihilism is discernible in the fluidity of the character, forming in the stream of consciousness as a process, while the connection with realism comes from the detail of precise description and the principle of probability. The term realistic modernism incorporates a number of contradictions at different levels: the story is fragmented and broken, but nevertheless conforms to causal and temporal logic; in contrast with modernist (and in line with realist) logic, space and time are evident and recognisable; and the descriptions are dominated by a sense of alienation and by gaps. Since the autobiographical novel is based on certain facts from real life, some biographical details would be helpful here: the novel describes Kovačič's family in Switzerland, from where they were forced to move to Slovenia in 1938 because the Yugoslav father, out of national pride, did not ask for Swiss citizenship; Bubi's bilingual childhood is overshadowed by the unstable socio-political situation, but although the author was not particularly fond of his parents, the novel comes across as a benevolent reminiscence of the family.

It is no coincidence that Bubi's Swiss period ends in play: they are making Indian costumes when Bubi has to leave the game and go with his family to Slovenia (then in Yugoslavia) which, because of poverty and the Second World War rejection of the Germanic aspect of the Kovačič family (the mother speaks only German, the children struggle to learn Slovene), soon loses its exotic, idyllic and fairy-tale character. The fact that play is at other crucial points placed at the centre of interesting stories is due to the theme of childhood and the child's perspective. This perspective permeates the minute descriptions of a string of objects, people, phenomena and concepts in an apparent non-hierarchical and non-evaluative way — childhood things, and hence the title of the novel. There are thus precise and careful descriptions of things that from an adult point of view are unimportant, but they vitally surround the child's viewpoint: a basket, a mechanical goose in a shop window, gelatine figures, a fountain in the park, a picture in a spa, the River Sava, food. As the title suggests, more than literary characters, the narrative is devoted to things and through their precise descriptions we get to know the whole of Bubi's

childhood and characterisations of the members of the family.

The child's perception influences the child's perspective, which in turn influences the character of the description; in their mimetic nature, descriptions that seem simple and sincere contain a surplus value, particularly in contact with the real and unreal, or the material and the sensory. Euphoric following of reality could be called, using Schelling's term, *identity*, meaning the removal of the division between the sensory and the material world, which is possible in art. Kovačič's principle — to recount the truth — undoubtedly influenced the realistic effect of his descriptions also in his other novels, where the surplus value is the enigmatic structure which compels readers to think actively and also diverts them from aesthetic commitment towards reflection, when what is described is merely hinted at and demands that readers unravel an enigma. The individuality and otherness of Kovačič's descriptions comes more than anything from enigmatic description or description-puzzle, which among the various kinds of description brings to the descriptive structure the most freshness and excitement. In European literature many novels have dealt with childhood in various innovative ways, but it is Kovačič's use of enigmatic description¹¹ that helps his work transcend the traditional novel. An example is an enigmatic description from a novel that does not name the object, phenomenon or person, but simply describes: "Here and there appeared one of the white figures. If it was small, with a lot of hair at the top, I wasn't pleased, because it always stayed there where it appeared, far away. It screamed and vanished" (12). At the same time, an enigmatic description is the most effective equivalent of the child's perspective and of the unreliable narrator, where the object in question is not named, but its appearance is motivated by visibility, by the alienating effect and the sense of amazement that extends the reader's reception or makes it more difficult (Zupan Sosič, "Potepanje" 149). In unravelling the enigmatic description, we are dependent on the child Bubi, the main character, whose age varies from newborn to teenager, his precise description and the child's lack of awareness.

At the narrative level, the unreliable narrator best captures the child's perspective, which offers a child's incomplete understanding and naivety. The unreliable narrator is the one whose narrative or commentary we doubt because of different sources of unreliability: the narrator's limited knowledge, personal involvement or a questionable framework of values. The choice of the child Bubi brings to the narrative a particular subjectivity coloured by ambivalence: on the one hand the childishness of the child's perspective alienates and relativises the narrative, on the other the realistic descriptions with a hint of autobiography make

it more convincing and justified. In Kovačič's novel revealing the mechanism of memory is similar to that in Nathalie Sarraute's *Childhood* (1983): Kovačič's memory functions as an accumulation of descriptions of things, people and events, while Sarraute awakens it through "key" words or expressions known as tropisms. Despite their different poetics, the two novels have common characteristics, including shared themes of childhood, love, friendship, individuality, creativity, empathy, art, native land, native language and education, whilst Bubi and Natasha have in common individuality, a strong personality, a vivid imagination, growing up in a bilingual environment, being indelibly marked by conflict between their parents and artistic talent. At the story level rather than the narrative one, Kovačič's novel is also related to Thomas Bernhard's world classic *Childhood* (1975). The protagonists of both have in common their relentless honesty, innovative critical stance, radical provocativeness and consistent non-conformism. In fact, these three characteristics can be used to describe the otherness of the protagonists of all three novels discussed here¹², just as it defines the individualists who with a distinct approach to novel writing in Slovenia (as well as abroad) still trigger positive responses among readers and critics.

Notes

1. Peggy Kamuf. "Fiction and the Experience of the Other." *The Question of Literature. The Place of the Literary in Contemporary Theory*. Ed. Elizabeth Beaumont Bisseli. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2002. 156-174.

2. The canon as a collection of evaluated, recognised and model texts, arranged with regard to the quality of representative literary examples, was first questioned by feminist and post-cultural critics and cultural studies, primarily in relation to sexual identity and the Western tradition, summarised in the acronym DWEM (dead white European males). Since the creation of a canon is also a biased elitisation of specific texts — in the past its creation was largely a male domain and dominated by Western culture on the axis Paris-London-New York — it is necessary to keep examining it critically and supplementing it with overlooked, particularly minority literatures, which also includes Slovene literature. In this context I would like to mention a number of contemporary Slovene novels which due to lack of space I was unable to include in my discussion, but which are of high quality and in line with various literary criteria belong at the very peak of Slovene (and probably world) novel writing: Drago Jančar, *Galley Slave*; Ciril Kosmač, *Spring Day*; Lojze Kovačič, *Newcomers*; Maruša Krese, *That I Am Afraid*; Florjan Lipuš, *Boštjan's Flight*; Boris Pahor, *Necropolis*; Dominik Smole, *Black Days and a White Day*; Marko Sosič, *Ballerina, Ballerina*; Suzana Tratnik, *My Name is Damjan*; Vitomil Zupan, *Minuet*

for Guitar.

3. Literary critics have drawn attention to the flirtation with Miller's prose primarily in relation to the novel *Playing with the Devil's Tail*. When exactly Zupan read Miller's work is not known, but that he read it in the original language can be concluded from his statements about frantically learning foreign languages. At an early stage (after 1932, when he travelled round the world), he taught himself French, English and Italian because he did not trust translations and because he did not want to get to know foreign literature through the delayed process of translation. He said himself (Pibernik 30) that among foreign authors he highly valued Henry Miller, especially the trilogy *Nexus-Plexus-Sexus*, and he explicitly mentions the author in *Leviathan* and *The Comedy of Human Tissue*. See Pibernik France, *Čas romana*, (Ljubljana: CZ, 1986). See also Alojzija Zupan Sosič, "Potepanje po pomladi" (spremna beseda). Vitomil Zupan: *Potovanje na konec pomladi*. Ljubljana: eBesede, 2014. 171-190.

4. Zupan's metaphysical approach to sexuality and art is reminiscent of Freud's understanding of art. Here I have in mind primarily Freud's idea of the bridging effect of art, which steers a way between the two principles of comfort and realism. Freud explains these as opposite poles in a state of constant tension. Man primarily leans towards the first, but upbringing teaches respect for the principle of reality. Freud believed that the repression of civilisation dictated oscillation between the two principles, preventing freedom of the instincts.

5. In his autobiographical novels, particularly *The Comedy of Human Tissue*, Zupan mentions the influence of Bernanos, Céline, Malraux, Sartre and Camus, although we do not know exactly when he read these authors. Kermauner (241) is convinced that Zupan read Gide, Céline and Kafka before 1940. See Taras Kermauner. *Družbena razveza. Sociološko in etično naravnani eseji o povojni slovenski prozi*. (Ljubljana: CZ, 1982).

6. The vital will is more intense in erotic imperatives, which are also existential ones: "To live! That is the cry! / To live in spite of everything, above everything, to live! To forget everything!" (Zupan *Potovanje* 57) Although in Zupan's novel sensuality develops from a nihilistic position, its vital optimism swears by hedonism, whereas Céline's metaphysical nihilism prevents the flourishing of the sensual. In contrast to Zupan's two main characters, Céline's hero does not accept the existentialist solution of a new humanism, but expires in lucid resignation and social pessimism, whereas, in spite of its picaresqueness and adventurism, Zupan's novel contains the idea of the "right ethical stance" of the individual and of society. See Nicholas Hewitt. *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*. Ed. Peter France. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 139-140. See also Wicks, Ulrich. "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach." *PMLA (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America)* 2 (1974): 240-249. See also Van der Will, Wilfried. "Aspects of the Neo-Picaresque in Twentieth-century German Literature." *New Comparison* 11 (1991): 24-40 (*Special Section: The Picaresque*).

7. Atwood writes about overt moral intention in a comment on *Woman on the Edge of Time*,

when she asserts that “Utopias are products of the moral rather than the literary sense” and that, because of political and social commentaries, they contain ever stronger didactic elements. They should be read with at least a partial knowledge of the social context at the time when the dystopia arose for the reader to be able to discern certain special characteristics of the text. See Coral Ann Howells. *The Handmaid's Tale. York Notes* (Longman Literature Guide). (London: York Press, 1998)50. See also Routh, Michael. *Brave New World. York Notes* (Longman Literature Guide). London: York Press, 1982.

8. The stereotypical dystopian novel was fundamentally transformed by the publication of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1985 (Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature*. California: ABC – Clio Literary Companion, 1995). Considering that *Filjo is Not at Home* was written at roughly the same time (and published a few years later), I feel justified in claiming that Bojetu's contribution to the European-American utopian genre is equally significant and in its apocalyptic sexual antagonisms even more universal, but in the encyclopaedias and discussions it is sadly unacknowledged due to the already mentioned problem of Slovenes as a small nation or rather smallness in the context of world literature.

9. Even in More's *Utopia* women work outside the home, but because of the strict social hierarchy they are not equal. Neither utopian solution (the abolition of the family or a more just social hierarchy) offered women a better social position. An optimistic vision was offered only by an anonymous author (under the pseudonym Daughter of Eve) in *A Women's Utopia*, where a solution is offered to dealing with the difference in knowledge through a better education system. See Sargent Lyman Tower. “Women in Utopia.” *Comparative Literary Studies* 4 (1973): 302-310.

10. In a number of places Lojze Kovačič emphasised the centrality of the theme of childhood, for instance in the book *The Time of the Novel* by Pibernik France (*Čas romana*), 1986: 96): “Every writer chooses a particular age of the human creature through which to narrate. This is an important question, decisive, which ideal of a person and mankind sleeps within you, what beauty you draw from the human species, what kind of person you would like to have. At the same time this means a choice of aesthetics and poetics, a way of thinking, mystery, attractiveness. On the surface, nothing was easier for me than choosing as the weapon I forged against the world my own ten-year-old human life.” About unreliable narrator see Rimmon-Kenan, Slomith. *Narrative Fiction*. Contemporary Poetics. London: Routledge, 1999⁷.

11. It is hard to precisely define the autobiographical novel since even autobiography is an almost undefinable concept and so there are many definitions and labels. Lejeune's (Lejeune, Philippe. *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Seuil, 1975) expression autobiographical contract is widely accepted; this includes first person narrative, retrospectiveness, the identity of the narrator, the central character and the referential self.

12. Enigmatic description was systematically explained by the Polish theoretician Janusz Sławinski (O opisu.” *Republika* 6 (1984): 101-111) as a category which is the opposite of the

(more usual) synoptic description.

13. The article is translated by David Limon. The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0265).

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The Performative and (No-Longer) Dramatic in the Theatre of Dušan Jovanović and Matjaž Zupančič

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Abstract This paper will examine how a text rhizome replaced the traditionally understood physicality of the book in the contemporary drama and theatre of two prominent Slovene theatre and drama (post)dramatists, Dušan Jovanović and Matjaž Zupančič. Both have demonstrated with their plays that the Slovene writing for the theatre was also headed for the waters disturbed by both the postdramatic turn and the performative turn. They bear witness to the fact that after these two turns, theatre texts tend to be in perpetual motion, in the process of semiosis. Therefore, nowadays the text in the theatre represents one of the elements in the weaving of various intertexts into a rhizome-like structure within the semiosphere of literature, theatre, and culture. The work of Jovanović and Zupančič thus played a significant role in the deconstruction of the so-called literary or drama theatre and in the manifestation of the performative turn.

Key words Slovene Drama and Theatre; Post-Dramatic Turn; performative Turn; Deconstruction of Drama Theatre; Dušan Jovanović; Matjaž Zupančič

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His essays include: “The new Slovene theatre and Italian futurism” (*International yearbook of futurism studies*, 2014), “(Re)staging the rhetorics of space” (*Neohelicon*, 2014) and “Deconstructive readings of the avant-garde tradition in post-socialist retro-avant-garde theatre” (*Aesthetics of Matter*, 2013).

Introduction: Towards a Text Rhizome

The dramatists we will discuss can be regarded as the two pivotal figures of the postdramatic intermedia intertwining, demonstrating with their plays that the Slovene writing for the theatre was also headed for the waters disturbed by the postdramatic turn. Thus the intertext in various cases, from Dušan Jovanović to Matjaž Zupančič, structures the contemporary (no-longer) dramatic and theatre writing in a way that is non-hierarchical, but at the same time extremely cohesive from the intertextual and intermedia points of view.

Our hypothesis will be that the status of the dramatic text or text for the theatre changed in recent decades, i.e., that the absolute drama as defined by Peter Szondi and in which the dialogue is the main component of construction — even more clearly became no longer the primary, but merely one of the possible dramatic discourses. Thus a text rhizome replaced the traditionally understood physicality of the printed text in a form of a book. Along with this deconstruction of the absolute, emerged textual strategies that no longer involve dialogue as the main principle of expression.

Jovanović and Zupančič did not extinguish the dialogic form but combined and sampled it with heterogeneous textual and metatextual and metadramatic strategies: from stage directions to descriptions that are closer to the novel and prose, to narrative, essayistic, theoretical, and “hybrid” techniques. Each of them introduced his own version of the millennium *ostranjenje* (Sklovsky) or *Verfremdungs Effekt* (Brecht), reminding the audience that what it is reading or watching is no longer a mere and simple realistic dialogue with the structure of an absolute drama, but a continuing process of the disintegration of the dramatic form. Thus they both followed what Szondi termed the “estrangement from drama” (10), attempts to create forms “beyond drama” (ibid.). As playwrights, both Jovanović and Zupančič are thus (as keen and highly successful theatre directors) conscious that a dramatic text is currently positioned in the centre of diverse networks of texts that influence it in a variety of ways: from eating into the text to enhancing it and adding to its complexity. A text in the theatre is therefore no longer something separate from the other elements of the production, but is rather interlaced with

other intertexts, from textual to gesticular, musical, and visual ones.

Together with some other prominent playwrights of various generations who are writing (no-longer) dramatic texts in Slovenia, namely Vili Ravnjak, Dragica Potočnjak, Andrej E. Skubic, Simona Semenič, Jovanović and Zupančič bear witness to the fact that following the postdramatic turn, theatre texts tend to be in perpetual motion, in the process of semiosis. The text in the theatre nowadays represents one of the elements of the intertwining of various intertexts into a rhizome-like structure within the semiosphere of literature, theatre, and culture as a rhizome with an ever elusive edge. Connections between dramatic and other texts and media are — akin to the ones in rhizome — heterogeneous, just like the strategies of (no-longer) dramatic writing.

At the very turn of the millennium, the (no-longer)(dramatic) text and theatre became fully integrated into the postdramatic context. In the irresistible desire to face the new (media) reality, they have increasingly and intentionally become a hypertext that is characterized by connections: a textual element opens into another text and so forth into an endless chain. Our reception of the theatrical is thus non-linear, multi-directional, and non-hierarchical. Just like digital textuality, textuality intended for theatre or, rather, performance, is similar to the “rhizome.” The dramatic text and theatre therefore embody Bakhtin’s dialogicality and polyphony and Julia Kristeva’s intertextuality.

Drama in the Context of the Century of Unrest

The dramatic and theatrical work of the most influential Slovene dramatists of the last three decades must be understood in the context of what Alain Badiou calls the century of unrest, especially the second half of the twentieth century, marked by tectonic shifts that announced a departure from what Derrida defined in his seminal work *Of Grammatology*² as logocentrism and a domination of the visual and ocular-centrism.³ The embracing of a gaze and a word in which dramatic writing lost a lot of its stability but gained many new initiatives, led not only to the redefining of but also to the end of the crisis of the dramatic author announced by Antoine Vitez and his famous 1970s statement “On peut faire théâtre de tous” (Autant-Mathieu 3).

But the story of redefining the relation between drama and its representation had begun in Slovenia and the former Yugoslavia two decades before that, with the first wave of the experimental theatre movements of the 1950s. While producing and presenting new Slovene plays ranging from existentialism to absurd and poetic drama, these theatres attempted to surpass the theatre of the proscenium

stage, turn away from it as a means of framing the traditional theatre, its realism and literariness. Oder 57 (Stage 57), Eksperimentalno gledališče (Experimental Theatre), and Gledališče Ad Hoc (Ad Hoc Theatre) began to generate new readings of contemporary drama, European and American (Ionesco, Beckett, Sartre, Albee, and Anouilh) as well as young and politically-repressed Slovene authors who became the milestones of the modernist and modern drama (Dominik Smole, Peter Božič, Primož Kozak, Vitomil Zupan, Marjan Rožanc, Dane Zajc, and Gregor Strniša). The political tactics in these theatres were primarily demonstrated in the political courage of the choice of the repertoire. And this choice of repertoire clearly marked the new approaches to theatre, the necessity to introduce new styles and topics.

The Aesthetic Revolutions of Dušan Jovanović

Dušan Jovanović (born 1939) began his career as a theatre critic for the student magazine *Tribuna* (Tribune) and as a dramatist. He was undoubtedly influenced by the first wave of experimental theatre, but was nevertheless very critical about its artistic tactics. He wanted something else, something more radical. His first (and till today unstaged) play had a highly suggestive title *Predstave ne bo* [The performance will not take place] (1963) pointing to meta-theatricality and political censorship. His second play *Norci* [Madmen] (1963), was scheduled to premiere as a part of the Stage 57 repertoire, but was cancelled when the authorities suppressed this highly important theatrical movement. It thus had to wait for almost a decade to be performed in 1971. In the meantime, Jovanović concentrated on his theatrical work as the leader and founder of a newly established student theatre (ŠAG – Študentsko aktualno gledališče / Student Actual Theatre), producing the its first scandals.

Despite all the differences, “the critical generation” of the experimental theatre Stage 57 and Dušan Jovanović’s new generation shared one crucial “victory”: they removed the fourth wall, creating a theatre space where there was a strong interaction between the actors onstage and the participating audience in the sense of Max Herrmann’s redefinition of theatre as a performance act that always brings emphasis to the third paradigm, the spectator. When theatre began to understand the spectator (as in Vsevolod Meyerhold) as the *third creator*, the one which in himself “completes that which the stage merely hints at” (Meyerhold 135), it became politically dangerous. The space shared by the audience and the actors transformed itself into a subversive political space, which had to be controlled by repressive politics. And the simplest way of doing this was to close it down, to ban it.

There is no doubt this new understanding of the performance as something that is not “a representation or expression of something which already exists elsewhere — like the text of a play — but as something which is brought forth by the actions, perceptions, responses of both actors and spectators” (Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* 23) was the big achievement of the first experimental theatres, particularly Stage 57 which had a strong influence on Dušan Jovanović and his generation that produced the new “aesthetic revolution” of the 1970s, namely the performative turn in the Slovene theatre and performance arts.

Dušan Jovanović is probably the most influential and pivotal figure of the Slovene theatrical neo-avant-garde period, the period of the late 1960s and 1970s in which the theatre was in the hands of a generation that demolished cultural taboos. They understood politics also in the sense of a sexual revolution, whilst crossing the strict theatrical borders and moving towards the experiences of happening and performance. This radical return of the theatre to the theatre in a sense of Antonin Artaud and his theatre of cruelty was a new aesthetic revolution, a political act provoking heated reactions from both the audience and the critics. Jovanović and his generation (Lado Kralj, Zvone Šedlbauer, Ivo Svetina, Milan Jesih, Iztok TORY ...) deliberately provoked the audience. This generation saw the reaction and participation of the public in theatre as a political act in which the audience was to be freed, together with the actors. It was only at that point that the emphasis truly moved from the field of the repertoire and the text to the theatre medium itself, to its process of liberation which, just like the theatre of Schechner, Grotowski, Barba, and others, became open to the field of other artistic media and spheres.

In 1968 with his performance group Pupilčki (the Pupilcheks), Jovanović *shattered* the hegemonic language of the dramatic theatre in order to “touch life” (Artaud 13) in the performance *Pupiliĵa, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki* [Pupiliĵa, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilcheks]. Along with his *Spomenik G* [*Monument G*] (1972) this performance was a radical search of theatre, based on the awareness that the stage is a physical and real space which asks to be filled and allowed to speak a real authentic language. Or, using once more a paraphrase of Artaud, combined with Fischer-Lichte’s terminology: Jovanović tried to invent the grammar of this new language creating a unique “autopoetic feedback loop” (Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* 287) between the performers and the audience.

Redefining the Text, Performers, and Public

The second half of the 1970s brought within the experimental theatre a redefinition of the roles of text as well as audience and performers with Jovanović’s play *Igrajte*

tumor v glavi in onesnaženje zraka [Play a Tumour in the Head and Air Pollution] (1972), performed by the SLG Celje (Celje People's Theatre) and directed by Ljubiša Ristić. According to Lado Kralj "the subject of this play is the theatre itself in which the theatre's organization, creativity and, finally, its very essence comes into crisis" ("Slovenia" 772). In other words, in his play Jovanović focused on the failure of the basic premises of the avant-garde theatre of the 1960s: the emphasis on the process rather than the result, the strong interaction between the performers and the public in what Erika Fischer-Lichte names in her book *Ästhetik des Performativen* an auto-poetic feedback loop, mystical catharsis, collective ecstasy, expanded consciousness, replacement of textual language with the language of the body and melodic, onomatopoeic sounds.

According to Dragan Klaić, *Play a Tumour* shows "with an anticipatory imagination the development of the avant-garde theatre of the sixties, the *cul-de-sac* of the utopian quest for togetherness, closeness, oneness" (*Utopianism* 126). This self-criticism, "a unique re-capitulation of his hitherto experiences with literature and theatre" (Inkret 404) can be interpreted as a radical, meta-literary, meta-theatrical, and meta-artistic discourse; a self-criticism in connection with the fundamental premises of the liberated, neo-avant-garde, Artaudian, and Schechnerian theatre, which Jovanović himself advocated and realized in *Pupilija* and *Monument G*.

Jovanović entered the waters of engaged drama and theatre, which rejected any kind of traditionality as well as any ideology already in the 1960s, with *Norci* [Madmen]. A decade later he took this idea and in *Play a Tumour* only combined it with the (self-) criticism and (self-) irony of a performative turn of the happening and neo-avant-garde performance. He created "a dramatic postscript to the 1960s and to their characteristic brand of theatre, written before the era was in fact truly over or before we could notice that it was over and with what kind of an outcome" (Klaić, *Utopianism* 128). Through this, he emphasized the seriousness of the crises of representation and the dramatist on the one hand, and on the other the dynamics of the rises and falls in the radical theatre practices of the second half of the twentieth century, directly connected to and interdependent with these crises.

According to his contemporary and colleague, theorist and art historian Lado Kralj, Jovanović "writes from an explicitly theatrical perspective" (Slovenia 772), "numerous plays waver between grotesque irony of the Theater of the Absurd and Brechtian documentary drama" ("Goli otok Literature" 253), starting with his blasphemous second play *Madmen*. Following his aesthetic revolutions within the field of performance and (no-longer) dramatic texts he played a key role in the

Yugoslav political theatre with his plays *Osvoboditev Skopja* [*The Liberation of Skopje*] (1978) and *Karamazovi* [*The Karamazovs*] (1980) breaking the socialist taboos and opening his dramatic procedures to a strange mixture of realism and metafiction. In the former, all the events of WWII and family tragedies are seen through the eyes of a six-year-old boy, a perspective which opens a highly subjective and non-ideological interpretation of the political events. His later play opened the taboo theme of a Yugoslav communist concentration camp on an Adriatic island — a specificity of Tito's break with Stalin and the Soviet Union in 1948 — in which lots of soviet school communists were killed as a part of severe re-education system. In order to open this theme he enters into a dialogue with Dostoevsky and his famous novel *The Brothers Karamazov* that enables him to show dramatically the generation gap between a father and three sons.

He further developed his post-Brechtian technique in plays written during and briefly after the war in former Yugoslavia. In 1993 he wrote his highly personal version of *Antigone*⁴, influenced by the ongoing war in Yugoslavia. If he deliberately entered into a dialogue with Dostoevsky in order to write about the “dark” and paradoxical events in the history of Yugoslavia, he chose the Greek myth in order to distance himself from the actual banality of war, or rather, to show how even the mythical structure of the Greek tragedy had become something quite banal and predictable at the end of the twentieth century. As Dragan Klaić interprets it:

The hatred was transformed into a blind, almost visceral passion with no evident cause or purpose. In Jovanović's Thebes the violence has become so pervasive that it had imposed its own construction of the reality, which was in turn internalized by all those affected. It had become transgenerational and only some intervention from outside the system could break spell. That should be the role of the deities but in Jovanović's play they remain in the background as a source of evil, refusing to assume the role of either arbiter or rescuer. /.../ Even Antigone's space for resistance becomes extremely narrowed, almost non-existent. (*The Crisis of Theatre? Theatre of Crisis?* 151)

In his second play dedicated to the violence in former Yugoslavia, he entered into a meta-theatrical dialogue with Brecht, namely, his *Mother Courage and Her Children*. In *Uganka korajže* [*The Puzzle of Courage*] (1994), Jovanović also deliberately addresses Brecht's system of epic theatre and its specific no-longer dramatic procedures in terms of stage space. He rewrites the convention of epic

theatre space in an original way, based on the play as a landscape echoing the psychological states of the protagonists and their small micro stories.

During the time of war in Yugoslavia he wrote also a third part, *Kdo to poje Sizifa* [*Who Sings Sisyphus*], which became *The Balkan Trilogy* using what he described as a dialogue with the dramatic form, dealing with archetypal situations. He deliberately chose the deconstruction and the reconstruction of the classical antique and contemporary plays and myths: *Antigone*, *Sisyphus*, and *Mother Courage*.

His latest serious play *Razodetja* [*Revelations*] (2009) is a genre hybrid of closely and densely interwoven thoughts, self-quotations from the play *Karamazovs*, and some other of his dramatic pieces contaminated by today's jargon of authenticity (in the sense of Adorno). Jovanović's latest plays are a result of his resistance to the world of neoliberals, to the telecracy of the global world in which the scripture cannot produce its own difference. His plays therefore echo the (no-longer) dramatic universe of Peter Handke, Heiner Müller or Richard Foreman.

Each of his new plays brings a new, alternative attempt to think theatre and art. What he is concerned about is today's lack of ethics in the society. Jovanović has described his approach to theatre writing as follows:

My writing starts with the need to feel the world through detail, a scene followed by a line of others, written in a form of a fragment. The new whole emerging from this combination of fragments is fragmentary in itself, therefore translating the very feeling of the division and partiality of my experience of the world that is not global, objective, but very particular and subjective. ("Muke z vojno" 4)

Jovanović thinks that after Shakespeare one can no longer speak about new, specific forms of authors, that there exist only two big dramatic forms: Noh theatre and Greek tragedy. He sees the contemporary author (using the term of his Macedonian colleague Goran Stefanovski) as a *plough-wright*: "I do not write but build up the plays" (Ibid.).

Plough-Wright Matjaž Zupančič

One of the best descriptions of the theatrical work of Matjaž Zupančič could be summed up in a two word phrase: *plough-wright*. A theatre director and playwright who studied theatre direction and dramaturgy in Ljubljana and London, in the 1980s he became the director of the Experimental Theatre Glej and proceeded

on his career both as a dramatist and theatre director as well as a professor at the University of Ljubljana, Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television. The author of more than fifty theatre productions, he began to write (no-longer) dramatic pieces in the late 1980s and soon became one of the crucial Slovene contemporary playwrights, receiving several Grum Awards for Best New Slovenian Drama and also becoming the most staged Slovene playwright in Europe and beyond. He has received numerous awards for sixteen of his plays.

His plays enter into a dialogue with Lacanian psychoanalysis, uncovering the plays of sliding signifiers and new versions of the desire of the Other, designating radical alterity, an other-ness which transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary. In his early plays, written in the 1990s, he uses and appropriates the very nature of various genres, including the underground culture of thrillers, maliciously defining “the transition between inside and outside, between man’s solitude and individuality which are threatened by something from outside such as the community, individuals, voyeurs and snoopers” (Bogataj 12). This is already suggested in the titles of his plays: *Izganjalci hudiča* [*The Exorcist*] (1991), *Slastni mrlič* [*Delicious Corpse*] (1992), *Nemir* [*The Unease*] (1998), or *Ubijalci muh* [*The Fly Killers*] (2000). The plays by Matjaž Zupančič take place in in-between spaces, receptions, and corridors with people constantly on the move, arriving and departing in a mysterious chain of occurring events. Matej Bogataj comments on *The Fly Killers*:

This “fantastic play” does not contain anything consistent; furthermore, the hotel becomes more and more undefined. Upon a mysterious death, the hotel even resembles the purgatory from where the guests go for a walk only to come cross dead bodies of a concrete and ordinary clash of interests. (12)

Zupančič likes to toy with various dramatic techniques and styles, from hyper-realism to mysteries and thrillers, from a straightforward depiction of reality to the absurd but also the strangely poetic. In his black comedy *Bolje tič v roki kot tat na strehi* [*A Cock in the Hand is Worth Two Thieves in the Bush*] (2004), in which the style of Monty Python meets that of Harold Pinter, the characters act as robots producing a series of repetitions that end up in a strange feeling of black comedy using the vocabulary of psychiatry and neurology. But, using the interpretation of Mateja Pezdirc Bartol from the essay “Fluid identity in the plays of Matjaž Zupančič,” he is “interested in the contradictions of the modern world, extreme situations provoked by the question of human identity. /.../ He is not, however,

interested in cultural or national identities, but rather in the individual in his/her relationship to the collective and/or system” (131).

In his play *Padec Evrope* [*The Fall of Europe*] (2011) he comments on and discloses the background of the present society. In a small, local hotel on the outskirts with the meaningful name Europe, a private party is being held with the local jet set telling dirty jokes and wrapping up business deals. But when the rather tipsy party plans to part, a global revolt is taking place outside with demonstrations and riots. The police close all entrances to the town, the roads are blocked and cars are burning. In this hopeless situation, the falseness of the local elite is revealed. Zupančič depicts the world with his sarcastic black humour and uncovers the very crisis of ethics in today’s society, Europe and elsewhere.

In his *Shocking Shopping* (2011–2012) he draws a global image of the world using the microphysical example of Joseph Kotnik (an allusion to Kafka’s Josef K) who, while in the “Shocking Shopping” mall buying bread and half a chicken, finds himself being announced the fifty-thousandth visitor of the mall with a promise of significant benefits, discounts, special offers, etc. But this apparently ideal world (in the sense of Voltaire’s *Candide*) turns into the nightmarish backstage of the mall with things becoming increasingly bizarre, horrifying, and cruel. The Mecca of shopping becomes an Artaudian theatre of cruelty that sucks the (anti)hero into a brutal swirl with no escape. In this strange twenty-first-century passion play, Zupančič uses his specific mixture of brutal concreteness and pure abstractness.

When Theatre Meets Reality Show

Let us have a closer look at his probably most (post)dramatic or mediatized play *Hodnik* [*The Corridor*] (2003)⁵. In a simulacrum of the form of classical drama and theatre, he examines the phenomenon of reality-TV shows. Or, as Ivan Majić states in his essay “Big Brother — from Simulation towards the Contemporary Myth (reading / watching Matjaž Zupančič’s play *Hodnik* [*The Corridor*])”: “This is a play that (using the similarities to the reality show Big Brother) positions itself not only within the literary aesthetic field but also comments on and acts within the context of the contemporary (media) situation” (150).

Zupančič deliberately chooses live performance, namely theatre, as a medium that comments on and deconstructs a currently highly exposed form of media, more precisely, reality TV. His starting point can be illustrated by Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s statement: “Each metier, language, genre and/or format demands a different set of strategies and methodologies” (14). As an appropriate media he uses “pure theatre” while deliberately avoiding the mixed media resources of today’s theatre,

staging the corridor of omnipresence of reality TV imagery, the very space of media violence in an age of “humanitarian impotence” (Gómez-Peña 27).

Thus he discloses the problematical status of the subject, which disposes of fictitious freedom offering itself as an illusion of interactivity, openness to participation, dialogue, intensified through electronic media of TV. He stages reality interpreted as an image of Auslander’s universe of TV, which is able “to colonize ‘liveness’, the one aspect of theatrical presentation that film could not replicate” (Auslander 15). Zupančič is fully aware of the fact that theatre has developed into an imitation of media discourses. The taste of today’s public is shaped by TV, which has become a model and telos of theatre. Capital is no longer interested in the economy of representation of live performance.

The play concentrates intensively on the economy of media repetition as presenting itself as a representation of the reality of here and now. Zupančič starts also from a fact which Auslander defines as follows: “What we are seeing in many cases is not so much the incursion of media-derived ‘technics’ and techniques into the context of live performance, but, rather, live performance’s absorption of a media-derived epistemology” (16). But in spite of this, he makes a decision for live performance, more precisely theatre, that “in the economy of live repetition /.../ is little more than a vestigial remnant of the previous historical order of representation, a hold-over that can claim little in the way of cultural presence of power” (17). Aware of the fact that our concept of closeness and intimacy are derived from the firmament of TV, he exploits this concept and the symbolic power of TV as a media that receives greater cultural presence and prestige than theatre in order to intrigue spectators and drive them into a state of awareness of TV manipulation and its “electronic noise,” presenting itself as a reality which is more real than the reality of live performance.

The question posed by *The Corridor* is therefore a crucial question, which Auslander keeps repeating and answering throughout his excellent book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*: does live performance dispose of ontology of its own, which is more sincere than the repetitions of TV? The answer to this question is no. In addition to this, Zupančič’s play and performance expose a crucial question about the possibility of subverting reality TV in a live performance. This question is well-defined in a statement by Stojan Pelko:

The question of theatrical *Corridor* and the transmission of a TV dispositive to the stage is therefore primarily a question of whether it is possible for a live performance to intensify this production of real effects, or, on the contrary,

does live performance merely virtualise this stage, while dealing with it as with as a phenomenon and not as a production of events. (19)

The degree of subversion is — similarly to other cases of contemporary politicized art — relatively low. It is constantly accompanied by TV noise denying access to the intimacy of the event. But it nevertheless resists, as long as we face the fact that a live performance is being followed by a live audience facing the stage and forced to become a witness of — to quote Pelko once more — “watching on the stage a void of TV reality” (20). The void of currently recurring surfaces of display without depth, defined by Debord as:

the manufacture of a present where fashion itself, from clothes to music, has come to a halt, which wants to forget the past and no longer seems to believe in a future, is achieved by the ceaseless circularity of information, always returning to the same short list of trivialities, passionately proclaimed as major discoveries. Meanwhile, news of what is genuinely important, of what is actually changing, comes rarely, and then in fits and starts. (*Comments* 13)

By means of purely theatrical media, *The Corridor* thus — while speaking about *Big Brother* — opens up a picture of the deterritorialized ethics of the post-modern world and its cybernetic models of organizing reality, the real fabricated electronically, from matrices and memory banks, collapsing into a black hole, produced by the media. As Debord defines it:

Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the result and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not a mere decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society's unreality. /.../ Spectacular government, which now possesses all the means necessary to falsify the whole of production and perception, is the absolute master of memories, just as it is the unfettered master of plans which will shape the most distant future. It reigns unchecked; it executes its summary judgments. (*Society of Spectacle* 6)

And the society of *The Corridor* or *Big Brother* is permanently producing those quick summary judgements in the name of the people.

Conclusion: Re-examining and Restructuring the (No-Longer) Dramatic Texts for the Postdramatic Theatre

Let us conclude using some remarks by the British scholar Lesley Anne Wade from a highly informative and enlightening introduction to the book *Slovene Theatre and Drama Post Independence: Four Plays by Slovene Playwrights*. When speaking about contemporary Slovene drama she describes the specificity of the dramatic landscape of the 1990s, the period in which a strong postdramatic turn took place. According to her this was a period in which “an increased number of playwrights are theatre practitioners, either directors (Dušan Jovanović, Matjaž Zupančič, Vinko Möderndorfer) or actors (Drama Potočnjak, Saša Pavček)” (28–29). She also states that this was also a period in which new plays about wider global and philosophical issues emerged, paving the way for Matjaž Zupančič and his new (post)dramatic textual and performative tactics as well as for a new wave of “post-avant-garde,” “post-conceptual,” and theatre of images that governed most of the Slovene stages for almost a decade in a confusion of the post-socialist world reflected by performances which undermined both the notion of theatre as mimesis and the logocentricity of dramatic theatre. This new re-theatralization and deliterarization provoked a specific revolt in which “writers also saw the importance, as Dušan Jovanović has remarked, of retaining the written play text, as it is a basic form for cinema and television” (Wade 29).

The dramatic innovations of both Jovanović and Zupančič can therefore be seen as a part of the specificity of the second part of the twentieth century, marked by unrest and a Badiouian inability to decide between ending the old and beginning the new. Both dramatists witnessed and participated as key figures in a series of aesthetic revolutions that disrupted the configuration of drama and theatre. They were not only witnesses but also the key figures of a process in which media, theatre and literature went through distinct transformations from the dramatic to the non-dramatic, non-literary, postdramatic and to the primacy of performative, the stage itself has been re-examined and restructured, dismantled, and newly put together over and over again.

The dramatic and theatrical oeuvre of Dušan Jovanović and Matjaž Zupančič is probably the best witness to the fact that during the second half of the twentieth century it became clear in Slovenia, too, that a theatrical creation is something specific, that it is always what a close collaborator of Jovanović, scenographer and architect Meta Hočevar, calls a *performance concept* and what she captures in the following Artaudian sentence:

I don't agree with the statement that first there was the word. The word wasn't first, darkness was first and then something was seen. Then after a long while

came the word. And I think the approach in the theater should be exactly the same. The director must first see and then hear. And only then search for the word. ("Space is Captured Light" 105)

Jovanović and Zupančič constantly re-examine and restructure the (no-longer) dramatic texts for the postdramatic theatre. As Zupančič summarizes in an interview:

The referential field of the drama — or art in itself — is wide. The art never starts from everyday life only, but always also from art itself and the history. But this is not crucial. To dare and to be innovative means nothing else but a radical attempt to find the authentic means to gather the idea into a stable and firm dramatic score. A good play is not a list of data for the performance; as this list we could use even a telephone directory, and build up a good performance from it. For me personally the dramatic text is an artistic universe closed in itself — but written nevertheless as a theatrical text: This means that it invites us to interpret it theatrically. In other words, when I'm writing a drama, in a way, I always think the theatre. (Kosi 10)

One could say that both discussed dramatists think drama, theatre, and society in a (post)dramatic form out of the need to tell new and newer stories about the post-millennial crisis of ethics and society conditioned by the neoliberal as well as the post-socialist society. Both dramatists have demonstrated with their plays that the Slovene writing for the theatre, too, was headed for the waters disturbed by both the postdramatic turn and the performative turn. They bear witness to the fact that after the two turns, theatre texts tend to be in perpetual motion, in the process of semiosis. Like Deleuze-Guattari's *rhysome* they move from local (Slovenia) to global (anywhere in the world), from dramatic to postdramatic, from realistic to absurd, from physical to metaphysical, from theatrical to meta-theatrical in order to grasp the remains of the fractured and fragmented meanings produced by sliding signifiers that only occasionally and temporarily meet the signified.

Notes

1. Linguistic proofreading Jana Wilcoxon.
2. See Jacques Derrida. *Of Logocentrism*, Trans. Gayatri Spivak. (Baltimore. John Hopkins University Press, 1967).

3. See Alain Badiou. *The Century*. Trans. Alberto Toscano. (Oxford: Polity Press, 2007).
4. See the English translation: Jovanović, Dušan: *Antigona*. Trans. Ema Peruš. *Gledališki list SNG Drama*. Ljubljana, 1995.
5. See the English translation: Zupančič, Matjaž: *The Corridor*. Transl. by Lesley Anne Wade. Prešernovo gledališče Kranj: 2004.

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The Innovative Dramatic Works of Simona Semenič

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Abstract Simona Semenič is a female Slovene playwright whose dramatic writing can be compared on the international level with Sarah Kane, Elfriede Jelinek, Anja Hilling and Ulrike Syha. They all have in common the search for linguistic and formal originality of expression, they strive for innovation in their dramatic writing, which will be heard in our world of media-shaped culture and bring an immanent theatrical solution. The paper considers three no longer dramatic texts by Simona Semenič: (1) *The Feast or the Story of a Savoury Corpse or How Roman Abramovič, the Character Janša, Julia Kristeva, age 24, Simona Semenič and the Initials z.i. Found Themselves In a Tiny Cloud of Tobacco Smoke*; (2) *Sophia or While IAlmost Ask for More or a Parable of the Ruler and Wisdom*; and (3) *7Cooks, 4Soldiers, 3Sophias*. The main characters of all three are tormented and abused women, victims of religious and political wars, and of patriarchal patterns and imposed social roles; thanks to their thematic and formal similarities, the three selected dramas could form a trilogy. The fates of the women, which are based on real people, are presented in a fragmentary way within a timeless fictional frame, while Semenič, through innovative textual strategies, achieves artistic effects and contemplates ethical aspects from a universal perspective, and so her works are relevant everywhere. Her writing is characterised by the undermining of established reading conventions (absence of capital letters or punctuation, writing in verse form, etc.), whereby the reader is included more closely in the process of decoding and interpreting the text. The division between primary text and ancillary text is transcended, since the stage directions are more than just guidelines for staging and become an equal part of the text, with an emphasis on their narrative function (comment on what is happening, narration of events separated by space and time, a means of communicating with the audience, etc.). The addressee of the dramatic text must thus think about the basic relations, who is speaking and to whom,

as well as about the status of the author, the dramatic characters and their own position. The reader/spectator is emotionally and cognitively more involved in what is happening and becomes to a large extent a participant and consequently shares responsibility for the state of society and the world. Although Semenič breaks the basic dramatic conventions, she at the same time relativises and revitalises them in metadramatic form, while the new textual strategies are most closely connected with the questions of reception and the power of theatre in today's world.

Key words Slovene drama; Simona Semenič (1975-); dramatic form; stage directions; spectator

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The Female Slovene Dramatists and the Social Context

Contemporary Slovene drama is a complex of different thematic elements, language varieties, genre models and formal searches; and in contrast with previous periods, since 2000 a breakthrough by female dramatists has been noticeable. Throughout history there have been very few female playwrights, either in Slovene or in other European literatures. The beginnings of dramatic writing in Slovene reach back to the female writers Luiza Pesjak (1828-1898) and Zofka Kveder (1878-1926), while after World War 2 the dramatic works of Mira Mihelič (1912-1985) stand out and in the 1980s Alenka Goljevšček made a name for herself. There have of course been other female dramatists — in other social circumstances the woman's voice has tried to make itself heard through drama — but they became a vital part of the development of Slovene drama only in the new millennium. There are

various reasons for the sudden increase in the number of female playwrights — for in the twenty-first century there are more than in the whole of the previous history of Slovene literature — but they are linked to the social status of women and educational factors, as well as public calls and workshops connected with dramatic writing, and encouragement of women's creativity¹ (Pezdirč Bartol, "Slovenske" 271).

The contemporary female playwright was first noticed by literary and theatrical scholars, whereas theatres themselves were at first hesitant and the dramatic texts of women writers only slowly made their way from independent writing projects and small non-institutional performances to the small stages of the main Slovene theatres and, gradually, the main stages of the national theatres. Female dramatists also made a breakthrough onto foreign stages. Dramas are now being written by numerous women writers, including: Dragica Potočnjak (1958), Desa Muck (1955), Saša Pavček (1960), Žanina Mirčevska (1967), Zalka Grabnar Kogoj (1967), Kim Komljanec (1978), Simona Semenič (1975), Jera Ivanc (1975), Saša Rakef (1980), Tamara Matevc (1972), Simona Hamer (1984), Vesna Hauschild (1985), Tjaša Mislej (1985) and Iza Strehar (1992). From their biographies we can see that contemporary women dramatists in Slovenia have two things in common: almost all are connected with the theatre, as actors, directors, translators and particularly dramaturgists; and secondly, they all studied and so master dramatic theory and the history of drama, thus their writing appears and develops through a close relationship with practical theatrical work.

Since 1960, the highest profile Slovene woman dramatist has been Simona Semenič and it is her innovative dramatic works that will be the focus of this article. Semenič was born in 1975 and graduated in dramaturgy from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana; she now works as a director, producer, dramaturge and performer, but above all as a dramatist. She has written more than twenty dramatic texts, most of which break with the basic conventions of dramatic writing and thus belong to the postdramatic theatre (Lehmann 2003) or are no longer dramatic writing² (Poschmann 2008). Her best received works are: *24 UR* (24.hrs, 2006), *Nisi pozabila, samo ne spomniš se več* (You didn't forget, you just don't remember anymore, 2007); *Jaz, žrtev* (I, the victim, 2007); *5fantkov.si* (5boys.si, 2008); *zgodba o nekem slastnem trupu ali gostija ali kako so se roman abramovič, lik janša, štiriindvajsetletna julija kristeva, simona semenič in inicialki z. i. znašli v oblaku tobaknega dima* (the feast or the story of a savoury corpse or how roman abramovič, the character janša, julia kristeva, age 24, simona semenič and the initials z.i. found themselves in a tiny cloud of

tobacco smoke, 2010); *medtem ko skoraj rečem še ali prilika o vladarju in modrosti* (sophia or while i almost ask for more or a parable of the ruler and wisdom, 2011); *tisočdevetsto enainosemdeset* (1981, 2013); *sedem kuharic, štirje soldati in tri sofije* (7Cooks, 4Soldiers, 3Sophias, 2014); and *mi, evropski mrlič* (we, european corpses, 2015). She has received a number of awards for her work, including on three occasions the Grum Award for the best original Slovene drama.

Simona Semenič on the Map of Contemporary Female Dramatists

Simona Semenič is not only a recognised and successful dramatist in Slovenia, but also abroad: her plays have been translated into a number of European languages and staged in Sweden, Slovakia, Norway, Russia, Israel, Bulgaria, the USA, Serbia and elsewhere. Her most successful work, which has been staged most often abroad, is *5boys.si*, which through the logic of children's games addresses the different forms of violence in the modern world. Semenič can be compared to a number of central European female dramatists, such as Sarah Kane (1971-1999) and Elfriede Jelinek (1946), and especially to her German contemporaries Anja Hilling (1975) and Ulrike Syha (1976). They all have in common the search for an original linguistic and formal mode of expression, they strive for innovation in their dramatic writing, which will be heard in our world of media-shaped culture and bring an immanent theatrical solution. All these dramatists put into words the relevant themes of our time that call for social reflection. Their similarities are also apparent in the relationship between the text and the performance, for their texts are performed in a very open way and demand of the reader, the director, the cast and the audience that they resolve certain basic issues — who is speaking and to whom, and the relationship between the primary text and ancillary text, narrative elements and dialogue — since their plays are often a mixture of different discourses.

Simona Semenič has spoken about this in an interview, in which she said that when writing *5boys.si* she was dealing primarily with two questions: “what is today only a theatre text (not, for example, a TV drama) and how can themes such as war and child abuse reach a public that is used to everything?” (Plahuta Simčič 15). These are two key questions, of dramatic form and reception, and the work of Elfriede Jelinek, Sarah Kane, Anja Hilling, Ulrike Syha and Simona Semenič bring extremely innovative answers. Since form to a large extent defines the content of the dramatic works of these writers, I shall discuss here the formal characteristics of selected works by Simona Semenič.

Her writing constantly breaks with or questions the basic dramatic conventions, particularly Ingarden's formal dramatic characteristic of a division

between primary text and ancillary text, and Szondi's concept of the absoluteness of drama and the connected status of the dramatist and the addressee, i.e. the reader or spectator. From this perspective three innovative dramatic works will be analysed: (1) *The Feast or the Story of a Savoury Corpse or How Roman Abramovič, the Character Janša, Julia Kristeva, age 24, Simona Semenič and the Initials z.i. Found Themselves In a Tiny Cloud of Tobacco Smoke*; (2) *Sophia or While I Almost Ask for More or a Parable of the Ruler and Wisdom* and (3) *7Cooks, 4Soldiers, 3Sophias*. In all three works the author poses ethical questions connected with society's attitude to those who are Other, disadvantaged, marginalised, because they come from the East, because they are women or thinking individuals, all connected by the fact that for society they are unheard, silenced and deleted voices, they are impotent and subordinated. The dramatic characters in all three works are tormented and abused women, the victims of religious and political wars, of patriarchal patterns and imposed social roles. Thanks to their thematic and formal similarities, the three selected dramas could form a trilogy.

The Feast or the Story of a Savoury Corpse or How Roman Abramovič, the Character Janša, Julia Kristeva, age 24, Simona Semenič and the Initials z.i. Found Themselves In a Tiny Cloud of Tobacco Smoke

This is a drama that is constantly aware that it is not written in the form of a drama. The classical dramatic text begins with stage directions that tell us about the characters, about when and where the drama is unfolding, whereas Simona Semenič's begins like this:

there are seven characters in this play, one of the seven characters is mei, the seventh character in this play, step in front of you, respected (western) theatregoers, with a pipe in my hand. (Semenič *The Feast* 1)

The seventh, anonymous character in the play is the one that presents the whole event to us, that is the feast attended by the five eminent guests from the title, who are served a stew made from a human corpse. The whole time this character warns the reader or spectator that he or she is in a theatre, either through direct address or by mentioning scenic elements, and not least through the time constraint. The seventh character thus has the function of a narrator, who announces guests, chats politely, comments on and interprets the whole feast, but also manipulates the facts and relativizes what is happening. The anonymous character's narrative represents a frame within which are placed the dispositions of the corpse; although no longer

alive, the corpse is the only one to directly state and represent the identity of different women:

the corpse is still standing at the front of the stage, moving its lips
and then you hear it

my name is olena popik and i didn't want to die
i didn't want to die
don't ask me why i didn't want to die, because i won't be able to answer
i didn't want to die should be enough

dear spectator, if you didn't know before, from this moment on there's no
doubt that in front of you there is a corpse
a few lines further you'll realize this is an eastern corpse
in this play there are no western corpses, only eastern
(if such a thing as an eastern corpse even exists) (Semenič *The Feast* 7)

We are witness to the shocking stories of women that have been subject to different forms of violence: rape, abuse, being drowned, beaten, murdered... although the violence is not seen on the stage, but rather mediated by the corpse — these are the acute cries of the powerless at which the reader/spectator cannot remain indifferent.

On the television news we see primarily the faces of the ruling class, experts and journalists, who comment on images, who talk about what is shown and what we are supposed to think about this. Horrors are not banalised because we see them too often. We don't see too many suffering bodies on our screens. But we do see too many nameless bodies, too many bodies that cannot return our gaze, that are the object of speech without being able to speak themselves. (Rancière 60)

Semenič returns an identity to this anonymous body: they are not nameless victims, they all have a first name and a surname, for each one we find out some specific biographical details and fragments of their fate; all the victims are real people whose stories the author found online, which helps her to break through the stage illusion. The message of all the victims is the same and is repeated like a refrain throughout the text — “I wanted to live”; all are connected by the fact that their life was ended violently. The story repeats from one narrative to another

and goes on endlessly, which the author illustrates at the end by listing the names of the victims — a list without end. Although the corpse represents the victims it acts as if alive and it makes direct declarations in order, to paraphrase Rancière, to return the spectator's gaze. The corpse's statements have a powerful effect on the reader/spectator partly because of the great contrast with the careless chatter of the narrator, who together with the announced eminent guests represents the western, developed world, a position of power and ease. The guests are only part of the narrator's narrative, they do not communicate with the narrator or the corpse, but they do eat the stew made from a corpse — a dish that points to the society of indifference that devours the weak, from which even the dramatist herself is not excluded:

simona semenič stops feeding herself at the moment the corpse becomes
silent
she is sitting there, lingering a little
lingering some more
and then takes another portion
(it seems the wonderful smelling stew is to her taste)
(Semenič *The Feast* 19)

The spectator is also a part of the western world, which the narrator is always addressing directly (valued audience, highly respected public, excellent spectator, etc.); the narrative of the narrator, like that of the corpse, is aimed at the spectator (the corpse is looking at you, do you hear, it's waving at you, introduce yourself...), which actively includes the audience in what is going on — the audience member is no longer a privileged spectator, but an active participant and consequently jointly responsible for the state of society.³

The basic duality of the traditional dramatic text is apparent in the division between dialogue and stage directions, or primary text and ancillary text ⁴(Ingarden 252), but this is not the case with the text we are discussing. As is clear from the quoted excerpts, that division is transcended, although maintained in the printed record, with italics used for the narrative of the anonymous character and plain font for the corpse's words. The text has an unusual visual form, without divisions into acts and scenes, while speeches are not assigned to characters, but rather the text flows uninterruptedly, like free verse; the length of lines is partly dependent on pauses in speech and the transition to a new line often replaces punctuation. The text is exclusively in lower case letters. It transcends the definition of drama based

on the axiom of absolute drama⁵, where the reader/spectator is faced directly with the persons shown, who present themselves through direct speech: this applies only to the anonymous character, while the eminent guests are mediated through narrative and the corpse represents the different fates of tormented and abused women. In spite of its non-dramatic exterior form and numerous narratological elements the text always retains the basic ontological dramatic situation, i.e. being staged in a theatre, the presence of an audience and the constant time limit. Although Semenič's breaks the basic conventions of the dramatic text, in her metadrama she both relativises and revitalises them.

Sophia or While I Almost Ask for More or a Parable of the Ruler and the Wisdom

Patrice Pavis writes that the parable is “a reduced version of our world” where the “dramatist often does not choose the easiest paths, so that the present is described with all the violence of naturalist details, because that would risk concealing the essence, whereas the ideological mechanism that it supports and its supposed veristic appearance would not be revealed” (519). The drama of Simona Semenič arises from the fairy tale tradition of rulers in luxurious chambers, but at the same time we are faced with an “educational story” about the structure of society, a demonstration of its mechanisms, of how it manipulates people, fabricates internal enemies, of revolt, war and social responsibility. The text is thus built on a presentation of the universal and the concrete: the fairy tale sometime and somewhere breaks through the real here and now, most obviously in the image of the 20-year old flowering linden tree, one of the basic symbols of Sloveneness, which corresponds to the origin of the dramatic text in 2011, on the 20th anniversary of Slovene independence. The dramatic characters are bearers of archetypal characteristics that are expressed even by their names: power and the state are represented by the strong ruler Vladimir (*vladati* in Slovene means to rule), the spiritual adviser Bogomir (*bog* is Slovene for God) and the minister Branimir (*braniti* means to defend). Due to dissatisfaction among the people and the possibility of revolt they must find someone to blame and so they identify as dangerous three sisters: their names are Ljuba, Vera and Nada, representing the three ethical imperatives of love, faith and hope.

The characters' statements are set in a wide narrative context, which begins even with the title, but the identity of the speaker remains hidden until the final lines of the text, when we find out that the narrative flow belongs to Sofija, the wise mother of the three girls. The role of Sofija is thus reminiscent of the

anonymous character in the first drama we discussed: Sofija is also a narrator who creates and comments on events, just that the reader does not know who is speaking and her role in the staging is dependent on the director's reading. Sofija is part of the story world that is described, a kind of "generative narrator" (Richardson 152) who does not, however, communicate with the other dramatic characters, since her communication is aimed at the reader/spectator. The dramatic text retains the basic formal division into dialogue and stage directions, and the speeches are assigned to roles, but Sofija's words are in italics. Anne Ubersfeld observes that: "the basic linguistic division between dialogue and stage directions concerns the subject of statements, in other words the question *who is speaking?* In dialogue this is a paper being that we call a *character* (who is not the same as the author), but in the stage directions it is the author who speaks" (26). This means that, according to Richardson, in the case of Semenič the stage directions do not belong to the author, but to a dramatic character and are better suited to the definition of narratologists who emphasise that stage directions are not the voice of the author, but that of the narrator. Sofija is thus written in the form of stage directions that have a narrative role, so that the audience is not just following the direct statements of dramatic characters, but is gaining a more precise insight into their thoughts; above all, Semenič extends the chronotope of events outside the audience's field of perception, so that they get the feeling of a "novel-like context." So the stage directions are not an ancillary text, as Sofija has the largest share of the text. Ingarden observes that the ancillary text is omitted during staging, or rather materialises in theatrical signs, through which it moves from the domain of language to a non-verbal, largely visual message⁶; in this dramatic text the stage directions cannot be staged since they remain at the level of language, or rather a partial transition to materiality is dependent on each directorial reading. Moreover, their formal character, even when they bring information about time and space, is different from traditional drama, with the text beginning with the words: "above the royal city/dark clouds/are gathering/gathering/many many years ago" (Semenič *sophia* 1); this is not just related to the pragmatic function, but also the poetic one — the aesthetic nature of the note is shown by repetition, unusual word order, the transition to a new line and so on.

The similarities with the previous text are not merely formal, but are also on the thematic and ideational level, which is apparent particularly in the way women are shown as victims; in this particular instance, the fate of the three sisters is taken by Simona Semenič from a real case, i.e. the Drina martyrs, who were killed by Chetniks and thrown in the river during World War 2.⁷ Ljuba, Nada and Vera

thus end up in the river. They could buy their freedom by cooperating with the authorities, but because they wish for a better and fairer world for all they are thrown into a brothel, where they are abused and raped by the ruler and soldiers. Because of their civil disobedience they are tortured, beaten, beheaded and their bodies thrown in the river, while their death is exploited for political benefit — the guilt is placed at the door of barbarians from the East and the girls are declared to be war heroes. The question of how to show all this horror on stage is brought by Semenič to the level of the narrative, as a direct description of events — in other words, not mimesis, but diegesis: throughout, Semenič believes in the power of words, which are for her more powerful than images.⁸

the catchpoles grab hold of hope
 strip her
 bare
 so I can see the blood has coagulated
 my name is
 and I am an aristocrat
 the catchpoles beat hope up
 striking her bare body with whips
 her young body
 the flesh is ripping while blood squirts
 hope screams in crying
 hope cries in screaming
 and they keep beating her
 one, two, three, four, five of them with whips
 the body twists
 the flesh rips, the blood squirts
 and then the five get tired
 the body is lying there completely still
 I gave birth to her amidst the smell of acacias (Semenič sophia 71)

Birth and death and the connected maternal tragedy put Sofija on the side of the female principle of birth and love, which is in opposition to the masculine principle of power, war and violence, but the contemporary parable does not have an unambiguous message, it is “never completely translatable into a lesson of some kind: it submits to the play of different meanings and the reflection of theatricality” (Pavis 520). This is particularly true in the case of the figure of Sofija, at both the

form and the content level: her position in the drama and the final events is both evasive and enigmatic, for as the mother of martyrs she is given the honour of marrying the ruler and her relationship with Vladimir constantly shifts between admiration and contempt, her own feelings and the wellbeing of the country, so that the relationship between wisdom and power remains ambiguous and unresolved.

7Cooks, 4Soldiers, 3Sophias

Fourteen dramatic characters appear in the text and are mentioned in the title, with the Sophias being based on three famous women from history: Sophie Magdalene Scholl was a member of the resistance movement against Nazism, who was beheaded in 1943 in Munich at the age of 21; in 1881 Sofija Lvovna Perovskajeva, aged 27, was condemned to death by hanging because of political activism, for taking part in a number of unsuccessful assassination attempts against Emperor Aleksander II; and Marie-Sophie Germain, a mathematician from Paris, who died in 1831 from breast cancer at the age of 55, without her education ever being recognised. In addition to sharing a name, the three have in common that through their thoughts and actions they transcended the constraints of their time and place, working against the demands and expectations of the patriarchal society — they were intellectuals and female activists who wanted to change the world. But the text is not a biographical drama, the fates of the three historical characters are presented in a fragmentary way, with an emphasis on their execution. As in the previous two dramas, the fate of the real Sophias are placed within a timeless fictional frame formed by the cooks and the soldiers. The cooks are the complete opposite of the Sophias, they sit in a semi-circle silently peeling potatoes, but at the same time they have an opinion about everything and everyone, they chat and gossip as the wheels of history turn. They are the eternal escorts of history's repeating events, apathetic, passive, petty, smug; they are the anonymous average mass, as the author emphasises through their names: the peevish one, the huffy one, the fat one, the dainty one, the boring one, the pedantic one and the pensive one. Their language is also carefully shaped in accordance with their defining characteristics, which brings a number of ironic emphases. The cooks are conformist preservers of the status quo, while at the same time being the ones who feed the soldiers, feed war, and drive the wheels of history. The soldiers are also nameless, labelled only by sequential Roman numerals; their male strength and charisma are emphasised, they carry out orders and fulfil bureaucratic regulations, ensuring social stability and supporting the political elite. The violence against the Sophias thus has two faces: incomprehension and insistence on an enforced social

role, as is emphasised by the cooks a number of times: “well, that’s nothing, a woman must get married, a woman must give birth, this is our mission, dear god, this is why we’re here, right” (Semenič *7Cooks* 81), and the physical removal of everything that might threaten the existing system.

This time, too, there is no display of violence in the foreground, more attention is paid to the procedure itself, the senseless rules, the accuracy of historical facts as the executor of the action, which is mediated through the brief speeches of the cooks, facilitating different directorial readings.⁹For the needs of the whole and a greater effect, Semenič dresses historical facts in fiction, making them universal. All the three Sophias in the drama are beheaded, although the second Sophia emphasises in one of her speeches that she was the first woman in Russia to be condemned to death by hanging because of political activism:

IV.

maybe it was as you say, madam, but we’ll execute you with an axe
regardless

the huffy one

this may not be historically precise, but it doesn’t make it any less true

the peevish one

and then

I.

do you forgive me?

the huffy one

he pauses for greater effect

sophia, the second one

i forgive you

the dainty one

i yawn

the pensive one

you swing (Semenič *7Cooks* 74)

This extract also illustrates the formal structure of the text, which does away with the duality of primary text and ancillary text (also typographically) and to the question who is speaking – we get the reply of the cook twice. The cooks make their speeches and say the stage instructions, there is no difference or hierarchy between them, and the reader/spectator is thus directly faced not only with what the dramatic characters say¹⁰, but also with the stage directions, for the ancillary text is also spoken by dramatic characters. The cooks are thus dramatic characters and at the same time narrators who comment on their thoughts and the world around them, communicating with the audience, adding different times and spaces to the whole, for the three Sophias belong to three different centuries and three large European countries. In this way, the formal structure of the text emphasises timelessness, the eternal wheels of history and thus the universality of the message.

Conclusion

In all three texts the women victims are real people placed within a fictional frame: the bodies of eastern women, the Drina martyrs and three Sophias from history. These are not anonymous bodies, in all three cases we hear “my name is”. Semenič shows specific people, events, time and space, placing all within a timeless frame that is created through repetition of events, enumerating characters, a fairy tale structure, a revised role for stage directions, narrative elements, etc., through which the ideas in her dramas take on a universal message of relevance to different parts of the world. Individual fates become a kind of metaphor for all the tormented and abused women — victims of the male position of power, of the patriarchal society, of the western world — and so a feminist reading of these texts is a strong one. But Semenič’s reach is wider: war, the repression of the western world, senseless bureaucratic procedures, conformism, imposed social roles, the relationship between the exceptional individual and the average mass, institutionally supported violence, mechanisms of strength and power, and on the other side questions of empathy, social responsibility, understanding the different, the Other. In her dramas, Semenič gives a voice to the powerless, the unseen, the silenced and erased. If, as Lehmann observes: “Questions of social power are political ones” (295), then we can say that Semenič deals with precisely that kind of question and so her dramas are also political. These are global themes in today’s world, which appear not only in Slovene drama, but also world drama and call for social reflection.

The author continually plays with the audience’s feelings and aesthetic distance, and so her texts, in spite of their sharp emphasis on ideas, do not come

across as pessimistic since they employ different alienating strategies through which to soften the image of the world: irony, sarcasm, cynicism, the use of unusual words and humour, with the text permeated by enigma and ambiguity (maybe it is, maybe it isn't). Her texts are made up of different types of discourse, they are a generic conglomerate containing elements of ritual, fairy tale, political drama, comedy, parable; they are a mixture of the tragic and the comic, of irony and empathy, of the horrific and the playful, so that the position of the reader/spectator swings from the comfort of aesthetic distance¹¹ (Pezdirc Bartol "Recepcija" 196-198) to being directly addressed and actively participating. With regard to the latter, I am not referring to physical inclusion in the staging, as in avant-garde theatre, but rather the idea that the reader or spectator is in an active rather than a passive position, so that "watching is action" (Rancière 13, 15) — in other words, the audience is emotionally and cognitively involved, which Semenič promotes through different textual strategies. But new textual practices do not necessarily mean a radical break with traditional ones¹² (Lukan 167), they rather arise from awareness of the crisis of the dramatic form and of representation already present in the twentieth century. Simona Semenič's writing is also known for its undermining of established reading conventions, as well as destabilising the basic concepts of theory of drama. In the three texts discussed here there is a noticeable absence of capital letters and punctuation, which allows the author to include the reader more closely in the process of decoding and interpreting the text: "Basically, I wanted to leave open emphases, thoughts and punctuation. I didn't want to suggest where the end of the sentence was. I determined pauses in a way by starting a new line — as if writing poetry. I also use an exclamation mark only where it is strictly necessary. This way of writing is in principle very interesting. Sometimes I write as a statement what someone else might read as a question" (Semenič "sedem" 25). Semenič's dramatic texts have a different appearance, they are not divided into acts and scenes, they do not have a list of characters, the division between primary text and ancillary text is transcended, and the stage directions have outgrown their usual role — when the drama is staged they cannot be omitted or materialised as theatrical signs, for they have become an equal and constituent part of the text. It is not that the stage directions have been erased, but rather revitalised, with their narrative function being emphasised (narrative on separate events, comment on what is happening, the possibility of seeing into characters' thoughts, mediation of markers of time and place, a means of communicating with the audience, etc.). And by introducing narrative elements into what was once absolute drama, Semenič also has a stronger presence as the author. Anne Ubersfeld (26-27) observes that

the dramatic author voluntarily surrenders the right to speak in her own name and is the subject only in the stage directions¹³; Toporišič reshapes her observation as follows: “In the case of Semenič’s work we can understand the dramatic text as the author’s declaration or the expression of her ‘personality,’ ‘feelings,’ problems,’ since all the subjective elements are no longer directed to other speakers. Thus the text, in contrast with absolute drama, becomes subjective, with the author not surrendering the right to speak in her own name; the author is the subject not only of the stage directions, but of the whole text” (99). Narratologists have come to a similar conclusion: “narrative makes a fundamental contribution to the playwright’s creative hold, it facilitates interdiscursive experimentation and the revealing of the dramatic events promotes reflection” (Koron 45) .

The addressee of the dramatic text (reader, director and actors, spectator) must for each text think about the basic relations, who is speaking and to whom, as well as the status of the author, the dramatic characters and their own position¹⁴ (Pezdirc Bartol “Slovenske” 279). Dramatic texts demand the addressee’s active involvement, the addressee becomes an active category, the reader/spectator is involved in the action and is to a large extent a participant, and thus shares responsibility for the state of society and the world. Simona Semenič does not achieve ethical dimensions in her texts through explicit political statements or ethical imperatives, nor through the thematisation or direct display of violence, massacres, war crimes, abuse and so on. “Aesthetic experience becomes the condition of possibility for a particular kind of ethical relationship. The ethical relationship becomes, in its turn, the ground upon which political action might be attempted” (Ridout 66). Semenič takes a specific historical or contemporary social situation and, through innovative textual strategies, achieves artistic effects and opens up ethical issues from a universal perspective. Although she breaks the basic dramatic conventions, she at the same time relativises and revitalises them in metadramatic form, while the new textual strategies are most closely connected with the questions of reception and the power of theatre in today’s world.¹⁵

Notes

1. See Mateja Pezdirc Bartol. “Slovenske dramatičarke v 21. stoletju: med teorijo, prakso in inovativno pisavo”. *Slavistična revija* 64.3 (2016): 269-282.
2. See Gerda Poschmann. “Gledališki tekst in drama. K uporabi pojmov.” *Drama, tekst, pisava*. Ed. Petra Pogorevc and Tomaž Toporišič. (Ljubljana: Mestno gledališče ljubljansko, 2008) 148.
3. The first performance of the text, written in 2010, was the premiere on 13.11.2011 in the

private apartment of the director Primož Ekart, produced by the Imaginarni Institute, and instead of the eminent guests six members of the audience were placed at the table. The exceptional proximity and personal contact between all those present and the absence of a division between stage and auditorium served to emphasise the ethical charge of the text.

4. Roman Ingarden. *Literarna umetnina*. (Ljubljana: Studia Humanitatis, 1990)252.

5. See Peter Szondi. *Teorija sodobne drame 1880-1950*. (Ljubljana: Mestno gledališče ljubljansko, 2000) 130.

6. See note 2, 372.

7. See Semenič. "Umetnost se gradi na napakah". Pogovarjala se je Brina Rafaela Klampfer. *Gledališki list SNG Drama Ljubljana* XCIV.12 (2015): 22-28.

8. In the premiere on 24 April 2015 on the small stage of the National Theatre in Ljubljana, directed by Primož Ekart, the violence against the three women was emphasised by sound effects — the rhythm of drums and the sound of blows.

9. The premiere was on 16.9.2015 on the large stage of the City Theatre in Ljubljana. The director Diego de Brea emphasised timelessness through the black-and-white aesthetics of the set, the selection of music and the lighting, while for the executions he used other media, staged live with the projection of previously recorded material on a screen, i.e. acted scenes recorded in black-and-white.

10. See Note 5, 30.

11. See Mateja Pezdirc Bartol, Mateja "Recepcija drame: procesi gledanja, gledališki prostor in pojem distance". *Primerjalna književnost* 30.1 (2007): 191-201.

12. Blaž Lukan. "Nove tekstne prakse v slovenskem gledališču in strategije uprizarjanja". *Slovenska dramatika*. Ed. Mateja Pezdirc Bartol. Ljubljana: FF (Obdobja, 31), 2012. 167-173.

13. See Anne Ubersfeld. *Brati gledališče*. (Ljubljana: Mestno gledališče ljubljansko, 2002) .

14. See Note 1, 279

15. The article is translated by David Limon. The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0265).

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—. *the feast or the story of a savoury corpse or how roman abramovič, the character janša, julia kristeva, age 24, simona semenič and the initials z.i. found themselves in a tiny cloud of tobacco smoke*. Trans. Barbara Skubic. Manuscript.

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Dialogism in Contemporary Slovenian Poetry: Aspects of External Dialogization¹

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Abstract This paper presents an introduction to a broader project that deals with the articulation and configuration of subjects in contemporary Slovenian poetry. In the theoretical introduction, I provide a brief outline of the different aspects and forms of dialogism defined by Mikhail Bakhtin and put forward some conclusions reached after my re-reading of Bakhtin's thoughts on the monological nature of poetry. In the empirical section, I situate the chronological landmarks of the increased use of dialogism in recent Slovenian poetry and list the key authors involved. An introductory difference is made between the dialogic strategies that concern the structuration of the poetic discourse and its subjects on different levels of discourse (the speaking positions and the position of the enunciative subject) on the one hand, and representations of the decomposition of the "hard" conceptions of the (philosophical) category of the subject and/or the (sociological) category of the individual by using monological procedures in the structuration of the poem on the other. From the standpoint of poetic strategies, recent phenomena of dialogism on the level of the poem is often incorporated into the apparent monologic model of the subject configuration: the plurality of the poetic subject is introduced above all in the macro-system of the book and less in the micro-system of the poem or even the utterance. From the standpoint of the difference between *external dialogism* as the emergence of polyphony through the introduction of speaking characters, and *internal dialogism* where different strategies of the multiplication of point of views and voices occur within an apparently single, but decentered, speaking position, the former prevails in recent Slovenian poetry to the extent that we can speak of a strong current of polyphony. The remainder of the paper presents some examples of external dialogism that, according to Bakhtin's typology, would be considered the external type of the *two-voiced word*: the introduction of the persona poem and the dramatic monologue (especially prevalent in women's writing). It seems that the

emergence of external dialogism is often a strategy used in the engaged thematic exploration of the intimate and social habitus that were kept in silence, while the very gesture of acquiring voice undertaken by until now “fragile” subjects — women, animals and even plants — is endowed with the symbolic value of subversive and transformative impulse.

Key Words Slovenian poetry; Bakhtin; dialogism; persona; dramatic monologue; écriture féminine

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Theoretical Section: Bakhtin’s Theory of Dialogism and Poetry

When the term dialogism is mentioned, Mikhail Bakhtin is the first major figure that comes to mind. Bakhtin is also the thinker who articulated the now famous assumptions on the monological nature of poetry in his essay “Discourse in the Novel.” These assumptions were not Bakhtin’s invention; rather, they were rooted in the Romantic theory of the lyric, common in virtually all of early modern theories of poetry.² However, such understandings of the monologic or the dialogic are based on certain generalized conceptions of external dialogism (the use of dialogue), while Bakhtin theorizes the inner dialogism of each discourse, which, Bahtin argues, the philosophy of language and linguistic did not detect because the focus of these disciplines remained on dialogue as a compositional form of discourse and not on inner dialogism that “endows the entire structure of discourse” (*Estetika* 60). A detailed study of Bakhtin’s entire opus shows that the understanding of poetry as purely monologic as presented in his “Discourse in the Novel” exists in contradiction to Bakhtin’s own theory of dialogic relations in literature and more generally in language.³ This theory was partly developed in his earlier works, prior to “Discourse,” but not finished until his later essays. Throughout his oeuvre, Bakhtin articulates the following different levels and aspects the dialogism:

Dialogism in its broadest sense means the intersubjective nature of the language in the sense of an instrument of communication (*langage* in French). Bakhtin grounds his conception of discourse in this broad sense, and opposes it to language in the sense of a system of signs (*langue* in French). Such a conceptualization is identical to Emile Benveniste's theorization of discourse. Bakhtin and Benveniste (and Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt before them) realized that each text has two levels or layers: each text is language but is also more than language in the sense of a system of signs.⁴ In "Discourse in the Novel," the second dimension is not taken into account because Bakhtin is dealing with *poetic language*, and not *poetic discourse* or *poetic utterance*. An important aspect of the general concept of dialogism is *voice* or *point of view* (točka zrenija), which does not appear in Benveniste's theory of discourse.⁵

Aesthetic dialogism, the dialogism of the aesthetic event, was developed in Bakhtin's earlier works. Each aesthetic activity presupposes the so-called *exotopy* of the author in relation to the character, and also in the lyric. The consequence of this insight is similar to that about general dialogism in language: namely, the multilayered quality of each utterance. In his text *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (1920–1923), Bakhtin defines different levels of the lyric utterance and lyric subjectivity, introducing instances he calls the author and the hero.⁶

There is dialogism in the sense of *heteroglossia* (*raznorechie*), that is the coexistence of varieties of sociolects, idiolects, linguistic styles, etc. in a single language. Bakhtin argues in "The Discourse in the Novel" that this sense of dialogism is characteristic above all in the novel, and not, or to a lesser degree, in poetry.

Finally, there is the dialogic structure of subjectivity: decentration, the processual nature of the subject, and the intersubjective ground of subjectivation. In Bakhtin and Voloshinov's texts, which have a Marxist slant, this dialogic structure signifies the "polyphonic nature" of the conscience, which is understood as a social and communicative act.

In my investigation of contemporary Slovenian poetry, I will take into account all of these aspects of dialogism. Together, they form my theoretical starting point: namely, I understand the poem as a discourse that always includes two levels, the level of enunciation and the level of the enounced. The subject of the discourse is also always articulated in a double way: as the subject of the enunciation (Bakhtin's author as a discursive instance) and as the subject of the enounced (Bakhtin's hero as a discursive instance). In addition to these two layers, there are a variety of possible subjective positions, voices, and perspectives on different levels of each

discourse. This potential multiplicity is especially present in literature as artistic discourse.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), Bakhtin develops the following practical-analytical typology of dialogic procedures:⁷

Direct unmediated discourse directed toward its referential object as an expression of the speaker's ultimate semantic authority;

Objectified discourse (discourse of a represented person);

The double-voiced discourse, that is to say discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse. It includes the following sub-categories:

1) Undirectional double-voiced discourse;

2) Vari-directional double-voiced discourse including parody and all of its nuances;

3) The active type (reflected discourse of another) including hidden internal polemic.

It should be emphasized that Bakhtin deals with various types of prose discourse. Therefore, his classification includes exclusively prose fiction. In addition, Bakhtin notes that "poetic speech in the narrow sense requires a uniformity of all discourses, the reduction to a common denominator, although that denominator can either be discourse of the first type, or can belong to certain weakened varieties of the other types" (200). However, as in "Discourse," he relativizes this assumption claiming that:

even in poetic speech works are possible that do not reduce their entire verbal material to a single common denominator [...] even in poetry a whole series of fundamental problems cannot be solved without some attention to the above-mentioned plane for investigating discourse, because different types of discourse in poetry require different stylistic treatments. (*Problems* 200)

In view of the fact of that Bakhtin's warning and of our own assumptions that poetry enters into the general theory of dialogism (the dialogism of language itself), it is legitimate to consider the appearance of these procedures in dialogic strategies in poetry. It should be recalled that two of the main procedures in modern poetry are narrativization and dramatization and that dialogism relates to them, especially

“external polyphony” in the sense of introducing speaking personas-characters into poems. We can thus presume that some elements of Bakhtin’s classification will remain useful for the study of poetic dialogism. However, this undertaking will only be productive if it is combined with the reconceptualization of the fundamental concepts of the lyric, and especially of the lyrical subject and the different layers of poetic discourse.

Dialogism in Contemporary Slovenian Poetry: Mapping the Phenomena⁸

The lively reality of poetic texts from Romanticism and then definitively from the birth of poetic modernity onwards, deconstructs the theoretical representations of the monologism of poetry. It is sufficient to think of the works of poets such as Victor Hugo, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Augusta Webster, Jules Laforgue, Robert Frost, Thomas Stearns Eliot, Ezra Pound, Langston Hughes, Fernando Pessoa, Henri Michaux, or Carol Ann Duffy to mention only the most typical in this respect. Medieval troubadours (François Villon, Rutebeuf) and Renaissance poets (Pierre de Ronsard) reveal a lively dynamics of both external and internal dialogisation. Despite this, the apparently monologic model prevails even today in poetry, creating the illusion of spontaneous utterance and experience through the apparent overlapping of the instances of the lyric persona, the subject of enunciation, focalizer(s), and the implicit author⁹ (cf. Wolf 251–289). Slovenian poetry, including its contemporary production, is no exception in this regard. Still, in the last decade, the increased use of dialogic procedures as defined by Bakhtin can be perceived.

For the moment, my investigation is limited to developments in Slovenian poetry after 2000. I am not attempting to offer a global insight into overall poetical production, but rather will focus on poetic works that make use of strategies that might be qualified as dialogic. Drawing on the collected material from this period, it is possible to claim that diverse practices of dialogism are present in the works of all generations of poets. Representatives of the older generation are fewer, including some four authors and an even lower number of collections using dialogism. Dialogic strategies, and in particular the dramatic monologue, are more frequent in women’s writing, and particularly in the work of authors of the middle and the young generations. This is especially the case from 2011 onwards.

The period from 2000 to 2016 can be provisionally divided into three parts; the period from 2002 (marked by the publication of Miklavž Komelj’s *Rosa* [Dew]) to 2007 when only a few collections using dialogic strategies are noteworthy; the period from 2007 to 2011 when the phenomenon becomes more intensive;

the period from 2011 to 2016 when the use of dialogic strategies, especially in women's writing, becomes even more frequent.¹⁰

At the outset, it is necessary to distinguish two types of aspects of dialogism:

1) the difference between *external dialogism* as the emergence of polyphony through the introduction of speaking or non-speaking characters (Bakhtin's unidirectional objectified discourse (discourse of a represented person); unidirectional double-voiced discourse; vari-directional double-voiced discourse; see above) and *internal dialogism* where different strategies of the multiplication of point of views and voices occurs within an apparently single, but decentered, speaking position and/or character (Bakhtin's active type, the reflected discourse of another).

2) two aspects of dialogism that are absent in Bakhtin's typology: a) dialogic strategies in the structuration of the poetic discourse and its subjects on different levels of the poem (speech strategies and positioning of the speaking subjects), and; b) the decomposition of a "hard" understanding of the philosophical category of the subject and/or the sociological category of the individual depicted on the level of the "poetic plot" (via motifs and themes from the more traditional theoretical perspective, or — in terms of cognitive approaches to literature — via schemes, frames and scripts, isotopies and events).¹¹ These two aspects of dialogism can occur together or not. Heuristically speaking, we could distinguish between structure and content without accepting the sharp bifurcation between content and form. In a poem with an apparently traditional model of the lyrical subject, it is possible to detect the deconstruction of the (category of the) subject on the level of the plot (storyworld, *diegesis*) without realizing it on other structural levels. We could presume that the most holistic, global, and probably most relevant are examples of poems, collections, and entire oeuvres where both of the above mentioned aspects are realized not only in the artistic sense, but also from the perspective of transformative ethical, epistemological, and social potentials. All the same, this hypothesis has yet to be proved. In this respect, contemporary Slovenian poetry belongs to the traditionally oriented modern mainstream of post-postmodern poetics based on an instable subjectivity and its small stories. More radical experimental poetic practices that draw from (different) modernistic and avant-garde traditions are rare. There are some important exceptions, for instance the work of Miklavž Komelj which has considerably influenced the younger generation of poets, and especially

the ones gathered around the magazine *Idiot*: Muanis Sinanović, Karlo Hmeljak, and Jan Krmelj should be mentioned in this regard. This generation, along with the boom of *écriture féminine*, is responsible for diversifying the somewhat uniform landscape of Slovenian poetry in the last few years.

In this paper, I focus in particular on aspects of external dialogism because the phenomenon of the disappearing of traditional lyrical *I* from the central speaking position in favor of diverse voices has become a frequent poetic procedure in contemporary Slovenia poetry. It is not insignificant that this procedure has become a particular characteristic of women authors.

a) Persona and the “poem-novel”

Although the introduction of the persona by Anglo-Saxon modernists is viewed as a historical variation on the dramatic monologue, it seems important methodologically to distinguish between the genre of dramatic monologue and the procedure of the (fictive) persona. The two are different from each other in at least two respects. The first difference relates to the speaking position. In the dramatic monologue, the character is necessarily a speaker who, at least in the original Victorian form of the genre, always addresses someone, while in the persona poem, the character does not necessarily have a voice. In persona poems without voice, the level of the subject of enunciation can be more marked, sometimes to the point that the “person” of this extradiegetic speaker is formed on the extradiegetic level and that this speaker penetrates the lower diegetic level, that is the level of the plot (storyworld). What’s more, the “person” of the diegetic speaker (the narrator in narratologic terms) can be more or less obviously related to the empirical author. The second difference is that both are products of their historical formations. The classical (Victorian) dramatic monologue and the modernistic persona poems are therefore distinct in the following aspects: the dramatic monologue is more focused on the psychology of the character and its disclosure in the speech. The methods of the character’s construction are very different from the strategies employed in modernist’s persona poems. In contrast with the Victorian dramatic monologue — in which we often observe the rapid “construction” of the coherent identity of a character that is frequently derived from the socio-critical dimension of the poem — the typical modernistic dramatic monologue — T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and Ezra Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley” being two paradigmatic examples of the form — strive to deconstruct the coherent identity of the character. The poem, relying on associativity and frequent impersonality,

provides only dispersed parts of the persona's identity, which is in any case unstable, uncertain, and decentred. Unpredictable shifts of voices, enunciative ventriloquism, and decentration on the level of the spatio-temporal situation of the character are typical of these poems. This is the frame of modernist poetics in which the modernist procedure of the persona has appeared. Today's use of this strategy is generally quite far from the modernist approach; indeed, it seems much closer to the original dramatic monologue, even though it is not entirely authentic as the persona is not a speaker. The strategy today often derives from narrativity as it attempts to depict a slice of the persona's life and its coherent psychology.

To be even more methodologically precise, we must distinguish particular persona poems and persona books where one or more characters appear within a collection. In certain persona books, particular persona poems (where the character is not speaking or is not the central speaker) alternate with true dramatic monologues and with dialogues. Examples of this are: Taja Kramberger's *Opus quinque dierum* and Peter Semolič *Druga obala* [*The Other Shore*] and, to a lesser extent, Barbara Pogačnik's *Alica v deželi plaščev* [*Alice in Coat Land*]. Because there are a greater number of persona poems/books after 2000 in Slovenia¹² (this is prior to the increase of the dramatic monologue), I will deal with this variant first, beginning with two samples from the older generation. These books form an impression of the fragmented poem novel.¹³ The books of Taja Kramberger and Katja Gorečan, which I will discuss later in this paper, also fall into this general category.

In 2003, Ivo Svetina (1948) published *Oblak in gora* [*The Cloud and the Mountain*] subtitled *Yüan Hung-Tao: 1568-161*. The book, written in 1999, includes one hundred and eleven prose poems that synthetically depict the life of the ancient Chinese poet. The two words in the main title are essential to the entire collection as they present two distinct aspects of life. The cloud is the symbol of the changeability and fugacity of everyday life, while the mountain presents the atemporal solidity of several valid truths.¹⁴ The nature of clouds and mountains is also represented formally in the poetic texts, which have a double structure: the first part addresses Yüan's perceptions and thoughts, while the second part offers wisdom gleaned from the details of everyday life, an observation of a bird's flight, drinking tea, etc. The narrator also maintains this duality especially in its temporal aspect: sometimes the narration shifts from the prevailing retrospective into simultaneity stressing the validity of the thought in each moment, even in the present moment of the reader. The punctuation marks designating reported speech are intentionally inconsistent throughout the book. Thus we can never really be

sure who is actually the speaker. Is it Yüan himself or the narrator providing a resume or even reading directly from Yüan's book? The ambivalent definition of the focalizer is especially pronounced during the expression of intimate experiences and cognitive insights when it seems that focalization is not flowing through the persona, but rather that the focalizer is the narrator himself or that the reader is participating in a sort of two-layered double focalization. The book presents a lively interlacing of different subject instances: the narrator, the character, and the focalization, which is multiple and shifts from the diegetic to the extradiegetic level, and in this way plays with the dynamization between two-layered narration and the poetic utterance traditionally understood as monologic.

Milan Dekleva (1946), the author of one of the most notable poetic oeuvres in the last thirty years, made the pre-Socratic thinker Anaximander the central character and speaker in his collection *Panični človek* [*Panic Man*] (1990) a decade before 2000, the landmark date I chose for this study. In his more recent book, *Izganjalci smisla* [*Exorcists of Sense*] (2012), Dekleva intensified his poetics of confronting the diverse philosophical and cultural traditions, including the poetry, of East and West. *Izganjalci smisla* is composed of fifty-eight poems featuring three historical personalities from eastern and western tradition: the poetess Sappho, the Taoist sage Laozi, and the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclites. The three characters speak and address each other in the poems, or alternatively a speaker/narrator speaks about them on a higher poetic level. The soliloquies of the protagonists as well as their dialogues with each other alternate with the narrator's entrances and departures from the diegetic level of the plot, all of the forms of address coming together to create a long discussion with many digressions. The speech of the narrator, who frequently takes the position of the observer of the character's states, thoughts, and words, is often nearly imperceptible, functioning to mark time, to penetrate the poetic plot, drawing the poem and the reader out of transhistorical atemporality and into the actual moment. Discourses about everyday life, philosophy, science, and poetry traverse the speech of all four voices in particular poems and throughout the entire collection. The specificities of the poetic existence of the three personae reside in their transhistoricity: each one exists in its own time (antiquity) and, simultaneously, in today's moment, the poems including abundant contemporary references to, for example, Srebrenica, Chernobyl, Osama bin Laden, Barack Obama, Hotmail, Lionel Messi, etc. The interesting phenomenon of transhistoricity should be emphasized in this discussion as it appears alongside dialogic strategies in the works of many poets, not just Milan Dekleva and Ivo Svetina. For example, Miklavž Komelj frequently uses transhistoricity as a topic in

his poetry collections in which procedures of inner dialogisation also prevail.

Taja Kramberger (1970), poet, historian, and historical anthropologist, wrote the collection *Opus quinque dierum* in 2009 and its publication marked an important turning point in Slovenian poetry in at least two aspects; first, as regards the systematization of the poetic polyphony throughout the entire book, and; second, as regards the shifts in women's writing towards more pronounced, even militantly expressed, feminists standpoints. The collection is a poetic mosaic built on the historical data from the Dreyfus affair (1894-1906) and coheres into a sort of documentary poetic novel. Its thematic inspiration, the Dreyfus affair, stands as the paradigmatic event of wider European society, "a symptom of all debilitated regimes" (Kramberger, *Opus* 11). As such, the Dreyfus affair is not only part of the past but is understood as still relevant in the present era, occurring time and again in various masks of symbolic and physical violence. *Poetics is politics and politics is poetics* is the starting point of the collection. Poetics and politics are inseparable because their common link, *ethics*, is the sole imperative. As far as poetic strategies are concerned, the *ethics* of Kramberger's writing is expressed in attacks on "the petrified fossil colonies in the language" and in "the resistance with combinations of words that we snatch away from the paltry society and return to dignity" (41). For the poet, the poetic exposition of the symbolic domination of all the oppressed, including women, animals, the silenced, and other marginalized groups, and the violence perpetrated against them, represents a struggle to decontaminate the foundations and start on a path towards the transformation of society. In *Opus quinque dierum*, this struggle is closely related to the strategy of systematic polyphony, which also dictates the composition of the whole. In the collection, eight cycles featuring different voices shift back and forth between the chronological period of the Dreyfus affair and the present. The poems programmatically introduce scientific discourse into poetic speech and depict the intimate, ideological, social, and political conditions of the scandal. Reading them, we encounter well known, lesser known, or unknown historical personalities that were involved in the Dreyfus scandal in different ways. Some characters appear in the collection as central speakers of a specific poem (e. g. Emil Zola, Karl Kraus, Alfred Dreyfus's brother) and sometimes even of an entire cycle of poems (Dreyfus himself in the cycle "Hudičev otok" [*The Devil's Island*]). As for others historical personae that appear in the poems, they are markedly polarized between positive and negative. When women narrators speak on a higher diegetic level, parts of the persona's speech is reported via quotes in the poem. In such cases, the woman speaker often penetrates the level of the poetic plot through the author's comments,

by referring to her present time, to the collective subject “us,” or to circumstances from her personal life. One of the cycles is entirely composed of poems constructed of fragments from Slovenian newspapers from the historical period of the Dreyfus affair that directly refer to the scandal and bring to light the state of mind in Slovenia at that time, a state of mind that also extends into the present era.

The 2011 poetry collection by Katja Gorečan (1989) entitled *Trpljenje mlade Hane* [*The Sorrows of Young Hana*] aroused great interest on the part of both literary critics and readers, and was nominated for one of Slovenia’s most important poetry awards. The title itself clearly refers to Goethe’s novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, while Slovenian readers also recognized the allusion to the seminal expressionist play by Slovenian playwright Slavko Grum entitled *Dogodek v mestu Gogi* (*An Event in the Town of Goga*), featuring a sexually abused girl as the main character. The work announces the auto-ironization of the confessional mode of poetry with a centralized lyrical *I*. In the collection, this process is realized by the clear constitution of two poetic levels — the enunciative level and the plot level — and simultaneously two women subjects — the narrator and the character. The book makes good use of the difference between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced, which is, according to Benveniste and Bakhtin, inherent to the language itself, bringing it toward a clearer dialogization based on a strong narrative structuration. By sequencing events about the intimate and partly also the public life of Hana, and plotting them with intentional stylistic simplicity, a fragmented auto-ironizing *bildungsroman* about the formation of a young woman artist is created. Different aspects of physicality, and especially of sexuality, told from a girl’s or women’s perspective create a strong thematic and motivic isotopy for the whole. Throughout the collection, this dimension is expressed in a deliberately distanced, almost banalized, sometimes even infantilized point of view. The key intertextual reference, the Austrian author Elfride Jelinek, appears explicitly in one of the poems when the hero is reading the Nobel Prize laureate’s novel *The Lovers*. The collection does not just draw on narrative procedures inspired by the Austrian writer, particularly in terms of the relation of the narrator to the main character, but thematically refers to Jelinek’s novel *The Lovers* by dealing with the subject of womanhood in a secluded, mentally narrow, and provincial environment. At the same time, the humorous and on the surface facile and banalized style could easily be read as an attempt to ironically introduce elements of so-called chick lit (on the order of *Bridget Jones Diary*’s) and thus break the high poetic register. The poems with two-part titles that recall of titles of children picture books or cartoons with the name of the hero followed by a related

event (for example, Hana and the world, Hana and her period, Hana and shaving, Hana and anorexia, Hana and penises, Hana and masturbation) reveal the dynamic relationship between the speaker, often taking the standpoint of the community, and the maladjusted main character. These dynamics oscillate between distancing and identification through a range of different emotive and judgmental relationships: from scoffing disapproval to (rare) sympathy. This strategy is frequently realized with shifts in focalization, intercalated utterances of the main character (always written in italics), and metaleptic penetrations from one poetic level to another that occur either throughout an entire poem or in one part of it and sometimes in a single utterance. In the latter case, the explicit dialogic dynamization of the sentence is realized: in a single sentence, multiple voices/perspectives/levels of the narrator and the main character crash into one another. What was previously expressed only by internal focalization suddenly attains its own voice that penetrates the grammar of the sentence: “hana *am not afraid of death*” (Gorečan, *Trpljenje* 66) “hana *am moving in the area of the minus*” (Gorečan, *Trpljenje* 67) “hana is not striving for the realization of her own happiness, but *am striving for the realization of my own unhappiness*” (Gorečan, *Trpljenje* 67).¹⁵

In Barbara Pogačnik’s (1973) latest book *Alica v deželi plaščev* [Alice in Coat Land] (2016), women characters from the world of fairy tales appear: Alice, Snow White, Cinderella, Ronia. With this collection, Pogačnik joins the archeological excavation of women’s memories and women’s psychological, experiencing, bodily, thinking, cultural, and socio-political traditions. In the last decade, this excavation has consistently, intensively, and programmatically taken place in several notable poetical oeuvres as well as in single books by Slovenian women artists of different generations (Barbara Korun, Stanislava Repar, Taja Kramberger, Maja Vidmar, Alenka Jovanovski, Anja Golob, Alja Adam, Katja Gorečan, Ana Makuc, etc.). Pogačnik (and this can also be seen in the work of Maja Vidmar and Meta Kušar) has added this archetypal approach, that is the reference to specific woman archetypes from fairy tales, to the more general exploration of womanhood and approaches that could be, with slight classificatory exaggeration, be termed as documentary-historical (Kramberger), historical-imaginative (Barbara Korun, Alenka Jovanovski), historical (Ana Makuc), mythical (Erika Vouk, Veronika Dintinjana, Miljana Cunta), and “in-yer-face” (Katja Gorečan, Monika Vrečar). By representing the experience of fairy tale characters in their external and internal worlds, *Alica v deželi plaščev* draws a more imaginative and playful horizon of a poetic world that is constructed outside of the firm referential framework of reality and amalgamates the fantastic with the real. Pogačnik’s writing adds a unique

approach to the prevailing realistic poetics of everyday life and brings a slice of surrealistic Luddism and a neo-symbolistic dimension to current Slovenian poetic production through a refined narrative exploration of the image. The narrative scope, the linguistic subtlety and richness, the giving-in to the impulses of the unconscious in relation to the double procedure of metaphorization-narrativization, the use of the Symbolist and Surrealist heritages, the focus on the intimate within the social: all of this comes together to create a non-declarative, non-militant, and artistically convincing kind of women's writing in which authenticity and art are not subjected to the project of ideological disclosure and/or new ideologization. Pogačnik's *girls* are nomadic subjects. Non-rootedness, motion, foreignness, the ever present tension between the symbols of "the house" and "the coat" and the intermediate symbol of "the threshold," eternal nomadism, including linguistic nomadism, are the essential thematic ingredients of the book. The most frequent character, Alice, is constantly confronting her intimate world, which she develops by wondering at the miracle of life with its subjection to diverse forms of symbolic violence within her own sociality. The girls that appear in these poems are mostly not the speakers. Rather, a (female?) narrator is speaking from a higher diegetic level. However, internal (sometimes multiple and changing) focalization prevails, which is especially emphasized by the element of wondering. Sometimes the girls speak their own words, which are marked in italics. In some poems, the speech can be attributed to Alice, even when she remains unnamed. That is the case in the poem "Pajek"[Spider], while in the poem entitled "Ronja in oče" [Ronja and Father] it is clearly Ronja speaking. A lyrical persona that is more authorial begins to appear in the subsequent parts of the collection where the multi-perspectiveness of the fairy tale girl heroes is replaced by the voices of women artists (Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, Isadora Duncan, Dalida etc.) through introductory quotes to their poems. At the same time, the fairy tale dimension that was an integrative part of the whole poetic world shifts to more realistic moments and casts, without however disappearing completely thanks to the audacious metaphorization.

b) *Voices of Their Own*¹⁶: Dramatic Monologue, Women and Animals Take Control of the Speaking Domain

The persona poem and the real dramatic monologue are combined in Kramberger's *Opus quinque dierum* and to an extent also in Pogačnik's *Alica v deželi plaščev*. A great deal has occurred in women's poetics in Slovenia between 2009, when Kramberger's book appeared, and 2016, when Pogačnik's collection was published. During this period, a series of relevant female poetic voices have

emerged and the number of women authors in Slovenian poetic production has increased. In this context, it becomes possible to speak of a boom in women's poetry. Within this phenomenon, the renaissance of the dramatic monologue is of particular interest. The renewal of the dramatic monologue is, with some exceptions (e. g. Peter Semolič's *Druga obala* [*The Other Shore*], (2015), closely related to the opening of the female speaking field. Given that some Slovenian women authors explicitly refer to the English tradition of the dramatic monologue, I will provide a short presentation of the emergence of this genre and its variations.

Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson are generally accepted as simultaneous but independent inventors of the dramatic monologue, a form that is considered a Victorian response to the Romantic theory of poetry with its autonomous, self-assured, and universal lyric subject. (However, a closer investigation of the Romantic subject in some crucial poetic oeuvres of Romanticism, such as that of Novalis and Victor Hugo, reveals that such representations may be oversimplified). Attempts to define the subject became more obsessional and vain after the period of classic idealistic philosophy when new discoveries in the sciences, evolutionary theory, and schools of psychological thought created a world of uncertainty that resulted in the loss of absolute values and a coherent position from which to speak.

Browning's *My Last Duchess* (1842) and Tennyson's *Ulysses* (1833) stand as the paradigmatic examples of the dramatic monologue.¹⁷ What is less known is that, according to some recent researchers (Isobel Armstrong and Glenis Byron to name two), the form expanded as a result of the efforts of Victorian woman poets such as Letitia Landon and Felicia Hemans. By including fictive speakers in their work, these poets began to use the genre to deconstruct the traditional dichotomy man-poet/women-muse, and to refute the general understanding of Victorian women as exclusively emotional beings. If Browning and Tennyson still pass for the inventors of the dramatic monologue, it was Augusta Webster who most strongly influenced the subsequent use of the technique (for example, the way it is used by English poet Carol Ann Duffy). According to Ana Makuc¹⁸ who quotes Glenis Byron, Webster introduced several novelties into the genre that Duffy later adopted: the woman's assumption of the subject's and speaker's position, the shift from characteristic sensibility to materialism, the social critique behind the mask, the problematization of the autonomous subject, the bestowal of voice to marginal subjects, and the use of colloquial language. Researchers distinguish two variants of the form in the work of Augusta Webster and other poets. In the so-called *sympathetic dramatic monologue*, the implied author's empathy and compassion with the lyrical personae and speakers (for example, with the prostitute in Webster's "A Castaway" can

be perceived. The *revisionist* variation, in contrast, works on the level of the subversive deconstruction of the accepted understanding of history, culture, and mythology. This is often achieved by plotting the story of a well-known figure from the cultural tradition and subversively deconstructing either the established story, character, role, or perspective with the goal of cultural transformation: for example, giving the female perspective of a mythologized story such as Orpheus and Eurydice, Arianne and Theseus, or Cassandra.

The intensive use of dramatic monologue techniques in recent Slovenian poetry, especially its strong prevalence among women authors, was first observed in magazines publications in 2008 (Alenka Jovanovski's "Lord Byron pozablja, o čem govori, zato govori o mehkužcih" [Lord Byron forgets what he is speaking about, and therefore speaks about molluscs]), then in more condensed form in Kramberger's *Opus quinque dierum*. The practice reached its apex in 2011 with the award-winning collection *Pridem takoj* [Coming Right Away] by Barbara Korun (1963). In two cycles from Korun's book, "Monologi" [Monologues] and "Antigona, okruški," [Antigona, Debris] (which, in terms of unity of plot, actually forms a kind of *play in poems*), the dramatic monologue has definitely obtained *ledroit de cité* in Slovenian poetry. At the same time, it has become more firmly rooted in writing with more or less intensive feminist themes, ground that was previously prepared in Kramberger's *Opus quinque dierum*.

In Korun's cycle "Monologi" composed of fourteen poems, it is not only women who give themselves the right to their own autonomous voice and supplant (the predominantly masculine) lyrical *I* of the intimistic-narrative poetry rooted in fragments of post-postmodern light subjectivity, but even men, animals (a rat), and plants (a hellebore) acquire their own voice. In "Monologi," all the aspects that researchers noted in A. Webster and later in C. A. Duffy appear: the female takeover of the position of the subject and speaker, the social critique behind the mask, the (implicit) questioning of the autonomous subject, and the bestowal of voice to marginal subjects. Throughout the poems, we encounter characters — speakers such as Noah's nameless wife, Monica Lewinsky, Mother Theresa, Queen Elisabeth I, J. S. Ratzinger, the future pope, Austrian politician Jorg Heider and his lover, the poets Barbara Korun and Iztok Osojnik, the rat Terry, a bud of a hellebore, etc. The *dramatis personae* are always disclosed in the title of the poem, which *didascalically* also gives the time and/or location (for example, "after the deluge," "the beginning of the third millennium," "the end of the second millennium") and sometimes also the circumstances. The poems mostly follow the original form of the dramatic monologue in which the speaking character addresses his or her

speech to a listener (Mother Theresa speaks to a novice nun, Monica Lewinsky to Bill Clinton, poet Iztok Osojnik to his climbing partner Barbara Korun, the author of the book, etc.). However, a new variant of the form merging with the previous sympathetic and revisionist appeared, one which used irony and absurdity to subvert a given historical situation or, at least, to reveal the dominant (and always symbolically violent) social-cultural-political models. The first poem spoken by Noah's wife after the deluge, "the woman without a name," uses a fundamental gesture to revisionistically slice into polarized cultural history. The poem looks both back and down at the silenced ones, at subterranean history, redirects its focus, and gives voice to the first representative of the marginalized, all those to whom history hasn't bothered to give a name. Noah's wife, feeling compassion for the forgotten animals, boards the arc and goes below deck. She enters into a place of complete darkness where she lives together with all the other marginalized ones. The poem concludes with an astonishing image of a chthonic body with many tails that rises with great force from the darkness to the light at the moment that Noah, God's legate, sets the animals free. To use Julia Kristeva's words: the semiotic chora breaks from the darkness, rising to the symbolic order of the light.

Ana Makuc's (1982) awarded book *Ljubica Rolanda Barthesa* [*The Mistress of Roland Barthes*] (2015) continues in the path that Kramberger began with *Opus* and was more powerfully defined in Korun's "Monologi." Until now, it is the only collection built entirely on the technique of the dramatic monologue. In all other cases, the dramatic monologue coexists with other forms in the same collection, most frequently with the I-form poem (for example, in Jovanovski's *Hlače za Džija* and Pogačnik's *Alica v deželi plaščev*) and/or with persona poems (in addition to Kramberger's *Opus* and Dekleva's *Izganjalci*, also in Peter Semolič's *Druga obala* and Maja Vidmar's *Minute prednosti*). *Ljubica Rolanda Barthesa*, a tiny booklet composed of fifteen short poems accompanied by illustrations by Nevena Aleksovski, reveals to the reader a different and revised intimate history of women, not anonymous women this time, but well-known female intellectuals and especially artists (Frida Kahlo, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Anaïs Nin, and June Miller), women from mythology, fairy tales, and literature (Cassandra, Little Red Riding Hood, Salome, and Lolita), and those who have entered into history as the partners and muses of famous men (Ann Boleyn, the wife of Christopher Columbus, and Gala, the muse of several Parisian Surrealists). Patriarchal history has either swept these women from the scene or hidden them behind the veils of men's representations of their fragility, passivity, fatality, or inferiority. The collection presents an engaged programmatic decomposition of the literary and

cultural canon. Using the technique of the revisionist dramatic monologue in which these women are each given their own loud and lucid voice, often addressing their partner (for example, Henry Miller, Diego Rivera, and Salvador Dali), they are liberated at last from the position that the cultural canon has imposed upon them. At the same time, the collection engages in the poetic exploration of aspects of womanhood, sexuality, and gender relations, asserting itself as one of the most clearly established literary projects in this regard.

From her first collection onwards, Maja Vidmar's (1961) poetry has been intimate, stylistically condensed, and elliptical with a strong rhythmical-semantic dimension. Recently, she had made increasing use of different forms of external dialogism in her questioning of the relationship of the female *I* towards the other in intimate, social, cultural, and natural spheres. She has also introduced personae and the dramatic monologue into her poetry. These techniques could already be observed in *Sobe* [Rooms] (2008), while the dialogism is more fully developed in her last book *Minute prednost* [Minutes of Advantage] (2015). Throughout the collection, dialogic procedures are interwoven through different thematic-motivic fields. The appearance of the animal voice or animal focalization, the pluralization of the traditional lyrical *I* using the procedure of allegory, and the introduction of different personae are of a particular interest among these structural-semantic configurations. The collection begins with a poem that contains an image of a symphonic orchestra playing in the woods. The image could be said to meta-poetically announce the emergence of different voices in the subsequent collection, while the exhortation of the lyrical persona to herself at the end of the poem — "breathe through all possible changes, change all skins" — heralds the emergence of different personae that appear in the poems that follow. The book finishes with a variation of the poems with the title "kdo si?" [who are you?]: "I don't know. / All the mentioned / are / there" (Vidmar 107). The first and the last poem provide a frame for the process undergone by the subject and the world in this book. Even though its readers are always on the track of a female lyrical *I* who seems to be authorial, the position of this *I* within the storyworld of the poem is no longer central but instead is marginalized in two ways: either in the relationship of the *I* to the Other(s) (in particular to animals) or the relationship of a "central ego" with various identities within the (female) subject. In the case of the latter, what is at work is the procedure of archetypal allegorisation. The technique of dialogisation through the use of allegorical personae enters the dialogic category of the non-speaking persona poem that was presented in the previous chapter, and becomes more similar to the technique used in the construction of the hero's psychology

in medieval literary genres (for example, in allegorical romances where the *I* is presented by the allegory of a castle inhabited by different psychological characteristics and phenomena). Interestingly, the masks or personae that emerge in this category of poems in Vidmar's book are virtually always masculine — the great pursuer, the scared, the bright, the one who judges, the cautious, the unbeliever — while the plural *I* to which they refer is clearly female. This gender difference is explicitly inscribed in the questioning of relationships between men and women, which has been a dominant thread in all of Maja Vidmar's poetry. *Minute prednosti* embodies both aspects of dialogism: dialogism in the very structuration of the poetic discourse as well as in the decentration of the subject on the plot level. Decentration occurs in the first part of the book where animals speak: a hermit crab, a scorpion, a baby roe deer, a titmouse, wolves, a swan, a fly, and an ant. The animals no longer symbolize the different states of the lyrical persona as they once did in the poetry of high modernism (for instance, in the work of Dane Zajc, one of the most important Slovenian poets of the twentieth century). The animals speak from their own, marginal animal position and point of view. However, the animal speech is expressed in an intimistic way, without a trace of explicit animal activism or reference to "the animal question" or "animal rights." They construct themselves into animal subjects, but the subjectification of the animal occurs on the intersubjective base, in their relationships to the other. The other is not just present in the poem's storyworld. She is also the recipient of the animal's address, although it cannot be ascertained that she even hears the animals speaking to her. In these female personae, whose point of view seems to intermittently appear in a poem through changing focalization, the reader is able to identify the authorial lyrical persona from other poems in the collection. However, it is the animals that seem to have an omniscient speaking position in the poems. They have the ability to penetrate the feelings and thoughts of the female personae addressed as *you*, which are no longer subjects or genuine objects.

Conclusion

In the last fifteen years, the prevalent monological and single-voice *paysage* of Slovene poetry has diversified and that process still continues today. Within a single collection of poems, the fatigued lyrical *I* often coexists with other voices emerging from the *loci* of different cultural traditions. Now Sappho, Laozi, Heraclites, Mother Theresa, Christopher Columbus's wife, Joseph Ratzinger, Hamlet, Pocahontas, Alice, Monica Lewinsky, Lord Byron and many others perambulate and speak in Slovenian poetry. A rat, a snail, a hermit crab, and a bud of a hellebore

join these voices. In recent Slovenian poetry, the equation of *voice* + *narration* creates a formula that it is not new, having already been inherent to the tradition of the dramatic monologue. However, the renaissance of the genre in a new historical, social and, poetological moment gives it fresh values. Without a doubt, this shift testifies to the exhaustion of monological confessional poetics, which thematically were often focused only the experience of a single, most frequently, authorial *I*. At the same time, it testifies to the exhaustion of prevalent procedures related to the structuration of the poetic discourse. The combination of narrativity and external dialogisation has led to the emergence of fragmented “poem novels” or “poem plays” built on the level of entire collections or poem cycles. Furthermore, the external dialogisation has become one of the key instruments in an increasingly intensive excavation of women’s “memory” and deals with all aspects of women contemporaneity in poetry, which is a project emerged in the Slovenian literary field albeit with a delay of several decades in comparison to others parts of the literary world-system. The emergence of external dialogism is thus often linked with an engaged thematic exploration of areas of silenced intimate and social habitus. The gesture of acquiring voice when performed by “fragile” or “minority” subjects — by women, animals, and even plants — is endowed with the particular symbolic value of subversive and transformative impulses.

Notes

1. Translated by author and Erica Johnson Debeljak.
2. For instance, they appear in J. Peterson’s *Die Wissenschaft von der Dichtung* from 1936 (Kos, Janko. *Lirika*. Ljubljana: DZS, 1993, 46–47) and persist today, for example in *Das lyrische Gedicht*, D. Lamping’s 1989 book that was influential in German-language criticism.
3. See Varja Balžalorsky Antič. “Bakhtin in Ducrot v perspektivi rekonceptualizacije lirskega subjekta”. *Slavistična revija* 64.2 (2016): 165–179.
4. Mihai Bakhtin, *Estetika in humanistične vede*. Trans. Helena Biffio et al. Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis, 1999, 289; Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale I*. Paris: Gallimard, 1972, 63.
5. In the 1980s, Oswald Ducrot transferred Bakhtin’s concept of *point of view* into linguistics and called it the *enunciator*. *Voice, point of view*, or the *enunciator* are more or less identical to the narratological concepts of *focalisation*, *point of view*, and *perspective*, with the important distinction that they are not only operative on the level of the text, but also on the level of the single utterance.
6. These assumptions from the 1920s did not enter directly into later theories of poetry, in part

because this unfinished work was published only in 1972. Some theoreticians have consistently and relatively successfully introduced the distinction between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced (similar to Bakhtin's distinction between author and hero) into poetry primarily on the basis of Benveniste (Karlheinz Stierle, in the 1970s) and a combination of Benveniste and Lacan (Antony Easthope, in the 1980s).

7. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. C. Emerson. Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 190.

8. Some of the following conclusions are also the fruit of discussions I had with master students at the Department of Comparative Literature and Literary during practical exercises in the 2015/2016 school year. We were dealing with some works presented here (Ivo Svetina's *Oblaki in gora*, Milan Dekleva's *Izganjalci smisla*, Barbara Korun's *Pridem takoj*). I would like to take this occasion to thank my students.

9. Cf. Werner Wolf, "The Lyric: Problems of Definition and a Proposal for Reconceptualisation". *Theory into Poetry*. Eds. E. Müller-Zettelmann and M. Rubik. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2005. 21–56.

10. The more or less empathic use of dialogization can be perceived in works of the older generation of poets as well (those born after 1945): such as Ivo Svetina in *Oblak in gora* [The Cloud and the Mountain], 2003, Iztok Osojnik in *Gospod Danes* [Mister Today], 2003, B. A. Novak in *MOM*, (2007), Milan Dekleva in *Izganjalci smisla* [Exorcists of Sense], 2012, and Milan Jesih in *Lahkoda* [It is Likely], 2014. The middle generation is represented by Barbara Korun in *Pridem takoj* [Coming Right Away], (2011), and some poems published in literary magazines, Maja Vidmar in particular in *Minute prednosti* [Minutes of Advantage] (2015), and previously in *Sobe* [Rooms] (2008), and Peter Semolič in *Druga obala* [The Other Shore] (2015). The generation born after 1970 is represented by Lidija Dimkovska in *ph Neutral History* (2012), Primož Čučnik especially in *Nova okna* [New Windows] (2005) and *Delo in dom* [Work and Home] (2007), Taja Kramberger in *Opus quinque dierum* (2009), and partly also *V tvojem objemu je prostor zame* [In your Embrace There is a Place for Me] (2014), Miklavž Komelj in *Rosa* [Dew] (2002) and more intensely in the following collections, *Hipodrom* [Hippodrome] (2006), *Nenaslovljiva imena* [Unaddressable Names] (2008), *Modra obleka* [Blue Dress] (2011), *Roke v dežju* [Hands in the Rain] (2012), *Noč je abstraktnjša kot N* [The Night is more abstract than N] (2014), *Minima impossibilia* (2015), Alenka Jovanovski in *Hlače za Džija* [Trousers for Dži] (2012), and individual poems published in magazines, Anja Golob in *Didaskalije k dihanju* [Didascalies to the Breathing] (2016), Barbara Pogačnik in *Alica v deželi plaščev* [Alice in Coat Land] (2016), and Radharani Pernarčič in *Bull Roarer* (2013). In terms of the poets of the generation born in at the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s, the following are worthy of mention: Katja Gorečan in *Trpljenje mlade Hane* [The Sorrows of Young Hana] (2012), Tibor Hrs Pandur in *Enerđi mašin* [Energy Machine] (2010), Karlo Hmeljak in *Krčrk* [Contractletters] (2012),

Ana Pepelnik in *Pod vtisom* [Under the Impression] (2015), and Ana Makuc in *Ljubica Rolanda Barthesa* [The Mistress of Roland Barthes] (2015).

11. See Peter Hühn, Peter. "Plotting the Lyric". *Theory into Poetry*. Eds. E. Müller-Zettelmann and M. Rubik. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2005. 147–172.

12. In the works of some poets, the consistent use of persona has appeared well before 2000.

13. Cf. concerning Ivo Svetina's *Oblak in gora*: Boris. A. Novak. *Zven in pomen Študije o slovenskem pesniškem jeziku*. Ljubljana: Znanstvenoraziskovalni inštitut filozofske fakultete, 2005, 190.

14. Boris. A. Novak. *Zven in pomen Študije o slovenskem pesniškem jeziku*, op. cit., 190.

15. Translated by V. B. A.

16. A paraphrase from C. Ann Duffy's poem *A Voice of Her Own* and the eponymous title of an essay about dramatic monologue in C. Ann Duffy and A. Webster by the poet Ana Makuc.

17. Michael D. Hurley, Michael O'Neil, *Poetic form. An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 170, 174.

18. Ana Makuc. "A voice of Her Own: Dramatic Monologues by Augusta Webster and Carol Ann Duffy" *Apokalipsa* 165-167 (2012): 139–153. 143.

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Mapping Ethnicity and Its Representation in the Global Context

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Abstract The essay begins by mapping the multiplicity of cultural identity in the global context, drawing from different scholars on the issue to reveal that identity has become a hybrid construct. As such, identity relies heavily on discursive representations in literary and cultural texts. Studies of ethnic identities, therefore, concern how people of different cultural backgrounds interact with each other, how the migrating experiences are narrated and represented, and how such representations reflect the life experiences of the migrants. As a result of the complicated diasporic experiences against global migration, ethnic identity has become an ethical issue which governs human interaction, thus shaping people's understanding of themselves, of others, and of the world.

Key words ethnicity; representation; cultural identity; ethics; globalization

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The issue of “cultural identity” against globalization has been much elucidated by scholars of cultural studies around the century since the need to situate oneself in the global context has become an urgent subject. With the global flow of capital and labor, the movement of people from one place to another, from one culture

to another, has brought about many related questions concerning the co-existence of cultures and peoples. Living in a multi-cultural society suggests that one has to interact with people of other cultures in daily experiences and activities. Therefore, cultural meeting, assimilation, negotiation as well as resistance have become the essential parts of the political act in an age of globalization. Whereas people all over the world are able to enjoy the same cultural products in many ways, they may not encounter the same political, social, cultural and psychological problems. At the same time when the globe is moving towards homogenization in cultural forms, another equally strong tendency remains to keep the heterogeneous qualities of different cultures. In fact, with globalization, “[w]e are not moving towards a common global culture shared by all, but towards greater awareness of the variety of ethnic identities. The end result of globalization is not global similarity, but increased awareness of global difference” (Kidd 195). “Difference” has thus become an apt word to describe the complexities of the modern existence: difference in race/ethnicity, in sex/gender, in age, in language, in religion, in place/location, and in culture. In this light, one’s ethnic identity, as represented in literary and cultural texts, provides an important dimension to understand one’s existence in the globalised society. It is an ethical issue which governs human interaction, thus shaping people’s understanding of themselves, of others, and of the world.

The Multiplicity of Cultural Identity

A document on the problems of race drafted in 1950 by eight scholars for UNESCO, including Claude Levi-Strauss, Franklin Frazier, Morris Ginsberg, and Ernest Beaglehole, is often cited in studies of racial and ethnic identities, in an attempt to differentiate between “race” and “ethnicity.” One of the articles of the Communications goes like this:

National, religious, geographic, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups; and the cultural traits of such groups have no demonstrated genetic connection with racial traits. Because serious errors of this kind are habitually committed when the term “race” is used in popular parlance, it would be better when speaking of human races to drop the term “race” altogether and speak of *ethnic groups*. (Metraux 142-143)

The discrepancy between the location of racial-ethnic groups and other differentiating categories such as nation, geography, religion and language originates mainly from the long and complicated history of migration, either

international or local. The diasporic experiences over history have made all kinds of boundaries blurred and identities multi-dimensional. Robin Cohen outlines some common features of diaspora, including dispersal from an original homeland, collective memory of the homeland, a strong ethnic group consciousness, troubled relationship with host countries, and tolerance for pluralism (17). Even if diaspora shares the above similar features, the specific migrating experiences and their impacts upon people vary tremendously from place to place, and from culture to culture. Current studies of cultural identity often take the following aspects into consideration:

Firstly, the diasporic routes which the migration has taken will affect one's cultural identities. People may have developed different cultural identifications if they migrate from different places although they are currently living in the same place. This is what Chris Barker means when he announces that "[i]dentities are concerned with routes rather more than with roots" (256). In this light, the cultural identification of a black Atlantic, for example, is different from that of a black African simply because they migrate to Europe or the US via different routes and therefore bring with them different traditions, histories and cultural memories. In this process, for what reasons people migrate also matters since this affects their motivations and objectives and will later influence their re-settlement in the new territory.¹

Secondly, the diasporic space where the migrants choose to settle down serves as another place of struggle for cultural identification. This experience of "putting roots 'elsewhere'" (Brah 179), or rather, an experience of "re-root", remains a focus of studies in cultural identities. According to Avtar Brah, "The diaspora space is the site where *the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is a native*" (205). On the one hand, the "native" people may have migrated from other parts of the world earlier on and carried other cultural traditions with them to this place; and on the other hand, the new diasporians are faced with the immediate task of settling down in the new territories and interacting with the earlier settlers. These two aspects constitute a relational perspective in understanding cultural identities since one's identities are always decided with reference to others.

Thirdly, the migrants are obsessed with a strong sense of longing for their spiritual and cultural "home." As Brah observes,

Where is home? On the one hand, "home" is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin."

On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. (188-189)

A nostalgic feeling towards the “lost” cultural tradition and a yearning for the establishment of a new home in the new settlement are the two sides of the same coin in cultural identification. Before coming to the new territory, the migrants may have cherished utopian imaginations towards the new land no matter for what reasons they decide to migrate; however, in the process of settling down in the new territory, they may realize that the new home may not be as ideal as they have imagined. Therefore, some of them may develop a strong sense of nostalgic feelings about the past. For many of the first-generation immigrants, the home where they come from become a home lost forever.² In comparison, however, the second- and third-generation immigrants may understand “home” in totally different ways from that of their (grand)parents. They either do not feel particularly attached to the “old” cultural traditions as much as their (grand)parents, or romanticize their cultural roots, ignoring the negative sides as much as they can.

These considerations are the important aspects of discussions when scholars analyze the issue of cultural identity against globalization. As a result of the complicated diasporic experiences, one’s cultural identity is marked by “hybridization”: “the mixing of that which is already a hybrid” (Barker 258). It is decided by “the multiplicity of subject positions that constitute the subject,” hence “a constantly changing relational multiplicity” (Brah 123).

The Representation of Ethnic Identities

Basically two divided points of view have been developed over the issue of cultural identity: essentialist and constructionist.³ Whereas the former believes that one’s cultural identity is inherent, the latter argues for its social and cultural construction.

For the essentialists, one’s ethnicity is decided when one is born. The biological features, including the colors of the skin, the hair and the eyes, decide one’s cultural belonging and will shape one’s understanding of who he/she is. Clifford Geertz lists a few “primordial ties” that one possesses in identification, of which “race” is one (43-44). Manning Nash also outlines a trinity of “index features” of ethnicity which consists of kinship, commensality and common cult (25). However, this essentialist point of view has now been strongly challenged by the social constructionists who see one’s cultural identity as socially and culturally shaped. As such, one’s identity is in an on-going process of construction; hence its fluidity and multiplicity. With regards to how identity is constructed, scholars differ tremendously. For some, “... identification is constructed on the back of a

recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (Hall, “Who Needs ‘Identity?’” 16). In this sense, identity is psychological identification with a collective category which can describe a group of people who share similarities. For some others, identity is performed. It is the performance of each individual in daily lives upon certain social and cultural norms, ending with either sincerity or cynicism (Goffman 17-21). Sometimes, identity is viewed in relational terms, since “... it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks ... that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term — and thus its ‘identity’ — can be constructed” (Hall, “Who Needs ‘Identity?’” 17); whereas in some other times, it is viewed as the result of interactions between an individual and the outside world (Bell 138-146). Winston James observes how the second-generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Britain develop their identities in totally different ways from their first-generation parents, mainly as a result of the different interactions with the British society (155-161).

According to Joshua Fishman, ethnicity is a tripartite composite of being, doing and knowing (63-69). In the first place, ethnicity is “a bodily and experienced reality.” Secondly, it implies “expressive obligations and opportunities for behaving as the ancestors behaved and preserving their great heritage by transmitting it to generation after generation.” Lastly, it is able to “explain origins, clarify eternal questions, rationalize human destiny” and “purports to offer an entre to universal truths.” These tripartite understanding of ethnicity is able to cover all the previous diversified points of view over the issue of cultural identity. It not only recognizes the functions of innate biological features of a person in identification but is also able to explicate the constructionist perspectives, no matter psychological, performative, relational, or socially interactive.

Apart from the above two divided perspectives — essentialist and constructionist — two other perspectives have also been developed by scholars over history, namely experiential and discursive. The former emphasizes people’s different experiences with ethnicity in different contexts⁴ whereas the latter focuses on the different representations of ethnicity in literature and culture. In the first place, ethnic identity is understood as ways of living and experiencing. Rooted in daily activities, it incorporates one’s psychological identification as well as social interactions with others. It is difficult to talk about ethnic identity in general. Only when it is placed in a particular historical context or a particular circumstance can it be clearly defined and understood. Secondly, ethnic identity is represented in narratives, by both migrants and non-migrants. As Avtar Brah argues, “*ethnicity is*

best understood as a mode of narrativising the everyday life world in and through processes of boundary formation" (237). In this light, "... social categories do not reflect an essential underlying identity but are constituted in and through forms of representation" (Barker 263). In other words, what racial and ethnic features one possesses are up to how language (re)presents them, especially in what particular contexts are they (re)presented. By analyzing the representations of ethnic identity in different contexts, one can observe the functions of discursive power and literary and cultural strategies behind the representations. Since "[r]epresentation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time" (Hall, "The New Identities" 162), analysis of the codes will shed light on the power relations that make the representations what they are.

It is the combination of these two perspectives, experiential and discursive, that the essays in this column rest their studies on. By placing the representations within a particular time and space, and by drawing references to a broad range of materials associated with ethnic experiences in reality, it is hoped that different ethnic identities can be understood in a convincing way.

The Ethics of Ethnic Identity

Since ethnic identity concerns human interaction, it is basically an ethical issue. Ethics, a.k.a., "moral philosophy," deals with "the fundamental issues of practical decision making, and its major concerns include the nature of ultimate value and the standards by which human actions can be judged right or wrong," which include, among many other subjects, the principles of life and the obligations that human beings hold toward other creatures on the planet (Singer 627). The meeting of different cultures in the multi-cultural context offers a space of struggle for human values and moral principles, which in turn brings about different modes of existence. Jonathan Friedman outlines two basic models of ethnic integration in his studies: assimilationism and pluralism. The former is marked by a few concentric circles to suggest the "re-identification with the host social world" on the part of the migrant group, whereas the latter is marked by a circle of different sectors surrounding a central sector which represents "the potential existence of a national dominant group" (85-86). These two modes may take on complicated and alternative forms in reality, as Friedman has noted. Chris Barker, however, uses the term "hybridity" to describe the result of cultural meeting and he elucidates six types of hybridization in his studies (257-258). No matter what models to use to map the co-existence of cultures, ethnic identity, either as an experiential reality or

as a discursive reality, involves a strong ethical dimension.

In the first place, identity itself is essentially an ethical subject since it concerns choices, choices that make a person who he/she is and what he/she is. According to Nie Zhenzhao, being able to make ethical choices marks human beings' transition from an animal to a human (94-100), thus a fundamental stage in civilization. To identify oneself, either in the general sense or in ally specific circumstances, it is necessary to choose among many options, the result of which means values and significance. Identity provides a source of value, "one that helps us make our way among those options", since "[t]o adopt an identity, to make it mine, is to see it structuring my way through life" (Appiah 24). Thus, to recognize a person with an ethnic identity means that one has to accept a system of internal values that the ethnic identity has acquired through history.

Secondly, the representation of ethnic identity is an ethical gesture. In this regard, it is important to differentiate between the narration by the migrants themselves and that of the non-immigrants. This differentiation is particularly clarified by Robin Cohen who gives different names to these two different narrations: *emic* and *etic*. The former stands for the migrant participants' point of view in the narration whereas the latter stands for the observer's perspectives (5). These representations could be vastly different since the writers take on different ethical standpoints. What should be included in the narrative, how people interact with each other, why they interact with each other in the ways as they are, what result such interactions may lead to, and what significance these interactions may mean to the migrants and to the natives: all these are issues that could only be understood when taking the ethical perspective into consideration, since literature, after all, "teaches by giving illustrations of ethical choices," as Nie Zhenzhao says in an interview (Ross 11). As is seen in many studies of ethnic identity, personal experiences in the multi-cultural environment are often brought into the analysis. Cohen makes an analogy with regards to the functions of the active participants in cultural meeting:

The clay (the history and experience of the group in question) will act like sedimented silicate, providing the necessary and basic chemical compound. And the potters (the active political, social and cultural leaders of the putative diaspora) will have to organize effective institutions to create and shape diasporic sentiments and galvanize them to a common purpose. (16)

Seen in this light, the "potters" play an active role in the making of ethnic identities

in the new territory. Therefore, a full understanding of the representation of diasporic experiences must take into account the ethical perspectives of the writers who produce different narrations of the diasporic experiences. After all, “The theoretical issue concerning identities is not whether they are constructed ... but what difference different kinds of construction make” (Alcoff and Mohanty 6).

Thirdly, the reading and understanding of ethnic identity against the global context also demands an ethical perspective. For the readers with different ethnic backgrounds, reading the stories of immigrants asks for an engagement with ethical relations between the writer and the reader. Since “ethnicities are always gendered” (Brah 126), the intersection between gender and ethnicity becomes an important focus of attention with scholars. G. C. Spivak’s studies on the colonization of Asian women in internationalized companies (68-71) and bell hook’s proposal for the role of Afro-American women in feminist movement (1-16) are fine examples of researches on this intersection. Linda Nicholson, analyzing in details the social and cultural contexts before and after Women’s Liberation Movement in 1960s, describes how the issue of identity has developed into “identity politics” (139-175). As politics, ethnic identity entails a strong power struggle which can be effectively interpreted in light of ethical literary criticism in order to examine “the ethical values in a given work with reference to a particular historical context or a period of time in which the text under discussion is written” (Ross 10). French philosopher Luce Irigaray, starting from constructing an ethics of sexual difference, proposes an ethical relationship between people of different backgrounds, including people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For Irigaray, sexual difference is the primary difference between human beings, the understanding of which will lead to the understanding of other differences. Sexual identity as well as other identities must be understood in relational terms, “a relational identity that is held between nature and culture, and that assures a bridge starting from which it is possible to pass from one to the other while respecting them both” (129). Thus, ethnic identities must be understood by placing them in different relational frames, such as the immigrants and the non-immigrants, the writers of diasporic experiences and the readers of them. By reading the stories of migration, further understanding is expected to achieve between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

In the last decade, more and more scholars began to reflect on the backlash of globalization and a return to nationalist thinking began to emerge in dealing with issues of ethnic identity. The global migration, however, does not cease to exist. “There is no longer any stability in the points of origin, no finality in the points of destination and no necessary coincidence between social and national identities”

(Cohen 174). Against such a context, studies of ethnic identities will continue to draw critics' attention. As reviewed and discussed in this essay, "ethnic identity" has taken on a plural form not only because of its inherent complexity but also as a result of social and cultural constructions. The issue concerns every individual living in a multi-cultural community since it is related to the very existence in the modern society. It demands an ethical perspective since "[e]thical obligation ... is internal to the identity. Who you are is constituted, in part, by what you care about; to cease to care about those things would be to cease to be the sort of person you are" (Appiah 236).

As outlined earlier in the essay, it is the combination of the experiential and discursive perspectives in ethnic identity that supports the studies in this column. Zhan Junfeng's essay views the issue at its intersection with gender. By analyzing how Thane Rosenbaum's hero negotiates between different types of (Jewish) masculinities, the essay attempts to unveil the changing gender and ethnic identification of a Jewish character in the post-Holocaust world. Cai Xiaoyan's essay studies how the English suburb functions in Hanif Kureishi's story. It is observed that the suburban stereotype in the English literary tradition has already been altered by the immigrants to serve as a place for the performance of their multi-ethnic identities. Qi Jiamin's essay examines how Gloria Naylor depicts the dilemma of African Americans in their encounter with national identity. In particular, the essay focuses on the roles that different places/spaces play at the intersection between ethnic identity and national identity. In all these essays, the writers draw upon historical and social materials in order to situate ethnic identification within a particular context. Based on the analysis of these materials, the essays then observe how ethnic identity is represented with various strategies in literary discourses. These studies reveal how the characters make ethical choices with regards to ethnic identification, in their attitudes towards war, towards violence, towards migration, toward cultural history, and towards multi-cultural community. They also suggest that ethnicity is an on-going dynamic process which relies heavily on social and cultural changes on one hand, and on personal and psychological identification on the other. Despite these efforts, it is important to remember what Homi K. Bhabha says on the problematic nature of representation in the postmodern era, since the image itself "marks the site of an ambivalence": it is "always spatially split — it makes present something that is absent — and temporally deferred: it is the representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition" (100). As Chinese scholars living in the 21st century, we may experience a double spatial split and temporal defer in our studies.

Notes

1. Robin Cohen distinguishes the earlier forms of diaspora from some of its new forms in the age of global economy. See Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 141-154.
2. Iain Chambers believes that since migrancy is always in the form of transit, “the promise of a homecoming—completing the story, domesticating the detour—becomes an impossibility.” See Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994) 5.
3. Suman Gupta reviews the major landmarks of the debate between essentialism and social constructionism in his studies on identity politics. See Suman Gupta, *Social Constructionist Identity Politics and Literary Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 22-31.
4. Dominick LaCapra carefully analyzes the varieties of experiences and their effects on one’s identity construction. See Dominick LaCapra, “Experience and Identity,” *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, eds. Linda Martin Alcoff, et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 228-245.

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On the Critical Representation of the Tough Jew Ideal in Thane Rosenbaum's *Second Hand Smoke*

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Abstract Thane Rosenbaum's novel *Second Hand Smoke* (1999) depicts Duncan Katz, a son of Holocaust survivors and a federal prosecutor of Nazi war criminals, as an ostensibly tough Jewish man inwardly tormented by rage and distress. This article argues that through its portrayal of Duncan, the novel offers a critical representation of the Tough Jew ideal. Specifically, the novel challenges the Tough Jew ideal for its premises on rage and for its close affinity with gentile masculinity. This article also contends that the novel points to the possibility of subverting the Tough Jew ideal and reshaping Jewish ethnic and masculine identities in the post-Holocaust era.

Key words *Second Hand Smoke*; Tough Jew ideal; Jewish masculinity; Jewish ethnic identity

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Introduction

Thane Rosenbaum is representative of the post-Holocaust literature in the second Jewish American literary renaissance and renowned for his skillful delineation of the strained lives of Jewish American Holocaust survivors and those of their descendants. In *Second Hand Smoke* (1999, hereafter referred to as "*Smoke*"), a

National Jewish Book Award finalist, Rosenbaum depicts the life and struggle of Duncan Katz, a son of Holocaust survivors and a federal prosecutor of Nazi war criminals, who is outwardly rugged but inwardly plagued by emotional turbulence.

Smoke is lauded for its “superb, if deeply disturbing, writing” (Pinsker 10) and for being “fierce, poignant, and mordantly funny” (DeCandido 1156). Critical comments are made on its artistic features such as the frequent flashbacks (Raphael 48; Perkins 185; Lourie 31; Burstein 74), the mixture of comic and impassioned linguistic styles (Raphael 48) and the dramatic plot design (Lourie 31; Steinberg 325). Reviewers remark on how Rosenbaum convincingly and insightfully portrays the toxic influence of the Holocaust on the children of survivors in the post-Holocaust era (Pinsker 10; Berger 6-15) and how Rosenbaum’s own experience with his survivor parents is reflected in this novel (Steinberg 325). Some applaud the artful characterization of Mila, Duncan’s survivor mother, for being “larger than life, but true to life” (Lourie 31) and for its successful reconfiguration of the stereotypical images of Jewish mother (Burstein 73). Others approve of the novel’s impressive rendering of Duncan’s combat “with ghosts of the Holocaust and himself” (Pinsker 10) and of his coping with Mila’s painful legacy of Holocaust (Burstein 74). Yet rarely have critics paid attention to the ethnic and gender politics inherent in the representation of Duncan. As a result, the motivation for Duncan’s hysterical devotion to and his ultimate rethinking of the legacy of the Holocaust cannot be sufficiently explained.

This article aims to explicate how the Tough Jew ideal is dissected and reevaluated in *Smoke*. This article holds that by its portrayal of Duncan as an ostensibly tough Jewish man vulnerable to rage and distress, *Smoke* offers a critical representation and insightful rethinking of the Tough Jew ideal. Specifically, *Smoke* challenges the Tough Jew ideal for its premises on rage and for its close affinity with gentile masculinity. The novel also points to the possibility of subverting the Tough Jew ideal and reshaping Jewish ethnic and masculine identities in the post-Holocaust era with the new historical memories and diasporic experiences.

Challenging Tough Jew’s Premise on Rage at Anti-Semites

With his muscular physique, fiery temper and vengeful spirit, Duncan in *Smoke* is intended by Rosenbaum as a stereotypical Tough Jew. “Tough Jew” is a term coined by the historian Paul Breines to refer to “Jews who fight, who are violent in the public political sphere” (i). Tough Jew is contrasted to either “weak Jews,” referring to “the image of the Jew as victim, as the frail and meek object of anti-Semitic initiatives,” or “gentle Jews,” referring to “those who uphold in theory and

practice the conviction that Jews *must* not be violent” (Breines i). Actually, in the traditional Ashkenazic (Eastern European) Jewish society, it is the gentle, erudite, modest, passive and non-violent *mensch*¹ that is held up as the ideal model for Jewish men, while Tough Jew images are only sporadic phenomena. Towards the end of the 19th century, with anti-Semitism becoming more and more severe in Europe, the thriving Zionist movement in Europe remodeled the Tough Jew images into a zealously promoted political and cultural program, marking “the historic break with the culture of Jewish meekness and gentleness and the beginnings of a tough Jewish counterculture” (Breines 30). Into the 20th century, especially before and during World War II, the Nazi propaganda about Jewish defenselessness and the wartime atrocities against the Jews made the non-violent *mensch* ideal even more problematic. It is by no accident that, in the latter half of the 20th century, against which the story of *Smoke* is set, muscular Judaism and Tough Jew ideal started to spread in full swing.

Smoke begins with Duncan’s *bris*, the Jewish rite of male circumcision, where he is tended by many Miami Jewish gangsters who take up the secondary careers such as rabbi and mohel. This is a painful revelation of the reality that the Holocaust has “consumed the best of European Jewry” and ruptured the Jewish tradition (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 6). Now the Jewish Mafia represents a new ethnic and masculine ideal of the post-WWII and post-Holocaust Jewish society, that is, the Tough Jew ideal.

As the brains of the Jewish Mafia at the Miami Beach and a Holocaust survivor, Mila disdains the traditional Jewish values and wants to predicate her son’s Jewish identity on the brute force, mental toughness, and mostly, rage at the anti-Semites. She wants to make a Tough Jew out of her son, who is expected to avenge the Jews lost to the Holocaust and protect Jewish people from the anti-Semitism by violent means. Through painstaking physical exercises in martial arts, football games, street fights and wilderness survival training, Duncan is transformed by Mila into a golem, an “ignoble savage,” an “American Frankenstein” and a “modern gladiator” (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 208-9). In a sense, the Katz’s version of Tough Jew, conditional on the multigenerational trauma of the Holocaust and fueled by the hatred for the anti-Semites, is much more enraged and vengeful than its prototype in the Zionist muscular Judaism.

But *Smoke* is not a novel that extols angry and vindictive Tough Jew. Duncan in his adulthood is always burning with rage, especially when he works for the Office of Special Investigation (“OSI”) as a prosecutor of Nazi war criminals. However, rage is obviously at odds with the nature of his prosecution job that

requires impartiality, imperturbability and objectivity. Moreover, even though Duncan deals with senile former Nazis every day, they are not life-threatening for him. His rage, therefore, often seems pointless. Rage only makes him hotheaded and bad-tempered, turning him into an avenger instead of a prosecutor.

As a law professor and a child of Holocaust survivors in real life, Rosenbaum has mixed feelings about revenge. While he holds the opinion that revenge is one of the ways in which human beings demonstrate their commitment to justice, he also emphasizes the necessity of self-restraint in seeking vengeance. He says:

Justified revenge — moral vengeance — is not possible unless the avenger is able to exercise restraint, has a specific measure of payback in mind, and knows not to take too much. To be an avenger rather than a hotheaded vigilante is to know when to stop, to set limits, to take what one is entitled to and no more. (*Payback* 35-36)

He adds that revenge is not “always animated by anger and rage” and that in some circumstances, “anger doesn’t have to be the guiding principle behind vengeance at all” (48). So, for Rosenbaum, vengeance may make sense, but it would be better guided by moral justice than by unrestraint rage.

Duncan, instead, is so fixated on revenge and so consumed with rage at the anti-Semites that he loses control of himself easily. Alan Berger comments on Duncan’s rage by saying that “[t]o live one’s life full of rage is psychically distorting” (14). The aggressive tendency, if not directed outwards, would be directed inwards and be harmful to oneself. Sigmund Freud contends that “[i]t really seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves, in order to guard against the impulsion to self-destruction” (*Lectures* 105). He also points out that “any restriction of this aggressiveness directed outwards would be bound to increase the self-destruction” (*Future* 119). From this perspective, it is not hard to understand the reason for Duncan’s rage to turn inward finally. Without many real-life enemies to unleash his aggressiveness onto, Duncan treats himself harshly by working overtime, giving up leisure and enjoyment, and doing excessive workouts in the gym. He is unable to maintain a stable relationship with anyone, including his mother and wife, so much so that he suffers from abandonment anxiety severely.

The self-destructive tendency of Duncan can be best evidenced by his mental breakdown in the Polish concentration camp towards the end of the novel, where the delirious Duncan imagines that he is physically and mentally humiliated by

neo-Nazis and locked up by them in a barrack in the concentration camp, and that he defecates in his pants and totally loses his physical strength and will power to fight back. By this, the novel clearly shows that the rage at anti-Semite inherent in the Tough Jew ideal may have further confirmed Duncan's Jewish identification in the post-Holocaust world, but it also undermines his physical health, clouds his judgment and disturbs his mental equilibrium. Even worse is that the whole meaning of his existence as a Jew collapses once the rage is dissolved, since his Jewish ethnic identity is a tumbling building founded solely on the base of rage at anti-Semites.

The novel not only demonstrates that the Tough Jew ideal with its overemphasis on rage can be devastating for individuals, but also reveals the harmful influences of basing Jewish identification on rage and retribution at the collective level. The novel questions the validity of linking the Jewish rage at the anti-Semites to the confirmation of Jewish identification in the post-Holocaust era. Tough Jew ideal implies that the more a Jew resents the anti-Semites, the more he is identified as a Jew and aligned with Jewish community. But the novel unravels at least two loopholes in this logic. On one hand, Jewish people's obsession with resenting the anti-Semites only prolongs and even aggravates the harm the Holocaust has done to them. Just as Alan Berger aptly points out, for children of survivor parents such as Duncan, "a life twisted by rage is — in its own way — granting Hitler a posthumous victory" (14).

On the other hand, there is a self-deprecating and even self-hating undertone of the Tough Jew ideal that is reliant on rage. It has been a not-uncommon phenomenon for supporters of muscular Judaism to sever the post-Holocaust Jewish people, including themselves, from the prewar Jewish tradition that is said to blame for generating passive victims. As Yitzchak Mais notices, the neglect of Jewish past in both popular and scholarly works of Holocaust studies has generated self-hatred among contemporary Jewish people:

Scant attention is paid to Jewish life in Europe before the Nazi assault. Thus we know the Jewish primarily as victims, with little knowledge of who they were. [...]. A disturbing consequence of this lack of knowledge is that often, in very subtle ways, Jews themselves are blamed for being victims. (18)

Therefore, if appropriate degree of introspection is necessary for Jewish people to reflect on the Holocaust, to overdo the self-criticism would undoubtedly have catastrophic effects on them.

To avoid this mistake, *Smoke* offers a more reasonable alternative to the Tough Jew ideal, that is, the gentle Jew ideal represented by the characterization of Isaac, who is Duncan's long-lost brother in Poland. As a caretaker of Jewish cemetery in Poland and a saintly Jewish figure worshipped by both Polish Jews and gentiles, Isaac has "no bitterness" and "no rage" towards the anti-Semites (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 212). Rather, he chooses to return to the root of Ashkenazic Jewish culture and carry on the tradition. If the Holocaust is designed by the Nazi to annihilate the whole Jewish race and its legacy, what better countermeasure can the post-Holocaust Jewry adopt than tenaciously committing themselves to sustaining their valuable legacy of Jewish religion and culture?

At the end of the novel, Duncan decides to live without Holocaust temporarily. Though it is still unclear how he is going to live on with Holocaust after that, it is true that Duncan wants to go beyond the rage that defines the Holocaust survivors and their children. According to Rosenbaum, his post-Holocaust trilogy, i.e. *Elijah Visible* (1996), *Smoke* (1999) and *The Golems of Gotham* (2003) deals with loss, rage and "repair and redemption" respectively by design, so as to illustrate his point that "[a]fter loss comes rage, and after rage there is the hope for rescue, repair, and even redemption" (qtd. in Royal 6). To control one's rage, therefore, is the antidote provided by the novel to the toxic influence of the Holocaust. Rosenbaum points out that:

The Holocaust is nothing but a black hole to me. But the post-Holocaust, while not an overlay of the original, nonetheless offers the possibility for something else, something that is alive and lasting, something that can endure, precisely because Holocaust memory requires survivors, and the post-Holocaust demands that the memory of the Holocaust not prevent the forward march into the future. (qtd. in Royal 4)

Therefore, this novel distinguishes Jewish people's collective memory of the Holocaust from their common hatred of or rage at the anti-Semites. Holocaust can facilitate Jewish identification not in the sense that Jewish people become more united for their shared feelings of hatred or common desire for revenge, but in the sense that it has become a collective memory of the survivors and their descendants, keeping them always alert to the threatening danger of the anti-Semitism and reminding them of the important mission of carrying on the age-long Jewish tradition into the future.

Problematizing Tough Jew's Similarity to Gentle Masculinity

Since the end of the 19th century, Tough Jew has not just become an ideal for Jewish ethnic identity, but also a desirable model of Jewish masculinity. Tough Jew differentiates itself from traditional Jewish masculinity that emphasizes Jewish men's gentleness, intellectual skills and academic scholarship. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the gentle Jew is indigenous to Jewish tradition, whereas the Tough Jew is actually foreign to it. Daniel Boyarin finds that "[t]he East European Jewish ideal of a gentle, timid, and studious male — *Edelkayt* — moreover, does have origins that are very deeply rooted in traditional Jewish culture, going back at least in part to the Babylonian Talmud" (2). While Jewish men do have a martial tradition, Boyarin argues, diasporic Jewish culture has little interest in the biblical warriors and ancient fighters and pays much more attention to male scholars, so in modern discourse "the 'Jewish' heroes, whether of the Bible or modernity, are all transformed into mimics of gentile heroes" (273). So, notwithstanding the sporadic Jewish tradition of violence, the popularity of Tough Jew among Jewish American community is more or less a modern phenomenon. Paul Breines warns against the striking resemblance of Tough Jew to gentile heroes such as James Bond and even to mythic Aryan heroes propagated by Nazi Germany (61-68). The root of this uncanny similarity between Tough Jew and gentile masculinity, as John Hoberman indicates, can be traced back to "Nordau's view that Jewish male dignity is to be achieved by adopting the predominant Western masculine norms", the norms emphasizing "force of character and the physical abilities that allow a man to conquer both his women and his enemies" (175).

In *Smoke*, Duncan is depicted as a typical Tough Jew in the sense that his masculinity greatly resembles that of the gentiles. For instance, he looks tall and muscled and excels at gentile sports like football. He does not take after his Jewish parents in appearance and can easily pass as a gentile. His brother Isaac thinks he is a big one like Arnold Schwarzenegger, a famous body-builder and Hollywood action movie star (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 208). His Jewish godfather Larry calls him Rambo, a macho character played by Sylvester Stallone in several US action films (134). In the eyes of Maloney, a former Nazi guard whom Duncan tracks and investigates, Duncan does not look like a Jew at all, who is "no doubt an American, with a kind of self-assured native presence and decidedly Protestant features" (100). All of these depictions of Duncan's so-called masculine looks bring to notice the paradoxical stance of the Tough Jew ideal embodied by him.

If Duncan's resemblance to gentile macho man is what qualifies him as

a “tough” Jewish man, then what makes a Tough Jew such as Duncan Jewish anyway? This is a difficult question to answer, mainly because the politics of ethnicity and gender intersect in the Tough Jew ideal. To a great extent, the “toughness” in the Tough Jew ideal is synonymous with the idea of violence advocated by muscular Judaism, according to which, being tough or violent is not just manly, but also Jewish. Or to put it in another way, it is the manliness in being tough or violent that the Zionists want to incorporate into their version of Jewishness, which may begin anew in and more adaptable to the social and historical circumstances towards the end of the 19th century. In that sense, “toughness” in the Tough Jew ideal functions as the essential means of realizing a brand new model of masculinity for the Jews, so as to modify and improve upon the traditional Jewish ethnic identity. This logic is self-contradictory without doubt. In *Smoke*, the ambivalent ethnic nature of the Tough Jew ideal is thus elaborated:

It was about time that Jews grew them as big as Goliath, when they no longer had to rely on David’s crafty slingshot, or the cleverness of Solomon, or the permanence of Samson’s hippie haircut. No more need for gimmicks or cunning or finesse; with Duncan it was all reducible to brute force. In the modern era the Israelis were certain setting a good example of creating an altogether new ethos of the badass Jew, but Duncan’s destiny was to finish the job. (Rosenbaum 36)

Therefore, toughness (or “brutal force” in the excerpt) is the key to unlock the mystery of masculinity, and the adoption of a new Jewish masculinity based on toughness is the ladder leading up to an “optimized” Jewishness. But the story of Duncan unravels the flaw in this argument, that is, Duncan does not become more Jewish for being a Tough Jew. His toughened masculinity has not made him more identified with Jewish ethnicity. Rather, it is his rage at anti-Semites and the multigenerational trauma of the Holocaust he receives from his survivor parents that keep him painfully aware of his own Jewishness.

One scene depicts how Duncan stands over the grounded opponents in the football field, imagining “the uniform rising, the SS armband returning to the huddle, the battle still unfinished” and picturing himself as a post-Holocaust gladiator in war with the Nazi army (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 36). It is not hard to notice that in this scene Duncan attempts to construct his Jewishness and masculinity at the same time. His violent and merciless combat with opponents provides a way for him to construct his masculinity then and there in the sports

field, but the configuration of his Jewishness is without any substantial support, because the sports field is not battlefield and his opponents are not Nazis. Thus the novel challenges the validity of Tough Jew ideal by laying bare its problematic Jewishness and restoring its masculinity to its gentile origin.

But the novel not just calls the Jewishness in tough Jewish masculinity into question, threatening to cancel out the boundary between Tough Jew and gentle masculinity, but also casts grave doubt on the macho of Tough Jew, for the simple reason that it is in fact Duncan's mother Mila, not his father Yankee, that makes a tough man out of him. In the Katz family, the gender roles of the parents are almost reversed. Yankee's sphere is limited within the family. He is the silent type and has a gentle personality, having little authority at home and leaving most important decisions to his wife. Mila, instead, takes up many male-dominated occupations in the public sphere, such as the brains of the Jewish Mafia in Miami and a card shark. Stern, apathetic and autocratic as she is, she withholds all her maternity in rearing Duncan and assumes the paternal function of disciplining Duncan in the toughest manner. If the usual pattern of boy's growth to be a man is to identify with his father, or anyone impersonating the paternal function, then in the Katz family, it is not Yankee but Mila that cultivates masculinity in Duncan.

In general, Mila chooses an irregular path for Duncan. She forces him to practice martial arts and encourages him to fight as an animal in the street fight and football games. She prohibits his involvement in "effeminate" activities or behavior such as playing piano and taking medicines. Through all these prohibitions and discipline, Duncan is cultivated to be a special kind of Jewish man, "a very different conception of the standard Jewish prince," "[a] Frankenstein experiment gone right this time" and "a modern-day golem from Miami Beach who could defend any Jewish ghetto anywhere, anytime" (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 36). This explains the conflicting subjectivity of Duncan. He is as strong as iron without but as fragile as ice within. His rage is more like a defense mechanism that prevents him from feeling the emotions that will soften him. Therefore, Duncan's masculinity is based on a paradox: he learns how to be a man from his mother, and he has to identify with her in order to differentiate himself from her in gender. This paradox becomes a destiny that he fights against in vain.

Reshaping Jewish Ethnic and Masculine Identities

Duncan has to learn how to be a Jewish man from his mother, not just because of his father's discharging of paternal responsibilities, but also because of the fact that the ancient Jewish tradition has been ruptured by the Holocaust. It is thus described

in the novel:

But Auschwitz had shattered such time-honored traditions. Since the oldest people in the ghettos and the camps were also the most vulnerable – and generally the ones who died the soonest — there was a severe shortage of grandparents after the war. (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 10)

Now that the best of the European Jewry have been killed in the concentration camp, there is a severe shortage of esteemed Jewish men to impart Jewish knowledge or implement Jewish rituals and practices. In the novel, Jewish Mafia in Miami takes over these honorable jobs, but performs rather poorly and awkwardly.

As the novel shows, the Holocaust is not the only reason for the decline of Jewish tradition in the post-Holocaust world. Cultural assimilation and commercialism are also to blame. For example, Howard Minskoff, a minor character in *Smoke*, is an Americanized Jew, who revels in his dissipated life with gentile supermodels, non-kosher wine and drunken orgy. When attending the party Howard throws for the Seder, the feast commemorating the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, celebrated on the first two nights of Passover, both Duncan and Isaac feel uncomfortable with the unrestraint merrymaking and even debauchery at the party. Isaac comments that the party is “spiritually empty” and he cannot help worrying “[w]hat will happen to Holocaust one day” (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 292). As the novel evidences, the WWII Holocaust has already been subject to the lethal influence of emerging commercialism in Poland, which is the motherland of Eastern European Jewry, the ancestors of Jewish Americans like Duncan and Isaac. The novel narrates that the infamous Nazi concentration camps in Poland such as Auschwitz become tourist sites, charging fees for car parking and selling tickets to visitors. A painful trauma of the Jew now turns out to be a commercialized product for sale and for show.

Facing the decline of Jewish tradition due to the Holocaust, assimilation and commercialism, one may resort to the Tough Jew ideal for a stable source of Jewish ethnic and masculine identification. But the reality is hardly positive. It is aforementioned that the Tough Jew ideal is more or less a stress reaction of the Zionism to the increasing anti-Semitic movement at the end of the 19th century. Tough Jew ideal is meant for self-preservation of the Jewry against anti-Semitism, even by means of necessary violence. But *Smoke* shows that despite the existence of the neo-Nazi punk like Arthur Schweigert and former Nazi such as Maloney in the post-Holocaust America, they pose no real threat at all to the safety of Duncan

and other Jewish-Americans. Even in Poland that is rumored to be the base of neo-Nazis, Duncan only encounters neo-Nazis of his own imagination. Thus the toughness in Tough Jew ideal seems out of date and even like a burden that keeps weighing Jewish men like Duncan down.

Rather, the novel shows that Tough Jew is something to be sublated, meaning to be negated, lifted up and preserved as a partial presence in the new synthesis of Jewishness.² In other words, Tough Jew ideal is not the truth or essence of Jewishness, nor is it the truth or essence of the Jewish masculinity. Both its ethnic and gender premises should be carefully critiqued and seriously criticized before the constructive part of it can be incorporated into the new Jewish identity in the post-Holocaust age.

If Tough Jew ideal cannot shoulder the heavy responsibility of providing the sources for Jewish ethnic and gender identifications, can the reclamation of Eastern European Jewish tradition suffice to make up for the broken link in Jewish-American identity politics? Alan Berger notices that “[i]n Poland, Duncan begins to reconnect with the religious dimension of his Jewish heritage; a knowledge that was denied him by his mother’s obsession with vengeance” (14). By “religious dimension of Jewish heritage,” Berger means Jewish religious practices like attending synagogues. But Duncan does not just reconnect with his Jewish root in religious ways, but also in secular ways. Isaac, who is Duncan’s nonreligious half-brother known as “caretaker of the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery” and “Poland’s most sought-after yoga master and spiritual mystic”, exerts decisive influences on Duncan by imparting the lost Jewish and familial traditions to him and opening his eyes to more possibilities of Jewishness (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 167).

Isaac’s resemblance to Mila in appearance symbolizes that Isaac is Mila’s legacy left to Duncan. Isaac is optimistic, forgiving and caring, standing for the normal state of Duncan’s personality, had the Holocaust not devastated Duncan as such. Isaac’s character opens a window for Duncan to their mother’s remote prewar past, when she was still humane, feminine and even maternal. It enables Duncan to rebuild the lost familial link between himself and his parents and to acknowledge his abnormal ethnic and gender identity as “an anomaly, a genetic mutation, a giant among the broken-down remains of Auschwitz alumni” (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 208).

Isaac also represents an important aspect of the Jewish tradition lost to the Holocaust, that is, the *menschlichkeit*³ that the Katz family and the Miami gangster clan cannot impart to Duncan. In this sense, Isaac functions as a link for Duncan to his past, tracing back to the medieval Ashkenazic Jewish culture and tradition once prosperous in Poland. Though he is not a religious scholar like his ancestors,

Isaac miraculously obtains Jewish *menschlichkeit* through his work in the Jewish graveyard and through the oriental philosophy of yoga.

Isaac's spiritual pursuit began when he was thirteen. Upon his bar mitzvah, Isaac found the grave of his great-grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Lewinstein, who was one of the most prestigious Talmudic scholars in Warsaw, Poland. From then on, Isaac worked in the graveyard to take care of the graves of his great-grandfather and the families slaughtered in the Holocaust. It is among the ghosts of a lost generation that Isaac rebuilds his connection to the Jewish past and cultivates himself into an esteemed Jewish saint, resembling his great-grandfather and all the other honorable *mensches* in Ashkenazic Jewish tradition. It is through the connection with Isaac that Duncan is able to transcend the limitation set forth by the toxic legacy of the Holocaust inherited from his parents and to enter into the realm of the once splendid and prosperous Ashkenazic Jewish tradition which was nearly annihilated by the Holocaust. This *menschly* tradition represents an alternative definition of Jewish masculinity that can possibly save Duncan from his abyss of despair and rage.

It should be noted that Isaac incorporates the philosophy of yoga into his pursuit of *menschlichkeit*. From the novel, one can learn that the social and cultural environment in Poland is hardly favorable for Isaac's self-cultivation of *menschlichkeit*. For example, the Nozyk Synagogue their great-grandfather once worked in is now dilapidated and near-empty. There is no rabbi there and a few old men having survived the Holocaust are "like a class without a teacher, had for years led their own services, alternating among themselves" (Rosenbaum, *Smoke* 225). Isaac has to resort to something else to fulfill his pursuit of *menschlichkeit*. Interestingly, the philosophy of yoga shares some important similarities with *menschlichkeit*. *Menschlichkeit* is mainly about the defining qualities of being a respected Jewish man in Ashkenazic Jewish society. There are such important qualities for *menschlichkeit* as truthfulness, trustworthiness, respect, peace, lovingkindness and wisdom.⁴ In Orthodox Jewish communities, studying the sacred texts and honoring God are also indispensable to being a mensch. Yoga, on the other hand, is a holistic worldview and comprehensive system of self-cultivation, comprising of moral restraints, internal observances, body training, breath control, meditation and so forth. Its moral restraints include nonviolence, truthfulness and not stealing, and its internal observances include the study of sacred texts and devotion to God (the guru).⁵ These requirements of yoga are very similar to those of *menschlichkeit*. Though both know about Asian practices of self-cultivation, Duncan's knowledge is limited to the fighting techniques of Asian martial arts, but

Isaac relies on Yoga to train his consciousness for a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquility. Duncan utilizes (or is forced by Mila to utilize) the Asian martial arts to define his tough Jewish masculinity, while Isaac applies the Asian wisdom to his cultivation of *menschlichkeit*. It is under Isaac's instruction that Duncan learns to cast away his rage and reclaims his *menschlichkeit*. Yoga may not be the orthodox way to Jewish *menschlichkeit*, but its physical and breath trainings heal Duncan's trauma and open the way to his further self-cultivation of *menschlichkeit*.

Thus *Smoke* provides a possible solution to the reconfiguration of Jewish ethnic and gender identities in the post-Holocaust era. Instead of asking the Jewish people to look back into history to reclaim something ancient and never-changing, the novel points to the possibility of looking forward, at a new possibility of Jewish identification that is more inclusive and open to changes.

Conclusion

Thane Rosenbaum's novel *Smoke* demonstrates the changing view of contemporary Jewish Americans on the Tough Jew ideal in the post-Holocaust era. Some Holocaust survivors like Mila base their descendants' Jewish ethnic and masculine identities on the rage at the anti-Semites and the violence that characterizes American gentile masculinity, as a response to the atrocity against Jews in WWII. But Duncan's spiritual plight proves that the ethos of Tough Jew with vengeful spirit and violent means can only bring further harms to Jews either as individuals or as a collectivity. Though its critical representation of the Tough Jew ideal in the characterization of Duncan, the novel reveals that to be a Jewish man in the post-Holocaust world requires one to inherit the ancient Jewish tradition of *menschlichkeit*, to confront placidly the historical memories of the Holocaust, and finally, to embrace the newly incorporated experiences of Jewish people in the process of diaspora. In this novel, this new experience takes the form of yoga. It may have only been the wishful imagination of Thane Rosenbaum as a novelist, but it does unravel the fact that Jewishness is not static, but always in the process of becoming. The novel demonstrates that in the post-Holocaust era, neither *menschlichkeit* nor the Tough Jew ideal is the ultimate answer to Jewish identity politics, which can always incorporate new elements, be it Oriental or Occidental, that are beneficial to the configuration of a stronger, more persistent and more elastic version of Jewish ethnic and masculine identities.

Notes

1. The word “mensch” (or *mentsh* in Yiddish) denotes a decent and humane person, a good human being.
2. For more information about the concept of “sublation”, see Bunnin and Yu, 664.
3. “*Menschlichkeit*” (or *mentshlekhkayt* in Yiddish) refers to the ideal masculinity of the traditional Eastern European Ashkenazic Jewish society.
4. For more information about the basic qualities of *menschlichkeit*, see Shelley Kapnek Rosenberg’s book *Raising a Mensch*.
5. For more information about the components of yoga, see Brian Smith, 2510-12.

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Reading Hanif Kureishi's Representation of the London Suburbs in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

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Abstract This article reads the representation of the London suburbs in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* against the tradition of English critical and literary engagement with suburbia. It argues that Kureishi gets beyond the stereotypes of the English suburb by representing it as a complex and meaningful cultural zone. He also highlights the suburb's performative nature to demonstrate identity as an anti-essentialist concept. The article concludes by suggesting that, by endowing the London suburbs with more complexity and possibilities, Kureishi's work contributes to the creation of new meanings and significations of the English suburb and participates in the reconfiguring of the English landscape.

Key words *The Buddha of Suburbia*; London suburbs; stereotype; performance; ethnic identity

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Despite its physical marginality, suburbs are in no way marginal places in modern societies. Having been established as a popular form of mass metropolitan living for a century and a half,¹ suburbia is now a constant fact of human geography and becoming more central in the explanation of contemporary experience.² However, despite its sociological and cultural significance, suburbia has been, until recently, little examined and remained more or less invisible in most accounts of modernity. Suburbia, just as Roger Webster reveals, "has no history, its archives are empty"

(2).

In England, where the first modern suburbs developed and the majority of its population is suburbanized,³ suburbia has been previously overlooked in literary circles. Ged Pope, in his recent survey of the English literature, points out that it is “difficult to find serious and direct mention of the suburb in fiction: quite often they are usually glimpsed in writing that is primarily focused elsewhere” (*Reading London's Suburbs* 9). The absence of suburbia from English literary canon is vividly shown in the reaction of such post-war immigrant writers as George Lamming and V. S. Naipaul upon their first arrival in the London suburbs. In *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), Naipaul states that while he came to a place that he knew very well, that is, from literary works, he actually “found a city that was strange and unknown” (qtd. in Pope, *Reading London's Suburbs* 143).⁴ This “familiar unfamiliarity” as termed by Pope, exposes the fact that the suburbs “have not featured in much London writing” (143).

Therefore, as one of the few English novels that use suburbia as both a setting and a serious subject, the significance of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) is self-evident. A semi-autobiographical coming-of-age novel set in the 1970s, the novel explores the growing experience of a mixed race child in south London suburbs. Now canonical in surveys of recent English fiction, it has garnered much critical attention, among which the suburban theme is the most frequently discussed.

However, pervasive among critics is the belief that the novel follows the English literary tradition that has more or less presented suburbia in a stereotypical manner.⁵ The interpretation sounds reasonable since Kureishi's depiction of the south London suburbs evokes a series of familiar stereotypes about suburbia, the novel's bipartite narrative structure also seems to reinforce the negative idea that suburbia is the place to be escaped from. However, it is also over simplistic in that it ignores the fact that a more subtle and complicated picture actually exists underneath the surface. Through a close reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the article attempts to challenge such a view and argues that the novel gives a much more complex representation of the English suburb, which emerges as meaningful cultural zone that provides new possibilities for constructing ethnic identity.

Suburbia in the English Literary Tradition

The noticeable lack of concern about suburbia is one prominent phenomenon pointed out in several recent critical works on the English suburb. The primary reason of its absence, according to Webster, is that the English literary and literary-

critical discourses have been dominated by the country/city dichotomy, and that, while highly valuing the urban, they rarely bestow on the suburb an equally important status (4). The belief that “we must turn to the city in order to examine the distinctive conditions of contemporary life” has persisted through the English literary and critical tradition (Brook 209). Suburbia came to assume a position of other, an empty sign, and a space devoid of cultural importance.

Another reason, as put forward by Pope, is the concern that the ordinary experience of the suburb may not be proper literary material (*Reading London's Suburbs* 9). Created to satisfy the demand for the private and the domestic, the English suburbs are very often the home of the lower-middle class, the experience of this social group — the everyday family concerns and trivial routines, is considered “not the kind of experience that literature deals with” (9).

There is also the conventional opposition between the city and the suburb that always privileges the former. Pervasive in the English public consciousness is the perception of the city as a place of freedom, excitement, heterogeneity and boundless possibilities. While the suburb has always been viewed as the other of the city and defined by its difference from the city. It functions in the minds of most English people a pejorative space: ugly-looking, mundane, inert, consumerist, and above all, a monotonous and boring place where nothing much happens. Pope quotes Walter Crane, a popular Victorian historian, as saying, “The life of the suburb is one without any society; no social gatherings or institutions; as dull a life as any man imagined” (*Reading London's Suburbs* 2). Another fixed connotation of suburbia is homogeneity. The suburb is, in the words of mid-twentieth-century urban theorist Lewis Mumford, “a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable house... inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group” (qtd. in Pope 1-2).

The assumed monotony and homogeneity provided rich satire for the writers who wrote about the suburb, and in return, their representations contributed to the more stereotypical construction of the suburb. In his recent survey, Dominic Head points out that British novelists “have played their part in establishing suburbia as an object of ridicule” (*The Cambridge Introduction* 213), and post-war British fictional engagement with suburbia consists of stereotypical representations of suburban life that depict it as “deadening, unimaginative, representative of a low or restricted common denominator” (218). Pope holds a similar view in his essay on south London suburbs by arguing that English fictional representations have “mocked, despised, scapegoated and stereotyped” suburbia, depicting it as “remote, unknowable, philistine, standardized and insignificant” (n. p.).

Charles Pooter, the fictional character in George and Weedon Grossmith's comic novel *The Diary of a Nobody* (1889) who is always engaged in trivial domestic tasks, has been an enduring illustration of suburban banality and a figure of satire throughout the 20th century. A more recent example is George Orwell's *Coming up for Air* (1939), in which he deploys the most established icons for representing suburbia as "a line of semi-detached torture chambers where the poor little five-to-ten-pound-a-weekers quake and shiver" (qtd. in Webster 1). The tendency to connect the uniform and mock architectural design of the suburb houses with loss of individuality and moral corruption of its inhabitants can be found in many English fictional treatments of suburbia.

The Suburb: Beyond Stereotype and Dichotomy

The Buddha of Suburbia is divided into two sections entitled "In the Suburbs" and "In the City." It is so structured as to stage the escape from the suburbs to the metropolitan center, and simultaneously the development from adolescence to adulthood of Karim Amir, the protagonist and narrator of the story. From the very beginning, Karim expresses his desire to flee the suburbs for the city, "where life would be bottomless in its temptations" (Kureishi 8). For Karim, the inner city represents freedom, excitement, opportunity, adventure and sexual exploration. In contrast, Bromley, the south London suburb where he grew up is "a leaving place" (117), which he loathes and cannot wait to get away from.

In Kureishi's depictions, Bromley conforms to the most stereotyped image of the English suburb. His description of the place as a dreary world with "gloomy, echoing streets [...] neat gardens and scores of front rooms containing familiar strangers and televisions shining like dying lights" (74) is no different from that of Orwell's. Without exception, its life style is conformist, passive and boring as "most of the neighborhood went to bed at ten thirty" and "people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness. It was all familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward of dullness" (62).

As Raymond Williams claims: "there are no suburbs: there are only ways of seeing places as suburbs" (qtd. in Brook 212). The stereotypical way to see an area of a city/town as suburban in England is to classify it as lower-middle class. In this story, Karim's family is a typical lower-middle-class family. His father, Haroon, lives the typical life of a suburban father, commuting to a civil servant job in London and fleeing the city as quickly as he can after work. He is the epitome of lower-middle class man: home-oriented, trivial and frustrated. While Karim's mother, Margaret, is a typical suburban housewife, bored, depressed and neglected

who is always engaged in household chores in the kitchen. They are unhappily married but divorce is out of the question because “divorce wasn’t something that would occur to them” (8). The mother is marked by her extreme conservatism. Obviously, the suburb is characterized by the routine and mind-set of the lower-middle-class.

The more obvious way in which Kureishi conforms to traditional depictions of suburbia is by underlining the centrality of consumption and materialism. Bromley has been turned into a carnival of consumerism as Karim observes a crowd of shoppers, “They were fanatic shoppers in our suburbs. Shopping was to them what the rumba and singing is to Brazilians. Saturday afternoons, when the streets were solid with white faces, was a carnival of consumerism as goods were ripped from shelves” (65). He also mocks the materialistic attitude of the suburbanites by saying “when people drowned they saw not their lives but their double-glazing flashing before them” (23).

In this sense, the novel fits into the long-time English literary tradition that represents the suburb stereotypically as homogeneous, boring and culturally empty. However, a careful analysis of the novel reveals its depictions of suburbia are far more subtle and complex. In fact, underneath the surface, there is a submerged representation that proves the suburbia a place that contains more complexity.

Although Karim complains about the suburb’s homogeneity, it turns out to be anything but a homogeneous mass of semis. The various south London suburbs that are used as the setting appear far more distinctive than they are usually expected. The description given by Karim in the first section of the novel — “neat gardens and scores of front rooms containing familiar strangers and televisions shining like dying lights” (74) seems to prove suburbia’s homogeneity, but the passage also shows its diversity as he moves on to introduce some of the inhabitants in detail:

Here lived Mr. Whitman, the policeman, and his young wife, Noleen; next door were a retired couple, Mr. and Mrs. Holub. They were socialists in exile from Czechoslovakia [...] Opposite them were another retired couple, a teacher and his wife, the Gothards. An East End family of birdseed dealers, the Lovelaces, were next to them [...] Further up the street lived a Fleet Street reporter, Mr. Nokes, his wife and their overweight kids, with the Scoffields – Mrs. Scoffield was an architect, next door to them. (74)

This description reveals a tremendous amount of variety even among the residents of a single street, who are of different ages, different occupations and different

political backgrounds, a picture just opposite to the impression given by Lewis Mumford. Pope even argues that there is actually nothing banal about Kureishi's south London suburbs as they are packed with people with unique characteristics (*Reading London's Suburbs* 159).

Indeed Kureishi's suburb does not remain stultifying for long. Karim's self-confession soon discloses the secret places that have been transformed as "playgrounds and sexual schools" (74), where young people enjoy music, games, drugs and sexual experimentations. As the youth's disruption of the parentally-controlled space, it adds a sense of freedom and excitement to the place and shows the potential of the suburb to "adapt itself to different circumstances" (Pope, *Reading London's Suburbs* 4). Clearly, the suburb presented here contradicts Karim's complaints about it being predictable and boring.

Even the most gloomy domestic space of the suburban home is endowed with the possibilities of sexual exploration and identity reinvention. The crucial episode in showing the suburb's transformational possibilities is in the opening scene where Haroon transforms himself from a civil servant commuter into an Eastern mystic. By using his Indian ethnicity and knowledge gained from the books on yoga and Eastern mysticism, Haroon deviates from the role of a mundane suburban man and performs as a spiritual leader to a roomful of suburbanites, and thus successfully reinvents himself as a spiritual advisor titled "Buddha."

The suburb is portrayed not only as a place of variety and possibilities, but as a zone of culture. In describing several suburban households, Kureishi emphasizes the highbrow tastes of their inhabitants, for instance, the house hosting Haroon's performance that is full of books and records, and Eva's house that has great attraction to Karim because of "the talk of music and books, of names like Dvorak, Krishnamurti and Eclectic" (12). Much as they care about appearance and show-off, people in the suburbs still have a keen interest in the spiritual as evidenced by the popularity of Haroon's teaching.

Unlike Margaret who spends every evening watching TV, most of the suburban characters are industriously involved in cultural accumulation. Both Haroon and Eva are avid readers and even join a creative writing course. Charlie is enthusiastic about rock and roll and active in practicing singing. Karim's younger brother, Allie, is preoccupied with fashion. With a PhD degree, Jamila proves to be the most educated among them. Already an avid reader at the age of thirteen, Jamila reads widely from Baudelaire to Simone de Beauvoir. Even the working-class drinkers in the pub in Beckenham are so cultured by talking about music artists like Syd Barret that Karim feels ignorant in comparison and decides to "study

the *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express* to keep up” (8).

Clearly, the suburbs are not without cultural pursuits. Webster points out that the growth and changing identity of suburbia have made it not only the major consumer of culture, but also “an increasingly significant producer of culture” (5). Indeed, it is a richly productive site that produces various forms of culture, especially the subculture of pop music. As a form of culture originated in suburbia, English pop music is, to some extent, account of the suburban experience and aspirations. It is this same desire to escape and change, and the same longing for the city that are relevant to the suburban youth.

Right after the party at Eva’s house Karim has an epiphany regarding how he wants to live in the future, “I wanted to live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs” (15), without realizing he has already obtained the kind of life envisioned by him. On the contrary, he mistakenly believes that it is only available in the city, a place that has been imagined superior in every aspect. It is not until he makes his adventure in the city that he begins to realize the gap between this utopian imagination of the city and its sobering realities.

Racism is one of the experiences that inform the suburban lives of the immigrants during 1970s. In Penge where Anwar’s family live, the sporadic outbreaks of racist violence always leave their lives miserable. In Karim’s imagination, London should be more multi-racial where “there were thousands of black people everywhere, so I wouldn’t feel exposed” (121), and people there should be more tolerant. But he finds that the racism he has encountered in the suburbs is also pervasive in the so-called liberal middle and upper-middle circles in London, even though in a more subtle way. As he reflects on the suicide of Eleanor’s black lover, Gene, he attributes the reason to racism, “[he] killed himself because every day, by a look, a remark, an attitude, the English told him they hated him; they never let him forget they him a nigger, a slave, a lower being” (227), he then realizes that he is in the same position as Gene because of the exact same racist treatment that he has received in London.

Karim’s experience also proves the belief that London is awash with new possibilities for self-creation a fantasy. Making his fame as an actor in a theatre in London, Karim finds himself trapped in a fixed role of lower-middle class Asian or Black that the white people expect him to play: ridiculous and funny with strange habits and weird customs, a popular stereotype held by most white people. O’Reilly contends that the presence of the white elites like Shadwell and Pyke “creates an environment that is more homogenous and less culturally diverse than suburbia”

(n. p.), and these upper-class people in the city can be just as narrow-minded, consumerist and snobbery as the lower-middle class of the suburbs.

Here we can see both the suburb and the city are unstable locales. The suburb appears much more diverse, exciting and culturally sophisticated than it is traditionally considered, while the privileged city that seems to promise many freedoms turns out to be mono-cultural, prejudiced and even repressive. As the rest of the story unfolds, we come to see the distinctions between the suburb and the city are becoming more blurred. Therefore, the binary opposition between them which the novel seems to rely on tends to break down. In this sense, the bipartite structure of the novel can be seen as a deliberate narrative device used by the author to question and deconstruct the traditional urban-suburb dichotomy.

In fact, Karim's move from the suburb to the city is not a one-way journey. Throughout the second part, Karim repeatedly returns to and continues his observation of the suburb, which constitutes "an undercurrent which runs counter to the theme of escape" (Head, "Poisoned Minds" 82). Therefore, Sebastian Groes deems the novel an anti-Bildungsroman in that it records Karim's failure to "transcend his rather childish tantrum against suburbia" (211). Therefore, the novel can be seen as Kureishi's "confession of youthful misperception" that he is trying to correct.

The Suburb as a Place of Identity Performance

The collapse of the binary opposition between the city and the suburb undermines the former as a privileged site for Karim's negotiation of identity. It is worth pointing out that it is exactly in the cosmopolitan city that Karim and Charlie are found to be stuck in an assumed role. More precisely, the city is the place where Karim fully realizes the performative nature of identity. His experience with acting and witnessing of Charlie's putting on various cultural persona lead him to the full realization that identity is constructed through imitation and performance.

In fact, Kureishi hints at the performative nature of identity from the very beginning by depicting the suburb as a place of appearance and display. Karim points to the prevalent practice of house makeover in the suburb by saying that all of the houses have been decorated or modified, "one had a new porch, another double-glazing, 'Georgian' windows or a new door with brass fittings. Kitchens had been extended, lofts converted, walls removed, garages inserted" (74-75). But this proves important since the game of display enables one suburban house differentiate from the other. The differences between the suburbs are also illustrated by the difference of appearance, with the garden as the showcase. The more affluent

Chislehurst, for example, has gardens with “greenhouses, grand oaks and sprinklers on the lawn” (29) while in the poorer suburbs like Brixton, the gardens are “full of rusting junk and sodden overcoats; lines of washing crisscrossed over the debris” (43).

As Susan Brook argues, the aesthetic of display proves the suburb the perfect location for “the display and performance of personal identities” (214). Here everyone is refashioning him/herself by trying on roles or disguises. Haroon, for instance, after years of trying to be more of an Englishman, turns himself into a fashionable Indian guru by exaggerating his Indian accent, and putting on exotic costumes and an Eastern mysticism. Eva, through decoration, marketing and accumulation of culture, becomes an interior designer and makes her way to London’s upper-class circles. As can be seen, makeover is the key to identity construction. Actually, Karim associates the sense of self with appearance in his first encounter with Charlie. He confesses that he wants to be him, “I coveted his talents, face, style. I wanted to wake up with them all transferred to me” (15). Here, the change of the self is connected with the change of appearance.

The novel’s emphasis on surface over depth in its exploration of identity construction can be seen as Kureishi’s challenge to and deconstruction of the essentialist nature of identity. In his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Stuart Hall puts forward two different ways of thinking about identity. One position defines identity “with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning,” while the other views identity as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being,’” which is subject to constant transformation (392-99). Obviously, it is the latter position that Kureishi subscribes to. In the essay on the arduous process of his identity formation, “The Rainbow Sign,” Kureishi castigates the essentialist notion of British identity and calls for “a fresh way of seeing Britain” and “a new way of being British” (101-02).

In the novel, Kureishi shows his anti-essentialist position through the different treatments of two camps of characters, those who adopt flexible and changing identities and those who locate their sense of identity in a fixed position. Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that the former set of characters are portrayed sympathetically, while the latter are treated with antagonism and portrayed with a tragic ending because of the rigid identities that they confine themselves to. One extreme example is Anwar, whose total reliance on Islam “for his sense of identity ironically throws him into a crisis of identity that leads to self-defeat” (qtd. in Finney 126). Stuart Hall argues that identity should be thought of “as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process” (392). This way of looking at identity

is fully shown in Karim. His identity is under constant transformations as the story proceeds and will “undergo further transformations” (O'Reiley) as the story ends with an uncertainty of his future.

Pope points out two prominent features of the contemporary British suburban space. One is its rapid and ever-accelerating development. Pope argues that the “ubiquity of the suburban landscape” is the fundamental characteristic that has transformed Britain's metropolitan space over the last several decades (*Reading London's Suburbs* 162). The suburban space has become ever unstable and its boundary has been ever shifting. The traditional dichotomy of suburb and city can no longer be applied. Another feature is that it is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural (162). Since the 1980s, it is populated by more and more immigrants born outside Britain.⁶ The immigrants' settlement in the suburbs has increased Britain's heterogeneity.

In view of the above, Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, with its new perspective that transcends the conventional binary and its complex portrayal of the English suburb, deserves the critical acclaim as “the most incisive suburban fiction of recent times” (Frith 271). Adopting a realistic style, the novel depicts an emerging multicultural Britain and articulates the experience of the first and second generation immigrants as well as their loves and hates of the suburbs. Thus, another significance of the novel lies in its status as one of the forerunners of a type of writing that both describes the experience of diaspora and participates in the reconstruction of the English landscape.

Notes

1. For more information on the origin and early history of the modern suburbs, see Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: the Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1987) 18-38; Richard Harris and Peter J. Larkham, *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function* (London: E & FN Spon, 1999) 1-20.
2. “Suburb”, according to the definition given by *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), is a district, especially a residential area, lying immediately outside or within the boundaries of a town or city; while “suburbia” refers to the behavior, opinions and way of living typical of the people who live in the suburbs.
3. For more detail, see Mark Clapson, *Invincible Green Suburbs, Brave New Towns: Social Change and Urban Dispersal in Postwar England* (Oxford: Oberg, 2003) 2.
4. Here entails an important notion of the city as both material and imaginary. In *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2004), McLeod argues that London

“emerges at the intersection of the concrete and the noumenal, between the material conditions of metropolitan life and the imaginative representation made of it” (7).

5. See Susan Brook, “Hegemony? Suburban Space in *The Buddha of Suburbia*,” *British Fiction of the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 214-216.

6. For more detail, see Sophie Watson & Anamik Saha, “Suburban Drifts: Mundane Multiculturalism in Outer London,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36.12 (2013): 2016-2034.

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When Ethnic Identity Meets National Identity: An Analysis of Bailey's Identity Transformation in Gloria Naylor's *Bailey's Café*

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Abstract Adopting Arnold van Gennep's tripartite model of "rites of passage," to study Gloria Naylor's *Bailey's Café*, this essay traces Bailey's rites of passage before and during his stay in Bailey's café to unravel his national identity transformation. Before his arrival at the café, he experiences an identity crisis due to his American national identity, particularly with the atomic bombs. It leads him to separate from America and comes to the liminal street of Bailey café, which constitutes a blues matrix that calls upon the historical sites of the way station, allowing him and other castaways to gather, rest, and transform. Through his encounters with Stanley and Gabe on the street, Bailey is able to gain the affirmative and transformative power of the blues and reintegrate with his American identity. Thus, the essay argues that the ideological aspect of American's national identity requires African Americans to transcend and to dream, and the blues empowers them to do so.

Key words American national identity; rites of passage; the blues; *Bailey's Café*; Gloria Naylor

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When Langston Hughes sings "Let America be America again" (3), He envisions an ideal America with such values as liberty, opportunity, and equality. For the majority of African Americans, America has never been the Promised Land or

Garden of Eden (“America never was America to me” [Hughes 3]). The conflict between ethnic identity and national identity of African Americans is well reflected in *Bailey’s Café* (1992), the fourth novel of Gloria Naylor (1950-2016), one of the black women writers that contribute to a “renaissance” of black women writing after the 1970s. The novel presents the life stories of five black women and two black men on the edge of the world before 1949 and envisions two way stations, Bailey’s café and Eve’s place, as asylums for them to heal their identity crises. This essay traces the transformation of the café proprietor Bailey’s national identity so as to unravel the dynamics between an African American’s ethnic identity and national identity, as well as the transformative potential of the café as a blues space.

Bailey’s Café is a blues novel filled with transience and liminality. Consisting of several loosely connected miniplots, the novel is structured to imitate a blues session. The writer of this essay believes that the narration of each major character follows a threefold progression: separation, liminality, and incorporation, a tripartite processual structure of “rites of passage” raised by Arnold van Gennep in his study on ritualized experience. Van Gennep uses “rites of passage” — “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” (Turner, *The Ritual Process* 94) to delineate the underlying structure that accompanies human psyche from one social status to another. Dorothy Perry Thompson takes notice of van Gennep’s theory in her study on *Bailey’s Café* and acknowledges the validity of the concept of “liminality” for African American literary criticism, as “it applies to characters caught between very different cultures” (98). Because of this cultural schism, African Americans need to go through various rituals to develop more wholesome mentality and identities. Thompson remarks that “[e]ach of Naylor’s major figures [in *Bailey’s Café*] is at some stage of the liminal process” (99). Naylor herself also admits that “it [the café] is there as a situation that embodies a turning point in each of these characters’ lives” (“Gloria Naylor” 95).

One crucial cultural schism addressed in *Bailey’s Café* is African American’s national identity crisis. This identity trouble is best illustrated by W. E. B Du Bois’s remarks on African American’s “double-consciousness”: “One ever feels his twoness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (5). An African American’s racial being is at times in conflict with his national being. The reason for this schism lies in the reality of being black in America. Due to the still rampant racial injustice, African Americans find it hard to fully embrace the American ideal set by the founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence — equality, liberty, and justice. As Bailey is a man who holds negative views towards racial integration in

America, his dissent against American's military actions in World War II weakens his national identity and triggers his identity crisis. Generally speaking, his realistic attitude and pessimistic views towards racial relationship in America undergo a transformation in the novel. Thus, taking van Gennep's structure into consideration, this essay centers on Bailey's development of national identity and traces the three stages of his rites of passage. It is believed that such an analysis will shed light on the dynamic transformation of one's national identity, particularly among the ethnic minorities in America.

Separation from America

The first phase in van Gennep's structure of rites of passage is separation, which mainly "comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group [...] from an earlier fixed point in the social structure" (Turner, *The Ritual Process* 94). In order to attain a more highly individuated stage of growth, one must leave the old ways behind. For Bailey, his national identity generates an identity crisis leading him to self-demise, so he needs to leave his national identity behind.

"Bailey" actually is not the café proprietor's real name. He only adopts the name of the café after he arrives at the street. Growing up in Brooklyn as an avid baseball fan, "Bailey" develops a strong indignation towards racial inequality in America because he cannot see "the American way" (Naylor, *Bailey's Café* 12) in baseball, which means "in the owner's box ... colored and white together" (12). Bailey's egalitarian "American way" calls upon "the American Creed," an ideology essential to American national identity. Stanley Hoffman believes that there are two features in the formation of the American national identity: one is the material, which is the population of America; the other is ideological, which features "the American creed" — a belief that is based on the principles of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights (72). Samuel P. Huntington also holds the view that the American Creed is "an indispensable part of their national character and national identity" (68), which can be summarized into five key principles: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire (Lipset 63-4). For different ethnics, the American Creed weakens the monolithic racial and religious factors in the dominating Anglo-Protestant culture in America. Furthermore, African American literary theorist Houston A. Baker, Jr. coins the capitalized word "AMERICA" to denote an integrationist vision of America similar to "the American Creed." "AMERICA" is an "immanent idea of boundless, classless, raceless possibility in America" (Baker 65). Baker points out that AMERICA is a utopian dream but the black community needs to discover it in America so as to strive for a better

future. Unlike other countries, America is a nation that ideology precedes any single national or ethnic history, so both the American Creed and AMERICA are constructed ideas that have founded the nation. Thus, this essay stresses the ideological part of American national identity in analyzing Bailey's national identity.

AMERICA is not real for Bailey. For him, there is an inconsistency in American life: egalitarianism is only true as an idea but not true in the real world. Joining the military is supposed to be Bailey's rites of passage towards being an American man, reconciling his ethnic and national identities. However, his hidden grudge towards AMERICA and the atomic bombs cause the army life to be his failed rite of passage. Bailey views joining the army not as a patriotic action but as a civil obligation. Nevertheless, he ponders, "I was willing to give that [my life] up for them [my unborn children] — not my country, them. Without them I knew there would be no America" (23). Thus, he conjures up a reason for his fighting and killing — fighting for the future of his race, "my unborn children" (23). However, his selective cause does not hold water. Once he sets foot in this War, his identity changes from a black man in America to an American soldier. His intention to replace his national identity with his racial identity eventually leads to his own mental breakdown.

As Bailey, the American soldier, gradually approaches Japan, he somehow senses "the divine wind" — "Kamikaze" (25) in the air. "The wind fluttering the edge of her flowered kimono, unraveling the baby's swaddling band as they hurled down the jagged cliffs of Saipan" (25). The divine goddess-like wind has been blowing for "one thousand and five hundred years in Japan" (25). Like many of Naylor's spiritual writings, she feminizes "Kamikaze," the renowned suicidal aviation attack unit of Japan, into a timeless wind goddess who protects Japan as well as the earth. This goddess pleads to the American soldiers for millions of innocent Pacific islanders' and Japanese citizens' lives. This wind makes Bailey "couldn't set foot in Japan" (25) because through the divine wind, he foresees an omen that "the very young, the deformed, and the old were waiting for me in Tokyo" (25). Indeed, American army's forthcoming months of bombardment await Japanese people, as well as two atomic bombs.

Addressing the ethical dilemma and humanity challenges of the atomic bombs, Naylor adopts a universal stand rather than a national one towards the bombs. The holy wind speaks for the souls of the dead, pleading against the atomic bombs, because it brings forth a new age of humanity — the atomic age that might lead to the end of human beings — the ultimate suicide project. Before

the bombing of Hiroshima, Bailey reflects, “[a]nd you gotta understand we were winning the war” (25-6). His words echo the then President Truman’s advisor, Admiral William Leahy’s view. Leahy points out that before the atomic bombs, “the Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender” (441). Thus, Bailey believes that he becomes a part of a national crime that is directed by his American white leaders. Using Hiroshima and Nagasaki as social and scientific laboratories for Japan’s speedy unconditional surrender eventually facilitates America’s global transformation — from a country mainly focused on domestic affairs into a global military empire, particularly in the Pacific region. Although Bailey’s prayers of survival have been answered by the atomic bombs (“My salvation rose like the head of a newborn” [26]), the “fruits” of the atomic bomb is the unconditional surrender of Japan and the rise of America as a global military empire, “spawning” (26)/ stationing her children in Japan, South Korea, the Marshall Islands, and all over the Pacific region.

Realizing the imperial action of America, Bailey has a mental breakdown on his arrival at the wharf of San Francisco after the War. When his fellow soldiers celebrate homecoming (“The boys were home” [27]), Bailey is stranded in the water. “I still believe this country had even been worth Hiroshima happening, but at the very moment of Hiroshima happening, it all stopped being worth it” (27). The atomic bombs make his rites of passage of American identity in the army a failure. Stranded at the shore of America, he cannot set foot on this land that commits the national crime. Stop believing in AMERICA, he loses his national identity at America’s borderland. He is *separated* from a traumatized national identity. It is a moment of utter schism of his double consciousness, which echoes Homi K. Bhabha’s remark that “the people are the articulation of a doubling of the national address, an ambivalent movement between the discourses of pedagogy and the performative” (149). Here, for Bailey’s case, the “discourses of pedagogy” refers to the teachings of AMERICA, while “the performative” designates American’s empirical and hegemonic actions in the War. The practice of America is in conflict with the ideology of America, and Bailey, an African American soldier, bears this conflict with his body and is overwhelmed by this fissure. Feeling lost, Bailey attempts to commit suicide by drowning. It is at that moment that his wife Nadine and Bailey’s café appear, and he is separated from the country and brought to the liminal world.

Transition in the Liminal Space

Bailey’s café initiates him into the liminal stage of his transition. The borderless

and nationless café provides him with a temporary identity — Bailey, the proprietor of Bailey's café — and a temporary shelter to resolve his identity crisis. Bailey's temporary identity is crucial for his rites of passage. Refusing to reveal to the readers his real name, Bailey grants himself with freedom and ambiguity. Furthermore, during the liminal stage of rites of passage, former social roles are suspended to allow the people to be themselves (Turner, "Betwixt and Between" 11). Thus, like a new born, Bailey's "nameless" situation grants him with the power to transcend and transform.

Not unlike Dorothy in *Wizard of Oz*, Bailey is carried into a magical space of endless ambiguity. The café "sits right on the margin between the edge of the world and infinite possibility" (76), and it is "real real mobile" (28). The magical café separates Bailey from the common world. In Turner's study on rites of passage among Ndembu people of Zimbabwe, the people who go through transitional rites — the neophytes — are often spatially separated: "... neophytes ... are very commonly secluded, partially or completely, from the realm of culturally defined and ordered states and statuses" ("Betwixt and Between" 8). Thus, liminality is a spatial concept, which can be used to describe the spatiality of the street of Bailey's café. The café is not easy to find. Although everyone is welcome to come to the café, it can only be noticed when one is truly hopeless. When some frequent customers cannot find the place, "they'll start asking questions. Hey, why wasn't this place here last month when I came by?" (28) The secretive and fluid nature of its location insulates the café and makes it a perfect place for Bailey to go through his liminal period.

Like most rituals of transition in many tribal cultures, magic is needed to finish the ritual. In *Bailey's Café*, it is carried out by an African American goddess. During rites of passage, close contact with "deity or with superhuman power" (Turner, "Betwixt and Between" 8) allows one to transcend limits. In the story, Eve, the owner of the Eve's place — a women's boardinghouse, is an older resident in the street who initiates Bailey into the role of café proprietor with a touch of magic, making everything natural and indubitable. "Eve was my first customer ... I didn't have to explain the routine to her, like no one had to explain it to me" (80). Without actual words, Eve makes Bailey accept his new status and new "routine" immediately, as "complete obedience characterizes the relationship of neophyte to elder" (Turner, "Betwixt and Between" 10). Being a woman with no age, probably more than a thousand-year old (82), Eve is a reference to the first woman in the Bible. The presence of a timeless woman as an eternal goddess of the street adds to the transcendence of the street. Thus, this is a space merging immanence and

transience with a slight touch of magic.

The timelessness and transience of the street is connected to Naylor's intentional historical reference of the way station in American history. Although Bailey's café does not have a fixed location, it is believed that it is mostly based in a brownstone near the pier at 125th Street in Harlem, New York (Whitt 153). Thus, it is still largely an American place. As Eve says to Bailey, "My place is a way station, just like yours" (159), Bailey's café and Eve's place are temporary American way stations for the most desperate in the world. From the early 19th century to the end of Civil War, there were many way stations along the secretive slave escape route called Underground Railroad. Since the slave escape network uses railroad terminology, "way stations" is used to refer to "hiding places, places of safety, and stops along the freedom route ... 'Station masters' sheltered the slaves in the stations and provided the fugitives with food, clothing, and protection" (McCaslin 560). Way stations also "served as a postal center and message drop" (Robinson and Fulkerson 40) and provided illiterate slaves with communicative and gathering locations. Thus, Naylor reinvents way stations into a café and a women's boardinghouse.

Bailey's negotiation with American identity starts from his entering this liminal space. His first lesson is learning to listen to the blues because the blues is a cultural matrix for AMERICA. The narrative intentionally imitates a blues session, with the café proprietor Bailey as the "maestro" introducing different "players" to sing their blues in the "Jam" and ending with "The Wrap." Virginia C. Fowler observes that "the novel's prevailing spirit is the spirit of the blues" (122). Moreover, way stations are the perfect places for the blacks to sing their blues. The blues is understood by Baker as a cultural "matrix" for African American literature, which is a "point of ceaseless input and output, a web of intersecting, crisscrossing impulse always in productive transit" (3). Baker's understanding of the blues is "to summon the black blues singer at the railway junction ... [which] is marked by transience" (7). Jeff Todd Tilton also comments that the blues are way-stations for people to rest: "within the larger story cycle, each song, sometimes each stanza, becomes a way-station, a temporary resolution that will give the singer strength to begin again" (2). Both the textual and the spatial connections with the blues allows the way stations to be places defying definition and generating possibilities. Thus, serving various despondent customers at the way station, Bailey learns to truly listen to the customers' stories/blues ("listen below the surface" [33]).

Naylor intentionally places Bailey's stories at the beginning and Stanley's at the end as bookends for *Bailey's Café*, because "they are antithetical to each

other” (Naylor, “A Conversation” 150). Thus, as Bailey’s foil, Stanley’s personal transformation reinforces Bailey’s transformation. Stanley is a man stubbornly believes in AMERICA because he comes from a truly AMERICAN family. With a mixed Yuma-Black-Mexican ethnic root, the family obtains financial success in a deserted land. However, Stanley’s failed job-seeking attempt disillusion his American ideal. Ready to commit suicide with a loaded gun, he comes to the street. At Eve’s place, Stanley is offered a nickname, “Miss Maple,” and a job, housekeeping. Wearing women’s clothes, he is able to recreate himself into a free man.

Thanks to the café, Bailey the maestro develops empathy through his narratives and in-depth listening (Bender and Hoefel 194). He sees through Stanley’s womanly attire and acknowledges his manhood. Defending Stanley’s sexuality in front of other customers, “Miss Maple isn’t a homosexual” (163), Bailey praises Stanley of his intelligence, courage, strength and freedom. Stanley creatively uses a white woman’s name to enter advertising jingles contests, eventually making a fortune that allows him to go back to America and start a company. The way stations grant him freedom to develop creative skills that a black man needs to survive in America, or in Di Loreto’s words, Stanley grows to be a “modern trickster” (571). Appreciating Bailey’s friendship and understanding, Stanley celebrates his leaving with Bailey with a heartening toast. Listening to Stanley’s blues, Bailey understands that beneath the seemingly disappointing reality, AMERICA is still a possibility for their race, as long as they know how to find it.

Incorporation with America

Sometimes, one needs to leave home so as to find home. As the café is the blues site celebrating multiplicity, the meaning of border is weakened, particularly in Bailey’s transnational relationship with Gabe, a white Russian Jew. On the liminal street, Gabe’s pawnshop is a timeless gateway for the Jews in exile. Thus, Naylor appropriates the racial significance of the blues site and reaches a broader sense of transcendence — racial and national transcendence. Nevertheless, it is this transnational relationship that allows Bailey to reintegrate with America.

Gabe is like Bailey’s father in many ways. Both of them like to talk, and both of them share common interests in topics such as “politics, the war, and that bloodbath over in Europe” (144). Although these conversations are not always friendly but they form a deeper connection and mutual understanding through their sharing. Furthermore, Gabe helps Bailey transcend his ethnic and national limits

by involving him in a concerted effort of assisting Mariam, a teenage girl from a Beta Israel village in Ethiopia that observes some strict Jewish rules. Because of her pre-marital pregnancy, she is exiled from her religious community. Finding her in a backstreet in Addis Ababa, Gabe guides her to the borderless street, so Gabe's action challenges the border of America and grants Bailey with a transnational perspective.

Standing in the transnational shelter, Bailey sees the limit of America as a nation actually lies in the problematic construction of "nation" itself. America, like many other countries, has its faults and defects. The then newly-founded country Israel is given as an example. When Gabe tries to send Mariam and her baby son George to Israel, he finds out that Israel has not recognized the Ethiopian sect of Judaism so Mariam and George are denied entrance. Thus, all nations have limits and restrictions. Eventually, it is America that gives them hope. A black rabbi named Matthews, who "has other Falasha people in his congregation up there in Harlem" (222), is willing to offer them shelter and help. Then, after Mariam dies, Bailey is able to find a quality boys' shelter in New York for the orphaned baby George. Thus, Bailey gradually comes to an understanding that America is still the land of hope for many.

Through his friendships with Stanley and Gabe, Bailey is able to listen to the blues, and listen to what lies underneath these people's pains — hope. When baby George is born, the street reaches its celebratory pinnacle, bringing everybody on the street together to celebrate life and hope. Gabe and Miss Maple dance with Bailey, forming a cross-racial brotherhood at the moment. The ceremony brings Bailey's rites of passage to an integrating moment, as Bailey transforms from listening to singing the blues. Furthermore, he gains the power of the blues through his narration of *Bailey's Café*, as he is the "maestro" (1). As Albert Murray puts it, "[t]he blues lyrics ... express ... his [the singer's] sense of humor as well as his sense of ambiguity and his sense of possibility" (208). Thus, the power of the blues is an affirmative and transcendental power. The blues narrative ends with the chorus in "The Wrap", embedding significance of both positivity and possibility, which is in line with the affirmative message of the blues.

As sites of the blues matrix, both the street and the narrative offer space for Bailey to find AMERICA. Baker believes that "the blues matrix — the fluid, mediating vernacular of the New World — enables one to understand that, rather than being a nation of strangers in search of Anglo-male domestication, AMERICA has no strangers" (112). Baker finds that the fluidity and transience of the blues accord with the transcendence of AMERICA. In the blues matrix, African

Americans gains the power of creativity and transcendence; in this matrix, African Americans find home in America. Thus, through Bailey's "singing," he develops a power to dream and transcend, to view AMERICA as a possibility.

However, gaining an understanding that America is still a land of hope does not end Bailey's liminal stage in the café. Since one feature of the blues is ambiguity, Naylor gives an open ending for Bailey, continuing his liminal position as the café proprietor. As "you eventually go back out and resume your life" (221), Bailey would eventually leave the café and integrate himself with America. The narrative of *Bailey's Café* stops on January, 1949. According to Charles E. Wilson, Jr., the novel reflects on a period of transition in American history between World War II and the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that mandated school racial integration (111). Thus, a reasonable speculation is that 1954 would be a good year for Bailey to leave the liminal street and prepare for the coming Civil Rights Movement, carrying on the fight for a better America like a true American.

America is a country built on dreams and ideas, so to be a true American is to be able to dream. Iranian American writer Azar Nafisi believes that "If you believe your country was founded on the actualization of a dream, then an obvious and essential question arises: How can you dream without imagination?" (34) For Nafisi, to be an American is to have the ability to imagine a better possibility rather than accepting the status quo. Thus, Bailey's acquired ability of singing the blues allows him to imagine a better possibility — AMERICA, enabling him to be a true American. It is in the blues matrix where his ethnic identity comes to terms with his national identity, as both the blues and the American national identity require one to be positive and to be transcendental. Thus, through the transformative power of the café as a space of the blues, Bailey is able to see America as a home for him and for his race. Most importantly, home is not a stasis, so is America. African Americans need to transform the current America and make it into AMERICA — a true home for their race and for many.

Nevertheless, America, as both a nation and an ideology, has never been under greater controversy than today. Recently, President Donald Trump signed a controversial executive order banning refugees and travellers from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering America in limited dates, which incites many to criticize the order as "un-American" (Lowry). This incidence might lead one to doubt that the nation's core values have changed, and America is not the America any more. Therefore, reflecting over *Bailey's Café* and other writings on American's national identity and national ideal is more relevant than ever before.

Note

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Marginality and Creative Energy: Reading the Prospect of Post-Colonialism through the Ibis Trilogy

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Abstract Post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and by re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. It achieves its distinct definition through the processes of abrogation and appropriation. According to Bill Ashcroft the act of appropriation in the post-colonial text issues in the embracing of the “marginality as the fabric of social experience” (*The Empire Writes Back* 103). Set against the Opium trade leading to the Opium wars Amitav Ghosh’s Ibis trilogy delves deep into multiple discourses of marginality in dealing with the shared fate and facts in the lives of the motley array of sailors and stowaways, coolies and convicts. Deeti’s shrine (memory-temple) and Neel’s journals (archive) provide Ghosh the sound blend of what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called the “affective” and “analytic” histories. By thus exploring the “unprecedented source of creative energy” (to quote from *The Empire Writes Back*) of the marginalized the Ibis trilogy affirms what Bill Ashcroft in his book *Post-colonial Transformation* has described as the “constructiveness and dialogic energy of the post-colonial imagination” (5). The history of the Ibis connects people from Calcutta to Canton, from Hooghly to Hong Kong and eventually reminds us of the common burden of the past. Ghosh’s fiction, due to the advantages open to it because of its very fictionality can imagine borderless blend of share and care, a blend which the material reality of our times demand so hungrily. If post-colonialism is “a language which grasps the global and the local by understanding of the complexities of imperial relationship” (to quote from *Literature for Our Times: Post-colonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century*) a study of the issue of marginality in the Ibis trilogy is alone sufficient to show that this language of post-colonialism is ever alive as it can endearingly embrace fictionality, historicity, and

material reality by virtue of its inclusive interrogation, immaculate investigation and ingenious imagination.

Key words abrogation; appropriation; marginality; post-colonialism

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Post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and by replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. It achieves its distinct definition through the processes of abrogation and appropriation. According to Bill Ashcroft the act of appropriation in the post-colonial text issues in the embracing of the “marginality as the fabric of social experience” (Ashcroft et al. “Empire” 103). Post-colonial writing explores marginality as an “unprecedented source of creative energy” (Ashcroft et al. “Empire” 12) as the multiple discourses of marginality “intersect in a view of reality which supersedes the geometric distinction of centre and margin and replaces it with a sense of the complex, interweaving, and syncretic accretion of experience” (Ashcroft et al. “Empire” 103). Post-colonial theorists have acknowledged Amitav Ghosh’s work as “a crucial index of many of the themes, issues, and problematics that constitute the multidimensional nature of the post-colonial predicament today” (Mondal 2). Ghosh’s Ibis trilogy delves deep into the multiple discourses of marginality through the exploration of the shared facts and fates of the lives of the motley array of sailors and stowaways, coolies and convicts.

Marginalization and Post-colonialism

The term marginality was first used in the sociological field in an essay by Robert Park in 1928. It was described as an experience resulting from the overlapping involvement of different cultures in the lives of immigrants. In a similar vein critics like Stonequist have applied the term to understand the experience of hybrid identities hovering between two cultures. According to Janet Macini Billson, the term marginality is used in the social context in three ways: first, to refer to cultural marginality, the dilemmas of cross-cultural identities and assimilation; the second to social marginality, describing the tensions which occur when an individual is restricted from belonging to a positive reference group; and the third to structural marginality which includes social, political and economic exclusion. The term has acquired growing and extensive significance over the years as it has been closely attached to the concept of power, a concept that has evolved over the

years theoretically as well as practically. The Ibis trilogy, forging ahead with the historical power-play around opium reveals that while the habit of taking opium can make one powerless, the habit of trading in opium can make others powerful. In the Epilogue to the trilogy Ghosh says that he has actually embarked on the “task of writing a history of the Ibis community” (Ghosh, “Flood” 608). A number of reviewers of the trilogy have noted Ghosh’s works as an attempt to capture a whole panorama of world history through the wrong end of the telescope. This so called wrong end is the post-colonial perspective of looking at history, of interpreting it, deconstructing it, defamiliarizing it. Human history, as we all know, is at its root, the continuous struggle over power. Those who have attained power at various stages of civilization have always gained easy access to resources and advantages which have normally been denied to those who have been powerless. The latter have been inevitably marginalized. The worst manifestation of the exertion of power and the extreme form of marginalization are seen in the politics of exclusion. Modern thinkers like Fisher therefore argue that the term exclusion has the potential to provide wider scope for analyzing the complex dynamics behind the situation of disadvantage. Marginalization or exclusion is thus not confined to mere lack of means as people can be excluded on the basis of their race, gender and age etc. Any study of marginality thus unveils the poor plight of the oppressed and thereby explores the power structure that is responsible for creating or manufacturing the conditions of the centre and the margin; both of which, however, are not fixed or permanent. The issue of marginality, when considered in the perspective of post-colonialism, exposes both the power and the resistance to it in the colonial discourse. Because marginality can take various forms and multiple expressions, any post-colonial attempt to write of the marginalized from the point of view of the marginalized inevitably shows why post-colonial criticism, in moving with the times has become, in the words of Graham Huggan, “irresistibly plural: multi-sited, multilingual, cross-disciplinary” (Huggan 17).

The Memorial to the Marginal

Quite expectedly, the Ibis trilogy starts its journey with a subaltern woman Deeti who is unlettered and uneducated. An unfortunate widow, she escapes from the pyre with the help of a low-caste chamar Kalua and together they come to the Ibis. This sati woman, rescued by another marginalized man slowly attains an identity as well as voice of her own. She feels that she is “free now to create a new destiny” (Ghosh, “Sea” 178). With experiences and maturity Deeti’s sensibility and sensitivity so much change that the care for her own sibling is gradually globalized

into care for “ship-siblings—*jahaz-bhais and jahaz-bahens*” (Ghosh, “Sea” 356). She can courageously ask for “a little izzat, some respect” (Ghosh, “Sea” 414) for her shipmates. Deeti experiences too much of too many things so that when she ultimately settles in Mauritius she is left with magnificent memories. This subaltern woman cannot write but she can paint because “being unlettered, it was the only way she could keep track of her memories” (Ghosh, “River” 10). Deeti thus builds up a memory-temple by painting the incidents and persons associated with the Ibis. Her experiences coupled with her extraordinary visionary power manifest themselves in her paintings. Deeti’s memory-temple complements Neel’s archive which is an indispensable source of information in the trilogy. Neel, who had once been the zamindar of Raskhali, was accused of forgery by Mr. Burnham and was ordered to be transported to the penal settlement on the Mauritius Islands. After his escape Neel starts recording his experiences in his journals. His fascination with words, love of reading and extraordinary empathy bring him closer to a wide variety of persons and officials — from the opium-addicted Ah Fatt to Compton and his teacher, from the old lama in the Buddhist monastery of Honam Island to Commissioner Lin. He listens to everyone, reads everything and carefully preserves everything. A notable example of his will to preserve is evident in his invaluable collection of Robin Chinnery’s letters and paintings sent to Paulette. Such wide range of acquaintances adequately enriches his narrative, his ‘archive’, the debt to which Ghosh acknowledges in the Epilogue to the Ibis trilogy.

Resistance amidst Transformation

Not only Deeti, almost all the other marginalized figures in the trilogy undergo change or transformation which is one of the important motifs in post-colonial writing. In *River of Smoke* Nob Kissin asks Neel, “But ships and the sea have a way of changing people, would you not say, Anil babu?” (Ghosh, “River” 396). When the world around changes rapidly under the opium wars Compton says, “Everything has changed. To survive I too will have to change” (Ghosh, “Flood” 533). A champion of free trade and commerce, Mr. Burnham tells others that very soon “China will be changed beyond recognition,” a change which will be their ‘legacy to history’ (Ghosh, “Flood” 437). China does change beyond recognition as at the end of *River of Smoke* Neel, while showing Deeti a picture of the Fanquiltown in flames tells her, “The place was changed beyond recognition...no one would believe that such a place had ever existed” (Ghosh, “River” 552-3). Time changes, lives change and change the identities. Such changes in the lives of the others empower them emotionally, intellectually or economically. Neel works as

Anil Kumar Munshi under Seth Bahmram, reading journals and collecting news, a job that empowers him immensely. Baboo Nob Kissim, once a temple's custodian of Nabadwip, realized very early that the ship Ibis would be the instrument of his transformation. Shireen Modi the devoted wife becomes 'a different person' and witnesses a 'new incarnation of herself' (Ghosh, "Flood" 267) when she arrives in China and wholeheartedly bestows her affection on Ah Fatt, son of her husband's mistress in Canton. Deeti-like she shows resistance to tradition in her decision to marry Zadig Bey: "I will probably never again be able to enter a Fire Temple: that will be the hardest part. But no one can take my faith from me, can they? And may be, in a few years, people will forget" (Ghosh, "Flood" 523). With the flow of capital, of lives, of identity, flows Ghosh's narrative and his-stories. Zachary Reid who had once been a ship's carpenter eventually becomes a partner in Burnham's firm by developing in himself sheer selfishness and hypocrisy, by becoming "a perfect embodiment of the kali-yuga" (Ghosh, "Flood" 606), a "man of the times... a man who wants more and more and more and more; a man who does not know the meaning of 'enough'" (Ghosh, "Flood" 582).

Everyone of the marginalized characters has his/her own story in the trilogy — from Havilder Kesri Singh to the fifer boy Dicky, from little Raju to Asha-didi, from Munia to the dying subaltern woman Sarju who on her deathbed on the Ibis privately gives Deeti seeds of the best Banaras poppy and says, "I want to be remembered in your shrine" (Ghosh, "Sea" 451) — as a result of which there are "so much telling and so many tongues" (Ghosh, "Sea" 400). Amidst so many stories the discourses or rather counter-discourses of resistance are strategically projected. When Havilder Kesri Singh gets disillusioned with war and asks Baboo Nob Kissin the real cause and achievement of so much death and destruction, the latter replies that in the epoch of apocalypse, the kaliyuga, the English have come to China and to Hindustan because "these two lands are so populous that if their greed is aroused they can consume the whole world" (Ghosh, "Flood" 509). This religious man believes that today "the great devouring" has begun by the English. Colonial machinery is thus expressed through post-colonial metaphor. To take another example, when Paulette forbids Freddie to smoke opium by saying that he will become a slave to it, Freddie says, "Opium will not make you slave... It is they who are slaves, ne? Slaves to money, profit?" (Ghosh, "Flood" 473) Again, in *Sea of Poppies* when the judge pronounces his sentence, it becomes "laughably obvious" to Neel that "the English themselves... were exempt from the law" as it was the English "who had become the world's new Brahmins" (Ghosh, "Sea" 239). This post-colonial discourse comes from a man who is out and out marginalized,

a situation that his wife Malati aptly describes as “nothing to preserve and nothing to lose” (Ghosh, “Sea” 269). We can recall at this point the Ethiopian proverb that James Scott uses as an epigraph to his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*: “When the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts”. Scott elaborately discusses the resistant discourses lying in the rumors, gossips, folktales, songs, gestures, and jokes of the victims of subordination, all of which constitute the “hidden transcript” — “a social space in which offstage dissent to the official transcript of power relations may be voiced” (Scott 85, XI).

The examples above are evidence of resistance lying in the ‘hidden transcript’ that the creative historian Amitav Ghosh decodes and places together with the official/public transcript voiced by persons like Mr. Burnham who emphatically declares that the opium war will be fought for “freeing a quarter of mankind from tyranny; of bestowing on the people of China the gift of liberty that the British Empire has already conferred on all those parts of the globe that it has conquered and subjugated” (Ghosh, “Flood” 436). People like Bahram Modi are easily deluded by such diverting discourses and enjoy them thoroughly but there are moments of his awareness of the truth like when Burnham talks about the process of persuasion of the British parliament to interfere in the free trade Bahram cries out, “Democracy is a wonderful thing... It is a marvelous tamasha that keeps the common people busy so that men like ourselves can take care of all matters of importance. I hope one day India will also be able to enjoy these advantages — and china too, of course” (Ghosh, “River” 404). When the Chamber of Commerce strategically refuses to protect Mr. Innes, Bahram, with a smile, thinks that there is no “language like the English for turning lies into legalisms” (Ghosh, “River” 349). The narrative thus subtly shows the interconnections and intersections of discourse, language, truth and power; all of which are potential sites of conflict and contradiction. This breeds plurality and multiplicity as a result of which the narrative thrust of the Ibis trilogy is centrifugal, not centripetal. Ghosh the creative historian shows us how post-colonial theory and practice can “embrace difference and absence as material signs of power rather than negation, of freedom not subjugation, of creativity not limitation” (Ashcroft et al. “Empire” 166).

Conclusion

Deeti’s shrine (memory-temple) and Neel’s archive provide Ghosh a sound blend of what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called “affective” and “analytic” histories which together “constitute the condition of possibility for the globalization of capital

across diverse, porous, and conflicting histories of human belongings” (Chakrabarty 71). Ghosh has been able to do this because literary writing or writing in the marginal space between literature and history can “authorize otherwise forbidden entries into the intellectual battlefield of European thought” (Ashcroft 99). Critics like Arjun Appadurai have therefore emphasized the immense power of the imagination of literary writing which can contribute to the “construction of social and moral maps for their readers” (Appadurai 58). Ato Quayson, like Appadurai insists on the transformative capacity of literary imagination which can envision alternative realities, identities, histories and thus can have profound effects on the interpretation of social facts. By exploring the creative energy of the marginalized, by liberating the marginalized as an appropriated subject, the Ibis trilogy affirms what Bill Ashcroft in his book *Post-colonial Transformation* has described as the “constructiveness and dialogic energy of the post-colonial imagination” (Ashcroft 5). The history of the Ibis connects people from Calcutta to Canton, from Hooghly to Hong Kong as it lays bare the power, pain and the glory of an earlier era of globalization when people started coming into contact and collision, shaping histories all the while through their pettiness, their privations and their passions. Ghosh’s fiction, due to the advantages open to it because of its very fictionality can imagine borderless blend of share and care, a blend which the material reality of our times demand so hungrily. When Neel witnesses the exploit of the British fleet he realizes for the first time in his life that such battlefields shape our identity: “He understood then why Shias commemorate the Battle of Kerbala every year: it was an acknowledgement that just as the earth splits apart at certain moments, to create monumental upheavals that forever change the terrain, so too do time and history” (Ghosh, “Flood” 388). Clearly the emphasis is on change, fluidity, heightened understanding and increased awareness beyond the boundaries of binaries, forgetting the fences of fixities. If Post-colonial studies in the twenty-first century exhibits, to use Ashcroft’s memorable metaphor, a “convivial critical democracy” (Ashcroft et al. “Literature” xvii) then Ghosh’s Ibis trilogy is truly a celebration of this. If post-colonialism is a language which grasps the global and the local by understanding the complexities of imperial relationship, a study of the issue of marginality in the Ibis trilogy is alone sufficient to show that this language of post-colonialism is ever alive as it can endearingly embrace fictionality, historicity, and material reality by virtue of its inclusive interrogation, immaculate investigation and ingenious imagination.

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Narration of the Displaced: A Study of Female Characters in the Novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*

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Abstract Identity crisis is the new affair down the literary mannerism. And to extenuate it further female characters portrayed as the one displaced from their location. A woman when marries goes to stay with the in-laws which itself is socially acknowledged dislocation of the female self. In the novel *Island of Thousand Mirrors* there are prominent female characters that belong to war torn Sri Lankan society and their experiences during a certain time frame are implausible. Yashodhara, Saraswati and Lanka are the characters that draw attention because Yashodhara and Lanka are sisters of Sinhalese descent whereas Saraswati is a Tamil who later joins the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Consequently, this paper looks intensively into their lives and how they have evolved into some new identity and had cast away their previous lives. There is impact of violence as well, in their lives as they change their demeanor. Female dislocation is itself a transgression and the death of two female characters in Sri Lanka at the end of the novel relates to the journey and the affinity they have pulled through being apart.

Key words female; identity; dislocation; Sri Lanka and migration

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Introduction

“Migration and diaspora are results of a multitude of social, political, and economic circumstances which, in turn, result in social, economic, and cultural marginalization” (de Zepknek 2). Migration in Sri Lanka is a kind of reaction against the Sri Lankan Civil War that will be discussed along with the aspects of socially, politically and economically displaced people in this paper and it will further discuss the aspect of dislocation/migration¹ of women in Sri Lanka. Referring to female in general, it is not a mere sex distinguished from male, but it is an identity that a woman possesses. Calling a woman female, relates her to the dominance of patriarchy. Profound writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir and Elaine Showalter have written much about the female. Feminists were of the view that they should be given equal rights and annihilate discrimination and objectification. It was later that writers like Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir dealt with the narration of female identity and experiences in fiction as well as in non-fiction, but the genesis of feminism could be the book *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) by Wollstonecraft and it was probably first of its kind that talked about “rights of women.” This paper will thus study women and their “identity crisis,” after dislocation, therefore feminism will be at the background and females as individuals dealing with their “identity crisis” will be foregrounded.

Discussing the Displaced

Dislocation or the concept of space is common to all expatriates but in a post war country like Sri Lanka where the Civil War lasted for twenty-six years, there is nothing much to discuss about the female domination in particular because the novel does not discuss the women from the aspect of marginalization of them but one can speak about the predicament that the women have experienced through the war. The novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* (2013) by Nayomi Munaweera is about Sri Lankan women, characters, Yashodhara, Lanka² and Saraswati who are born during Civil War in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Civil War is the result of continuous conflict between its two ethnic communities the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The reason for the conflict is that the Sri Lankan Sinhala through the government (which was Sinhalese as well) tried to suppress the Tamils. But the Tamil revolt against the government and their political ideologies (which upheld Sinhalese speaking nation and citizenship) in the form of an insurgent group called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (from now on as LTTE). The LTTE declared genocide against the government when their demand for a separate Tamil state in

Sri Lanka is rejected.

The story begins in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, where a Sinhalese family resides. The children in the family grow along with the Tamil tenant's children. Yashodhara and Lanka are those children who grow up with Shiva (the Tamil boy who was the son of the tenant). But after the death of Yashodhara's and Lanka's uncle in the Sinhala-Tamil riot, Yashodhara and Lanka's mother Visaka insist their father Nisan to leave the country. Their parents are not resilient enough to sustain the Civil War (1986-2009). Amidst the Civil War they leave for America. Visaka's brother Ananda is already settled in America and so they all move in with him and his wife.

On the other hand, in Sri Lanka Saraswati a Tamil girl who stays with her family in the north of the island is enjoying her school unaffected by the war until the LTTE took her two brothers Krishna and Balram as soldiers. Saraswati aspires to become a teacher when she grows up. But her childhood dream is disrupted when she is raped by the soldiers of the Sri Lankan army. After such barbarism, Saraswati too is taken away from her family by the LTTE. Later she joins the "Black Tigers" a special squad and becomes a suicide bomber. She is sent to Colombo after being trained to murder a Tamil leader. In the process of murdering the politician, Saraswati and Lanka also die. Lanka was on her way back home to meet Yashodhara who was leaving for America the same day. Lanka and Saraswati met just before the explosion. They looked into each other and as Saraswati was dressed like a pregnant woman, Lanka felt sympathy towards her as she thought that Saraswati was pregnant and yet she had to travel in a crowded bus. They both felt a kind connect. And few minutes later they both explode. Both were there for a cause, Saraswati for the cause of Tamil nation and Lanka for the cause of war stricken children.

The author brings out the nostalgia towards their homeland which both the sisters feel while in America. Yashodhara and Lanka while growing up in America often missed the sea. Whenever they used to go swimming they miss the salt water. They both grow up missing their homeland, sea water and curries. At one instance Yashodhara imagines about the island

we remember the ocean that we have lost. Those morning walks down to the beach. Our father's swimming lessons inherited from the fishermen of his own youth. We are used to water without cease, water that stretches warm and endless to the very rim of the world. This glorified bathtub cannot satisfy our water desire. We swim to exhaustion, lungs threatening to burst, our

just developing biceps and thighs quaking, sinews stretched and lengthened.
(Munaweera 106)

Later in the novel Yashodhara becomes a book worm indulging in literature. She marries Siddharta a Sinhalese boy settled in America but she is not happy with her marriage. Even Lanka after getting tired of her illicit relationship with his art teacher in college decides to go back to Sri Lanka. There again she meets the Tamil boy Shiva who is a selfless doctor ready to offer help and medication to all the Sri Lankans irrespective of their ethnicity. Yashodhara after her unsuccessful marriage decides to join Lanka in Sri Lanka for some time. When she reaches Sri Lanka she got surprised to see Shiva and shocked to notice the intimacy between Lanka and Shiva, because as children, she and Shiva have shared the same bond as her sister Lanka. But after losing Lanka, (in the explosion mentioned above) Shiva and Yashodhara both are distressed and choose to move to America. It is the first time for Shiva but it is the second time for Yashodhara, for in childhood she did not know what losing a dear one can cause but now the immense pain caused by the death of a sister in this time of war has made her an escapist by choice. Consequently, in the novel, escapism causes dislocation in all the characters. There is a lot of dislocation brought out through the characters which intensifies their sense of uncertainty and disorientation towards their belongingness arising out of conflicting situations.

Sri Lanka is an island nation and so the author has used water as a very impactful cause to illustrate the sense of belongingness missed by the characters once they are away from home. The above-mentioned extract from the novel necessitate us to believe that the author wants its reader to understand the emphasis of water and the displacement caused by the unavailability of the “sea” and “well” in the three protagonists. Saraswati feels wistful towards the “well” she had in the backyard of her home “Sometimes when I am by myself I miss the taste of the “well” at home. Water filtered through our small piece of earth, its exact mineral consistency, the taste of home. It is the only thing I allow myself to remember” (180), Yashodhara and Saraswati cannot appreciate the coolness of swimming pool in America but they long for the ocean where they used to go with their father in Sri Lanka. Even Lanka’s room that Yashodhara describes “hers, phosphorus blue-green, the shade of deep water just beyond the surf so that entering her room felt like falling into the lair of a mermaid” (Munaweera 180). Yashodhara’s fondness towards sea compels her to name her daughter Samudhra (meaning ocean). Water is very close to all the characters and in the novel, we find water as lively and as a

benefactor who soothe those protagonists in times of “identity crises.” Lanka had drawn pictures of sea in her room and Saraswati connects herself to the well at her home. In the novel Pacific ocean is also mentioned which reminds both the sisters of the salt water that they have separated from.

There is always dislocation that prevails in their mind even when they are not where they belong to. They are no less than tourist, they are “only a different shade of tourist, darker skinned than these boiled lobster Europeans and for this reason perhaps more deserving of scorn This obscene sun worship is a habit we have picked up in colder climes” (Munaweera 197). They call themselves tourist; because they cannot identify themselves with the American culture and the Americans look at them as visitors.

These are cross cultural influences that determine their hybridity. It is obvious that “cultural contacts are leading to such a hybridization of behavioral modes across the world that it is difficult to identify any “local culture” as being genuinely, with a timeless quality” (Sen 154). In many ways, Lanka is more audacious than her sister she tries to gather what she had left behind in her childhood days in Sri Lanka because she always asks Yashodhara to narrate stories from the island and though the two places (America and Sri Lanka) share nothing at all in common she travels back to Sri Lanka and wants a new life there. Whereas Yashodhara inextricably tied by culture and tradition, even in a foreign land and this restrains her to enact preposterous. In Lanka perhaps the past (the time spent in Sri Lanka) had sustained which now brings her back to the past, the place where her forefathers rest. Sri Lanka has now become even more terrifying but she wants to teach the children who are now orphan and disabled from the brutality of the war. She wants to help and wants to transform the idea of ethnic divide into unity between the two cultures. Lanka loved colors; art was her identity a way of holding herself in times of beseeches. She is ready to sell her studio in America and provide assistance to the war-torn children. Her cultural identity is churned though she never identified herself with America because at some instance she calls herself tourist.

Identity in Crisis: Yashodhara, Lanka and Saraswati

Habermas gave two kinds of identity crisis: “legitimation crisis” where a person is unable to fulfill its commitments made by one and “motivational crisis” where a person struggles to make commitments (407-408). If we refer to the characters like Yashodhara and Saraswati, they both are cases of legitimation crisis as individuals. Yashodhara as a wife made commitments towards his husband

Siddharth because of the social stigma, but left him after knowing about his husband's extra-marital affair. Her identity as a wife vanished and her subconscious did not allow her to continue her identity as a wife. There is "identity crisis," certainly but there is cultural "identity crisis" as well. Sinhalese culture is full of tradition and values and leaving a husband is yet another step away from the social and cultural entity. For Yashodhara "The legitimate crisis or identity conflict refers to the problem of the multiply defined self whose definitions have become incompatible. It is characterized by severe difficulty in reconciling the demands that follow from diverse commitments, the situation makes it impossible to choose and act consistently with all the person's values and goals" (Baumeister 408). As for Saraswati the "legitimation crisis" begins when she is raped. She no longer considers herself a part of the society nor does her parents try to explain constraint of the social dogma. And her identity as any other Tamil girl is lost. But she fights back for her new identity as a LTTE. The cultural constraints for both Yashodhara and Saraswati leads to "becoming" from "being."

Cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything that is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to continuous "play" of history, culture and power. (Hall 225).

The three protagonists show the "becoming" and "being" because their existing individuality is affected by their present. Saraswati, Yashodhara and Lanka are women who have lost their previous individual self and that individual self was their identity and now they have a new cloak of a different identity (from Sri Lankan to American and again back to Sri Lankan and Saraswati from a timid Tamil girl to a LTTE). There is identity crisis that wanders in the characters. Identity at the same time confuses; "Erikson (1956) described a unidimensional continuum ranging from firm identity to confused or diffused identity" (Baumeister 407). But voluntarily or unwillingly they all accept the nature of their transformation which is confusing. Identity is perhaps "when we shift our attention from the notion of being identical to oneself to that of sharing an identity with others of a particular group (which is the form the idea of social identity very often takes), the complexity increases further" (Sen XII). Distressed by the idea of having plural identity has to

do much with woman and especially a woman who belongs to an Indian society³ or perhaps to a Sri Lankan society⁴ as well. Shashi Deshpandey's *That Long Silence* is an example for a conventional Indian woman Jaya whose life is surrounded by her husband and children and later when she is fed up of the routine life of waiting for his husband's return from work and children coming back from school she goes into introspection about her dual identity. She was an individual in her father's house but after marriage she has lost her individuality. "Jaya's journey towards a well-defined self-hood is mired in the labyrinthine mazes of societal pressures, ..." [Sic] (Gaur 179). A female after being a human is a woman and then daughter, wife, sister and mother. And she has to follow some orthodox etiquette in order to be socially blessed and not to be baptized as a slut, or prostitute. Even it varies from culture to culture.

"Identity is a process, identity is split" (Hall 16). Even Saraswati weaved a new identity for herself she was no longer a timid Tamil girl but a ferocious "Tiger" who was determinant to give everything the war demanded. She wanted a new land for her fellow Tamils. She no longer longed for her home. In the novel, she says "but it is useless. I inhabit a different world now and there are no bridges between that place and this" (Munaweera 184). This clearly shows the displacement she has gone through, she has forgotten all the emancipation and love she got back at home instead she says "My true family is back at camp, these are strangers I knew in a different time" (Munaweera 184).

In the case of Lanka and Yashodhara they migrated to U.S. when they were quite young so they do not remember the ethno-national concept. Here ethno-nationalism relates to the divide between Tamils and Sinhala, both the ethnic communities of Sri Lanka were at war when they left the country. The Sinhalese called themselves legitimate owners of the land and the Tamils said the land equally belongs to them for their kings had won battles to get this piece of land. But in America they are only known as south Asian. They are identified as Americans or migrants and the problem with South Asian people abroad is that often people identify all the South Asians to be similar. People cannot recognize a Sri Lankan as Sri Lankan, an Indian as Indian or a Bangladeshi as a Bangladeshi. "These Indians. Always cooking with their onions ... She thinks we are Indians. We have never even been to India!..." (Munaweera 110) This problem is prominent all around the globe. Even, for us it is grim to identify a Korean, Japanese or Chinese respectively. In India people of north-east are look-alike to Nepali or Bhutani. In the novel, likewise these Sri Lankans are identified as Indians. Lanka and Yashodhara's family is identified as Indians. There is reference to the curry

and spices that are found in the island nation which are substituted by American grocery. Substituting spinach in place of gotukola (green leaves known as Brahmi in India) brown sugar for jaggery and olive oil in place of coconut oil (Munaweera 109). These are cultural constraints, and a remorse in using American good because they feel hollow and yearning desire for their traditional foods only found in their own culture (specifically in South Asia). Migrants have individual identities shaped in their motherland before their exodus. And will have personal affections to the culture, and from there will come conveyers of the “ethno-national torch” (Sheffer 152). And this action brings out their stand in foreign land and their patriotism for their homeland (Sheffer 152). The novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* too has a torch bearer of ethno-nationalism; he is Yashodhara’s uncle Ananda who is also an immigrant. He shouts at his colleague and friends “what are you going to do? Sit here and let these Tiger bastards take the country?” (Munaweera 120). Lanka is more attracted towards her motherland her shift in identity from a Sri Lankan to American has not yet gripped her. Unlike a leader (Anand) but like a devotee (Saraswati) she is still able to connect to the island. Yashodhara is disparate her sister because her inclination towards Sri Lanka is not as much as her sister. Hitherto both sisters awaken the cultural identity through their attributes in the new country by recognizing themselves as Sri Lankan and delivering remorse over American food and accent. Saraswati too through herself ascertains her culture of Tamil nationalism.

There is a tint of cultural identity even in the novels like *Shadow lines* (1988) by Amitav Ghosh and *Anil’s Ghost* (2011) by Michael Ondaatjee. Somehow Tha’mma and Ila (in *The Shadow Lines*) and Anil Tiserra (protagonist of *Anil’s Ghost*) share the same circumstances. As Tha’mma is always concerned about ‘boundaries’ and her inclination towards Bangladesh (Tha’mma was born in Bangladesh but after partition she stays in India with her younger generations), Anil not concerned about her new home (abroad) and Ila who has always been away from India cannot identify herself with this country. They all have spent major part of their lives in some distinct land. There is alienation in all the three characters. Culturally, Ila does not find herself as part of the Indian culture because of the constraints of tradition which restricts her from exercising her own free will. Cultural identity is a global term used impeccably to show where one belongs to in other words its part of Orientalism. Orientalism is nothing but being identified (as an orient) by the west. This identification is particular in the case of west towards the east. The ‘cultural gap’ is perhaps the reason the west looks down upon the east. Here Anil belongs to the west, her identity is differently extrapolated and other

people who are victims of the Civil War are differently recognized or say they are fighting for their identity. Even Lanka and Yashodhara are cultural mulattos just like Anil and Ila. Anil goes to Sri Lanka for investigation regarding civil war, she is also Sri Lankan and unlike the sisters she is not very nostalgic about the space she was once in.

Space of Their Own

It is demography, the role of space which ultra-actively pushes an individual to escalate from the place one lives in and jump into another. There is no empty space one looks to fill with things instead every individual has a space where he/she escapes from. Displacement/dislocation from the view-point of a migrant or immigrant there is a narrow line of differentiation. This differentiation in the case of Saraswati is distant because she does not move from one country to another but from one space to the other. She lived in the house and now she lives in the camp. 'House' is a space much spoken of by Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space* (1994). He writes "The house, quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavor to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value" [Sic] (Bachelard 3). But after moving from house she goes to the camp and she becomes a migrator (there is displacement of space). Earlier discussion on space revolves around women's confinement to a relative area where she is comfortable. But the aspect of space in relation to environment challenges the very existence. Geo-criticism evokes this aspect of existence. Robert T. Tally in his book *Geo-criticism and Spatial Literary Studies* brings the idea of space in relation to geography which influences personal identity. If one belongs to one country and moves to another country for persistence, even then the person looks back to his/her own country. Such men's lives are suspended and they indulge in "identity crisis." "Today in the wake of such postcolonial and critical theory, we are less surprised to hear that maps, or any other "scientific" device or discourse, for that matter are also ideological, that they are embedded within and often serve the interests of structures of power or domination" (Tally 4). Other than the ideology that pertains within the nation every individual has their own assortment of ideologies. But even respective ideologies of each country are prejudiced by its tradition and culture. And culture/tradition leaves a mark of individuality which is perhaps deferred or in predicament when talked about cultural identity.

Saraswati, from her parent's home, goes to a space where she finds an identity

for herself and later when she is about to explode she has a grin in her face. This grin is not of remorse but of pride that she will be remembered by all and she could make her Tamil parents proud that she became a martyr and there was nothing more she could give them. Being a woman and a Tamil woman is more resilient. In Sri Lanka Tamils were always outsiders or say aliens. They are descendants of South Indian Tamils who came as laborers to work on tea plantations during British rule. This is one of the reasons why Tamils are not counted as Sri Lankans. Tamils flourished during the British rule, which is one of the reasons for the conflict between the two. With the ethnic divide in Sri Lanka the people there considered themselves as Indian Tamils and Sinhalese. "Indian Tamils" is a label provided by the Sinhalese so that Tamils could always feel that they do not belong to the island. And formation of the LTTE is one major reason behind the Tamil displacement in the land of the Lions. And now Tigers (LTTE) were ready to make a place/space for themselves. So, this new space (the LTTE camp) gave her a destiny an aim and recognition. And as Foucault says, the home is "utopia" (4) for Saraswati, "the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space" (Foucault 3) though it exists because the society wants it to exist but for her it is not real it is just not homely. Stated above how she calls it not hers even though she once belonged to them (her parents). Even Yashodhara finds herself displaced when she is on the Air Lanka flight and she tells "I am drowning in this sensation of dislocation when La comes. I bury my face in her shoulder and weep my jet-lagged exhaustion, my rage at what I have left behind" (Munaweera 188). She has been carried by plane from one space to another and she gets nostalgic. The flight itself is a "space" where there are people of different origin and hybridity. There is a concept of "here" and "there." Earlier when Yashodhara was in America it was "here" and Sri Lanka was "there" whereas when she was in the flight she was suspended and now when she is in Sri Lanka this island country has become "here" and America has become "there." Lanka and Saraswati never lamented for the things they left behind in the places where they lived before, after entering into the new space, but Yashodhara had that 'turning back' once a while. The reason may be she was too emotional to counter the past and face its angst. So she wanted to go, even though her subconscious mind asked her to stay. The space where Yashodhara used to hide with Shiva the Tamil boy was also a 'space' which she never wanted to share with anyone. It provided her content.

Migration: An Aspect of Nation/Nationalism

Saraswati, Lanka and Yashodhara all are migrants. Among them few contrived and few self-imposed. Saraswati is a Tamil migrant fighting a war against the Sinhalese in the Sinhalese nation whereas Lanka and Yashodhara are immigrants or migrants in America. They had left their country as children with their parents to escape violence. All the three characters have displacement and relocation in common. But the type or level is different. Saraswati wants nation for herself and her Tamil community for survival. And the other two left their nation for survival. The contradictory aspect of nation is critical. Anderson defines nation as “it is an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). But a nation’s existence does not make a nation nationalist instead “... Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Anderson 6). The Tamil community wanted a separate state for them which would help them provide a politically secure community. Therefore, Saraswati was a nationalist to the Tamils. The being or becoming a nationalist has nothing to do with nation. Lanka and Yashodhara are liberals they do not discriminate between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The reason behind this could be that they had not witnessed the conflict and its brutality but Saraswati has in person witnessed and experienced the grossness of war. In the context of “us” and the “outsiders” Said says “just beyond the frontier between “us” and “outsiders” is the perilous territory of not-belonging: that is to where... in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons” (177). Tamils are the “outsiders” whereas the Sinhalese are the “us.” But in the novel *Island of Thousand Mirrors* all are “outsiders” Saraswati, Yashodhara and Lanka respectively. Saraswati is outsider to the Sinhalese Yashodhara and Lanka are outsiders to the Americans. But there is a cultural difference. Yashodhara and Lanka despite being part of American community do not forget Sri Lanka they always miss their homeland. But for Saraswati, it is like fighting for a separate nation while residing inside a different nation. She is displaced in her Land⁵ Sri Lanka which is historically contested whether it actually belongs to the Tamils or not. Dislocation also causes language barrier or rather dislocation crosses language barrier. It becomes easy to adopt a different tongue and it is also important for existence in an unknown land. Since you are an immigrant consequently you should learn the new tongue.

Bhabha, in *Location of Culture* quotes C. Lefort who says that language is enigmatic even though one understands others language it does not mean that he/

she has adopted their tradition, sometimes it is like Caliban. Prospero the king who lives in an island with his daughter Miranda has taken Caliban as his slave and even taught him his own language. Bhabha's theory of "adopt" "adept" and "adapt" is appropriate with Saraswati. Even Saraswati tames her tongue to learn Sinhalese to defend herself and deceive the Sinhalese; it takes a year for her to master the foreign tongue. "I am taught Sinhala. I let its ugliness take over my tongue" (Munaweera 186). "The Colombo shopkeepers speak Sinhala at me and I reply effortlessly and smile back at them. I own their tongue as if I have been brought up in this smoky, crowded city instead of in quiet northern places" (Munaweera 188). Therefore, it is necessary to learn the language of dominance or power. Every nation has a language and the Language Act of 1956 in Sri Lanka brought out the envious nature of the language that could cause destruction. Anagarika Dharmapala who was a Buddhist revivalist chose the path of non-secularity. Though Dharmapala, revived Buddhism, he injected nationalism into the minds of Sinhalese which resulted in hostility towards the Tamils. Regarding them as "eternal enemy" (Weiss 24). Religion should never become a nationalistic fervor, because it will lead to bloodshed and communal riots. This is one instance to prove that language is a barrier to immigrants but there are instances that prove that language helps in the development of a nation if it is not looked up as a tool for nationalism. Just because Joseph II ⁶ decided to change the "language of the state" to German from Latin it does not mean at all that he has changed the language to show any kind of dictatorship, but for advancement of his people. German as a language was widely used and communication was a lot easier for connecting his entire realm (Anderson 84-85).

Conclusion

Displacement conceptualizes the movement of individuals as immigrants across the globe. The cultural constraints forbid the identity to play and hence leads to identity crisis. The sense of identity gets fractured as a result of diasporic displacement and nostalgia acts as the only soothing agent. Saraswati, Lanka and Yashodhara all are victims to the vicious dislocation. All the more shocking is that, Yashodhara's family considered as Indians and not as Sri Lankan's because they cook curries with a variety of spices. "even when we are clear about how we want to see ourselves, we may still have difficulty in being able to persuade others to see us in just that way ... Our freedom to assert our personal identities can sometimes be extraordinarily limited in the eyes of others, no matter how we see ourselves" (Sen 6). Even as Americans they are dislocated. In the epilogue of the novel the writer

says Yashodhara is fear full and does not want her daughter to know where they come from and so Yashodhara tells Samudhra stories of Rama, Sita and Ravana which have no association with their culture except Ravana who is God in Sri Lanka. Saraswati's rape by the soldiers was an act of war crime. Her body was spoilt but her mind was more troubled than her body perhaps. She was somehow devastated, and so she almost felt dumb. Her mind had a shift and she could not locate herself anymore to the society so she gave up, in order locate herself once again. Dislocation of females starts at home and the females through their feminine self-generate a long list of identities or rather plural identities.

Notes

1. I am using dislocation and migration together because migration to my knowledge is also dislocation because a person travels and shifts from one place to another and re-settles in a new social political and economic environment.
2. Lanka is the name of a protagonist taken from Sri Lanka but readers may find Sri Lanka written as Lanka in some texts. But here Lanka is the name of the character and nowhere throughout the paper has Sri Lanka been written as Lanka.
3. In Indian society a female has to abide by certain norms set by the family and society. She has to become an obedient daughter and wife. She cannot impose ideas she has to only adhere to the ideology set by the family and society. Therefore, Indian culture is very different from the west.
4. Sri Lankan society is not widely different from Indian society. Women are treated secondary. They have to be quiet and composed and listen to their counterparts.
5. Her land that is Saraswati's land is Sri Lanka. She is a Tamil she stays in the north with her family but Tamils in Sri Lanka are not the aborigines or original settlers therefore they are regarded as outsiders. So her place of displacement could be contradictory. Histoy says that sri Lanka is the land of lions that is Sinhala and not the Tamils.
6. He was the German King from 1765 to 1790.

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