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# Forum for World Literature Studies

Vol.9, No.2, June 2017

Special Thematic Issue

Ethical Literary Criticism and World Literature

Edited by Yang Gexin



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# 世界文学研究论坛

2017 年第 2 期

学术专刊

文学伦理学批评与世界文学

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# Ethical Literary Criticism and Ethical Narratology: An Interview with Prof. Wolfgang G. Müller

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**Abstract** Wolfgang G. Müller (Email: womu@gmx.de) is retired Professor of English Literature at the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena. He received his academic education at the universities of Mainz, Manchester, and Leicester. He taught as professor at the universities of Mainz, Leicester and Jena. Book-length publications include *Rilke's "Neue Gedichte"* (1971), *The Lyric Self* (1979), *The Political Speech in Shakespeare* (1979), *Theory of Style* (1981), *English and Scottish Balladry* (1983), *Dialogue und Conversational Culture in the Renaissance* (2004), *Edition of Shakespeare's Hamlet* (2005), *Don Quixote's Intermedial Afterlives* (2010) and *Genre in Shakespeare* (2015). He published articles on rhetoric in Renaissance literature, the tradition of Don Quixote in English literature, narratology, intertextuality, iconicity, the letter as a genre, ethics in literature and detective fiction. At present he runs a research group on the flaneur in English and American literature. On behalf of *Forum for World Literature Studies*, Dr. Zhang Tian, when attending the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ethical Literary Criticism, Comparative Literature and World Literature (Oct., 2016, Tartu, Estonia), interviewed Professor Wolfgang G. Müller on the issues concerning ethical literary criticism and ethical narratology.

**Key words** ethical literary criticism; ethical narratology; ethics

**Author** **Zhang Tian**, Ph. D. in literature, is Associate Professor of English at Central China Normal University (Wuhan 430079, China), member of editorial board of two journals: *Sino-American Journal of Comparative Literature* and *Journal for University Students at Central China Normal University*. Her current academic research mainly focuses on ethical literary criticism, Jewish American literature and cultural studies. Tian is the visiting scholar in Department of English

at Harvard University (2014–2015). Her monograph *Saul Bellow's Urban Writing* is forthcoming in 2017. She is recipient of awards and scholarships from the National Social Science Fund of China, Chinese Scholarship Council, Hubei Provincial Ministry of Education, Hubei Foreign Literature Association and Central China Normal University.

**Zhang Tian (hereafter Zhang):** Dear Professor Müller, thank you so much for accepting our invitation to have this interview. It was so great to see you in Tartu in the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ethical Literary Criticism, Comparative Literature and World Literature. I even remembered the place of our first meeting in Estonia. It was at the Tallinn bus station when a group of us, scholars from China, were expecting the coach. And eventually we saw you. It was such a pre-destined meeting for us all. As far as I know, you have been a very regular and active participant in the conferences of the International Association for Ethical Literary Criticism initiated by Prof. Nie Zhenzhao. I have attended your insightful and fascinating keynote speeches in South Korea and this time in Estonia. In your keynote speech in the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ethical Literary Criticism, Comparative Literature and World Literature, you gave a speech on “Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: The Tragic Hero as an Ethical Problem Case.” At the very beginning, you mentioned the neglect of making a distinction between morality and ethics because the value constructions to be achieved in literature are difficult to be specifically named and presented in literary works. What is your opinion on this distinction between morality and ethics? What is the significance of this distinction in the construction of ethical literary criticism?

**Wolfgang G. Müller (hereafter Müller):** There is a distinction to be made between moral philosophy, which is concerned with naming and defining moral values and principles, and ethical philosophy, which is on a higher level of intellectual pursuit in that it investigates the problematic nature of values and ethical judgments. Literature has a greater affinity with ethics than with morality, because it does not simply convey moral values in terms of didactic messages, but sensitizes the reader to the problematic nature of life and its ethical concerns and values by way of fictional constructions, which show us, in Aristotle’s terms, a world not as it is — not a mere copy of reality — but reality as it could be. Literature thus mediates a sense of similarity and can create a basis for empathy and stimulate the intellect.

**Zhang:** When we talk about Shakespeare, character flaw is an unavoidable topic. You also mentioned that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is an extremely sensitive character. Do you think character flaw matters much in the character’s value construction?

**Müller:** The characters in fictional works, especially the protagonists, usually are not one-dimensional and they tend to be involved in situations in which whatever they do may be wrong. From life we know that decision-making may involve us in unsolvable dilemmas. So the presentation of a character in a difficult situation may alert us to the ethical tensions and contradictions inherent in performing actions. Character-flaw as an error of judgment, Aristotle's *hamartia*, is essential to Greek tragedy. Oedipus' killing of his father and his marrying his mother are unintentional, but his hubris in trying to defy the prophecy of the oracle is a flaw, causing his downfall. Shakespeare's Hamlet is a more difficult case. He regards his indecisiveness, his incapacity to commit premeditated murder — demanded of him as part of a revenge action which he considers necessary — as a personal flaw and blames himself for not acting decisively. But it is the very fact that he does not kill his enemy, when the best opportunity is offering itself to him in the prayer-scene, which establishes him as an ethical character. This raises the whole issue of ethics and action. Goethe said in an aphorism that only the meditating man can afford a pure conscience, while an acting man is conscienceless. Thus literature stimulates us to think about basic ethical issues, without explicitly teaching us morality.

**Zhang:** Quite thought-provokingly, you discussed the comic dimension of *Hamlet*. You proposed the question of whether the comic episodes and scenes have an ethical impact. You provided the tentative answer that Hamlet's use of world-play and irony and his playing the role of the fool are means of asserting freedom in an oppressive and corrupt social world.

**Müller:** Your finely phrased question contains the answer. Humour and wit always call in doubt established values and beliefs and thus may be an assertion of freedom of thought. That is why dictators and tyrants hate wit and satire. We must be aware that *Hamlet* is, whatever else the play may be, a tragedy of resistance with the protagonist spied upon and persecuted by murderous intriguers. Since open resistance would cause his destruction under the political conditions at the Danish court, he resorts to playing the role of the fool, which he comes to enjoy and perform in a masterly manner. In view of the corrupt society at the Danish court, Hamlet's ridicule of its representatives (Claudius, Polonius, Osric) is an assertion of his freedom and simultaneously an emphasis on ethical values, which deviate from those of the rotten court. Moreover the comic dimension makes the tragedy more theatrical. We know from Shakespeare's whole dramatic works and especially from the comedies that he loves word-play and wit. One of his wittiest characters is Sir John Falstaff in *Henry IV*, whose wit also has a subversive dimension. It is a sign

of Shakespeare's greatness as a dramatist that Hamlet as his most complex tragic character is also one of his most intelligent and wittiest figures, matched only by Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

**Zhang:** What do you think makes the ethical substance of a tragedy and how does it achieve ethical cognition in a way which differs from ethical cognition in philosophical works?

**Müller:** We can distinguish between two kinds of cognition, philosophical and literary cognition. Philosophical cognition is the result logical operations (definition and syllogism). Literary cognition is the result of the fictional representation of human actions and issues. This difference of the two fields of cognitive activity is particularly striking in the realm of ethics. Whatever the central issues in Shakespeare's tragedies may be, for instance revenge in *Hamlet* or jealousy in *Othello* or murder in *Macbeth*, the ethical aspect never is absent. *Hamlet* presents the problems of a protagonist who is not capable of planning and perpetrating murder, although he is aware that his enemy has deserved death. Nie speaks of the killing taboo in this context. *Othello* shows on the stage how a perfidious villain may manipulate a basically honest man into killing the person he loves most in the world. And *Macbeth* represents the process of the moral destruction of a man who gives way to the temptation of murdering for ambition. Since all these works present images of moral and immoral action in physically conceived situations on the stage, they have a greater effect on the mind and soul of readers and spectators than any philosophical arguments dealing with revenge, love, friendship and moral, political and legal problems.

**Zhang:** In your article "An Ethical Narratology" which appeared in *Ethics in Culture: the Dissemination of Values through Literature and Other Media* (2008), you discussed several strategies of mediating moral values and alerting readers to moral issues and problems through narration. Can you elaborate on that? And what is the difference between your approach and that of James Phelan?

**Müller:** This article explores the ethical potential of narrative technique for the representation of moral issues and problems, concentrating on basic forms of narration. Authorial fiction with its omniscient narrator, for instance Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, seems to have an explicit way of dealing with moral problems which is, however, frequently qualified by the use of irony and a restriction of the narrator's reliability. Even though the authorial narrator presents himself/herself as the dispenser of ethical values, ethical-critical work remains to be done

by the attentive reader with regard to the representation of plot and character and a qualified judgment of virtuous and vicious conduct and their many transitional forms. As distinct from authorial fiction, point-of-view narration usually goes without explicit moral comment. It privileges the perspective of individual characters, referring to them in the third person, i.e. without making them narrators. Point-of-view fiction brings the reader close to the consciousness of fictional characters, which may cover the whole range from good-hearted to criminal and sinful figures. By way of empathy the reader gets access to the processes occurring in the minds of the characters and thus he/she may experience ethical crises or ethical errors in a more immediate form. There are even examples like Patricia Highsmith's crime novels in which the consistent use of free indirect style — the stylistic hallmark of point-of-view fiction — makes the reader share the thought processes of pathological murderers in what are ethically and aesthetically most extraordinary reading experiences. Point-of-view fiction is to be distinguished from I-narration, which latter confronts the reader with a fictional character who narrates experiences made or witnessed from the subjective position of the storyteller. An example of the high ethical potential of I-narration is the case of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, whose protagonist accuses himself for committing a sin, when he actually does a highly good deed in helping the black boy Jim on his way to freedom. For the reader it is an intellectually and ethically exciting experience to have a different image of a character in morally challenging situations than the character himself. Complex individual stances and attitudes can be represented by the voice of an I-narrator in an unfiltered way. The wealth of forms of self-presentation and of interaction between the narrating and reading self have given first-person narration its high position within the sphere of ethical narration. An outstanding critic investigating first-person narration is undoubtedly James Phelan, whose rhetorical approach I admire and try to extend to other forms of narration. It must be stated, however, that Chinese narratologists like Nie Zhenzhao and Shang Biwu have lately caught up with international developments.

**Zhang:** Prof. Müller, most of your publications are focused on literature of the Renaissance period. Do you think ethical narratology and ethical preferences have different reflections in literary works in different periods?

**Müller:** I can only give some hints. A novel like Ian McEwan's *The Children's Act*, which deals with the conflict between the professional and the human aspect of a lawyer's case, has an ethical basis which differs strongly from that of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, in which questions of decency, moderation and honesty are at stake.

The rise of ethical criticism has occurred most significantly in view of narrative fiction. In this context it is definitely necessary to include the historical aspect. There are, for instance, normative periods like the Age of Reason which believe in a set of values to be shared by all reasonable members of a community. In so far Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* is the product of the Enlightenment. One tendency of the nineteenth century was to place ethical dilemmas in the consciousness of the individual, for which purpose new methods of narrative introspection were used. Ethical preferences are not only historically conditioned; they are also dependent on genre. In this context it would be an intriguing question to ask if lyric poetry is open to ethical criticism. (See, for instance, Hank Lazer in *Forum for World Literature Studies* 8, 2016) One could for instance ask if the ethical component is stronger in the romantic poet William Wordsworth or in his contemporary John Keats.

**Zhang:** You gave a very exact and wonderful case study in your article "From Homer's *Odyssey* to Joyce's *Ulysses*: Theory and Practice of an Ethical Narratology" in *Arcadia* 50 (2015). Your notion of ethical narratology seems to be more integrated. Aesthetics, as you mentioned, together with ethics can be interdependent in narrative art. What draws your attention to this?

**Müller:** My point is, for instance, that there are aspects of human relationships and of life which can be represented in the novel, as a consequence of specific narrative devices, aspects that are inaccessible to other forms of discourse, for instance philosophy. It is the aesthetical nature of literature and specifically the novel which unlocks new realms of experience. In so far the ethical dimension is in the novel inseparably related to the aesthetical dimension. To put it extremely, aesthetics gives birth to ethics in the novel. To repeat it once more, since it is so important, it is literature and the novel in particular which makes possible ethical cognition in ways which are closed to the intellectual sciences. This seems to have been noticed by philosophers like Peter Bieri, Michael Hampe and Gottfried Gabriel at the beginning of our century, who covetously glance at the cognitive-ethical potential contained in literature and increasingly draw on literary and especially narrative examples within their philosophical argument. In the sphere of the novel the newly discovered sisterhood of ethics and aesthetics has produced most significant results, at which philosophers can only marvel. As a contemporary author who increasingly merges philosophy and literature with emphasis on ethical issues J. M. Coetzee can be referred to, for instance in his novel *Elizabeth Costello* (1999).

**Zhang:** Ethical dilemma has been a key term in Prof. Nie's construction of ethical

literary criticism. Do you think ethical dilemma is another way to describe what you mentioned above “the ethical substance of a tragedy ? ”

**Müller:** Yes, I share Professor Nie’s emphasis on ethical dilemma as a key term in ethical criticism. Literature may confront us with irreconcilable oppositions, in which whatever the protagonist does may be wrong, in which there may be collisions of laws and duties and volitions. The problem of decision-making with all its implications is one of the central ethical issues in literature. In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* the protagonist has to cope with the problem of revenge, which he regards as an imperative duty, but which he is on account of his individual disposition incapable of performing. Thus he preserves his moral integrity in a desperate situation. On a less tragic level the protagonist of Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot, faces the problem of saving her family’s hopeless financial situation by marrying the apparently impeccable heir to the estate, whom she yet does not trust. Here it is her moral intuition which causes her to make the right decision. In both cases it is the respective authors’ superior art that gives moral profile to the issue in question. At this point is necessary once more to emphasize that literature can only be ethically relevant, if it offers compositional equivalents which express ethical substance in complex forms. There is an interdependence of form and meaning on the ethical level, too. A formally modest or aesthetically reductive work can never possess ethical depth.

**Zhang:** Ethical literary criticism has been achieving noticeable attention from home and abroad. What’s your opinion on ethical literary criticism?

**Müller:** I believe that ethical literary criticism is one of the most important departures in recent critical work and that its relevance is universal. Ethical criticism does not simply try to sift out meanings and messages from literary works. If we could detach ethical messages from literary works, the works would be dispensable. It is of central importance to realize that the ethical substance is part and parcel of the work’s whole as an aesthetical construct. The aesthetical and spiritual complexity and iridescence of the work of art is a prerequisite for its ethical significance.

**Zhang:** Prof. Müller, thank you once again for this interview.

**Müller:** Thank you for asking such good questions.

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# Interrogating Modernity: Hermann Broch's Post-Romanticism

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**Abstract** The present article makes an original and wide-ranging contribution to scholarship by examining, for the first time comprehensively and in the context of what the author defines as the “post-romantic syndrome,” Hermann Broch’s position vis-à-vis Romanticism. The focus is on Broch’s trilogy *The Sleepwalkers*, but the article also considers the relevant essays on Hofmannsthal, on kitsch, and on myth and late style.

**Key words** Hermann Broch; post-romanticism; modernity

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Broch and Romanticism has by now become almost a subfield of research.<sup>1</sup> Yet we still lack a comprehensive account of how Broch positioned himself, through immersion but also distantiation, vis-à-vis Romanticism, searching for a specific location within what one must see as a *post-romantic* intellectual and artistic landscape. If anything, Broch’s work, above all his magisterial novel *The Sleepwalkers*, presents a full-fledged interwar embodiment of post-romanticism as what we can call a complex discursive formation, “complex” in the sense that it self-consciously orientates itself towards, and involves, another, past (yet far from

<sup>1</sup> See, most recently, the articles collected in *Hermann Broch und die Romantik*, ed. Doren Wohlleben and Paul Michael Lützeler, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014.

dead) discursive formation (the “historic” Romanticism of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century). But how should one define post-romanticism, and why should one seek to interpret Broch’s novel as an iteration of this particular discursive formation? To begin to answer these questions, in the first part of this article I make the case for the significance of post-romanticism and its differentiation from both Romanticism and aesthetic and ideological formations such as neo-romanticism;<sup>1</sup> doing so amounts to recovering and articulating a previously under-reflected cultural phenomenon that could best be captured as a syndrome of both returning to, but also fleeing from, Romanticism, of acknowledging its ineluctable and continuous presence, but also, in the same breath, critiquing it through numerous creative gestures of realignment and (dis)continuation. In the second part I proceed to detail and substantiate this phenomenon through closer examination of Broch’s major novel, and also with reference to some of his essays. I endeavor to establish the semantic compass of the appellation “romantic” in the essays and in the trilogy, to analyze the way in which the trilogy parodies and undermines two central Romantic motifs, and, finally, to position *The Sleepwalkers* in the wider framework of a post-romantic interrogation of modernity that highlights the problematic confluence of rationality and irrationality since the Reformation.

### 1. The Post-Romantic Syndrome

Romanticism occupied a unique place in the cultural formation of modernity. Not only did Romanticism enjoy — like so many artistic currents from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards — a resurrection in periods of imitation and emulation in literature, music, and the arts; unlike all later currents, Romanticism became an attitude, a wider cultural reality, one might even say, a life-style. It branched out with equal force into philosophy, the sciences, and social theory; it established its own code of social intercourse and intimacy, its own privileged heroes and villains, in short — a whole philosophy and ideology of culture. Aesthetic and cultural modernity, most of us would agree today, began with the Romantics, even though its roots lay in an earlier defense of the autonomy of reason.

Romanticism’s relations with modernity are much more complex than the picture painted by those asserting it as a promoter of the process of modernization (the tenor of Broch’s major essays on human rights and international relations fits this pattern of offering conservative solutions to major political challenges). In

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1 For consistency, I only capitalize Romanticism (“proper”/“historic”), leaving derivatives that signal a specific (later) relationship with Romanticism (e.g. post-romanticism, neo-romanticism, etc.) uncapitalized.

Germany and Britain, this ambiguous dynamic is particularly evident: the very same generation of poets and thinkers that began by embracing the French Revolution ended up bitterly opposing its ideals; in Germany, some of the major Romantics went as far as undertaking religious conversions (to Catholicism) to seal their change of heart and mind. It would thus be much fairer to describe the stance of Romanticism towards modernity as profoundly contradictory. Romanticism did not always play into the process of modernization; much of its energy was spent doubting, criticizing, or simply rejecting it. The French Revolution, with its radical agenda, served not as the cause but as the point of crystallization; latent social and intellectual forces gathered and focused on an event of enormous momentum, thus revealing the entire spectrum of reactions to modernity, from passionate embrace to uncompromised resistance.

This is certainly nothing new for students of Romanticism. What needs to be emphasized instead is the fact that Romanticism, with its dual attitude towards the Revolution, presented a laboratory case of reaction towards modernity. In a way, Romanticism was the first such reaction that would display the whole gamut of enthusiasms and critique. Behind the particular responses to the Enlightenment belief in the universality of reason embodied in the acts of the Revolution, there lurks a paradigm-setting instance of responding to modernity. It is this paradigmatic nature of the Romantic attitude to modernity and the Revolution that has not been sufficiently recognized before. Pulling out the implications of this paradigm-setting process is an indispensable step in appreciating the longevity of post-romanticism in the multitude of forms and guises it took long after the Romantic movement itself had ceased to exist. Romanticism, one may suggest, was an examination of modernity, a check on its performance, an inspection of its resources. Such an examination was bound to take place with renewed vigour in different circumstances every time a society and a culture would find themselves at a critical juncture in their modern history. Being an evolving and “incomplete” process, as Habermas has called it,<sup>1</sup> modernity is subject to these regular performance tests throughout its history. Because Romanticism was historically the first such critical assessment, the features and the parameters of the test, as well as the mode of formulating its questions (and often also the answers), would be drawn upon and would resurface in an ever-changing fashion every time modernity would be subjected to such an examination. This continuous after-life of the Romantic intellectual legacy, at a time when Romantic responses to the new social and cultural agendas would no longer

1 Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity — an incomplete project,” *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto, 1985) 3-15.

do, constitutes the essence of the post-romantic syndrome. To put it in today's terms, checking on the performance of modernity has proven to be intimately dependent on mobilizing and carrying forward the arguments and the style of argumentation — at times in the guise of severe critique — worked out in the various strains of Romanticism.

Let me dwell at this point a little bit on the word “syndrome” that is so central to the title of this article. There are at least two likely objections to this term: a) that it naturalizes rather than historicizes the phenomenon I am discussing; and b) related to this: that it is turning the phenomenon into some kind of clinical predisposition to illness, evil, or other undesirable conditions. “Syn-drome” comes from the Greek *syn* “with” and *dromos* “a race”; running; race-course; or even “a public walk.” The verb, *syndromein*, means “running together,” “meeting,” or “running along with,” or “following close.” The noun, then, has accrued the meaning of somebody or something that runs along but maybe still just behind something or somebody else. In other words, a response that is not late in coming, but also a set of features that occur simultaneously and characterize a particular phenomenon, usually seen as some kind of “abnormality.” This brief etymological excursus is needed in order to demonstrate that at its very origin the term “syndrome” has a diachronic dimension built into it: “following close,” “unfailingly appearing just behind” something. I thus insist that writing about a “syndrome” does not naturalize the phenomenon, as it actually allows us to follow the curves of the race, with our eyes fixed on the run and the response of the chaser. This is exactly what we do when we interpret Romanticism and post-romanticism as discourses that represent responses to modernity in its historical evolution — but also as discursive formations characteristic of modernity and tracing its dynamics as an integral part of it. To some extent, Marx captures this — although in negative terms and from premises I do not entirely share — when he writes in the *Grundrisse* that “The bourgeois viewpoint has never advanced beyond this antithesis between itself and this romantic viewpoint, and therefore the latter will accompany it [i.e. the bourgeois viewpoint] as legitimate antithesis up to its blessed end.”<sup>1</sup>

What is more, I deliberately choose to speak of “*post-romanticism*,” thus placing the emphasis on the notion of distance, transformation and non-identity vis-à-vis Romanticism, rather than of, say, “*neo-romanticism*,” which both narrows down the scope to literature and the arts, excluding sociology and political and

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1 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973) 162.

economic thought,<sup>1</sup> and also — equally unacceptable — stresses repetition and identity through imitation and emulation.

Still, what about the likely reservation that “syndrome” is redolent of disease, of an unhealthy condition that is dormantly available and awaiting actualization? This impression is further corroborated by the resilient link produced in scholarship between Romanticism and Nazism, in the case of Germany. Indeed, there has been a long tradition in seeking and locating the longevity of Romanticism and its supposedly baleful impact precisely and solely in Germany. One has to re-examine this connection and rethink this bond that seems so deeply entrenched. There are two crucial implications to asserting, as I do, that Romanticism and post-romanticism are evolving responses to modernity: one is that Germany cannot be singled out as the sole target of analysis, and as the only host tissue in which post-romanticism recurred; rather, the intimate link between modernity and post-romanticism can be observed across the cultural, ideological, and geographic divide, and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the examples of this article are drawn almost exclusively from Austria and, later, from the work of a transnational exilic community in the US, but we encounter different manifestations of post-romanticism also in the intellectual and artistic life of France, the Soviet Union, and other countries (as I briefly demonstrate below). In a sense, the geographical distribution needn’t even matter: what is really at stake is the pervasive nature of the post-romantic syndrome that permeates modernity at each critical juncture of its evolution. The second implication, going back to the *Urszene* of Romanticism responding to the French Revolution in ways that set the parameters for future responses — both for and against — is that post-romanticism should not be seen as linked exclusively to Conservatism and the Right, as has been the case for so long. In equal measure, albeit in a more complicated fashion, it was also linked to Left (usually Leninist or social-democratic and reformist) thinking and action, a connection that has so far remained largely unexplored. Thus the wider target of our concern with post-romanticism as a complex discursive formation must become the double misconception that post-Romanticism is a specific German malaise, and that it was nurtured by an exclusive alliance with Conservatism and the Right. In the present article, I seek to address the first of these misconceptions, focusing on Left post-romanticism elsewhere in my work.

But if this is the case, the word “syndrome” warrants rethinking, in the sense

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1 For a still rare interpretation of post-romanticism (and not just of Romanticism) that extends beyond the domain of literature and the arts, see Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter, Durham, NC and London: Duke UP, 2001.

that it no longer originates in post-romanticism as such but in modernity, whose structural problems post-romantic ideologies come to reflect and engage. I am here evoking the work of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman who, in what is one of his most seminal books, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, made the case for the structural deficiency of modernity, or to use his stronger word, its “pathologies.”<sup>1</sup> It is this deficiency that generates the discourses of post-romanticism which function as a syndrome to the extent to which they accompany, or “follow closely,” modernity at different junctures of its history, by critiquing its various deep-seated problems — sometimes latent, sometimes manifest — from vantage points across the ideological spectrum.

The pattern of drawing on Romanticism in formulating and dealing with twentieth-century concerns could be observed, as I have already suggested, across European cultures and intellectual traditions. In France, Baudelaire and the surrealists re-discovered Romanticism and revived its critical potential.<sup>2</sup> In Italy and Scandinavia, a range of fin-de-siècle writers availed themselves of the Romantic legacy to articulate new anxieties and to diagnose new social problems.<sup>3</sup> In Russia, where in the nineteenth century a string of writers partaking — to a different degree — of the Romantic movement built the national poetic canon (thus fusing indiscernibly Romanticism and the classic), the post-1917 age called into being a state-sponsored stream of “revolutionary romantic” (*revoliutsionnaia romantika*) which was more than a mere artistic current and stood for an entire world view and a broader life-attitude.

In all these countries, the resurrection of the Romantic legacy at various points of their cultural history in the twentieth century was the inevitable result of these societies' complicated dealings with modernity. If there is some distinctiveness in the case of Germany — a distinctiveness that does corroborate the larger pattern of actively reengaging the Romantic intellectual legacy in order to formulate twentieth-century cultural and political agendas — then it must reside in the fact that Romanticism, as the first consistently articulated and large-scale reaction to the philosophical project of modernity, was fused in Germany with the rise of a cultural-political nationalism (Fichte, after all, wrote his *Addresses to the German Nation*

1 See Zygmunt Bauman. *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

2 On this, see Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Die Kritik der Romantik. Der Verdacht der Philosophie gegen die literarische Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989) 39–61, 72–83.

3 This process is explored in Mario Praz's classic study *The Romantic Agony* (1930–33), which was the first broad survey of the after-life of Romanticism in European literature (as such, it also contains some inevitable exaggerations and oversimplifications).

while looking through his window on the French troops marching outside). The larger pattern, however, compels us to recognize the fact that every time the project of modernity was being revised, critiqued, or assessed — and not just in Germany — the spectre and the resources of Romanticism in philosophy, economic thought, sociology, literary theory, historiography, and theology would be revived in turn.

All this accounts for the unique longevity of Romanticism, and for the extraordinarily value-laden notion of Romanticism as a cultural code that stands for a recognizable range of responses to the perpetual crises of modernity. This is why Romanticism became such a contested axiological territory in the twentieth century. In the next and final part of this paper, I attempt to exemplify this working hypothesis by briefly looking at Broch's *The Sleepwalkers* and some of his essays.

## **2. *The Sleepwalkers*: Post-Romantic Iterations**

Hermann Broch's *The Sleepwalkers* is a novel inscribed in the wider framework of post-romantic interrogations of modernity. To situate the novel within the post-romantic syndrome, one needs to go beyond Broch's novelistic work and recognize the fact that the appellation 'romantic' served at his hands as a diagnostic tool with which he was gauging the progress but also the inherent problems of modernity. In this, he was not alone; notable contemporaries, including Carl Schmitt, Georg Lukács, Irving Babbitt, and Eric Voegelin (the latter a fellow exile in the US who had known Broch from their time in Vienna and corresponded with him), were all engaged in thinking about modernity and the turns of Western history through the prism not just of Romanticism as a historically identifiable epoch (albeit one demarcated by chronologically porous boundaries), but also through the lens of Romanticism as a broader category that stands for particular attitudes whose resilience outgrows narrower temporal frames. This multiplying of the meaning of "Romanticism" — both as an appellation of a specific epoch and as a way to refer to larger attitudes that transcend this particular period — is a defining feature of their attempts to define the "romantic." Coming from very different political perspectives, they would see in the "romantic," more often than not, an epitome of the many undesirable aspects of modernity. The "romantic" to them was a synonym of unhealthy overexcitement concealing inactivity, exhaustion, and barrenness, or of hubris and concomitant confusion, engendering a dangerous drift away from reality. Indicatively, Broch, in his long Hofmannsthal essay and in the essays on kitsch and myth, was also at pains to differentiate between Romanticism as a more or less clearly delineated period in cultural history (to which he tends to relate more sanguinely, without accusatory pathos), and Romanticism as shorthand for a bundle

of attitudes that continue to manifest themselves and shape the cultural landscape long after Romanticism proper had come to an end. This latter notion, the “romantic” understood as a lingering cultural force, he was at times prepared to celebrate as wholesome conservatism, while being at others highly critical of it, seeing in it no more than a condensation of imitation, repetition, and voluntary surrender to clichéd tradition. His 1933 essay “Evil in the Value-System of Art” clearly demonstrates this bifurcation. It acknowledges the capacity of Romanticism (interpreted as a demonstrable period in cultural history) to implement art’s continual mindfulness of “what has been,” in other words to remain in touch with the past in a productive manner (Broch’s example here is Romanticism’s turn to the Gothic). What is more, Broch is just as inclined to assign positive value also to Romanticism understood as a time-transcending manifestation of the inherently “irrational and conservative in the work of art,” two essential features that are portable across periods and epochs: “For everything conservative goes back as well to the irrationality of man, and if we call the conservative maintenance of old values and attitudes “Romanticism,” then it is an essential component of this Romanticism to locate its sense of the world not in rational thought but in human feeling, in the intuitions and premonitions of the blood.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, importantly, while Romanticism’s openness to the past is celebrated, in the same essay Broch finds the forward transfer of Romantic *écriture* beyond Romanticism deeply problematic and unacceptable; it is this unholy transfer that issues in kitsch. His example here is the historical novel, and this example is extremely significant given the fact that *The Sleepwalkers* is a narrative about historical processes and events, which, however, Broch vehemently (and successfully) resisted turning into a historical novel. *The Sleepwalkers*, from this perspective, is a novel that deliberately opposes the inertia of imitation (and kitsch) — it is an avowedly *post-* and not *neo-*romantic text. The historical novel as genre, Broch avers,

can be seen as the product of a quite legitimate Romanticism that clings to the values of the past and sees the continuous unfolding of history as a reflection of the eternal. But this completely legitimate and in principle unchangeable attitude of the conservative spirit is discredited the moment it is employed out of personal motivations: for example, in times of irrational and revolutionary

1 Hermann Broch, “Evil in the Value System of Art,” *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age. Six Essays by Hermann Broch*, ed. and trans. John Hargraves (New York: Counterpoint, 2002) 22; the nominative construction, “irrational and conservative in the work of art,” serves as a title (20) for one of the sections of this essay.

turmoil, if it is used as an escape from the irrational, as a flight into the an idyllic historic past, where fixed conventions still applied.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Romanticism is here once again revealingly split between a swathe of historically situated cultural and artistic conventions, on the one hand, and a vehicle for reflecting the “eternal,” on the other. The trouble does not lie in the “eternal” which a particular genre captures at a particular moment in history; the trouble begins when this same genre and its historically circumscribed conventions are employed at a very different historical juncture with the same intention of “reflecting the eternal.” Instead of securing such a reflection, this mechanistic transfer of cultural and artistic conventions ends up producing kitsch, “kitsch-romanticism,” in Broch’s words. A lot of the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Broch suggests in his Hofmannsthal essay, is filled by this “superannuated romanticism,”<sup>2</sup> the Romanticism of repetition, kitsch, and a perfunctory transfer of cultural and artistic conventions beyond their historically and socially circumscribed context. Broch’s essays thus offer clear evidence, through their multiple and often bifurcated use of “Romanticism” of his resolve to approach literature and the wider domains of culture and ideology as a *post-romantic* thinker who insists identifying and preserving not just the energies of sublation but also, arguably even more so, those of discontinuity and breakup within the seemingly unbroken.

In comparison with the essays, the semantic compass of “romantic” in Broch’s trilogy is equally broad yet relatively stable; there is an overlap of three distinctive meanings, all of them with pejorative connotations. The first one thinks the “romantic” as something obsolete, dying out, or, not unlike “kitsch-romanticism” in Broch’s essay “Evil in the Value-System of Art” something that had been turned into mere convention. Examples abound, but here are two characteristic instances, both clustered around Bertrand, the most powerful critic of the “romantic,” especially

1 Ibid. 34.

2 Hermann Broch, “Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time,” *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age. Six Essays by Hermann Broch*, ed. and trans. John Hargraves (New York: Counterpoint, 2002) 174. Hofmannsthal was amongst Broch’s central intellectual preoccupations during his exile; reportedly, he told Egon Vietta that “eighty percent of Hofmannsthal is dated, and twenty percent the best in contemporary German literature” (“ich erinnere mich an seinen Ausspruch, daß achtzig Prozent Hofmannsthal veraltet seien und zwanzig Prozent das beste an gegenwärtiger deutscher Literatur”; cf. “*Sich an den Tod heranpürschen...*” *Hermann Broch und Egon Vietta im Briefwechsel, 1933–1951*, ed. Silvio Vietta and Roberto Rizzo (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012) 290).

in the first part of the trilogy. When Bertrand accompanies Ruzena to her house, he waits a while in the hope to see the light of her room on; since this does not happen, he goes home thinking that he had “paid the romantic [etiquette] its dues” (*fand er, daß er damit für die Romantik genug geleistet worden sei*).<sup>1</sup> The romantic is here cast as no more than a behavioral convention, an ossified etiquette that demands — and receives — lip service. Earlier in the first part, Bertrand points to the existence of “a dead and romantic convention of feeling” (*einer toten und romantischen Gefühlskonvention*; 60) — note his coincidental usage of “dead” and “romantic” in this sentence, an immediate parallel to which he sees in the resilient but dated belief, indeed an insufferable “feudal prejudice” (*das feudale Vorurteil*), that agriculture is morally and existentially superior to trade (61). There can be little doubt that the precise address of this ironic remark is Adam Müller, the Romantic political economist and sociologist who had gained prominence and enjoyed a spectacular revival in Germany and Austria during the years Broch was commencing work on his trilogy. Müller (1779–1829) is best known to historians of German literature for his friendship with Kleist, the co-editorship of *Phöbus*, and his lectures on rhetoric and aesthetics.<sup>2</sup> Müller’s important work in sociology and politics had been discovered by Friedrich Meinecke when the latter was researching his book *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* (“Cosmopolitanism and the National State”) published in 1907. A few years later a vogue of some momentum was already in evidence if one is to judge by the fact that, as Meinecke’s memoirs record, at a Faculty costume party in Freiburg the historian appeared dressed and made up as Adam Müller. Carl Schmitt’s interpreters and commentators might be well advised to keep in mind that *Political Romanticism* is a book that cannot be understood without the background of this vogue around Müller. In attacking Adam Müller, Schmitt had chosen a public figure of the past, whose ideas were gradually gaining the status of common currency in the present; Schmitt’s own argument thus enjoyed the added resonance that Müller’s resurgent popularity would generate.

1 Hermann Broch, *Die Schlafwandler* (Kommentierte Werkausgabe, Vol. 1) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) 91. All further references to Broch’s roman trilogy are to this edition, with page numbers indicated in brackets in the main text.

2 For an outline of Müller’s life and work, see Jakob Baxa, *Adam Müllers Philosophie, Ästhetik und Staatswissenschaft: eine Gedächtnisschrift zu seinem 100. Todestage*, Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1929. In English, see Othmar Spann, *Types of Economic Theory*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Allen and Unwin, 1930) 158–70 (strongly biased in favour of Müller), and, more recently, Richard T. Gray, *Money Matters: Economics and the German Cultural Imagination, 1770–1850*, Seattle: U of Washington P, 2008.

A key feature of Adam Müller's work in economics is his disagreement with Adam Smith on the central issue of wealth and capital. In a number of shorter polemical pieces, notably his essay "Adam Smith" (1808), Müller moved away from his early appreciation of the Scottish economist, arguing that it is not the freely circulating, mobile and portable wealth measured by money and advanced by trade that matters most; rather, it is the possession of land and immobile property that should be considered the true measure of wealth. Not only do land and immobile property offer a better guarantee at a time of crisis; they also concentrate in themselves the invisible added value of time-honoured attachment, family links, and rootedness. The "wealth of nations" is thus made up of tangible property, preferably land and durable infrastructure, and — in the same proportion — of intangible emotional wealth that resides in the awareness of tradition, immutability, and a most valuable community spirit. Material wealth would not be upheld and would not survive without the essential support of the emotional economy of attachment, familiarity, and dedication to a piece of land consecrated by uninterrupted family possession and care.<sup>1</sup>

It is not by chance, then, that Broch, who mentions Adam Müller in what is, on balance, an affirmative manner in his Hofmannsthal essay (and whose early appreciation of Adam Müller's renewed importance in the first quarter of the twentieth century must have been sharpened by Carl Schmitt's publications in *Summa*, the Catholic magazine edited by Franz Blei, to which also Broch contributed articles),<sup>2</sup> should offer his readership the same symbiotic vision of obsolete "romantic" conventions that yokes together a particular "emotional convention" (*Gefühlskonvention*), highlighting loyalty to tradition (for Betrand,

1 Müller's writings on economics are most easily accessible in Adam Müller, *Nationalökonomische Schriften*, ed. Albert Josef Klein, Lörrach: Albert Kern, 1983; see there especially Müller's essays "Adam Smith" (1808), "Vom Nationalkredit" (1810), and "Streit zwischen Glück und Industrie" (1809).

2 The biographical aspects are captured in Wolfgang Graf Vitzthum, "Hermann Broch and Carl Schmitt," *Wege in die Zeitgeschichte. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Gerhard Schulz*, ed. Jürgen Heideking, Gerhard Hufnagel, Franz Knipping (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989) 69-99. While in 1932 Broch inscribes Schmitt an offspring of one of his essays, it is much more consequential to note that Broch's later work on human rights and international relations (which Hannah Arendt deemed at the time overoptimistic and, politically, insufficiently realistic) should be read as a tacit rejection of Schmitt's anti-cosmopolitan blueprint for a new foreign (and domestic) policy that ignores human rights (cf. Paul Michael Lützeler, *Hermann Brochs Kosmopolitismus: Europa, Menschenrechte, Universität* (Vienna: Picus, 2002) 42).

in the meantime, tradition had been degraded to sheer “inertia”: *Trägheit*), with a particular economic habitus that glorifies the solidity of agriculture over the spurious virtues of trade.

The second meaning of “romantic” in the trilogy equates it with something remote from reality, exotic, and escapist. Ruzena, one should not fail to emphasize, is the focal point of this somewhat orientalist version of love portrayed in the first part of the trilogy: hailing from the provinces of Empire, a Bohemian (*eine Böhmin* 57), she is an example of difference, even exoticism, and of escaping into that world of difference. She exemplifies what Bertrand elsewhere in the first part, with reference to economic life, calls the “colonial romantic” (*Kolonialromantik* 32). Yet in a subversive reading against the grain, a reading that constitutes an almost materialist “deconstruction” of this orientalizing of the romantic, Joachim begins to be aware of the phonetic accord between “slave” and “Slav” (*an den Gleichklang von Sklaven und Slaven denken* 63). Ironically, the colonial connotation of “romantic” intersects with the meaning of “romantic” as an obsolete convention and etiquette already discussed above: Joachim’s brother dies in a duel (an increasingly obsolete behavioral convention) with a Pole in Poznań.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, there is a third recognizable meaning of “romantic” in *The Sleepwalkers*: as a marker of inefficiency and failure to perform. Joachim thinks of Bertrand as someone who remains an alien to Ruzena yet manages to do more for her than he himself was able to in the “inertia of his romantic phantasy” (*in der Trägheit seiner romantischen Phantasie* 72). Here a telling connection is produced between inertia and “romantic” (which we have already noted elsewhere in the novel); this connection flies in the face of Novalis’ “Phantasie an die Macht” (“power to the imagination”) as a principle encapsulating romantic activism. The same notion of inefficiency and failure to perform resurfaces in Bertrand’s words to Ruzena: “no one can be helped through the romantic” (*mit Romantik kann man für niemanden sorgen* 88). Thus not only is the romantic at odds with imagination and activism; it also sits uncomfortably with love: two pillars of the Romantic outlook — imagination and love — are undermined and brought down in the same breath.

Having considered the cluster of interlocking meanings that the word “romantic” holds throughout the novel, we need to extend this interpretation of the trilogy by demonstrating Broch’s re-evaluation of two staple Romantic motifs. The

1 For other aspects of the “colonial romantic” in the first part of the trilogy, see Paul Michael’s Lützel, “Hermann Brochs ‘Pasenow oder die Romantik’ und Carl Schmitts ‘Politische Romantik,’” *Hermann Broch und die Romantik*, ed. Doren Wohlleben and Paul Michael Lützel (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014) 107-26, esp. 113-17.

first one is the enduring Romantic motif of insanity, which in the Romantic canon is associated with creativity and prophetic powers. The marginal (the insane) is often cast as excessively talented and endowed with the powers of wisdom and a particularly acute vision. The seemingly marginal is thus assuming a position of centrality that occasions a redrawing of the boundaries within the field of cultural production, to speak in Bordieu's language. In the first part of *The Sleepwalkers*, however, this same motif reappears with a negative valence: the old Pasenow's insanity symbolises nothing but frailty, waning faculties, and inevitable demise.<sup>1</sup> The other staple motif of classic Romanticism, the journey(s) of an (often solely imagined) homecoming, traverses the entire trilogy. Homecoming, and the associated connotations of incessant longing and preoccupation with seeking truth and profound meaning that transcends (everyday) reality, is deeply engrained in the canon of European Romanticism. It is to this motif that Lukács reacts in his *Theory of the Novel* when referring to the post-romantic condition as a condition of transcendental homelessness. Very much in line with Lukács's diagnosis, in Broch's trilogy these homecomings are frustrated; longing (*Sehnsucht*) is contaminated with triviality. The first part charts a trajectory that oscillates between the homely and familiar (*heimatlich*) and the impossibility to identify with it: what begins, for instance, as a journey that is supposed to lead into the world of homeliness and custom (Joachim's visit to a countryside estate) ends up in a realisation of homelessness. Joachim, in this passage which plays several times on the familiar and homely (*heimatlich*), dislocated from the domain of nature (represented by the mother) into that of the affective (represented by Elisabeth),<sup>2</sup> finds himself in the end to be *heimatlos*, as much an alien without a sense of belonging as Bertrand. Homecoming and the sense of alienation and homelessness are never far apart in the trilogy; they appear before the reader often inseparable, deliberately complicating, in a recognisably post-romantic fashion, the foundational myth of natural home and the resulting compulsion and purity of homecoming.

Longing infused with, and eroded by, triviality; homecoming as no more than a painful parody of what was meant to be a transcendental journey; finally,

1 The old Pasenow is modeled, at least in part, on Broch's father who in his final years (he passed away in 1933) "withdrew more and more into the shadowy world of his own eccentricity" (H. F. Broch de Rothermann, *Dear Mrs. Strigl/Liebe Frau Strigl, A Memoir of Hermann Broch by His Son* (New Haven, Conn.: The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 2001) 35; also 3: "Many features of my grandfather turn up again in the elder Pasenow in *The Sleepwalkers*).

2 The original German must be adduced here: "was bei der Mutter bloß natürlich und heimatlich war, das wird bei ihr [Elisabeth — GT] rührend und heimatlich zugleich" (37).

the “eternal” and “even the godly” (*das Ewige... sogar das Göttliche* 380) as mere stations along the road of the sleepwalkers, forever arrested by earthly and material concerns — Esch, at the end of the second part of the trilogy, epitomizes this frustrated homecoming, in which the homeland (*Heimat*) is debased to a place of forced relocation after the couple's money runs out. Dispelling the mythology around homecoming goes hand in hand with undermining the Romantic myth of a spiritually elevated union between man and woman; the concluding line of the second part rings with unmistakable and cruel irony: in his Luxembourg homeland, Esch “would still sometimes beat” his wife, but less and less than before, and “eventually” he stops beating her “altogether” (*Manchmal schlug er sie noch, aber immer weniger und schließlich gar nicht mehr* 381).<sup>1</sup>

The third part reinforces the parodic treatment of the motif of homecoming; and just as at the end of the second part, the unholy marriage of sacred and profane resurfaces once more (in this instance, the idea of home, filled with metaphysic symbolism, is wedded to the sobering notion of money). All this is transposed this time in a light-hearted but no less ironic clef: on a military ticket, Huguenuau had managed to return for free (*kostenlos*) to his Colmar homeland (689). It is this prosaic homecoming with a matching price tag attached to it, suggestive of the trivialisation of a journey supposed to hold the enduring allure of priceless and immaterial gifts, that a post-romantically sceptical Broch so brilliantly stages for his protagonists.

*The Sleepwalkers* is a post-romantic novel not just in the way it treats particular narrative motifs, but — crucially — also in its wider conceptual framework. Broch's modernist prose, as is only too well known, relies on an uneasily experimental infrastructure that accommodates larger essayistic texts addressing the philosophy of history. The overall tenor of these texts is conveyed in Broch's formulaic interpretation of European history as a process of “disintegration of values” (*Wertzerfall*). Romanticism is at the very heart of this conception, as it is from German Romanticism, especially Novalis, that Broch appears to borrow the major reference point, the unique moment in time, from which on the process

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1 On other aspects of Broch's erosion of the Romantic motif of love and intimacy, see Katrin Schneider, “Dornröschen wollte nicht geküsst sein. Romantik und verkehrte Märchenwelt in Hermann Brochs *Die Schlafwandler*,” *Orbis Linguarum*, Vol. 34 (2009): 125-38 (Teksty ofiarowane Profesorowi Feliksowi Przybylakowi).

of disintegration unfolds unstopably.<sup>1</sup> In the draft of a prospectus of the final part of the trilogy written for the publisher and sent to Daniel Brody on 17 March 1932, Broch describes this disintegration as a “four-hundred year old process, which, directed by the rational, dissolved medieval Europe’s Christian-Platonic picture of the world, a grandiose and frightful process, the end of which is marked by the total fragmentation of values, the unleashing of reason with the concurrent advance of all irrationality, the self-laceration of the world in blood and hardship” (my translation — GT).<sup>2</sup> Broch insisted that his trilogy is nothing more and nothing less than a depiction of the final stages of this long course history had been following over the last four centuries. Remarkably, from Broch’s standpoint in 1932, this would backdate — without a shadow of a doubt — the baleful process of disintegration of values (note the pessimistic variation on Nietzsche’s call for “transvaluation of all values”)<sup>3</sup> to the 1530s, the time of the Reformation. In “Christendom, or Europe” (1799), an essay that in many ways reads as the foundational document of a Romantic philosophy of history, Novalis had suggested that it was in the Reformation and the hubris of rationality and science that the roots of subsequent division, strife, and evil had to be sought. Broch goes back to Novalis’ diagnosis (and even, implicitly, to his exaltation of the Middle Ages), he adopts it, but he also perceives contemporary voices, notably that of Lukács. Also in the early 1930s, Lukács, who had opened his earlier *Theory of the Novel* with a sentence that intentionally echoes Novalis’s essay,<sup>4</sup> launches his own version of a philosophy of history that seeks to explain the world of remythologization and rising

1 This considerable debt to Novalis would not prevent Broch from referring to Novalis (and Eichendorf) much later, in 1949, in a letter to Hannah Arendt, as “idiots” (an umbrella appellation for all romantics in this letter); he is also critical of them in his 1950 paper “Einige Bemerkungen zum Problem des Kitsches” (cf. Broch’s letter and Paul Michael Lützeler’s comments, in: Hannah Arendt/Hermann Broch, *Briefwechsel, 1946 bis 1951*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1996) 111, 116 n. 4).

2 “[jenes] vierhundertjährigen Prozesses, der unter der Leitung des Rationalen das christlich-platonische Weltbild des mittelalterlichen Europas auflöte, grandioser und fürchterlicher Prozeß, an dessen Ende die völlige Wertzersplitterung, die Entfesselung der Vernunft mit dem gleichzeitigen Durchbruch aller Irrationalität steht, die Selbstzerfleischung der Welt in Blut und Not” (Hermann Broch/Daniel Brody, *Briefwechsel, 1930–1951*, ed. Bertold Hack and Marietta Kleiß (Frankfurt am Main: Buchhändler-Vereinigung GmbH, 1971) 288–89).

3 In “Evil in the Value-System of Art,” Broch explicitly refers to Nietzsche in the section “The Construct of Values: Overcoming Death.”

4 “Selig sind die Zeiten, für die der Sternenhimmel die Landkarte der gangbaren und zu gehenden Wege und deren Wege das Licht der Sterne erhellt” (Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1920) 9).

totalitarianism. Lukács's interpretation locates the engine of this process in what he calls the "destruction of reason" as the title of his later eponymous book would have it. For Lukács, there can never be too much rationality; a Hegelian at heart, he traces the turns of history through a litmus test that establishes the presence or absence of reason: with reason defeated, myth and irrationality are on the ascend, hurling humanity into an age of darkness. Broch's scenario is subtler. He believes that myth can also carry positive connotations and be undoubtedly of help if a new balance of enlightenment through the creative illusion of art is to be attained. Not unlike Adorno and Horkheimer (also his contemporaries), Broch is mindful of the dialectic of rationality: for him, the "unleashing of reason" and the "advance of all irrationality" (289) are, after all, concomitant occurrences; irrationality can and does thrive under the auspices of rationality.

It is especially significant that Broch's diagnosis of modernity, going back to Novalis and taking the Reformation and the hubris of rationality as its major points of reference, persists beyond *The Sleepwalkers*. A magnificent example is provided by his 1947 essay "The Style of the Mythical Age," written in English and edited by Jean Starr Untermeyer, the translator into English of Broch's *The Death of Virgil*. Here the schism of the Reformation is presented initially in a more nuanced and balanced way. Protestantism is said to have laid the foundations for "the autonomous human soul"; furthermore, the Protestant epoch produced its own "great style," "actually one of the greatest in all history, that of the Dutch school in painting, of Bach and his predecessors in music, of Milton in poetry, and finally of Kant in philosophy, where we find less a style than the building of a Protestant scholasticism."<sup>5</sup> Crucially, "[t]he Protestant revolution was one against the hierarchical concept of myth" (105). And yet, in the end, the schism of the Reformation, just as in *The Sleepwalkers*, is taken to be the first step of an "irrevocable process, lasting from the eighteenth to the twentieth century," in which "the Western structure of values lost its Christian centre" (106).<sup>6</sup> Broch's

5 Broch's essay was first published as "The Style of the Mythical Age. An Introduction to Rachel Bepaloff's 'Iliad'," Rachel Bepaloff, *On the Iliad* (New York: Pantheon, 1947) 9–33. All quotations are from *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age. Six Essays by Hermann Broch*, ed. and trans. John Hargraves (New York: Counterpoint, 2002) here 106 (future references are by page number only, in the main text).

6 The Reformation is also a major reference point in Erich von Kahler's ambitious 1945 book *Man the Measure: A New Approach to History* (Kahler was Broch's close friend during his years of American exile); cf. Helmut Kohlenberger, "Hermann Broch und Erich von Kahler: Vordender der Aporie," *Hermann Brochs literarische Freundschaften*, ed. Endre Kiss, Paul Michael Lützel and Gabriella Rác (Tubingen: Stauffenburg, 2008) 245–60, here 249.

retrospective survey of Western cultural history identifies these 150 years as the age of Romanticism, the last (and still on-going) stage in the fragmentation of values that began with the Reformation (“These one hundred and fifty years of disintegration have produced a certain attitude in man which is called romanticism,” 106). The problem is not as much secularization *per se*, the real problem is the loss of spontaneously available universality, as in romanticism “autonomy becomes absolute” (107). With the disintegration of “general” and “eternal validity,” “validity remains insecure” (107). Accordingly, Romanticism shapes the universe “anew for (and from) every particular case” (107), for myth in its universality is no longer available as a binding framework.<sup>1</sup> In what is once more a clear reference to both Novalis and Lukács, Broch sums up the recurrence of the romantic within modernity as an attitude of involuntary withdrawal into, and homesickness for, the past: “Infected by this ultimate insecurity, the romantic artist acquires the characteristic attitude of longing, longing in particular for the religious unity of the past <...>, the romantic in his homesickness is led back to Catholicism, to find

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1 Eric Voegelin, another student of the endurance of myth in culture and political ideology (and an attentive reader of Novalis), agreed with Broch’s highlighting of the Reformation and Romanticism as key stages in the “decline of myth” (*Mythenverfall*), although Voegelin was adamant that the mysticism of the 14<sup>th</sup> century should be assigned even greater prominence in this process (see Voegelin’s letter of 31 December 1947, on reading Broch’s essay, in the correspondence between the two: “Briefwechsel, 1939–1949” ed. Thomas Hollweck, *Sinn und Form*, No. 2 (2008): 149–74, here 169). Voegelin had himself been exposed to Romantic philosophy, sociology and political economy in Othmar Spann’s seminar at Vienna University (cf. Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia and London: U of Missouri P, 2006) 34). Voegelin’s reading of Novalis is extensive and well documented; at times he sees him as a predecessor of Marx’s dream of a “patriarchally organized society” working “without state pressure” (cf. Voegelin’s letter to Klaus Vondung of 10 February 1978 in Eric Voegelin, *Selected Correspondence, 1950–1984*, ed. Thomas A. Hollweck (Columbia and London: U of Missouri P, 2007) 833); or as a close parallel to Simmel (Eric Voegelin, “The Basic Forms,” Voegelin, *The Theory of Governance and Other Miscellaneous Papers, 1921–1938*, ed. William Petropulos and Gilbert Weiss (Columbia and London: U of Missouri P, 2003) 198); or, finally, as precursor to Hitler’s voluntaristic view of the world (Eric Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, ed. and trans. David Clemens and Brendan Purcell (Columbia and London: U of Missouri P, 1999) 88). Voegelin co-edited a volume featuring an article on Broch and the philosophy of history (R. A. Kann, “Hermann Broch und die Geschichtsphilosophie” *Historica: Studien zum geschichtlichen Denken und Forschen* [Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag Friedrich Engel-Janosis], ed. Hugo Hantsch, Eric Voegelin und Franco Valsecchi (Vienna: Herder, 1965) 37–50); the article is critical of Broch’s portrayal of the Middle Ages.

shelter in the Church” (107; this verdict is strongly reminiscent of *The Sleepwalkers*, where in “Zerfall der Werte” (6) the romantic is also portrayed as “fearing discovery” (*die Erkenntnis fürchtet*) and beholden to the past).<sup>1</sup> At a time when the religious system of values had already dissolved and myth was no longer available in its immediacy and universality, the “abstract” had to be reached, Broch’s essay insightfully suggests, “by the detour of romanticism” (107); this forced detour ensued in a constantly increasing “romantic uneasiness” (110). Throughout the last two centuries this anxiety was mirrored in the all too swift succession of a host of essentially post-romantic aesthetic currents: “Art became naturalistic, veristic, scientific in its methods, running through the sequences of Impressionism, until at last, in an ultimate despair of expression, it has become expressionistic. If in all these forms it renders the reality of our time, it does so in fact only as anarchy reflecting anarchy” (110).

The protracted presence of the romantic is thus little more than a response to the vanishing of myth, of the stability and universal validity enshrined in it. The “long century of Romanticism” beyond the mid-1800s has seen an endless rerun of attempts to rebuild myth with the woefully inadequate means of the private and particular. Fifteen years after *The Sleepwalkers*, Broch’s essay confirms his diagnosis of modernity, of which romanticism is but an on-going manifestation. Seen from this vantage point, the trilogy begins to make perfect sense as an example of a post-romantic critique of Romanticism: a critique that draws on the rhetorical and artistic resources of the critiqued, parodies its staple motifs, dispels its “pseudo-myths” that constantly fall short of “*the new myth*” (112), of which Western culture had been so much in need and whose arrival Broch keenly anticipates (let us recall that he hails Joyce, now in a much more qualified way than in his earlier essays, and Thomas Mann, but especially Kafka, as the creators of the new myth). *The Sleepwalkers*, then, with its ironic, but also at times violent, discrediting of the belief in immediacy and organicity amidst a world of particularities and lost totality, should be read as a post-romantic interrogation of modernity; it conjures the spectre of Romanticism, determined to expunge it. In its stead, it leaves behind the

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1 Dorrit Cohn comments on this passage in *The Sleepwalkers*: “... Broch uses the term “romantic” in an idiosyncratic way that is almost contrary to its usual acceptance. Not the adventurous outsider is romantic, but the conservative stay-at-home, who sentimentally longs for the return of past traditions” (Dorrit Claire Cohn, *The Sleepwalkers: Elucidation of Hermann Broch’s Trilogy* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1966) 70 n. 20). This stay-at-home attitude presents the ultimate frustration of the process of homecoming; it does not allow the journey away from home to commence in the first place.

footprints of somnambolic apocalypse.<sup>1</sup>

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1 On the multiple semantic layers (and intellectual sources) of the metaphor of sleepwalking in Broch's trilogy, including its apocalyptic and neo-platonic symbolism, see Heinz D. Osterle, "Hermann Broch: 'Die Schlafwandler.' Kritik der zentralen Metapher," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1970): 229–68.

# An Eco-Critical Cultural Approach to Mars Colonization

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**Abstract** Colonization is a term common to many disciplines, from political science to anthropology, from sociology to microbiology. In all of these cases it has evidence-based historical or scientific roots. On the contrary, when this term is referred to the Outer Space, its use still draws from the realms of imagination, since no colonies exist as yet outside planet Earth. Nevertheless, we know that this might happen soon, and believe that the realms of imagination have played — and are playing — a fundamental role in the matter.

It is the object of this essay, the authors of which belong to three different disciplines (Anglo-American Literature and Culture, Ecology, and Philosophy), to discuss and problematize the cultural, environmental, and ethical implications of the project of Mars colonization, a project which is rooted in politics and economics.

It is not our aim to advance any doubts about the consistency of the current agenda concerning the *mission* of colonizing Mars. However, we want to underline the absolute necessity of adopting a truly sustainable and multidisciplinary *vision* which involves a deeply ethical, ecological, and cultural approach. By *ethical* we mean that we ought to be aware that a new phase in the Anthropocene has come, since we are challenged to enlarge the *semiosphere* so as to include the Outer Space, which means proposing new ecosophic paradigms; by *ecological* we mean that owing to a

change in our *Umwelt* we should follow an ethical management of the environment, that is respectful of Mars territories as well as of those we will continue to inhabit on Earth; by *cultural* we mean that it has to take into account all of the following: the literary narrations of the past, both utopian and dystopian; the intuitions of Sci Fi fandom and scholarship; and the perspective of post-colonial studies, which problematize the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism and analyze the consequences of external control and economic exploitation of people and lands.

**Key words** Mars colonization; ecology; ecosophy; literature; culture

**Authors** **Alessandra Calanchi, Almo Farina, Roberto Barbanti** delivered a previous version of this essay entitled “Where to *invest* next? An eco-critical cultural approach to Mars colonization” at the 2016 “European Mars Society Conference” held at the Centro Congressi in Bergamo, Italy, on 14/16 October. Calanchi is professor of Anglo-American Literature and Culture and the author of a volume on the literary representations of Mars and Martians (Aras 2015); Farina is full professor of Ecology, Director of the International Institute of Ecoacoustics (<http://www.iinsteco.org/>) and President of the International Society of Ecoacoustics (<https://sites.google.com/site/ecoacousticssociety/>); Barbanti is coordinator of TEAMeD / Théorie Expérimentation Arts Médias et Design, co-founder with Pierre Mariétan of review *Sonorités* and scientific director of LAMU (Laboratoire Acoustique Musique Urbaine) at the l'École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris la Villette.

### 1. Why Responsibilities Matter (ac)

Mars colonization started much earlier than most people think. Like any other colonization of the past, it began in the human imagination and narratives. The “discovery” of America, for example, and the subsequent settlement of Europeans in the trans-Atlantic wilderness, had actually been accurately prepared or foreseen through folk tales, story-telling, and myths of various types, such as Atlantis and the Garden of Eden. However, unlike the previous experiences we know from ancient and recent history, this particular type of colonization is taking longer and involves wider strata of society and culture throughout planet Earth.

For the first time in history we are witnessing a process of colonization happening in a globalized world, with a worldwide mass media coverage. The fact that nobody is likely to meet a *colonizable* people, and nor to experience any symbolic encounter with Otherness, which happened in all previous cases, is not really relevant if we think, to continue with our example, that Natives Americans, though undoubtedly human, were rarely perceived as such in the first stages of

colonization. Puritan literature from early America abounds in descriptions of devils, beasts, and monsters — not men or women — and the discussion about these creatures' possessing or not possessing a soul was virulent and lasted for decades.

From a cultural perspective, Martians have represented a propulsive force in the literary and filmic construction of the Martian project, in either sense (humans as the invaders or the invaded); however, from a merely scientific perspective, the debate about the plausibility of the existence of life on other planets, which was very lively in the past centuries, can only continue if we reach an agreement on the definition of life. The fact that the only aliens we could reasonably expect to meet on Mars are extremophiles means that we do not need worry about the possible drawbacks of colonization in terms of the encounter (and possibly struggle) with the Other — that is, we do not have to worry about our responsibilities.

Or should we? The problem is that the risk of repeating the same errors of the past does exist. While our planet is being destroyed by environmental crises, overpopulation, and natural catastrophes enhanced by human intervention (e.g. building along sea shores, deforestation, and terrorism) we happily plan to terraform Mars, to extract mineral and gas resources, and ultimately to create human settlements. But who can guarantee that the investors of today and settlers of tomorrow will show more respect to the environment than humans have granted their own home-planet so far? Who can promise that our missions on Mars will not cause new forms of class struggle, intolerance, racism, radicalization of poverty, and the rise of new totalitarian regimes and new commercial lobbies on Earth?

We believe in the necessity of a common agenda that implies respect for the environment and geo(Mars)-bio-diversity — whatever it may be. Also, the contribution of the humanities and in particular literature and film studies is important in order to become fully aware of Mars colonization as an ongoing cultural, political, and social process, and also in order to improve the level and quality of life of future settlers. In particular, a deep knowledge of literature and mythology concerning Mars, together with postcolonial studies, gender studies, and cultural studies, will provide both humans on Earth and humans on Mars with a robust background. Finally, humans must become aware that this particular colonization will be — and actually is already being — performed under their very eyes. Any time of day and night it is possible for humans to browse the Internet in search of information, news, photos, and comments that have travelled millions of miles before reaching their eyes, and will travel on. Even though from a distance, every single human being who has access to the World Wide Web will participate, in a way, in this mission.

This is why Mars colonization should be studied under multiple perspectives, starting not with economics and politics but with ecology and ecosophy, and including those disciplines which are based on the study of imagination, on the patterns of representation, on the dynamics of myth formation and transmission, and on simple story-telling. Literature offers an extraordinary reservoir of stories, and each story tells us something about ourselves, about our dreams, our projects, and our responsibilities. This means that we should also invest in such sectors; it means that investments should not only concern business and profit, but involve cultural values and cultural education as well.

## 2. A Trans-Planetary Transplantation? (ac)

As literature shows us, Mars colonization started in the arena of imagination long before real exploration began. In particular, in the U.S. the idea of progress and the myth of the Frontier were at the basis of all activities performed in the Outer Space. The concept of *transplantation*, introduced by J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur (1782), is clearly to be found in the present-day plans for Mars colonization:

The most important concept to bear in mind about colonizing Mars is the art of defying apparent natural laws by pulling oneself into the air by the shoestrings — the “bootstrap” philosophy. When settlers crossed the Atlantic hundreds of years ago, they didn’t bring with them all that was eventually to be on the North American continent. Rather, they brought simple tools and supplies that were to be *the seeds of a continental culture based on indigenous resources*. They were aided in no small way by trans-oceanic trade and sustenance but everything that grew up in the New World didn’t arrive fully formed. It was seeded and nurtured by the vast resources of the continent and the multiplying human population.

The same will be true for colonizing Mars. [...] Before leaving England, the Pilgrims didn’t study the greenhouse cultivation of corn or techniques to purify precious water [...]. (Mallove 339. Italics mine)

O’Sullivan’s theory of the Manifest Destiny is also responsible for the projects of colonization regarding the Outer Space: as he wrote as early as the 1830s, in fact, “The expansive future is our arena. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds. [...] We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can” (427). And everybody surely remembers president J. F. Kennedy’s

famous “New Frontier Speech” (15 July 1960):

[...] Today some would say that [...] there is no longer an American frontier. But I trust that [...] we stand today on the edge of a New Frontier — the frontier of the 1960s — a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils — a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats.

[...] I tell you the New Frontier is here, whether we seek it or not. Beyond that frontier are the uncharted areas of science and space [...] I am asking each of you to be pioneers on that New Frontier.

Robert Zubrin’s “The Significance of the Martian Frontier” (1994) culminates in the following statement:

I believe that humanity’s new frontier can only be on Mars [...] Mars has what it takes. It’s far enough away to free its colonists from intellectual, legal, or cultural domination by the old world, and rich enough in resources to give birth to a new. The Red Planet may appear at first glance to be a desert, but beneath its sands are oceans of water in the form of permafrost, enough in fact (if it were melted and Mars’ terrain were smoothed out) to cover the entire planet with an ocean several hundred meters deep. [...] For the rest, all the metals, silicon, sulfur, phosphorus, inert gases and other raw materials needed to create not only life but an advanced technological civilization can readily be found on Mars.

The United States has, today, all the technology needed to send humans to Mars. [...] Once humans have reached Mars, bases could rapidly be established to support not only exploration, but experimentation to develop the broad range of civil, agricultural, chemical and industrial engineering techniques required to turn the raw materials of Mars into food, propellant, ceramics, plastics, metals, wires, structures, habitats, etc. As these techniques are mastered, Mars will become capable of supporting an ever-increasing population, with an expanding division of labor, capable of mounting engineering efforts on an exponentially increasing scale. Once the production infrastructure is in place, populating Mars will not be a problem — under current medical conditions an immigration rate of 100 people per year would produce population growth on Mars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century comparable to that which occurred in Colonial America in the 17<sup>th</sup>. [...]

In the new millennium president Obama, speaking at Kennedy Space Center on 15 April 2010, proclaimed: “By the mid-2030s, I believe we can send humans to orbit Mars and return them safely to Earth. And a landing on Mars will follow. And I expect to be around to see it.”

Nevertheless, it is also worthwhile to remember that alongside this optimistic vision concerning progress and advancement there exists a literary production that has been warning humans against the risks of space colonization. I am not referring to Science Fiction, which has already been extensively studied, but to earlier works. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century many people thought Mars was inhabited and this led to a number of utopian works based on the planet’s superiority in political and social terms. It is sort of astounding that the first American novel set on Mars was written by two women from Iowa, Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant, in 1891. It is a proto-feminist utopia entitled *Unveiling a Parallel: A Romance by Two Women of the West* (1891) and tells of an American man who visits planet Mars where he finds a society based on gender equality. Women can do any job there — “They are becoming doctors, lawyers, editors, artists, writers” — and they can vote. Religion is also based on equality. Creation is described in this way: “A pair of creatures, male and female, sprang simultaneously from an enchanted lake in the mountain region of a country called Caskia, in the northern part of this continent. They were only animals, but they were beautiful and innocent. God breathed a Soul into them and they were Man and Woman, equals in all things.” Two years before another utopian novel was written by a man, William Simpson: it is entitled *The Man from Mars. His morals, politics, and religion* and tells of an American citizen who is visited by a Martian — through a sort of hologram *ante litteram* — who criticizes planet Earth’s politics — he speaks of “misgovernment” “relics of barbarism” and “breathless pursuit of wealth, beyond all reasonable limit” (217, 219, 272).

It is not irrelevant that, at the turn of the century, astronomer Percival Lowell published as many as three books on Mars — *Mars* (1895), *Mars and Its Canals* (1906), and *Mars as the Abode of Life* (1909) — which contributed to the lively debate on the possibility of life in the Outer Space. But what interests us even more is his ecological and eco-critical vision, which becomes particularly strong in his third book. As early as 1909, Lowell — who published articles in such reviews as *Nature* and *Scientific American* — was worried about the Earth’s environmental decline and sky pollution: according to him, man “has enslaved all that he could; he is busy exterminating the rest [...] Already man has begun to leave his mark on this his globe in deforestation, in canalization, in communication” (in Markley 94).

The contribution of literature to our current *vision* and *mission* regarding Mars

is therefore twofold. On the one hand, in the course of time literary imagination has given a sort of powerful propellant to American (and human) projects of Outer Space colonization. On the other hand, however, it has repeatedly warned humanity against the risks of duplicating the errors that have been committed on planet Earth — *deforestation, canalization, communication*, and whatsoever. True, it is quite unlikely — but not impossible — that there is life on Mars; however, we strongly believe that we should grant the planet full respect for its landscape, resources, climate, and everything we will meet up there. The examples of human colonization in the past are not good at all — while busy exterminating or enslaving or converting people, we also exterminated vegetation and wildlife, and even today the way we behave toward our home planet is not exemplary. Therefore we strongly advocate that ecology and ecosophy will have a place on planet Mars.

### **3. Insatiable and Uncontainable! (af)**

If we build a fence to limit the pasture of our cattle, sooner or later — no matter how large these pastures are — our cattle will reach its borders and repeatedly trample on them. This innate tendency all biological species have to push themselves to the end of their territory, solicits a reflection on the very concept of *territory*, a concept which is apparently linked to a restricted temporal vision. Every biological species, be it vegetable or animal, tends, in fact, to occupy new spaces, either in search of new resources or trying to escape from intra- and inter-specific competition. This process includes the great migrations of human populations in more or less recent times, from the great exoduses of the past, following unfavorable climatic periods such as minor glaciations or persistent droughts, up to the current migrations due to the often huge economic and social inequalities between western nations and underdeveloped countries.

From an ecological point of view, biological consciousness urges the species to look for new resources (reproductive territories, food, safety) through complex mechanisms that we call, in short, “migratory” Human beings not only cannot escape this biological and ecological logic, but they are even helped by a technology that now permits them to avoid the great fatigue of walking long distances. From this perspective, Man can dare to escape the “prison” of Mother Earth and travel to worlds far away.

The idea of colonizing a planet like Mars mirrors, as has been written, the ancient idea of colonizing the New World. Nonetheless, in ecology the term “colonize” is not very effective, since all the species that find a favorable environment out of their own bio-geographical areas do not necessarily exert

hegemony. First, they have to adapt to new conditions, and the stronger they are, the more quickly they will adapt. For example, the domestic sparrow and the starling occupied North America in rather a short time, but they had to adapt to the new conditions in terms of seasonality and food resources. The same is true for the Japanese nightingale, which, once escaped from captivity (it was kept as a pet in many countries due to its attractive appearance), found in Mediterranean Europe a favorable milieu but had to adapt to a new climate and to environmental conditions (e.g. the structure of vegetation) which were very different from the native areas in the Asiatic South-East from where it came. So we do not really speak of a “colonizing” but of an “adapted” species, which changes the perspective completely. Only later will the “adapted” species have to make a choice: either to avoid competition with the indigenous species, or become dominant by subtracting resources from the indigenous species. This is exactly what Man has always done. The problem is that in so doing he prevents resources from self-renewal (General Theory of Resources<sup>1</sup>) and from this moment on his decline starts. Each species that “exaggerates” is destined to extinction in the end.

If we consider Man as the colonizing species of a planet like Mars, we can imagine at least two very contrasting scenarios. The first scenario envisages a strict protocol of territorial expansion onto Mars. Such protocol regulates all actions in order to reduce, but not eliminate, all risks of biological contamination. The second scenario does not take into consideration the potential fragility of the planet; for example, if potatoes could grow on Mars they would be cultivated with no problem. In both cases the terrestrial contamination of Mars would only be a matter of time, because we know that when two systems come into contact we must expect a reciprocal influence.

Our preoccupations, however, ought not to be confined to our possible biological exportations to Mars, but should comprehend all that we will import from Mars; and here the matter gets more complicated. Obviously, if we were able to erect a formidable ecological barrier between us and Mars, and if our exportable/importable product only consisted of information (images, sounds, and data), we would create a strange Earth clone, something difficult to understand. What would be the point of going to Mars if no physical (both mineral and biological) elements were shared? Which kind of investor would be content with just a tele-knowledge?

If, by mere hypothesis, we landed on Mars and renounced all that we have on Earth (food, plants, animals, and habits) and adopted integrally all that Mars can

1 [http://www.codebiology.org/pdf/Farina%20A%20\(2012\)%20Towards%20a%20General%20Theory%20of%20Resources.pdf](http://www.codebiology.org/pdf/Farina%20A%20(2012)%20Towards%20a%20General%20Theory%20of%20Resources.pdf)

offer us — provided it could be realistic from an ecological point of view — we would become children of Mars and lose our identity as terrestrial human beings. We consider this option really excessive, at least for the times closely following our landing on the Red Planet.

According to a more realistic scenario, Man lands on Mars, where he spreads out his/her biological offshoots (viruses, bacteria, spores, and seeds) and reconstructs conditions similar to those on Earth on this planet. As historical defaunation and the destruction of biodiversity in the last centuries testify, we did not stop in the face of the destruction of our home Earth: therefore, how could one ever think that, on a remote planet, our environmental care would be any different? We have “conquered” (so to say) the highest mountain tops of the planet, like Everest, and we have been able to create huge deposits of waste in places that our culture considers sacred and deeply symbolic. What can happen during Mars colonization? How long will it take for “Mars neighborhood committees” to impose their strict rules in terms of waste management and collective behaviors?

We must therefore expect a massive biological as well as ideological contamination following our landing on Mars. Such contamination will be of unprecedented and unimaginable dimension both for colonists and for the whole of humanity which will see in the Martian New World the hope for a better future. If millions of American buffaloes were brought to the verge of extinction in a few decades — an extinction that was fully accomplished as far as the passenger pigeon is concerned — we cannot expect any hypothetical forms of life we might encounter on Mars would meet a better destiny, unless they were functional to our own model of development. Man will land on Mars following an expansive model of development, so we cannot expect any respect for the Martian milieu. It is recognized that every single species modifies its own surroundings, but Men are more skilled because they tend to expand not only their own ecological niche but their eco-semiotic niche, so that, thanks to their particular form of creativity, they produce new life areas that demand ever-increasing energetic inputs.

In the end, we ought to work out an ecological “twinning” between Earth and Mars in the shortest time possible. Maybe such a twinning will allow us to reduce the consequences of the bipolar and often hypocritical policies that have heavily marked Earth’s biological and ecological destiny so far. Our agenda therefore implies that we should acquire a deeper environmental knowledge, since Mars colonization could offer an opportunity to know Earth and biodiversity better and make us ready to negotiate respective ecologies with mature awareness. In order to be really ready to land on Mars we should empower our knowledge of the ecology

of biodiversity as the only defense of both the terrestrial natural and cultural capital and Martian yet undiscovered resources.

#### **4. Ecosophy and Conclusions (rb)**

The innovative and legitimate research here proposed, also involving the historical construction of cultural imagery around pre-figurative projections of appropriation of new worlds, undoubtedly requires the fundamental contributions of ecology, as we have seen, and ethics, as we are going to see. An ecosophic approach to planetary — and specifically Mars's — colonization cannot but question the multiple levels that any complex phenomenon brings into play. In this sense, in agreement with Felix Guattari's ecosophic methodology (1989), we ought to approach the present and future Mars colonization according to mind ecology, social ecology, and environmental ecology, which means taking into consideration the relations between human beings, the other species, and the whole inorganic nature in all of its vast and cosmic extensions.

If, on a purely conceptual level, there are no doubts that “humanity's new frontier can only be on Mars” (Zubrin 1994), it is also true that this unprecedented and extremely contemporary horizon of which we are all planetary witnesses is proposed by techno-science as a globalizing metaphor of its own power.

Such concept forces us to remember an essential assumption of current techno-scientific research, which invalidates many of the utopian dreams that for some years have animated a particular kind of fantastic techno-philia. This techno-philia, publicized and fostered thanks to the substantial funds of millions of dollars offered by such companies as Google<sup>1</sup> (which is certainly not devoted to any future public welfare but, much more prosaically, is just interested in the centralization of power and control, in market monopoly, and in current profits), has taken the names of transhumanism and post-humanism. These movements, however, are driven by the great American technological multinational companies whose acronym is known as GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft) and whose objectives (immortality, the transplant of individual human consciousness into machines, and human migration to other planets), though intriguing and maybe desirable, are intrinsically propagandistic and tend, in fact, to build forms of neo-colonization of the imagination by manipulating human aspirations.

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1 The transhumanist project is embodied by the Calico branch of Google (Californian Life Company), created in 2013 with an initial allocation of 425 million dollars. Google also finances Ray Kurzweil, the futurologist manager who directs Singularity University (SU) in Silicon Valley, active since 2008.

The essential limit of the physical world is light speed. Actually, the nearest planet to ours, which could possibly offer the same qualities of habitability for human beings, is *Proxima b*<sup>1</sup>, which is about 4.2 light years far from Earth. This means that with the present technologies it would be reachable in about 76,000 years. This is the main limit to star migration, which also implicitly posits a conceptual limit to Mars colonization. As French geneticist Albert Jacquard claims, we are now becoming aware of the finitude of the space we have been given: “Dans l’histoire des hommes, c’est le constat de la finitude de l’espace qui nous est alloué” (2006; see also 1991). To be aware of our “internality” is something new, to which the certainty of being prisoners on planet Earth necessarily follows. This “internality” must also be framed within the global ecological crisis and the destructive apex reached by techno-scientific advancement, as philosopher Hicham-Stéphane *Afeissa* argued.

In reality, despite our grand and expensive projects of Mars colonization, the great majority of us are destined to “internality” which means most of us are prisoners on Earth. No true escape is possible from the atomic bomb, terrorism, or the ecological crisis, which is already dramatically destroying our environment.

It is this “internality” that brings to mind a tale by Marion Zimmer Bradley. In the story, a crew made of the young descendants of the Starward, sent from Earth to colonize Alfa Centauri more than one century before, is coming back to Earth aboard the Homeward spaceship. After 130 years of human life, the equivalent of five centuries of space-time contraction, they expect to find a dominant humanity that governs many other planets and is extraordinarily powerful in its technological advancement, but the reality is very different: no will of conquest has survived, and what they find is a collective, federal, self-managed life, where science has recovered its role as a place of reflection and praxis at the service of human development, and the State has been dissolved into small rural communities supportive of one another.

Finally, let us not forget that together with the awareness of physical and ethical limits, at the core of our ecosophic reflection we find what such philosophers as Holmes Rolston III and John Baird Callicott, or biochemists such as Enzo Tiezzi, propose — that is, a vision that entitles the world and the possible future worlds in

1 Proxima b (aka Pale Red Dot) is an exo-planet which revolves around Proxima Centauri, the closest star to the solar system. Its discovery was announced on 24 August 2016 by the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Proxima b is about 4.2 light years far from Earth: it has a temperature suitable for liquid water to exist on its surface, but its surface might be exposed to the ultraviolet rays coming from Proxima Centauri, which are much more intense than those we have on Earth. In that case it would not be as easily inhabitable as some believe.

their natural (co-evolutionary) aspects *the right to exist independently from human will, desires, needs, and dreams*. This means that nature, the other species, the organic beings and even the inorganic matter, the terrestrial habitats, and even the extraterrestrial territories *do have an intrinsic value beyond and despite the domineering projections of our instrumental reason*. This is a conceptual revolution which should be transmitted to the future worlds now on the verge of being colonized, no matter if they exist only in our imagination. Our imagination is never neutral. In the same way as every story has the right to be narrated (Wu Ming Manifesto, [www.wumingfoundation.com](http://www.wumingfoundation.com)), it is necessary for humans to accept the fact that whenever we imagine, dream, or plan something we are exerting a cultural, ecologic, and ecosophic hegemony.

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# Representation of Hybrid Identities in Contemporary Latvian Literature

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**Abstract** Latvian literature, by revealing the most significant tendencies of the state development, contributes to the discourse of cultural diversity, simultaneously boosting the idea of national unity. The aim of the paper is to investigate the expressions of hybrid identities in Latvian contemporary literature. In the research, cultural-historical aspects that determine the representation of intercultural dialogue in literature are outlined. Contemporary Latvian literature reflects processes related to existence of people among different cultures. Such interaction results in the development of dialogic relations, which characterize individual's simultaneous belonging to different cultures, and contributes to the creation of a new, namely, hybrid identity.

**Key words** dialogue; local; global; hybrid identity; Latvian contemporary prose

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## Introduction

Under the contemporary world globalization conditions, characterized by the formation of trans-national economy and an international law system, by the development of information systems, open state borders, as well as a tendency towards uniform social and ethical standards, the problem of personality's identity becomes especially acute. The extension of national and cultural borders as well as their ambiguity

make people contemplate their self-identification and stimulate them to search for the answer to the question — Who am I? The answer to this question is not simple to find. The researchers define the contemporary situation as the time of the loss and the search for identification strategies and universal collective values (Ēriksens). Therefore, the problem of identity becomes the object of theoretical reflection of philosophers, psychologists, culturologists, sociologists and other scientists (Huntington, Fukuyama, Wallerstein, Burke a. o.). The search for one's identity is an attempt to find the system of values and culture suitable for oneself, it is a protective reaction against the tendencies of world globalization. Scientists point out that the identity of an individual is “dynamic and [...] open to potential changes during the whole life” (Mieriņa, Koroleva 355). Based on individual's life experience and his / her search for inner balance in a constantly changing world, identity cannot be fixed and doesn't lie in one's genealogical line only, but is more referred as the subjective practice and involvement. Thus, one's individual and transforming “I” is juxtaposed to a rather rigid group's “we” Accordingly, the identity is related not only to the notion of belonging (relationships between the self and the society; one's identification within the society), but also to that of being (existence), “to the ways in which individuals make up an image of themselves” (Mieriņa, Koroleva 355).

Processes, characterized by intensified national feelings and the growth of ideas of fundamentalism and purification, are observed as a reaction to the threats of globalization and homogenization. Therefore, both in a theoretical discourse and everyday life, the categories of national, ethnic and cultural identity grow ever more essential. National identity is a universal concept of the humanities nowadays, which is topical in cultural studies, history, ethnology, art, and literary theory, in political science, sociology and elsewhere. Personality's national identification involves ethnicity, since ethnos is a stable human community that develops naturally in the process of ethno-genesis. National identity is a historically latest formation, which has developed in the result of ethnization, accentuating social-political aspects and unity of national goals.

In the research of recent decades, a frequent notion used in scientific literature is the concept of cultural identity (Terrence, Fishman, Ennaji), which is quite broad and elusive. According to the researchers, cultural identity is interpreted as a wholeness consisting of different aspects — identifiers, e. g. history, language, religion, nationality, place of residence, race, gender etc. Hence, the aspects forming the cultural identity become the basis of personality's contradictoriness, which may have both positive and negative consequences (James 175). These cultural identity forming identifiers are being discussed, changed and supplemented, some

of them are emphasized, whereas others are considered unimportant. In relation to the theme of this research, important seems the opinion expressed by Joshua A. Fishman stating that cultural identity is a dynamic relationship between the ancestral heritage, with all its components (oral tradition, literature, beliefs etc.), and the language(s). The researcher stresses the changeable aspects of cultural identity and the importance of language for it (Fishman).

### **The Impact of Globalization on Contemporary Latvia**

The impact of globalization on culture and human, due to the implications of the dislocation or de-territorization of culture, as noted by Imre Szeman, “inaugurates a new era of cultural relations” and “constitutes a historical rupture” (Szeman 96).

Globalization processes always unfold in the relationship with the local that enhances the establishment of a new and complex system of relations between the local and the global, as observed also in Latvia. Thus, in contemporary Latvia and its cultural space, a clash of two opposite tendencies is being noted: (1) the number of people with hybrid identity grows, (2) the manifestations of radical national expressions standing for the purity of Latvian culture and national identity are more frequently observed. Taking into consideration a constant relationship between the local and the global, the people of Latvia meet a new form of national identity, where pure nationally-oriented characteristics cease to exist, and face a new concept of a hybrid identity that continues to present itself with an ever growing expression.

A person’s affinity with a nation and mutual unity of his / her belonging to a nation are based on and maintained via common values — language, cultural space, and social memory. Dismissing the idea that nationalism can be based on ethnic purity, *Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy (2012–2018)* offer the description of national identity in Latvia as a phenomenon including the idea of each nation’s uniqueness but not its superiority; it is a denomination for a mutual community of the people having similar national cultural features and striving for the nation’s continuity:

The Latvian constituent nation is inclusive. It has an obligation to strengthen its identity and at the same time to be open to those who wish to join it. It means that one cannot only be born a Latvian but also consciously become one. Each person’s choice determines whether alongside his or her Latvian identity, which is the common one, he or she wishes to maintain also his or her national uniqueness and minority identity. (Guidelines on National Identity)

Although it is the priority of the State of Latvia to strengthen Latvian state national identity, its cultural space is open to various cultural and ethnic phenomena leading to “Open Latvianness” including openness for local national minorities and immigrants.

Currently, national identity is widely discussed and supported by Latvian official power and is seen in the national policy as a consolidating factor under the current circumstances of globalization. The Latvian cultural canon [Latvijas kultūras kanons] comprising the most outstanding Latvian cultural values has been established ([www.kulturaskanons.lv/en](http://www.kulturaskanons.lv/en)). National research programmes *National Identity — Language, Latvian History, Culture and Human Security* [Nacionālā identitāte (valoda, Latvijas vēsture, kultūra un cilvēkdrošība)] and *Letonika* [Latvian Studies], as well as the pilot programme *Promotion of National Identity* [Nacionālās identitātes veicināšana] supported by the National Culture Capital foundation [VKKF] approve the state’s orientation towards the maintenance of the national and collective ethnic identity. The majority of the support within the framework of the latter project in the field of literature has been allotted to the re-evaluation of the twentieth century history of Latvia via publishing the series of novels *We. Latvia, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* [Mēs. Latvija, XX gadsimts] by 13 Latvian contemporary writers as initiated by Latvian writer Gundega Repše and originally the collection of short stories *We. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century* [Mēs. XX gadsimts] by 12 female writers in 2011. The novels of this series address problems of the role of collective historical memory for the formation of cultural and national identity of the individual. This is a striking attempt to understand Latvian identity by bringing into different periods of Latvian history and discussing questions about the impact of other cultures upon Latvian identity, about the interaction between cultures, the existence of multicultural society and the rights for the idea of cultural purism to develop.

### **Hybrid Identities: Theoretical Overview**

Transformations of the contemporary ideological landscape, dissolution of culture’s boundaries, and global mobility mark a human’s existence outside a single identity frame, thus the term of hybridity as a designation for cultural fusion is naturally linked to the conception of identity for multicultural or “in-between” individuals — people of multiple or transnational identities and mixed origins, migrants and diaspora communities. The universal designation emphasizing the synthesis of at least two components, has provoked a multiplicity of terms (“hybrid identity” “double identity” “multiple identity” “hyphenated identity / communities” “shared identity” “glocal identity”) with specifically nuanced connotations to denote the

in-betweenness of a modern human. (Kacane, Kovzele, Laha 15–17) The reasons for the emergence of identity of a multiple nature are determined by the modern human's involvement into two, three or more cultures and his / her quest for social mobility, including immigration and emigration, short- and long-term business travels, international marriages, living in multiple countries, etc. Among the reasons behind the hybrid identity is the general contemporary tendency of cultures towards drawing nearer, activated and made topical by the latest technologies, which are able at an incredible speed “to transfer” from one part of the world to another both ideas and people. Consequently, as a complementary and non-exclusionary phenomenon a hybrid identity may consist of but is not limited to (1) a national identity, (2) a national minority identity existing and developing alongside the national one, (3) European, and (4) global / globalized identity, the latter being often seen as “identification with all of humanity” (McFarland, Webb, Brown 830–53).

The term “hybrid” borrowed from the discourse of biology and botany referring to cross-pollination, has extended far beyond the framework of natural sciences and is most often used in postcolonial and cultural studies as “an entity that challenges and subverts hegemonic identities” (Sandest). Nowadays, the concept of hybridity is basically used in connection with post-colonial theories, but is not limited to them. It involves also a wide scope of phenomena in culture and literature as well. Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the first to apply the concept of hybridity to cultural phenomena, distinguished between intentional and unintentional hybridity, and associated the idea about a hybrid text with concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia, where polyphony means the use of different voices in the text, for instance, in novels, but heteroglossia denotes the diversity of language within the limits of an individual text (Bakhtin). In linguistics, hybridity, contrary to hybridization as a dynamic on-going process, is seen as the end result that “entails the combination of two languages and undermines the notion of a monological authoritative discourse” (Guignery 2).

The widely employed but disputable notion of hybridity, has been discussed by historians, philosophers, cultural critics, postcolonial and communication theorists initiating a debate in the last few decades on the (in)adequacy of the term in cultural studies, for instance, it has been observed in Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), Homi C. Bhabba's *The Location of Culture* (1994), Néstor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995), Robert Young's *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (2005), Anjali Prabhu's *Hybridity. Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (2007), Marwan M. Kraidy's *Hybridity, OR the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (2005 (2007)), a. o. Although the concept of hybridity has

gained visibility in the Baltic countries, it is basically analyzed in the context of hybridization of literary genres. In the English speaking and postcolonial world, though, taking into consideration the contemporary globalization circumstances, it is broadly attributed to cultures, peoples, and communities as such, as well as to ethnic and individual identities.

Hybridity, often characterized by such key words as “coalescence and antagonism” “fusion and separation” “dissolution and division” “disruptiveness and productiveness” “doubleness” etc., implies antithetical action where the combination of elimination (standardization) and creativity (heterogeneity) opens up new perspectives and generates appearance of a new trans-cultural form located in the contact zone, third or in-between space:

Hybridity stands in opposition to the myth of purity and racial and cultural authenticity, of fixed and essentialist identity, embraces blending, combining, syncretism and encourages the composite, the impure, the heterogeneous and the eclectic. (Guignery 3)

Having been seen as the entity that creates alternative discourse, hybridity subverts the idea of one dominant culture and its uniqueness and raises a question on power shifts and authority. If nations are traditionally seen as historic occurrences characterized by cultural and ethnic homogeneity, then alternative discourse re-examines the existence of purities and dwells upon, as Edward Said notes, filiation and affiliation (Said 17), i.e., being or becoming a representative of a concrete nation. Influenced by such a large scale process as globalization, hybridity is seen as “a by-product of the transcultural dynamics between the tradition and modernity sometimes conceptualized as the local and the global” (Kraidy 319). Viewed in the context of multiculturalism, hybridity is seen as “a strategy of cooptation used by the power holders to neutralize difference” (Kraidy 321) and is included in the context of inter-contextual theory of hybridity that “explicates transnational cultural dynamics by articulating hybridity and hegemony in a global context” (Kraidy 329); it assists in understanding local and global cultural complexity and various actions in transnational cultural dynamics influenced by the dominating power.

The concept of hybrid identity seems to be the most appropriate one for the characterization of the above described situation of cultural interaction in the era of globalization when new conditions for culture are constantly being produced. By using the terms “hybridity” and “hybrid identity” in this research, we rely on the approach taken by Homi K. Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture*,

offering to perceive hybridity as a mutual interaction between cultures which results in withdrawing binary oppositions and unequivocal juxtaposition of cultures. The outcome of the culture shift and “clash of civilizations” (Huntington) is the emergence of the so called “Third Space” — a space where a new position is not only the sum of two cultures, but something more (Bhabha):

It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha 209)

A hybrid identity develops in the place where processes of cultural transfer and interaction as well as processes of repulsing a different (alien) culture take place simultaneously. A hybrid identity is not a stable form, it constantly develops and changes. In a local place, where codes of different cultures are present and processes of cultural clashes and interactions in a diachronic and synchronic perspective take place, there emerge culture hybridization tendencies, later resulting in the appearance of a hybrid cultural identity.

Thus, being aware of the diversity of terms used to denote interactions of cultures, and of the phenomena of transfer and fusion, as well as recognizing the ambiguous and controversial character of the term “hybrid identity” created by the scientists nowadays, e. g. Tony Sandset, Patricia Leavy, Keri E. Iyall Smith a. o., the term “hybrid identities” seems to us the most appropriate one for conceptualizing global and local expressions and for displaying the processes of transformation and expansion of Latvian national identity in the contemporary society. These processes take place due to both the cultural situation of the past and contemporary tendencies of globalization and contra-globalization. The contemporary Latvian literature tries to reveal the processes of Latvian cultural hybridization and the existence of different identities in many and various ways, and it also makes attempts to discover the causes of these processes in the past.

### **Hybridization Processes of Latvian Culture**

Within the theory of post-colonialism, cultural hybridization is frequently looked at as a comprehensive phenomenon, thus, for instance, Jonathan Rutherford points out that all *forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity* (Rutherford 211). Referring to Edward Said’s quote, Latvian literary scholar and translator of Peter Burke’s *Cultural Hybridity* (2009) (Bērks), Pauls Daija, dwells upon the non-

existence of the so called “uncontaminated” purities (Gilroy 250):

Therefore we may say that **culture does not exist in the singular and the roots of any culture involve borrowing and adopting.** Or as in his book Peter Burke quotes Edward Said: ‘Any history of culture is the history of the culture of borrowing.’ (Kļavis)

The issue of hybrid identity relates to the problem of national identity which in Latvia has always been extremely topical. Though Latvian culture constitutes a part of Europe’s cultural space, looked at from the aspect of the historical development of statehood, Latvia has been an independent country for a very short period of time. During several centuries, historical events have been among the most important identity forging factors which influence the development of the country and its culture until today, determining people’s abilities of thinking and behaviour, their feeling of inner freedom, their desire to take responsibility not only for one’s own individual life, but also for that of the nation in general.

The history of the Latvian state is a striking example of constant interacting with different cultures. In various epochs of the formation and development of Latvian culture it has been influenced by the cultures of bigger nations (German, Swedish, Polish and Russian), which eventually has led to the emergence of its specific hybrid identity. The impacts have been determined by the long periods of dependence, namely, Latvia has been subjected to other countries since the thirteenth century and up to 1918, and then, after a very short period of independence, it was occupied again, regaining its independence only in 1990.

In addition, the issue of national identity is currently brought into focus by the fact that due to various historical developments the proportion of representatives of other nationalities in Latvia now is quite considerable, and this situation is being constantly aggravated both socially and politically (one of the examples of such moments of aggravation is conducting a referendum on the second official language in 2012). Consequently, the contemporary Latvia is faced with the problem of redefining its national, ethnic and cultural identity manifested on political, social and cultural level.

The approach of the centenary of Latvia’s statehood makes the issues about Latvia’s past and future, about the Latvian language, culture and Latvian identity especially topical. The Internet site *National Identity*, considered to be a mouth-piece of the official viewpoint and independent information, writes that “a united national identity and cultural heritage of Latvian nation existed only in the period

until the thirteenth century, before Latvia was overrun by the German culture and affected by further historical events. At the present moment, we can speak only about the Latvians' and foreigners' territorial belonging to Latvia" (Kas ir nacionālā identitāte?).

In the history of Latvia, the search for identity, including issues of hybrid identity, has been topical since already the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, and also in the early and pre-national period of Latvian culture hybrid identity has remained in the focus of attention and is to be most directly ascribed to the Baltic Germans and to the clergymen-writers of that time:

In Latvia, to separate the history of the Baltic Germans from the history of the Latvians is impossible, since those were not only the Latvians that were influenced by the Germans, but to the same extent the Baltic Germans, too, were influenced by the Latvians. (Kļavis)

The most striking examples of the hybridization of Latvian culture have been observed since the twentieth century, one of them being the deliberate Russification policy implemented by the Soviet Union and "undertaken in the context of the global power race between two mutually conflicting economic systems — capitalism and socialism" (Kalnačs 22). The twenty-first century brings new challenges not only for the policy of the national identity, but also for a social and cultural integration. Nowadays, due to the expanding cultural contacts at a global level, the hybridity of Latvian culture is much more evident than ever before and requires interdisciplinary approach from the global studies perspective (Steger).

Taking into consideration the fact that Latvia is a very ethnically diverse country (Latvians compose about 62% of the population, while 27% consider themselves Russian, and 11% belong to other ethnic minorities), ethnic tensions related to differences in the perception of history from time to time escalate between the two main groups (Mierina, Koroleva 359). The descendants of immigrants, who arrived in Latvia within the framework of the biggest immigration wave (from the 1950s to 1980s), contrary to their predecessors who lived / live in their "parallel worlds," have successfully integrated into the society. They are not simply the bearers of cultural values, their hybrid identities have led to the creation of hybrid culture and hybrid texts (e.g. NGO "Orbīta" ([www.orbita.lv](http://www.orbita.lv)), uniting Russian poets, photographers, musicians and multi-media artists in Latvia, has actively participated in Latvian cultural life since 1999). Under the multi-cultural conditions, when Latvian families and kin consist of representatives

belonging to different cultures, the Latvian language and its active use become the determinant objective indicator of national identity. The spatial belonging, namely, the space which an individual considers his / her native place, home, where one always wishes to return, may be considered a subjective criterion of determining a specific national identity.

### **Attempts of Defining National, Ethnic and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latvian Literature**

Fiction is the indicator and the former of the search for both national culture and ethnic identity. At depicting their heroes' life during the clash of cultures, writers reveal the understanding about the national identity in the period described and simultaneously give also their own interpretation of the identity problem, thereby, a fiction work becomes an important source for the formation of a collective self-reference. Viewed from this aspect, contemporary fiction is a particularly important research object. On the one hand, it identifies the historical experience gained at defining Latvian national identity and solving problems created by the clash of cultures, and on the other hand, it shows the specificity of a contemporary situation.

The analysis comprises works of contemporary Latvian fiction with a different thematic specificity (the contemporary position is present in all novels, which is determined by the time when the novel has been written). All works can relatively be divided into two blocks:

— the works that view the Latvian identity from the historical aspect (These works emphasize the situation when a hybrid identity was being formed due to the appearance of other ethnicities in Latvia as a result of colonization, and, consequently, the interaction between the local culture and that of colonizers took place. In works under the analysis, the Germans and the Russians are depicted as nations which historically have affected the features of Latvian culture most of all.);

— the works that accentuate the issue of national identity under the contemporary globalization circumstances (These works show the situations when a contemporary Latvian inhabitant, who thinks about himself as a Latvian, gets to a foreign country and, staying there for a longer time, experiences the impact of other cultures upon his identity. Thus, the problem of the loss of Latvian identity gets emphasized. The Latvians, who due to the multicultural situation experience the impact of other cultures upon their identity in Latvia, staying abroad for a long time come under ever stronger influence of other cultures and in the result gradually become hybrids of many cultures. This situation brings into sharp focus the question about the possibility of maintaining Latvian identity in the multicultural world under the globaliza-

tion circumstances.).

The novels dealing with the twentieth century history of Latvia emphasize the multicultural situation in Latvia, which, depending on the plot, carries both positive and neutral as well as negative connotations. Pauls Bankovskis' novel *I8* reflects upon the idea that historical events and multi-cultural environment make the impact also on art, culture and everyday life, thus forming and diversifying national identity. The topicality of the issue of multi-cultural situation and identity under the contemporary conditions in Latvia is shown by depicting the narrator's family, where German, Polish, Russian and Latvian roots intersect; the narrator himself was born in Latvian SSR and considers himself a Latvian. The author questions the idea if a human's identity is determined by the roots of his family. His protagonist does not feel himself as a Latvian who has roots either of Krakow Poles or of Riga Germans. He feels himself in the present — as a Latvian. However, though specific ethnic roots are not essential for a contemporary individual, his identity, formed by a collective historical memory, is reflected in both his language and the subtle value system, as well as in social life which a bearer of culture feels as his own. According to Ēriks Eriksons, belonging to some ethnic group cannot be the result of the action deliberately guided and influenced by some family members — it has to be perceived as a component of a human's self-formation process describing identity as a part of one's self-building, personal integrity and continuity (Eriksons). Within such a context, the issue of the importance of national identity is being made topical today, when a large segment of people (Latvian people among them) perceive themselves as “world citizens,” as peculiar ethnic hybrids with a multiple identity.

In a historical aspect, Latvian identity is conceptually brought into focus by Gundega Repše in her novel *Bogene*. The epigraph of the novel is a fragment from St. Augustine's text about memory, which indicates a vector of reading — human's understanding about himself and, respectively the understanding of kin and nation, is linked with the conscious and unconscious information kept by memory, which is passed down from generation to generation. In the novel, this idea is notably vividly expressed in relation to the episodes of torture (also the torture of nation's spirit on a cosmic scale) and protagonist's reflection on them:

Why do they cover up the mouth any time, but never the eyes? I see everything and keep it in mind. My daughters, grand-daughters and grand-grand-daughters will see it, and the God will see it when I annunciate it. (Repše 148)

At ruminating on the darkest twentieth century periods in Latvia's history —

deportations and occupation of 1940 — the author, from a young woman's point of view, reveals not only the nation's tragedy, but also Latvian woman's spiritual strength and the specific Latvian lore, whose representative and witness chthonic Bogene is. When people's foreboding of evil is depicted, references to multicultural environment appear and the hybrid identity of family members is described.

Characters of Gundega Repše's works, whose roots are in Latvia and who recognize themselves as the Latvians, sing the German Christmas song *O, Tannenbaum*. This fact shows that the presence of German culture in Latvia even among the Latvians is natural and accustomed. The song, brilliantly representing the German culture, is performed at a specific moment in a narrow family circle and creates the atmosphere of solemnity and harmony. Further on in the novel, however, a negative attitude is expressed towards Germany and the Germans as the nation linked with Nazism. The historical events of 1940 bring about the situation that Latvia is overcrowded with various peoples: here are the Germans, and then the Russians arrive; there are moments when all the then dominating three cultures (Latvian, German, Russian) intertwine and form one whole — at some official party the Russian waltz *Manchuria Heights* is being played and the NKVD observers, the German secret service agents as well as beautiful Latvian girls are dancing together. In the novel, such a mix of cultures is characterized as the one creating the atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety.

When describing the period of Latvia's occupation, deportations and nation's sufferings, Repše provides a long list of surnames of victim families arranged in the alphabetic order and comprising the names of nations having different roots — Latvian, German, Russian, Jewish, Polish etc. In this way Gundega Repše voices her opinion about Latvia as a multicultural state whose population is characterized by a hybrid identity, revealing also that in times of political tragedies sufferers are not only the representatives of one nation, but rather the whole population of Latvia, who, despite their different ethnic identity, have much in common, the principal thing being — their belonging to the same country.

The basic reason for a negative attitude to different nations of Latvia's population is various historical and political complexities. This idea is topical in many works describing Latvia's development in different periods of time. Thus, World War I and World War II create a negative attitude towards the Germans, while the period of the Soviet occupation forms an unconscious aversion about the Russians. A brilliant example of this fact is the novel *Mother's Milk* written by Nora Ikstena, where the author reveals how within the period of several generations' life the attitude towards the Russians gradually changes (Ikstena). People who have

experienced the beginning of the Soviet occupation openly express their negative opinion about the Russians and Russia, while their children peacefully co-exist with the Russians — they learn in the same school, study and even fall in love with one another. On everyday life level, there develop friendly and harmonious relations with foreigners, and these relations become strained only due to historical and political events.

After the Soviet occupation, Latvia becomes the motherland for the representatives of various nations and a common cultural space where interlace and interact features of many cultures. In the twenty-first century, the boundaries between countries are only relative, and the Latvians take a wider look. The debut novel *Riga — Moscow. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Love Story* [Rīga — Maskava. 21. gadsimta mīlas stāsts] by Sabine Košeleva depicts the relationships between two young people — between the so called “latiška” [latishka] [a Russian word for a female-Latvian transcribed in Latvian] and “my Russian”. The fellow from Russia does not perceive the main female character as a simple “latiška”; just like the blood of a Belorussian, Ukrainian and even a Latvian runs in his own veins, the genetics of the girl, too, is to be assessed as hybrid. *The Review on the Book ‘Riga-Moscow. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Love Story. We are still attracted to those Russians* [Grāmatas Rīga — Maskava. 21. gadsimta mīlasstāsts recenzija. Velk mūs pie tiem krieviem] stresses the fact that the author of the book does not hesitate to bring to light all deeply prejudiced “kitchen talks” about the national question which any Latvian is well familiar with (Simpson; Petrenko). The author of the book writes:

‘We are still attracted to those Russians, whether we like it or not’. [...] ‘We — so dull, ponderous, too serious, living aloof and grumbling about — admire the open Russian soul, when drunk — we sing Russian ballads and like Russian films. Perhaps we need the Russians — for the sake of balance. [...] Perhaps — enough abusing? The past remains the past. Time to bury the battle-axe. Why do we need to carry hatred with us like such a childhood trauma which makes us angry and does not allow us to live happily?’ (Košeleva 15)

The short period of independence has determined also the specific national character, quite often discussed in novels, namely, sometimes the Latvians are spoken about as a nation which lacks self-confidence, a nation which is unable to make independent decisions:

We are too much accustomed to conciliatorily obey, keep silence, not to

object, suffer. (Bankovskis 67)

We have grown so much accustomed to the idea of having nothing — no property, no freedom, even our own language has not belonged to us for a long time — and therefore we live like animals kept in starvation, always hungry, always harbouring strong suspicion against both aliens and ours. (Bankovskis 110)

In 1918, on the eve of Latvia's independence, the heroes of Bankovskis' novel *18* philosophize:

I am a world citizen. [...] Politics does not interest me. I have to sing where I am paid for to sing. I don't care — whether it is for the Russians, or the Germans, since nothing actually belongs to us, the Latvians, even this land we are now standing on is not ours. The only thing that remains for us to do — to allow other people to fling us about. All our history is not our own, but determined by others. (Bankovskis 33)

While walking from Riga to Valka, the protagonist observes the Latvian landscape and identifies the presence of other cultures in it too, which testify to the violent interference in the destiny of the Latvian nation, namely, on seeing that the German manor houses are being destroyed by the Russian army he does not feel any regret, since he does not consider this estate his own:

The supporters of one power destroy what belongs to the other one. This was only one of many manor houses — the embodiment and symbol of the 700-year long wrong done to our people, the corner-stone and stronghold of alien powers. (Bankovskis 39)

A closer attention to the issue of the hybridization of Latvian culture and individual hybrid identity resulting from processes of globalization and contemporary multicultural situation is devoted in novels depicting the present-day Latvia. Having lived in foreign countries for a longer time, the protagonist of the novel *The Latvians are Everywhere* by Otto Ozols, being fluent in Latvian, Russian, German and English, has never expressed a wish to return to Latvia. His ties with his native country are absolutely cut, he does not call himself a Latvian either, but defines himself as “a world wanderer” (Ozols 122), “a world vagabond who has run away from Latvia” (Ozols 59). Another character of the novel, Rihards Kleinbergs, acts in a similar

way; he emphasizes his Latvian roots, but calls himself an “inhabitant of Berlin” (Ozols 59). This position shows the influence of globalization upon individual’s consciousness. The Latvians are considered to be one of the most mobile European nations. Due to the emigration wave starting with the new millennium, Latvia lost 9.1% of its population (OECD 16). In search for freedom, wellbeing and stability, people have left their native land, are well-aware of the tendencies of world globalization and have become extreme cosmopolitans. Having spent only a week in a foreign country, the protagonist of the novel also experiences the influence of a multicultural world upon his consciousness when in Sweden some black artist, admiring Martin Luther King, quotes the latter:

Words, thoughts and intonations like warm waves were sweeping over my consciousness, soon engulfing it completely. That was unbelievable. (Ozols 42)

Other contemporary writers — Vilis Lācītis, Sabīne Košeleva — contemplate the influence of multi-culturalism upon human identity as well. The plot of Vilis Lācītis’ novel *Stroika with a View on London* [*Stroika ar skatu uz Londonu*] [(stroika — from Russian “a building”; language hybridity in the title) shows the possibility of and necessity for identity transformation when a character of the novel gets into an alien cultural space. In Great Britain, the guest workers, though they can speak English a little, experience the infiltration of the language into their consciousness in everyday life situations. This process is brilliantly illustrated by the emergence of hybrid words — the words are not translated, but only phonetically transformed by adapting them to the pronunciation of the native tongue. In the preface of the novel, the author indicates that “Anglicisms and Russicisms are used in the text intentionally and without a special selection as a peculiarity of Latvian builders’ language” (Lācītis 5). Being aware of the fact that these phonetically adapted words might be unfamiliar to a wide circle of readers, the author offers a glossary of guest workers’ slang at the end of the book, explaining in it the meanings of most frequently used words. Moreover, this glossary includes not only borrowings from Russian and English but also from such languages as German, French and Polish. In the novel, slang words are used during the guest workers’ intercommunication, thus testifying to a gradual transformation of the characters’ consciousness and identity. Though the guest workers from Latvia depicted in the novel are only one social group, it is big enough to affect the transformations of Latvian culture and identity on the whole. Such cosmopolitan people have to be perceived as bearers of cultural transfer, since at visiting their home land again they carry not only novel linguistic

and cultural knowledge with them, but also spiritual and non-material values of foreign countries' reality, which are "absorbed" by the Latvian culture.

### **Conclusions**

The contemporary Latvian prose testifies to the importance of the issue about maintaining national identity under globalization conditions. In the time when it is impossible to speak about the Latvian culture as being "pure" of any admixture of other cultures, the characters who live or have lived in Latvia and whose native tongue is Latvian feel themselves Latvians to a greater or lesser extent. Those characters, whose ethnic and national identity cannot be unequivocally defined, present various possibilities of addressing the contemporary multicultural situation — starting from the homogenization of culture, when the feeling of belonging to some definite culture and nation dies away, and ending with counter-globalization, when national cultural values and belonging to one culture are emphasized. The majority of characters are located in between these two anti-poles, and being aware of their polyphonic cultural identity they still accentuate their belonging to the State of Latvia and Latvian nation. Thus, the contemporary Latvian literature not only identifies the specificity of the present situation, but also provides its peculiar vision of the future in the light of the present, indicating a possible way for the development of culture hybridization.

In the contemporary Latvian prose, the problem of national identity is viewed in a diachronic and synchronic aspects. In a diachronic aspect, the role of a collective memory is highlighted, while in a synchronic aspect — the role of language and belonging to one state. A person of today often knows the specific ethnic roots where the German, Polish, Russian, Jewish etc. cultures intertwine, but is not able to fully realize and feel them; person's identity is formed by a collective memory which is reflected in folklore, language, landscape, everyday life and in a subtle value system as well. In the present situation, the feeling of belonging to Latvian nation involves speaking one language and belonging to one state, which the characters with a hybrid identity consider their home.

The contemporary Latvian prose testifies to a cultural transformation and the birth of a new human awareness — the characters, who live in the multicultural situation of the present and are aware of themselves as individuals with different ethnic roots inherited from the past interacting in them, are not samples of a mechanical combination of cultures, but they form a new hybrid cultural type of a human.

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# Discontinuity and Continuity: Literary History According to Foucault

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**Abstract** The paper is focused on detailed reading of Foucault's chief methodological work *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Analysis show that Foucault never prioritizes discontinuity over continuity, but rather thinks of the conditions from which they both arise. This approach is called quasi-transcendental since it eludes any binary oppositions. For example, what Foucault calls *episteme* is in fact historical *a priori* of an epoch (which can be, then, thought of either as necessary historical unity or as partial social construct). Structurally, it can be demonstrated that this reasoning, although somewhat paradoxically, has affinity with Heidegger and other phenomenological and hermeneutic oriented philosophers of history.

Such a philosophy of history breaks neither with continuity nor teleology: what it breaks with is merely the romantic illusion that the final subject may be positioned in the place of the absolute subject. The lesson for contemporary literary history is that it should be written from fundamental hermeneutic and ethical perspective: literary historian is led to an understanding of his own position and to opening up the space of freedom, to conceiving his ever new unstable subjectivations. And, moreover, literary history should not be subordinated to cultural history (or any other histories). The history of literature *qua* literature should advocate that it is literature that somehow produces culture and not the other way around. Or, as Walter Benjamin lucidly put it: literature should be an "organon of history" and not its mere material.

**Key words** literary history; discontinuity; teleology; episteme

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Traditional literary history relied on the Hegelian *Geistesgeschichte* model, which is said to favour unproblematic linearity, continuity and teleology. However, proliferating voices in recent literary scholarship have clamoured for a revision of this (supposedly) outdated model, since the logic of continuity and teleology is allegedly not only unjust to the amorphous mass of historical material but even presupposes imperialist, racist, sexist, homophobic, counter-ecological and similar intentions.<sup>1</sup> Therefore — the argument goes — the teleology and continuities of literary history, both theory and practice, should be pitted against discontinuities, dispersion of events, heterogeneity, contingency, difference — in other words, against contemporary academic concepts. A glaring feature of such claims is their banal generalisation. As accurately pointed out by Tomo Virk, such appeals are in most cases guilty of “a schematic oversimplification for the sake of rhetorical effect and faster argumentation” (“Aporije” 814).

The leading “prophet” of this “new,” “postmodern” paradigm of both literary and general history is Michel Foucault. What is usually adduced are “discontinuities,” “breaks,” “ruptures,” “cuts” and “nodes” or “nodal points,”<sup>2</sup> concepts found particularly in Foucault’s seminal methodological work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (*L’Archéologie du savoir*, 1969). This complex and intellectually demanding work, which defies any simplifying appropriation, of course contains a number of sentences or passages which can be isolated and inflated into a thesis, a catchword — a practice rampant not only in literary science but throughout academic scholarship. Based on a close reading of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, this paper seeks to demonstrate that Foucault in fact never refers to any simple advantages of discontinuity over continuity. Moreover, his concept of the dispositive of power, appealed to (explicitly or implicitly) by moralising accusations levelled at traditional literary history for resting on imperialist, sexist and similar presuppositions, leads to no such oversimplified ruminations at all. On the contrary, Foucault’s “method” seeks to break free of the vulgar logic of

1 Exhaustively discussed in Virk, *Primerjalna književnost [Comparative literature]* 145-72.

2 The concept of the node or nodal point has no real basis in Foucault’s thought. Occasionally employed as an *ad hoc* metaphor, it is assigned no serious theoretical weight by Foucault himself. Nevertheless it found its way into the comparative history of the literary cultures of East-Central Europe edited by Cornis-Pope and Neubauer. In the preface, the node is presented as a “new” concept of comparativist periodisation, “a rich metaphorical alternative to the traditional metaphors of organicism” (Valdés xiv). Cf. also the typical (pseudo)Foucauldian statement in the introduction (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 18): “We are using nodes to disperse and complicate rather than unify.”

reduction to binary oppositions. As the paper seeks to prove, his “historical method” is methodologically not as innovative as it is generally considered, for it may be formally placed in a major 20<sup>th</sup>-century current of the philosophy of history, which I shall term “quasi-transcendental history.” This quasi-transcendental history is the common denominator of various attempts made in 20<sup>th</sup>-century discourses, or theoretical traditions, at both (post)structuralist and phenomenological-hermeneutic levels.

Let us now examine Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* more closely. From the perspective of philosophy of history, the basic problem for Foucault — as, indeed, for most poststructuralists — is *henology* in its most general sense, that is, henology as the discourse which discusses the one/One (*tò hén*) and at the same time performs what it discusses: “performative” discourse which has to speak in such a way that everything discussed unites into a single concept or conception. If this henology discourses on history, the former must inevitably envisage the latter as a direct and synthetic unity, as a totality, be it the Hegelian *Geist* or the collective consciousness (or the unconscious). The problem with this henology is perceived in its presupposition of the “metaphysical” henology familiar from (Neo)Platonism — the henology which breaks out in a new *Geistesgeschichte* garb in the German idealism. That is why practically all “poststructuralist” philosophies of history (Althusser’s, Deleuze’s, Foucault’s and others) have sought to make a fundamental break with Hegelian absolute knowledge, which continues to inform, albeit covertly, even the more recent *Geistesgeschichte*. In short, Hegelian absolute knowledge in its most general sense infiltrates any history which seeks a deeper, meaningful story — coherent, synthesised, unified — behind the bewildering sedimentation of facts. In the final analysis, such stories are always an infantile acceptance of the metaphysical illusion of oneness/the One. All of this is, as Foucault playfully puts it, “these are harmless enough amusements for historians who refuse to grow up” (*Archaeology* 160).

According to Foucault, it is therefore necessary to question all the homogeneous entities which are normally presupposed and implemented quite uncritically, such as — to limit ourselves to literary history — continuity, the unity of a given period, author or work. It does not follow, however, that these unities should be challenged by the chaos of radical discontinuity, breaks, dispersion; rather, “all these syntheses that are accepted without question must remain in suspense” (28). According to Foucault we should accept all the unities, with the aim of finding out whether they can be legitimately reassembled; in other words, all the material at our disposal should be examined in “in its raw, neutral state” (29). This

in its turn presupposes a horizon of new unity — this unity is inescapable, of which Foucault is fully aware — which is conceived by a pure description of discursive events. It is the withdrawal into a supposedly neutral, non-committed sojourn in the quasi-transcendental analysis of the discursive field, in which “we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes” (30). The issue at stake, then, is an analysis or description — rather than interpretation — of the conditions applying to statements as singularities of events (not as linguistic units) and to the relations between them, in which the traditional unities, totalities and syntheses of historiography and various philosophies of history are suspended. The new unities postulated by Foucault are the result of his essentially *quasi*-transcendental treatment of historicity. What exactly does that mean? Not transcendental conditions, as is the case in Kant — conditions finally leading to the constitution of transcendental apperception, or, to put it simply, of a unified and stable subject; on the contrary, what is meant is the conditions of *actual* — and always partial — statements, events, discourses or, if you will, experiences, where (to adopt Deleuzian terms) the conditions may never be “greater” or more general than what is conditioned. This paves the way for typical poststructuralist ontology which seeks to think the transitions from one singularity to another, without ever being able to synthesise from that “rhizomatic” multiplicity any actual unity, totality, etc. The main reason for this is that such synthesis would lead to an illusory unity of the subject, who would then envisage such unities arbitrarily and narcissistically, enjoying the (supposed) unity and stability of its own subjectivity. At bottom this means settling an account, not with subjectivity as such but with the metaphysical, Cartesian Ego, which is allegedly present in the background of all “great stories” invented by traditional (literary) history. Therefore I have dubbed this turn a *quasi*-transcendental turn, inasmuch as it represents an attempt at thinking which would radicalise the Kantian transcendentalism while avoiding the traps of idealism.<sup>1</sup> Towards the close of his life, when Foucault consciously begins to revisit Kant, he defines his thought in retrospect as new Neo-Kantian criticism. Foucault’s essay “What is Enlightenment?” (“Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?”) explains:

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1 I do not propose to address the question to what extent this project is feasible at all. Even Foucault admitted once that such a position might be untenable: “Je ne peux pas éliminer la possibilité de me trouver, un jour, face à un résidu non négligeable qui sera le transcendental” (*Dits et écrits I* 1241).

In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archaeological — and not transcendental — in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge [*connaissance*] or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. (315-16)

Let us examine the following passage from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, which hints at Foucault's "quasi-transcendental turn" in several places:

The third purpose of such a description of the facts of discourse is that by freeing them of all the groupings that purport to be natural, immediate, universal unities, one is able to describe *other unities*, but this time by means of a group of controlled decisions. Providing one defines the *conditions* clearly, it might be legitimate to constitute, on the basis of correctly described relations, discursive groups that are not arbitrary, and yet remain invisible. (32; italics by A. Š.)

The unities required by Foucault are always unities at a quasi-transcendental level. While this term is not used by Foucault himself, he certainly implies an invisible, vertical level: "if there really is a unity, it does not lie in the visible, horizontal coherence of the elements formed; it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation" (80).

Of course the new unities are much more fragile and weak than the traditional ones, representing as they do a transversal systemisation of statements which defy all final unification or hierarchy. Moreover, they are liable to fall apart and rearrange themselves differently in accordance with other rules. The ceaseless degrouping and regrouping of statements into "weak" discursive unities is, for Foucault, the only way to escape the domination of the identity subject.

The problem of (quasi)transcendence is further suggested by Foucault's

assertions that “things,” their presence, are to be renounced, “de-presentified.” This renunciation implies renouncing the temptation to interpret as well: there is nothing left behind either phenomena or things that would call for interpretation, explanation or unification:

To substitute for the enigmatic treasure of “things” anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. To define these *objects* without reference to the ground, the *foundation of things*, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance. (52-53)

“The conditions of their historical appearance” is the key phrase here because Foucault is not interested in analysing a historiographical story but in its conditions, that is, in what makes a given history or historiography at all possible. The whole point of Foucault’s theorising is to convince the reader that there is no metaposition involved after all. By itself, the historical *a priori* is neither unhistorical nor suprahistorical but inevitably historical, as it is defined “as the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect” (144). Thus Foucault arrives at his concept of the archive, which enables the break with all causalism (causes in the thing itself, the author’s intention, etc.). This is a shift to describing a system of discourses which sets up the quasi-transcendental conditions of statements as singular events, that is, conditions of reality which defy synthesis by any final subject. The archive itself as “the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (146) cannot be totalised: “The archive cannot be described in its totality” (147). This notion of the archive, as well as the other key concepts in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, of course presupposes the concepts of subjectivity and history, as has been noted earlier in the paper: the archive “deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates that temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history ... It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks” (147). The issue discussed is the ontology of a typical poststructuralist philosophy of difference. The difference, the dispersion, is ourselves, and it is we who produce it: the illusive mind, the folding-of-surface effect, is in fact the cause of all the differences perceived by this same mind. In

dispersion, the mind perceives its own dispersion.

Foucault's archaeology is thus a theoretical strategy designed to ensure a perfectly disinterested description, a withdrawal into a supposedly quasi-transcendental perspective which observes phenomena from the inside. It never delves for anything potentially hidden behind a discourse, for there is nothing behind — we may recall the poststructuralist saying that depth is but an effect of the surface. All that needs to be done is “to define those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules” (155). And insofar as archaeology is no mere discourse analysis but also (and perhaps predominantly) a description of the relations obtaining between discourses themselves, or, more accurately, a description of interdiscursive formations, the (Foucauldian) archaeologist has to describe the pure immanence of the (inter)discourse<sup>1</sup> which functions according to the (para)logic of difference and is described by the “differential analysis of the modalities of discourse” (156).

Of course Foucault noticed early enough that such a neutral and emphatically non-hermeneutic position was untenable. Therefore, his *Archaeology of Knowledge* was immediately followed by the so-called genealogical turn. This means that discourse analysis as such is essentially inconsistent, and Foucault was the first to admit it. In this connection, we shall consider the (much) later objection by Paul Ricoeur, which — partly based on Michel de Certeau's criticism — brilliantly illustrates the problem of any position that refuses to be hermeneutic. Ricoeur describes Foucault's theoretical standpoint in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* as “intellectual asceticism” (202), because he sees Foucault as intellectually limiting himself to the (supposed) neutrality<sup>2</sup> of stating without a statement-maker. In

1 It is noteworthy that interdiscursive analysis can only be comparative in character. Accordingly Foucault's methodological thought, named “archaeology” by the author (its subject cannot be a culture, mentality or idea: in this respect it is incomparably less ambitious, as far as it remains at the level of interdiscursivity or interpositivity), is defined as a comparative description: “Archaeology is a comparative analysis that is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourses, and to outline the unity that must totalize them, but is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures. Archaeological comparison does not have a unifying, but a diversifying, effect” (*Archaeology* 177).

2 Michel de Certeau was among the first to attack Foucault's supposed neutrality with the question “Where are you speaking from?” (*D'ou tu parle?*), which was a topical issue in the France of 1968. In de Certeau's view, any historiography concealing its social place of utterance is necessarily ideological, and as such untheoretical: “Denial of the specificity of the place being the very principle of ideology, all theory is excluded. Even more, by moving discourse into a non-place, ideology forbids history from speaking of society and of death—in other words, from being history” (*The Writing* 69).

Ricoeur's opinion, historiography, including literary history, attempts to think its own "place of statement," the relation between representations and social practices, and as such it has to abandon the neutrality of statements and their relations, if it is to describe the relations between discursive and non-discursive formations. Foucault himself refers to non-discursive domains which should be considered by archaeological research in the light of discursive practices — domains such as institutions, political events, economic practices and processes (202) — in which "language itself resists any reduction to a statement" (202). Like Foucault, Ricoeur spots a problem in the relations between discursive and non-discursive practices (or events), but unlike Foucault he believes that they cannot be thought without a speaking subject after all. This in its turn implies that there is no (quasi) transcendental relation to be established between, for example, a political event and medical practices.

Let us return to our point of departure. Does Foucault, then, want to introduce discontinuity instead of continuity? As demonstrated by the present paper, certainly not. Indeed, his *Archaeology of Knowledge* explicitly warns against the temptation of such levelling:

And to those who might be tempted to criticize archaeology for concerning itself primarily with the analysis of the discontinuous, to all those agoraphobics of history and time, to all those who confuse rupture and irrationality, I will reply: "It is you who devalue the continuous by the use that you make of it. You treat it as the support-element to which everything else must be related; you treat it as the primary law, the essential weight of any discursive practice; you would like to analyse every modification in the field of this inertia, as one analyses every movement in the gravitational field. But in according this status to continuity, you are merely neutralizing it, driving it out to the outer limit of time, towards an original passivity. Archaeology proposes to invert this arrangement, or rather (for our aim is not to accord to the discontinuous the role formerly accorded to the continuous) to play one off against the other; to show how the continuous is formed in accordance with the same conditions and the same rules as dispersion; and how it enters — neither more nor less than differences, inventions, innovations or deviations — the field of discursive practice." (*Archaeology* 192-93)

The above passage clearly states that both continuity and discontinuity are subjected to the same rules, which originate in the relations between statements. Only from

that vantage point is it at all possible to consider how they are conceived. In Kantian terms, this is an inquiry into the (quasi)transcendental conditions of both continuity and discontinuity, that is, an operation which *per se* precedes any historiography and in fact enables it.

This reading is further corroborated by Giorgio Agamben, one of the most eminent contemporary “Foucauldians.” Far from being “a manifesto of historiographical discontinuity” (Agamben 15), Foucault’s archaeology in Agamben’s interpretation remains outside all dichotomies between the “archaic” and “contemporary,” seeking to think an undecidability “in regards to diachrony and synchrony, unicity and multiplicity” (29).<sup>1</sup>

An analogous reading is to be applied to the concept of *episteme*, which is used by Foucault to replace “periods” or “epochs.” But *episteme* is not the same as an epoch: it is a quasi-transcendental epoch, a discursive condition, the historical *a priori* of what is always erroneously postulated (from the perspective of the spirit’s narcissistic self-reflectivity, the collective consciousness, the subject etc.) as the synthetic unity of a given epoch. The concept of *episteme* thus operates at the minimised level of the prehistorical (inter)discourse field. Nonetheless *episteme* is a unity, a totality — and this is not, in fact cannot be, eschewed by Foucault: “The episteme is not a form of knowledge [connaissance] or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifest the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities” (*Archaeology* 211).

Deleuze arrives at a similar conclusion, claiming that each *episteme* constitutes a new field of visibility and utterability — that which enables a history of ideas,

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1 According to Agamben, Foucault’s quasi-transcendental method, termed by the author himself a “paradigm” (hence his name “paradigmology” for archaeology), may be traced to Plato and to all later giants of western philosophy: Foucault’s distinction lies simply in having given it the most meaning-laden theoretical expression. Interestingly, Foucault considers even hermeneutic thought to be paradigmatic, although the thought itself lacks such awareness. The hermeneutic circle, to quote an instance, is paradigmatic rather than hermeneutic: “There is no duality here between “single phenomenon” and “the whole” as there was in Ast and Schleiermacher: the whole only results from the paradigmatic exposition of individual cases. And there is no circularity, as in Heidegger, between a “before” and an “after,” between pre-understanding and interpretation. In the paradigm, intelligibility does not precede the phenomenon; it stands, so to speak, “beside” it (*para*)” (27).

concepts, mentalities in the first place (Deleuze 56).<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, Deleuze, too, has had to admit that Foucault's approach is a type of Neo-Kantianism (67).<sup>2</sup>

What, then, is the philosophy of history underlying Foucault's archaeology of knowledge? It is hard to shake off the impression that it is simply "teleology" projected onto a quasi-transcendental "objectivity," or that it has an evident affinity with Heidegger's *Geschichte des Seins*.<sup>3</sup> The latter is suggested especially by the concept of *episteme* as an inappropriable epoch-making "foundation" of history, one that is accessible only through detailed analysis. Therefore I find persuasive the judgment of Manfred Frank, who compares Foucault's *episteme* to Heidegger's Being, *Sein*, with its ever unpredictable "sendings" (*Schickungen*), which is an equally invisible, unfathomable and epoch-making motor of the history of metaphysics (Frank 196). There is a further affinity with the so-called phenomenological concepts of history, as those found in Hans Blumenberg or Jan Patočka. Such a philosophy of history breaks neither with continuity nor teleology: what it breaks with is merely the romantic illusion that the final subject may be positioned in the place of the absolute subject, the Spirit, which might totalise the entire movement of history, insofar as it encompasses the *telos* of history. Thus the discussion shifts to a (quasi)transcendental level, at which the subject is precluded by the — never fully accessible — discontinuities from construing an unbroken continuum of history's flow. Still, we should not be misled by the discontinuities between discourses or epochs, keeping in mind de Certeau's insight that "the ruptures within and between language systems are in the end bridged by the lucidity of his [Foucault's] own universal gaze" (*Heterologies* 183). It makes no difference, after all, if the force at play is an accidental game of regrouping statements or the telic force of history; in both cases, insofar as there in fact occurs a transition from one epoch (*episteme*) to another, this transition can be envisaged on the basis of the most general and fundamental continuity, even teleology. The very refusal to perceive any *telos* in history implies a certain interpretation of its beginning and end. And as there is no archaeology without eschatology, there is no a-teleology

1 Later Foucault will replace *episteme* with the more fundamental concept of the dispositive. The weakness of *episteme* is its limitation to the (inter)discursive level, while the dispositive traverses both discursive and transdiscursive levels.

2 This is admitted in Foucault's own statement about Cassirer, who is considered the founder of Neo-Kantian transcendental history: "... nous sommes tous néo-kantiens" (*Dits et écrits I* 574).

3 Similarly Tomo Virk in his *Duhovna zgodovina* (22): "The idea of *episteme* presented in Michel Foucault's vision of history shows certain affinities with the *Geistesgeschichte*." Cf. the same work on the teleological nature of Heidegger's history of being (24-26).

without teleology. Referring to Heidegger's lecture on western metaphysics, we may say that the Jewish-Christian linearism cannot be fully overcome.

Moreover, Foucault's later thought on history and, most of all, his actual historiographical practice (which never resembled an anarchic patchwork of discontinuities) display an analysis which has moved at a similar (quasi) transcendental level ever since the beginning of his work, that is, since *The History of Madness* (*L'histoire de la folie*). Later, however, Foucault rarely employs the term "discontinuities," which went out of fashion in the 1980s. His own history writing, too, which is represented as a paradigm especially in the second part of *The History of Sexuality* (*L'Histoire de la sexualité*), reveals an unexpected double transfer of his historiographical practice. Firstly, Foucault takes up antiquity and early Christianity, a completely new theme for an author who had so far limited his historical studies to the Modern Age. Secondly, he no longer seeks a watershed moment between antiquity and Christianity. In fact, his historical study resembles a history *long durée*, with the obvious difference that the historical treatment in *The History of Sexuality* is in a way pre-historical: pre-historical in that it seeks to examine the factors which enabled real historical phenomena, rather than to describe these phenomena in their historical sequence — and this treatment is (quasi) transcendental. If Foucault is writing a history of morality, he is not necessarily describing historical forms of moral life: his interest lies in the history of ethics, as far as every form of morality presupposes the technologies of subjectivity. What he finds is that the shifts between antiquity and Christianity are both continuous and discontinuous. At this stage, he dubs his practice "the history of thought." Contrary to what the term might seem to suggest, it is not a history of ideas or mentalities, of forms of thinking: rather, it is a history of problematizations, which seek "to define the conditions in which human beings "problematize" what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live" (*The History* 10). It is "not a history that would be concerned with what might be true in the fields of learning, but an analysis of the 'games of truth,' the games of truth and error through which being is historically constituted as experience; that is, as something that can and must be thought" (6-7). This history of thought, which explores the conditions of thinking in each period, unfolds along a triple axis: the axis of truth, of power and of ethics. Combining the archaeological and genealogical descriptions, it examines all possible relations between these aspects: "... this project, whose goal is a history of truth. It was a matter of analyzing, not behaviors or ideas, nor societies and their "ideologies," but the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought- and the practices on the basis of which these problematizations are formed. The

archaeological dimension of the analysis made it possible to examine the forms themselves; its genealogical dimension enabled me to analyze their formation out of the practices and the modifications undergone by the latter” (11-2). Foucault’s point emerges still more clearly in the above-mentioned essay “What is Enlightenment”:

But we have three axes whose specificity and whose interconnections have to be analyzed: the axis of knowledge, the axis of power, the axis of ethics. In other words, the historical ontology of ourselves must answer an open series of questions; it must make an indefinite number of inquiries [...] but which will all address the questions systematized as follows: How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions? (318)

From this point on, Foucault’s is a hermeneutic and ethical (quasi)transcendental history. In its light, the archaeological and genealogical method finally leads to an understanding of one’s own position and to opening up the space of freedom, to conceiving ever new (unstable) subjectivations.<sup>1</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As it has been hopefully made clear by this somewhat more detailed, although still oversimplified discussion of certain fundamental foci of Foucault’s thought, most concepts circulating today under his name in literary science and the humanities in general have little to do with Foucault himself. Instead, such concepts are largely mere pseudo-Foucauldian “phantom” concepts, crumbling in the face of serious reflection.

But if Foucault himself was asked how exactly to write literary history, what might his answer be? Not a simple or direct one, so much is certain. And yet there is a tangible suggestion. With regard to Roland Barthes, Foucault claims that structuralism — contrary to the prevalent opinion that it has abolished all history — has in fact introduced a new concept of literary history. By adopting the concept of *écriture*, Roland Barthes has, according to Foucault, discovered a specific vantage point which enables the conception of a history of literature different from the

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<sup>1</sup> “Mon problème est de faire moi-même, et d’inviter les autres à faire avec moi, à travers un contenu historique determine, une experience de ce que nous sommes, de ce qui est non seulement notre passé mais aussi notre present, une expérience de notre modernité telle que nous en sortions transformé” (*Dits et écrits II* 863).

one practised until now. Literature used to be “read” as a global, general history, which embraced the totality of the collective consciousness of a period or of an individual’s life. Barthes’s concept of *écriture*, by contrast, has introduced the history of literature *qua* literature (Foucault, *Dits et écrits I* 1138), that is, the history of literature as a partial history which traverses collective as well as individual consciousness, showing that both collective and individual consciousness are parts of *écriture* itself. Literature is thus not perceived as a product of human culture, of humans as autonomous subjects, but as the place of birth and death of these supposedly enduring subjects. To sum it up: it is not man who makes literature but literature that makes man. Therefore literary history should not be subordinated to cultural history, as is often done today in Foucault’s name: research should not be limited to the question how literature mirrors the collective consciousness or collective (cultural) memory of a civilisation, which is all the rage in today’s cultural studies. Instead, an exploration of literature as the place of all other cultural products should be followed by inquiry into all historical transformations of such problematisations. This kind of literary history is advocated by Walter Benjamin as well:

What is at stake is not to portray literary works in the context of their age, but to represent the age that perceives them — our age — in the age during which they arose. It is this that makes literature into an organon of history; and to achieve this, and not to reduce literature to the material of history, is the task of the literary historian. (464)

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# When a Personal Narration Represents the Zainichi Korean Narrative: Lee Hoesung's *The Cloth-Fulling Woman*

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**Abstract** This article considers the meaning of the Zainichi Korean narrative, focusing on *The Cloth-Fulling Woman*, written by Lee Hoesung. Lee won the Akutagawa prize for this novella, causing a sensation in Japanese society and abroad. The heroine, Chang Suri, is represented by the synthesis of three axes: her mother, her husband, and her son. The mother's narration of Suri recalls her active image against the background of colonial Chosun in the 1920s. The image of Suri in relation with her husband, however, shows the typical process of Koreans being driven away from their homeland to wander and suffer, reflecting the phases of the colonial period. Meanwhile, to her son, Suri as a mother remains in the realm of childhood, with constant flashbacks to that period. The narrator controls these three narrative viewpoints through the lens of postwar Japan. That is, the synthesized image of Chang Suri represents the very historicity of the lives of Zainichi Koreans. Ultimately, Chang Suri's narrative does not remain personal, but becomes representative of the common Zainichi Korean experience.

**Key words** Zainichi Korean narrative; Lee Hoesung; *The Cloth-Fulling Woman*; the Akutagawa prize; representation of Korean characteristics

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literature, tracing a process for Korean literary scholars to approach the Japanese literary world. Dr. Kim's research also delves into the subject of acculturation in Korean and Japanese popular culture and the socio-political issues and disasters faced by Japan. Her work raises the question of the function of literature (Quaking Japan, yet literature. *Korean Journal of Japanese Studies*(13). 2015). **LEE Youngho** (M.A. in Chinese and Japanese Language and Literature) holds B.A.s (Korea University) in Media Creative Writing, Japanese Language and Literature, and Korean Language and Literature. His master's thesis is entitled "The Literature of Korean Residents in Japan from the 1970s: Focusing on Lee Hoesung's Akutagawa Prize." His current doctoral studies focus on the magazine *Kikan Madang* from the 1970s by Korean residents in Japan, and current articles include "An Analysis of the Tendencies in Japanese Research of Chosun Literature in the 1970s" and the Formation of the Literary Genre of Korean Residents in Japan in the 1970s."

### Introduction

Zainichi Koreans can be defined as people who have lived in Japan since the Japanese colonial era, including those who went to Japan after liberation in 1945. Zainichi Koreans began acquiring Japanese recognition in the field of literature from the late 1960s. Lee Hoesung was at the forefront in actualizing this recognition.

A second-generation Zainichi Korean, Lee debuted in the Japanese literary world in 1968. *To the Road Again*, his first novella, discusses the problems of a Zainichi Korean family. The novella was followed by several short stories and novellas. In 1971, Lee won the 66<sup>th</sup> Akutagawa prize for his novella *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* (*Kinuta o utsu onna*). Since 1935, the Akutagawa prize has honored Japanese literary works; Lee became the first foreigner to win the prize, not to mention the first Zainichi Korean. This achievement created a sensation. In the Japanese literary world, other Zainichi Korean litterateurs such as Kim Seokbum, Kim Shijong, Kim Changsaeng, Ko Samyung, Chung Kyimun, Chung Sungbak, and Yang Seogil took a strong interest in this event. In Korea, a translation of the prize-winning novella was published in 1972, becoming the first translation of a Zainichi Korean's work in the country. In 1977, *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* was translated into English and included in an anthology, drawing international attention.

Lee's early works primarily depict the longing and agony of youth and the pursuit of identity, issues germane to the second generation of Zainichi Koreans. That is, if the works of the previous generation were mainly about nationality or

ethnicity, the next generation focused on the existential problems of living in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

Despite its similarities to Lee's earlier works, *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* conveys a slightly different mood, and contemporary critics noted the idiosyncrasies of Korean characteristics present in the prize-winning novella. In certain ways, these comments may be characteristic of Zainichi Korean literature of the period. Traditional Korean customs are represented in descriptions of Korean clothes, food, and entertainment, and through phonetic transcriptions of the Korean language. Furthermore, there is a Korean element to the image of mother and the style of narration. This inclusion of typical Korean items and narration styles were in fact Lee's intention. In his analysis of Lee Hoesung's retrospective writings, Lee Youngho determines that the award-winning author purposely utilized Korean images to win the Akutagawa prize.<sup>2</sup>

Numerous studies have extended the point of research on contemporary comments. Mizutani Akio focuses on the image of the mother and determines that Lee's work reflected features of his mother from his childhood.<sup>3</sup> Yamazaki Masazumi views Chang Suri as a symbol of daughters and of Korean women, representing the homeland.<sup>4</sup> Park Yuha discusses the image of the mother in terms of gender.<sup>5</sup> In Korea, Song Hachun reviews Lee's complete literary activity and emphasizes the concepts of ethnicity and the image of the Koreans.<sup>6</sup> Other studies have analyzed the image of mother or the symbolism of Korean materials of the work.

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1 Takeda Seiji and Isogai Jiro also discuss the changing issues through the generations, unlike the first generation who longed for their homeland under the conflicting composition such as literature and politics or ethnicity and assimilation. See Takeda Seiji, *The grounds of Zainichi* (Tokyo:Kokubunsha, 1983); Isogai Jiro, *Transformation and succession of <Zainichi> literature* (Tokyo:Shinkansha, 2015).

2 Lee Youngho, "A Study on Formation of Literary Genre of Korean Residents in Japan in the 1970s: Focused on Receiving Akutagawa Prize of Lee Hoesung in 1971," *Hallim Japanese Studies* 27 (2015) 12.

3 Mizutani Akio, "Chang Suri expressed in *The Cloth-fulfilling Woman* written by Lee Hoesung," *Japanese Literature (Kokubungaku): Interpretation and Research of the text* 25 (Gakutosha, 1980).

4 Yamazaki Masazumi, *Literary theory of Zainichi in the postwar period: the range of criticism of Asiatic argument* (Yoyosha, 2003).

5 Park Yuha, *National identity and gender: Soseki, literature, modern* (Tokyo:Kurein, 2007).

6 Song Hachun, "Wound and national awareness that history left: discussion on Lee Hoesung(1, 2)," *Research of Korean Studies* 10, 11 (1988, 1999).

It is clear that the Korean characteristics or peculiarities depicted in Lee's work have been highlighted in both Japanese and Korean literary criticism. However, the perspective from each country diverges. To a certain extent, the Japanese perspective could be said to come primarily from an exotic interest. On the other hand, the Korean commentary stems from national ethnicity. Importantly, the implication of being Zainichi Korean is not limited to either Korea or Japan, but rather emerges historically in the relation between the two countries. Although Zainichi Koreans may live in Japan physically, the meaning of their lives does not converge within Japan, necessitating a perspective of their condition that embraces two sides. Kim Gaeja, for example, discusses a view of Zainichi Koreans with an expansive spatial notion encompassing Japan and the Korean peninsula, rather than being wedged between Korea and Japan.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, outside of Asia, other approaches to views of Zainichi Koreans have emerged. Melisa Wender takes a socio-political approach in investigating the works of Zainichi Koreans such as Lee Hoesung.<sup>2</sup> Elise Foxworth emphasizes the importance of Zainichi Koreans' "little narrative" (208) by exploring identity through private Korean home life and revealing an identity not wholly constrained by the grand narrative of Japan. That is, both Wender and Foxworth conclude that the identity of Zainichi Koreans should be investigated in the light of Japanese society and ideology, despite their involvement or lack thereof in that society.

Based on above comments, the present article returns to the starting point of when Lee Hoesung won the Akutagawa prize. That moment has relevance in that *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* has been praised for constituting the very formation of the literary genre of Zainichi Korean writing. Needless to say, the relevance of the novella is not only due to its winning of the prize. The book's representativeness is not determined merely from outside appraisals but rather from its structure and contents, as the following analysis reveals.

## 2. The Structure of *The Cloth-Fulling Woman*

*The Cloth-Fulling Woman* was published in *Quarterly Arts*(18) in June, 1971. The story is about the life of Chang Suri and her family. The first-person narrator is Suri's third son of five. The narrator looks back on the past and returns to the present, repeating a pattern of reminiscing, unfolding the memories of his mother

1 Kim Gaeja, "Spatial Expressions represented in Kim Shijong's poems and the ground of 'Residing in Japan(Zainichi)'," *Dongak language and literature* (67) 2016: 5.

2 Melisa L. Wender, *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan, 1965-2000* (California:Stanford University Press, 2005).

in an iterative process. Peppered throughout this retrospective narration are the narrator's father and grandmother's individual narrations recalling Suri in turns. That is, Suri is remembered by her mother, her husband, and her son, with the three vectors controlled by the narrator. However, information is presented as if the grandmother or father has spoken personally. Suri's entire image seems to be shaped through a synthesis of the narrations of three characters. It is therefore important to investigate the concrete nature of these three axes.

The novella covers three temporal and spatial points. One is Japanese-ruled colonial Chosun (present-day Korea) of the late 1920s. Another is Karafuto (present-day Sakhalin) of the 1930s and 1940s. Karafuto was the northernmost occupied territory of imperial Japan. This second period contains Suri's short visit home in 1939. The third point is Japan of the 1970s, when the narration starts. In sum, the story ranges from the 1920s until the 1970s with Chosun, Karafuto, and Japan as the backdrops.

The spatial movements presented in the story are based on Suri's real experience. Chang Suri is the real name of Lee Hoesung's mother, making *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* a kind of autobiographical work. Lee was born in Maoka, Karafuto in 1935. After Japan's defeat, the Soviet Union occupied Sakhalin in 1947, and Lee's family, disguised as Japanese, returned to Hokkaido, Japan. Receiving orders for compulsory repatriation to Korea, Lee's family was forcibly detained in the Hario camp located in Kyushu. Fortunately, a compromise with headquarters of GHQ was made. Lee's family wound up settling in Sapporo, Hokkaido, and Lee Hoesung began life as a *Zainichi* Korean.

However, the story of *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* does not stay within Lee's personal experience. Each setting of time and place presented in the story represents contemporary characteristics. Regardless of the author's intention, it is quite clear that time and space serve to embody the historicity of *Zainichi* Koreans. In this sense, the temporal and spatial aspects of the novella come to the foreground. Therefore, it could be said that the element controlling the entire story is not merely the narrative framework, but also the work's temporal and spatial settings.

In the colonial period, especially since the 1920s, the food and labor exploitation worsened. Driven away from their homeland, Koreans were forced to migrate toward Japan or its outposts in search of work. In the 1930s, on the threshold of full-scale war, compulsory conscription became stricter, and control of residents through organizations like the Consonance Association (協和會) expanded. The character of "Father" described *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* reflects these historical phases, as shown in the following text.

Mother wanted so much for Father, who seemed always to have been a wanderer, to settle down somewhere. Even though there seemed to be no way to avoid floating and drifting backwards, she had hoped to find some indication in Father's life that he cared too about holding on somewhere.

"I wonder where we'll go from here? When we had enough of Shimonoseki, we went from Honshu to Hokkaido, and then to Karafuto. Your life is also drifting along aimlessly. Why did you let them make you an official of the Consonance Association? You're too unsuspecting and so you are taken advantage of. But just because you were appointed to be an official, you don't have to go around flag-waving." (1977:129-130)<sup>1</sup>

As seen in the above quote, the narrator recalls how his mother, Suri, wanted her husband to avoid drifting aimlessly. Suri left the Korean Peninsula for Shimonoseki, a gateway to Japan in those days, and married a coal miner. Together they moved to Honshu, in the middle of the Japanese islands. They then further moved to Hokkaido, the northern extremity of the Japan archipelago, and set temporarily in Karafuto, the northern-most outpost of imperial Japan. These continuous spatial movements show how Suri's husband lives under the control of Japanese imperialism. Suri's dying testament to her husband is, "Don't let yourself drift" (135).

Consequently, spatial movements combined with time engraved in each movement create an important motif. Adrift in her real life, Suri wishes for settlement. This desire is applicable to the people of colonial Chosun living under similar conditions. In this sense, Chang Suri is personal, but the narrated Suri, in accordance with historical time and space, has concrete representativeness. The following section explores the symbolism of Suri through *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* three-pronged narrative framework.

### 3. Meanings in the Representation of Chang Suri

The beginning of *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* traces back to the end of 1944 when Suri dies at the age of thirty-three during the birth of her sixth child. The narrator recalls the moment, and looks back on his childhood with his mother. The episodes the narrator relates are somewhat humorous, with a folksy tone. However, the narrator is severely scolded by his mother for any moral wrongdoings. The narrator

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the text generally follow Beverly Nelson's translation (1977). In cases where correction is needed, the transcription has been altered and updated.

paints an affectionate, yet at-times stern and resolute image of his mother. Chang is also recalled as a devoted maternal figure, mending her family's worn clothes before she dies.

The narrator's memories of his mother do not follow chronological order. The story often pauses, turns backward, and remembers events fragmentarily and unexpectedly. In one example, Suri returns home for a while in 1939, accompanied by the narrator. It has been over ten years since she has been in Japan. She is wearing Japanese clothes and carrying a parasol. She is, in a sense, an unrestrained woman. The narrator describes how while crossing a bridge, he sees women in white Korean *hanbok* beating their laundry along the river's edge. He remembers the scene and recalls the sound of his mother cloth fulling in Karafuto as she piled starched clothes on a smooth stone and beat them with a wooden paddle, in image that arouses a distinctly Korean sensibility. The image of Suri depicted by the narrator is either that of a mother or a form of Korean symbol in terms of sensuous meaning.

Another episode depicts Suri's mother remembering her daughter. The narrator's grandmother relates to him a *sinse taryeong*, a traditional Korean storytelling method in which the story-tellers recites adverse events from life in a rhythm of lament. The narrator recalls:

As she became absorbed in her memories, she would begin mourning with her whole body, swaying her body and slapping her knees rhythmically, recounting stories about her daughter, crying and mourning over her dear daughter's whole life. (109-110)

The grandmother's method of recalling her daughter has an air of sorrow for a daughter who has wandered away from her homeland and died young. However, the grandmother's narration never reveals her innermost thoughts. The Korean *taryeong* is a basic rhythm and the contents the grandmother relates are mainly about Suri's maiden days in the 1920s, so the daughter is recalled as a young lady full of confidence. In fact, stories narrated through *taryeong* are traditionally satirical or humorous, so the rhythm is not buried in sorrow. The grandmother narrates while beating out a rhythm and swaying her body in time. Consequently, the mood depicted in the grandmother's recollections of her daughter is not entirely sentimental, as claimed by contemporary Japanese literary critics. To be certain, the grandmother conveys sorrow for her daughter's short life and her narrative is a mournful requiem. However, her method of remembering her daughter also carries

rather a brave tone. Hearing his grandmother's tale, the narrator comes to know how strong-willed his mother was in her maiden days.

It is also important to note how the grandmother's lamentation often centers on Japan. The narrator's father's work as an official for the Consonance Association for Japanese imperialism has created a rift between him and the narrator's grandparents. Lamenting her daughter's death, the grandmother says,

Is it fate? This happened, I suppose, because our country is in ruins. *Aigo*. She was promised to the spirit world. What made her come to this country of thieves? These people not only plundered our homeland, but they stole my daughter, too. It would have been better to become a fire-field farmer than to come to Japan. *Aigo*. My fate! My Suri! (111-112)

*Aigo* is a Korean exclamation of lament. As seen above, the grandmother accepts Suri's death as her fate. At the same time, however, she does not forget to criticize bitterly the plunder of Japanese imperialism. Referring to the Japanese as "thieves" reveals directly the grandmother's feelings of resentment.

At the suggestion of their daughter, the narrator's grandparents move to Karafuto in the late 1930s. Suri returns home to visit her parents for a little while in 1939. Only at this is it revealed that the narrator's grandmother is in fact Suri's stepmother, and that family conflict motivates Suri's move to Japan.

Suri takes her parents with her to Karafuto, where they are set up in a house described by the narrator as a "cave." They wear traditional Korean clothes, and make kimchi and fermented soybean paste, foods with a peculiar Korean aroma. From a modern viewpoint, the grandparent's lifestyle may seem typically Korean. However, from the perspective of the narrator as a child, there may have been something mysterious or eccentric to it, as this was not a lifestyle familiar to him in his daily life. The nature of Korean-ness undoubtedly changes over generations. In this sense, contemporary scholarship that simply points out Korean characteristics and sensibilities in *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* is limited in its superficial view of Zainichi Koreans.

In addition to the depictions by the grandmother and the narrator, another important facet of Suri's image is shown through her husband's remembrance of his wife. In the narrator's memory, the mother and father have occasional fights. However, Suri is in fact the unilateral victim of the father's violence. Shortly before Suri's death, her husband beats her. She packs her belongings and it seems she is about to leave her family at last. However, as she crouches listening to her sons'

crying, she abandons the idea of leaving. This scene shows Chang's resolute will to remain for her family rather than float away. In other words, she does not drift away, contrary to her husband having wandered around the Japanese archipelago. This will of Suri's sends her son a message about the meaning of the settled, sedentary life of a Zainichi Korean.

The violence of the narrator's father upon the mother is problematic. The father, of course, is Korean, but he is working as a member of an association of imperial Japan. The narrator's father also shows reluctance towards the lifestyle of Suri's parents. Japanese colonial policies barred Koreans from freely wearing traditional clothes. Working as a member of Japanese association, the father is in conflict with the narrator's grandparents, who do things like wearing Korean clothes and eating traditional foods. In the end, this conflict erupts in violence targeted at the father's wife. Suri is exposed to a double form of concatenated violence: the ordeals of colonial Chosun and patriarchy. It is no exaggeration to say that the father's violence intensifies through Japanese colonialism. The compulsory draft imposed on him and his life-long wandering have much to do with the colonial policy of Japan. That is, the character of father relates to Japanese colonialism. The route he takes is one along which Korean draftees moved during the colonial period. Consequently, the father's narration of Suri shows the life of a colonial Korean driven away from the homeland to an outpost in Japan. It is the very life of the first generation of Zainichi Koreans domiciled in Japan.

As mentioned above, Chang Suri is represented by the synthesis of three axes: the narrator, his grandmother, and his father. The grandmother's narration of her daughter recalls Suri's active image against the background of colonial Chosun in the 1920s. The image of the narrator's mother in relation to his father, however, shows the Koreans' typical process of being driven away from their homeland to wander and suffer, which reflects the phases of the colonial period. Moreover, to the narrator, the mother remains in the realm of childhood, flashed back to at any time. The narrator's story controls these three narrations overall in the position of postwar Japan. Through the medium of the narrator, the narrations by the grandmother and father recall Suri starting from her younger days. In sum, the synthetic image of Chang Suri represents the very historicity of Zainichi Koreans' lives.

#### **4. Successive *Zainichi* Korean Narratives**

The narrator mediates and connects the three stories of Suri. The narration that controls all three viewpoints from the perspective of the present differs from the concrete individual recollections the narrator has of his mother. The narrator

controls each narrative, including his own, and responds to his grandmother's *sinse taryeong*:

I almost think that Grandmother, without ever saying so explicitly, was trying to teach me as she repeated her crazed lament, her *sinse taryeong*. I think she was trying to train me as her successor to carry on the tradition, to relate my mother's story. It was as if Grandmother, who knew she would die soon herself, was commanding me to transmit this story of my mother, as she had literally to sing my mother's praises.

Actually, I had already begun to praise my mother openly. However, my *sinse taryeong*, of course, wasn't rhythmic and full of elegance like my grandmother's. Mine was just very commonplace talking. (119-120)

Through the *sinse taryeong* method of narration, the grandmother passes down her remembrances of Suri to the narrator in a traditional Korean style. The narrator receives it and writes it down. The narration, in other words, is in the writing. This style differs from the grandmother's style of narration, which is accompanied by oral rhythmical melody and physical beats. As he points, the narrator's style of story-telling is commonplace in comparison with that of his grandmother. However, it is necessary to notice that his narration connects with that of his grandmother and successively transmits his mother's story. In this sense, the narrator is the successor to his grandmother.

This succession of narrating sheds light on Lee Hoesung's reasons for writing this novella. Before Lee wrote *The Cloth-Fulling Woman*, four of his works had been nominated for the Akutagawa prize. However, in each instance Lee was excluded from the shortlist. Therefore, Lee utilized the image of Korea purposely to appeal to Japanese readers. The strategy succeeded, and at last he won the Akutagawa prize. It has been said that the moment a literary work leaves the author's hand, the work walks on its own. Regardless of the author's intention, interpretations of the work are another matter, in the realm of readers.

Modern scholarship on *The Cloth-Fulling Woman* has emphasized the image of the Korean mother or the typical Korean elements depicted in the story. Despite their adherence to a standard pattern, these analyses serve to address the general atmosphere of Lee's text. However, they fail to notice the concerns and function of the narrator.

In sum, the narrator mediates and connects three concrete narrations — his own, his grandmother's, and his father's-- to represent the life of a woman during

the Japanese occupation. His narration goes back and forth in time, and varies in place. Accordingly, memories surrounding his mother are at times mixed and presented fragmentarily. What is important, however, is that his narration continues, generating a new meaning. In this narration, the images of mother unknown to the narrator are bridged through the previous generation's remembrances. When the narrator reminisces about his mother, he writes down his thoughts. In this way, the narration does not progress in an orderly manner. He hears his grandmother and father's narrations and continues narrating in his own way. Thus, the narration presents a symbol of successive Zainichi Koreans' narratives.

## 5. Conclusion

In his award acceptance speech for the Akutagawa prize, Lee Hoesung mentioned Kim Saryang. Kim burst upon the Japanese literary world during the colonial period, and although his critically acclaimed work *Into the Light* (1939) was nominated to the Akutagawa prize, it did not win. Lee expressed regret for this, and appreciated the meaning of the award, declaring himself a long-time stand-in for Kim Saryang. It is noteworthy that Lee does not forget the literary activities of Koreans during the colonial period.

Zainichi Korean literature did not begin after 1945, but rather was rooted in the colonial period. Korean and Japanese literature blended on the Korean peninsula in the 1920s. Entering the 1930s, starting with Chang Hyukju and Kim Saryang, an increasing number of writers moved forward to Japan, forming the early history of Zainichi Korean literature. It is probable that Lee recognizes his literary activity as an extension and succession of this history. Moreover, Lee's winning of the Akutagawa prize marked a new era in the history of Zainichi Korean literature.

Lee's awareness of this new era can be inferred from the narrative style in *The Cloth-Fulling Woman*. In postwar Japan, the narrator recalls the memories of a mother who lived during the colonial period. Chang Suri's image is represented through the three axes of her mother, husband, and her son. The narrator mediates and connects the three stories, criss-crossing Japan and Korea from the 1920s until the 1970s. Compared with grandmother's narration of her daughter, the narrator's stories of his mother differ in their style and content. Nevertheless, the meaning of a consistent narration from a present-day viewpoint bears noting. It is clear that the narration of Chang Suri goes beyond the personal to become representative of the Zainichi Korean narrative.

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# When Adultery Meets Democracy: The Boom of Adultery Genres in Japan around 1950 and the Ethical Standards on the “*Fujinkaiho* ( 婦人解放 )”

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**Abstract** Around 1950, middlebrow novels and “adultery films” enjoyed enormous popularity in Japan. Primarily targeting female audiences, both genres became more common as various social and cultural changes occurred in postwar Japan. This growth in adultery-related storytelling is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Japan was under U.S. occupation and unethical themes such as adultery were discouraged by the Motion Picture Code of Ethics. Furthermore, these popular adultery genres were thought to represent the unspoken “inner minds” of the women they targeted. Focusing on “adultery films,” this paper argues that although they offered vicarious pleasure by pretending to deviate from oppressive social norms, they often reinforced the dominant ideology of the time. The majority of adultery films follow a similar plot pattern: (a) The heroine is generally a victim of the feudalistic marriage system of old Japan; (b) she meets a man who respects her as an independent individual; (c) with his *help*, she “liberated” from a repressive husband and marriage life. Focusing on the above features, this paper examines how the theme of adultery was represented in cultural spaces under the ethical standards built upon postwar American democracy.

**Key words** Adultery Literature; Literary Cinema; Adultery Film; Film Censorship; Emancipation of Women (*Fujinkaiho*)

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*Yoru No Onnatachi* and Film Censorship in Occupied Japan” in *Art Research* (March 2014) and “Film Censorship in Japan under the U.S. Occupation and the Regulation of Sexual Expression: Focusing on *A Hen in the Wind*” in *Korea-Japan Military and Culture Studies* (2015). A part of this paper was adapted from Bokyoung Kim’s dissertation.

## Preface

Around 1950, middlebrow novels and “adultery films” enjoyed enormous popularity in Japan. Primarily targeting female audiences, both genres became more common as various social and cultural changes occurred in postwar Japan. This growth in adultery-related storytelling is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Japan was under U.S. occupation and unethical themes such as adultery were censored by the Motion Picture Code of Ethics. Furthermore, these popular adultery genres were thought to represent the unspoken emotions and hidden desires of the women they targeted.

Until recently, no academic attention had been paid to these adultery genres. This paper examines the nature and influence of adultery films. First, in most adultery films, the heroine’s marital infidelity is limited to platonic affairs, and the two male rivals often symbolize the old values (e.g., feudalism and patriarchy) and new values (e.g., democracy and gender equality) of Japanese society. Second, these films targeted a particular gender, age, and class: young housewives. This paper will clarify how the theme of adultery was represented in cinema under the ethical standards built upon postwar American democracy (戦後民主主義, *Sengominshushugi*).

## The Chatterley’s Case and the Growth in Female Readership

In early 1950s Japan, almost every newspaper and magazine published a story about “The Chatterley’s Case,” a trial in which the publisher and translator of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, a novel by D. H. Lawrence, were accused of publishing obscene content (ワイセツ文書). Ironically, however, this intensive control over the book aroused the public’s curiosity. Although no book stores in Japan carried *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the book was sold at a premium price on the black market. Even forged copies were circulated due to its soaring popularity. When *The Weekly Asahi* (週刊朝日) announced the bestsellers of the first half of 1950, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was on the list (July 2, 1950 issue).

The famous literary critic Masato Ara (荒正人) made a suggestive comment

about this phenomenon (Ara, 44-5). First, Ara categorized *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as pornography, along with *Jin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅, *The Forbidden Legend Sex & Chopsticks*), *Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique* (*Het volkomen huwelijk*), and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. *Jin Ping Mei* is a Chinese novel written during the late Ming Dynasty that includes explicit descriptions of adultery and sexual behavior. *Ideal Marriage* is the best-selling sex manual published in 1926 by Dutch gynecologist Theodoor Hendrik van de Velde, a work that was introduced to Japan in 1946. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, part of *The Kinsey Reports*, analyzes the sexual activities of men and had a profound influence on the public perception of sexuality.

Each of these three books deals with sex as a subject to explore and present to the general public. Ara pointed out that the primary audience of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* consisted of women around the age of twenty. He attributed this phenomenon to the “sense of liberation” among Japanese women in postwar Japan, a mindset that made them think it is okay to do the same things and read the same books as men. He concluded his article by suggesting that it is important to appeal to women readers in order to be a bestseller (44-45).

In other words, postwar democracy and the “emancipation of Japanese women (婦人解放, *Fujinkaiho*)” under the American occupation created space for Japanese women to access to forbidden media, such as pornographic content. A new desire to consume “taboos” had emerged in Japanese women. The controversy around “The Chatterley’s Case” sheds light on this new social and cultural climate in early 1950s Japan.

Since the late 1940s, the number of women readers had gradually increased in Japan. For instance, the results of a vote conducted by *Yomiuri Newspaper* (読売新聞) for the ten best books of the year 1951 shows that votes from women were up to 43.9 percent (2). In a short comment about the vote, critic Samitaro Uramatsu (浦松佐美太郎) explained that novels such as *Gone with the Wind* and *Lady Musashino* were selected because they had “something that appealed to women’s hearts.” (今年の良書2) This idea suggests the influence that women readers had over the publishing market at the time.

### **Popularity of Film Adaptation of Adultery Literature**

Interestingly, at the beginning of the 1950s, the changes in cultural mood that Ara pointed out were also evident in the Japanese film industry. In its August 1951 issue, the editorial board of *Kinema Junpo* (キネマ旬報) published a list of films since 1945 that were adapted from literature (13-14). In addition, film critic

Hideo Tsumura (津村秀夫) wrote an article titled “A Short Essay on Cinema and Literature (映画と文学に関する断章)” in the same issue. He stated that film adaptations of novels had been increasing over the previous two to three years (10).

Based on this list from *Kinema Junpo*, film adaptation of literary works was a high priority of the Japanese film industry during this time. Of the films produced around 1950 in Japan, a large number were called “literary cinema (文芸映画, *Bungeieiga*),” a term used to categorize films adapted from literature. More important is that this tendency was especially common in film productions for female audiences. Along with *Shochiku* (松竹), which was renowned for its signature women’s films from the 1930s, *Toho* (東宝) and *Shintoho* (新東宝) concentrated on making literary cinema for women in the new postwar era.

*Shintoho*’s literary cinema or literary melodrama (文芸メロドラマ), often called “Koi Melodrama” after film producer Eisei Koi (児井英生), included several exemplary works: *A Dream Once Again* (夢よもう一度), which is based on the novel by Seiichi Funahashi (舟橋聖一), *Virgin Treasure* (処女宝, 1950), and *The Munekata Sisters* (宗方姉妹, directed by Yasujiro Ozu in 1950), which is based on the novel by Osaragi Jiro (大沸次郎). Koi also produced several literary melodramas at Toho, such as a film adaptation of Yasunari Kawabata’s (川端康成) *The Dancing Girl* (舞姫, directed by Mikio Naruse in 1951) and Kenji Mizoguchi’s (溝口健二) 1951 film, *Lady Musashino* (武蔵野夫人), which is based on the novel by Otsuka Shohei (大岡昇平). More popular were Mikio Naruse’s films from *Toho*. They achieved commercial success due to themes and stories that were closely related to the daily lives of ordinary people and aroused sympathy from female audiences. One of the main reasons that Naruse’s films, usually called “*Tsumamono* (妻もの, Wife stories)” or “*Fufumono* (夫婦もの, Husband and wife stories),” were able to achieve this appeal is that they dealt with marital problems and common issues that families face. In particular, the heroines agonized over their married life because of routine and ennui, the cinematic portrayal of which appealed to female audiences.

No single genre name emerged to categorize these types of films.<sup>1</sup> Various terms surfaced, such as “literary cinema (文芸映画),” “literary masterpiece (文芸巨篇),” and “romantic melodrama (恋愛メロドラマ).” Among them, films that focused on the extramarital relationships of “*Shufu* (主婦, housewife) heroines,” “*kantsu* (姦通, adultery),” or “*furin* (不倫, marital infidelity)” were advertised

1 These adultery films had received no academic attention until recently. To my knowledge, Marie Kono (河野真理江) was the first to explore this genre, focusing only on films produced from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s (Kono, “Bungei” and “Ryojyu”).

using terms such as “*kantsu eiga* ( 姦通映画 ),” “*kantsu-mono* ( 姦通もの ),” or “*fujin-mono* ( 夫人もの , wife stories) (Kono, “Bungei” 27).”

Marketing campaigns for these adultery films used words such as “femme covert ( 人妻 ),” “widow ( 未亡人 ),” “adultery ( 不倫 ),” “lust ( 愛欲 ),” “sensuality ( 官能 ),” and “female body ( 女体 )” to arouse the sexual curiosity of potential audiences. However, the biggest reason that adultery films found favor with female audiences is that they described “emotions involved in romance ( 恋愛心理 )” of modern Japanese women. Moreover, as Ara has pointed out, in the context of “emancipation of Japanese women” policies established by occupation authorities (i.e., revision of the Civil Code and abolition of adultery laws), heroines of adultery films made positive impressions on audiences because they were considered a “new” type of woman, independent individuals who were different from the Japanese women restrained by the institutions of family and marriage. Hideo Tsumura wrote, in an essay titled “The Boom of Adultery Films ( 姦通映画ブーム ),” that these films did not merely sensationalize extramarital sex to gain public attention. Rather, they expressed, through an art form, the emotions, desires, and choices of married women that had long been repressed by conservative morals or economic hardship (Tsumura, “Kantsu” 106-9).

Literary cinema reached the peak of its popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the middlebrow novel ( 中間小説 ) was also commercially successful. Satoko Kan ( 菅聡子 ), a researcher of modern Japanese literature, calls this phenomenon “the boom of *yoromeki* ( よろめき , A Japanese term referring to a woman’s extramarital affair )”(56). Kan suggested two reasons for this boom: (a) “liberation” of female sexuality in postwar Japan, as symbolized by the abolition of adultery laws, and (b) the Americanization of consumption by Japanese wives, a change in material circumstances that enabled them to engage in “*yoromeki*”(56). Like Ara, Kan thought that changes in the social situation of Japanese women in postwar Japan made adultery genres popular in the 1950s and 1960s.

As discourse surrounding the “adultery genres” popular around 1950 suggests, these works were not simply enjoyed as specimens of indecency. Rather, they were considered works of art that (a) explored the *inner minds* ( 内面 ) of ordinary women and (b) offered vicarious pleasure to readers and audience who wanted to project their secret desires for free love ( 自由恋愛 ), which were difficult to fulfill in their real lives. At the same time, because the term “ordinary women” typically refers to “housewives” in this discourse, these kinds of films tended to reinforce the ideology that created the desire for vicarious pleasure in the first place. In this sense, adultery films might be said to have instilled ideas that would perpetuate the social

and moral restrictions that they seemed to challenge, not only exploring but also strengthening the hold of oppressive ideas in their “inner minds.”

### **The Film Censorship and Representations of Adultery**

Advocating for free love on the surface, most adultery films use conventions that criticize and exclude heroines who express desires that deviate from normative sexual morality (as well as the female audiences who experience pleasure in the process of sympathizing with these heroines).

Early on, the majority of literary melodramas, including adultery films, were based on novels. As their popularity increased, adultery films with original scenarios increased, securing a market independent of middlebrow novels.

The genre conventions of adultery films are particularly clear in two exemplary works: *The Naked Face of a Flower* (花の素顔, 1949), by Minoru Sibuya (渋谷実), and *A Jealousy* (嫉妬, 1949), by Kozaburo Yoshimura (吉村公三郎).<sup>1</sup> *The Naked Face of a Flower*, a film based on Seiichi Funahashi's novel, explores the extramarital affair of the heroine, Mamiko (麻美子), a married woman running a dressmaking shop with a painter on a back street of Ginza.

On June 6, 1949, at a meeting about *The Naked Face of a Flower* with Harry Slott from the CIE<sup>2</sup> and few people from *Shochiku*, Slott issued instructions for film production. *Shochiku* representatives explained that the purpose of the film was to “indicate the difference between new home life after the war and the old feudalistic family system.” Slott required them to avoid eroticism and sensationalism and emphasized that portraying adultery in film, despite recent changes in Civil Law, was not desirable.<sup>3</sup> These instructions from the CIE censor likely explain why the relationship between Mamiko and her lover never exceeded platonic love. They do not become sexually involved in the film. Interestingly, however, the film does depict the sexual relationship between her husband and his lover, presenting his infidelity as forgivable because the sex happens “only once.” Suggesting a clear

1 Unfortunately, *The Naked Face of a Flower* is not available for screening. Thus, analysis of this film is based on the scenario housed in the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University (Saito). Analysis of the film *A Jealousy* is based on the Videocassette release in 1993 (Yoshimura).

2 Civil Information and Education Service (CIE) was a section of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), which functioned as the central agency for this propagation policy.

3 General Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Pacific. Historical Articles on the War in the Pacific, GHQ and Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Records in the National Diet Library (*Kokuritsu kokkai toshokan*), Tokyo, Sheet no. CIE (D) 01447, Box 5305.

double standard, punishment for marital infidelity in early adultery films depended on the gender of the character who committed it.

The reason the CIE censor did not strongly object to the production of this film, despite its sensational topic, was the purpose of the film explained by *Shochiku* representatives. In the film, Mamiko is mistreated and repressed by her in-laws. This mistreatment highlights an intention to advocate the new concept of family life in postwar Japan and paint the old feudalistic family system in a negative light. In order to make the heroine's adulterous behavior suggest liberation from the feudalistic family system, the repressive treatment of her in-laws had to be depicted as damaging and unjust.

This critical tone is apparent in *A Jealousy* as well. In the opening sequence of the film, the heroine, Toshiko ( 敏子 ), is clearly enslaved to her husband, Kosuke ( 耕介 ), whose attitude toward her is oppressive and arrogant. Toshiko constantly revolves around Kosuke, who is positioned in the center of the frame, and their facial expressions communicate the inequality of their relationship. Most importantly, Tsukazaki ( 塚崎 ), a military acquaintance of Toshiko's younger brother and the man with whom Toshiko has a platonic affair, is a foil to Kosuke. This soldier respects Toshiko's individuality and looks after her. Whenever Toshiko is with Tsukazaki, they are arranged in parallel, in sharp contrast to the scenes with Toshiko and her husband, symbolizing the gender equality between the two men. In other words, this film describes the adulterous partner of the heroine as an "ideal man" of postwar Japan. In this way, *A Jealousy* exemplifies the cultural conditions that made adultery, in many novels and films, a tool to represent the liberation of Japanese woman from an oppressive marital system and the pursuit of a new form of personal fulfillment.

However, Toshiko's liberation develops in a strange direction. At the end of the film, Tsukazaki proposes to Toshiko, who has left home and decided to start a new life. At first, she says to him that she wants to be alone for a little while and establish her economic independence, a line that apparently does lip service to CIE censors who wanted to encourage the emancipation of Japanese women. She finishes, however, by promising to accept his proposal in the near future, and the film ends showing the new happy couple anticipating a bright future together. After all, the freedom and independence that Toshiko has achieved by leaving her oppressive husband is only temporary. Starting over on her own terms is only a transition to happiness through another marriage. Using two opposing male characters, *A Jealousy*, like other adultery films, criticized the feudalistic system of marriage and pointed to a new kind of marital relationship based on postwar democracy.

However, this image of new gender relations, despite its democratic flavor, does not liberate women from the role of “wife” or from the institution of marriage.

*A Jealousy* satisfied CIE censors, who highly praised its treatment of “women’s liberation” in postwar Japan (General, CIE (D) 00227). In other words, they took the bright future promised to Toshiko, being a “housewife” married to an ideal man, as “liberation.” Beyond this outcome, they likely did not care about the heroine’s freedom, only attending to the way the film presented Japanese feudalism as evil and democratic gender relations as good. Of course, the binary opposition between the two is the narrative of occupation they wanted to propagate, that America had successfully liberated Japanese women from the feudal system of old Japanese society.

### **Conclusion**

This article examined how adultery films during the U.S. occupation of Japan represented the “emancipation of women.” Most of these films present two opposing male characters, one representing old Japan and the other representing the American democratic values of postwar Japan. Also, the advocacy of freedom and liberation for women in these films is limited to the extent that the heroines maintained their sexual chastity. In addition, the liberation only occurs when a (platonic) extramarital lover, who symbolizes postwar democracy, “saves” her from her oppressive husband through a new marriage.

Aiko Ogoshi (大越愛子) has argued that the “emancipation of women” propagated during the early stages of U.S. occupation weakened when the social structure of postwar Japan was established (51). The ideal family model in postwar Japan was a salaryman husband and a housewife who would support him and their children. While the liberation of women had been held up as a progressive idea, the idea that women should return to the home simultaneously gained traction.

Scholars have suggested that in Hollywood, a large number of films were produced to persuade women to return to the “home” as a countermeasure against sharply increasing male unemployment (Kato 137). However, these Hollywood films never used obvious propaganda methods. Instead, they underscored maternal love, the everlasting ideal of femininity, and the guilt felt by mothers amidst family tragedy to generate intense pathos. A similar intention might be seen in Japanese adultery films produced during postwar U.S. occupation. Pretending to express the emotions and desires of housewives, they deftly channeled specific ideas into the minds of female viewers, just as Hollywood films did. By arousing the emotions of housewives, adultery films made them feel liberated when, in fact, they were

encouraged to confine themselves to a home provided by a husband.

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# Keeping or Breaking: Ethical Conflict and Ethical Choice in Shimazaki Toson's *Broken Commandment*

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**Abstract** The main ethical line of Shimazaki Toson's *Broken Commandment* is a conflicting process of keeping or breaking commandment for civilian intellectual Segawa Ushimatu who was born with eta background. Through the description of his mental anguish, the novel reveals an intense ethical conflict between the modern concept of eliminating class distinctions, advocating the equality of human rights and the traditional concept of remaining feudal hierarchy in a period of social transition after Meiji restoration. Under the influence of modern enlightenment, Ushimatu's self-consciousness was awakened and he finally chose to break the commandment. He exposed his real identity in public and repented his concealing in the past. Through his ethical choice, the novel shows a strong appeal for social justice and his consideration of individual moral transformation.

**Key words** Shimazaki Toson; *Broken Commandment*; Segawa Ushimatu; Ethical Literary Criticism

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*Broken Commandment*, a novel written by Shimazaki Toson, described an elementary school teacher named Ushimastu Segawa keeping his father's commandment: Never reveal his eta<sup>1</sup> background. Once the commandment were

1 During the Edo Period, some people, named "Eta" or "Burakumin," were discriminated as a distinct subgroup of the Japanese society. They formed their tribe community, and also named "tribesman." In 1871, the government declared to abolish this clan system, they became "new commoners." However, they had never shared the equal rights with others.

broken, he would be abandoned by the society. Segewa is a young man with progressive thoughts and awakening self-consciousness, he hates the evil forces, sympathizes with the weak and idolizes Rentarou Inoko who is an enlightenment thinker with eta background. He was greatly encouraged by the works written by Rentarou Inoko. On one hand, he wishes to challenge the society and declare his real identity in public; on the other hand, he is afraid of the pitiless social reality. Therefore, this dilemma has trapped him in the condition of hesitation, indecision, inaction, anguish, and worries. However, his progressive inclination and good relationships with students provoked the suspicion and hatred of the school president who is actually reckless with greed boasting his ideas of loyalty to the sovereign. The president and school inspector regarded Ushimastu Segawa as a dissident, acted in collusion and tried to exile him with illegal ways. Later, Rentarou Inoko was killed by his political enemies, which pushes Segewa to make up his mind to declare his eta background, and ask for his students' forgiveness for concealing his family background in the past. He broke the commandment, the whole Japanese society will reject and not forgive him. With his lover's courage and comfort, he moved to Texas, a city in North America, to begin a new life.

### **The Main Ethical Line and Ethical Environment in *Broken Commandment***

The main ethical line of *Broken Commandment* is the whole process of Ushimastu Sewaga, as a civilian intellectual with eta background, from keeping the commandment to breaking it, and his change from a man formerly yielding to the reality by concealing his eta background to finally confessing it to his students and repenting his concealing. The novel reveals accurately and delicately the anguish, wavering attitude, and the struggling of Ushimastu sewage's inner world during the process.

Clan system involved in this novel was a special political system existing in ancient Japan — The system of identity distinction in feudal society was a product of blood relationship of tribes in primitive society which still survived in a hierarchal society, and it caused great influence in Japanese society. Due to career and other reasons, this identity distinction system which did not originate from ethnical distinction was fixed and led to some tribes treated as lower class factitiously. After the Meji Restoration, the governors declared to abolish this unfair identity system superficially. However the feudal forces were still powerful in modern Japan, and the problem of eta remains still unsolved after the Second World War, not even to mention the time when *Broken Commandment* was published. In 1920, the Writer wrote the following when he reviewed the history:

To look back to the past half century, the remains of feudal society still exist in our internal and external world. Though we experienced the Meiji restoration, something deeply rooted in the past has not been renewed totally. To some extent, something presented to us now is just the modernized remains of the feudalist society. (Liu zhenying 1-2)

The author is deeply dissatisfied in his contemplation over “the modernized remains of the feudalist society,” which is the coexistence of the superficial and shallow modernization and the remaining old thoughts and concepts in the new period.

The motif of *Broken Commandment* concentrates on criticizing the unreasonable and brutal identity system, the corruption and darkness of educational institution under the monarchism of the Japanese emperor. More importantly, it reveals the intense ethical conflicts of the modern Japanese society under the ethical environment of the transformational period of Meiji restoration.

### **Ushimatsu Segawa’s Ethical Anguish and Ethical Conflicts**

Ushimatsu Segawa was a typical product of northern Shinshu. At twenty-two he had graduated with honours and a teacher’s certificate<sup>1</sup> from the teachers’ college in Nagano, and became an elementary school teacher in Iiyama. People in the town only knew him as a devoted young teacher. That in reality he was an eta, a “new commoner,” as the official phrase had it, on one had any idea. A “Young teacher” is his decent social identity in public, while an eta is another shameful social identity he concealed on purpose. His father once told him:

How they were not descended, like the many groups of eta who lived along the Eastern Highway, from foreign immigrants or castaways from China, Korea, Russia, and the nameless islands of the Pacific, but from runaway samurai of many generations back; that however poor they might be, their family had committed no crime, done nothing dishonorable. One thing more he added: that the only way — the only hope — for any eta who wanted to raise himself in the world was to conceal the secret of his birth. “No matter who you meet, no matter what happens to you, never reveal it! Forget this commandment just once, in a moment of anger or misery, and from that moment the world will

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<sup>1</sup> In Japan, the elementary and junior high school teachers are employed by the government, they were divided into official teacher and apprentices.

have rejected you forever.” (9-10)<sup>1</sup>

The word CONCEAL summarizes everything about commandment. During the young and happy period with daydreams, what Sewaga concerns is the experience of learning, the desire of practicing in the outside world, but he seldom remembers the commandment ordered by his father. He suddenly became aware of the importance of concealing his identity one day, as it matters the survival of his life.

Ushimastu Sewage is a man with complex and contradictory characters, he is over sensitive with his eta background. “Whenever people talk or ask about eta, he would become nervous. He is used to avoiding any topics about eta” (5). Because Ohinata, a man with eta background has been driven from the hospital, he becomes suspicious and absent-minded, then he decides to move to Rengeji temple from the restaurant in Takajo Street. Actually this time he has no solid reason for moving, but because he harbors doubts and fears.

One day, Ginnosuke and Bunpei came to the temple to visit him, their talks involves Inoko, Bunpei shows his dispraise to Inoko. During their discussion, Sewaga keeps silent and stares at the oil lamp with a blind mind. A natural outflow of a painful expression glooms his young and handsome appearance. After the friends have left his house, Sewaga paces back and forth in the room and can't help repressing the internal excitement. Reflecting on what happens during the daytime and recalling the content they discuss as well as their facial expressions, he cannot help trembling. He reviews the past, and feels regretful and self-condemned for his carelessness, and nothing would make him feel at ease. “Exhausted with worries that led to no clear conclusion. Ushimatsu spent a tortured night, his body restless and his mind wandering in dark places” (38). Finally, he made up his mind: he would never mention a word about Inoko to others, such as his name, his works, his behavior and so on. He sells the books he owns written by Inoko and erases the seal or his signature in the books.

He then begins to blame himself again after helping Senta finishing the tennis game. “Rentaro, Ohinata, and now Senta... linked together, the three names made him shiver with fear. Always, to spite him, wisdom dawned too late” (61). He becomes utterly confused, horror and suspicion control him and make him illusory at the night of the Emperor's Birthday. In illusion, he heard his father's voice from the distant farm which reminds him of the lifelong commandment.

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1 All the excerpts of Shimazaki Touson's *Broken Commandment* are taken from the following source — Shimazaki Touson, *Broken Commandment* (in English). Trans. Kenneth Strong (Tokyo: Orion Press, 1974).

In writing letters to the seriously ill Inoko, he is always irresolute and hesitant in speech, because he dares not to expose his secret of his eta background. “A spasm of guilt struck him as he sighed it. Tossing the brush aside, he sighed, and crept between the cold sheets. No sooner had he begun to doze than nightmare after nightmare crowded upon him” (66). For many times, he has the impulse to throw away his spiritual burden by revealing his identity secret to Inoko. However, he recalls the willing of his father and the warnings from his uncle, then becomes blameful, and filled with fear, confusion and anguish. While talking with Takayanagi “three times denied the man to whom he owed so much, whom he revered as his teacher and guide, as if he were no more to him than any stranger” (149).

Through the description of Sewaga’s inner anguish, the novel *Broken Commandment* reveals the conflicts between the new things and the old ones, the ethical conflicts between the modern concept of eliminating the class distinction, advocating equal human rights and the feudal concept of class distinction which still remained in modern Japanese society. Criticizing the dark reality and advocating the democratic equality in Japanese modern society form the keynote of this novel. And Sewaga’s ethical identity has been transformed totally during the process: from the concealing of his eta background to a civilian intellectual appealing for human equality with awakening self-consciousness.

### **Ushimatsu Sewaga’s Awakening Self-Consciousness and Ethical Choices**

To break the commandment, or to keep the commandment, that is a matter about to obey the feudal force or fight against it. Through Sewaga, who considers both the advantages and disadvantages, he experiences intense inner conflicts. With his father’s commandment warning, the ethical choice made by Sewaga is to keep the commandment for many years. Under the influence of Inoko, his self-consciousness gets awakened, and the tragic death of Inoko finally urges him to make the second ethical choice: to expose his eta identity.

Rentarou Inoko is an enlightenment thinker, with eta background. Sewaga admires him as a senior and is deeply moved by his behaviors. Sewaga talks about Inoko frequently, communicates with him by letters, and defenses for him. The works of Inoko focus on psychological research which are amazing and touching. And sewage buys all his books. “The more he read, the more he felt himself drawn irresistibly toward a new world. His true self-awakening as an eta had begun” (11).

*Confessions* is a latest book published by Rentarou Inoko, with its first sentence “I am an outcast” (11). A vivid account followed of the ignorance and squalor to which the eta had been reduced, with portraits of many fine eta men and women

whom society had discarded merely because of their eta origin. “And bittersweet recollections of the writer’s own struggle — from the frustration of his early search for spiritual liberation, and tortured doubts in face of society’s contradictions, to his finding at last of new life, like a long night giving way to the dawn sky” (11). The thought expressed in *Confessions* is “ ‘the new torment’ being endured by the lowest class in Japanese society” (10). Sewaga “found himself reading with his thoughts concentrated not on Inoko’s narrative, but on himself” (12). He finds out his soul mate in it. However, “reading his hero’s *confessions*, instead of admiration he felt only bitter pain” (13). Through the expression in his eyes, the ways of his walking and the voice of his talking, the loss of his active personality is clearly showed. Although Sewaga’s self-consciousness gets awakened, he realizes the need of self-esteem, he does not find a way out. “But no tears, no arguments, however deeply felt, no ideology, however passionate and powerful its attack, could break down such prejudice; so it was that great numbers of the ‘new commoners,’ honourable, law-abiding citizens, had been ostracized from birth, buried alive in a world that hardly knew of their existence” (37).

While facing reality, Sewaga also shows his image of standing-up. He maintains that “Even as an eta, I belong to society — eta or no, like any other man I have the right to live!” (45) He admires Inoko, “one couldn’t help admiring the courage of an eta who had raised himself from such depths and fought so hard for his convictions” (56). He pitied the nameless eta students, and asks for the inspector’s favor on behalf of him. He has showed his mercy to the rich guy Ohinata and the child Senta. Ohinata has been driven from the hospital in sickness, then driven from the lodging, cruelly humiliated, finally he was carried out silently into the street. All deepens his awareness of the tragic fate of eta. For senta, he takes his tennis rackets and begins his tragic fighting under the ironic laughter of the onlookers. Sewaga’s attitude becomes more and more determined especially when he debates with Bunpei, he chooses to defend Inoko. All those behaviors prove that Sewaga has become a passionate, active and well-determined soldier-like fighter from a man once in confusion and hesitation.

As fireworks vanish as soon as they appear, Sewaga’s determination of struggling weakens quickly. His self-consciousness has been awakened, yet he is so confused, painful, indecisive and hesitant. The harsh and almost overwhelming traditional power suffocates him and puts him in despair, and he even fears for awakening. Indeed, another reason for his concealing of eta background come out of the fear of losing his beloved girl O-shio.

The death of Rentarou Inoko pushes Sewaga finally to choose commandment

breaking. He commits his crime of concealing his real identity in the past to his students. At the ending part of the novel, Sewaga holds his hands on the students' desk and bends his head in acknowledgment of his guilt. Feeling somehow that he still had not humbled himself enough, Ushimastu stepped back from the desk and knelt on the wooden floor, and said "Forgive me! Forgive me!" "I am an eta, an outcast, an unclean being!" (230) Some private business brought Ginnosuke to school, he witnesses "Ushimatsu, on the verge of hysteria, was kneeling abjectly to his colleagues; he bowed his forehead to the floor, burying his shame in the dust and dirt" (230). Tears flow on his face while he makes his confession. He begs to his beloved O-shio asking her to think of him, "if ever she did think of him again — as a criminal, an offender against society" (235).

The novel *Broken Commandment* demonstrates the tragedy of an awakening person.<sup>1</sup> The confession made by Sewaga is easily understandable because he conceals it for such a long time, while his servility is far beyond comprehension. He regards the Eta too humble to gain readers' sympathy. On the one hand, it helps illustrating the writer's motivation of emphasizing the sorriness of awakening. More primarily, it reveals the deficiency of Japanese enlightenment movement, the real concepts of "self-consciousness," "individual liberation" are not established, the root of which is originated from the incompleteness of the bourgeois revolution in Meiji restoration and the weaknesses of bourgeoisie under the oppression of feudal political power. This feature has been reflected not only through the hero Sewaga, but also through those positive characters such as Inoko and the lawyer in the town.

Ushimatsu Sewaga's ethical choice, to break the commandment and leave his motherland to live in a distant country, calls for our further contemplation. Some scholars hold this view: "To break the commandment symbolizes Sewaga's awakening of his sense of human rights and equality, and his resisting struggle against identity distinction. Meanwhile, to leave the motherland implies the weakness of bourgeoisie civilian intellectual, and awakening didn't mean the ability and action to change current situation" (Shimazaki Toson 223). Indeed, through the ethical choices made by Sewaga in *Broken Commandment*, it reveals the appeal for social justice, and the consideration of individual moral transformation.

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1 "The Sorriness of Awakening," is an article also written by Shimazaki Toson, it is about the memory of the writing of the novel *Broken Commandment*.

# Green or Greed?: The Irony of Ecology in Jane Smiley's *Good Will*

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**Abstract** Pulitzer Prize laureate Jane Smiley's novella *Good Will* tells a story of a man named Bob who lives a self-contained as well as self-deceiving life in a valley. His interactions with nature and people are hindered by his greedy anticipation, egotistic imagination and male chauvinist domination. The pastoral life he imagines turns out to be a bubble in the end. Mainly from the eco-ethical and ecofeminism angles, the paper probes into Bob's intentional living a green life and his later failure caused by his greed for absolute personal power over his family and environment; meanwhile, Smiley's ecological poetics can also be discovered through a series of irony of ecology in the story, which is different from the ecological implications in traditional fictions.

**Key Words** irony of ecology; nature; imagination; egotism; androcentrism

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*Good Will* published in 1989 is a novella written by the American novelist Jane Smiley, who won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1992 for her novel *A Thousand Acres* (1991). It's a story narrated by the protagonist Bob (Robert Miller), a Vietnam veteran, about his trying to live entirely off the land after the war for years with his wife Liz (Elizabeth Miller) and his son Tommy (Thomas Miller) in a valley 3 miles to a town named Moreton, in Pennsylvania. They seem to lead a life of minimalism, such as no savings in the bank, no electricity, or TV, or telephone, or even mirror in the house, no motor vehicles for transportation. On top of that, their life is almost self-sufficient: the Millers live in the house built by themselves; they eat and drink what they grow, raise, fish and hunt; they wear what they weave and sew; they use

or play what they make; and they barter for what they can't make. They derive almost everything they need from nature. This seemingly green and peaceful life is interrupted by an interview from a writer named Tina Morrissey at the beginning of the story, and later broken up after a series of upgrading unexpected incidents involving Tommy and his African American classmate Annabel Harris and her mother Lydia Harris, a black mathematician. The green life out of good will turns out to be gloomy in the end.

As to researches in China, papers and theses mainly center on Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* and only a few on her other fictions like *Good Faith*, *Private Life*, *Ten Days in the Hills*, and *Moo*. However, there is none about *Good Will* yet. By contrast, there've been relatively more researches on Jane Smiley and *Good Will* overseas. For instance, Nakadate, in one of the chapters of his book *Understanding Jane Smiley*, focuses on Bob Miller's egotism and tyrannical dominion and control over his wife and son, of which the causes and effects are summarized. Considering the underneath reasons for Bob's determination to control the conduct of others, Nakadate does mention Bob's obsessive need to demonstrate Thoreau-like self-sufficiency and to withdraw and achieve a separate peace after his tour in Vietnam, but the whole analysis is not from an eco-ethical perspective. Suzanne MacLachlan's article "Kitchen-Table Tales of Desire and Will" published in *Christian Science Monitor* on Oct. 30, 1989 is a book review of Smiley's two novellas, *Ordinary Love* and *Good Will*. MacLachlan also regards Bob Miller as the egomaniac, but the article is a very brief and short introduction to the novella without any further justification. Kathryn Morse's "Walmart, Homesteads, and Unintended Consequences" is a review on *Good Will*, published in *Environmental History* (Oct. 2005). Morse points out the conflicts Bob, Liz, and Tom face between modern homesteading and American culture of consumption. However, Morse doesn't explore the novella from an eco-ethical angle either. According to Jesse Cohn, Bob's fatal mistake is "his commitment to his own trope of 'self-containment'" (Cohn 183). What's more, Cohn points out that Bob projects his own wishes too much on his family without any realization, and contains his family and himself in such a strict way so as to be far away from the exchange economy. However, Bob's attitude towards nature hasn't been mentioned and his seemingly ecological living style hasn't receive any attention. Accordingly, the paper is to study Bob's ecological ethics and to dig out the ironies hidden behind his superficially green life.

Mainly from both eco-ethical and eco-feminism angles, the paper probes into Bob's intentional living a green life and his later failure in doing so, by analyzing his eco-ethical relationship with the environment and the people, as well as the

ironies existed in the seemingly ecological living style. The paper finds out that behind Bob's "good will" of living a green life against capitalism hides his real greed for keeping everything under his control like God. The ending disillusionment of his dreaming pastoral life proves to be an irony of ecology, and thus reveals Jane Smiley's eco-ethical ideology, which is very different from those of traditional writers whose focuses are usually the worsening environment caused by the damages from humans, through which novelists want to call the reader's attention to environmental deterioration, arouse their ecological consciousness, and hope for a universal action to protect the earth by breaking the dualism idea of man/woman, culture/nature, and etc. Nevertheless, Jane Smiley puts an emphasis on the feasibility of realizing a totally green world with every creature and plant sharing an equal right and status, by unfolding the eco-ethical dimension of human nature.

### **Nature: An Idealized Refuge and Reservoir of Resources for Bob**

Throughout the whole novella, Bob Miller resorts to wilderness for a peace of mind and lives off the abundance of land. Nature is where Bob longs to harbor so as to keep himself and his family far away from the disappointing world outside, for "wildernesses embody both 'soft' 'shallow' Romanticism — a provisional getaway from the mechanical or total administered hurly-burly — and, in 'deep' terms, a radical alternative" (Morton 114). After his return from the Vietnam War, he purchases the abandoned farm of about 55 acres from an estate sale for 3300 dollars, and thereafter lives a self-contained life in the valley for years. The Millers seldom get involved into any social contact except that the son Tommy, despite Bob's plan of homeschooling, goes to a grammar school for one last year under Liz's insistence, and Liz has gone to church on weekends for almost one year. The family's annual ritual, the only entertainment in the town within a whole year, is on the day after Thanksgiving, when they walk to town, eat early at the Claytons' house, and go to a movie. They never go to any markets except once when Tommy twists and breaks apart the dolls of his classmate's and they have to buy the same ones in Walmart as compensation. The rest of their days are spent in the valley without any contact with the outside world year after year. Bob depends on nature as a steady fence against the corruption of money and the sophistication of society. For Bob, the absence of money, TV, electricity, telephone and cars at home guarantees a clean and purified environment for him, his wife, and esp. for his son Tommy. Wilderness that surrounds them, in his eyes, is just a net filtering everything sordid from outside. Nature functions as a provider of vacuum or an idealized refuge for them to live in. As a contrast to nature, money is what Bob despises, just like what

he tells Tina, the interviewer: “Money is the precise thing Liz and I don’t focus on, which is why we earn so little. As soon as you bring up the money, I notice, conversation gets sociological, then political, then moral. I would rather talk about food, or swimming, or turkey hunting, or building furniture” (Smiley 98)<sup>11</sup>. To some extent, his self-contained living style is a kind of protest against the outside society of consumerism, for “one could use one’s refusal to consume certain things in certain ways as modes of critiquing modern society” (Morton 116). And yet he can’t in fact change anything outside but only escape, just as what is said by Morton — “Boycotting and protesting are ironical, reflexive forms of consumerism. By refusing to buy certain products, by questioning oppressive social forms such as corporations or globalization, they point toward possibilities of changing the current state of affairs, without actually changing it” (Morton 117).

Bob considers himself a deist. For countless times, Bob enjoys himself in his observation of nature — “From the house, everything is perfect. The natural landscape offers enclosed, familiar, pleasing curves, softened with August haze and prolific vegetation — sugar maple, black cherry, hickory, butternut, walnut, beech, yellow birch, and white oak are some of what I can see from here — and I respond, unfailingly, with love (‘regard’ and ‘inspiration,’ looking and inhaling)” (107). Here his adoration for nature is obvious. Nature pacifies and comforts him in more than one way, just like what he feels — “It is carrying the bird home through the trees, tromping through the leaves, surveying the landscape that brings me back to myself” (137). Nature is somewhat a fetish object for Bob to peer at any time he likes, and nature is objectified as a retreat for him to recover any time he needs. His longing for and obsession with nature share similarity with America’s “pastoral ideology” or “green script,” which according to Buell, represent “the essential America as exurban, green, pastoral, even wild” (Buell 32-33).

In addition to his pastoral complex, he seems to lead a green life in terms of ecological consciousness, which can be found on the one hand from his farming habits, such as companion planting, crop rotation, garden sanitation, and stockpiling organic compost heaps; and on the other hand from his collecting and bartering for second-hand articles. However, what behind his zeal for nature and his green life style is not his seemingly eco-ethical consciousness, but his constant consumption of nature and his desire to keep everything under control. Nature is a reservoir of resources for him to make use of, as what he assumes after his purchase of the farm

1 All the quotations from the novella in this paper come from the version: Smiley, Jane. *Ordinary Love and Good Will—Two Novellas* by Jane Smiley. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1990.; hereafter the quotations from the novella will be marked only by page number.

— “Now the land has a personality, is without dollar value, and each acre is simply more or less useful or beautiful or ripe for improvement” (99). The land is for him to use and observe, which he enjoys very much — “The fact is, I used to think that the pleasure of receiving the earth’s free gifts — water, raspberries, firewood, walnuts — would fade with habit, but it hasn’t. That’s another prayer — good luck that feels like gratitude” (136). In his opinion, nature exists just for man to use. The consumption of nature, in his eyes, is a natural deed different from the social consumption of commodities. That’s why Bob thinks with self-satisfaction — “We even burn black walnut and cherry, wood the cabinetmaking companies would pay me for if they knew I had it. That’s my luxury, my conspicuous consumption — I burn black walnut for heat” (106). Being ignorant of his own consumerism, Bob is just like “those green Romantic consumerists who have gone so far as to not consider themselves consumerists at all” (Morton 116). Here definitely contains an irony. As a matter of fact, Bob’s exploitation of nature not only satisfies the family’s daily needs, but also his longing for a sense of safety and a sense of achievement, both of which are denied to him by the outside world. Here on the land, he decides what to plant and how to plant, how much wood to cut and how much to barter; he raises lambs every year and slaughters them the next year when they grow up enough; he controls the growth of plants and maximizes the germination rate of carrot seed to almost 100 percent within 7 days while a normal germination rate is usually 30-40 percent within two or three weeks; he is such a good carpenter that he makes delicate furniture for his house and for barter; he is such a good craftsman that he makes his son all the toys. Bob prides himself on making everything the family need from nature. “What I do is remind myself that I am a genius, and, when I step into the workshop, that lends even these kitchen chairs I am making the glow of loveliness” (113). As to Bob’s pride, Neil comments: “Bob’s description of Tommy’s room amounts to a catalog of Bob’s own accomplishments, and he tells us that ‘my pleasure is the knowledge that I have brought all of my being to bear here...If he were really afloat, his bed would bump against the window, and he could look upon the orchard I planted, then bump against the shelves I built, where he could snatch down tops and cars and blocks and tools and dolls we’ve made him; this is a lovely sea, I think, tiny, enclosed, friendly, all his, and his alone’ (102)” (Nakadate 100). He is the creator of everything, like God, in this land. It seems that everything from nature is within his expectation and control. The image is confirmed in Tina’s book sent to the Millers several months later after the interview, which reads: “‘Miller’s manner is not unlike that of some powerful and wealthy CEO. He does what he wants, the way he wants to do it. Surely this

comes from rejecting the power of money and from cultivating his ability to grow, build, catch, or find everything he not only needs, but wants” (157). Although Bob escapes from a capitalist society, refuses to go with the times, and rejects consumerism and social trends, deep in his heart lurks a strong desire to become somebody who has omnipotent power and earns universal recognition, which can be found from his total authority on the land as well as his years’ longing and eagerness for an interview with a commendatory report. The green life style versus the inextinguishable greed hidden in his heart form another irony of ecology.

Nevertheless, he can’t always keep anything under his control. A case in point is his turkey-hunting activity before Thanksgiving Day. The turkeys he discovers are one tom, three hens, and two young birds. Bob targets the nearest hen, a twelve-or-thirteen-pound bird, but in the end he shoots dead the tom mistakenly. The tom is described to be “about six feet long, so large that it is nearly human in some way” (137). Bob’s original intention is very likely to be environmental and protective for the sake of turkeys’ reproduction, as a result of which he aims at one of the three hens instead of the biggest tom. However, the most ironic thing is that he kills the only tom in this turkey family, and thus causes an ecological damage. The accident reveals a truth that in spite of human beings’ good will to protect the environment and their intention to keep all the things under control, the unavoidable errors and misjudgments in their actions will bring potential threats to the environment, which is also an irony of ecology implied in the novella.

As we can see from the above, nature is idealized by Bob as an enclosed space which he takes refuge in, and as a reservoir of boundless resources for man to draw anything he needs and wants. His idealized objectification of nature is far from environmentalism. On the contrary, it uncovers his subconscious greed to rule and to dominate. The contrast between what Bob imagines and what he really desires undoubtedly implies an irony. Even when the land produces and provides in the way he expects, there’re many more unexpected things waiting for him. The unpredictable facet of nature and the unforeseen events stand just as an ironic warning for Bob and for anyone who idealize the relationship between man and nature, which resonates the words in *Ecology without Nature* — “Ecomimesis aims to rupture the aesthetic distance, to break down the subject-object dualism, to convince us that we belong to this world. But the end result is to reinforce the aesthetic distance, the very dimension in which the subject-object dualism persists” (Morton 135).

### **The Good Boy and the Beauty Wife Imagined and Manipulated by Bob**

Besides the unexpected incidents from nature, the biggest surprise comes from Tommy, Bob's beloved son. The surprises would not have been surprises if Bob had woken up from his imagination to realize the causes behind in time. At the beginning of the novella, Bob perceives everything impressionistically — "The chestnut tree above me is alive with light and shade, the weather is warm and breezy, my wife and son go about their business with evident satisfaction. The valley that is our home is soothingly beautiful, safe, and self-contained" (114). The pastoral picture in which Bob is so intoxicated almost deludes the reader. As the story goes on, however, so many unexpected things take place that it goes far beyond the original pastoral, or green life Bob dreams of, which is just like what he confesses — "I admit I like to be prepared for things. A life without money is predicated on anticipation (although, maybe, it is shaped by the unexpected). More that is unexpected happens when you are married, more still when you have a child. Mostly these unexpected things leave me confused and slow... (116)" Bob's longing for fixed situation within his expectation discloses, in fact, his greed of keeping everything under his control. His habitual comment on his son is "He is a good boy" (103). To be a good boy, Tommy must follow what his father expects and orders, such as doing daily farm work after school, assisting in yearly sheep-slaughtering against his own will, buying no toys he wants, and sitting down when instructed. To Bob's mind, the son's unconditional obedience is a prerequisite for being good. Any different opinions from Tommy will be neglected, any protest will go in vain at last, and any noncooperation will very likely lead to physical punishment. Bob would prefer his son to be a replicate, thinking and doing the same as himself, like what he tells the interviewer — "Before he was born, I used to imagine a child-raising program that was purely example-setting. I would go about my work and he would accompany me, gradually assuming responsibility for the tasks that he was strong enough and smart enough for.... Which is not to say that example-setting is sufficient. I find that he does need a lot of molding and guidance, but that is another task we plan for, Liz and I" (104-105). As to homeschooling, despite his wife's objection, Bob plans to begin it as soon as his son finishes the second grade in grammar school. When Tina, in her interview, doubts the appropriateness and asks Liz whether Tommy likes it, Bob speaks up without even thinking — "He likes the idea" (108). Bob gets used to speaking for his wife as well as for his son, neither leaving any choice for them to make, nor any chance for them to speak. Facing his wife's glance after his abrupt interruption, Bob makes the truthful emendation: "Well, he doesn't always like it. But his schooling is my decision to make. He understands that. ... And as for taking responsibility for what goes into his head, that ATTACTS

me” (108-109). Suzanne comments that “Bob Miller thinks he knows exactly what he wants for himself and his family. He loves his wife and son and life on the farm, but most of all, he loves the fact that he has made them what they are. His life is self-contained and he wants to complete this by taking his young son, Tommy, out of school and teaching him at home” (MacLachlan 13). In effect, homeschooling itself has nothing wrong. Instead, Bob’s ignorance of his son’s opinions as well as his greed to control everything matter. Besides, Bob’s way of educating his boy is over-strict, tyrannical, brutal, and violent. His storm-like spankings on Tommy each time after the boy’s rebellious deeds are the evidence for his lack of wits and ways to educate. Bob has no other better choices but follow his grandfather’s paternalistic way of treating his five sons brutally as his Saint Bernards, showing no concerns for such factors as their sense of happiness, drinking habit, political views, psychological needs, overall health development, etc., as long as the boys are obedient and under control. The grandfather’s words “Your sons weren’t made to like you. That’s what grandchildren are for” (146). linger in Bob’s mind. That’s why he keeps on educating Tommy through physical punishment when he thinks necessary, as he himself describes: “I am cool and resolved. I spell out moral values, expectations, and consequences. I punish and promise more punishment. I make sure he understands. I assert authority. I bring things to that impossible point, an end” (146). His good will on his son, in fact, contains a will to triumph over his son’s will. A case in point is the lamb-slaughtering. Weeping and sniffing, Tommy, for several times, expresses his reluctance to watch his father killing lambs, but Bob insists on the son’s help, which in his eyes, is a lesson to learn — “If you eat something, you have to help produce it” (117). The 8-year-old boy is required to hold the lambs during the shearing, help Bob hoist them by the feet and catch the blood after they are slaughtered. The whole process is full of blood and cruelty for a young boy. However, it’s not the first time for Tommy to experience the killing. Bob exposes such bloody scenes to his boy each year since Tommy’s birth. Now the growing-up boy gradually realizes something, and feels what the lambs feel. Instead of comforting his son, Bob gets “angered rather than gladdened that he has grown up enough in the past year to imagine the sheep’s point of view” (117). Bob despises Tommy’s sympathy for those lambs. According to Bob, the sheep are no longer the cunning little lambs, but grow up into stupid and homely livestock now. Therefore, shooting them in the head and cutting their throats to drain out blood can’t be natural any more. There’s a wall standing between Bob’s mind and the minds of “the other.” His egotism severs the spiritual connection both with his family members and with nature, which he doesn’t realize in time. During the father-son contact,

the son's feelings, thoughts, desires are constantly denied and suppressed by the father. Tommy's curiosity for new things and the outside world is neglected. In the end, the long lasting repression and oppression turn Tommy into a rebellious and violent boy, who consequently destroys his classmate — Annabel's new dolls, cuts her new clothes, and even burns down her whole house with an original intention of burning the new satellite dish. It's ironic that the good boy imagined by Bob turns out to be an uncontrollable arsonist. In order to compensate the damage, the Millers have to sell their farm, and work in the town for paying debts. Bob finally has to go back to the modern society that once he ran away from and works to earn money that he once distained. His former pastoral dreams are shattered. Nature becomes something precious looming in his retrospection — "...and still, from time to time, close my eyes and feel a warm, wet breeze move up the valley, hear the jostling and lowing animals in the barn, smell the mixed scent of chamomile and wild roses and warm grassy manure, and remember the vast, inhuman peace of the stars pouring across the night sky above the valley, as well as the smaller, nearer, but not too near, human peace of the lights of Moreton scattered over the face of Snowy Top" (197). The green life is finally smashed by his greed. The failure of his Thoreau-like self-sufficient living style proves to be an irony of his imagined ecology and by such an irony Jane Smiley conveys to us her eco-ethical view that any illusion of resorting to nature for an escape or any attempt for a complete oneness of man and nature is but a "good will."

In addition to Tommy, his wife Liz also lives in Bob's imagination and manipulation. According to Bob's earlier narration, his wife adores him very much, such as "The thing to do would be to get Liz to say, 'Oh, Bob can make anything,' in that factual way she has, explanatory rather than boastful..." (98). Liz does say "He can make anything" (141) to Lydia Harris when Bob offers a ten-hour-work helping around her house as some compensation for the damage done by Tommy on Lydia's daughter's new coat. For all Bob's descriptions about their happy marital life, there are a lot of conflicts between them. One fact, which denotes an ironic tone, is that without purposeful birth-control after marriage, Liz only gets pregnant once in their more than 12 years' marriage and gives birth to one child — Tommy. The barrenness implies the discord between the couple. Furthermore, Liz and Bob share few outlooks. As to moving into the valley to live an isolated green life, Liz at the beginning opposes, as she confesses to Tina: "And you know, at first I hated it. I didn't have any inner resources at all. I thought I would die of loneliness, even on days when Bob would talk to me.... This was not how I intended to spend my life" (108). Under Bob's powerful influence, Liz makes concessions. In terms of desire

and greed, Liz dares to admit her deep need while Bob deliberately neglects and denies: "You know what? When I saw that coat, I wanted to have it! I wanted to be seven years old again, and to be wearing that darling coat to school every day. I just yearned for it. That's a color that never turns up at the Goodwill" (143). She also dares to reveal the dark sides: "We are so greedy. People don't know how greedy we are" (129). As for the attitude to the other people, Liz takes on a broadminded and generous attitude while Bob is often sensitive, arrogant, angry and hostile. As for their son's education, Liz is against Bob's idea of homeschooling. That's why she asks for Tommy's study in grammar school for one more year before the homeschooling. However, Liz finally compromises under Bob's arguments that homeschooling children will have a sense of themselves and a sense of their own abilities and thus will get along better with the other kids once they get to college, and that schools nearby are regimented and limited. In terms of physical punishment, Liz doubts its necessity. Despite her euphemistic advice "I don't know if it warranted violence," Bob blindly continues. When the mother and the son want to go to church together on a Sunday morning, and Liz asks for Bob's permission and a rearrangement of Tommy's pony training from that morning to the afternoon, Bob stubbornly refuses so as to confirm his complete authority and dampen his wife's enthusiasm for God. For Bob, Liz's visits to church (Fellowship Meeting) on Sundays and her prayers each night are annoying and distracting, just like he feels: "I notice that days when she goes to church, for whatever reason, are special days, obstructing the smooth flow of time that I like. ... she never fails to kneel at bedtime and make a lengthy prayer. That, both the unfailing regularity of it, and the awkwardness of its insertion into our nightly routine, is the real bone of contention" (113). However, the contention doesn't really result from the superficial fact about Liz's pious belief, but from Bob's loss of control and authority over his wife during her church time and prayer time, when God replaces him to be the Lord of his wife. Bob's greed to totally occupy and control his wife forbids his wife's worship to others, even if the idol is God rather than another human being. He is so used to his wife's "admiring" eyes on him that he can't bear Liz's loyalty to God, for Bob considers himself to be the only God whom his wife should worship. Bob never wants to go deep into his wife's inner mind, nor his son's, for he admits — "the seeking, probing quality of her inner life demands something of me that I don't understand and can't give" (182). No wonder he doesn't meditate on the reasons why Liz keeps on going to church each Sunday despite the inconvenience of a long walk to town, and sticks to praying each night even right after their sex. Nakadate comments that "Bob is, not surprisingly, patronizing, resentful, and

dismissive of Liz's increasing need to 'be saved' and to express her identity and independence through church attendance and prayer. He never sees himself as a cause of her search for society as well as salvation..." (Neil Nakadate 101). Bob's androcentrism deriving from his strong greed deep in his heart at last vanquishes Liz's final resistance. Her declaration of surrender goes like these: "I can't do it anymore. It's too strenuous.... It's more like a trudge upstream." (179); and "there wasn't room in my life for two of you.'... 'You and God.'" (183). Bob wins the battle against God in the end. Liz has to continue living under the enormous shadow of her husband, and doing whatever that meet Bob's expectation, even against her own will. Bob chooses to see what he wants to see in his wife and his son. Liz has to live as a beauty wife in accordance with Bob's imagination. As for this, Liz reveals — "Bobby, you know that the urge for revenge is a fact of marital life... 'You always think too well of me. I love you partly because you never fail to see beauty in what you look at, but that scares me, too'" (180). The beauty wife's true desires and wants are ignored, just in the same way Bob ignores his good boy Tommy's desires and needs. Bob's extreme expectations on his wife and his son are no more than great pressure and repression on them. His undemocratic way of ruling the family is in opposition to the ecological ethics of respecting the variety in the other, which according to the Australian ecofeminist scholar Plumwood, are "listening and attentiveness to the other; sensitivity to other members of our ecological communities; being open to unanticipated possibilities and aspects of the other, reconceiving and reencountering the other as a potentially communicative and agentic being..." (Plumwood 69-70), and etc. As we can see, Bob's problematic relationship with his son and his wife is also ecologically ironic in this sense.

### **Annabel and Lydia: A Lydian Stone for Bob**

Next to nature, his son and wife, Lydia Harris and Annabel Harris are the ones whom Bob contacts most. It is from the note sent by the teacher Miss Bussman about Tommy's mischievous act of twisting and breaking apart Annabel's dolls that Bob first hears of the girl's name, and it is from Tommy's reluctant answer to his inquiry into the motives that Bob first finds out that Annabel is a black girl. Tommy's casual explanation and reiteration — "She's a nigger." (119) agitates Bob to such an extent that he grabs his son's shoulders, lays the boy over his knees and whales the tar out of him while shouting with the beating rhythm: "NEVER. USE. THAT. WORD. IN. FRONT.OF. ME.AGAIN" (119). Bob's over-reaction to this issue seems to indicate that he is an anti-racist. Neither Bob nor Liz has ever used that expression in front of their son before. According to Tommy, he learns the word

“nigger” from some teachers including Miss Bussman, and some fifth-graders. However, Bob’s irritation doesn’t come from his defense for colored people, but from a worry about his own reputation, as what he tells his wife: “Simultaneously, I was hearing that word, I was seeing the way he sat there, I was hearing him say that word in front of strangers and feeling their disapproval of us and this setup we have, I was imagining that little girl finding her broken dolls, I was imagining her showing them to her parents and what they would think of us...” (120). All those concerns are not about his boy or that black girl, but about himself. It is not until Bob’s direct encounter with Lydia and Annabel that he gains a vivid feeling and rich experience of getting along with colored people. Different from the black figures in Faulkner’s fictions once Bob read, Lydia Harris has quite a high social status and family income. As a mathematician with a doctor degree, Lydia teaches maths in the State College, while her husband Nathan Harris teaches maths in Harvard University. The nice house with a charming garden that the Harrises live in and the delicate furniture and appliances are all a luxury for Bob. The camel’s hair coat Lydia wears and her elegant behavior form a sharp contrast to Bob’s plain life style. Lydia’s respectful way of treating her daughter is also an opposite to Bob’s tyrannical way of ruling his son, which, in the words of Bob, are “She liked to watch Annabel act. I like to see Tom act properly” (174). Lydia’s pleasure in just looking at her daughter skiing arouses Bob’s envy, for he can’t attain such simple happiness by just watching his son. In terms of educational background, financial situation and parenting method, the Harrises obviously get an upper hand over the Millers. It’s an unconventional case compared with what Bob used to know about black people. Therefore, when Lydia visits the Millers to show the couple her daughter’s new pretty lavender coat cut up by Tommy with scissors stolen from the teacher’s desk, neither Liz nor Bob is willing to believe it. Their shock is understandable, but Bob’s perspective is prejudicial — “What I am aware of is the color of her face, how its strangeness makes what she is saying totally incomprehensible to me. ...but she has become so important and strange telling me about it, then standing here, gazing at me, that I have no response” (139-140). In spite of his earlier teaching to his son against using the derogatory word to colored people, he naturally adopts a biased view toward Lydia. Facing differences in race (or skin color) as well as standpoint, Bob exhibits a hostile and resistant attitude rather than an open and tolerant one. Such an anti-ecological prejudice against “the other” based on race, gender, class, species and etc. is objected to by ecofeminism, which articulates the theory that “the ideologies that authorize injustices based on gender, race, and class are related to the ideologies that sanction the exploitation and degradation of the environment”

(Sturgeon 23). In reality, Bob is not the only person who shows racial bias. Lydia is the only black woman mathematician teaching at a college in that country. To the question “why aren’t there any others? (149)” proposed by Bob, Lydia gives an answer — “Mathematicians aren’t very socially adept, but their field demands social interaction. They take the shortest route, through who you know, to who you are, then to what you know. With women and blacks the stretch past who you are is too difficult, slows people down. I’ve been lucky to be able to use a lot of who you know to jump over who you are. They also cherish the idea of innate genius. That idea, applied socially, always engenders prejudice. ...Three of my colleagues have come up to me at parties and asked if I was in the music department” (150). As we can see, prejudice forms gradually through a long history during which people form a certain thinking tendency toward many issues. It’s rarely easy to wipe out those partial views from all the people throughout the world. The word “nigger” Tommy learns from his teachers and seniors is less than a tip of the gigantic iceberg of society, where racial discrimination roots. Just as Lydia deems that it isn’t terrifying unless the parents are the source of the trouble, not the kids, the racial discrimination can be passed down from one generation to the next with or without the adults’ intention.

Compared with Lydia, Annabel is more evidently abhorrent to Bob. As a matter of fact, Bob’s groundless dislike emerges even just through a few first glances at the girl out of the window, where Lydia persuades the hesitant Annabel to call on the Millers under Bob’s invitation — “Click click, just like that, my dislike of the child is solid, in place, maybe even permanent” (163). As to Lydia’s sweet love for Annabel, Bob loathes the natural mother love, judging that Annabel is unworthy of such intensity. His hostility is so strong that it can be felt by Annabel. Actually, concerning the racial prejudice, Bob feels guilty but helpless: “Guilty and racist for responding to Lydia as if she were a phenomenon....But she is a phenomenon. She just told me so herself” (150). The conflicts between what he feels and what he should feel torture Bob a lot. This is a fight deep in his heart all the time, as he admits to his wife: “I think I’m having a fight with myself” (171). Nevertheless, Bob keeps on denying his true feelings and idealizing a harmonious environment among them. The Harrises’ visit, in his eyes, proves a kind of assimilation. In Bob’s eyes, he and Liz set a very good example for their son to learn that Lydia and Annabel are like any other friends or acquaintances, perfectly acceptable and welcome, different in no way. Bob still lingers in his imaginary beautiful world with a greedy desire of solving everything at one blow. When Bob feels relieved in Tommy’s seeming improvement in his communication with Annabel, and confirms that his son is never

a dyed-in-the-wool racist, Liz reminds Bob with the words that the author Smiley wants the reader to ponder for themselves: “We might think we weren’t racist, but still let something drop” (170). In fact, various prejudices exist more or less no matter how hard we try. In an era when we cannot completely eradicate biases, the most important thing is to face it instead of pretending that it doesn’t exist. To face the problem is the first step to find ways to better the situation, while to evade the fact will doubtlessly increase the threats and worsen the condition. In some sense, Annabel and Lydia are a Lydian Stone (touchstone) for Bob to feel the reluctance of discovering some darkness deep in his heart. As we can see from above, Bob’s persistent denial of his innate racial discrimination while dreaming that he loves “the other” despite the differences in race, class, gender, and the other factors could only lead to an ironic situation.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the story, Jane Smiley exposes to the reader a man’s habitual avoidance and cruel ignorance of the outside world, of the limits of man, of the needs and wants of his son and his wife, of his true desires and feelings, and of the conflicts in his heart. No matter in gardening, farming or hunting, Bob takes on the role of a dominator. Although he wants to flee from the bondage and rules of a hierarchical society of materialism to pursue freedom and self, he sets a lot of new rules and limitations on the farm for his son and wife to follow. He focuses little on money by saving almost none, and seemingly lives a very green and humble life, but deep in his heart he longs for power and reputation, prioritizes his pride and authority, and shoots animals and birds without any hesitation and sympathy. He stubbornly insists on homeschooling, but his parenting way is over-strict, violent, demanding, and paternalistic. Though he seems to love his wife deeply, he can’t bear his wife’s zeal for God and wants to be the only spiritual center for her to circle around. He scolds and beats Tommy for his racist expression, but he groundlessly abhors the black girl at the first sight. The man who prefers being prepared for things can’t avoid a series of unexpected events. The man who fancies that he has a good boy and a beautiful wife is actually blind and deaf as well as tyrannical to them. The man who prefers living a self-sufficient life in wilderness has to go back to the town to earn money that he used to disdain. The man, who imagines that his love is beyond the dualism of human/non-human and white/colored, turns out to be a narcissist who loves himself most. All these imply in fact an irony of ecology, just as the title of the novella *Good Will* ironically tones. At the end of the story, Bob finally realizes something that leads to the failure of his green dream and becomes more open than the past — “But it seems to me that what they want of me is to make another whole

thing, the way I made a whole of my family, my farm, my time, a bubble, a work of art, a whole expression of my whole self....Let us have fragments, I say” (196). Through the story, the novelist reminds us that if we cannot completely abandon self, eradicate human greed, wipe out dualism to lead a purely green life, why not face it with more and more awareness? Respect is of necessity for various voices in the globe, and balance is in need of multi-lateral opinions and interests. It’s the ecological ethics shared by Timothy in his book *Ecology without Nature*: “Like Alice at the Looking Glass House, we are stuck, esp. when we try to get away. Let us see if we can get away smarter, stuck as we are” (Morton 139).

To sum up, there’s never an easy way to completely overthrow the binary opposition and hierarchy patterns across the whole world and establish a totally ecological living environment for each member of the earth. The most important thing is to recognize and acknowledge the negative sides first, and then try to balance man’s desires and the rights of “the other.” Otherwise, the ecologically harmonious world will only exist in our imagination, just like the world imagined by Bob.

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# The Influence of Authorities on Writers in a Society: Censorship Rules and Challenges Faced by Dissident Writers with Reference to Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*

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**Abstract** Censorship rules and laws are important in a society to avoid the circulation of objectionable or offensive contents. Whereas misusing such laws to suppress the nonconformist artists is unjustifiable and is an instance of exploitation and manipulation of law and principle by those in power. The anticipation of persecution discourages writers or the artists even to think against the authorities. Eric Maria Remarque is just one among the writers who have undergone the grave situations for raising a separate voice through his novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. This paper analyses the workings of ideologies and use of laws as means to suppress the revolutionaries. It also analyses how history is also manipulated and a fictitious version of history is propagated by the authorities by suppressing the dissident ideas with reference to the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

**Key words** Censorship; Power; Dissident authors; History; Ideology

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First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true...though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and

very commonly does, contain a portion of the truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied. — John Stuart Mill

## Introduction

The contemporary theory New Historicism has questioned the traditional idea of literature as something that is fanciful and fictional and history as a discourse that is composed of facts and evidences, and the central mission of historians as the accurate description of the past. Writers generally stand as the voice of the public; whereas in an authoritative society, historians are appointed by those in power to write in favour of the rulers. Therefore, the chances of history being biased and being judgmental are too high. This is why recently postmodernism also started doubting and questioning the concept of absolute truth and new historicism has taken into consideration the possibility of different versions of history being untold or suppressed. It's not only art that is used or demanded to be an ideological state apparatus through which the authorities can cultivate their ideologies but also the act of history writing is also manipulated for the same. *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a novel that has challenged such an authority that has tried to suppress the history through its strict statutes and regulations.

In an article written by Bruce E Gronbeck titled “The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument and Collective Memory,” the professor argues that “To be sure, you can ‘know’ what you yourself can remember of events and even can read or see what others think they have experienced or remembered, but such knowledge is always partial, usually self-centered and even self-interested, and subject to the vagaries of surviving documentation” (Bruce 2). Thereby he emphasizes the fact that there is no ultimate history and the past is unreachable to the public most of the times. The factors that can influence the process of history writing include the historians or narrators’ own political views, vulnerabilities and flexibilities, the influence of power structure, the interests of the publishers and the existing censorship rules. Apart from these, Gronbeck has analysed in his essay that historians are engaged in a discursive practice. He says, “That practice, as I already have intimated, is simultaneously narrative and argumentative, concerned with what Spengler identified as *nacheinanderung* (one-after-anotherness) and *nebeneinanderung* (relationships between simultaneous events)” (Gronbeck 3). Therefore, a historian is expected to narrate the history one after another by

connecting related events to make it appealing as well as readable for both the reviewers and the common people. The reviewers in an extreme and intolerant society include any authority that would judge the work based on its ability to be an ideological state apparatus that supports the ruling powers to cultivate its views and ideologies. Besides, history has a major role in assigning different roles for the characters as heroes and villains, which is again the reflection of the interest of the existing power structures. It is because of this, the credibility and righteousness of the behavior of many national leaders and superheroes have been questioned even after many years, which again explains the vagueness of history. Most of the times, such constructed history is repeated and retold through other state apparatuses like educational institutions, religious institutions, arts and performances and like Homi Bhaba reminds, through different performative ways of the concerned authorities.

Germany during 1900s was a hub of art and culture where they celebrated the beauty and value of art and gave a lot of importance to aesthetic and artistic works. The leaders of the time were knowledgeable about the significant role of art in a society. It is because of this, Germany has invested a considerable amount for the purpose as discussed in *Banned in Berlin*, “Germany in the imperial era devoted enormous resources to creating, editing, publishing, distributing, marketing, reading, interpreting, and reviewing serious literature” (Stark xv). All the while, they were also aware of the power of literature to unmask several things using its power to reflect the society, including its ability to bequeath customs, beliefs and traditions to the younger generations and its role in establishing the supremacy of a culture over another. They were also aware of what Foucault called “decentredness” of power, which causes much pressure in the authority to act for retaining their traction. Therefore, they tried their level best to suppress all possibilities of a revolutionary voice. Stark in his introduction to the text analyses that “At the same time state and local authorities right up to the final days of World War I — expended much time and money prosecuting and trying writers; supervising, controlling, regulating, and censoring literature and the public stage; and hearing and arbitrating frequent appeals of their censorship decisions” (Stark, xv). In this manner, the authorities made sure that nothing revolutionary or skeptical has reached to the public through any means.

The traditional war stories of the country portrayed a romanticized version and celebrated glories like valour, honour, fame, prestige, dignity and triumph. The realistic facts including the miserable conditions of the military people were masked by the glorification of war. The students were recruited to the military troops through the charismatic speech of the officers, and many others were

enlisted forcefully leaving them choiceless and helpless. The unbiased narration of all such realities can be seen in the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The hapless condition of adolescents and youngsters on the war front is well portrayed in the novel. The dark times spoil the beautiful ages of their life. The insults and totalitarian attitude of the superior officers, the pressure both physical and mental thrust upon the inexperienced and junior warriors, their lost past, detachment from home, unconnectedness are all sketched in a realistic manner, which made the work a target of the agrarian military aristocrats.

The rustic military masters confiscated the work of some writers and artists, prosecuted many for violating the laws against the state. Many were sued for “lese majeste,” that is the crime against the sovereign power. Therefore, the sovereignty made sure about the supervision over the writers to limit and confine their reach over the readers. The censorship rules, the purging of academia through massive book burnings, the rules, the guides, laws and commands that were issued during the time were all just a part of the safety measures taken by the arbiters on the top of the Nazi party. Therefore, in such a society, the approach of authorities to a work like *All Quiet on the Western Front* is quiet predictable.

### **Ideal Art verses Social Literature**

The idealist conception of art has been created and proclaimed and has made registered in the minds of people through constant reminders. The leaders who are well aware of the dangers of the power of the written word, as a part of subduing all the possible channels of resistance, keep reminding the authors about the limited role of writers. Emperor Wilhelm II in his famous speech in 1901 in Germany, delivered a detailed lecture on the nature of true art and the danger of artistic modernism. He declares that “art takes its models from nature and God’s eternal laws and the artists of classical antiquity expressed most perfectly these eternal unchanging laws of beauty, harmony, and aesthetics” (Stark xvii). Thereby he demands the artists to stick to the ancient rules where art was just an appraisal of the beauty of the nature, because that is the riskless and manageable form where art would be just a piece of work that would praise any kind of beauty. This is whereas just one side of the coin and the other side which is inevitable is the art’s role of mirroring the society. The beauty of the nature is stagnant and the poets and artists of all the time praise the same nature using different tools, whereas the elements that are changing in each period’s and society’s literature are the cultural differences and the reflection of what is happening in that particular society. Many hidden histories and different versions of history have been discovered using the literature produced

during the particular period. Especially the social novels, banned books, works of revolutionary writers and those works that faced much challenges from the supreme leaders of the society speak a lot more than authorized history books or famous and cultivated versions of history.

Foucault in his “Order of Things” has introduced the term “episteme,” the cultural and political ideas that determine the body of knowledge at any given time. Any writing that is produced at any point of time is moreover the product of the political supremacy of the society, which could be an influential religious politics, sexual politics, state politics and the like. The dominant political extremists keenly watch everything that reach to the public and use censorship as a major tool to suppress the dissident voices.

### ***All Quiet on the Western Front as a Social Novel***

Erich Maria Remarque is a novelist who has showed unfailing courage to portray the bare realities of the life of military people in the front. Even though he served the German military during the First World War for several years, after publishing *All quiet on the Western Front*, the authorities mercilessly declared him as a traitor. He was declared as the enemy of the country, which led to his exile and even to the massacre of his own sister. This shows the enormous amount of courage and self-sacrifice that is required from the part of the people who volunteer to question these authorities or who want to portray a different version of history than the cultivated version.

Traditional war literature when glorified and celebrated war by associating the elements of valour, honour, courage and patriotism, this novel has adopted the realistic method in which Remarque gives a graphical representation of the things happening in the camp and war front in an objective manner. At a time when the soldiers refused to speak openly about the things happening even to their parents or friends, Remarque’s open statement in the novel ripped the mask of mentor and guardian wore by the authorities in the society.

He says openly how the soldiers become mere puppets in the hands of the authorities. Thus he says, “An order has turned these silent figures (Russian soldiers) into our enemies; an order could turn them into friends again” (*Remarque* 133). He exposes and barely narrates how these soldiers become the tools who are supposed to get injured and get killed for the voracious and greedy authorities who just pass commands to the young militants. He dares to show the adverse and destructive effects of war not only on the soldiers but also the mass as whole, including its effects on the economy, health, education, work and even the family

both physically and psychologically. The trauma that the war leaves behind after a war is also well portrayed in the novel.

His open criticism on the unmindfulness and disregardness of the government is also a reason for the book to be marked as a rebellious and disloyal record that can misguide the subjects of the society. In the novel he says, “Why on earth should a French locksmith ...attack us? No, it’s just the governments” (Remarque 141). The conversation that follows discusses how war is a need of generals like Kaiser and political leaders for “Generals get famous because of wars” (Remarque 141). Thereby the author declares that every soldier is a scapegoat of someone else’s ego. No soldier has got interest in war, neither they have joined the troop out of passion but compulsion and tricky words of the generals and superiors.

Chronicling the German war and its events, Remarque directs his hilarious condemnation on the war and as much against the military authorities for the mental torture they place on the helpless lads who fight on the front. The Nazi party hails both the novel and the novelist as icons of treason — A real instance of infidelity to the government as well as the institution of military. The anti-war tone of the novel has aggravated the anger of the authorities who expected to portray the war as a glorious part of the history of Germany. However, the realistic portrayal of the war has made the novel so appealing and revealing, which the authorities marked as the cowardly version of the war, which has defamed the country.

### **The Portrayal of Appearance Verses Reality**

Paul, the protagonist of the novel, stands as a representative voice for the inner thoughts of all young lads fighting in the front. They are recruited in to the army by presenting a romanticized version of the life in the army, where they would be the heroes fighting for the country, and the whole country would praise their glorious deeds that would protect the country. It’s only after getting into the camp they understand that their desires, longings and needs are contradictory to the role thrust up on them by the superior officers or even the people of his country. They demanded these youngsters to be courageous and sacrifice their life for the betterment of their country. They are deprived of proper food, lodgings, latrine or even the weapons. However, they are demanded to adjust with the available little things for the advancement and fame of the country, which is totally against their dreams and ambitions. This apparent contradiction between the actual self and the forced self is pretty reflected throughout the novel. This is evident from the continuous whispers happening in Paul’s mind. For instance, when he is in his house for vacation, the discrepancy between the way he expresses himself and his

real thoughts is evident when he speaks in his mind “Oh Mother, Mother, to you I’m still a child — why can’t I just put my head in your lap and cry? Why do I always have to be the stronger and calmer one? I would like to be able to weep for once and be comforted...” (Remarque 126). This shows how much struggle he has in his inner mind and the effort he has to take to portray himself as a stout, stable and powerful young militant. This appearances verses reality makes the life of the young people psychologically challenging. This psychological disposition of Paul and his friends are delineated in the novel, which has the ability to act as a revelation that can appeal the readers.

Such socially responsible novels which portray an unfamiliar side of the truth, though face ample challenges from the officials of the society, if survive the excruciating torture, can act as an eye drop that can clear the vision of the society by making them realize the actualities and also by awakening them by helping to realize their real potential. This is exactly why authorities do not want such authors to come up or to publish and circulate their writings. As a result, they ban books, do massive book burning, use censorship as a weapon and even exile the author from the country. In such cases, most of the writers either stop writing or at least hesitate to publish the book for not to risk their own life or that of their acquaintances. Authors like Taslima Nasrin and Salman Rushdie are also among the contemporary writers who have gone through grave situations for being outspoken and irreverent, according to the definitions of those controlling powers.

Louis Althusser, a prominent figure among the Marxist thinkers, in his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” analyses how dominant social systems enforce their control by molding human subjects through ideology and how they reproduce themselves. It is evident in the case of any dominant system. There would always be certain ideologies that circulate around the subjects, which because of the habituation would seem normal, and in order to sustain the power, the authorities make sure that the subjects are reproduced and the order is well maintained. They use different institutions, such as religious and educational institutions to reach out to the public and use them as state apparatuses to cultivate ideologies. Althusser has also opened a new window through his essay “A Letter on Art in Reply to Andre Daspre” by analysing the relations between art and ideology. In the essay he says that he does not rank “real art among the ideologies, although art does have a quiet particular and specific relationship with ideology” (Maoilearca 1480). Since pen is a powerful intellectual sword that can be used to manipulate the subjects, writers are often expected to write in favour of the influencing social system. The censorship rules and other methods compel and insist art also to work as a state apparatus, the

rule which declared writers like Remarque as a threat to the society. The probability of arrest, prosecution, banishment, threats, risk, murder, bloodshed and like make an ordinary writer think twice and again before writing against the authority. Being irreverent and plain-spoken though make them the villains of the time, later help them to become the superheroes who have showed the courage to portray the facts. It not only helps to record a different version of history but also to make the subjects aware of the workings of the ideologies.

### **Conclusion**

In short, in every country there are certain ruling power structures that would influence the government, law and administration; however, in some societies, there are various extreme influential and controlling forces who take any intense or severe steps to bring the subjects under their command. Such extremists use their authority over the governments and laws to suppress any opposing expressions. Remarque's experience is also not different; all the problems he has faced are just because he has published the novel which has the content against the Nazi party and the military superintendents. This is not an isolated situation, but any writer in an intolerant society, who volunteers his time and craftsmanship to reach out to the public should also be ready to be treated as a traitor, terrorist, blasphemer, etc. The penalty they have to pay for this would include their own lives. They have to risk the safety of their family and even have to be ready to face banishments and like situations. Nevertheless, such works can speak a lot more than the sponsored books that carry over the ideologies of the particular power structure, and like New Historicism argues, they can even portray a different history, that is, the suppressed version of history. At the same time, it is a powerful weapon that can work on the intelligence of people to make them realise the actualities and can give them the courage to act through its rhetorical power.

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# **Problematics of Multiculturalism: Exploring the Dynamics of Cultural Proximity in Hanif Kureishi's Trilogy: *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album*, and *My Son the Fanatic***

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**Abstract** To examine any social condition, it is essential to understand that subject-object equivalence of the society which lies "... [in] the denial of difference" (Mark Bahnisch). The article employs this critical approach to examine the situation that sprang-forth with the practice of conservatism in the postcolonial Britain. Cultural Nationalism is an intermediate point between ethnic and liberal nationalism. It is a byproduct of the dissociation of the immigrant population from the host society and acts as a motivating factor for separatist movements. The article attempts to analyze the discourse of Cultural Nationalism which is seminal in the works of Hanif Kureishi. Social theories such as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the creation of "Cultural Capital", and Derrida's notion of "Desire," stand — useful in examining the political-literary narratives of post-World War Britain. This article argues human as a cultural product, and the process of thinking about their social recognition as a fulfilment of the generated "desire." The article also examines the problematic of cultural assimilation and how it cultivates, minorities' problems, social disintegration-degeneration, and cultural fundamentalism.

**Key words** Hanif Kureishi; immigrants; multiculturalism; otherness; in-betweenness

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### **Introduction**

The “demand for multiculturalism is strong in the contemporary world” (Sen 149), however, in the much increased global contact, especially in diverse cross-cultural-communication, multiculturalism as a project seems to be partially successful. The assertion “love thy neighbour” (Sen 149) has gained a different dimension in the context of multiculturalism. Amartya Sen says that the “entreaty to love one’s neighbour now requires people to take an interest in the very diverse modes of proximate people” (Sen 149). This practice of differentiating the socio-cultural-spaces has grown. Majority of the nations despite following democratic governance witness cultural clashes and problems of assimilation in a surmountable way. This problem has already been triggered out by Amartya Sen (2006) who puts in an optimistic tone that “... the main hope of harmony in our troubled world lies in the plurality of our identities” (Sen 16) and that the “illusion of unique identity is much more divisive than the universe of plural diverse classifications that characterize the world in which we actually live” (Sen 17).

### **Problematic of Multiculturalism**

The cultural artifact to identify human-being as the “Other” has developed the persistent sense of otherness where the “us” receives the social benefits while “them” lives with demeaning identity. This sense of “othering” comes from the invention of “categories.” Thus ‘othering’ becomes a “... process of casting a group, an individual or an object into the role of the ‘other’ and establishing one’s own identity through opposition to and, frequently, vilification of this Other” (Gabriel 2012). This ‘other’ creates a conflict of boundaries in the intended project of global assimilation and becomes the cause of cultural clashes. Kureishi (1995) aptly observes the divisive nature of the present day society when he says “... these days everyone ... [is] insisting on their own identity, coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew-brandishing, whichever features they ... [can] claim, as if without a tag they ... [will not] be human” (*The Black Album* 92). The categories that Kureishi mentions are invented categories (other) which have their own modal accessories

and are used to enter in any kind of dialogue for cross-cultural communications. Despite the global reach of secular-democratic ideas, the cultural production of such categories plays an important role in the crisis of the psychological space occupancy<sup>1</sup> of the inhabitants' of the region. Kureishi talks about how there is an invisible "... subtle mechanisms of discrimination ... [operating in England] (Kureishi qtd. in Gilbert 3). Gilbert (2001) to emphasizes on "... geographical concentration of the immigrants in the certain areas ... which recalls the ethnic zoning in colonial cities like Chandrapura<sup>2</sup> ..." (Gilbert 3).

In the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the globalization-effect and the de-colonization process impacted the inflow of foreign population in the developed countries. The crucial point in Britain's history was the 1960's when people from different commonwealth countries were invited to take up jobs in Britain<sup>3</sup> "... to facilitate ... [and] redress the country's ageing workforce ... [and] partly to meet [up] reputed labour shortage<sup>4</sup> in the range of jobs ..." (Conway 1)<sup>5</sup>. The massive inflow changed the demography of the country and, "... cities like London, Leicester or Birmingham ... appear[ed] to have no connection with England of Arthur Bryant" (Conway 66-67). Multiculturalism became "a face of life, in which the Church of England has been replaced by mosques or temples ... old corner grocers by *halal* butchers and *sari* shops"<sup>6</sup> (Conway 66-67). Resultantly, the immigrants were seen as a counter negative to the social cohesion. The inflow with such massive counts

1 Independent stories of Xenophobic Experiences: For instance the case of Michael Luo, a New York Times Editor was told to "go back to China." <<https://in.finance.yahoo.com/news/asian-americans-share-stories-racism-073233936.html> > Louise Liu | Business Insider – Tuesday 11 Oct, 2016 1:02 PM IST.

2 Chandrapura is an Indian town described by E M Foster in his book A Passage to India (1924). E M Foster has depicted the colonial pattern of ethnic zoning in that that place (Foster 7).

3 Flexibility in the immigration norms, the "Imperial Act of 1914" and "The British Nationality Act" of 1948 extended a right of entry to all the inhabitants of Commonwealth Countries (Conway 48).

4 This acute labour shortage was because of the devastation faced in World War II.

5 South-Asians became the visible immigrant community in cities like Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol, Liverpool, Bradford, Leeds and Manchester. Their combined number increased from 80,000 to 3 million between the years 1951 to 1991. In Spitalfields sixty percent (60%) of the population consists of Bangladeshi and in Bradford, over half the population was from Pakistan (Conway).

6 The district of Saville Town, home to Mohammed Sidiq Khan, leader of the July 2005 London Tube-Bombing, consisted of 90 per cent of South-Asian population.

accordingly affected the factional cultural communication (between the natives and immigrants) prompting an increasingly suspected situation of “continued home country loyalties” and identities.

Never the less the immigration policies solved the labor shortage in the newly developing industrialized British Society, no thoughts were given to the needs of immigrants. Denied social space and public amenities made their situation worse. Nor a conscience developed among the majority community in accepting these people from other countries as equal in status. As a response to the situation, world political domain started experiencing domination of different separatists’ uprisings and that demonstrated a violent struggle to assert control over certain part(s) of London and England as a whole.

The main driving force behind such uprisings originates from a shared belief of a unique cultural identity, which justifies the separatists’ rights to have an exclusive separate home-space and identity within the inhibited land. Such confrontations against a government or a social setup, demanding a separate, virtual-geo-political-boundary based on the uniqueness of the cultural practices, gives rise to the concept of new boundary within a boundary which is the core of ‘Cultural Nationalism/ Sub-Nationalism’. The article focuses on the emerging concept of Cultural Nationalism with Great Britain as a plot to emulate the situation of the immigrant’s inflow, the interaction of the natives in the post-World-War-II era. Further, it also attempts to decipher the socio-cultural matrix and the escalated tensions that emerge out of cultural conflicts as depicted in Hanif Kureishi’s works published during the 1990’s.

Hanif Kureishi’s trilogy<sup>1</sup>, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1991), *The Black Album* (1995), and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997)<sup>2</sup> are the paradigmatic examples of the post-imperial-ethno-English socio-conscious writings. These stories written between 1990’s to 2005 draw on the ethnic differences as found in the immigrants and the native communities of England. “Quest for identity” becomes seminal in his work, also because of the writers status of a second generation Pakistani immigrant, with multiple identities — Pakistani, immigrant, Londoner, Muslim, ‘Black British’ writer. The complexities are embedded in multiple identities, and the problem to identify someone with something specific which is more related to social conditioning where “... high status cultural signals [are] used in cultural and social selection” (Lamont & Lareau 153). In the social mechanism, the concept

1 The Buddha of Suburbia, and The Black Album was published as novels. My Son the Fanatic was published as short story in the collection of short stories Love in Blue Times.

2 Abbreviations used for in-text citation of the selected novels: The Buddha of Suburbia; TBS; The Black Album: TBA; My Son the Fanatic: MSF

employs the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, taste, postures, clothing, mannerism, material belongings, belief-system, credentials etc. that one acquires by being part of a particular social class in a definite geographical location, and acts as tools of engagement to condition the target population. Therefore being a ‘Londoner’ in the social-mechanism designates “... being and belonging to ... [the] polyphonic ... [British identity, but not being British] (Madhuri 5). “Londoner” is a cultural production of the dominant British imperialism.

### **Anxiety of In-Betweenness: Struggle for “Being” and “Belonging to”**

Karim Amir, the central character of in *The Buddha of Suburbia* lives with the anxiety of in-betweenness: as a Londoner and of being born to a Pakistani father and an English mother:

I am an Englishman [‘] born and bred, almost [‘]. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories ... Perhaps it is the odd mixture of blood, of here and there, of belonging and not [,] that makes me restless ... . (Kureishi, *TBS* 3)

Despite being a racial mix (half-English on his mother’s side) and oblivious to any other cultures than English, Karim is still seen as just another foreigner in the country. His restlessness, therefore can be described as a result of pressure from both the cultures in constructing the “self.” Likewise, Shahid (*TBS*), Pervez and Ali (*MSF*) also express their anxiety of being the other: “Everywhere I went I was the only dark-skinned person ... [‘I had been kicked around and chased a lot’] ... I began to be scared of going into certain places ... [‘I kept on thinking there was something I lack’]” (Shahid, *TBA* 10); or the public humiliation of Pervez in the pub: “*Suddenly spotlight ... on Pervez’s face ... Comedian is telling Paki, Rushdie and Muslim Jokes. He ... [being] the only brown face there ...*” (Kureishi, *MSF* 69). Shahid’s outburst in-front of Riaz about his experience as an immigrant, and Pervez’s public-humiliation to be the “only brown face” amid the crowd shows the unwillingness of the host society to give the immigrants a proper space in the polyvalent nature of multicultural identity. Their stand amid the cultures can be termed as the “confused desi” (Madhuri 21) who were “... supposed to be English, but to the English ... [they] were always wogs and nigs and Pakis” (Kureishi 24). The “monolithic whiteness” (Werbner & Modood XV) of the British has been a conditioned fact to look for the race based human segregation. Enoch Powell in support of racial prejudices says “... England ... [is] becoming overrun with ‘wogs’ and [is] in danger of becoming a

‘black coloney’” (Madhuri 13). The racial demagoguery reflects how the immigrants are seen as competitors of the natives who feel that the resources of their land would be consumed by them.

The social mechanism that operates in the formation of identity for the South-Asian immigrants can be viewed from Bhabha’s ideas on dialogic tools for conditioning. Bhabha (1994) believes that there “... is ... [an] emergence of the interstices — the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” where in “... community interest, or cultural value[s] are negotiated” (Bhabha 3). The subject-object co-relevance in the colonial gaze is the hegemony of [S]ubject[‘s] ... “in-between,” or in excess of, the sum of the [I] “parts” of difference (Bhabha 3). Bhabha’s assertion can be understood as the process of the formation of the subjects’ “I” part in the new British imperialism. “I” can be seen as a process of double conditioning in the immigrant context, first as the direct subject to the colonial empire in their native lands, and second, as an immigrated subject in that country.

### **Formation of “I” and the Creation of “Cultural Capital”**

Kureishi’s representation of the father figures in the selected texts, stands alibi to Bhabha’s mentioned process of the formation of “I” under the canopy of British Colonialism, and Bourdieu’s creation of the “Cultural Capital.” Haroon (Father of Karim) in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Shahid’s “father” in *The Black Album*, and Pervez (Father of Ali) in *My Son the Fanatic*, all have the exposure to double oppression. Their “... dream of doing well in England” (Kureishi, *MSF* 64.) has been an antecedent-conditioned for being accepted in the host society with a status of a lower-middle-class non-European immigrant. This status also calls for something distinctive; and Haroon tries to make himself distinct by banking on the idea of the exotic east: his part-time fantasy of teaching *yoga* to the English is an outcome of it (Kureishi 5). He takes this “this yoga thing” (Kureishi 13) very much business-like, to sell to the West and also to satisfy their Eurocentric ego. Shahid’s “Papa,” the Travel Service Entrepreneur firmly believes in “the ways of British life” (Kureishi, *TBS* 53) and expects his sons to practice it; he would take “... Shahid and Chili into the bathroom to demonstrate the only correct way to shave ... [and] for bathing demonstration ... courtesies, and how to shake hands firmly while saying ‘How do you do?’” (Kureishi 53). Shahid’s father’s approach to make an Englishman out of the “confused desi[s]” is to overcome the sense of racial inferiority he has internalized. Pervez (in *MSF*) desires that his son Ali becomes an accountant and marries an English girl (Kureishi 65) and if he succeeds in doing so, his dream of doing well in England will come true. Right from the beginning Pervez

is "... both terrified and ecstatic to be ... [in Fingerhut's house]" (Kureishi, *MSF* 3). The engagement of his son with Madelaine serves as an achievement to him as "All the years ... [he] lived here, not a single Englishman has invited ... [him] to his house" (Kureishi, *MSF* 65). For Pervez, to be in a relation with an Englishman, and preferably by a marriage bond between his son and the English girl will elevate his status and will help him in moving in the circle of the elite race. Haroon, Papa (Shahid's father) and Pervez create their own space of "liminality" in a hope of cultural transformation which in reality fails completely.

The attempt of the fathers to assimilate with the English society is the reflection of their moulded psychology of invariable marking their difference as the 'other'. The anxiety of being the other and the urge for integration in the host society aggravates the propensity of the "... self-oppressive role-play and anglophile mimicry" (Schoena 109). Their preferences "of the love of yoga" (Haroon in *TBS*), "love for Pakistani Cricket Team" (Shahid's Father in *TBA*) "love for the English food and music" (Pervez in *MSF*) and their "propensity to mock the British" (Gilbert 132) reflects that the Englishness they have espouse in public life, to some degree are tactical forms of mimicry to deflect racial gaze of the dominant culture. They represent the "brown Englishman" (Gilbert 132) who desires to be the Englishman without any affixations.

### **Being the "Other": Desire, Memory, Flux of Cultures, Hybridity**

The transcultural approach in Kureishi's characters draws on political perceptions of the conditioning of the sense of power and behaviour among people which is indoctrinated in them by "... deep memory, cultural flow, and the hybridisation of indigenous and imported categories" (Mitra 2012). The acceptance of inferiority by the first generation immigrants later, problematize the intercultural interaction for the second and third generation immigrants in the country. The indifference in acceptances of the prejudices of the foreign by the second and third generation immigrants then can be translated in terms of Derrida's concept of "Desire" and its practical failure in social mechanism to create a sense of identity. Jacques Derrida's notion of desire signifies an impermanent lack of something. So eventually when someone acquires that desired object, desire ceases to be in operation. But then, the nature of desire is an unattainable reality. In social mechanism, this continued sense of emptiness comes into creation of reality to fulfill the lack. This point is well illustrated in Andreas:

... [D]esire is already invested in social formation, which ... creates ... interest

... creates the sense of lacking ... I am interested in the way desire actually produces reality, and moving beyond the psychoanalytic view of desire as 'lack', ... I put forward a different view based on Deleuze and Guattari's idea in *Anti-Oedipus*, that 'lack' should not be identified with desire; rather desire constitutes production in the social field. (Andreas 57-58)

Andreas views on cultural production of the British imperialism, is the representation of the equitized role-play of lack and desire. Their lack of a non-British background produces a binary of pure versus impure in the racial politics (Natives=English=Pure, Immigrants=Non-English=Impure). Though the constitutional democratic governance of the country does not differentiate as such, yet the immigrants remain in the periphery for their livelihood needs for their lack of being English. Either way, their acceptance or rejection of their status does not improve their living situation. Overtly their acceptance of their status acts inversely for double oppression in the society.

Kureishi describes Shahid's (*TBA*) college as a "brand for the population of mostly black students." Also he specifies that the teaching staff of that college are Whites:

The college was a cramped Victorian building ... It was sixty per cent black and Asians, with an ineffective library and no sports facility. Its reputation was less in academic area but more for gang rivalries, drug, thieving and political violence. It was said that college reunions were held in Wandsworth Prison. (Kureishi, *TBA* 24)

Kureishi's contrasting representation of the ruling class (the teachers) and the ruled (black students from the third world countries) brings in Bourdie's conditioning and the imperial gaze of the British. In the case of Karim, his employer chooses him to play Kipling's protagonist "Mowgli."<sup>1</sup> His hybrid ethnicity (an off spring of an Indian-Pakistani Father and an English Mother) acts positively to get him his breakthrough as a performance artist. The think tanks of the theatre group identifies Karim as an Indian, and see him a perfect fit for the role because of his third world affiliation: 'Indian black boy in knickers'. Karim's inverse exposure to his levied motherland feeds the imagination of the British colonial mind: "This is your costume, Mr Mowgli' ... It turned out that on stage ... [he] would wear a loin-cloth and brown make-up ... [to] resemble a turd in a bikini-bottom" (Kureishi, *TBS*

1 The Jungle Book (1894) is a collection of stories by Rudyard Kipling.

146). The audiences' views on Karim's "knicker" is suggestive of the orientalist discourse. Despite Karim's ability to speak "... English with an English accent" (Siddiqui 2), he is asked to perform authentic accent; "Shadwell took me aside and said, 'A word about the accent, Karim. I think it should be an authentic accent.' 'What d'you mean authentic?' 'Where was our Mowgli born?' 'India.' 'Yes. Not Orpington. What accent do they have in India?' 'Indian Accent.' 'Ten out of ten'" (Kureishi, *TBS* 147). This trajectory is also seen in the lives of Pervez and Ali (*MSF*). The first meeting between the two families sets the nature in motion again. In the engagement ceremony, Mr. Fingerhut (father Madelaine) carries a disgusted look because of his daughter's choice of an Indian boy as her life partner. The unwillingness of the police chief in marrying his daughter Madelaine to Ali depicts the institutionalized racism and indifference of the British Culture.

### **Degeneration and Disintegration: Loosing the Solidarity in the Social Fabric**

The affective nature of desire for "lack," acts as an indictment to create reality. The debate on the complexity of belonging in the postcolonial British subjects' is because of the unwillingness of the host society to understand properly the "created lack" among the second and the third generation immigrants. To understand such hegemonic discourse on formation of the British immigrant identity in the 1980s and the 1990s, it is essential to look beyond the discriminatory dynamics of the society and to focus on the "re-imaging of desire" (Andreas 57). An interesting thing about "desire" is its unattainable reality. As Deleuze and Guattari argue that "... there are no desiring machines that exist outside the social machines ... and no social machines without the desiring machines ..." (Deleuze & Guattari 340), therefore, in the practical ground of cultural interaction, desire always constitutes production in the social fields. Sara Upton stating on this idea says that the failure of political institutions and theoretical academia to convey the society with a direct engagement to the real world about the "... alienation and disaffection of certain communities within the host society" (Upton qtd. in Andreas 58), has resulted in the disintegration of the social fabric in the postcolonial Britain.

As a cultural instigator, Kureishi recognizes this nature of the social mechanism of "desire." Indifference towards the immigrants grew adversely during the Thatcherite period with British Muslims being affected "... more so than others" (Andreas 60). The desire for cultural production in immigrants grew intense. Karim, Shahid, and Ali's, upbringing in the Western cultural mould, their education, their taste for British rock-music, sexual liberation of "hedonism" and "fetishistic" British life-style nothing results in improving their as the other. Second generation

immigrants face the humiliation as faced by their fathers:

‘You can’t see my daughter again,’ said Hairy Back. ‘She doesn’t go out with boys. Or with wogs’ ... ‘We don’t want you blackies coming to the house.’ ‘We don’t like it’ ... However many niggers there are, we don’t like it. We’re with Enoch. If you put one of your black ‘ands near my daughter I’ll smash it with a ‘ammer! With a ‘ammer.’ (Helen’s father to Karim *TBS* 40)

‘Paki! Paki! Paki!’ she screamed. Her body had become an arched limb of hatred with a livid opening at the tip, spewing curses. ‘You stolen our jobs! Taken our housing! Paki got everything! Give it back and go home.’ (A female racist to Shahid, *TBA* 139)

‘The Western materialist hates us ... how can you love something which hates you.’ (Ali to Pervez, *MSF* 69)

Result of such ousted racial remarks draws the second and the third generation immigrants towards cultural fundamentalism. The suppressed rage for racism and indifference in the second and third generation British immigrants compels them to come out loud with their native identities, for instance, Mohammed Emwazi, who turns a British jihadist and loves to be nicknamed as “Jihadi John,” or Mohammed Sidique Khan, the “London Tube-Bomber” (7<sup>th</sup> July 2005). The failure of the “desire of acceptance” in the second and third generation immigrants leads them to seek identity through religion. As Maurice O’Connor (2016) observes this as a new zenith of “separatist cultural fundamentalism” with a religious mould. Commenting on Kureishi’s representation of such youths, he further says that “Seen from the post 9/11 perspective, the relevance of ... [Kureishi] is that ... [he] represents ... the first fictional accounts of the radicalization of those disposed Muslim Asian youths who, while born and bred in the UK, were no longer seen themselves as British” (O’Connor 150). West cease to exist as a hope of betterment for the settled immigrants. The disenfranchised Asian youth who had a Muslim heritage now started seeing Western modernism as “... eroding their cultural values” (O’Connor 143). To stop such erosion, they took an active stand in protesting against all discrimination and look forward to creating a virtual geo-political boundary with indigenous culture and religion as a shield of a stable identity for Cultural Nationalism.

Aspiring for cultural nationalism the young British Muslims do not hesitate to revisit Islam from a radicalist perspective:

For young religious radicals, extreme *Islam* worked in many ways. It kept

them out of trouble, for a start and provided some pride ... At the same time they were able to be rebels. (Kureishi 8)

For the young religious radicalist like Riaz-Al Hussain, Chad, Hat, and Tahira (*TBA*) and Ali/Farid (*MSF*) Islam becomes the culture, a past bond to be renewed for asserting their identity. But unfortunately the plurality of identity of the immigrants comes in their way: neither their attempts of assimilation nor their resistance through religious affiliations helps them in coming out of their state of in-betweenness. Kureishi, while investigating for the changing dynamics of the English society in the post Thatcherite period observes:

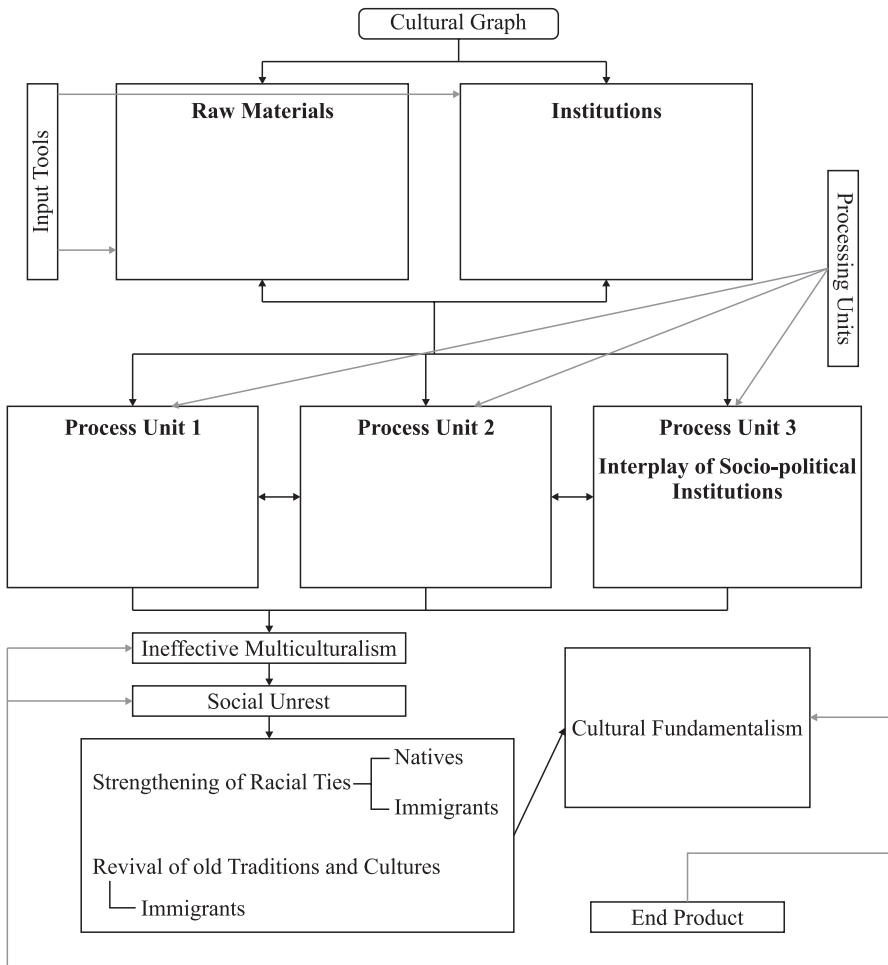
It seemed to me that ... younger kids would be interested in what I was interested in: Bhangra music, pop culture, all that stuff. But they had completely rejected all of that, and I was really shocked, because, those kids were English as me. They were born and raised in England, yet they rejected the West. (Kureishi qtd. in Kumar 127-128)

## Conclusion

From the immigrants' perspective, the thought of cultural nationalism in a foreign land is difficult concept to emulate as people with no direct interaction with their native land start identifying it as their home. Schiller (2010) raises the question: "... [If] such an attachment ... [to the homeland in a foreign land is] different from and in opposition to classic nationalism? Can either kind of identification - whether it is to the national's territory in which one lives or from which one descends - be reconciled with a broader project of identifying with human aspirations for social justice and for substantial life for everyone on the planet? (Schiller 27) or if then, a nation is not merely a cultural configuration but "... [to invest in] a cultural community with sovereignty, and at the very least, with political autonomy" (Schiller 27). Karim, Shahid and Ali, all remain Londoner rather than a citizen of the country. Though their birth and up-bringing signifies the British mode of cultural production of subjects, their status of being a Londoner pushes them towards the periphery of national identification. Kureishi's discussion of the British society in the span of the last three decades of the twentieth century is still matter of concern in context of insider-outsider/native-non-native relationship. Apparently the immigrant question in Kureishi reflects the minority interest, but the wide consolidation of cultural fundamentalism in UK and around the world, and with an increasing number of

terrorist attacks, the subject has come to appear increasingly prescient and topical.

Kureishi’s contribution as an instigator to the debate of the contemporary culture in identity formation provides us with insights to re-evaluate the modern day transnationalism. Kureishi exploration of this polyphony in the psychological identity construct of the immigrants shows the embedded stereotyped category of the South Asian immigrants as ‘others’ in British eyes. His representation of these characters signifies his personal quest to counter the “... homogenization of catagor[ies] by representing the characters that are divided on the basis of race, class, gender, generation ... sexuality [and nation]” (Madhuri 20). As Ania Loomba rightly comments, Kureishi upholds the lost cause of acceptance in the British society and tries to save the archetypal immigrants from being drowned as “an anonymous collectivity” (Loomba 137).



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# Beyond the Figure of the Husband: Television Serials and the Cultural Image of the Malayali

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**Abstract** This paper tries to explore the marginality of women to public life in Kerala, an issue which is increasingly coming under critical scanner, the question of modernity and the representation of the popularly known Malayali women, in the popular television serials in Malayalam television channels and to trace the changes in the depiction of women characters in Malayalam television serials. Most of the Television serial in Malayalam are best known for being melodramatic and for its sentimental plot revolving around trivial day to day life of the Malayali women, especially, the rift between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, the adopted girl child and the step-mother, drift among sisters and so on and so forth. In this paper, we argue that though most of the television serial are based on trivial happenings and events, but some of these melodramatic serials subtly project and share the anxieties of lost innocence, traditions and tries to retell the necessity to regain the lost Malayali values and ethics to the new generation. For the purpose of this we choose to discuss popular Malayalam serials like *Bhaghyalakshi*, *Saaryu*, *Balamani*, and *Parasparam*.

**Key words** Malayali; women; television serials; culture

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## Introduction

“God’s Own Country!”<sup>1</sup> the slogan of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, is perhaps the best way to introduce the Malayali, the inhabitant of Kerala, the South-Indian State, which enjoys a unique position in the political map of India. Kerala is way ahead of the other Indian states in social indicators like birth and death rates, infant mortality, sex ratio, fertility rate, life expectancy, couple protection rate, maternal mortality, economic growth and literacy. Lately, the “Kerala Model” of development, which is highest in India and is comparable with that of many first world nations, has generated critical interest worldwide. These high social and economic development indices have given rise to the “myth of the Malayalee women” (Pillai 1).

This paper tries to explore the marginalization of women to public life in Kerala, an issue which is increasingly coming under critical scanner, the question of modernity and the representation of the popularly known *Malayalimanga*<sup>2</sup>, in the popular television serials (soap serials) in Malayalam television channels. The paper attempts to trace the changes in the depiction of women characters in Malayalam television serials. Most of the Television serial in Malayalam<sup>3</sup> are best known for being melodramatic and for its sentimental plot revolving around trivial day to day life of the Malayali women, especially the rift between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, the adopted girl child and the step-mother, drift among sisters and so on and so forth. In this paper, we argue that though most of the television serial are based on trivial happenings and events, but some of these melodramatic serials subtly project and share the anxieties of lost innocence, traditions and tries to retell the necessity to regain the lost Malayali values and ethics to the new generation. For the purpose of this we choose to discuss popular Malayalam serials like

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1 The slogan of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation.

2 Malayalee women.

3 Malayalam is the official language of Kerala.

*Bhaghyalakshi*<sup>1</sup>, *Saaryu*<sup>2</sup>, *Balamani*<sup>3</sup>, and *Parasparam*<sup>4</sup>.

The Malayali community, especially women have been able to carve out a distinctive identity of their own in every walk of life. The various legislations enacted first in the erstwhile states of Travacore, Cochin and Malabar and later on in the present state of Kerala, which is a union of the earlier princely states, played a great role to revoke the legal framework of matriliney in the state. Many of these legislations aimed at bringing about radical changes in the structure and practice of family system. The high rate of literacy amongst female and the equally high of women employment, high physical health achievements, and reservation of one third of seats in local governance for women has undoubtedly strengthened the position of the Malayali *manga* in the public sphere. But at the same time the alarming rate of female suicide, dowry-related deaths, domestic violence, and gender and caste based crimes also confine women to their domestic sphere.

Though viewing and appreciating television serials, considered mainly as women's affair is viewed with contempt especially amongst the intellectual in Kerala, there has been many attempts to study and analyse the effect of television serials on the private and personal spaces of the Malayali, to understand the visual discourse and viewership, to explore gender based issues, to explore the stereotypical depiction of female characters, the politics of production of serials, and also debates on wastage of time. These serials have also led to the breakdown in family relationships where most women spend their evening hours in front of television serials and men hang out with their friends outside. The recent unprecedented increase of alcoholism in the state and its relation to serials would prove as an interesting area of study. But no considerable effort has been made to understand the subtly hidden anxieties that lies buried under these popular cultural artefacts.

### **Between Reality and Imagination**

To understand the relationship between the average Malayali women, most of who despite being educated are forced to spend their entire life cooking and bring up their children and have little or no economic independence, we believe that it is highly imperative that we understand the other side of the relatively economically

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1 *Dir.Purushothaman*. This serial is still aired on Surya TV from 7.30 to 8.00 PM (Monday-Friday). The discussions are based on the story of the serial till 10.03.2016.

2 *Dir.BaijuDevaraj* was telecasted on Surya TV.

3 *Dir. Gireesh Konni* was telecasted on Mazhavil Manorama channel.

4 *Dir. Sudheesh Shankar* This serial is still aired on Asianet from 7.30 to 8.00 PM (Monday-Friday). The discussions are based on the story of the serial till 10.03.2016.

successful Malayali women, a relatively recent phenomenon in Kerala.

The economic aspirations and imagination of the average Malayali has always been identified and linked to the concept of *pravasalokam*<sup>1</sup>. The present economic affluence that Kerala enjoys and the high social and economic development induces are directly linked with the remittance of the immigrants. The political economy of the state and the cultural image of the Malayali has an irrevocable relationship first with the Persian Gulf and then with countries like Australia, United States, Canada, United Kingdom and other European countries. The Persian Gulf has played and still in limited manner continues to play an important role in the life and economy of the Malayali. The initial days saw the people especially men, who migrated both legally and illegally to Gulf to work as skilled or unskilled labourers in the construction industries, a tradition that continues even today. Kerala had a significantly better nurse-people ratio compared to the rest of India even at the time of independence. Arguably this created a favourable social environment in Kerala for the migration of women as nurses. Soon the Kerala male also wore the nursing cap and started migrating to the west. The last decade of the twentieth century saw a large number of Malayali youth venturing into professional educational institutions with the motive of securing a job visa abroad. Some of others who failed to take up nursing or any other career that would help them secure a job visa to the west tied knot with those who had already migrated.

Kerala is also home to one of the largest working women population in the country. Many women have been able to secure job both in the government and private sector. The boom in Information Technology (IT) sector and the opening of Industrial Park in different parts of the state provided new job avenues to many men and women. The initiatives of the State government and local financial institutions also helped many youths both male and female in setting up their own business enterprises. The image of the strong Malayali women of yesteryears was returning and this was exploited by television serials like *Bhaghyalakshi*, *Prasparam* and others.

But this economic affluence was not without adverse effects. Recent studies however indicate growing uneasiness when Kerala's social development outcomes are linked to non-conventional indicators, particularly in the context of the rising visibility of mental ill-health among women and the aged, gender-based violence, and the rapid growth and spread of dowry and related crimes (Eapen and Kodoth 7). These studies indicate that education alone does not enable women to address gender-specific problems.

1 The world of the Exile.

Even if employed, these women has little control over her earnings and are dependent on various factors like family and society. And every often is treated as a milch cow who has to shoulder the burden of the rest of the family, this has been one of the recurrent themes of many popular television serials. The new generation serials in Malayalam depict a strong working woman who shoulders the responsibility of the family but refuse to be exploited both socially and economically.

### **History of Television and Television Serials in Kerala**

Although television made its debut in India in 1959, it took more than two decades to reach Kerala. The Government of India in the initial days used television largely as an instrument of social change and Doordarshan, the official government broadcaster, only aired programmes which focused on issues like national integration, agricultural development, literacy, education, health and family welfare. Things however began to change by the 1980s when Doordarshan, gradually, moved away from its exclusive focus on educational programmes and began experimenting with entertainment programming. In 1984 it began broadcasting *Hum Log* (We, the People), a part-educational and part-entertainment television soap opera. The unprecedented success of television serials like *Hum Log*, *Buniyad* and others paved the way for the telecast of *Ramayan*<sup>1</sup> and *Mahabharat*<sup>2</sup> mythological epic.

DD Malayalam<sup>3</sup>, the first television station in the Malayalam language continued its monopoly until the 1990s when the Indian government opened its skies to private satellite channels. In August 1993 Asianet, the first private television channel in Malayalam, also the first regional channel in India, began satellite broadcasting. Aisanet focused mainly on films and film-based programmes along with news and news based programmes. Later in the year 1998, the Chennai based Sun TV network launched its Malayalam channel, Surya TV. Then in the year 2000, Kairali TV under the aegis of Communist Party of India (Marxist), was launched. It was a 24-hour news and entertainment channel. It was followed by India Vision in 2003

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1 The sacred Hindu text which tells the story of Rama, depicts the duties of relationships, portraying ideal characters like the ideal father, the ideal servant, the ideal brother, the ideal wife and the ideal king.

2 A Hindu epic narrative of the fates of the Kaurava and the Pandava princes, the Kurukshetra War. It also contains philosophical and devotional material, such as a discussion of the four “goals of life” or *purushart has* and the Bhagavad Gita.

3 It is part of the Doordarshan, the official government broadcaster, and broadcast programme in Malayalam and is owned and controlled by the government.

the first 24-hour exclusive news channel in Malayalam; Jeevan TV, an enterprise by the Catholic Church in 2002; Amrita TV by Amritananadamayi Matt (Ashram); Shalom TV (2005), an exclusive channel for Christian devotional programmes promoted by a Catholic organization in 2005; Manorama News, an exclusive news channel from the house of Malayala Manorama in 2007; and Jai Hind TV, backed by Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee<sup>1</sup> (KPCC) in 2008. Asianet, Kairali, Surya, and India Vision have presently more than one channel each that offer specialized programmes.

The popular television serials telecasted by Delhi *Doordarshan* not only attracted huge audiences in the Hindi belt and generated enormous revenue but also opened up vast avenues to create awareness on several gripping problems that the country faced. Television serials in Hindi addressed largely to North Indian audiences and were unable to converse with the entire nation. In the beginning, adaptations of well-known regional literary works were given preference in the regional languages. *Vaitharani*, an adaptation of a radio play by noted playwright T. N. Gopinathan Nair and directed by celebrated writer and film director P. Bhaskaran, is said to be the first soap opera in Malayalam, telecast from Thiruvananthapuram *Doordarshan* Kendra. This weekly serial which consisted of 13 episodes was aired at 7 pm from November 1988 to February 1989. Apart from *Vaitharani*, two other serials namely *Rohini* directed by Rajasekharan and *Varam* directed by G. S. Vijayan were also telecast from November 1988. The serials turned out to be a huge success and this led *Doordarshan* to commission more serials. Thirteen-episode serial was the order of the day in which one episode was telecast once a week. This numeral 13 was sacrosanct in *Doordarshan* circles and it was obtained by dividing 52 weeks in a year by four so that a serial lasted for a quarter of a year.

Among the private channels, Asianet and Surya TV were the frontrunners in telecasting serials which drew Malayalee audience like never before. Taking a cue from Doordarshan, Asianet began with weekly serials but soon switched over to daily (Monday to Friday) format. The credit for initiating a mega serial also goes to Asianet. *Sthree*, directed by Shyam Sunder, broadcasted on Asianet, was the first mega serial in Malayalam and it was a definite breakthrough in television industry. This serial broadcast at 7.30 pm was rated as one of the most watched programmes by Malayalee viewers in those days. The narrative structure of the serial was melodramatic, women-centred and sentimental. The audience was mostly comprised of women but men and children also sat along to form a large family audience. The

<sup>1</sup> The controlling authority of Indian National Congress in Kerala is called the KPCC. Its head office is situated in Thiruvananthapuram, the Capital of Kerala.

success of a serial directly depended on the melodramatic and sentimental contents in its narrative structure. It became hugely popular and at the same time generated revenue hitherto unheard of in Malayalam television.

The television occupies a unique place in the cultural dynamics of all societies and the Malayali is no exception. The Malayalam television serial although criticised for being extremely melodramatic in nature, we argue that they help us to understand how the society negotiates with various social, cultural and economic issues. Today there are around 16 Malayalam channels and the main five private channels like Asianet, Surya TV, Amritha, Mazhavi Maoraman, and Flowers broadcast serials from 6.30 to 10.00 PM (from Monday to Friday) apart from few other reality shows. These serials have to their credit audience from every walk of life and people of different age groups.

### **Changing Cultural Image of the Malayali**

Unlike a majority of the television serial in the Hindi language which narrates the saga of *Saans* and *Bahu* (the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law) in the traditional Hindu joint family, the television serials in Malayalam revolves round contemporary issues that engulf the average Malayali women and society. Kerala shares a different demographic pattern when compared with the rest of the country, especially the high level of education amongst women and the relatively high level of working women. Though matrilineal in character the Malayali society is very much patriarchal and many Malayalam serials like *Bhaghyalakshi*, *Saaryu*, *Balamani*, and *Parasparam* discusses how women negotiate and resolve contradictions surrounding their marginality. Most of the present television serials in Kerala discusses and projects issues like disintegration of the joint family system and the problems of nuclear family, corruption involving women, the problems related to education and the use of new technologies rather than the household struggle between *Saans* and *Bahu*, dowry death, the increasing rate of crime and social isolation of women.

The early serials both in Hindi and Malayalam emphasised the mythological ideal of Sati-Sita-Savitri stree (sacrificial-submissive-chaste women) who tried to hold together the traditional joint family and are performers par excellence in their roles as wives and daughters-in-law who epitomes the role of self-sacrifice, patience and chastity. For instance, the Malayalam serial *Sthree*<sup>1</sup>, which run into nearly 400 episodes, narrated the story of Indu, a young woman who marries for love in a vio-

1 Directed by Shyamshundar and Telecasted on Asianet, *Sthree* has the credit of being the first mega serial in Malayalam.

lation of social and familial norms. Indu who is well educated, intelligent, beautiful and modest, soon wins over the members of her husband's family through her good behaviour. Though Indu was very much devoted to her husband beyond all else, she becomes separated from her husband when he is implicated in the murder. Indu who was pregnant with at the time of their separation, raises their child on her own and remains loyal to her jailed husband. When faced with unwelcome advances from other men, she transforms herself into a well-prepared woman to defend her honour and chastity. After many years of separation Indu and Hari become united but Indu soon realises that Hari had remarried under the influence of his family. Instead of being angry or disillusioned by the turn of events Indu willingly offers to give away her child, who had also been her only source of companionship and happiness, to her husband Hari, so that he could lead a good life full life. Indu's story was such a huge success among largely female audience and Indu and Hari became synonymous with the ideal couple. Most of the Malayalam serial of the early days followed this plot and story line.

Till very recently some Malayalam television serial like *Kumkumapoovu* (Dir. Praveen Kadakkavoor) were known for their melodramatic character. *Kumkumapoovu*, broadcasted in 785 episodes, tells the story of Professor Jayanthi and her illegitimate daughter Shalini. Jayanthi, the protagonist was made to believe that her child died immediately after birth. But Jayanthi meets Shalini years later, when Mahesh marries the legitimate daughter of Jayanthi, Amala. Amala hates Shalini because her husband and his family looked after her after rescuing her from Markose, who treated her unkindly Jayanthi father had entrusted Markose with the responsibility of raising Shalini. Amala who later on learns from her husband that Shalini is her half-sister tries to harm her in all possible ways. The rest of the plot of the serial moves from realises of truth and the crisis of accepting each other and negotiating with the new identity. The serial ends with the death of Professor Jayanthi. The extreme disparity between the villain's brutality (here Amala and Markose) and the victim's (Shalini and Jayanthi) meekness attempts to make the audience cry and arouse feelings of outrage at the injustice of it all. Though serials like *Stree* and *Kumkumapoovu* tried to show the existence of different kind of justice and moral system at work for both men and women, they failed to project the real changing face of the Kerala society. Rather they emphasised the age-old traditional view of women as a reflection of the male desire, by showing and limiting them within the kitchen and bedrooms. They failed to bring about the aspirations of women and their urge and need to exits outside of male specularisation and desire, to exist on her own terms.

Notion of the woman as the “other,” as different from the normal male, was the image of the Malayali manga that was epitomised by the lead character of the Serial *Stree*. Ironically this image still engulfs the consciousness of the average Malayali, who see women as self-suffering, sacrificing and family oriented. Most of the other serials produced during this period continued this stereotypical depiction of women in their roles whether it the role of wife, sister, daughter or mother. This image of the Malayali women is also found in the Malayalam films of the early days; however, this stereotypical depiction has now begun to be questioned with greater intensity and the new generation Malayalam cinema has begun to characterise a powerful woman who dare to challenge the established norm.

Arguably the serial *Parijatham*, (Dir. by Baiju Devaraj) acts as a connecting bridge between the old and the new generation Malayalam television serials, *Parijatham*, revolves around the romantic relationship between the lead characters Seema and Jayapal, know JP, which quickly turns out to be a fake and treacherous plot by the latter to trap Seema. But unfortunately, Seema’s sister identical twin sister Aruna falls prey to the plot. While Aruna is the traditional Malayalee girl — virtuous, soft spoken and eternally forgiving, Seema epitomises all that could be termed anti-traditional in a young Malayalee woman — she is passionate, outspoken and vengeful. The story is about Seema taking on the role of Aruna for the sake of obtaining for her sister her rightful place as wife in the JP household, following her fake marriage and rape by JP.

The new generation<sup>1</sup> television serials in Malayalam signal the emergence of a new trend in the representation of ideal Malayali manga, based on the traditions of ideal Indian womanhood, a trend characterised by the domestication of the female subject, by recentring within the large, extended family and the home and her traditionalisation through the figure of the mata (mother), the sumangali (auspicious married woman), the pativrata (chaste wife). The new generation serials in Kerala show the presence of a strong female character who tries to make their own space by redefinition of marriage, the myth that womanhood that renders female desire culturally inconceivable.

The narrative of the Malayalam serials *Parasparam* and *Bhagyalakshmi* challenges the image of the domesticated womanhood. The lead characters, Deepthi and Lakshmi in television serial *Parasparam* and *Bhagyalakshmi*, respectively challenge the traditional behavioural pattern set for the daughter-in-law. The plot

1 New generation is a discursive term derived from media discourse to refer to a new set of films in Malayalam which depart from the conventional style. I choose to extend the same term to refer to the new serial produced in Kerala, as they also depart from the conventional style.

of *Parasparam* revolves around the Deepthi, a bright and independent young girl who dreams of becoming an honest IPS officer<sup>1</sup> with support from her family, but the untimely death of her father and mother her brother Gopan, who is weary of her dreams, make her to marry Sooraj, a bakery owner. Sooraj, never dared to dream beyond looking after his house, siblings and his bakery and always loyally carried out the orders of his mother, Padmavathi, a traditional and stubborn lady who wants all the family members to follow her command and live with her in own house. Like Sooraj, her mother in law Padmavathi is also unaware that she is Deepthi is well educated. Padmavathi warns Deepthi of her ambitions. She believed that if Deepthi is allowed to follow her dreams she would erode the family traditions and move away from them. Sooraj, on the other hand, offers to set her free. The narrative of the serial at this point of time tends to replicate the plot of the earlier serials. Deepthi, willingly sacrifices her dreams and tries to a traditional housewife by helping Padmavathi in the kitchen and her husband Sooraj at his bakery. But the story changes when she discovers her husband's talents in cooking and make him win in a cookery competition. Sooraj, persuades her to prepare for the civil service examinations secretly. Padmavathi, who discovers this first tries to discourage her but later on agrees on the condition that she should secure a posting in the same place and should live with them in their own house. Deepthi, realises her dreams of becoming an IPS officer and keeps her promise to Padmavathi. Padmavathi and Soorja were taken into custody by a group of terrorist. Deepthi successful cracked down a terrorist attack, but Padmavathi receives a bullet injury during the police operation. This distances the father-in-law from her. The police department applauds her bravery and decides to send her for training to the Scotland Yard.

The new socio-cultural and economic division which has given more opportunity and freedom to women has paved way for a new social stratification in Kerala society. Marriage which was earlier considered as a legal contract where women “disappears” as the property of her husband has now come to be redefined as a legal contract among equals. A new morality in marriage is evident in the representation of both Deepthi and Lekshmi as oscillating between the roles of active desiring subject and passive object of desire, countering the traditional gathering of roles in culture, which figured actively and exclusively only as a male domain. The new generation serial *Bhaghyalakshi*, unlike the other family television serials it does not deals with in-law fights, illicit relationships and other negative elements in life, but explore the life of a working woman — their joys, sorrows, trials and their contributions to family and society. The story of *Bhaghyalakshi* revolves around the

1 IPS (Indian Police Service) is one of most top government jobs in India.

life of the lead character Lekshmi, a working girl who looks after her family after the sudden death of her father. Lekshmi is forced to marry Gautham to protect the honour of both her and Gautham's family, when the bride, her younger sister Kavya elopes on the day before her marriage. The serial moves around the problems which she has to encounter for pursuing a job which she needs and the problems that erupt in her family. Like Deepthi in *Parasparam*, Lekshmi also aspires to be independent. The lead characters in these serials represent the urge of the new generation female who try to create their own space both within the family and outside without compromising on their freedom, integrity and dreams. For both Deepthi and Lekshmi marriage does not signal an end, but is a new ground for where they negotiate a new set of values between wife and husband, premised in gender and sexual equality rather than inequality.

The gendered, domesticated and subversive nature of civil society in India confines women's participation in public sphere in the name of the family tradition and honour, and threats to their own security. The orderliness of domesticity which the civil society demands or rather imposes on woman reframes her from stepping out into the active public arena, a notion which is now highly challenged and discussed by the civil society in Kerala. The woman characters in new generation Malayalam serials do not merely to entertaining their audience but signal a change towards gender equality which has already begun in various corners of the state. Women's right to live independently and decide her own fate is another major theme which television serials like *Bhaghyalakshi*, *Parasparam*, *Saaryu*, and *Balamani* echoes. While *Balamani* directed by Gireesh Konni, revolves round Sumangala of Azhakathu family, her sons Arvind, Anand and Ananthu and her three daughters-in-laws- Mythili, Abhirami and Balamani. The plot of the television serial *Balamani* moves around the incidents which happens in the life of Balamani, who is deserted by her husband Ananthu and how Balamani cleverly plays her part to overcome those and hold the family together. We find a similar plot in the serial *Sarayu*, directed by Baiju Devaraj, which tells the story of a widowed working women and the problems which she has to suffer both from with the family and outside being a widow.

Most of the serials discussed above also raise social issue like divorce, widow remarriage and politics of social exclusion and subtly brings to questions the fundamental relations between men and women. While the serial *Balamani*, the protagonist Balamani after being deserted by her husband Ananthu seeks shelter in the house of a fish vendor without realising that her son has been hired by her husband to kill her. She decides to raise her son by herself in the midst of utter poverty without seeking the help of her rich in-laws. The serial also subtly discusses the is-

sue of rearing of children in divorced families, an important question which is now addressed in Kerala, which has one of the highest divorce rates in India. *Sarayu* on the other hand discusses the plight of widow who like other are subject to patriarchal customary and religious laws and confront discrimination and exploitation both at the hands of her family members and the general society. *Sarayu* does not try to fight back at the laws and patriarchal order but overcomes her marginalisation and social exclusion by upholding her integrity and identity. At a time when her family members raise question on her morality and chastity she leaves the comforts of her in-laws' house with her daughter to make a world of her own. At no point in the entire narrative she succumbs to the treacherous deeds of her enemies but decides to remain as a mother devoted to her child. Moreover, her economic independence ensures her a free and secure world. A dream which many women in Kerala, which ranks first among the Indian States in terms of Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI).

*Bhaghyalakshi, Parasparam, Saaryu, and Balamani* discusses the impact and effects of the changing social patterns like industrial development, urbanisation, migration, nuclearization of families, rise of divorce rates and their how the family especially the joint family tries to overcome these problems through negotiations and at the same time allowing an independent space to the "other."

### **Camouflaged Ideologies and the Middle Class**

To reconstruction and rewrite the patriarchal order by posing questions at its unorthodox characteristics with the intention of exposing its limitations is arguably one of the camouflaged ideologies of the new generation television serials in Malayalam. These new television serials with a strong women centred narrative expose how the hegemonic force of patriarchy bred by nationalist fervour and the right-wing ideology use the inverted ideological form of the relation of power between the sexes: the adulation of women as goddess and/or mother, to oppress her. The ideology linked around the myth of the Sati-Savitri-Sita has played a crucial role in limiting the place of woman in public sphere in literature, arts and in historical debates in the subcontinent and also in forming the ideology of the dominant middle class society.

The same ideologies also governed the politics of production and representation of woman in the earlier serials like *Stree* and other popular serials. These serials projected the necessity of tolerant and sacrificing woman for the success of the male in the family- whether father, husband, brother and son. Debatably, most of the serials in Malayalam try to uphold the ideas of Hindu nationalism which are

based upon the Hindutva ideology which have provided women with the means of political assertion while at the same time withholding them from achieving total freedom. They emphasise the need for patriarchal policing which glorifies the legend of Sati-Savitri-Sita to reinforce and maintain the classic female Hindu stereotypes such as the chaste wife or heroic mother who protects the family like the manly Hindu warrior. The strongly Hindu centred narratives help to portray to the outside world what Hindu nationalists are fighting for, the perfect Hindu family. This attitude often clashes with followers of feminist nationalism.

Falling in line with the plot and narrative of other television serials in Hindi language, most of the earlier day serials in Malayalam too exploited the image of perfect woman who accepted their fate with a smile. They also depicted women who were taught to accept their own situations and blame themselves for their misfortunes. As Banerjee holds the deliberate silence on the structural violence of a woman's life emerges from her sexuality within patriarchy. This power relation within the structure of the family is never questioned, even by women, and as a result the inequality which exists within the structure of the family is conveniently ignored and at the same time accepted for maintaining the Hindu ideology of family, which according to Mazumdar will always remain sacrosanct.

It surprising and ironical to note that though Kerala has a good number of Christian and Muslim population the narrative of most of the television serials in Malayalam centres round the traditional Hindu joint or extended family, as phenomenon which is fast becoming a thing of the past in Kerala. Despite of being limited to the Hindu family the Malayalam serials does not merely talk about the Hindu family alone. These sacrosanct ideology and family structure is applicable not only to Hindu family but the Christian and Muslim communities in Kerala also hold a very similar family structure. By this however I do not mean to say that there are no Christian and Muslim characters in Malayalam serials, they most serve as supporting characters and at times negative characters. There were also a few serials like *Manasaputri*, (Dir. Sudheesh Sankar) which is the story of Sophie and Glory; and *Ente Pennu*, directed by Sreejith Palery, which features characters like Emmanuel Isho and Father Joseph Illikkan in the main roles. Apart from these have in there has been only very little or no attempts to create serials where Christian and Muslim characters have played the central role, but these serials failed to gain considerable reception. The politics of representation based on religion in Malayalam cinema and serials stills awaits a detailed study.

The new generation serials in Malayalam echoes the observation that Kapur and Cossman have made in relation to Hindutva's conception of women: "The

constitution of the new Hindu woman — a woman who may be educated, and who may work outside of the home, a woman who is strong and powerful, inside her family, and her community — is still a woman constituted through traditional discourses of *matrishakti*, as mother and wife, and of Sita, as chaste, pure and loyal” (Kapur and Cossman 10). We find examples of this the serial *Parasparam*, and *Bhaghyalakshi*, where the central character Deepthi realises her dreams of becoming an honest IPS officer and at the same gowns herself into the role of wife, and daughter-in-law, while Lakshmi tries to realise of fulfil the wishes of her heavenly father by attempting to regain his business. In *Sarayu* the protagonist Sarayu after the death of her husband tries to rebuild her dreams alone. The new generation Malayalam serials like *Bhaghyalakshi*, *Saaryu*, *Balamani*, and *Parasparam* sketch the image of the women who try to fight form erasing their subjectivities, by making their own name, identity and fulfilling desire.

The popularity of serials is partly due to the reassertion of representational trends like the idealisation of domesticated womanhood and the centrality of the extended family, which nonetheless is continuous with the hegemonic representations of womanhood and family in cinema and television in post independent India. Or what Chatterjee notes as the “identification of social roles by gender” (The Nation 198) corresponding with the social separation of “space into *ghar*,”<sup>1</sup> the outside world as “typically the male domain and *bahir*”<sup>2</sup> the home that is female in representation is challenged by the new generation television serials in Malayalam. Their narrative arguably can be seen as a part of the review which attempts to discuss, question and overview the historical location of gender in discourses of identity and subtly redefining gender roles in a new evolving public sphere of Kerala.

It can also be argued that the bulk of theorizations on nationalism and gender that unwittingly align themselves with the hegemonic nationalist narratives of gender and family assigns two categories to the private, supposedly apolitical and domestic. Opposing the views of Yuval-Davis who argues that the construction of the public-private divide is in itself a political act and that political power relations with their own dynamics exist in both sphere (Yuval-Davis 12), feminist scholars such as Carol Pateman argue that the very concept of the modern individual who naturalises the public-private divide (Carol Pateman 10). However, we should not fail to acknowledge one of the most important contributions of feminism to social theory, which has been the recognition that power relations operate within primary

1 Means “house” in Hindi.

2 Means “outside” in Hindi.

social relations as well as within the more impersonal secondary social relations of the civil and political domains.

According to Yuval-Davis, the implicit division of civil society into the public and private spheres, with the former being marked as male domain and the latter as female domain, which is not politically relevant, lies under the neglect of women as biological, cultural and symbolic producers. (Yuval-Davis 16) The exclusion of women and their gendered character and identity is also at the same time contextual. It is important to note that Chatterjee's argument about the marking of the domestic domain as a sacred space outside the purview of the modern state did not apply to regions like Kerala, in the way it did to Bengal. (Chatterjee 171-92) In early 20th century Kerala, community reform movements enjoyed enormous clout and the state was in fact called upon to legislate in order to transform the inner-most social spaces of marriage and family by community movements whose major agenda was, the transformation of internally-heterogeneous, loosely structured pre-modern caste groups in to internally homogeneous, strongly bound and mutually exclusive modern communities (*Domesticating Malayalees: Family Planning, the Nation and Home-centred Anxieties in Mid-21<sup>st</sup> Century Keralam*, Devika 46). These transformations which was at the heart of the modernizing process of communities were strongly informed by the ideology of modern gender and resulted, not in the undoing of patriarchy but its re-doing in ways that were complex and perhaps more difficult to resist (Devika 46), a theme which the new generation television serials in Malayalam has exploited.

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# A Diachronic and Synchronic Study of American Ethical Criticism: A Review of *American Ethical Criticism: A Survey*

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**Abstract** *American Ethical Criticism: A Survey* by Prof. Yang Gexin is a pioneering monograph that studies the rise, development and demise of American ethical criticism diachronically and synchronically. It argues that the American ethical criticism since the 1980s has inspired and enriched the contemporary ethical literary criticism, which ultimately transcends the limitations of the former as an established literary approach. Besides evaluating the merits and demerits of American ethical criticism, the book illustrates how it is critically integrated into the contemporary ethical literary criticism. Based on the study, the book also outlines the current problems and future direction of ethical literary criticism. This paper firmly believes that the monograph will open up a new territory for literary studies in China and beyond.

**Key words** Yang Gexin; *American Ethical Criticism: A Survey*; Ethical Literary Criticism

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Since the 1980s, the passionate promotion and debate of ethical approach to literature by Wayne Booth, Martha Nussbaum and other American critics rejuvenates the once silenced ethical criticism. Despite its initial vitality, the American ethical criticism declined by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to its inherent flaws, though it continued to influence literary studies. At the beginning

of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, absorbing the strength of American ethical literary criticism but transcending its limitations, ethical literary criticism in China developed its own theoretical framework and critical discourse, gradually establishing itself as a leading literary approach in China and beyond. But the intense yet ephemeral academic journey of American ethical criticism had never been sufficiently studied.

Yang's recent book is the first academic monograph that systematically studies the origin, development and changes of American ethical criticism (Nie 3). The book makes a diachronic and synchronic study of American ethical criticism. Diachronically, the book traces the classical and European origin, the historical development, the gradual demise and the historical influence of American ethical criticism. Synchronically, it focuses on the scholarly exchange and debate of American ethical criticism since the 1980s, evaluating its merits and demerits. Based on the study, the book also highlights current problems and future direction of ethical literary criticism, which plays an increasingly important role in contemporary literary studies.

This review first recapitulates major arguments of the book, presenting how it scrutinizes the historical evolution and synchronic debate of American ethical criticism and how it explores the contemporary ethical literary criticism's correction of American ethical criticism. Based on the analysis of the merits of the book, this review then illuminates its significance in ethical literary criticism in particular and literary studies in general.

### **The Diachronic Evolution and Synchronic Debate of American Ethical Criticism**

Although Chinese scholars have been studying American ethical criticism since the 1980s, Professor Yang's book is the only monograph that clarifies its etymological ambiguity and quests into its historical origin and academic tradition, examining the evolution of ethical criticism (Ji 173). Besides diachronic examination, the book presents the extensive dialogue and heated debate of American ethical criticism, exploring its essence.

With numerous materials but lucid prose style, Yang briefly outlines the evolution of the ethical critical terms and traces origin of American ethical criticism from Classical Antiquity to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the introduction and the first chapter of the book. As a transdisciplinary study of literature and ethics, ethical criticism arises out of the ancient but enduring debate between literature and ethics since Classical Antiquity and is nourished by the tradition of European moral criticism. Pre-platonic philosophers and poets had always acknowledged the vital

role literature played in shaping ethical awareness until Plato famously excluded poets from his Republic. But Plato's view was challenged and redressed by his student Aristotle, whose "non-reductive humanism" reaffirmed literature as a vital source of ethical knowledge. Yang considers the ancient debate as "a historical prerequisite for the development of ethical literary criticism" (16). Besides, he shows convincingly how Plato, Aristotle, Horace and others contributed to the ancient ethical criticism with their respective practice and theory.

The first chapter continues to review, with great clarity, the European development of ethical criticism and explores the forces that bring the approach to its demise. The Hellenistic Era and the Middle Ages upheld the ethical stance established by Aristotle, Medieval secular and Christian literature obviously featuring ethical education. Renaissance humanism paved the way for the development of moral criticism with critics like Philip Sidney. The realist literature of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on ethical values to set role models for the public, propelled the development of moral criticism. Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson and Samuel Johnson are mentioned as its practitioners. The development of critical realist literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought to the fore various moral problems in society and further advanced the development of ethical criticism. Charles Dickens, Balzac, Turgenev and Tolstoy's works demonstrate ethical inclination. At the same time, since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a series of notable works that studied literary ethical criticism were published. Yang observes that these critical works put forward the concept of "ethical literary criticism", and expanded the territory of literary research, bringing religious, political, theological and culture perspectives to the study of ethics in literature, though it failed to establish an accepted theoretical framework. Although ethical criticism continued to play its role in the study of literature, it gradually lost the momentum in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yang summarizes three factors that brought its downturn: the rise of Aestheticism that denied the moral dimension and function of literature, the linguistic turn and the turn of the reader's response that further eliminated the moral dimension of literature and the innate flaws of ethical criticism.

Having showed the rich historical heritage of American ethical criticism, the second and third chapters conduct a synchronic study of American ethical criticism since the 1980s. In 1983, *New Literary History* published a special issue on "Literature and/as Moral Philosophy," sparking a new wave of critical enthusiasm in ethical criticism. Yang maintains that the return of the ethical criticism in America is a response to the linguistic turn in literature studies that focuses solely on linguistic forms. It is also stimulated by the ethical debate within deconstructionism,

the increasing popularity of narratology and some leading philosophers' ethical probes into literature. Yang analyzes the critical theory and practice of major critics of new humanist and deconstructionist ethical criticism respectively. Wayne C. Booth and Martha C. Nussbaum inherit Aristotelian humanism and the subsequent new humanism in approaching literature. Booth's ethical theory, especially his "conduction," illustrated in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* is studied in details. Yang observes that Booth's ethical criticism advances from ethical monism to pluralism and relocates the essence of ethical criticism. Absorbing Aristotelian ethics, Stoicism and the 18<sup>th</sup> century Sentimentalism, Martha C. Nussbaum advocates plural and noncommensurable values, stressing the importance of perception and emotions in ethical criticism. Likewise, the contribution of two most prominent deconstructionist ethical critics is carefully examined. Assimilating Kant's Ethics and Paul De Man's language theory, Miller argues that the act of reading entails ethical judgment, conclusion and prescription. Adam Zachary Newton's narrative ethics integrates the theory of Bakhtin, Levinas, Cavell, Robert Langbaum, and Wayne Booth, formulating narrative, representational and hermeneutic levels of theoretical frame. He argues that narrative is ethics and the meaning of literature depends on author's intention and interest, the formal text created for readers of a historical era and the response of readers at a given time.

The intense debate of American ethical criticism is closely studied in chapter three. This chapter begins with a review of the traditional debate between Autonomists and Anti-autonomists, cognitivists and their opponents, consequentialists and anti-consequentialists. Prof. Yang puts forward three principles for critics in defense of ethical criticism: the principle of ethical submission, the principle of diversity and the principle of relativity (121-22). The heated ethical debate between the radicals is closely analyzed. In 1997 and 1998, Richard Posner published two essays against ethical criticism in *Philosophy and Literature*. Martha C. Nussbaum immediately responded with her essay "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism" in the same journal, pointing out Posner's faults in attacking ethical criticism. Nussbaum summarizes four points of Posner's attack: "empathetic torturer argument," "the bad literati argument," "the evil literature argument" and "aesthetic-autonomy argument" (133). Prof. Yang then illustrates how Nussbaum responded to each of Posner's accusation. In the following section of this chapter, Prof. Yang explains Wayne Booth's defense for ethical criticism in the wake of Posner's attack. Booth also published an essay in *Philosophy and Literature*, titled "Why Banning Ethical Criticism Is a Serious Mistake" in defense of ethical approach to literature. Yang recapitulates the two major issues of their

debate: whether is it appropriate to evaluate literature on the basis of ethics? whether is reading helpful to create better citizens under democracy? Yang wraps up this chapter with a summary of the essence of the debate: “The discrepancy of this debate lies in politics as well as in literature. Broadly speaking, it includes the discussion of political policies, human nature and social structure. It is the political commitment that frames and at the same time circumscribes the ethical debate” (149). The real disagreement of the two sides lies not in the definition of ethics and aesthetics, as acknowledged by Posner and Booth respectively, but in the opposition of their political views. But the flaws exhibited in the traditional and radical debate of the American ethical criticism, Yang points out, never impedes the development of ethical criticism. On the contrary, the intense debate and the unresolved conflicts attract more critical attention, especially Chinese scholars striving for a new ethical approach to literature.

### **The Response of Chinese Scholarship to American Ethical Criticism**

Yang’s book manifests a strong sense of contemporaneity and Chinese subjectivity. Its meticulous study of American ethical criticism serves not for the nostalgic interest in a particular period of critical history but for the present literary studies in China and the world. Having sorted out the strength and flaws of American ethical criticism, the book continues to explore its influence by examining how Chinese contemporary literary criticism responds to it.

Chapter four, the last chapter of the book, reviews the Chinese assimilation and correction of American ethical criticism in their construction of ethical literary criticism. The American ethical criticism was introduced to China since the 1980s when Chinese scholars analyzed the works of major American ethical critics. At the same time, professor Nie Zhenzhao and his team has embarked on constructing ethical literary approach to literature, combining western and Chinese critical traditions. The national conference “Anglo-American Literature Studies in China: Looking Back and Looking Forward” held by Jiangxi Normal University in 2004 propels the development of ethical criticism in China, where Prof. Nie Zhenzhao made a key-note speech “Ethical Approach to Literary Studies: A New Perspective” that promoted the ethical criticism in literary studies in China and outlined the major framework of this new approach to literature. In subsequent essays, Prof. Nie further expanded and demonstrated the approach, which gained increasing critical attention. The conference “Ethical Approach to Literary Studies: A New Perspective” held by Central China Normal University in 2005 Marks the rise of ethical literary criticism in China, when more than 120 scholars convened in Wuhan discussing the values,

significance, methodology and practice of literary ethical criticism.

Prof Yang points out that the contemporary ethical literary criticism in China transcends the limitations of American ethical criticism and displays four distinct features of its own: 1) It sublimates literary ethical theories into ethical literary methodology; 2) It proposes that literature arises out of ethical needs, regarding the function of education as the primary function of literature; 3) It distinguishes ethical criticism from moral criticism from different perspectives; 4) It establishes its own critical discourse, such as ethical situation, ethical order, ethical confusion, ethical dilemma, ethical taboo, ethical complex, etc., making it easily approachable to literature studies. With some leading scholars of ethical literary criticism like Prof. Nie Zhenzhao, an important journal of scholarly exchange (*Foreign Literature Studies*), and increasing number of practitioners and academic publications, ethical literary criticism moves steadily to its perfection. Prof. Yang compares Prof. Nie's definition of ethical literary criticism with Marshall Gregory's definition and points out convincingly that Nie's version is more comprehensive, since it greatly expands the territory claimed by Booth and Gregory, as it emphasizes objective evaluation of authors and their works from ethical perspective, explaining the ethical nature of literature, exploring the moral reasons of various phenomena of life described in literature and evaluating them accordingly. Yang also shows, with numerous case studies, that the application of ethical literary criticism to literary texts produces new conclusions. An ethical approach to *Hamlet* finds that prince Hamlet's hesitation to take revenge is caused by two unresolved ethical complexes: regicide and patricide. His famous soliloquy could be therefore understood as "To be (ethical), or not to be (ethical)" (172).

Yang further demonstrates his strong sense of critical responsibility in pointing out the current problems and the direction of ethical literary criticism in the conclusion of the book. Although ethical literary criticism has established its basic critical frame, but three issues must be further clarified: 1) the essential difference between ethical criticism and moral criticism; 2) The limited capacity of ethical literary criticism and the unlimited potential of textual interpretation; 3) the definition and application of basic terms of ethical literary criticism. At the meantime, Yang highlights that ethical literary critics are to endeavor in the following three directions: 1) guided by the principle of practicality, ethical literary criticism is expected to produce more exemplar critical works for different texts; 2) Based on the principle of plurality, ethical literary criticism must attempt to assimilate the merits of other critical approaches so as to fortify its own strength; 3) Ethical literary criticism must be equipped with transdisciplinary and transcultural

perspectives. At the end of the book, Yang expresses his confidence that ethical literary criticism will play a greater role in literary studies in the future.

### **The Critical and Practical Significance of *American Ethical Criticism: A Survey***

With rich historical documentation, insightful analysis and strong practicality, Yang's book plays an important role in the perfection of ethical literary criticism and the academic exchange between Western and Chinese literary studies.

To Begin with, it traces and analyzes the Western heritage of ethical literary criticism since the Classical Antiquity to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which had never been sufficiently studied. For more than a decade, Professor Nie Zhenzhao and his team from Central China Normal University has been striving for a new ethical approach to literature, to "avoid ethical absences and solve the problems of separating theory from practice in ongoing literary studies in China" (qtd. in Yang Jincai 36). Yang's book is the 10<sup>th</sup> academic monograph of the "Construction of Ethical Literary Criticism Series" published by Central China Normal University Press. While most monographs provide case studies of writers and their works from ethical literary perspective, Yang's book examines the Western and Chinese tradition, methodology and practice of ethical criticism, seeking to fortify the theoretical foundation of ethical literary criticism.

Moreover, the book demonstrates the distinctive feature of ethical literary criticism and helps to clarify some misunderstandings of ethical literary criticism. It distinguishes the contemporary ethical literary criticism from previous versions including American ethical criticism, proving that the former firmly establishes its own theoretical framework and critical discourse while the latter fails. As Prof. Nie points out in the preface of the book, the publication of this monograph helps us to understand the flaws in the methodology of American ethical literary criticism and the importance of fundamental theory and methodology for ethical literary criticism (6). In addition, analyzing the long odyssey of ethical literary criticism, Yang also clarifies some ambivalent critical terms like "moral" and "ethics" that had always been haunting ethical approaches to literature. Undoubtedly, it will help to foster a better understanding of ethical literary criticism.

Furthermore, the book reveals current and potential problems in contemporary literary criticism based on the study of the demerits of American ethical criticism and makes valuable suggestions accordingly. At the meantime, it also points out the direction of future development of ethical literary criticism. All these facilitate a better development of ethical literary criticism.

Last but not least, Yang's book is a confident move to promote scholarly

exchange between China and the West in the field of literary studies, as one reviewer points out: “With a strong sense of scholarly cultural awareness, Yang examines the evolution of American ethical criticism and the Chinese reconstruction of ethical literary criticism based on academic recognition and dialogue” (Ji 175).

From what has been discussed above, there is no doubt that Yang has produced an insightful and suggestive text that invites future probes into ethical literary criticism. The book certainly anticipates a better future of contemporary ethical literary criticism and a new wave of scholarly exchange between China and the west in literary studies.

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# The Narrative Dynamics of Contemporary Chinese Ecoliterature: A Review of *A Study of Eco-Narrative of Chinese Contemporary Novels from a Comparative Perspective*

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**Abstract** Eco-narrative in literature is now understood as an effective way to examine the problematic relationship between our postmodern landscape and mindscape. A case in point is Ji Xiuming's *A Study of Eco-Narrative of Chinese Contemporary Novels from a Comparative Perspective* which carries out a comparative analysis of both western and Chinese views in ecocriticism and literary expressions.

**Key words** Ji Xiuming; eco-narrative; Chinese contemporary novels; comparative perspective

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Actively participating in the fast global economic development, China like many other countries has been witnessing and suffering the deterioration of its own natural environment. Similar with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), contemporary Chinese ecoliterature started with narratives of caution and apocalypse. The conflicts between Chinese economic reforms and environmental protection have become extremely conspicuous in recent decades. Professor Ji has listed out many Chinese contemporary environmental disasters such the flood in the middle and

lower reaches of Yangtse River in 1998, the epidemic of SARS and the pollution of Huaihe and Yangtse rivers in 2003, the nation-wide freezing rain and snow disaster in 2008 (16). According to Professor Ji, experiencing the natural disasters Chinese began to realize the importance of environmental protection. Chinese literature acts correspondingly by addressing people's combat with nature and its negative consequences.

As for the genre of eco-novel, Professor Ji argues that there is not a clear distinction between eco-novels and non-eco-novels because ecological issues are also dealt with in non-ecological novels. According to Professor Ji, the analysis of eco-narrative in novels is an appropriate approach to deal with ecological issues in both kinds of novels.

In her book, Professor Ji has summarized the themes of the eco-narrative of Chinese contemporary novels, such as ecological crisis, anti-anthropocentrism, anti-materialism, criticism on science and technology, criticism on political culture, the ethical relationship between man and nature and the sense of loss of religious and spiritual home. Her book has a wide coverage of Chinese contemporary novels. Novels by Yu Jie, Du Guanghui, A Chen, Lao Gui, Zhe Fu, Li Cunbao, Guo Xuebo, Chi zijian, Wei An, Wang Men and Jian Rong have been used to exemplify those thematic concerns. In order to carry out a comparative study, Professor Ji has been engaged with critical ideas of a good number of distinguished Chinese and foreign scholars such as Wang Nuo, Lu Shuyuan, Wang Shudong, Shen Dan, Yang Jianlong, Zhou Xufeng, Zhou Xianglu, Jonathan Levin, Donald Worster, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Heidegger, Benedict Anderson and Mark Schorer.

Professor Ji argues that according to many Chinese contemporary writers science and technology has deified man but the selfish and self-centered man-god is killing wild animals around the world. Man will reap what he has sown. Du Guanghui raises an environmental ethical inquiry: "After the annihilation of animals, will man end up killing themselves?" ( 25 ) The deterioration of environment in China is not only the result of the fast development of economy and technology but also the result of its own historical problems including the collision between the culture of revolution and the traditional village or country culture with patriarchal clan system at its core.

The eco-narrative of Chinese writers has displayed a peculiar cultural consciousness. Eco-narrative provides a way in which Chinese writers can reflect upon and reconstruct national culture. Professor Ji focuses on the symbiotic relationship between wolf and man, nature and culture in Jia Pingwa's novel *Missing Wolves* and Jiang Rong's novel *Wolf Totem*. The wolf culture and the

philosophy of life inspire and complete modern people's cultural imagination. The images and concepts of wolf, threat and the invasion of Mongolian cavalry are closely interlocked within an eco-narrative which demonstrates the contribution of a nature-centered nomadic culture to Chinese civilization. The sustainability of Chinese culture depends on the inflow of the fresh blood of new cultures.

Through an emphasis on the cultural, political, national and international elements in Chinese eco-narratives, *A Study of Eco-Narrative of Chinese Contemporary Novels from a Comparative Perspective* proposes a new methodological direction for charting the trajectory of Chinese intellectual debates over ecological issues. Addressing the differences between western eco-narrative and Chinese eco-narrative, Mrs. Ji emphasizes the importance of literary examination and representation of national policy and national cultural imagination. She argues that compared with Chinese narrative of modernity focusing on the nation-state imagination and the fulfillment of a Chinese dream of abundance, strength and happiness, contemporary Chinese eco-narrative emphasizes the model of eco-national culture, the interlocked relationship between national-state system and national eco-policies (42). Within such a discursive context, Chinese Xun Gen literature (Search-for-Roots Literature) is considered extremely effective in dealing with ecological issues, because it reflects upon Chinese modernization process which has dramatically changed Chinese landscape and mindscape. The conflicts between the physical and spiritual spheres of Chinese modern life and the combat between nature's right of existence and man's right of existence have sparked a nationwide self-examination in literature.

Mrs. Ji points out that Chinese contemporary eco-narrative takes place in a complex cultural context within which pre-modern, modern and postmodern elements co-exist. Chinese eco-criticism thus develops a compromise formula. Affected by the formula, Chinese writers often take an ambivalent, ambiguous attitude toward certain ecological issues. The ethics of modernity and the ethics of environmental protection affect Chinese contemporary writers at the same time, as a result of which they quite often suffer from an ethical confusion which does not exist in western eco-narrative because anthropocentrism has been overthrown in western societies already. In China modernization is still an ongoing process and the tug of war between progress and protection continues. Deeply influenced by these social, economical and cultural factors, Chinese eco-narrative in general has weakened the classical western ecological perspectives whose core concepts are "anti-anthropocentrism" and "respect of life" (53).

Mrs. Ji devotes five of her study's eight chapters to critically reflecting upon

narrative patterns and motifs in contemporary Chinese eco-narrative. Importantly, she closely examines representative Western and Chinese literary texts and successfully draws paradigms of Chinese eco-narrative. She demonstrates the intersections between literary studies and other fields of inquiry: geo-political studies, culture studies and the study of ethics. Chapter 3 offers a profound discussion of the necessity of introducing the analysis of narrative strategies into the research of eco-literature. The shared eco-narrative motifs such as the beauty of the aboriginality of nature and people, the mysticism in religions, and the evilness of nature are clearly illustrated. A Lai's novel *Distant Hot Springs*, Chi Zijian's novel *Right bank of Eergu'Na River* and Du Guanghui's short fiction "Oh, My Kokohili" are put side by side with their western counterparts such as Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, Boris Livovich Vasilyev's novel *Do Not Shoot at White Swans* and Leonid Maksimovich Leonov's novel *The Russian Forest*.

Based upon textual analysis and Tzvetan Todorov's ideas on narrative sequence, Mrs. Ji has categorized two contemporary eco-narrative sequences: 1. mode of retrospection including aspects such as spiritual utopia, aboriginal beliefs, animal spirit and the magical power of nature; 2. mode of postmodern criticism which exhibits itself in the sequence "harmony — breach of harmony — regain of harmony — breach of harmony again — the possible victory over the destructive power — the possible reconstruction of a harmony?" The narrative point of views in contemporary Chinese eco-narrative such as children's perspective and animal's perspective are carefully examined by Mrs. Ji as ways through which narrative tensions are heightened and multi-dimensional debates are unfolded.

Chapter 4 entitled "narrative strategy: specific narrative features" focuses on national geo-political and cultural elements in contemporary Chinese eco-narrative. Drawing theoretical concepts from H. A. Taine and comparing with American national geo-political eco-narratives by Washington Irving, William Faulkner, Tony Morrison, Mrs. Ji studies the eco-narratives of Chinese minority writers such as Tibetan writer A Lai, Bai ethnic writer Zhang Chang, Mongolian writer Baugil Dhidhi, and Tujia ethnic writer Li Chuanfeng, etc. Mysticism and cultural uniqueness are narrative focuses and marks in minority writers' eco-narratives. Unnatural narrative is widely employed by these writers to create a mythic nature and helps people to develop a sense of awe at and a respect for the mysterious nature. The spiritual power and its personifications of nature take place in various forms. The images of utopia and dystopia in the eco-narrative of contemporary Chinese eco-narrative are compared with its western counterpart. Different from its western counterpart, Chinese depiction of dystopia mainly emphasizes the distorted

human desire, social and cultural aspects. As a result, the battle between technology, natural environment and human nature is not that significant.

What follows is an illuminating exploration of the achievements and problems in contemporary Chinese eco-narrative. According to Mrs. Ji, the evaluation of social, moral values in eco-narrative should be given more attention and the employment of diversified narrative techniques will help writers to extract those values and develop unique esthetics in Chinese eco-narrative. Mrs. Ji argues that localization in eco-narrative deals with the complexity of national issues: the conflicts between development and environment, the symbiotic relationship and tension between the ethics of nature and the ethics of living, people's ethical confusion caused by the clash between the modernization process and the seemingly static rural country life. The relationship between people and earth has to be addressed repeatedly.

Throughout the book, Mrs. Ji displays an impressively broad range of reference and expertise. Her undertaking draws as deftly on theories of eco-criticism as it does on the comparative history of western and Chinese eco-narrative. Juxtaposing her readings of both western and Chinese eco-literatures, Mrs. Ji has demonstrated their similarities and differences. Chinese eco-narrative is considered as a way in which contemporary Chinese writers address national economic, political and cultural problems and participate in the global cause of environmental protection. As a comprehensive and ground breaking study, *A Study of Eco-Narrative of Chinese Contemporary Novels from a Comparative Perspective* is just such a compelling read for refining our understanding of contemporary Chinese writers' perspectives, anxieties and wishes in their eco-narratives.

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