

The ESSE Messenger



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Europe, like Hamlet; or, *Hamlet* as a mousetrap

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Abstract¹: This is an essay on imagination and the politics of reading. Imagining reality is the inventive way of seeing everyday life; reading is performed in this paper by applying the logical framework of a classic – Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – to one of the great problems of the contemporary world – immigration – and by responding to this in terms of justice.

Proceeding as a close reading of the first two lines of *Hamlet* – in a sense, the paper is a footnote to this opening of the play –, the essay implicitly addresses old critical questions like why should we read a classic? or how to cross the frontiers between distant historical periods, how to surmount the historical specificity that separates Shakespeare's texts and his critics' writings? The answer given in this essay to these questions is also an invitation to pursue the kind of effort made here to do justice jointly to a text of the past and to a burning issue of the present. A politics of tradition. Rigorous intellectual discipline is not enough; it is also necessary to make an ethico-political decision not to avert one's eyes from real issues, not to hide behind the screen provided by our world, but to do all we can to change the increasingly negative current social attitudes towards immigrants.

The argument is carried out with the tools for thinking provided by thinkers like Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek.

Keywords: Immigration, spectrality, identity, justice, alterity; Shakespeare, Lacan, Derrida, Badiou, Žižek.

Like Hamlet, Europe today is faced with the question “to be or not to be.”

Like Hamlet, Europe tragically does not know what to do.

Like Hamlet, Europe is haunted.

And, like *The Tragedie of Hamlet*, Europe's drama begins with a question concerning identity: ‘who's there?’ (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.i.1)

I. Now, who asks this question?

Hamlet opens with a touch of true genius,ⁱ and a mouse-trap for the contemporary audience.ⁱⁱ Right at the beginning of the play, a significant though inconspicuous inversion of roles takes place: instead of the sentry who is keeping watch at the defensive walls of Elsinore, i.e. at the dividing line between the inside and the outside,ⁱⁱⁱ it is someone who arrives that asks the question demanding

¹ This essay was written in the context of the research carried out by the Discourse & Identity Group (GRC2015/002, GI-1924, Xunta de Galicia).

identification. Can you imagine an immigrant doing this at the doors of Europe today?^{iv}

Why does Barnardo and not the sentinel, Francisco, ask “Who’s there?” Simply, because Barnardo has seen a ghost haunting the place, while sentinel Francisco has not.^v And Barnardo, knowing that ghosts are restless, asks yet another question that confirms the real source of his fears: “have you had a *quiet* guard?”^{vi} Therefore, his question “who’s there” is not prompted by the fear of an answer like: “Fortinbras, I am here to reclaim the crown.” Rather, it is motivated by the dread of receiving an answer from a “thing” that cannot be grasped, classified, identified: from a ghost.^{vii}

II. What does the tragedy of Hamlet consist of?

Hamlet is the tragedy of a modern prince who does not know what to do because he is convinced that his father has been murdered by his uncle but he cannot prove it before a tribunal. This prince is certainly in need of instruction; and here the ghost enters ready to teach prince Hamlet what he must do.^{viii}

Unfortunately, though properly, the ghost’s lesson is truly spectral: Hamlet’s dead father returns to ask his son to revenge him.^{ix} But this is precisely what Hamlet should not do because the modern prince must base his rule on the institution of justice and this is incompatible with revenge.^x Hamlet’s father was spectralised not only by death, but by history as well: his advice is a thing of the past.^{xi}

III. Europe today

That the human mind produces monsters is a well-known fact. We do this when we conceive the other as the source of all our problems, the cause of our lack, even the embodiment of evil itself.^{xii} It is a canny trick, useful to bring people together against an external threat, to justify our behaviour towards strangers, and to mask the real nature both of our world and of our darker motives. Looking directly into the heart is hard and can perhaps be unbearable: think of the monstrous heart breaking out of the chest of the man lying on the dining table (not in the operating theatre) in the film *Alien*. But Horatio warned of the serious danger of averting one’s eyes from the heart of the matter: while everyone is expecting an external attack, it may well be that “something is rotten” inside. (*Hamlet* I.v.90)^{xiii}

Let me ask you to imagine. Not an ideal world as John Lennon asked us to do in his famous song, but reality itself: imagine that Europe is surrounded by a frontier in which we have placed sentries to demand those who arrive: “stand and unfold” (*Hamlet* I.i.2) yourselves. Now imagine that the same inversion that takes place at the beginning of *Hamlet* is rehearsed today, at this very moment, at the borders of Europe; and that the immigrants, instead of our sentinels, ask the question “who’s there?”

Do we know what to do? For we must choose: between listening to (and if we do so we are “bound... to obey”)^{xiv} our own vindictive ghosts inciting us to take revenge on others, whom we have construed as the monstrous causes of our “sea

of troubles” (*Hamlet* III.i.59) or to follow the road of justice and attentively listen to the question they have for us: “is there any human being in there?”

“To be or not to be” just, “that is the question.” (*Hamlet* III.i.56)

IV. The mousetrap

Like the great epic poems,^{xv} the tragedy of *Hamlet* opens by formulating the main topic and confronting the audience with the core of its subject right at the beginning of the *oeuvre*.^{xvi} This opening is a mousetrap designed to catch the conscience of the contemporary audience. The mechanism of the trap consists of an inversion of roles: the question is asked, not by one occupying the position of authority and in charge of checking the fitting identity of each element of the system, but by someone else who arrives at the place and faces authority from a disturbed position. Despite the parallelism that this may suggest between the beginning of Shakespeare’s tragedy and today’s European drama, there are also obvious differences. To start with, the questioner in *Hamlet* is an insider, the soldier who comes to relieve the sentinel, while in the contemporary rehearsal of the drama the questioner is an outsider, the immigrant. Does this destroy the parallelism between the tragedy of *Hamlet* and Europe’s drama today? Let us press this point a bit further before examining the logical framework of the inversion of roles and its relevance today.

In *Hamlet* the threat that Horatio associates with the “thing” is internal as opposed to the external threat represented by Fortinbras; in today’s European drama the “thing” appears external and opposed to our internal ideal order.

Does the opposition inside/outside hold in the spectral scene created by the ghost’s appearance? In fact, the ghost is neither here inside nor there outside, it is in between: in *Hamlet*, it appears precisely at the border^{xvii} and is impossible to fix to a point in space.^{xviii} It is true that the question is asked from the inside in *Hamlet*, while in Europe’s drama it comes from the other side of the wall. Immigrants, though, with no acceptable papers to identify themselves, are neither inside nor outside: like ghosts, they have abandoned one world, but have not entered another yet; they have left their country and, even if they have crossed the borders, even when inside, they remain in between.^{xix} In a similar way, Barnardo is an insider but, like the immigrant’s, his position has been disturbed and is “out-of-joint” at the precise moment that he asks the opening question.^{xx}

There is, however, a point at which the parallelism is significantly broken: if, on the one hand, in the case of Europe’s drama the question is asked by the immigrants who are as much disturbed as Barnardo, on the other hand, they have not been disturbed by ghosts; more precisely (for immigrants certainly have their own ghosts to deal with), the question they ask is not prompted by our ghosts. This difference makes room for the figure of the immigrant to enter and play the crucial role in the re-enactment of *Hamlet*’s opening in Europe’s drama today.

Let us now examine the logic of the inversion of roles and of the variations that take place in its enactment today. The general framework, to repeat, is this: instead of the sentry who keeps watch and therefore has the right to challenge, it is someone who arrives that asks the question demanding identification. Within this framework we have two relevant variations. In both *Hamlet* and Europe’s

drama the “thing” provokes and speaks. But while in *Hamlet* the ghost provokes the question and gives voice to vindictive impulses, in Europe’s drama the immigrant (even when silent, like the ghost when it first appears in *Hamlet*, and like the dumb show included in the-play-within-the-play) provokes vindictive reactions and gives voice to a fearful question. Moreover, instead of coming from a firm position of authority, the question at the beginning of *Hamlet* issues from the failure of the symbolic order to classify a “thing” and the consequent anxiety of the speaker; in the contemporary rehearsal of the drama the question is asked by the ghost itself haunting us embodied in the immigrant.

In order to understand the logic of the inversion of roles and of the variations that today’s European drama introduces, one must understand the nature of the ghost. What sort of ghost is this, where does it rise from? Horatio’s diagnosis of the situation (“something is rotten in the state of Denmark”) provides the key to the answer: the ghost arises from the inside. In the contemporary drama the ghost of the immigrant is the return of an inherent unacknowledged antagonism,^{xxi} a real inner division that lies under the imaginary ideal unity.^{xxii} Impossible to eliminate, the flaw is embodied in an *other* who is excluded only to return in some “horrible form.” (*Hamlet* I.iv.72) The opposition inside/outside that serves to exclude fails to exorcise. The horror this ghost provokes inheres in the instability of the very opposition on which we rely to guarantee the imaginary unity of our world: the opposition inside/outside.

Traditional ghosts, like Hamlet’s father, return to demand the living to perform some task for them, often something they have been unable to do or left unfinished.^{xxiii} Immigrants, on the contrary, perform something for us; rather than requiring us to do something or imparting a lesson on what we should do, as Hamlet’s father does, they ask a question. When in the contemporary drama, instead of the representative of symbolic order or a disturbed element of the system, immigrants ask the overwhelming question, they play our part: they do what we, the insiders, fail to do afraid as we are of this “thing” at the heart that we prefer to cover up with commodities rather than face it.

Though the inner flaw embodied in the immigrant “assume a horrible form” and be naturally abhorrent to our current disposition of mind, the immigrants’ question is a true opening and a new possibility for us: at stake in our response to the immigrant is the possibility of doing justice to ourselves and to others, for only if we are just to immigrants, if we carefully listen to their question, we can properly address and take care of the flaw in the heart and prevent its rotting inside.

The immigrant “waves [us] to a more removed ground” beyond the present status quo, a passage that is frightening enough.^{xxiv} By the inversion of roles, instead of being demanded identification, the immigrant asks the fearful question and thus gives voice to the “thing” that haunts us. By replacing the disturbed insider with the immigrant and facing us with this questioning other – the throbbing heart of the matter that asks “are there just or vindictive beings in there?” – a truthful re-enactment of the play invents the possibility of catching our conscience... and opening our cage.

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Notes

ⁱ T.S. Eliot admired the beginning of *Hamlet*, despite considering the play as a whole an artistic failure. Catherine Belsey has pointed out that “[a]s Hamlet begins, Shakespeare builds suspense in a manner unprecedented on the English stage.” (2010: 1)

ⁱⁱ “The Moue-trap” is the title Hamlet gives the play-within-the-play in III.ii.232. The prince designed it to ensnare the king’s conscience: “The play’s the *thing* / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King.” (II.ii.600-601; italics mine) This mirrors the aim of the play as a whole: to “catch the conscience” of the audience (Barbeito 1998).

ⁱⁱⁱ The opposition inside/outside is “the matrix of all possible opposition,” according to Jacques Derrida (1981: 103).

^{iv} James Joyce drew attention to Shakespeare’s interest in outsiders: “Shakespeare’s characters all come from abroad and afar: Othello, a Moorish prince; Shylock, a venetian Jew; Caesar, a Roman; Hamlet, a Danish prince; Macbeth, a Celtic usurper; Romeo and Juliet, citizens of Verna.” (2000: 164)

^v Harold Jenkins points out that the question is not asked by “the sentry on guard who has the right to challenge,” without further explanation (1981: 165). Belsey identifies anxiety as the major ingredient of the “suspense;” she does not distinguish, though, between the two soldiers: “Shakespeare’s guards are already in a more than ordinary state of anxiety... Is this shape I can barely perceive in the deep darkness, each seems to ask, the sentinel I hope to see, or is it someone—or something—else?” (2010: 1) Alain Badiou defines anxiety as a “*guide post for truth*,” (2009: 155) and argues that it must be overcome by courage and justice; see ‘Theory of the subject according to Sophocles. Theory of the subject according to Aeschylus.’ (2009:158-168)

^{vi} *Hamlet* I.i.10. The inscription *R.I.P. (Requiescat in pace)* on tombstones is an exorcism against the ghost’s restlessness.

^{vii} “Thing” is what Horatio will call the ghost a few lines later (I.i.24, and again in I.1.153 and I.2.210). Hamlet repeats this when he applies the same term both to his own soul and, indirectly, to the ghost: “As for my soul, what can it do to that, / being a thing immortal as it is?” (I.iv.66-67) Later Hamlet will also call “thing” the play that he has designed to force the king’s exposure of his crime: “the play is the thing.” (II.ii.600) As a consequence of this double association, the rhyme “thing”-“king” (“the play is the thing/ Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King”) not only anticipates what is going to happen by tying the present king to the “thing”-“play” that will entrap him; it is also haunted by the ‘presence’ of another king, the “thing”-“ghost” that forced the inversion of roles at the beginning of *Hamlet*, a play designed to catch the conscience of the audience (in Europe’s drama today, the part of the “thing,” as we shall see, is performed by the immigrant). The audience’s consciousness is linguistically seized because language itself is haunted: Horatio’s question in I.i.23 concerning the apparition of the late king’s ghost (“has this thing appear’d again?”) and Barnardo’s answer in I.i.24 (“I have seen nothing”) anticipate Hamlet’s combination of “king”-“thing”-“nothing” when he says that “the king is a thing... of nothing.” (IV.ii.26-27) The first level of interpretation of these sentences is haunted by the paradoxical relation “thing”-“nothing.” At one level, when Barnardo says that he has seen “nothing,” this sentence, interpreted as a general statement, includes the ghost, which has just been called a “thing” by Horatio; therefore, he means “*I have not seen the ghost.*” But the ghost is also *nothing*; therefore, Barnardo’s “I have seen nothing” tonight is haunted by his having previously seen a *no-thing*. In a similar way, when Hamlet says “the king is a thing... of nothing,” he has the living king, his uncle, in mind, but the sentence is haunted by the dead king, his father’s ghost, now literally a king-thing of nothing. And when, just before this, he responds to Rosencrantz’s demand “you must tell us where the body is” (iv.ii.25) by stating that “the body is with the King,” (IV.ii.26) insofar as he refers to Polonius, Hamlet does not only mean that his body “is here in the palace ‘with the king,’” (Jenkins 338); he also hints at the fact that Polonius is with the late king among dead.

^{viii} The scene of instruction proper takes place in *Hamlet* I.v. In *Spectres of Marx*, in which *Hamlet* plays a central role and which concentrates Derridean hauntology, Derrida deals with the relation with ghosts in terms of a scene of instruction on the good life. One cannot “learn to live” in the context of ordinary life, either from a living authority (“from father to son, master to disciple, or master to slave,” which would always involve some form of “violence” and “taming,” xvi-xvii) or from one’s own experience (“from oneself, it is not learned from life, taught by life,” xvi-xvii). Learning how to live “can happen only between life and death... with ghosts,” (xvii-xviii) “[t]he scholar of tomorrow... should learn to live by learning ... how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself: they are always *there*, spectres.” (1994: 221; italics in the original) The aim of education cannot be the subjection of the pupil to the past, as Hamlet’s vindictive father conceives instruction, on the contrary, it is “[t]o live otherwise ... more justly.” (xvii-xviii)

^{ix} This avenging ghost must be confronted with the ghost-thing that disturbs the situation and provokes the question at the beginning of the play. For the essential ambivalence of the ghost (vindictive agency and the “thing” that escapes identification and opens a scene of instruction on justice), see Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*. The figure of the ghost is recurrent in Derrida. For a list of his writings dealing with spectrality, see Kas Saghafi (2006: 279); to this list *The Gift of Death* should be added. According to Belsey, the vindictive ghost belongs to the Senecan tradition, while the mysterious ghost (which does not answer the *what is* question, i.e., the question concerning identity) belongs to the popular tradition of winter tales. Hamlet’s address to the “questionable shape” (I.iv.43) of the ghost (“Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn’d” I.iv.40) shows that he senses the ambivalence of the ghost as a pharmakon (see Derrida, ‘Plato’s Pharmacy,’ in *Dissemination*).

^x “The slogan of this regime, *pax et justitia*, in keeping with the function it laid claim to, established peace as the prohibition of feudal or private wars, and justice as the way of suspending the private settling of lawsuits (...) Law was not simply a weapon skilfully wielded by monarchs; it was the monarchic system’s mode of manifestation and the form of its acceptability.” (Michel Foucault 1990: 87)

^{xi} “— What is a ghost? Stephen said with tingling energy. One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, *through change of manners.*” (James Joyce, *Ulysses* 180; emphasis mine) It should also be noticed that in the spectralization of Hamlet’s father already lurks a main concern that would spread with the development of modernity: the spectralisation of the father figure as guide.

^{xii} See Slavoj Žižek; for instance, *How to Read Lacan* (2006), chapters 3 and 4 in particular.

^{xiii} Horatio detects the correspondence between the inner cause of the danger that threatens the situation and the ghost. Eliot was right when insisting on Hamlet’s “bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feeling.” (1969: 145) but he did not realise that this bafflement was the logical outcome of the ghostly nature of the “objective equivalent” of Hamlet’s predicament. Thus he hit the nail on the head though he looked for the objective correlative in the wrong place and, not finding it, charged the play with lacking one for the state of mind of its protagonist: “Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear... Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore

remains to poison life and obstruct action. None of the possible actions can satisfy it; and nothing that Shakespeare can do with the plot can express Hamlet for him.” (1969: 145)

xiv - Hamlet. “Speak; I am *bound* to hear.”

- Ghost. “So art thou *to revenge* when thou shalt hear.” (*Hamlet* I.v.6-7 emphases mine)

John Milton made disobedience the theme of *Paradise Lost* (“Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit”) and gave the etymological meaning of the word (“obey” < “oboedire” < “audire,” i.e. “hear”) a key function in his reinterpretation of the myth of Paradise. *To listen or not to listen* to the proper guide or instructor is *the question* in Milton’s poem (Barbeito 1991).

xv “The wrath of Peleus’ son.” (*The Iliad* I.1) “The man for wisdom’s various arts renown’d.” (*Odyssey* I.1) “Of arms I sing, and of the man.” (*The Aeneid* I.1) “Of Man’s first disobedience.” (*Paradise Lost*, I.1) The obvious difference is that, unlike the epic poems, Shakespeare’s play does not explicitly state its subject but displays it dramatically.

xvi Derrida’s explanation of the etymology of “oeuvre” is relevant here: “Work: that which makes for a work, for an *oeuvre*, indeed that which works – and works to open: *opus* and *opening*, *oeuvre* and *overture*: the work or labor of the *oeuvre* insofar as it engenders, produces, and brings to light, but also labor or travail as suffering, as the enduring of force, as the pain of the one who gives. Of the one who gives birth, who brings to the light of day and gives something to be seen, who enables or empowers, who gives the force to know and to be able to see.” (1996: 171)

xvii And when it appears in the closet scene (III.iv.104-138), the ghost is most undecidable than ever. Only Hamlet can see it and we cannot know if it is a projection of his disturbed mind or a “visitation” as the ghost states (III.iv.110).

xviii See what happens when the soldiers try to fix it:

- Barnardo. ““Tis here.”
- Horatio. ““Tis here.”
- Marcellus. ““Tis gone.” (*Hamlet* I.i.145-147)

xix If we understand “situation” as “any consistent presented multiplicity, thus: a multiple, and a regime of the count-as-one,” (Badiou 2007: 522) i.e. a multiple structured by the count-as-one, then the immigrants without papers, not counting as citizens, do not belong to the social structure even if they live in the country. In Badiou’s terms, though they do not exist (because they do not belong to, they are not made to exist by the situation) they are, they *inexist*; even if they are not members of a consistent multiplicity, still they *inconsist*. Badiou has approached the question of the immigrant in several texts; see, for instance, *Metapolitics* (2005).

xx “The time is out of joint” (I.v.196) is Hamlet’s definition of the general situation. This point is decisive in Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*.

xxi On the inherent nature of antagonism, see Žižek (2006, 2010).

xxii In p. 895 of Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits*, Jacques-Alain Miller indicates the pages in this book where Lacan deals with the relations between the notions of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. In pp. 8-9 of *How to Read Lacan*, Zizek explains these notions using the game of chess as an example: The rules one has to follow in order to play it are its symbolic dimension... [thus] ‘knight’ is defined only by the moves this figure can make... the imaginary [is]... the way in which different pieces are shaped and characterized... real is the entire complex set of contingent circumstances that affect the course of the game.” (On should not be misled by the word “circumstances” and forget that the real can be the result of repression). See also Dylan Evans (2006).

^{xxiii} For traditional ghosts see, for instance, Ronald C. Finucane, *Ghosts* (1996).

^{xxiv} The following passage illustrates the source of our fears:

Horatio. – It beckons you to go away with it
(...)

Marcellus. – It waves you to a more removed ground.

Horatio. – What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
(...)

And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
(...)

The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into the brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.

Hamlet I.iv.58-78

Star-crossed Lovers in Sarajevo in 2002

Shakespeare, My Contemporary?

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Abstract¹: Ever since the establishment of the National Theatre of Sarajevo in 1921, select performances of the Bard's plays, along with other canonical dramatic texts such as Ibsen's, Miller's, Williams', Ionesco's, or Beckett's, have been staged both on the premises of the National Theatre and elsewhere (NPS n. pag.). The Sarajevan audience has always been a privileged one, exposed to and immersed in the dramatic arts. *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, but also dramatic appropriations and "re-writing" of Shakespeare's works such as *Gamllet*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* or *The Performance of Hamlet in the Village of Mrduša Donja* (NPS n. pag.; Bašović 291), are only some of the dramas that they have enjoyed viewing. However, a 2002 performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Haris Pašović and coproduced by the MES International Theatre Festival and Baščaršijske noći festival (Imamović; Imamović and Seksan; Ožegović; "Nedeljni vodič"; Prijović) drew unequivocal attention. It was innovative in many ways: the use of the found-space; the ensemble comprised of established actors/actresses, and young talented people fresh from the Academy; the foregrounding of the (political) feuds; the re-translation of Shakespeare, and foremost, the double ending. This paper aims to consider the manner in which the aforementioned staging of *Romeo and Juliet* brought in a new reading of Shakespeare within the context of post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina and in particular discuss its (melodramatic) ending.

Keywords: *Romeo and Juliet*, stage adaptation, found space, post-Kottian approach, MES International festival, Baščaršijske noći festival

Introduction

In a year when nations across the world have been looking for fitting ways to observe and commemorate the fourth centennial of Shakespeare's death, it only seems proper that at the conference M@king It New in English Studies in Maribor, held from September 15–17 2016, we were discussing the Bard's eternal life. As a part of larger (literary, artistic, dramatic and academic) community, South-East Europe, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, started the celebrations early last year (2015) with the premiere and subsequent touring of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Miki Manojlović and in co-production with Radionica Integracije from Belgrade, Serbia and Qendra Multimedia from Priština, Kosovo (Martinović [pars. 1–2]). The performance, contextualizing and assessing this early Shakespeare tragedy within the web of complex Albanian and Serbian relations and rifts, had the originally English text spoken in both Serbian and Albanian languages, without any sub/supertitles or translation (i.e. half of the

¹ A short version of this paper was presented at the 4th International Conference of the Slovene Association for the Study of English, "M@king It New in English Studies", held at the University of Maribor in September 2016.

lines—those of the Capulets—are recited in one, Serbian, and the other half—those of the Montagues—in the other, Albanian, language; “Srpsko-albanski “Romeo i Julija” ispráčeni ovacijama u ZKM-u” n. pag.). The play also experiments with the stage, having the troupe comprised of both Albanian and Serbian thespians (making their living in Serbia, Kosovo, the USA and Bosnia and Herzegovina) stand at different ends of a large cross, which, along with the bilingual declamation and multiethnic ensemble, has provoked a range of queries and interpretations [1]. Interestingly enough the production was heralded in 2014 by Refik Kadija of Shkoder University, Albania and Tetovo University, Macedonia in his talk “Re-translating *Romeo and Juliet* into Albanian” given at a conference with the emblematic title, “Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* in European Culture”, which was held in Spain in November that year (Kadija n. pag.).

This paper is not, however, about Manojlović’s worthy dramatic construal, even if his version shares plenty of elements with Pašović’s 2002 directorial style and execution; nor is the paper about the history of *Romeo and Juliet*’s stage life in sundry South–East European traditions, even if it first intends to place Pašović’s 2002 dramatization into a B&H context. Ever since the establishment of its National Theatre in 1921 (NPS [par. 1]), and the creation of many other playhouses within and outside the Bosnian capital, Bosnian and Herzegovinian audiences have enjoyed viewing many of the classical and canonical dramatic works, including the Bard’s plays, both comedies and tragedies alike. Long since its premiere in 1934 (NPS [par. 2]) Shakespeare’s most frequently staged revenge-play *Hamlet* has been presented in Sarajevo at more/less regular intervals, the last such being given by a visiting Globe Theatre in June 2014 (“Romeo i Julija” u Sarajevu u režiji Mikija Manojlovića”). Apart from this play, *A Mid-summer Night’s Dream*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest* have all seen their Sarajevan debuts (NPS [par. 3]; Stojić; Ćurak and Burić; “Premijera lutkarske predstave ‘Bura’ Williama Shakespearea”; Bašović). Similarly, and quite possibly encouraged by the post-1950s rise in avant-garde texts and dramaturgy and the loosening of the socialist realism grip over literature and arts in former Yugoslavia, diverse stage directors have interpreted and produced Shakespeare in Bosnia, both as purists but also radically diverging from and experimenting with the original texts and dramaturgy [2]. Nevertheless, the then social and political reality of former Yugoslavia differed much from the Polish or Czechoslovakian and hence, just like in the West, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the “Shakespeare Our Contemporary” movement remained chiefly aesthetic. Conversely, the Kottian vision of Shakespeare as a contemporary, “living next door, alive and well in cold-war Warsaw” (Elsom 1), which was recognized and seized as a powerful tool of political activism and accordingly led to the altering of Shakespeare’s dramas used as politically subversive metaphors, was the only possible commentary on the condition of state in Stalinist Poland of the 1950s and 1960s [3]. Additionally, Pavel Kohout’s Living-Room Theatre and the fight of Czechoslovakian artists, the signees of Charter 77, against the state control and systematic oppression of its dissidents resulted in drastic and innovative experimentations with the staging of Shakespeare’s texts [4]. As already stated, the movement did not seem to gain momentum in 1960s and 1970s Bosnia and Herzegovina as a means of political fight and activism but rather as an aesthetic movement.

Furthermore, and yet strangely and inexplicably, none of the aforementioned has been the history and life of the early Shakespeare tragedy which is the focus of this paper. *Romeo and Juliet*, which was probably composed between 1591–1595 and published as early as 1597 in a bad quarto edition (Dickson 305), remained off the central stages and far from the keen eye and zeal of Bosnian & Herzegovinian directors and theatregoers. Though habitually read, both as a mandatory text for elementary and secondary school students, and in the privacy of people's homes, if staged in Bosnia, *Romeo and Juliet* is usually given as a school pageant and/or by amateur dramatic ensembles [5]. Under such circumstances, the 2002 dramatization of the play, orchestrated by a well-known and established theatre director, coproduced by two significant cultural festivals in Sarajevo and beyond, and performed by an ensemble of professional and schooled actors and actresses, should have caught the attention of every Shakespeare scholar.

Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo, 2002

This was an extraordinary and idiosyncratic performance in many ways. To begin with, it was a directorial come-back. Haris Pašović is a Sarajevo-born theatre and film director whose name has been venerated in the theatrical and dramatic milieux of the Western Balkans (and beyond) ever since his directorial debut in 1980s former Yugoslavia; a director who in his late 20s ranked among the best of young ex-Yugoslav theatrical stars (Burić [par. 1]; Imamović [par. 2]; Prijović [par. 1]); an artist of an exhilarating, distinctive and quite controversial style who was nobody's follower (Ožegović [par. 2]); a man who helped reinstate the small and experimental theatres' festival *MES International Festival* in 1992, and who was the motivating force behind and the organiser of the first Sarajevo Film Festival in 1993 ("Haris Pašović" n. pag.; Burić [par. 1]; Imamović [par. 2]; Prijović [par. 1]; Ožegović [par. 1]); a man who is one of the founders of the directing department and a professor at Performing Arts Academy in Sarajevo ("Haris Pašović" n. pag.); and who in the aftermath of the 1992–1995 war ceased actively working in theatres. As Burić suggests: "tired of theatre, [...], and of the misery that makes Bosnian theatrical life ([...]), Pašović has been out of the game for too long" (Burić [par. 2]). After a 6-year-long period, Pašović selected one of the dramatic greats for his return. The Bard for a bard, one might say. Intriguingly, of all the modern classics and of all the tragedies he could have selected, Pašović opted for this Shakespeare tragedy of an unusual structure [6], seemingly an incongruous choice for a director of such eminence [7]. He did however explain why *Romeo and Juliet* struck a particular chord with him,

Romeo and Juliet seems to have been written right now. It is encouraging to see that 400 years ago Shakespeare, essentially, gave almost a literal description of our [Bosnian and Herzegovinian] situation, because it proves that these problems are not only ours and of these times. At the same time, it is disheartening, because, despite all the changes that have happened, despite all the wars, in the four centuries humanity has fundamentally not progressed. (Imamović [par. 3]; translated by IČF [8])

Also, in another interview conducted just the night before the premiere Pašović expanded the above quoted explanation and emphasized that “the relation between love and war is, actually, the thing that makes this story highly relevant in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the world that we are living in” (Prijović [par. 2]). Citing Ahmed Burić, “Pašović [was] direct[ing] a classical piece, [...], adjusting it to the actual, not only Bosnian but global, national and religious divisions, contextualising the love drama [9] within a specific temporal and spatial frame” (Burić [par. 2]).

Certainly, the dramatic story of two young people who find themselves on the differing sides of a feud yet fall head over heels for each other and continue pursuing their idealistic love disregarding the opposing families until all melts down to their ultimate destruction and death has resonated loudly with Bosnian & Herzegovinian, and in particular Sarajevan, audiences. The three year (1992–1995) long destruction of the country and its multinational and multicultural society, along with many other issues, brought along and deepened the rifts and divisions among the country’s many ethnicities and minorities. Hence, the play about doomed and forlorn lovers no longer could have been read and understood “only” as a love-drama from some remote region and of the distant past, but grew into a powerful social allegory and a political commentary on the 1990s Balkan Wars. Moreover, Sarajevo has its very own Romeo and Juliet—regrettably the fervour of Bosnian Muslim Admira Ismić and Orthodox Christian Boško Brkić whose attempt to escape from a besieged city into a better world where they could love each other free of all human and societal constraints ended in a shattering tragedy no words can describe [10]. Immediately upon this horrifying and irrational execution, the Sarajevan star-crossed lovers and their story were heavily publicized; the picture of their bodies embraced in death for a full week on the very bridge where the war had begun a year before whizzed across the world.

Much like the aforementioned killing of Sarajevan lovers, Pašović’s directorial endeavour was given a massive media endorsement. For months before the actual event, the performance was heralded in the news (see Burić; Imamović; Prijović); exclusive interviews were conducted with the director and members of the cast in the cultural sections of print, broadcast and electronic media, discussing details of strenuous rehearsals and giving a sneak preview into what might be expected. Accordingly, the premiere was commented on and championed both locally and regionally, as the two-night run was to ensue in September that year (see Imamović and Seksan; “Nedeljni vodič”), and even several years later as Pašović carried on with his directorial work (see Ožegović).

One of the elements of the show considered in the print media was the newness of the translation. As suggested by the director, this was a re-translation of Shakespeare, executed by Senada Kreso in such a manner that it produced an updated version which not only modernized the play, but brought it closer to an average Bosnian viewer. In reality, the translator/editor intervened on the already existing and published translation (from English to Serbian; see Imamović [pars. 9–11]), creating a “less archaic version, different from those with the prescribed rhymes that sometimes make no sense, reduce the essential meaning of the text, yet add to its melodiousness” (Kreso qtd. in Imamović [par. 10]). Hence, instead of opting for a complete new re-translation starting from the “authentic”

Shakespeare's script, the translator essentially adapted the existing translation, which is a quite frequent manner of translating and re-translating Shakespeare in European traditions, according to Erich Fried, Alexander Anikst and Jean-Michel Deprats, the panellists of "Does Shakespeare Translate?" (Elsom 35–63) [11]. The end effect was that characters from this 2002 stage adaptation of Shakespeare used Bosnian and Herzegovinian vernacular, at the expense of musicality created through the use of particular metre and rhyme. Unfortunately, to the knowledge of the author of this paper, Kreso's translation has not been published and survives only in a private collection; therefore, any in-depth and/or comparative analysis of the rendition will have to wait until its publication.

The director made another careful and clever choice with his ensemble, which numbered about 20-some actors and actresses, although the total crew (with the designers, stage hands and advisors coming from professions unrelated to theatre, such as special task forces' officers) included approximately 60 people. For meagre and financially underprivileged post-war theatre productions in Bosnia, this indeed was also novel and brave. The young lovers were enacted by students of the Arts Academy of the University of Sarajevo (Džana Pinjo and Ermin Bravo), whereas for the more mature characters Pašović cast already established actors/actresses (such as late Zoran Bečić as the Prince, Izudin Bajrović as Friar Laurence or Tatjana Šožić as the Nurse) [12]. Additionally, the director combined the young and the established with thespians of all generations, acting experience, gender, nationalities and even race (Lady Montague was played by Nancy Abdelsakhi who had been born in Zenica to a Sudanese father and Bosnian mother), yet the audience could not see any difference or feel the excess or lack of experience—on stage the whole crew became a single entity. For weeks before the performance the ensemble rehearsed vigorously, with a commitment and passion that often led them to undesirable situations. Their preparations and rehearsals included training in martial arts and armaments, and the rain that drenched Sarajevo for days before the opening night caused falls from stage props and related injuries. In the performance they spoke their lines with ardour, they sang (in four languages), and showed prowess not only in acting.

Probably the most fascinating and curious yet functional selection on the part of the director was the choice of the stage-place. The decision to take Shakespeare outdoors to a found-space was not something unusual or fully new, if taking into consideration the various attempts to re-create authentic or as-close-as-possible-to-the-original Shakespearean dramaturgy. From William Poel's experimentation with the picture-frame stage and his transformation of the illusionist stage into an apron stage in the late 19th century, to Harley Granville Barker and his lights design to project an image of the thrust stage at the beginning of 20th century, to Nugent Monck and his Maddermarket Theatre in the 1920s, to the suggestive and minimalist stage sets and "stylized" Shakespeare of Nigel Playfair in the 1920s and 1930s, to the try-out and "open stage" of Sir Tyrone Guthrie from the 1930s to 1950s [13], to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Dino Mustafić's *Macbeth* in 1999 (Stojić) [14]. In the humble opinion of the author of this article, the best performances of Shakespeare's plays are given outdoors and in found spaces. However, Pašović's found space itself carried a particular message because of its position, shape and history. It is a public square in the

Bosnian capital located in the hub of both the city and state/government, as the square is in front of the state Parliamentary building/Joint Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Behind the square are the Faculty of Philosophy and National Museum; just across from it is the most famous hotel in Sarajevo (the then Holiday Inn, where many foreign reporters and war correspondents had been situated during the Winter Olympic Games in 1984 and in war time from 1992 to 1995); and in its vicinity, on the same river bank, is the notorious Vrbanja bridge (now known as the Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić bridge) where the first two civil victims of Sarajevo fell during an anti-war rally held in April 1992, which signalled the beginning of the three year long hostilities and war in B&H. The larger part of the square includes two semi-circular areas, with a flight of stairs in between the two or three landings, and therefore with its layout the space resembles an ancient Greek theatron with an orchestra and kerkis, albeit of futuristic design. Back in 2002, the remnants of the war were still quite vivid in the square—one of the buildings of the Joint Institutions was still derelict whereas the other was reconstructed, just like the egg-yolk yellow facade of the Holiday Inn, and the glistening Sarajevan Twin Towers (Unis Holding Towers, now UNITIC), symbols of Sarajevo's resilience. Moreover, across from the square, in the direction of the old part of the city, just in front of a tram stop, was another dilapidated building—formerly a part of cigarette factory complex. The art director, Šejla Kamerić-Sijerčić, opted for few and minimal interventions on the space, adding a guard-tower, and using the discarded car-tires and barbed wire that were left behind after the war had ended (Kamerić-Sijerčić qtd. in Imamović and Seksan [par. 17]). In the words of the director Pašović, the found-space was, with its landscape and its history,

a complete image of the modern world: half of its landscape a reconstructed urban site with Holiday Inn and Unis Twin Towers, the other half a derelict tower building. It is a place where eras intersect, the modern times with the socialist epoch, and additionally, with the acting area in the shape of an antique stage. In its totality, this is the scenery of the modern world: half of it destroyed and the other half not; everybody waiting to see whether the one half would be reconstructed or whether the other half would collapse as well. Of course, it is the place where the war began. (Pašović qtd. in Imamović [par. 5])

One could not have chosen a better setting/space for a performance inspired by the famous opening lines: “*Two households, both alike in dignity,/ In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,/ From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,/ Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean./ From forth the fatal loins of these two foes/ A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;*” (Shakespeare 701; emphasis added).

From the very first scene of the performance it was palpable that Pašović was to foreground the feuds, and the then contemporary ethnic & religious divisions. The ensemble marched onto the stage, doing a military drill, wearing costumes that resembled combat uniforms and brandishing an assortment of weapons. The family insignia and the colours of the costumes were the only elements of differentiation between the feuding characters—the Montagues (representing Muslims) were dressed in shades of orange and light brown; the Capulets (representing Christians) clothed in shades of black and red (Imamović and Seksan [par. 18]). Even Romeo and Juliet remained in camouflage, armed with

modern weaponry, for most of the performance, until the very ending when their clothes became simultaneously suggestive of their mutual bond and the loss of attachment to their surroundings or family. As proposed by the performance, the society of 2002 Bosnia and global “Verona” was highly militarized, testosterone-driven, and hence, such a world could not provide a safe-haven for a romantic couple. The questions prompted were not about the naivety of lovers, the quality and type of their idealistic (first) love, the heroism or cowardice of suicidal deeds, pre-destination and free will, or the failure of adults to protect young people. The questions incited all went in the direction of everybody’s responsibility to prevent and/or stop war and the murder of innocents. Mind you, this was not only the post-Balkan-wars Bosnia and Herzegovina that we were living in, it was also the post 9/11 world. The characters represented not only Muslims, Catholic and Orthodox Christians [15], but also Jewish and representatives of the international/ global community. With such an understanding and subtext, the character of the Prince of Verona arrived on stage in a car resembling the automobiles used by the UNPROFOR and wearing a costume that looked a lot like that of the UN peacekeepers (Blue Helmets), helmet and blue bullet-proof jacked included.

That Pašović indeed was staging an anti-war *Romeo and Juliet* was emphasized even more profoundly with the double-ending, one of the reasons why the whole performance lasted for about four hours. Namely, after the course of Shakespeare’s play ran quite closely to the original, although in an exceedingly militarized setting and with plenty of gun-fire [16], a twist appeared at the ending: instead of Mercutio, Tybalt, Paris, Romeo and Juliet ending in death, in this version all of the characters shot at each other and died on stage. Upon this, everybody remained still for a while, then got up and instead of taking bows, began enacting the play from its crucial moment, the moment when the first murder that sets off the course of tragic events occurs. As the scenes tagged along, the feuding families shook hands, and at the very ending the ensemble on stage sang Lennon’s “Imagine”, with an image of a huge purple heart projected on the building behind. This extremely melodramatic and overstated, borderline kitschy, ending, should not be taken lightly in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina—it was also an emblem of the commemoration of the 1992–1995 Balkan Wars. Namely, upon the eve of one of the most disastrous and bloodiest periods of ex-Yugoslav (and Bosnian) recent history, in an attempt to do everything in their power to stop the wars, a good number of intellectuals, artists and bands from former Yugoslavia had gathered at Zetra Olympic Hall in Sarajevo on July 29th, 1991, not realising the futility of their efforts [17].

At the very ending of the paper, a series of queries arises: was Pašović’s adaptation really a necessary intervention on Shakespeare’s text in vein with Kott’s “Shakespeare, Our Contemporary” movement? Was this only a post-Kottian aestheticism? Or was it simply a tongue-in-cheek, provocative reading of Shakespeare, carried out for the sake of provocation and not in vein with either the Bard’s or “Shakespeare, Our Contemporary” aesthetics? Whatever one decides, and there are arguments for all possible interpretations of this interpretation, one must admit that with it an old dramatic text was given a new cloak and that no member of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian theatre audience sitting and viewing the performance that night was left untouched.

Notes

[1] For further information on the premiere and subsequent touring in Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as related issues see Martinović; “Srpsko-albanski “Romeo i Julija” ispraćeni ovacijama u ZKM-u”; “Miki Manojlović: Kroz Romeo i Juliju gledam život”; “Romeo i Julija’ u Sarajevu u režiji Mikija Manojlović.”.

[2] Quite an unsettling experience for me as a then student of English language and literature (and Shakespeare purist) was hearing Tony Braxton’s hit song “Un-Break My Heart” tearing the roof off in a 1997 production of *A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream*. On the other hand, quite an appetizing experience was viewing the found-space adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2002, or a 2008 dramatization of *The Tempest*, turned into a puppet play to attract and appeal to younger audiences.

[3] As is reported by Elsom the Eastern bloc countries censored and mostly banned avant-garde or social realist plays, yet the censors did not dare tackle Shakespeare for fear of „look[ing] ridiculous“ (2). Therefore, Shakespeare’s texts became a key means in artists’ war against state control and oppression.

[4] For further information on Pavel Kohout and the Living-Room theatre, as well as on Tom Stoppard’s appropriation of Shakespeare and Kohout’s aesthetics see “Demythologizing the Bard: Appropriation of Shakespeare in Tom Stoppard’s *Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth*” (Čirić-Fazlija).

[5] Coincidentally, a random piece of information which seems a rebuttal of the claims the paper is making, yet is actually an additional argument for the claims is the fact that only a month prior to the Maribor conference a pageant *Romeo and Juliet*, produced by the Youth Bridge Global (YBG) and performed by young lay actors and actresses from Mostar was given in Sarajevo Chamber Theatre 55 (“Bh. verzija Shakespearovog klasika: Romeo i Julija u ponedjeljak u Sarajevu”).

[6] For one of the most extensive discussions on the “problematic” structure of this play which “becomes, rather than is, tragic” (Snyder 213) see Susan Snyder’s “*Romeo and Juliet*: Comedy into Tragedy” (212–221).

[7] Up to that point in his career Pašović had directed many seminal avant-garde and experimental, as well as classical plays, such as Wedekind’s *Spring Awakening*, Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Weiss’s *Marat/Sade* or Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*. Much talked of has been his cooperation with Susan Sontag on the staging of *Waiting for Godot* during the siege of Sarajevo. Pašović would, however, go back to Shakespeare’s tragedies and do another re-fashioning of the Renaissance master in his *Hamlet* in 2005, setting the story of revenge and a young man’s heavy burden against the backdrop of the Ottoman court, thus transposing the medieval Elsinore to Topkapi Palace and Christian to Islamic cultural milieu, addressing not only the issue of “updating” of Shakespeare for contemporary audiences (hence, partaking in the “Shakespeare Our Contemporary” aesthetics) but also the problematics and controversies of the post-9/11 world. For further information, see “*Hamlet* u Narodnom pozorištu Sarajevo”; and Medenica 2006 [interview with the director].

[8] Unless otherwise specified, all the translations from B/C/S into English were done by the author of this paper.

[9] Naturally, one could go on for days and lines discussing whether *Romeo and Juliet* should be read as a “love drama”, as qualified by Burić, and why such a qualification is an impoverishing reduction of Shakespeare’s original. As Fishlin suggests, different interpretative positions may fluctuate from one exegetical extreme—a story about “young

lovers”—to another—the piece being “an anti-war play” ([par. 2]), as indeed they have in numerous stage, film, television, operatic, and musical adaptations of this Shakespeare’s play (for further information see Fishlin; Dickson 2005).

[10] For further information on the life, love and death of Admira Ismić and Boško Brkić see Shork 1993, Herbert, Robertson, Sandic-Hadzihasanovic, and Zaritsky [documentary film]. In his “A Note on Adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*“ David Fishlin gives a rather short yet informative take-on on media coverage of their deaths, mentions Zaritsky’s documentary and gives space even to a reception of “sentimentalizing ... over the couple’s death” ([pars. 35–37]).

[11] The aforesaid panel discussion was just one of many in the conference titled “Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?” held in 1986, and organised by the British section of the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC) with the help from other organisations such as the British Council, the Goethe Institute, the French Institute, to mention only a few. In the words of John Elsom, one of the organisers and later the editor of the Conference Proceedings published by Routledge and IATC in 1989, the conference was “about our perceptions of Shakespeare as about the canon or the man himself; ... [and] a kind of birthday party, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, the most influential work of Shakespearean criticism of our time” (7–8). Highly intriguing are the suggestions that Shakespeare might no longer be “our contemporary”, as well as Fried’s proposition that, while translating his plays, Shakespeare should not be made contemporary at all costs (qtd. in Elsom 41).

[12] For a full list of cast see Imamović and Seksan.

[13] For more information on Poel’s, Monck’s, Barker’s, Playfair’s and Guthrie’s experimentation see Styan 47–205.

[14] See Mile Stojić’s “Otpad” which gives a vivid account of D. Mustafić’s *Macbeth*.

[15] Even before Pašović, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* had already seen its Muslim Juliet and Christian Romeo set in Bosnia and Herzegovina in an adaptation staged by the Romany company *Pralipe* in 1994. See Dickson 312; Dickson [par. 7]; “In Love with Shakespeare” [par. 17].

[16] Another curiosity of the performance was the use of pistols, M16 and AK-14 rifles, pyrotechnics such as light grenades, as well as an explosion staged at the first ending of the performance on the 6th floor of the derelict building of the Joint Institutions (Imamović and Seksan [par. 6]).

[17] This was at the time when the ten-day occupation of Slovenia by the then Yugoslav National Army had already ended, and when the first victims in Croatia fell. For more information on the anti-war concert, but also on the Zetra project see Braun, Pfeil and Visevic; and Kern.

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Shakespeare on Screen

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The Interaction of Fate and Free Will in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

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Abstract: *Hamlet- the Prince of Denmark* has attracted immense attention as one of the most prominent plays of its kind, the tragedy. Taking into consideration the duty of revenge bestowed upon Hamlet by his deceased father, a crucial point arises as to whether such a duty can be merely Hamlet's fate, or if he can decide not to obey the father's ghost instead of the familial expectations. This brings about two notions whose validity is still discussed in the modern world even if hundreds of years have passed since the play was written, hence the concepts of fate and free will. Indeed, the dichotomy of fate and free will has been under scrutiny in literary works throughout centuries. In this respect, Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet- the Prince of Denmark* stands out as an outstanding example of prominent early modern texts involving the interaction of fate and free will.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Hamlet, Revenge, Fate, Free Will

Shakespeare's *Hamlet- the Prince of Denmark* has attracted immense attention as one of the most prominent plays of its kind, the tragedy. Beyond being highly based on a revenge plot at surface level, at the deeper level the play is comprised of an intricate design of marital and familial relationships. It is highly concerned with filial duty and the expectations of family members from one another. At the centre of these relationships lies the bond of father, mother and son: that of Hamlet, his father and Gertrude, his mother. The play provides the reader with the opportunity to examine the roles attributed to each member and expectations within the family, mainly the nuclear family.

Likewise, the influence of the ghost on Hamlet reveals that even if a member of the family has died, the ties and responsibility of the individual in the family, especially that of the children, remain unchanged in terms of loyalty and obedience to the parents. Therefore, the authority of the father figure does not cease with his death, but continues to exist as a part of the family system even as a deceased member and acts as a manipulative force on the child. The loyalty and obedience expected of children to their parents is what still persists between Hamlet and his father, despite the fact that the father is already dead. This constitutes the tragedy of the play's protagonist: Hamlet is torn apart between his conscience and his duty as an obedient son. Hamlet strives with taking the revenge of a murdered father; however, it is not only on the grounds of personal choice that he tries to take vengeance, but also because it is the role attributed to him as the son of a king. The conscience bestirs him at this point: Hamlet questions how just it is to kill someone upon the claim of a ghost whose identity, let alone sincerity, is sceptical.

Moreover, the chain of family relationships is strikingly apparent even at the outset of the play. Hamlet is introduced to the reader as one who still profoundly mourns the death of his father, the King Hamlet whereas the father has been displaced both in public and private life by Claudius, his father's brother. It is

Claudius who has succeeded to the Danish throne and it is him again who has displaced his father at home by marrying his mother. This is also the reason why his mourning is double fold: his mother has remarried too hastily to a man who is beyond comparison to his father. So, not only does Claudius dispose Hamlet of his right to the throne, but also intervenes in the relationship between the son and mother as his stepfather.

In this respect, the timing and setting of the ghost's appearance contributes to the ambiguity of its genuineness. Hamlet's deceased father, the former King of Denmark, reappears as a ghost, informing his son how he was murdered by his brother, the new King Claudius. Even though Hamlet doubts the truthfulness of the ghost's story and even the ghost's existence, he seems to have already suspected that Claudius might have something to do with his father's death: "Oh, my prophetic soul!", he exclaims upon listening to the ghost. Nevertheless, Hamlet seeks to prove the honesty of the ghost first rather than giving in to his suspicions. Whatever means he applies to find out the reality, he must be sure that Claudius is guilty of the crime before he sets out to do his duty of vengeance.

Taking into consideration the duty of revenge bestowed upon Hamlet by his deceased father, a crucial point arises as to whether such a duty can be merely Hamlet's fate, or if he can decide not to obey the father's ghost instead of the familial expectations. This brings about two notions whose validity is still discussed in the modern world even if hundreds of years have passed since the play was written, hence the concepts of fate and freewill. Indeed, the dichotomy of fate and free will has been discussed for many years. Whether an event occurs under the control of fate or choices has been searched through literary works. Those who prefer to support either side have based their ideas on some plays so as to prove that they are right about what they claim to the counter-argument they face. A prominent play of its kind: Shakespeare's tragedy of *Hamlet- the Prince of Denmark* is an example that can be presented as a literary work involving a texture of fate and free will (choices).

Taking into consideration what has above been mentioned, what enables *Hamlet* to be analysed within the boundaries of fate and free will is that its protagonist Hamlet has to make an important decision, the duty of getting his revenge for his father's murder, which in a way shapes the lives of the other characters in the play, including himself. How Hamlet has as essential role in the play in terms of his choice on how and when to take action will be analysed and to support what has been put forward, references to the text as well as citations of several writers' comments on *Hamlet* will be given in this essay.

Before commencing to analyze the play, it is of crucial importance to mention how the terms "fate" and "free will" were perceived in the Elizabethan period. In his chapter related with historical critics, Weitz refers to what Spencer calls as the "optimistic" and "pessimistic" which "functioned in his criticism of Shakespeare as the defining characteristics of the Elizabethan philosophy":

Elizabethan optimism was one aspect of a complete metaphysical, theological, and moral picture of the world, according to which man is the predesigned center of a created universe made by God and sustained by him as part of an eternal, pervasive order. To know God is to know his works; to know his works is to know man's nature, as part of God's works; to know man's nature is to know his end:

which is to know God. Thus, the circle is complete and man's great vocation in this life is to discover and adhere to this order which God had wrought for man so that he could fulfil his assigned, *noble destiny*. (67)

As can be seen from the last words of this quotation, The Elizabethans believed in destiny or in other words that our lives were predestined before our births, accepting that we would live what our fates held for us. Weitz also refers to Spencer's combination of this optimism to a larger order, an order of Nature, which man is a part of. To understand himself, man had to comprehend this order as it included him and he reflected it. There was an Elizabethan stress on the role of Nature as "God's Deputy", which means that nature was believed to rule over three domains: the cosmological (the created universe), the natural (created objects on Earth), and the human, each of which reflected the others as an aspect of the same unity: the universe (Weitz 67).

It is apparent from what I have hitherto written that the Elizabethan optimism evoked the idea that man is a part of the order created by God. So there is somehow an interaction among the domains over which God has control through Nature. Nevertheless man, whose life within this order is predestined by God, is given the chance to change his hierarchical place with his power to think and decide for himself with choices. That this was also acknowledged in the period that Shakespeare wrote can be understood from the Elizabethan conception that "Man is central in Nature's second domain. He has a definite place in the universe, nature and society; thus, his relations to God, the rest of creation, and his fellowmen are duly appointed by God. And because he, and he alone, has *free will*, he can choose to descend to the beasts or ascend, through pure apprehension to angels" (Moritz 69).

To give further information about Elizabethan thought on this matter, Tillyard provides the reader with more details. In Tillyard's view, man's will is free and to support this, refers to Hooker, who believes that the will of man consists of the freedom to take or refuse any object presented and defines the right use of the will as a means of bending our souls to having or doing things which are seen to be good (51). Therefore, although man does not have the power not to be mentally affected by our "appetites", he has power to decide whether to transform them into action or not (67).

Regarding the terms *free will* and *fate*, it is essential to define what they mean since they will be used frequently in this paper. In the *OED*, "fate" is described as "the principle, power, or agency, by which, according to certain philosophical and popular systems of belief, all events, or some events in particular, are unalterably predetermined by eternity". On the other hand, according to the *OED*, "*free will*" is "the power of an individual to make free choices, not determined by divine predestination, the laws of physical causality, fate, etc...Also: the doctrine that human beings possess this power and are hence able to direct and bear responsibility for their actions". So, does free will enable possibilities to arise or manipulate what chance we have? Is fate the authority that determines the chance falling upon us? Or does free will provide choices for us that shape chance? Upon pondering over such questions which have remained unsolved even in our modern world, it is obvious that the analysis of *Hamlet* requires a perspective that strives to find answers to these questions, as well as illustrating how Hamlet's

choices have a decisive role on other characters and himself throughout the whole play.

Concerning the concepts of free will and fate in the play, it may be no coincidence that the protagonist of the play - Hamlet is first introduced to the reader when he mourns deeply for his father, the former Danish King, who has recently died. In fact, death can be considered as an unavoidable force in our lives, hence fate, but whether the king died naturally is sceptical as Hamlet's uncle has already succeeded to the throne and hastily married his mother. We infer from the new King's speech that Hamlet has still not overcome the sorrow of his father's death. When he addresses Hamlet as his cousin and his son, Hamlet's answer "A little more than kin, and less than kind", (I.ii.65) and his reactions further in their conversation immediately form in our mind the impression that Hamlet is not happy with this new relation of father and son between them: "Hamlet's first remark- after remaining silent for more than sixty lines- is an aside, punning on *kin* and *kind*, and referring to the King's *cousin* and *son* (Muir 72). Moreover, Hamlet does not hesitate to reveal his dislike of being the uncle's son: "His next remark- this time aloud- is a quibble on *sun* and *son*, thus repudiating Cladius's claim to be his father" (72).

Regarding Hamlet's sorrow after the loss of his father, the fact that the ghost repeatedly appears is quite significant for the outcome in the play. In this respect, it is necessary to give a basic idea of what seeing a ghost could have meant for Shakespeare's period. An appearance as a spirit of a person who had recently died was, according to the orthodox Protestant in the Elizabethan time, "while occasionally might be angels, were generally nothing but devils, who "assumed" the form of departed friends or relatives, in order to work bodily or spiritual harm upon those to whom they appeared." (Wilson 62). In fact, doubts as to the intention of the ghost can be understood from Horatio's speech,

I have heard, the cock that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat awake the god of day:
and at his warning, whether in sea, or fire, in earth, or air,
Th' extravagant, and erring spirit hies to his confine:
and of the truth herein, This present object made probation. (I.i.147-54)

Furthermore, the appearance of a ghost can also be a clue of strange things that happened or are about to happen in Denmark. Characters in the play comment on its appearance in multiple ways: "Horatio surmises that that its appearance 'bodes some strange eruption to our state'; Bernardo thinks it has something to do with the threatened war; Horatio, again, compares it to the portents that heralded the assassination of Julius Caesar and asks if it is privy to its country's *fate*" (Muir 72). This is most obvious in Marcellus's comment that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I. iv. 92). Consequently, if this is really the case and such 'rotteness' exists; then it is not Hamlet's choice to live in it because it has already emerged without his control or desire, thereby implying that it is his destiny to undergo what life holds for him.

Concerning the emergence of his father's ghost, it is beyond Hamlet's power to control such an appearance, so it is not his choice that a spirit in the figure of his father appears. Nevertheless, the function of the ghost cannot be restricted to a mere sign of fate. In fact, as Kenneth Muir states, it was necessary to have some

doubts about the nature and provenance of the Ghost for the action of the play (59). If it could have been granted from the beginning that the Ghost was either honest or evil, knowing the truth about it, Hamlet would not have devised a plan and wanted to have “the Murder of Gonzogo” performed, which is his first action in the play with twofold effects: Thanks to the play, Claudius realises that Hamlet is aware of the murder he committed and Hamlet is certain that the King is guilty of his father’s death.

However, regarding the notion of free will in terms of meeting the Ghost, it is undoubtedly Hamlet’s choice to follow it despite his friend’s warning not to do so. The ghost informs him that Claudius poisoned his father and demands Hamlet to take revenge but not to punish his mother even if she married his father’s murderer. So, to be given the duty of avenging his father is Hamlet’s fate, whereas it is his choice whether to believe in the Ghost or not and fulfil the duty given. Upon this duty, Kenneth Muir comments: “We must start therefore, from the assumption that Hamlet is charged with the duty of killing Claudius” (60). Notwithstanding, Hamlet has not yet decided whether to believe in the ghost or not and “is well aware of the dangers he runs in conversing with spirits” (Muir 60). This can be inferred from the play:

The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
T’assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses to damn me. (II.ii.594-9)

In unison with what Hamlet has told the reader in the soliloquy above, he does not directly trust the ghost and acts rationally although it might be implied with his reaction “O my prophetic soul, Mine uncle?” (I.v.45-6) that he had already felt something evil had been done by his uncle to succeed to the throne. As a modern individual, Hamlet does not act like a primitive avenger who would kill his father’s murderer without hesitation and therefore chooses to be sensible and to test the honesty of the Ghost: “He cannot, in any case, kill his uncle on the unsupported words of a Ghost, a word no other person has heard, not merely because he could not justify his action in the eyes of the world but because, being a man of scruple, he would wish for more objective evidence” (Muir 74).

Moreover, Hamlet wants to find out the truth by devising a plan that arises from the urge to prove the ghost’s claim. He requests the players to perform ‘The Murder of Gonzago’ which is a play similar to his father’s murder. He will observe how the King behaves, if any sign of guilt is revealed in his looks or reactions, he will take the Ghost’s words for granted. So the play will be a means ‘to catch the conscience of the King’. Charlton comments that Hamlet has by chance found an occasion for an appropriate play, and, as the King’s ready acceptance shows, he can be morally certain that the test will take place; and so, if one supposes him to need confirmation, within a thrice he will really know (90). What may hinder Hamlet from presenting such a play is that he will face the threat of being killed himself because Cladius will understand that he knows the secret. Thus Hamlet’s choice to have the play staged will determine his own future state after the

performance because Hamlet is convinced that Claudius is guilty upon observing the King's response while the play is being performed. In addition, the choice of the play, as well as Hamlet's conduct informs Claudius that Hamlet knows his secret: "Hamlet's insulting behaviour is so reckless that one can assume that he knows he will have to kill Claudius soon or be murdered by him" (Muir 85).

What is more, Hamlet gains the opportunity to fulfil his revenge; nevertheless, he decides to let Claudius go, and therefore, instead of seizing the opportunity, Hamlet's choice is to spare his uncle while he is praying on the grounds that a man killed at his prayers is known to go to heaven, which means that Claudius will not go to the hell he deserves. Charlton maintains that "[f]or Hamlet, to kill the king at such a moment would mean to do him a favour, rather than revenge" (86). Contrary to the reader's expectations, Hamlet makes a decision that has crucial importance in the outcome of the play because it was the only opportunity Hamlet could have used to avenge without harming any other character in the play: "The deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, Rosencratz, Guildernstern and Gertrude are directly or indirectly due to Hamlet's failure to strike the King at his prayers" (Muir 91). So, Hamlet's free will, thus his deliberate deferral of revenge, reverberates throughout the play. For Bradley, this incident is the turning-point of the tragedy because Hamlet's delay, which has not up to now done any irreparable harm, will affect everyone: "In sparing the King, Hamlet sacrifices Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Laertes, the Queen and himself" (136).

Apart from Hamlet's intention not to kill King Claudius at prayers, hence his personal choice that shall affect both the family's public and private life, Hamlet's disgust is not only limited to his uncle's lechery, but also at Polonius who does not refrain from employing his own daughter for the sake of subserving his public interest. Likewise, Hamlet is most probably aware of Polonius's obsession with getting the King's approval, even at the cost of usurping his own daughter. Their conversation when Hamlet encounters Polonius in II.ii proves how Hamlet despises him:

Pol: Do you know me my lord?

Ham: Excellent, excellent well: you are a fishmonger. [...]

Ham: For if the Sun breed maggots in a dead dog,

being a good kissing carrion. Have you a daughter?

Pol: I have my Lord.

Ham: Let her not walk i' the Sun: conception is a blessing,

But as your daughter may conceive, friend look to 't (II.ii. 173-85)

Therefore, the quotation above reflects what Hamlet thinks of Polonius as a father. Wilson explains that "fishmonger" means a pandar or procurer; "carrion" as a common expression at that time for flesh, which implies that Hamlet regards him as a bawd and hence his daughter a prostitute (106). That Hamlet has somehow overheard Polonius propose losing his daughter to him might be the reason for his sarcastic words and anger at him. Wilson also reminds the reader that Hamlet had told the King that he was too much in the "sun" at I.ii.64 and relates this to his advice not to allow Ophelia to "walk i' th' Sun", thereby hinting at himself as the "Sun", since he is the "son" of Denmark (106).

Apart from Hamlet's choice to take revenge, another point that relates to the concept of free will in the play is his rude attitude towards Ophelia owing to his general opinion of women as frail. It is to a certain extent true that Ophelia should not have allowed her father's eavesdropping, but to be fair and consider such a conduct in terms of the period they lived in, if she had refused to do likewise, she would have behaved contrary to the expectations of the society that idealizes the preservation of chastity and submissiveness of women: "Both her brother and father warn her repeatedly to defend her honour, her virginity, the fragile basis for woman's respectability and personal value in patriarchal society" (Dreher 78). Having been told by the two authority figures in her family that Hamlet's intentions for her are only aimed at satisfying his lust, Ophelia starts doubting his love and realises that she might be faced with losing her honour and therefore tries to stay away from her lover to avoid this danger.

In fact, Ophelia can be said to be a typical example of what Elizabethans thought as a good daughter: "In late Elizabethan drama, the struggle for woman was to be human in a world which declared them only female and in which freedom of conscience for them was still a new concept" (Dusinberre 94). Notwithstanding this new concept of freedom, Ophelia is still not given the chance to make decisions according to her conscience but to the contrary, she is a girl who "has no chance to develop an independent conscience of her own, so stifled is she by the authority of the male world: (94). When Hamlet comes to her room in Act II.i, she is frightened by his behaviour which proves previous warnings about him to be right and thinks he might harm her. After this, she seeks protection but her father's means of 'protection' is not of the customary type since he uses his daughter like a puppet in a plot with the King to arrange her meeting with Hamlet so that they can eavesdrop and find the real reason for his madness.

Nevertheless, Hamlet insults Ophelia insistently despite her innocence, thereby illustrating how it is his own choice to treat a woman unfairly. Furthermore, Hamlet can not grasp what his conduct in her closet might have evoked Ophelia to think as a young woman who is under constant pressure to save her chastity. On the contrary, he gets really angry at her and starts attacking her verbally: "You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not." (I.iii.118-21), thus the denial of his love for her must have been more heart-breaking than his insults.

In addition, his warning "Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" (III.i.128-9) can be interpreted as a sign of his mistrust. He might have noticed somehow that her father is listening to them and so might have asked Ophelia where Polonius is on purpose and by referring to a nunnery might be, as Muir puts it, "satirizing Polonius's fear that he will seduce Ophelia" or from another perspective, might be the explanation of how he sees Ophelia from a view that is "entirely dependent on his male description":

Ophelia is honest or bawd depending on how Hamlet now chooses to describe his own behaviour towards her. If he loved her, declared that love to her, and she accepted his gifts and embraces, then she is chaste. If he never loved her, but attempted to seduce her only, then she is lewd and lascivious, because Hamlet trifled with her. Either way she should get (her) to a nunnery – 'nunnery', as all

modern editions of the play hasten to tell the reader, meant both a convent and a brothel in Elizabethan colloquial expression. (Jardine 72)

Last but not least, it can be considered that Hamlet abuses Ophelia as a means of confirming others in their assumption that he has gone mad with her love to hide the real reason for his strange conduct. Leverenz states that “Everyone has used her: Polonius, to gain favour; Laertes, to belittle Hamlet; Claudius, to spy on Hamlet; Hamlet, to express rage at Gertrude; Hamlet again, to express his feigned madness with her as a decoy” (131). Up to now, Hamlet has revealed to his uncle that he knows about his crime, moreover he did not make use of the opportunity he had of getting revenge and killed Polonius whose son will soon return to avenge his father. However, what is more destructive than what he has done so far is his being the prime cause for Ophelia’s madness. Having lost her father and being away from the brother, Ophelia has noone to confide in. The reason for her madness is, with the song she sings, implied to be partly the disappointment she feels at Hamlet’s lack of love for her: “Hamlet fosters Ophelia’s crisis” (Leverenz 131).

As the play comes to an end, the King makes one last effort to get rid of his enemy. On reading the message that Hamlet is returning to Denmark, the King is worried that this time Hamlet will accomplish his aim to revenge. Having succeeded in his aim to provoke Laertes into thinking that Hamlet is his enemy, the King tells Laertes about his plan to summon both to a sword duello. Regarding this plot, when Osric informs Hamlet that the King has bade him Hamlet that a great wager has been laid, explaining that the King made a bet that among a dozen passes, Laertes will not be able to exceed three hits, Hamlet accepts to take part in this wager. Despite Horatio’s advice to withdraw if he has any hesitations, Hamlet openly puts forward that although he has some doubts, he will challenge his fate:

We defy augury; there is a special providence
in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come:
if it be not to come, it will be now: if it be not now,
yet it will come; the readiness is all, since no man
has aught of what he leaves. What is't to leave betimes? (V.ii.204-8)

Therefore, one can infer that “there is a divinity that shapes our ends and he is in the hands of Providence” (Bradley 144) Still, Hamlet has also a part in the shaping of divinity due to his choice to take part in the wager and confront Laertes as the avenger of Polonius. Although he is not yet aware, this choice and hence the sword-fight will bring disaster for all.

During the fight, both Laertes and Hamlet are wounded. With his last strength, Hamlet can finally do the long-delayed deed to kill the King and stabs him with the same sword. At last he could get his father’s revenge but only after he had learnt that he will be no longer living and the Queen had already died. It might be argued that the Queen died by chance when she drank from the poisoned cup, but this possibility is easily dismissed when one considers that it was Hamlet’s choice not to kill the King when he had the chance. The more Hamlet postponed his duty, the more deaths he caused.

Taking into consideration what has hitherto been discussed in this paper, *Hamlet* can be considered as a play in which elements of fate and free will are

intertwined. On the one hand, the murder of Hamlet's father and his mother's marriage to the villain, which happened out of his control, were Hamlet's fate. On the other hand, how Hamlet hesitates to believe in the claim of his father's ghost that Claudius, his uncle, murdered him, thereby employing a play to ensure that Claudius is guilty shows how he deals with the duty he is assigned as a rational and modern individual. Moreover, his perception of women and treatment of his mother, Gertrude, as an unfaithful wife and Ophelia as a girl betraying her lover for the sake of being an obedient daughter and sister, as well as his refusal to kill the King while he is praying thus the delay of his revenge in addition with his willingness to take part in the wager against Laertes are all evidence that can be given to prove that Hamlet's choices or his free will is the main reason for such a result of this tragedy. Although it can not be denied that the play consists of traces of fate, the majority of Hamlet's actions are influenced by the power of free will. To sum up, the interpretation of the play in terms of *fate* and *free will* can be best illustrated when a resemblance is made between Hamlet's choice and the way a dice falls, which can be explained via Warner's description of the word *chance*:

Many of the words used in connection with chance have an etymological connection with the idea of falling. "Accident", "incident", "coincidence", "chance" are derived, by different pathways, from the Latin *codere*, "to fall". All the following words refer to events that just happen, in an apparently arbitrary way, like the way a dice falls upon any one of its six sides. But "falling" is not a purely objective event; it includes within it, by implication, the position of the observing subject who defines which way is up or down. (21)

All in all, that *Hamlet* employs concepts like fate and free will as a text written centuries ago represents the utility of Shakespeare's plays to shed light on the norms of the accepted culture within the period concerned, hence its function of uniting the modern perception of the concepts above mentioned with their implications in the early modern period. In relation to this notion, Hamlet can be regarded as the subject who chose which way the "dice" – "the play" would "fall" – "end" in this tragedy. The target was to make it fall on which side the dice had "one" – "Claudius's death"; however, with his free will, Hamlet intervenes in the fall of the dice, planning to make it fall upon the side he chooses; but his plan does not turn out to be successful and thus the dice falls on an undesirable number: death for all.

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The Relationship between Literature and Popular Fiction in Shakespeare's *Richard III*

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Abstract: Deemed a great connoisseur of the human nature whose literary characters exhibit the deepest shadows of the human soul, Shakespeare has largely influenced modern views of certain historical personas. The most famous example is Richard III, perceived as the cruellest English ruler. Inspired by contradictory attitudes of popular fiction writers, Philippa Gregory and Anne O'Brien, toward Shakespeare's Richard, this paper argues that the Bard cemented the negative image of Richard III based on inconsistent historical sources. Likewise, by comparing Literature and popular fiction, the aim to show that Shakespeare's play presents a true popular work of fiction of its own time.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Richard III, Literature, popular fiction, Literary influence, ideology

1. Introduction: Literature versus Popular Fiction

In contemporary literary theory, which does its best to avoid the prescriptive attitude of the classical literary era [1], there is still a noticeable dichotomous tendency to divide literature into two rather opposite groups. The first of them belongs to the category of "serious" works of art, in other words Literature, while the other texts which do not meet the standards pertaining to Literature are relegated to the field of popular fiction. The latter is also known under the name of genre fiction, wherein its very definition points to the strict formulaic nature of such works in accordance with which writers of popular fiction organize their texts. On the contrary, the former is said to transcend the constraints of any particular genre, suggesting that works of Literature can never be consigned to a single category due to their individuality and complex structure.

In his book on the concepts of Literature and popular fiction as well as their interrelationship [2], Ken Gelder explains that the above-mentioned dichotomy presents the only possible way as to establish the characteristics belonging to either of those two domains. By comparing the so-called *high-brow* and *low-brow* [3] literature works to operas and soap operas, respectively, Gelder puts forth the idea of an entirely different system of production, reception and audience reflection employed by the two branches of literature. To start with, the main aspect of divergence between Literature and popular fiction is found in the audience, instigating a number of further disparities. Namely, Literature is said to possess a higher level of autonomy, indicating that it does not concern itself with attracting large audiences. Literary *authors* (as opposed to popular fiction *writers*) do not strive to organize their content, language and form in order to be

appealing to various types of audiences, thus aspiring (and very often achieving) a kind of elitist position.

In opposition, popular fiction is considered to be inextricably linked to its audience; its gripping contents, approachable language and a multitude of paratextual activities [4] all work toward a single goal. That is to promote the never-quenching industrialist spirit (by largely avoiding the aesthetic one, which is in turn reserved for Literature) of popular works, often “derisively [labelled] as capitalism’s most perfect literary form” (Gelder 35). Likewise, John Frow asserts that texts embody “the popular genres of capitalist modernity, since we accept that they are industrially produced” (137). This is directly connected to the opposing notions of singularity and the addictive quality embedded in Literary and popular texts. Works of Literature are said to be “singular (...) [and] so the reading experience here is also singular: one emerges ‘satisfied’ from the literary text. Popular fiction, on the other hand, is generic – which compels readers continually to go in search of the next example of the genre they happen to be reading” (Gelder 41).

Additionally, popular fiction works are instilled with the task of entertaining their *consumers* (nor *readers*, as it is the case with the reception of Literature), wherein the entertainment factor functions as a form of ideology due to its escapist tendencies. Such ideological nature, however, is said to evade the field of Literature because its primary focus lies in the strengthening of human life and experience (30-34). The matter of human experience attributed to Literature is significant because Literary works are said to continuously challenge our views on the theory of literature, but even more importantly, on history and reality. [5] In other words, it is commonly thought that Literary texts which belong to the literary canon have justly earned their position because they proved innovative in one or more of those areas, thereby exhibiting a substantial influence on real life by refusing to yield to the ideology of their time.

Now, since Shakespeare’s works are endowed with an unmistakable reputation of belonging to the category of the literary canon [6], or simply Literature, it is hardly commendable to look for “faults” in his works. Nevertheless, inspired by novels from two contemporary popular (historical) fiction authors, Philippa Gregory’s *The Kingmaker’s Daughter* and Anne O’Brien’s *Virgin Widow: England’s Forgotten Queen*, and their rather benevolent portrayals of Richard III, this paper strives to show how Shakespeare’s overall Literary greatness enabled him to cement (though not to altogether create) an unfavourable image of this particular English king which has for centuries prevailed in both general and literary public. This is not to detract from the literary greatness of Shakespeare’s play in any way, seeing that the rhetoric of his work is here discussed only in the context of congruence, or the lack thereof, between the real life Richard III and his literary counterpart. Albeit, since it is often forgotten that the Bard was in fact a writer of popular fiction of his time, the historical and literary context of Shakespeare’s creation of a cruel villain and sanguinary murderer embodied by Richard shall be explored with the aim of revealing the play’s ideological and industrial nature, characteristic of popular fiction.

2. The (Shakespeare) Legacy of Richard III

The original impetus for this research on the topic of Richard III and thus this paper, was a rather surprising account of Richard's character in the said historical romances by Philippa Gregory and Anne O'Brien. Surprising in the sense that, quite contrary to popular belief and promulgated cultural views on Richard, both authors depict him as a fairly physically attractive man of an equally graceful character. According to Gregory and O'Brien's matching portrayals of the last Plantagenet king, he is a true gentleman of his time: resourceful but never unscrupulous, reserved but never formidable, and above all a gentle and devout lover to his Queen Anne Neville. Consequently, the two novels were to be researched in the light of the widespread contemporary penchant for romanticizing all kinds of monsters previously deemed appalling [7] (the direr the better) and providing the audience with *their* (the monsters') *side of the story*. The idea was to prove that the two authors modelled their protagonists in a way to fit the corresponding genre conventions (that of a modern historical romance), without taking into consideration the established historical sources and canonical depictions of Richard, primarily the one belonging to Shakespeare.

Now, in order to understand why the original hypothesis proved to be not only imprecise, but in fact completely inverse to the truth, it is necessary to explain the predominant attitude toward Richard III. Thus, Richard the Third was the notorious English king whose reigning period lasted less than two years (1483-85), yet the account of Richard's actions predating his short-lived rule have earned him the title of one of the most ill-famed rulers in the English history. Previously anointed Duke of Gloucester, son of Richard Plantagenet, third Duke of York and the main instigator of the Wars of the Roses [8], and brother to amorous king Edward IV and traitorous George, Duke of Clarence, "That bottled spider, that foul bunch-back'd toad" (IV, 4, 81), as presented by Shakespeare, is believed to have trampled over his own flesh and blood so as to reach the English crown. The ascension to the throne had, not surprisingly, ever since olden times included a bloody path with both likely and unlikely aspirants equally willing to sacrifice their parents, siblings, spouses and offspring along the way. Yet, the one belonging to Richard III is somehow seen as the vilest among them all.

Scattered here and there among countless literary portrayals, internet sources, newspaper articles, and (as we shall later see, highly controversial) historians' accounts, many reasons for Richard's infamy can be found. As brought together in place by Horace Walpole *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* (1768), Richard is first and foremost accused of murdering King Edward IV's sons and his own nephews, Edward V and Richard Duke of York. Next, he is said to have slandered King Edward IV by claiming that his brother was not his father's child but that their mother had conceived Edward with a certain labour man, all in favour of Richard becoming the king. Next, he is said to have single-handedly murdered Edward Lancaster, together with arranging the execution of his two closest allies who had originally helped him win the throne (Lords Hastings and Buckingham) as well as his other brother, George Duke of Clarence. Last but not the least, this list of already serious misdeeds is often supplemented with Richard's alleged implication in the murder

of the old King Henry VI and his own wife, Queen Anne Neville, the daughter of the famous Kingmaker, Count Warwick and Richard's protector in his youth (Walpole 3).

By following this logic, it is easy to conclude why it would seem rather curious to come across not one but two historical novels with a proclaimed aspiration to the status of truth, which feature corresponding portrayals of this very character whose almost demonic legacy is never once demonstrated nor implied. However, what this paper actually strives to show is that all these villainous actions attributed to Richard are, based on contestable and speculative grounds, most likely refutable as well as that Richard's infamous public image was additionally blown out of proportion by Shakespeare's play. To draw once again on the aspect of literary monstrosities – Richard's case can be compared to that of Bram Stoker's creation of Count Dracula, wherein the famous author merged all the bits and pieces of prejudice and sporadic folkloric accounts of the undead in his novel, consequently transforming them into recurrent stereotypes about vampires that are still present today. In a similar manner, it can be argued that Shakespeare made use of the already damaging reports on Richard and eternalized the last Plantagenet king as an incorrigible villain.

Due to yet another popular misconception regarding Richard III in this modern day, followed by the recent excavation of his skeleton, many emphasize the idea of *recent* efforts to restore the honour of the maligned king: "the discovery of Richard's body will lead to a re-examination of his reign and may go some way to rebalancing the largely negative" (Britten 5). However, it should be noted that such a positive attitude towards Richard is not the product of the twenty-first century. In as early as 1798, Horace Walpole, the established writer of the first English Gothic novel and the main supporter of Richard's cause, disproved all defamatory allegations directed at the infamous king. Offered by, as Walpole argues, irrelevant and biased historical sources, these blasphemous theories with no confirmation from Richard's contemporaries went on to be unjustly cemented through the means of Shakespeare's play (Walpole 70).

2.1. Political and Ideological Background of Shakespeare's *Richard III*

In further expanding Gelder's reflections on popular fiction's immersion in the ideology and Literature's inherent repudiation of such tendencies, one can consider Culler's argument on (general) literature's "diametrically opposed functions" (38), according to which popular fiction takes over the role of an ideological promulgator, whereas Literature prompts constant challenging of authority and social hierarchy (Culler 38). Interpreted as a part of Literature, Shakespeare's *Richard III* has for centuries been considered influential in both literary and ordinary world. However, this research proves that the text of Shakespeare's play in fact bears strong ideological markings, in turn making it closer to the field of popular fiction, by corresponding and not subverting the prominent ideological path of its time. Inasmuch, Shakespeare's work is said to have served as a powerful ideological instrument by reinforcing a false image of Richard III with long-lasting repercussions, able to cloud many a judgement even today.

The key issue concerning Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III is seen in the Bard's choice of sources for his play that has for centuries taken up an important place in both the English and world literature canon. Namely, apart from relying on Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (1534), William Baldwin's *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559–96), as well as Edward Hall's (1548) and Raphael Holinshed's (1587) *Chronicles* [9], it is generally accepted that the famous playwright had largely based his protagonist on Sir Thomas More's *The History of King Richard the Third* (1513). More's already partial and "fine ironic portrait of an evil king" is thus deemed to have given "Shakespeare rich material to work from" (Pierce 89), enabling him to create a figure of Richard which "escapes from historical boundaries, strict fact and chronology, to become a stylised, larger than life demonic figure" (Besnault and Bitot 108).

Following More's description, Richard is thus portrayed as the sheer opposite of his brother and *predecessor on the English throne*, King Edward IV. Richard is seen as an incurable monster: vile, unscrupulous, and morally unencumbered when it comes to the murdering of people, above all innocent children. Additionally, More wrote that Richard's outward appearance was as unappealing as his inner moral corruptness and depravity since he was depicted as a man of little stature, with crooked back and uneven shoulders. Nevertheless, More's depiction of Richard is challenged due to his espousal of John Rous' [10] account of Richard's scandalous birth by recounting the story of how he came into this world feet-first, with shoulder-length hair and many a tooth after spending two whole years in his mother's womb (More 4–7). [11]

The reasoning for such conspiratorial view is often based upon the fact that Shakespeare's most prolific period coincided with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the granddaughter of Henry, Earl of Richmond. Crowned King Henry VII, Richmond was the founder of the Tudor dynasty and the very man responsible for Richard's demise at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. The latter event, as well as the political and social consequences that had ensued from it, are historically claimed to have created a prevailing atmosphere of Tudor adulation. Specifically, the Tudor historians' propaganda revolving around the central figure of Henry VII had the aim of glorifying the new king's acts together with the establishment of a new dynasty [12], wherein More was charged with an "inspired loyalty to the house of Tudor, revealing much the same outlook and political prejudices" (Wilson xi). Consequently, Shakespeare's dependence on More's strongly vilified depiction of Richard is seen as the Bard's inclination to adhere to this, as defined by E. M. W. Tillyard, "Tudor myth". [13] Despite the claims that More "sincerely believed Richard was the sort of man he depicts, capable not only of the actions he ascribes to him but also of those he admits were mere rumours" (xix), scholars and historians started to question, not the truthfulness of More's words, but rather his objectivity.

As a result, it is argued that "Richard was the target of a smear campaign orchestrated by the Tudor dynasty [in which respect] Tudor historians deliberately blackened Richard's character, and [that] Shakespeare followed suit by putting a hunchbacked tyrant on stage" (Buka 353). Additionally, More is harshly criticized for having collected data for Richard's biography "from Richard's worst enemies, without the least effort to sift truth from prejudice"

(Goy-Blanquet 62). Such opinion that “Shakespeare’s Richard was More’s Richard, and [that] both Richards were historical distortions invented to justify the Tudor family’s ascension to the throne of England” (Hallett and Hallett 13) is wholeheartedly supported by Walpole, Richard’s most prominent defender, who proposes that “Many of the crimes imputed to Richard seemed improbable; and, what was stronger, contrary to his interest” (Hathaway xiv). Walpole, in fact, denies Richard’s implication in any of the crimes attributed to him, including the one which contributed most to Richard’s notoriety – the murder of the young princes [14].

In her extensive work set on proving Richard’s responsibility for the murder of King Edward IV’s sons and his own nephews, historian Alison Weir asserts that her “objective view point [is] based on common sense and sound research” (14). Albeit not as inherently trustworthy, Weir’s text is inasmuch useful because it touches upon all the relevant persons and chroniclers of the time whose opinions had laid the groundwork for all later attitudes and recounts of the real King Richard’s nature. Despite herself addressing the issue of Tudor historians’ overt hostility toward Richard and their – above all, John Rous’ – proneness to “recording gossip as fact” (19), yet, Weir finds solid proof for her claims in the Italian monk Dominic Mancini’s “brief (...) on English affairs” (15) in which Richard III was described as a malicious schemer whose attainment of the crown was by all means unjust. Weir furthermore praises Mancini’s objectivity as “an invaluable source” by arguing that the monk “had no reason to write anything hostile to Richard III” (16). Moreover, as the second key historical source for Richard’s malevolence, Weir delivers the Second Continuation of the Croyland Chronicle (1459-86), claiming that it is without doubt the best source for the period for being highly accurate because it was written from the author’s personal knowledge of the events described (17-18). The author of the Chronicle, Weir asserts confidently, must be John Russell, “Bishop of Lincoln and Lord Chancellor of England under Richard III” (18).

Nevertheless, contrary to Weir’s interpretation that the chronicler’s silence in relation to straightforward listing of Richard’s crimes [15] “speak[s] volumes”, others sharply dismiss it [16], together with Russell’s appraisal by Thomas More, as an indicative of the truthful, historically justified absence of Richard’s machinations, and yet another clue that “Shakespeare [w]as a co-conspirator with More in the enterprise of tarnishing Richard’s reputation” (Hallett and Hallett 13). This opposing attitude is supported by a multitude of researchers who strongly believe that arguments for Richard’s blackened persona are based upon nothing more than falsity, ignorance and predilection toward the first Tudor monarch.

Thus, “having been examined by wise and moderate men, [Richard’s slanders] have onely found malice and ignorance to have been his greatest accusers, persons who can onely lay suspition to his charge (Winstanley 62). Moreover, “Malicious credulitie rather embraceth the partiall writings of indiscreet chroniclers, and witty Play-Makers, then his [Richard III’s] lawes and actions, the most innocent and impartiall witnesses” (Cornwallis 61). In turn, Walpole dismisses all disputants of the last Plantagenet king in connection to the alleged murder of two innocent boys, and even brings into question the violent death of King Edward IV’s elder son, Edward V (“Richard III’s Physical Appearance” 81).

As for other heinous crimes attributed to Richard and espoused in Shakespeare's play – his role in the murders of Edward Lancaster and King Henry VI (son and husband of Margaret of Anjou), Richard's own brother George, his associate Lord Hastings and his Queen, Anne Neville – the following conclusions are offered: none of Richard's contemporaries attribute him with the murder of Edward Lancaster who is proved to have been executed by servants of King Edward IV, since the young Lancaster was the King's opponent in the battle for the crown (considering that at the time the War of the Roses was still in full swing). In relation to the death of the old and mad King Henry VI, the records do not state clearly how his departure came about, but it is likewise argued that there are no contemporary accounts which point to Richard. He is also historically absolved of the crime of his brother George's demise; according to Walpole, Richard had in fact defended him before the Parliament for George's act of treason against Edward IV, which was the actual cause of his death, brought on by Edward himself. Also, the execution of Richard's auxiliary, Lord Hastings, is said to have been an "absolute necessity" and an act of "self-defence", which Richard was "loath" to indulge. Last but not least, the death of Richard's Queen is attributed to Anne Neville's poor health. Namely, she is said to have fallen ill of the "languishing distemper", and her death is supported in terms of being a crime by no proof whatsoever (Walpole, "Richard III's Physical Appearance" 70-77).

All this serves to prove that Shakespeare was not only disinclined to organize his play in a way that would serve to oppose the prominent ideology of his time, but that he actually employed dubious historical records to create a play that exhibits characteristics reserved for the popular works of his time, as shall be seen in the next chapter.

2.2. Elizabethan Playwrights as Craftsmen

As mentioned in Shakespeare's work of a different kind – the comedy by the name *Twelfth Night or What You Will* [17] – common among the playwright's contemporaries was the popular (philosophical) belief that moral ugliness cannot inhabit a fair body, more precisely that beauty is inextricably connected to inner goodness and righteousness. In line with this logic, those which are left, ugliness and a wicked nature, must likewise go hand in hand. [18] In this sense, Shakespeare's decision to portray Richard III as a hunchback and a physically incompetent creature thus cunningly concurs with the expectation that such a deformed body simply must accommodate an equally abominable soul. The Bard's play works hard to assert such state by incessantly repeating and emphasizing Richard's uncomeliness; he is referred to as a hog, a spider, a toad, and a dog on multiple occasions. [19] And it is this conjoined outer and inner foulness belonging to Richard that also provides a literary grounds for the virtual demonization of Richard's character, in addition to the inversion of historical facts discussed in the previous chapter.

Apart from the controversial validity of historical records and sources Shakespeare had used for his play, another concept is argued to have contributed to his augmentation of More's already unpleasant attitude towards Richard. Namely, to suit the purposes of the drama conventions of the Elizabethan theatre

in order to attract a greater public. In light of this recognizable characteristic of popular fiction, wherein Elizabethan playwrights received payment for their texts, Shakespeare resorted to prevalent motifs and themes beloved among his contemporaries, both his fellow playwrights and the audience. Accordingly, his Tragedy of the King Richard the Third is perceived as:

[T]he best shocker of the age, with a villain who embodied some of the Elizabethan's pet detestations. As a monster, physically and morally (...) and as a godless and bloodthirsty tyrant he was admirably fitted to be the protagonist of a Senecan [^o] tragedy, at that date the only form of tragedy approved by the literary dictators. (Wilson x-xi)

Accordingly, Richard's physical deformity and an almost demonic personality are interpreted as a mere hyperbole aimed at pleasing the standard expectations and motifs in the Elizabethan drama.

As a result, critics have taken to considering “the murder of a brother and of young children, one of whom is a king”, “stichomythia in conflictual love-bantering in the two wooing scenes, an amplification of the horror of such dramatic situations as the death of Clarence, and above all rhetorical excess in the expression of passions” and attributing them to the “sensational themes” Shakespeare had acquired from Seneca (Besnault and Bitot 117). Bloom and Marson also work to support the fact that such writings including violence, gore and supernatural occurrences “were especially attractive to late sixteenth-century English dramatists” (63-64). In this manner, one is enabled to relegate the core content of the play – “the villain-hero with his self-revealing soliloquies, the revenge motif, the ghosts, the stichomythic dialogue” – to a literary means with the purpose of evoking “the abundant echoes of Seneca's own plays” (Smidt 54), and to avoid interpreting it as the reflection of the true character of Richard III.

Closely related to this, Shakespeare's intertwining of physical incapacity and an irreconcilably vile nature arguably presents yet another notable Renaissance convention in the eyes of the critics. Robert B. Pierce explains it by stating that “What takes [Shakespeare] out of the ranks of Elizabethan Senecanism, however, is his connection with the traditional Vice, the stock villain of the morality plays” (102). [21] Likewise, Besnault and Bitot assert that in one of Richard's soliloquies “the contemporaries of Shakespeare, especially the older ones, were very likely to recognise in the hero of Richard III kinship with another dramatic archetype, the Vice, which was extremely popular in Interludes between 1550 and 1580: Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralise two meanings in one word. (3.1.82–83)” (113-114), while Leggatt will draw comparisons between the character of the Vice and literary Richard by noting that “Richard, like the Vice, presents himself as a friend to the audience, and as the play develops we discover that this friend is not to be trusted” (32). Lastly, Hathaway will point to the severe misinterpretation of the real Richard's character brought on by this typical Renaissance dramatic convention employed with the purpose of creating an exhilarating work of fiction in the context of its time:

Richard III (c.1591) and Richard II (c.1595) concentrate more on central figures whose lives are fitted into tragic moulds. The earlier play owes as much to Seneca as to the chroniclers of English history, and its hero is constructed differently from the figure he cut in 3 Henry VI. In the play that bears his name he is a figure

in whom dissimulation has distorted personality, a man whose shadow has displaced his substance. (8)

3. Conclusion

The relationship between Literature and popular fiction in modern literary theory is still rather unequal, with the balance strongly in favour of Literature as a field which works incessantly to subvert social and ideological constraints of its time. However, as seen in the case of real-life Richard III and his unjustly, literary attributed malevolent fame, the division between Literature and popular fiction in terms of their differing relationship with the ideology and historical moments of creation might prove problematic at times.

Namely, this paper serves to show that works which are nowadays considered to be pure popular fiction, such as Philippa Gregory and Anne O'Brien's historical romances, can have the ability to subvert the widespread impact created by Shakespeare's "serious", Literary work of art. Additionally, by returning to its corresponding ideological and historical context, it is possible to regard Shakespeare's *Richard III* as simultaneously representative of popular fiction in the Elizabethan era due to Shakespeare's excellent knowledge on the taste of his contemporaries and the English theatre-goers. He knew how to employ the popular and much-loved, rather appalling motifs and apply them to the appropriated More's text, already heavily charged with anti-Ricardian propaganda, in order to create a powerful masterpiece whose power and impression will expand far beyond its literary bounds.

In the end, it was not the aim of this paper to say that Gregory and O'Brien's novels should be regarded as equivalent to Shakespeare's plays, nor that popular fiction should strive to do so in general. Nonetheless, it is important to be aware that both Literature and popular fiction emanate inevitably from their own political and social contexts, and that the contradictory roles of ideological subversion and endorsement traditionally belonging to Literature and popular fiction might be interchangeable.

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Notes

[1] The origin of theoretical and historical issues of classification and literary genealogy can be traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics* in which he offers the division of literary forms by their discernible characteristics, but also prescribes the "correct" ways of producing those forms. Aristotle's prescriptive theory was employed until the Romanticism (when the emphasis was put on the originality of each and every literary creation as a unique work of art), meaning that authors were obliged to follow the rules of writing specific literary form, otherwise their texts were not considered to be works of literature.

[2] See Gelder, *Popular Fiction* 11-17.

[3] This is yet another definition of the dichotomous classification, habitually used in the popular culture.

[4] Each and every concept and activity that serves the purpose of promoting and attracting a larger number of *consumers* to a certain literary product. For example, *fanzines*, *prozines*, logos, action figurines, T-shirts, popularization of locations, recurrent motifs and dates (such as birthdays of characters), and alike.

[5] Such is the case with historiographical metafiction which intertwines the field of theory, fiction and history in order to simultaneously challenge all those domains. See Hutcheon *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 105-123

[6] See Culler, *Literary Theory* 47.

[7] The most representative would be the character of a vampire. Its initial portrayal of a hideous, mindless creature driven solely by its thirst for human blood was firstly transformed through the work of John Polidori into a gentleman superior and attractive to humans, and secondly by Anne Rice, into a romanticized anti-hero whose inner world reveals deep sadness caused by the fact that vampires must drink human blood.

[8] The War of the Roses (1377-1485): the English civil war between two noble houses, the House of Lancaster (represented by a red rose) and the House of York (the white rose being its emblem), which sprang between two descendants of Edward III.

[9] Cf. Greenblatt (2004); Hathaway (2002); Walpole (2002); Wilson (2009); Hallett & Hallett (2001).

[10] John Rous (1411-91), an artistic Warwickshire chantry priest and antiquarian. (Weir 15)

[11] The latter 'legend' is outright ridiculed by Walpole.

[12] In line with this attitude, Henry VII "was divinely appointed to heal the conflict between the warring dynasties of York and Lancaster" (Kastan 492). His victory over Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field and his subsequent marriage to the daughter of King Edward IV marked the ending of the War of the Roses and a successful unification of two rival factions into the new, Tudor dynasty and era. Furthermore, through Legatt's more practical approach in his *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, Shakespeare's way of dealing [with the resolution of conflict between Richard III and Henry VII] is to link the myth with a concern for the normal conditions of life, the ordinary decencies of family, state, even sexual relations, that Richmond promises to restore" (52-53). However, the praising of the Tudor dynasty and Henry VII is believed to have been conducted not only in good faith, but also by deliberate manipulation of historical record, especially concerning Richard.

[13] “[T]he prevalent belief that God had guided England into her haven of Tudor prosperity” (Tillyard 210).

[14] Edward (12) was brought to the Tower of London in May and was joined by his brother Richard (9) on June 16 (Schwyzer 38).

[15] The author of the Croyland Chronicle states no more than “denouncing [Richard] for sensuality, holding an execution on a Sunday, and overspending” (Weir 18).

[16] “It seems to me that (...) the authors of the Chronicle of Croyland, who were contemporaries with Richard, charge him directly with none of the crimes, since imputed to him, and disbelieve him of others” (Walpole, “Richard III’s Physical Appearance” 77).

[17] I, 2, 44-48.

[18] See Horny 77.

[19] Words of Queen Margaret directed to Richard: “Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog” (I, 3, 230), and to Queen Elizabeth: “Why strew’st thou sugar on that bottled spider” (I, 3, 246); “A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death- / That dog, that had his teeth before his eye” (IV, 4, 50-51). Queen Elizabeth’s own curse toward Richard: “That bottled spider, that foul bunch-back’d toad” (IV, 4, 81). Richmond’s exclamation at the end of the play: “God and your arms be praised, victorious friends! / The day is ours; the bloody dog is dead” (V, 5, 1-2).

[20] Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C.–65 A.D.), the Roman philosopher and dramatist. The Senecan tragedy, written primarily to be recited, largely inspired the English dramatists who brought it to life on the stage. It provided a model for a five-act play with complex plot and elaborate, overly formal style of dialogue. In the Elizabethan Age, it had two lines of development. One of them was the academic tragedy adhering to the rule of three unities and featuring a chorus. The other one, the greater one, was the revenge tragedy or the so-called tragedy of blood which developed from Seneca’s beloved motifs of murder, revenge, ghosts, mutilation, and carnage. But while Seneca gave way to such events offstage, Elizabethan playwrights usually kept them onstage in order to satisfy the contemporary appetite for violence and horror (Abrams and Harpham 372).

[21] Morality plays represented dramatized allegories of Christian life depicting a quest for salvation, featuring key events such as temptation, sinning and climactic confrontation with death. A character of Vice was often present in the play, embodying the tempter with a simultaneously vile and comic nature. The Vice is considered to be the antecedent to cynical, ironic villains and comic figures in the Elizabethan drama (Abrams and Harpham 201).

Re-thinking *Hamlet* in the 21st Century

Different Cultures, Same Questions?

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Abstract: The article, from an inter-disciplinary perspective, addresses William Shakespeare's character Hamlet and his 'whirlwinds of passion'. The troubles we encounter in Hamlet's questionings of many of life's values, purposes, and meanings simultaneously suggest the same patterns of trouble contemporary readers encounter in their social surrounding. In seeking answers to Hamlet's questions—and our own—as well as in recognizing the possibility of reconstructing, re-thinking, and re-using patterns of this literary text, the article reveals our own present realities and 'whirlwinds of passion'.

Key words: Culture; *Hamlet*; interpretations; literary text; William Shakespeare

Text as a Timeless Machine: The Case of William Shakespeare's Narrative

One of the world's best known theatre directors, Peter Brook, at the beginning of his book, *Evoking (and forgetting!) Shakespeare* (2003), poses the question, "Why is Shakespeare not out of date?" Based on available data, many scholarly approaches, and ever-increasing reception theories and contextualization studies (Kennedy; Penda; White), we witness that Shakespeare's works have been disseminated worldwide not only in terms of a place but in terms of the reader. This implies on two things: the author's popularity and the capacity of the literary text, in general, to adjust, to transform, and to be used over and over again, as Elizabeth Grosz demonstrates. (Lukić)

As a result of literary text's ability to adjust, transform, and adapt to each new context, this article confronts Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and his main character's 'whirlwind of passions' seen through his questions, doubts, arrogance, melancholy, uncertainty, indecision and brutality from a twenty-first century perspective. By doing so, the article accepts the arguments that a text cannot be classified and identified once and for all time emphasizing the flexibility of the text as well as the importance of each reader to approach it. (Lukić) Even more, every re-thinking of *Hamlet*, for instance this one, takes, according to Julia Kristeva, a step forward from the previous one, thus, adding new layers of meanings, views and connotations to a text. (Kristeva, 171) In other words, Kristeva's idea allows the reader to read a text from his or her own present position - to identify with it, to communicate different issues (political, religious, gender, sexual, social, global, etc), to tell different stories, to elicit particular interpretations, and their memories. Or, as Umberto Eco claims, to read as if each literary text were 'a lazy machine that wants its reader to do a part of its job.' (Eco, 35)

Furthermore, while Richard P. Wheeler argues, when referring to Shakespeare's texts, that one should bear in mind the 'limits' of his texts (probably referring to social and cultural specifics at the time of their creation), Grosz insists

that, no matter the time a literary text was written or its author's intention, every reader can read it in a different mode. (Lukić) Even more, Brook maintains that, 'each line in Shakespeare is an atom. The energy that can be released is infinite – if we can split it open.' (Brook, 25)

Generally speaking, whatever the reason, whether the adjustability of Shakespeare's texts (film adaptations, theatre performances or various exhibitions), their contemporaneity due to topics and characters' traits, their 'energy', to use Stephen Greenblatt's word, or simply due to twenty-first readers' interests, we will agree that Shakespeare's texts 400 years after his death can equally be negotiated as readily by our age than by his own. (Greenblatt; Kott)

On Two Different Cultures: Patriarchal and 'Cosmic Casino'

Understanding culture as a system of standardized social values, as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton discuss it, is not an easy process. (Williams; Eagleton and Popović) While some authors agree that culture stands as a description of a society as noble and posh in contrast to primitive, not cultivated societies, others state that it represents the state of human's spirit; a mirror of a society's lifestyle with all its mirror of a society's lifestyle with all its changes, ideas, aspirations, standpoints, patterns of behaviour and many more. (Haralambos and Holborn)

Indeed, for the purpose of this article, the author will discuss two distinct cultures - Shakespeare's at the end of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, twenty-first century cultural realities – that draw upon a cultural diversity that can contribute to the process of re-thinking Hamlet.

Looking at the social structure of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century England, we notice strongly present patriarchal principle, i.e. patrilineal descent principle. In other words, patriarchal ideology based its power on gender differences through which cultural values and its content importance were determined and passed on. (Curtis) As such, the place of women in Elizabethan England was assigned to the 'private sphere', the sphere of lower social importance that required of them to make decisions concerning household matters, child rearing, the wellbeing of family members, and similar. (Camden) Even more, the patriarchal daughters had three roles that they had to fulfil within the same context: a daughter, a wife, and a mother. (Galić Kakkonen and Penjak)

Furthermore, the Church of England had a large impact on people's lives. As such, not only was mass attendance obligatory but also the teaching of the Church was compulsory in education together with the teaching of Latin and Greek as well as reading of Virgil, Homer and Cicero. In brief, this was the basic social context that defined rules, roles and expectations of its individuals. Cultural context, on the other hand, mirrored these social values through literature, flourishing number of playhouses (the Red Lion (1567), the Theatre (1576), the Curtain (1577), the Rose (1587), the Globe (1599)) and large attendance of the same. (Astington) Playhouses played very important rule in mirroring social context. For instance, there were times when playhouses served propaganda purposes, for instance Shakespeare's company in performing *Richard the Second*, in 1601, or when plays were written aiming at a particular market. Whatever the

role might be, playhouses offered a critical overview of all the social issues that one could not discuss openly in public; they spoke of the controversies of the time, often mocking political figures; as if the playhouses were a symbol of freedom - despite the fact that authors whose plays were 'too controversial' would sometimes get in trouble.

Although twenty-first century socio-cultural context does not evidence nor do people today feel stressed by the invisible web of gender assumptions that surrounded and supported Elizabethan people, it, nevertheless, has its own 'stereotypical costumes', as Cordelia Fine calls them. (Fine, 7) The culture as we know it today does not recognize the 'high'- 'low' cultural distinction depending on its users ('high' targeted at aristocracy and 'low' at more general public) (Švob-Đokić, Primorac and Jurlin); people today simply live immersed in culture seen as a crossroad of tolerance where differences meet, ideas exchange, and where freedom of choice is allowed and encouraged; thus, a complete denial of culture as elitism, a privileged, as we once knew it. Approachable means of technological progress and with it easy access to any cultural content, enabled us to share our own, local culture and values with others around the world; it enabled us to interact among people of different cultures and their attitudes and values; to exchange ideas and information. In a word, fast spreading of cultural contents and ideas changed the way we perceive and use culture. 'The culture of forgetting', as Švob-Đokić calls it, has slowly been annulating all the values that, up to now, were a part of intellectual, cultural, and civilization sense of the human existence. Thus, everything that is easily produced seems to be easily forgotten, melancholically state Švob-Đokić, Primorac, and Jurlin. (Švob-Đokić, Primorac and Jurlin)

In this sense, we can either agree or disagree with Stuart Hall's perception of culture as a system made of different forms of practices that, as such, (should) enables all people within the society to gain, build, and foster their identity. (Eagleton and Popović)

But what has changed in the perception and meaning of culture between two discussed centuries? Progress made in knowledge, states Nadedža Čačinović, is the major reason that has changed in the relationship between man and culture. (Čačinović) Stating this and referring to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, it is the reader's progress in knowledge, as Čačinović claims, thanks to many new data, information, and interpretations on Shakespeare that has enabled us to move forward in our re-thinking of *Hamlet*.

On Questions Hidden behind Hamlet's To Be, or, Not to Be'

Hamlet, the tragedy Shakespeare sets his readers to read on Danish prince, Hamlet, his sorrows, madness, disappointments, unhappiness, melancholy, and numerous doubts and questions of life's worth and values. Also, it is a tragedy that holds up to a reader many of life's manners, meanings and relations, as well as, while extracting from a reader various interpretations, challenges him to think of new connotations that would go beyond written words.

The power of Shakespeare's greatness lies, according to Harrison, in his mastery of mirroring 'Nature herself' through his characters. (Harrison, 17) Or, in

other words, ‘when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too’. (Harrison, 15) Thus, when reading and re-thinking Hamlet we re-think the nature of an individual who ‘speaks by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated and the whole system of life is continued in motion’ (*Ibid.*, 18); we feel his troubles as our own.

To move closer to the subject at hand, the old Danish king, Hamlet, is dead. His wife, queen Gertrude, has remarried but Hamlet cannot ‘cast the nightly colour off’ (1.2.68) and settle down with the fact that ‘all that lives must die.’ (1.2.72)

Curious by Bernardo’s question, ‘Who’s there?’, Hamlet decides to find the answer to this matter of concern. The ‘Who’ brings Hamlet to the ghost of his deceased father – quite an unexpected image. As he finds out the truth about his father’s death, that he was poisoned by his own brother, Hamlet becomes furious, starts to doubt, to question, and to put shadow on everything and everybody around him – the world, the values, the meaning of life. The oddness of the situation and disgust for his surrounding arises in him. At a glance, he thinks for himself:

HAMLET How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!
 Fie on’t, ah fie, fie! ‘Tis an unweeded garden
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this. (1.2.133-137)

World once full of nature’s delights now turned into a weary and unweeded place. Thus, Hamlet cannot help but wonder why should it have come to that. In his observation, each of us can recognize sorrow and melancholy for past times. Hamlet’s sorrow due to his father’s death reflect through his melancholy, his disgust towards his mother remarrying, and desire to revenge his dead father. But the fact that he cannot call piece with is the quickness, ‘wicked speed’, of his mother remarrying; it is something that troubles him much deeper; something ‘within which passeth show’, as he refers to Gertude and Claudius marriage. He even sees the marriage as incestuous, which at the time could have been possible.

It was a custom of the time that widows would not stay single for a long time but, at the same time, ‘could not decently accept a proposal of remarriage so long as the corpse of her late husband was still in the house.’ (Harrison, 46) Accordingly, Gertrude’s remarrying, although on Hamlet disgust, did fit in as socially approved conduct. After only two months since his father’s death, Gerturde who ‘would hang on him’ (1.2.143) showing him (king Hamlet) deep love and affection, suddenly forgot about him; forgot about his loving and kind treatment he endowed her with. Hamlet accuses her of being ‘most pernicious woman’ (1.5.105); calls her names; even compares her to an animal saying that ‘a beast that wants discourse of reason/ Would have mourned longer!’ (1.2.150-151)

By saying, ‘frailty, thy name is woman’ (1.2.146), Hamlet expresses another disrespect towards his mother that, at the time, was unacceptable, rude, and against every child’s obligation. In other words, children were obliged to show respect towards their parents, not only in addressing them with ‘Sir’ or ‘Madame’ but in obeying and respecting their decisions, as well. But since, from Hamlet’s

point of view, his mother has acted unacceptably, he sees no reason why he should show her any respect.

According to Valerie Traub, calling women all sorts of names was not rare at the time. In her opinion, it was ‘a useful tactic for men wary of losing their authority.’ (Traub, 130) Moreover, Hamlet’s reaction and rudeness towards his mother may be caused by his subconscious sense of emotional wounrability caused by the sudden bound break between him, as a son, and his mother, as his parent. (Novy) Or, as Frye recalls, Hamlet might be suffering from Oedipal complex according to which Hamlet desires to marry his mother after killing his stepfather, Claudius. (Frye) On the other hand, his ‘conflict of emotions’, according to Lawrence Stone, reflects and contradicts his surrounding that, after the death of his father, has become highly insensitivity and emotionless. (Novy) Or, as Marcellus puts it, ‘Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.’ (1.4.67) Here we witness on Shakespeare’s focus on picturing disruption of social order, which, in this case, he decided to locate within familial, marital, and social construction.

Even more, by addressing her with ‘frailty, thy name is woman’ (1.2.146), Hamlet addresses the entire womankind, in general, as those creatures who cannot be trusted; beings who lack dignity and loyalty; those who would deceive anyone as soon as they find a better opportunity for themselves. In doing so, Hamlet is, at the same time, questioning the stability of the patriarchal system and its values as the ones that picture women as loyal to their husbands, committed mothers to their children and household, ever-thankful beings who worship their husbands and sons, and praise their achievements and support their key roles for the benefit of society.

In expressing true disgust towards his mother, Hamlet reflects upon another issue that he sees closely connected to woman’s personality traits – the honesty issue. He echoes, ‘To be honest, as this world goes, is to\ be one man picked out of ten thousand.’ (2.2.180-181) We could say that, according to Hamlet, finding an honest person is as difficult as finding a four-leaf clover on the meadow. In that sense, Hamlet feels disappointed, weary, quite looking and feeling like Heraclitus whose burden is the world; the world that he pictures as a ‘sterile promontory’ (2.2.301); this ‘majestical roof fretted with golden fire’ (2.2.302-303) (referring to sky and stars) gives him the sense of ‘a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours’ (303-304) that, if taken the whole state and mood Hamlet’s been confronting, only mirrors his inner state-being, his deep disappointment in people and in the world, in general. Even more, he recognizes all of this as a ‘quintessence of dust’ (2.2.310) that does not give him any delight, at least not any more. Hamlet advices Ophelia not to trust anybody, including himself, for, ‘We are arrant knaves, all. Believe non of us.’ (3.1.131) Because he shares deep feelings for her, he does not want her to encounter his destiny where he has been left only with confusion, ‘turbulent and dangerous lunacy’ (3.1.4), distraction, and madness. It seems to us that if, suddenly, Hamlet has become also Hecuba (the symbol of great sorrow) of his time; a creature once respected by many now ‘quite, quite down’ (3.1.157) in spirit and being; ‘unmatched form and feature of blown youth\ Blasted with ecstasy’ (3.1.161-162) – his wit’s\ diseased.’ (3.2.308-309)

As Hamlet tries to find meaning in many of images surrounding him, he tries to seek meaning in woman’s beauty, also. Although he finds it paradoxical,

HAMLET the power of beauty will sooner
 transform honesty from what it is to a bawd (boud) than the
 force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. (3.1.113-115)

Accordingly, beauty for Hamlet has no other function apart from ruining woman's honesty, her grace, affection, and warmth and harming men. While, at first, woman uses her external beauty, as well as sweetness of words and gestural embodiment, as her means to attract men, men soon become aware of its monstrous power that has brought them to a woman who will use them, eventually, in order to achieve their hidden goals. Shakespeare incorporates these features in many of his female character in his tragedies. For instance, do not Tamora and Lady Macbeth use the sweetness and passion of their words to camouflage their fake caring and warmth towards their husbands with only one aim – to gain power to rule, to make decisions, and to stop being the one considered of less worth, of lower instance in contrast to man; to liberate themselves from aggressive patriarchal constraints.

Although female beauty, today, still stands as a symbol of passion, attraction, and lust, many surveys in the recent time have addressed the issue through its role and impact in various cultural contexts. For instance, Manning, Trivers, Singh and Thornhill report on cultural variance between Peru and western countries in terms of defining what is a beautiful female body. While in Peru beautiful woman is a heavy woman with high waist-to-hip ratios, western countries prefer the opposite. (Manning et al.) Also, black female beauty due to their skin colours and hair types, which black females have, is not an ideal definition of a female beauty in western countries. (Robinson-Moore) This points at two things: firstly, there we witness on quite strong and present cultural dominance of white skin people and their ideal beauty paradigms that are imposed to the rest of the world as a dominant beauty standard; secondly, in spite of this white western dominance there are cultures that respect only their idea of what a female beauty is.

Furthermore, while some studies see female beauty through its physical characteristics (size of breasts, hip, waist) that male perceive as sexually attractive (Tovee and Cornelissen; Jasienska et al.) others try to proof scientifically what are precise female facial traits that are addressed as beautiful. (Cunningham; Johnston and Franklin) In viewpoint, the process of globalization and the impact of media have created stereotypes of ideal female beauty and desirable body image that are supposed to stand against time, meaning that ageing is a process that deteriorates female beauty and as such is undesirable. (Johansson; Cunningham et al.; Markey and Markey) It seems that twenty-first century does not agree with Oscar Wild's 'Beauty is in the eyes of a beholder' but all that is important is how much does a woman fulfill culturally prescribed ideal of a beautiful female image in order to be addressed as beautiful.

In the same way as he talks on female beauty, Hamlet refers to woman's love labelling it, again, as a thing of low value, short-termed. In other words, woman's love lasts no longer than a 'prologue, or the posy of a ring.' (3.2.145) Fear and love go hand in hand when it comes to loving a woman, for if you love a woman you should fear her, at the same time, due to her beauty that, once it has attracted you, turns to monstrous being. Hamlet knew very well these woman's traits; their

jiggings and amblings hidden behind ignorance. Or in other words, he refers to them with disgust and scorns them by saying,

HAMLET For

anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing,
whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to
hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue
her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very
age and body of the time his form and pressure. (3.2.19-24)

His reaction is quite understandable and logical since his own mother, 'partial by nature' (3.3.32), as Polonius refers to mothers, used all of these to attract his uncle and remarry. Hamlet does not see a larger picture behind his mother's decision; as if he does not want to accept that, in doing so, all she did was protecting him and the kingdom from falling into enemy's hands. By being harsh towards all woman kind, Hamlet is, actually, expressing his grief and anger, at the same time, caused by his father's sudden death and, subsequently, his mother remarrying.

Although Hamlet's surrounding is only a fictional one that mirrors sixteenth and early seventeenth century social background, we find the presence of it in our daily surrounding and relationships, as well. Today, we detect disrupted social order even more than in Shakespeare time. It is not only Hamlet who feels lost and unhappy by adults', referring obviously to his mother, decisions and moves. While we locate disruption in familial, marital, and social relationships, we notice that this form of social illness is being fostered by mass media and the process of globalization to such an extent that they both create a sense of social chaos. According to Traub, disorder in modern societies is due to an inversion of gender roles and duties; deconstruction of gender hierarchy where women are no longer at the bottom of the pyramid but equal the position of men is what brings true tragedy. (Traub, 132) This, in a way, changed men's super-hero image; the one on which women depended and relied upon; it foreshadowed men's authority and superiority evoking in him bursts of negative reactions and feelings – anger, frustration, rage, physical violence towards others, even madness – low self-esteem, and sense of instability.

Present socio-political paradigms, that guide and limit many of social relationships, today, are no longer ruled by the patriarchal order and its values. Modern institutions, today, form and define social order that abandoned traditional roles, habits and customs, for instance, children no longer address their parents with 'Sir' or 'Madame', they do not wait for their parents' approval for their marriage, nor do they always respect parents' advices and decisions. Generally speaking, 'modern social life is characterised by profound processes of the reorganisation of time and space' (Giddens, 2) that, as such, emphasizes diversity and risk without giving importance to its origin and reason. This quite often has a negative impact on family and marital relationships. The first proof of it is the number of divorces. For instance, Croatian Bureau of Statistics reports (2013) on exact number of marriages (in 2011, 20 211 per 1 000 inhabitants) and divorces (5 662 per 1 000 marriages) that, in comparison to other European countries (2,1 million and 986 thousand divorces in EU 28, in 2011; i.e., 4,2 marriages for every 1 000 person) is a large number. (Eurostatic)

Furthermore, due to fast spreading of information and availability of computer and Internet to large number of households, huge productivity in lot of different areas, numerous foreign investments, great differences between high and poor standards of living, tend to build in an individual a sense of insecurity (personal and collective) that quite often results in frustration, disappointment, depression, and low self-esteem. Taking drastic measure of dealing with their life situations – for instance, committing suicide – or, simply decide to move out of their country, that has lately been a common example. For instance, in Croatia, there have been 8 534 immigrants in Croatia, in 2011, and almost a double of them, 12 699 emigrated from Croatia. (*Divorces_in_2013*)

Furthermore, apart from revealing his opinion on marriage as a non-romantic-not forever lasting bond between two people, on woman's honesty, on instability of patriarchal system, on loyalty, the purpose of life, we witness on Hamlet's insecurities, 'lunacy' (2.2.49) as Polonius recalls, that extend much beyond his well-known invocation, 'To be, or not to be; that is the question.' (3.1.58)

Although Claudius refers to Hamlet's behaviour as 'impious stubbornness, unmanly grief' (1.2.94), his 'transformation' so extreme that 'not th'exterior nor the inward man/ Resembles that it was' (2.2.6-7) and to his condolment as 'unprevailing woe' (1.2.107), Hamlet decides to continue with behaviour and coining, subconsciously, the idea of revenging his father's death no matter the consequences. Hamlet strongly believes in two things: firstly, 'every man has business and desire,/ Such as it is.' (1.5.134-135) that he or she must follow through in their life and, secondly, he deeply believes that good and justice will eventually prevail. Or in other words, 'Foul deeds will rise,/ Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes' (1.2.256-257), meaning that whether he take the matter into on hands or not, the justice will eventually come.

Northrop Frye acknowledges that there is no other Shakespeare's play that captures as many problems as *Hamlet* does. Actually, while distinguishing Hamlet problems as either pseudo problems or actual ones, Frye concludes that whatever types the problems might be, they 'are part of the texture of the play, and central to its meaning.' (1986, 84) Hamlet, by calling upon two images, 'My fate cries out' (1.4.58) and 'The time is out of joint' (1.5.189), however, implies on the essence of time, its shortness and limitations. 'Words, words, words' (2.2.195), states Hamlet when wanting to imply worthlessness and meaningless of all his aforementioned concerns including time.

But, why does he add to the concept of world such a low-meaning connotation? It is due to the fact that in that same world he has been referring to, 'A goodly one, in which there are many confines,/ wards, and dungeons' (2.2.248-249) live many slanders, crabs that go backwards (implying to human cowardness), 'rogue and peasant slaves' (2.2.553) as he himself is, or even worse 'A dull and muddy-mettles rascal' (2.2.569) that do nothing apart for dreaming of the better world. Hamlet does not exclude himself from these images. In all his desire to revenge Hamlet eventually does not find strength to do it for he is 'too civilized for stealthy murder' (Frye), or, in a word, he is a coward. His following words mark his desire to act and, yet, inability to begin with the action apart from talking about it:

HAMLET Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance! –
Why, what an ass am I? Ay, sure, this is most brave,
That I, the son of the dead murderèd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion! Fie upon't, foh! – About, my brain. (2.2.582-590)

Even Polonius will emphasize the pocker face that people quite often use:

POLONIUS ‘Tis too much proved that with devotion’s visage
And pious action we do sugar o’er
The devil himself. (3.1.49-51)

In the spirit of doubting, lack of confidence in human race, lost of will to act and, possibly, change something, Hamlet utters, ‘To be, or not to be; that is the question.’ (3.1.58) He wonders on many things: it is more noble to suffer in spirit than to stand against fortune; is there any point in contradicting and trying to fight against destiny that has already been predescribed for us; or is it better to ‘die, to sleep -\ No more.’ (3.1.62-63) For who could possibly, wonders Hamlet,

HAMLET bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th’ oppressor’s wrong, the prou man’s contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law’s delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th’unworthy takes. (3.1.72-76)

No wonder, states Hamlet, that men decide to take the matter in their own hands and end their life freely. Accumulated problems, from Hamlet’s view point, stand as insoluble ones and as such require unexpected resolutions, such as suicide. We find this problem very present in today’s society, as well. Peeter Värnik, for instance, reports that, from 1950 to 2009, the European Region (4.0) has had the highest ratio of suicide, while the Eastern Mediterranean region (1.1) has had the lowest rate of suicide. (Värnik) This proofs that what Hamlet’s been thinking about is an issue many people encounter when they see no light at the end of a tunnel. Apparently, ‘suicide’, as Frye claims, ‘is an obvious way out for someone who feels that the world is a prison, even if “a goodly one”.’ (Frye, 87) But the feeling of not knowing what expects us in life makes cowards of us all. As such, Hamlet’s words easily get applied to us, as well. Fear is one of the most present weapons that makes people act in the way they do not want to. There are many types of fear that people, today, suffer from – fear from many types of oppressions (political, religious, financial), fear from terrorists attacks, fear from revenge of the wicked people, fear from losing the person we love, fear from falling in love, etc. Cao, Han, Hirshleifer, and Zhang, in their survey on fear, try to establish what causes the most fear in people, today. Accordingly, people fear change and the unknown, the most. (Cao et al.) Another study on the same topic showed that in spite of the fact that negative life events are good predictors of fear, mother’s presence and her high educational level can, can moderate the whole process, in particular in children and adolescents. (Ollendick et al.) Thus, if Hamlet’s mother

had paid more attention to his son, he might not have suffered from either melancholy, nor need to revenge.

Eventually, ‘we all build secondary prisons out of our actions; but these are projections of the deeper prison of what we are, the limits of our powers imposed at and by birth.’ (Frye, 99) So, as far as we agree with Frye, the case of Hamlet stands as of the examples how living in a golden cage can sometimes be a true cage. While offering infinite opportunities, it can turn into claustrophobic space for a person whose mind is troubled, like Hamlet’s, for instance.

Hamlet has had enough of the golden cage; enough of believing in life as something worth living; he has discarded love, honesty and female beauty as images that make life worth-living. All this time he felt as if he has only been eating ‘the air, promise-crammed.’ (3.2.91) Thus, he concludes, ‘Since\ no man has aught of what he leaves, what is’t to leave / betimes?’ (5.2.168-170)

‘This’, I dare say, ‘is a sorry sight!’ to echo Macbeth’s words. The mere sight at one of Hamlet’s final words amazes us for it reveals a picture of a young man confronted with the broken image of the world he, until finding the truth about his father’s death, viewed as a noble, fair, and secure place to live in. His realization of the ‘false face’ (*Macbeth*, 1.7.82) of the world quite contrary to his own image of the same does not only disappoint him, but makes him melancholic up to the extent that the only solutions he sees is to let go of everything he once valued, to end his life – to sleep.

Conclusion

The passing of time, no higher purpose of living, human cowardness, instability of marriage, instability of patriarchal society and its values, woman’s falsity, wickedness, infidelity, insincerity, sorrow, honesty are all issues that agitate and motivate Hamlet to question, doubt, and indulge in finding deeper meaning to all of it. No matter social surrounding or to time gap, we witness that some of the same arguments and issues that Hamlet approaches, the contemporary reader encounters in his present surrounding.

Additionally, by extracting Hamlet’s questionings and doubts of many of life’s values, purposes, and meanings at surface, we may conclude that although we will probably never be able to answer them, it offers us recognition, a point we can identify with. Even more, in doing so, the re-thinking of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* from today’s perspective allows us to read Shakespeare’s text as if ‘past is not simply another country; it is a narrative that is continually being rewritten, reconceptualised through the lens of our societal values [...].’ (Olsson 2013, 29) Thus, every time we eco, ‘Adieu, adieu, Hamlet’ (1.5.91), as the Ghost of Hamlet’s father does, we evoke Shakespeare and his work and do not allow its forgetting.

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Reviews

Mark Sebba, Shahrzad Mahootian and Carla Jonsson (eds.), *Language Mixing and Code-Switching in Writing: Approaches to Mixed-Language Written Discourse* (New York & London: Routledge, 2014).

280 pp., £ 34.99, ISBN 9781138792975.

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Although multilingualism and language contact have been widely researched in the past few decades, there seems to be an area in this vast repertoire of studies that has remained relatively untouched: code-switching in written discourse. This observation lies in the heart of the book edited by Mark Sebba, Shahrzad Mahootian and Carla Jonsson, who have compiled thirteen scholarly papers on this subject matter from a completely new methodological perspective. As Sebba remarks in his opening chapter, entitled *Researching and Theorising Multilingual Texts*, the majority of research on written code-switching has made use of methods that were created for studying spoken discourse, which poses several questions concerning their reliability in terms of analysing written texts. He emphasises that the difference between the two media calls for a methodological approach that also bears in mind some of the characteristic features of written discourse. He proposes three guidelines: firstly, viewing text in a broad semiotic framework; secondly, studying texts in a literacy framework, considering the social context (target audience, circumstances of production and reading process); and thirdly, taking the visual features of text (layout, design, font size/colour, punctuation) into account.

The principles proposed by Sebba are applied and further elaborated in the twelve papers that follow. These studies analyse code-switching in different historical periods in a wide range of text-types, including literary and non-literary sources, printed and online material, private correspondence (letters, SMS) and (semi-)public messages (forums, social media websites). The methods used for studying code-switching are founded on corpus analysis, ethnography, New Literacy Studies and discourse analysis.

The second and third papers draw on historical linguistics and focus on multilingual texts originating from the Middle Ages and the era between the 15th and the 19th century. In his work *Literacy, Multilingualism and Code-switching in Early English Written Texts*, Herbert Schendl observes code-switching in Old-English multilingual charters and Middle-English sermons. The third study, written by Arja Nurmi and Päivi Pahta, focuses on a specific text genre, writer/readership and period, all indicated in the title of the study, *Multilingual Practices in Women's English Correspondence 1400-1800*.

The fourth and eleventh chapters study literary texts as a source of code-switching. Cecilia Montes-Alcalá investigates the interplay of Spanish and English in three US-Latino novels in order to find out whether the language shifts serve similar purposes as spoken code-switching, that is, whether they involve socio-pragmatic purposes apart from having stylistic and aesthetic functions. Meanwhile, Carla Jonsson takes an ethnographic perspective by looking at code-switching in two multilingual Swedish novels in an attempt to identify and analyse local and global functions of language shift.

The sixth, seventh and twelfth chapters deal with code-switching practices in online texts. Samu Kyölä sets out to explore the potential research areas and methodology of studying online discussion forums, emphasising the multi-layered nature of forums, and providing useful guides to saving and storing data (and creating the corpus) for analysis. Carmen Lee and David Barton address the same topic by studying code-switching practices on Flickr, adding the visual dimension of analysis to the repertoire. Sirpa Leppänen investigates another dimension of online code-switching by observing fanfictions written by young Finnish web users.

The eighth, ninth and tenth chapters observe different media of written communication. In the tenth chapter, entitled *Repertoires and Resources: Accounting for Code-switching in the Media*, Shahrzad Mahootian explores some of the possible reasons behind code-switching in the written popular media. In the eighth chapter, *Analysing Multilingual Texting in Senegal*, Kristin Vold Lexander introduces her own model for studying multilingual SMS in an attempt to fill a gap in scholarly research, identifying four areas of analysis: the role of code-switching in maintaining relationships, identity, visual features of SMS, as well as orthography. The ninth chapter entitled *Vernacular Literacy Practices in Present-day Mali: Combining Ethnography and Textual Analysis to Understand Multilingual Texts* by Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye and Cécile Van den Avenne, observes code-switching in a context where literacy levels are relatively low and writers are low-skilled. The key idea, however, is that code-switching between the official French and the native Bamana is not related to the level of literacy, however is motivated by other factors.

Finally, the fifth and the thirteenth chapters place the two codes involved in the switching process at the centre of their studies. In the fifth chapter, Mark Sebba provides an analysis on switching practices in British Creole writing, which proves to be a challenging field of study owing to the lexical, phonological and grammatical overlaps between English and the Jamaican British Creole, as well as the inconsistencies in the orthography of the latter. The final chapter, entitled *Bilingualism Meets Digraphia* by Phillip Sebastian Angermeyer delves into the question of code-switching between two languages employing two different writing systems: English and Russian. As the author observes, the analysis of script provides an additional dimension of studying code-switching which is unique to the written discourse.

All in all, the studies in this book all live up to the goals set forth by Sebba in the opening chapter: each scholarly contribution approaches the issue of code-switching in written discourse from a fresh theoretical perspective, with methodological proposals and insights for future research in the field. The choice of organizing the studies based on method rather than thematic aspects allows for

variety and a more exciting reading experience, where analyses of novels, SMS, handwritten shopping lists and online forums follow each other. Such diversity of topical interests also contributes to a thorough investigation of all possible sources of multilingual written discourse, which enables a clearer understanding of the differences between spoken and written practices, therefore fostering the process of framing a distinct methodology of studying written code-switching.

Bernard De Meyer and Neil Ten Kortenaar (eds.), *The Changing Face of African Literature / Les nouveaux visages de la littérature africaine* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009).

xxii + 216 pp. ISBN 9789042025806.

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This bilingual book – French and English - is the fruitful outcome of a conference that successfully broke new grounds in the postcolonial linguistic emancipation of Africa, while simultaneously prioritizing post 1990s texts, specifically several fourth-generation African writers – the Nigerian Ben Okri, the Zimbabwean Yvonne Vera – in an era of migration and of construction of multiple affiliations. The African literary-critical legacy is brilliantly substantiated by this volume with its various explorations into performances of “interdiscursivity” enabling one to “account for the relations between African literature and the contexts of orality” (Ato Quayson, 1997).

After a Preface by Liz Gunner, the editors Bernard De Meyer and Neil Ten Kortenaar introduce the readers to the wide-ranging enterprises of CALS – the Centre for African Literary Studies. There follows thirteen essays on either the new paradigms in African literature or the specific themes in recent works by individual writers, the whole undertaking being rounded out by Notes on Contributors. The sense of relative “mutual isolation” is self-consciously registered and accounted for in terms of the separate trajectories in which various African literatures have developed, especially so in the case of literatures in English, French and Arabic – the largest ones in the African cultural space. The key essays selected for this volume give a measure of the “depth and nuances” of the current evolving lines in African fiction as well as astute and insightful scholarship.

The first Section “Changing Faces” is unified by scholarship concerns with contexts. In her “New Locations and Changing Paradigms in Contemporary African Literature”, Nana Wilson-Tagoe dwells on the new locations of African literature by first prioritizing the emergence of writing by women with their insights into matters such as nation, tradition and the form of literature itself; after having next diagnosed the crisis of the African state, as correlated to the (in)voluntary movements of people on a large scale within and beyond the continent, Wilson-Tagoe finally comes to outline some new themes in modern

Africa, the great scourges – disease and war. In “The Changing History of African Literature”, Stefan Helgesson puts forward an innovative rationale of literary history: the continuity of African literary tradition all along several generations testifies to its written – rather than oral – expression and mainstream, as performed on its own, and in a distinctively African way (rather than writing back to European modes of writing). In “Maigret en Afrique: Le genre policier dans le literature africaine contemporaine”, Karen Ferreira-Meyers explores the ways in which the European and the American-grounded literary paradigm of detective novels has been adapted to African needs in subversive metamorphoses, as evidenced with cases in the literary practice from the French Algeria, Angola and Botswana: Yasmina Khadra, Alexander McCall Smith and Pepetela. Ferreira-Meyers briefly and succinctly analyses their writings, mainly focusing on formalist elements, as well as on their topical thematic concerns with their critique of societies in which the African anti-heroes successfully perform.

The second section – “Changing Themes” – prioritizes thematic approaches to several African literary corpora, with arguments on the issue of the writer’s linguistic choice. In “Ce que ca veut dire que d’ecrire en sa proper langue: Quelques perspectives historiques de la litterature romanesque de langue Afrikaans”, Jaco Alant investigates the resourcefulness of the literature in Afrikaans – a tongue with a controversial history in the African space, a singular version of an authentically linguistic nationalism South of the Sahara. The self-empowerment of the women’s voices and the emergence of the young generations of writers have strong bearings on the dialectics of alterity/ identity in refreshing African literature. Desire Kabwe Wa Segatti contributes “Migritude: Nouveaux visages de la literature africaine au feminine”. By setting out from the concept of ‘migritude’ (Jacques Chevrier), Kabwe Wa Segatti highlights the prerequisite of tracing out its metamorphosis into “origin-returning”, with a difference – “demigritude” as illustrated in the discussion of Veronique Tadjo’s work. In “The Woman’s Shout: New Accents in Anglophone African Fiction”, Annie Gagiano pursues the hypostases of the topos of the woman’s cry(ing) in seven recent novels, from cultural spaces as various as Nigeria, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa. John Lubinda contributes “L’Honnête home comme martyr dans la literature africaine” and focuses on the political underpinnings of a literary figure – the honest man – who repeatedly and cyclically gets scapegoated. Lubinda discusses Henri Djombo’s *Le Mort Vivant*, in which a young man with an innocent past is kidnapped by the soldiers of Boniko.

The third section – “Diversity/Diversité” – includes essays on specific authors and texts, which at once evidence innovative strategies while maintaining a concern with their salient if not idiosyncratic modes of writing. In “Scheherazade’s Dilemma: An Exploration of Andre Brink’s Prose Oeuvre Published after 2000”, Godfrey Meintjes critically surveys the corpus of twelve novels published (1958-2005) by the South African writer, arguing about the ways in which they testify to Andre Brink’s apartheid resistance. In “Echanger dans un context global: La redécouverte du sense d’autrui dans Un fou noir au pays des blancs de Pie Tshibanda”, Emmanue Kayembe Kabemba also pursues the construction of identity in Pie Tshibanda’s novel *A Black Madman in the Land of the Whites*. The same concern with subversion of conventional binaries is also manifest in Bernard De Meyer “L’afropolitanisme en littérature: Le cas de

Bessora". Bessora's work as the epitome of new/young literature is astutely discussed and acknowledged as drawing on the legacy of tradition, as well as on Mariama Ba and Ken Bugul, so as to pursue some re-shapings of identity-alterity. Cheril Stobie focuses on "Discourses of Alterity in Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*", especially on bisexuality as the incentive for the interplay between identity-alterity, with effective artistic correlatives analysed in formalist terms. In "Incidences de la présence de l'animisme dans Le septième serment de Paulina Chiziane", Ludovic Heyraud analyses the Mozambican writer Paulina Chiziane's novel *The Seventh Oath* by singling out the omnipresence of worship and witchcraft rituals/practices. In "Dialogues of Violence: Wiliam Tell Meets La Haine in Yizo Yizo's Township", Muff Andersson turns from the literary to television discourse, especially the popular South African TV series *Yizo Yizo*; this is discussed in terms of how violence can and should be represented in the South African cultural space as extremist.

On reading this book, one cannot help sharing the editors' views about the ongoing "de-ghettoization" of Africanness, as brilliantly and cogently testified by the contributing essays that astutely argue about the distinctiveness and quality of its literature in all its wealth and variety. The book combines a macro-structural or broad scope approach of a synopsis of current trends in African literature with a micro-structural approach of analytical studies of individual writers and of themes across several texts. The large and the small get connected by recurrent concerns such as gender and sexuality, the nation-state and its break-down, AIDS, war and suffering. The strategic framework of this volume is comparative, bringing together literary texts in five languages from at least ten national literatures. Such a broad comparative framework has been demanded by most recent debates on the African literary practice but has seldom been delivered. At the same time, this book also manages to problematize the comparative method: showing common features but also salient, distinctive elements. By juxtaposing contemporary texts from several traditions, the editors manage to map out themes that prevail in African literatures.

Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

341 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-85540-2.

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Between the 1960s and 1980s quite a number of academic studies dedicated to Irish literature and more specifically to the Irish novel were published (J. C. Beckett, Stephen Brown, James Callahan, Seamus Deane, John Wilson Foster, Barry Sloan, as well as contributions by other European scholars of Irish Studies) and the leitmotif and justification of this new approach of respect for the Irish tradition was the revival or re-reading of the Irish classics and moderns. This new interest could be explained with political and socio-economic factors but the

international success of the Irish fiction of the period provides a much more reliable explanation. However, Irish Studies in the 1990s-2000s markedly address new aspects of the appeal of Irish literature. Derek Hand impressively crowns this trend. The study of the Irish novel includes popular fictions, a very positive trend.

Thus the “sensational” authored and anonymous novels of the early 17th century, Maria Edgeword of the 18th century or Maeve Binchy, J. P. Donleavy or even the early work of Edna O’Brian of our times must be considered in their authenticity, as the fictions of the consumers of the literature of their day. And again there are purely literary reasons for the inclusion of such authors – they do not only represent the contemporary taste, and the “unconsciousness” of the period, but often these authors break new grounds, experiment with new techniques and are instrumental in the development of the literary form.

The awareness that the “Irishness” of Irish literature is its most precious asset has allowed Derek Hand to consider the work of Gaelic, Anglo-Irish, Protestant, Catholic, immigrant and other Irish writers, with all their representations of Irishness. Hand gives credit to modern scholars of literature sharing the same views: James Acheson, Jacqueline Belanger, Joe Cleary, John Cronin, John Wilson Foster, Liam Harte, Michael Parker, Eamon Maher, Linden Peach, Kersti Tarien Powell, Barry Sloan, Gerry Smyth, Christine St Peter and many others. A special feature of Hand’s History of the Irish Novel is that it is one of those increasingly rare monographic studies, so time consuming but also allowing its author to build upon his/her concept. Hand presents in a balanced way the de-Anglicizing aim of Irish literature, but also promotes the more important understanding of Irishness as diversity and as a true cornerstone of the grandeur of the Irish literary tradition, of what may be called Irish identities. The History of the Irish Novel weaves cultural history into the literary discourse and in the discussion of the novel that is of paramount importance.

In fact, analyzing the genre and its origin, Derek Hand offers a viable proposition on the emergence of the Irish novel and while the English influence and some of the popular work can be described as Anglo-Irish, the Irish landscape, the Catholic strain, the Gaelic character shape the novel of the 17th century. One of the earliest authors is Richard Head and the list of the popular 18th century Irish novels includes the work of Oliver Goldsmith, Sarah Butler (and her influence on Swift); Laurence Sterne with his Irish ancestry and no Irish representations, Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s mother, Frances Sheridan, one of the important romancers of the age, Maria Edgeworth, “announcing the start of modern Irish history”, where Ireland is not just a context but the actual substance.

One of the few novelists of Romanticism, Charles Robert Maturin, whose Gothic fiction was highly valued by Balzac and Baudelaire, was very much Walter Scott’s equal and the creator of the historical novel recommended his novels to literary friends and acquaintances. Unfortunately, as is the case with Scott himself, the interest in Maturin has declined with the years. Of the 19th century Irish novelists George Moore is the most significant and he somehow eclipses other authors, including a number of women novelists. Hand discusses the work of Oscar Wilde and does not the least underestimate Bram Stoker, writing at the turn of the century. James Joyce is of course always an inspiration to be analyzed

from different perspectives – in the History this is achieved from the perspective of the Irishness of his work. Whereas traditionally parallels are drawn with Virginia Woolf, it seems much more productive to focus on Elizabeth Bowen. Bowen's novels deserve greater critical acclaim and popularity among the readers and Derek Hand does his best to inspire critics and readers. Samuel Beckett and later Iris Murdoch are sources of national pride but unlike Joyce, most of their work makes them international novelists.

Significant socio-political events – beginning with the Great Famine, the Irish Civil War, the policy of Ireland during World War II, do not seem to have found adequate representation by contemporary authors, and in this sense post World War II Irish novelists had to reinvent the modern novel – thus Brendan Behan, John Banville, Bernard MacLaverty added to the world the literary phenomenon, the Irish short story. The novels of J. P. Donleavy, Edna O'Brien, Maeve Binchy, so different, so unique are examples of the broadening scope of the reinvented novel. In the last part of Hand's History, in many ways the most interesting, he presents some of the new fiction – of the Celtic Tiger and post-Celtic Tiger period, and the coexistence of the two Irish literatures (one is tempted to consider the past and future of what was Soviet and Yugoslav literature and speculate). Many of them are little known or unknown and their introduction is another merit of the History.

Today we have to consider the emergence and shaping of what may be termed global literature – where language, culture, origin need to be judged differently although the final say again is that of the consumer. In the manner of Wilde, Derek Hand notes that "the Irish novel has a future because it possesses a past".

Hobby Elaine. *The Birth of Mankind: Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

xxxix + 310 pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-3818-6.

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This Tudor book has not been published for over 350 years, but between 1540 and 1654 it was a most effective bestseller. Indeed, along with Richard Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, or Jacques Ferrand's A Treatise on Love Sickness, The Birth of Mankind influenced the literary work of the period. Today the book shows the cultural situation of the past, complementing the picture created by the drama and prose fiction of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, introducing fact to the emotional setting. Elaine Hobby is an experienced textual editor and scholar whose field of expertise is early modern studies and the publication of The Birth of Mankind seems a fitting achievement.

The task of textual editing is just as complicated and rewarding as the creation of the original English text. The original is indeed German, published under the title The Rose Garden (Der Schwangerfrauen und hebammen Rosengarten, or

Rose Garden for Pregnant Women and Midwives) by Eucharius Rößlin, an apothecary from Freiburg who printed it in 1513 in Strasbourg. The English history of the book began in 1540 and the title changed to *The Birth of Mankind*. The first edition had been translated from Latin into English, which in its turn was a translation of Rößlin's German original.

Elaine Hobby meticulously explains the book's prehistory in her detailed critical Introduction, also explaining the English cultural situation during the Tudor period and after it. In addition to the changed title, the book suffered a change of contents and was targeted at a different general reader, rather than the professionals, which seemed to have been the intention of the German author. This in turn feeds Hobby with independent data on the needs of the English reading audience: scope, numbers etc. The history of the book illustrates the changing purpose and concept of the art of translation. The singularity of the book seems to reflect the demand for knowledge throughout Europe, signalling perhaps the emergence of a female audience. The Latin translation in its turn had introduced changes. The English translator freely added material which could be one explanation of the popular commercial success. Today this manipulation of the text would be described as a legitimate method of adaptation in translation.

The original text provides an opportunity of understanding how post-medieval science draws on classic scholars such as Galen, Avicenna and Hippocrates in the process of the creation of a new European science. It can be only speculated how (obviously because of its foreign popularity) and why (perhaps resulting from an early modern English 'awakening') the translation was initiated, because there is no evidence that the translator Richard Jonas had any medical education (indeed, there is textual evidence to the contrary). In 1545 there was a change of translators and that edition, attributed to Thomas Raynalde, a physician, became the standard one (this is the edition Hobby edits), although it, too, underwent amendments of one kind or another – an important one is the translation of the anatomical tables attributed to Nicholas Udall, the famous author of *Ralph Roister Doister*. Raynalde added his own scholarly comments and analysis to texts. The immediate influence of *The Birth of Mankind* on literature is the complex treatment and critical attitude of/towards the dominant theory of the humours, as well as all reference to other common medical beliefs of the age.

Elaine Hobby has carried out a serious research on the authorship of the translation(s) – with the goal of closer interpretation of the text, as well as of understanding the logic of Tudor science and its application in Tudor and Elizabethan England to the Jacobean, the Caroline and Interregnum period. In conclusion, what to an uninformed reader may have seemed as only a necessary, yet somewhat unusual and peculiar publication, is in fact an edition of rare scholarly importance, provoking reflections and dispute on a variety of topics: cultural history, theory of translation, British culture in the European context, science and knowledge of special and popular appeal and application; history and purposes of text editing (applicable also to the literary texts of the period) and so on. This is a most gripping and excellent edition, completing and complementing the forgotten literary cultural past.

Brigitte Wallinger-Schorn, *"So There It Is:" An Exploration of Cultural Hybridity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011).

Viii + 316 pp. ISBN 9789042034143.

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Poetry, Kimiko Hahn notes with delight, is defined in the Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms as “a species of magic.” The poet’s charming discussion of this phrase is just one among the many nuggets of information contained in Brigitte Wallinger-Schorn’s survey of contemporary Asian American poetry. Although the book is organised around hybridities of language, narrative, and form, its chief attraction lies in the wealth of information it delivers about the lives, aesthetics, thematic concerns, and politics of particular Asian American poets, coupled with interesting interpretations of individual poems. I have some reservations about the theoretical framework, but there is no doubt the book is a valuable study of Asian American literature. Any lover of poetry will be interested in the works of writers who can draw extensively on both Asian and Western traditions. The chapter on “formal hybridity” contains fascinating discussions of forms perhaps little known to Western scholars. There is the zuihitsu, consisting of “fragments that convey a sense of disorder but at the same time are arranged around a unifying theme” (183), the ghazal whose strict form challenges the poet’s precision and invention, or the Chinese quatrain the jueju. Wallinger-Schorn explores how Asian American poets such as Justin Chin, Agha Shahid Ali, and Marilyn Chin, adapt these forms to English and the poetic fusion with Western forms like the sonnet, the ode, and the elegy provides a vital source of inspiration.

Organising analyses into distinct chapters according to form, narrative, and language often prevents an integrated approach to any one poem. The most in-depth discussion of individual works comes in the chapter on “narrative hybridity”, probably because the focus on content allows a sense of the whole poem. “Narrative hybridity” focuses on particular themes in Asian American poetry; unsurprisingly, issues of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality are prominent, particularly where they intertwine with Orientalist stereotypes. Certain poems offer unexpected surprises: Kimiko Hahn’s “Komachi to Shosho on the Ninety-ninth Night,” for example, features a female speaker instructing her lover on her desires, their bodies becoming intertwined in the text through a rhythmic parallelism. While this may seem just an elegant subversion of stereotypes about submissive Asian female sexuality, Wallinger-Schorn explains that the title refers to the story of a woman who makes her prospective lover wait outside for one hundred days until he dies on the final night, thus casting the poem in a different light. The analyses of this and other poems by authors like Cathy Song, Timothy Liu, and Mei-mei Berssenbrugge showcase their attractions and offer thought-provoking insights.

These final two chapters are the book’s strongest. The introduction provides necessary background information on Asian America Studies. This is followed by the main theory chapter, which is an uncritical survey of contemporary thinking

on cultural hybridity. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concepts of Third Space and hybridisation, the framework promises a lot in terms of complexity, diversity, and heterogeneity but in practice lapses into ideological binaries. Any work labelled "hybrid" is automatically associated with progressive politics, while "monocultural" becomes a synonym of "white" and is identified with the extreme wing of the Tea Party. Curiously, the author is willing to champion any kind of diversity other than political – 39% of Asian Americans voted Republican in the 2008 election, but one would never guess that from the discussion of Asian American politics. "Hybridity" thus becomes in practice a vehicle for a progressive/conservative binary, which is then mapped onto imaginary constructions of ethnic/white communities respectively, leading to sentences like: "the merging of languages and cultures... can challenge the 'Moloch' of nationalist, monolingual America" (75).

Fortunately, Wallinger-Schorn's detailed individual approach avoids the worst excesses of the framework and reveals genuine diversity of views, at least in relation to Asian American poets. Regarding use of English, for example, we learn that Myung Mi Kim is concerned with linguistic oppression and the ideology of monolingualism (109), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni wishes her poetry to reach out to the white community (102), Nick Carbo introduces Tagalog into his poems to reverse linguistic colonisation in the Philippines (100), and Amy Ling feels English is a tool, no better or worse than the wielder (94). Mainstream American culture, in contrast, is routinely homogenised as monolingual, monocultural, monolithic, and hostile to foreign languages and cultures, which will surprise anyone familiar with 20th century American poetry. How would the fascist Ezra Pound respond to poetic intrusions from Asia? The framework would suggest a reactionary response; actually, he could barely contain his excitement and produced stunning translations (*Cathay*), innovative haikus, and the ideogrammic technique, all the while denouncing Western traditions. The theory's simplistic binaries seem incapable of dealing with such fascinating contradictions.

Some information prompts interesting questions for further research. We learn that many Asian American poets have an MFA and work in University English departments. This raises questions about the position of the university as both educator and patron. Does this subtly encourage poets to focus on themes the academy favours, such as ethnic identity, gender, sexuality, and now hybridity? Is there a recognisable difference between poetry produced inside the academy and that emerging from other spheres? These questions are not raised, but the centrality of the university in Asian American poetry demands careful study.

Overall, the book provides plenty of interesting information and much food for thought. The appendix includes interviews with Kimiko Hahn and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, which will be of interest to anyone researching those poets. I remain unconvinced by the theoretical framework, but *So There It Is* is a valuable guide to contemporary Asian American poetry and should be essential reading for anyone interested in the topic.

Sonia Baelo-Allué, *Bret Easton Ellis's Controversial Fiction: Writing Between High and Low Culture* (London: Continuum, 2011).
 240 pp. ISBN 978-1441107916.

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Bret Easton Ellis did not move easily into the quasi-canonic position he now seems to enjoy. His works were often regarded as fictions of superficiality, fictions that were as ephemeral as the fashions, brand names, and lifestyles they portrayed. In particular, his most notorious book, *American Psycho*, led to moralistically inspired criticisms from both the Left and the Right, and the banning of the book in some quarters. In Germany, the book was banned in 1995 because particular passages of the book were perceived to be too dangerous for young people to read. This kind of decontextualized bureaucratic reading, however, points to features of the text that deserve closer study.

Sonia Baelo-Allué situates Ellis's fictions in the field between "the high" and "the low." She makes it clear that Ellis's works deserve a close reading and serious attention, despite the celebrity status of their author. The mere fact that Ellis managed to produce commercially successful fictions by marketing his own personality does not serve Baelo-Allué as an exhibit for the kind of cultural criticism associated with the likes of Adorno who bemoans the alleged lightweight character of a literature that seems to strengthen the "capitalist structures" of our world (34). In contrast, Ellis's sophisticated appropriation of elements of postmodernism and so-called minimalism can be seen in a more positive vein as an aesthetics of reduction. For Baelo-Allué, the category or label that fits Ellis most is blank fiction, a kind of fiction connected to the consumer culture of the 1980s and 1990s, a kind of fiction, moreover, which appears to be morally ambiguous about the consumer society and its values. Blank fiction is characterized above all by an "atonal blank prose where no feelings are portrayed" and narrators appear to be emotionally uninvolved.

The main sections of her book focus on the three most important or representative books by Ellis, namely *Less Than Zero* (1985), *American Psycho* (1991) and *Glamorama* (1998), whereas the novel *The Rules of Attraction* and the short story collection *The Informers*, though not ignored, are not subjected to extensive analysis. The last section of this study considers the two most recent books, *Lunar Park* (2005) and *Imperial Bedrooms* (2010). She mostly observes the same procedure in all chapters, first very usefully outlining the reception of each book, then discussing the uses to which mass culture, pop culture, and celebrity culture are put in the respective novels, and finally trying to take up a discussion of genre by linking it to issues of aesthetics—of the blank, coming-of-age novel, of serial killing, of the impossible conspiracy thriller.

Baelo-Allué rightly points out that *Less Than Zero*'s depiction of family life in the 1980s presents a clear illustration of the radical culture critique in Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*; similarly, Bloom's criticism of rock music and its effect on the soul seem to be vindicated by Ellis's literary presentation of the flat-souled nihilism of wealthy Los Angeles youths (cf. 66-67).

But any possible criticism of the behaviour and attitudes presented in *Less Than Zero* has to come from the outside, as it were, as there is no narrative instance that explicitly qualifies the narrator's description – although one will surely read the novel differently with its sequel, *Imperial Bedrooms*, in mind.

Every study of Ellis has to confront *American Psycho*, the most iconic novel of serial killing. It was its presentation of sex, torture and murder that triggered denunciations of the book as “totally hateful – in effect, a how-to manual on the torture and dismemberment of women” (John Leo), or of Ellis himself as a “confused, sick young man” (the feminist Tammy Bruce), but also praise from another feminist writer like Fay Weldon (“Ellis is a very, very good writer”) (1). Baelo-Allué manages to approach this paradigmatically controversial book in an admirably even-handed way. *American Psycho*'s use of sex and violence, she convincingly argues, were disturbing to literary critics precisely because Ellis's book came from a writer who was perceived to be serious or belonging to the realm of high culture. By combining both high and low cultural references and genre specifics, Ellis deliberately defied the genre expectations of his critics who were often unable to place the book in its proper context; in contrast to generic serial killer thrillers, *American Psycho* refuses to offer its readers the comfort of clues, of patterns, of a strong detective and of the arrest of the criminal (128). Later novels such as *Glamorama* are sophisticated deconstructions of the thriller; compared to Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, a thriller that aims at and provides closure and a full explanation, *Glamorama* offers a logic that cannot be grounded in anything beyond unreliability and suspicion. It therefore functions as a highly sophisticated attempt to both use and problematize certain genre conventions, thereby exemplifying quite a number of meta-fictional devices.

As the study under review convincingly demonstrates, the works of Bret Easton Ellis offer the literary scholar a host of things to study and reflect on. Issues of social and cultural criticism are linked to those of genre definition and narrative modes; intermediality is linked to the important question of how the public persona of an author (partly the result of commercial considerations) influences literary interpretations. The non-literary bias in the reception of Ellis's novels hardly comes as a surprise. But it can serve as a starting-point for a more extended reflection on the 'biographical fallacy' that is particularly tempting in the case of a book such as *Glamorama* that both uses and criticizes the cult of personality/celebrity in the world of fashion. In fact, Ellis demonstrates the possibility of the Warholian attitude. that one can be a participant observer as a writer: “You can part of a scene and also see it for what it is,” he notes (138). In conclusion one can say that the present book offers a rewarding evaluation of Ellis's fiction that manages to do very well what it sets out to do, namely to vindicate Ellis's stature as an American writer whose works hold up surprisingly well on re-reading.

Robert Sheppard, *When Bad Times Made for Good Poetry: Episodes in the History of the Poetics of Innovation* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2011).
226 pp. ISBN 978-1-84861-136-8.

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Through wide-ranging sources and erudite literary analysis, Sheppard has produced a significant project of documentation. He begins his history of the poetics of innovation by separating the book into twelve sections. Section 1 addresses the Poets' Society Manifesto, while Sections 2 to 7 examine the poetry of Allen Fisher, John Hall, Tom Raworth, Iain Sinclair, Ken Edwards and Bob Cobbing. Section 8, "Beyond Anxiety: Legacy or Miscegenation," serves as an interlude to shift the discussion back onto the poetry of Tom Raworth, Allen Fisher and Iain Sinclair respectively in sections 9, 11, and 12. Section 10 discusses the poetry of Maggie O'Sullivan.

In general, Sheppard has adopted an episodic style to relate most of the events depicted in his book which, combined with the wealth of personal details thanks to his active involvement with poetry, creates at times a few disconnected and rough edges. The discussion on the poetry of John Hall (Section 3), Ken Edwards (Section 6), Bob Cobbing (Section 7) and Maggie O'Sullivan (Section 10), for example, contrasts, both in depth and scope, with the relatively fuller examination of the poetry of Fisher, Raworth and Sinclair. In my view, although this condensed episodic approach is generally informative, the author has only partially established relevant connections from one poet to the other between individual sections and from there to other scholarly research in the field. This is a problem which comes up in the introduction as well, although, fundamentally, Sheppard's approach is convincing and well-informed. In the epilogue, "What I Regret about the Poetry Scene at the Moment," Sheppard articulates his personal views on the situation of contemporary poetry. In Section 1, Sheppard begins by situating in a brief summary the aesthetic taxonomy articulated in a formal Manifesto issued by the Poets' Society in 1976. This document, a good introduction to the prevailing artistic atmosphere, is a celebration of a new poetic vision. It situates the "creative imagination" of the individual, particularly in its first four points drafted mainly by Jeff Nuttall, as the "source of new forms, new ideas, and new vocabulary, by which language must be perpetually revitalized" (19). From there, for the Poets' Society, there is only a small step to come to what should account for good poetry: poetry must always remain new and ever astonishing. Innovation, whether in content or structure, should always be the measuring standard for good poetry.

A resilient "linguistically innovative" subtext lies inside Allen Fisher's poetry - without, however, pinning it down to flat experimentation, either with structure, content, or both. It seems, on the contrary, that to capture the most nuanced qualities of "linguistic innovation," the poet must combine Pound's ideogrammic method of "connecting and juxtaposing materials" with Olson's "field of patterned energies, with nodes, or notes, of facts disposed upon the page in a primarily spatial disposition" (32). To juxtapose these two techniques propels both the poet and the reader to a new level of awareness to language and poetical imagery; it

sets that very special tone of Fisher's poetry, prompting the latter to opt for "procedural," indeed "processual" poetics.

Grafted onto the Pound-Olsonian tradition, Fisher's *The Apocalyptic Sonnets* (1979) mediates between *Place* (1971 - 1980) and *Gravity as Consequence of Shape* (1982 - 2005), an argument which Sheppard makes persuasively in Section 2. Fisher's technique, which sets the tone of his poetical universe, creates that kind of poetical "linguistic innovation" that vibrates at the very core of his opus. In a more elaborated version this time in *Gravity as Consequence of Shape* (Section 11), his poetry asserts its own autonomy by contemplating on fracture and fragmentation, instead of any form of "totality."

Tom Raworth's poem, "West Wind," is an accusation of the underlying "socio-historical" substrate, which Sheppard examines in Section 4, entitled "Whose Lives does the Government Affect." It presents a politically authenticated Britain, where political message and social context are forcefully counter posed; at the end, however, Sheppard argues, the political images it seeks to evoke, combined together with its freedom of syntax and versification thwart the poem's centeredness, "ensuring that neither the images nor the atmosphere remain static" (79).

These major idiosyncratic elements of Raworth's poetry can also be traced in his more sophisticated work entitled *Eternal Sections* (Section 9). Essentially, having produced a fascinating and profound work in which the attentive reader discerns linguistic mastery and technique, Raworth has consistently demonstrated that his poetry is open and verges by itself towards the unfinished. His poetry gains, as a matter of fact, by that, because to opt for openness means to intensify reality and to reach for poetics by "ruptur[ing] discourses" on either textual or conceptual level or occasionally on both. Such a poetical vision recuperates in time for loss of linearity. Sheppard's analysis is further developed by examining the poetry of Iain Sinclair in Sections 5 and 12. Having gained more extensive formal recognition and print circulation, Iain Sinclair posits in *Autistic Poses* (1985) and, more or less throughout his work, the vibrant concept of "cultural poetics." Sinclair begins from the premise that "the official map of the culture at any time would always fail to include vital features," so rather than lamenting the inimical incapacity of the cultural canon to be all-inclusive, the poet/artist must make it his personal responsibility, as Sheppard puts it, to "walk out into the culture (literally in Sinclair's case) and gather what the walking reveals" (203). From here, Sinclair's aesthetics de-sublimes mainstream culture and its canonical import.

Sheppard is able to pull together the strings of each section by contextualizing his discussion inside that kind of poetics which he defines as "speculative writerly discourse." Poetics, he argues, should be approached as the "product of the writers' reflections upon writing, and upon their acts of writing, gathering from the past and from others, and casting into the future, speculatively and conjecturally, provocatively on occasions" (15). Sheppard's position here ensures that dimension of coherence that is so necessary to bring together such complex and dynamic poetical oeuvres as those discussed throughout the pages of this study. In this sense, this book accomplishes in full its mission to document and bring to light a significant, yet understudied, period in British poetry and poetics.

A corresponding list of cited works completes each section and there is an index at the end of the book.

Julian Barnes, ed. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. (London and New York: Continuum, 2011).

192 pp. ISBN 978-1441152220.

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Julian Barnes is an edited collection of ten essays (one of them shorter and entitled Afterword), with an extensive and usefully sorted primary and secondary bibliography. The editors are Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs; Childs also contributes an essay. Childs' Chapter 8, "Matters of Life and Death" focuses on the death-centred short stories of Julian Barnes collected in *The Lemon Table* (2004) read alongside the novelist's thanatological musings, *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), providing an interesting insight into the parallels between fictional and autobiographical ways of expressing similar thoughts.

The volume consists of contributions not only by established literary scholars, but also by people who are able to provide an interesting, alternative point of view. The latter category includes Dimitrina Kondeva, the Bulgarian publisher of *The Porcupine* (Barnes' only book to be first published in a language other than English) who provides an epistolary chapter illustrating how the 1992 novel (and the independent publishing market in Bulgaria) was formed. Particularly intriguing from today's internet-pervaded point of view are Barnes' questions regarding the trial of Todor Zhivkov, but in fact each letter (as well as the commentary provided by Kondeva) illustrates interesting facets of *The Porcupine* and its creation and reception in the country which served as the point of reference for the novel ("Wouldn't it be wonderful publicity if Zhikov sued for libel?" asks Barnes in a letter from June 1992.).

Another interesting perspective is provided by setting contrasting viewpoints side by side. Hence in Chapter 9 Christine Berberich analyses *Arthur & George*, a novel set in Edwardian times, as an example of the new approach to the historical novel. She describes it as one in which "[f]act and fiction converge and intermingle in a way that makes it difficult, or maybe even irrelevant, for the reader to discern the dividing line" (122-3). The "Author's Note" which "seems to reinforce the research element of the novel at the expense of the fictional" (122) is rightly pointed out, as a similar approach is visible in an increasing number of contemporary historical novels. Also mentioned is the illustration depicting the early twentieth century invitation to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's second wedding. The reproduction is presented as an example of strengthening the sense of unity between history and story (121-2). There is a lengthy description of the dress of Doyle's second wife from one of the few passages in the novel which provides detailed descriptions of clothes. "This is exactly the kind of (historical) information contemporaries of Sir Arthur would have been regaled with in their

daily papers the day after the wedding” notes Berberich, but goes on to point out that, “not all of this information might have been available at the time: would contemporary newspapers really have printed details about the fabric of Jean’s underdress?”

The next and final chapter is the Afterword (although it is in fact a half-chapter, shorter than the others and discussing a specific aspect of Barnes’ work rather than summing up the collection) written by Andrew Lycett, the critic and biographer who was writing a biography of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at the same time that Julian Barnes was writing *Arthur & George*. He points out some elements of Doyle’s life which Barnes did not include in the novel (such as Doyle’s weekend at a hotel with Jean Leckie while he was still married, accompanied by his mother) and those which Barnes modified within his artistic license (making Doyle address his mother as the Mum rather than Mum). The descriptions of the wedding dress on the other hand are said to “indeed echo reports of . . . newspapers, even down to details of the underdress” (132). Lycett also refers to the preceding chapter and the mention of the wedding invitation reproduction, which turns out to be “a computer-generated mock-up of this document – nearly the same . . . but in fact tellingly different” (133).

As the 2011 Booker Prize has shown, Julian Barnes is still an active and engaging writer and will doubtless inspire further comprehensive publications. This collection of essays edited by Peter Childs and Sebastian Groes came out too early to include the novel for which Barnes was awarded the Booker: *The Sense of an Ending*. Nevertheless, Continuum’s *Julian Barnes* provides for the most part an interesting and multifaceted overview of nearly all his remaining fiction up to and including *Pulse* (2011). The book should be particularly useful for students who will appreciate the chapter summaries and subsection titles which along with the index significantly facilitate finding the necessary information.

Selected Letters of William Empson, ed. John Haffenden (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2009).

800 pp. £78.00 (hardcover); £34.49 (paperback). ISBN 9780199539864.

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Since his death in 1984, William Empson has had an important afterlife – vital, we might say. This is largely thanks to the admirable work of his biographer and chief editor, John Haffenden, who has not only edited the posthumous collections of Empson’s work, *Argufying* and *The Strengths of Shakespeare’s Shrew*, but has also written a colossal two-volume biography of his subject. Now, we have the letters, selected by Haffenden for their relevance to Empson’s role as literary critic.

One of the most useful and illuminating functions performed by a volume of any writer’s letters – even a selected letters collection – is the dispelling of myths.

The notion which could readily be arrived at, if one were to read Empson's major works of criticism, from *Seven Types* to the posthumous *Using Biography*, is that Empson went from microscopic close reader of ambiguity to scourge of Christian literary critics and strident champion of intentionalism. This volume shows that, whilst Empson's interests changed – developed, we might say, or even deepened – from an interest in lexical ambiguity to vaster concerns over religion and culture, he never lost his eagle-eyed enthusiasm for the minutiae of language. Indeed, this volume brings into focus precisely what made Empson so valuable as a critic: he saw, perhaps more clearly than any of his contemporaries, how closely the act of microscopic reading is interlinked with the bigger picture. Sometimes important insights into society really do turn upon something as small as the pronunciation of a name. Empson's correspondence with Joyce's biographer Richard Ellmann is a good example of this. Empson wondered how Joyce pronounced Dedalus in Stephen Dedalus' name. "It turns out that my colleagues in America and Canada [...] pronounce the first syllable as "Dead" not as "Deed". At first I thought that they were all disciples of Hugh Kenner, who made large deductions from this supposed change in the sound of the name, but some rejected this idea quite indignantly" (603). (The conclusion reached by both is that Joyce probably pronounced it as Deed.) Elsewhere, he canvassed Shakespeare scholars over the pronunciation of "bastard", given the fact that King Lear plays the word off "base" (449-55). Empson's later books, namely *Milton's God* and *Using Biography*, suggest a development of his thought which allowed little room for close textual analysis. But such moments in his letters demonstrate that he never lost his interest in these issues. It should be pointed out that Haffenden himself displays a keen eye for accuracy down to the minutest detail, and he has done a masterly job of editing these letters. There are only a few minor typographical errors, such as on page 569, where we find "Hebribes" (for Hebrides in Boswell's book). If anything, they stand out precisely because they are the only slips in this vast and impressively compiled edition.

The overall impression, then, is one which we could already have garnered from Empson's published criticism, but which we find brought into clearer focus: that he cared passionately about the truth above all else, and would defend it vociferously, sometimes boisterously, and sometimes drunkenly. Empson was always an original and unconventional figure and never a starched-shirt of an academic, so it would be inaccurate to say that these letters give us a chance to see him "off-duty". In one sense, he was never off-duty, in that he was always thinking about literature, always engaging in "argufying" (which in these letters often feels less like a dialectic and more a sort of bar-room dingdong), and always seeking out others upon whom he could test his ideas. Occasionally, this can lead to some pugnacious language. Other reviewers of this volume have called Empson out as being uncivil to some of his correspondents, and indeed he can be short with those who seek to defend the Crucifixion or who, to Empson's mind, misrepresent what an author such as Milton or Marvell meant in a particular poem. But such a criticism of Empson is liable to miss the quality which made him precisely who he was: provocative. We cannot have the provocation without the belligerence. He even fell out with those critics he most admired –including Christopher Ricks, one of his closest friends in later life, with whom he engages in a series of strongly worded missives over a review of Jonathan Raban's *The Society of the Poem*

which Ricks had written for *The Listener*. “Your answer makes me afraid that something bad is happening to you” (520), Empson wrote to Ricks after a more public disagreement over the matter. Ricks’s reply shows the depth of the quarrel: “When I started to write this, I’d thought I’d be able to be more amiable than this. But I couldn’t muster the necessary false candour, so this will have to stand” (522). Reading such letters, we may find it surprising the friendship ever survived such a heated and personal spat.

It is in his original and suggestive readings of literature that Empson shows his true genius. Allied to this is his gift for the right phrase, which is gloriously colloquial, frequently verging on the outright funny. Of *Macbeth*, he remarked in a letter to *The Times* in 1966: “I think the play must be regarded as a Just-So Story, like ‘How the Elephant Got its Trunk’: the Scots are shown discovering that their kingship arrangements produce tribal wars, so they accept the more civilized hereditary principle, and there are the Stuarts right at the start” (420-1). What we get here are micro-theses, little interpretations which are sometimes followed up and defended, sometimes made as casual comments, but which nearly always show Empson in his favourite role as agent provocateur, making us rethink what we know (or think we know) about a work of literature. They are miniature examples of the larger reassessments found in his books: the argument of *Milton’s God*, for instance, which is defended repeatedly in these letters, or his edition of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, posthumously published, which put forward the view that Mephistopheles was an impostor.

Haffenden has proved himself as Empson’s worthy editor and biographer. Some reviewers thought a two-volume biography of Empson too long; there can be no such charge here, as the 700 pages of correspondence collected together in this volume give a full and enlightening picture of one of the most important literary critics of the last century. Some recent critics have pondered the level of Empson’s contemporary relevance to English studies. The answer, in one sense, is simple: Empson showed that literary criticism needs its *enfants terribles* (to borrow Terry Eagleton’s sobriquet for Empson), who attack our commonly held notions head-on, in an inimitable style, sometimes at the cost of civil manners, but always for a nobler end. Nobody has come close to replacing Empson in this role. “Some of the recent reviews of my work have wondered why I am always so facetious, making it impossible to take what I say seriously”, he wrote to one correspondent in 1979; “this author is probably a tragic clown, they say, staving off lunacy” (647). In reality the lunacy Empson was staving off was perhaps, after all, other people’s folly.

Laurence Raw, *Exploring Turkish Cultures: Essays, Interviews and Reviews* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).
x + 401 pp. ISBN 978-1-4438-2639-6.

Sebnem Toplu
Ege University, Turkey

Laurence Raw lectures in Başkent University in Ankara, Turkey and has published various articles on Turkish film and Turkish theatre productions. His other books are on studies of film adaptations of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James and on theatre criticism. Raw has been living in Turkey for decades and has succeeded in composing a ground-breaking book offering multifarious new insights into the Turkish education system, present and past cultural complexity and political agendas, accompanied by highly gripping interviews done with Turkish cultural celebrities, besides extended analyses of landmark theatre and film productions.

As Raw discloses in his introduction, the book is not only a collection of his writings, but has a conceptual framework as well. As the title suggests, the book explores different versions of Turkishness, through a series of essays, reviews and interviews, covering different ideas and values over the years since the Republic. Raw claims that his aim has not been writing a “comprehensive” analysis on Turkish culture, nor does he analyse in great depth issues of politics, culture and identity since such books have already been covered in numerous books both in Turkish and English (Introduction 2). Hence, what makes the book different or interesting than any written on the topic so far? He states that his aim has been to understand “how the present has been influenced by the past and vice versa” (2), in other words, how much of the Ottoman values and belief systems are still retained in Turkey up to 2011. I believe a brief analysis of the “Ottomans” could also have been helpful. However, it may have been beyond Raw’s scope, since he fulfils his claim by exploring intriguing topics such as the translation of western classics into Turkish, handling the translation strategies from an ideological point of view, or the curious topics like “Village Institutes”; the schools that had creative approaches to learning, closed down by the government decades ago for political, ideological reasons. Yet, such diverse topics engage with the cultural policy of the young Republic established in 1923. Stemming from these subjects, Raw’s book discloses old and new versions of Turkish culture - the new version, for example, shown in education, film and television productions supported by the successive ministries. In terms of the pedagogy of teaching English language and literature in university departments, Raw conveys his own classroom experiments in teaching foreign literature through the unique empathies of the students towards fictional situations and/or fictional characters. Another interesting perspective in his book is Raw’s analysis of the museums, comparing the Istanbul Military Museum and the Sofia Museum of National History. Raw’s essays also include a subtitle called “Postcards from Istanbul” where authors such as Elif Şafak, Moris Farhi and Maureen Freely and academics like Mary Beard shed light on Istanbul and its contradictions. The first chapter ends with a highlight; an engaging interview with the now-deceased Talat Halman (a diplomat, politician, professor,

critic, poet, newspaper columnist, business person and translator) revealing his perspectives on various topics.

However absorbing, challenging and diverse the rest of the book is, I have been more fascinated by the second and third parts of the book, namely, the chapters on theatre and film. Offering very interesting evidence on the translations of Shakespeare, Exploring Turkish Cultures comprises highly appealing essays and interviews with the eminent actress Yıldız Kenter and actor Genco Erkal, besides experimental plays or the political significance of performing Death of a Salesman in the Turkish context, finishing that second chapter reflecting on Nesrin Kazankaya's challenging views through an interview with her.

The last chapter displays a highly gripping and valuable analysis and documentation of Turkish film productions, starting with the political significance of Lawrence of Arabia, going on with the landmark figure Ayhan İşık and of course the highly popular and respected film star Türkan Şoray, analysed through the succession of her films and including an absorbing interview. The book is rounded up with the most recent development in Turkish films, and new generation directors such as Derviş Zaim and Tolga Örnek.

With its wide scope of analyses, Exploring Turkish Cultures: Essays, Interviews and Reviews is a highly absorbing book as a whole and I believe it is highly valuable for anyone interested in cultural diversity in theatre and film.

Interview

“I don’t think the world was ever disenchanted.
It still is enchanted.”

Excerpts from an Interview with Philip Pullman (Part 2¹)

Zsuzsanna Tóth
University of Szeged, Hungary



The interviewee: Philip Pullman (1946-) is a British writer of children’s and young adult literature. His best-known work is a fantasy fiction based on Judeo-Christian narratives; it is entitled *His Dark Materials*, consisting of *Northern Lights* [*The Golden Compass* in the USA] (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). In trans-textual relation with English canonical works of literature, among others by John Milton and William Blake, *His Dark Materials* stands out as an instructive coming-of-age story and a bold criticism of religious fundamentalism. Consequently, these novels have been honoured by several literary prizes, such as the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award; have caused indignation in particular Christian communities in the USA and the UK; and have aroused the interest of scholars of the humanities, especially litterateurs.

The interviewer: Zsuzsanna Tóth is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Szeged, in Hungary. In recent years she has paid attention to the representations of the religious experience of completeness without the presence of the Judeo-Christian God in *His Dark Materials*. She is currently working on her PhD dissertation, a comprehensive analysis of the way Pullman’s fiction is related to a contemporary social process, the so-called ‘re-enchantment’ (the increasing popularity of alternative forms of religiosity because of the increasing unpopularity of Christian institutions) in Anglophone societies. The majority of her pre-arranged questions to Philip Pullman are connected to this academic research.

The interview: After an exchange of a few emails since July 2014, the interview was finally held on 1st June 2015, in a rainy Monday afternoon. On Pullman’s kind suggestion, the conversation took place in The Eagle & Child Pub (the venue of the Inklings, an Oxford writers’ group, including J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, from 1930s to 1960s), in Oxford, United Kingdom.

Key words: Self-representation, criticism of organized religion, superstition, inspiration, classification of literature, school of morals, criticism of literature, freedom of speech, *His Dark Materials* trilogy

¹ The first part of this interview was published in the *ESSE Messenger*, 25-1 Summer 2016.

T: As a writer of children's and adolescents' literature, have you ever sensed a kind of division between high literature and popular literature?

P: There is that division. Nowadays we tend to think of it as a division between literary fiction and genre fiction. But it's less marked in books for children. That way I was lucky in writing this book, or having published as a children's book, first of all. Because children aren't bothered by whether it's a genre book or a literary book, they don't feel that this one is something that they ought to read and something else which is *beneath* their consideration. Adults do. So I was lucky to find an audience first among children, and then later among adults, I said, and you've probably heard it in your literary quotations. Because *His Dark Materials* has had far more readers, more adult readers, by being published as a children's book, than it would if it had been published as an adult book.

T: Mmhmm.

P: Because if it would have been published as an adult book, it would have been called a fantasy from the start, and most adults wouldn't read it because they're not interested in fantasy.

T: So most critics and scholars claim that, you know, *His Dark Materials* is fantasy, and fantasy usually has been regarded as low literature or popular literature. Have you sensed it, or was it a kind of problem, ever?

P: It's come up, it's been mentioned. It doesn't worry me because after all, much great literature has been a fantasy. Dante, you mentioned Dante?

T: Yes.

P: That's a fantasy. *Paradise Lost* is a fantasy. And much of Shakespeare is fantastical. The great social realist novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the English novels, the Russians, the French, were of course [...] social realist. Fantasy was not regarded as interesting or important then. But in 1865, I think it was, along came *Alice in Wonderland*, obviously a fantasy. And clearly, obviously for children, too. So I think fantasy sort of drifted towards the children... the world of children's books. And, you know, people like him [pointing to a painting – representing Tolkien – hanging on the wall], and C.S. Lewis, found themselves writing the sort of books they wanted to write, which were fantasy stories, because they both loved fantasy; and found themselves, whether they wanted to or not, being read by children.

T: And what do you think, what will be your future place in literary history?

P: [Laughing] That's not for me to decide.

T: [Laughing] Okay.

P: I haven't a clue. I don't have the faintest idea. I'm very happy to have published the first of these books twenty years ago, and to find that it's still in print, and still selling, and still being talked about. That's wonderful, I couldn't ask for any more than that. If I'm still being read in a hundred-years' time, wonderful, but I won't be around, I won't know.

T: You often emphasize the importance of stories and story-telling, and you seem to have a strong sense of mission. And, on the other hand, you also say that you write for yourself. So, you are a story-teller, and would you define yourself as a prophet? In any sense of the word?

P: No, I don't think so. It's an interesting word there, an interesting idea because I write like J. G. Ballard. Do you know J. G. Ballard's work?

T: No.

P: English writer of what used to be called science fiction. I think he died about ten years ago. He wrote a number of extraordinary books, and he is what I would call a prophet, not only in the sense that he wrote about things that were gonna happen in the future, may-come-true, but also in the sense of being a great... moralist, like the Hebrew prophets who, after all, criticised and denounced the societies of their day, from a moral point of view. "This is wrong, it's wrong to behave like that, you should worship God, you should not worship money," all that sort of thing. So there was a strong sense of a moral message coming through in his prophecy. However, I suppose, I do feel that there's a moral strain in what I write...

T: Yes.

P: But I would prefer to think of it in terms of a tombstone in a church, in the city where I was born, in Norwich. There's a little church yard there and a tombstone from 1801. And it says this, I remember it, word for word, "This stone is dedicated to the talents and virtues of Sophia Ann Goddard, who died in 1801, aged 25 years." She was evidently an actress. "The former"—that is, her talents—her talents "illuminated the"... wait a minute... as such... is ... that's right. Her talents "shone with lustre, in the great school of morals, the theatre, while the latter"—that is, her virtues—"illuminated the private circle of life with sentiment and so on." But the idea of the theatre as a school of morals, there's something that interested me a great deal. I love that little tombstone, and every time I go to Norwich, I buy a bunch of flowers and put it on the tombstone for Sophia Ann Goddard, who was evidently a very good actress as well as a lovely person. Now a school is somewhere where you learn to do things, somewhere where you can try things out in safety. And if you're learning to make... if you're learning to be a carpenter, you learn how to manage your tools...

T: Mmhmm.

P: ... you learn how to lift safely, you know, the instructors is saying, "Don't hold the chisel like that, because you'll cut yourself. Hold it like this." Or, you know, "If you saw too hard, you'll damage the saw, go gently, take it easy." It's where you learn to do things like that. So a school of morals is somewhere where we can learn the importance of other people. Learn the importance of other people's feelings, learn how to emphasize with them, how to enter into their... enter imaginatively into their lives, and their sorrows, and their problems, and their joys, and their happiness and so on. So fiction in general, and theatre as well, does function, for me, as a school of morals. And in that sense, if that's what prophets talk about, then, in that sense, [laughing] I'm a prophet. I am, actually.

T: Let's talk about the relationship between the artist and the critics. It's definitely the critics who need artists, I know you also write criticism, and what I wonder whether artists need critics – or not.

P: I don't think I've ever learnt anything from a critic that helped me write. Even great critics, like Harold Bloom, like... English critics like F. R. Leavis, even great

critics have told me interesting things about other people's books. But nothing of that remains when I sit down to write. So I have learned nothing from critics.

T: Hmm.

P: Nothing useful anyway. What purpose do they serve socially I don't... well... I suppose critics and newspaper-reviewers, which isn't quite the same thing, that reviewers read newspapers, write about new books that they come up, they bring into the attention of the public and the booksellers, so they serve a sort of purpose ... in the entire economic structure of book selling and publishing. But even that's changing now, with Internet book-selling, and the great change, the great revolution in publishing that's been brought about in the last what? ten-fifteen years, we're living through the... a fourth huge revolution in story-telling. First was when we learnt to talk. Uncountable tens of thousands of years ago. When someone'd say, "Ugh."

T: [Laughing]

P: They could say 'lion,' or 'horse,' or something. That was the first one, we needed to talk. The second one was when we learnt to write things down. Making marks on anything: clay, or wax, or the walls on the cave when we learnt to make marks, to preserve the story, to be read later on. The third revolution was, of course, Gutenberg, printing, in the fifteenth century. And now, we're in the middle of the fourth, which is the digital revolution. And it's allowing readers to respond immediately to a story in the same way by putting words onto a screen, by writing their own fiction in response to it, by talking to each other about it, you know, all the things that the Internet can do. And it's so big, it's so huge, that we don't know what the effect will be in the end. But that's the fourth revolution we are in the middle of now.

T: Mmhmm.

P: So maybe critics would become more important because immediately a book is out, instantly a hundred, two hundred thousand reviews can be placed on the line with.... Maybe they will become less important because people will think 'What, they're all online, so what? I don't agree. I'll read the books I want to read.' We just don't know. It's too soon.

T: Well. I think that the answer to my next question has already been answered that what do you think about the ways your works are analysed, or interpreted, or do you read such works?

P: No.

T: That's all? No.

P: No. They send me the books. I've got about twenty books on the shelf, that are all about my work.

T: Aha.

P: It's no helpful. It doesn't tell me anything that will help me to write another book. I think usually, well, 'You haven't got that right,' you know, 'it's not what I was trying to do at all.' Or else something, 'Oh, yeah, that's good. Oh, yeah. Oh, I'll take the credit for that. Yes, I was clever to say that, because it sounds good.' But really I don't take much notice of them.

T: Okay. So you don't read them. Then the next question is useless, I mean that was there any study that pointed out what you had wanted to say as a message, or was there any interpretation that turned out to be a misinterpretation for you?

P: Well, there are those, yeah. Plenty of misinterpretations. But I don't argue with them.

T: Mmhmm.

P: There's no point. If I wrote to everyone who I thought had read my book in the wrong way.... Well, what am I trying to do? Am I trying to change their mind? What for? Let them say what they like, I don't mind. The greatest advice about reviewing and critics in general was 'don't read it, measure it.' So don't read it. 'How long is it? Oh, it's a long one, that's good.'

T: There are different belief-systems, and different religions. All religions have their key figures, respected figures, and I would like to know your opinion about how much an artist or an author should respect or should take responsibility for how he or she represents the key figures of other belief-systems, for instance God, or Jesus, or Moses, for instance... Now I'm thinking of the tragic consequences of the caricatures of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, in January [2015]. Probably you know...

P: Yeah.

T: ...what happened. Because the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion sometimes clash, and...

P: Yes. Freedom of speech is something very important and we should treasure it, because we have not had it for very long in human history, and it's quite *rare* in the world. Most human societies have always tried to forbid certain ways of talking, especially certain ways of talking about the divine, and in some parts of the world today you can be put to death if you say something that the priests or the imams don't like. But it's something that's very important, this freedom of speech. It's very rare and very precious, and we should use it responsibly, and make sure that we look after it.

T: And do you think that you as an artist should respect the old taboos of other religions?

P: [Whispering] Erm... yeah....

T: Or how much should you respect it?

P: How much... Well... Well, one of the questions that one has to ask and answer is, "What do I need to say at this point?" If I need, for the sake of the story, if I need to say that Mohammed used to steal sheep and was a rapist, then I say it. Do I really need to say that? *Charlie Hebdo*, of course, they have freedom to draw whatever cartoons they liked, but of these cartoons weren't very *good*, they weren't very *funny*, and weren't very *interesting*, and very good. Was it worth dying for that? Well, probably it was, but it's a very difficult one. It's a very difficult one.

T: But it might not be their fault, I mean the drawers of *Charlie Hebdo*, but the religious fundamentalists who...

P: Well, the fundamentalists are *always* wrong.

T: Yeah.

P: Always wrong. Very-very wrong. Religious fundamentalists, scientific fundamentalists, or any sort of fundamentalists. Always wrong. They're wrong because they think there is one answer, whereas, in fact, there are five answers, there are ten answers. There are a thousand answers. There are a thousand ways of thinking, and a thousand ways of representing people, and a thousand

opinions, and... and... While we live in a society that allows all those different opinions to be expressed, we must protect that, and we must look after it, and we must realize how valuable and how rare it is.

T: Okay. The next question considers the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion, and the religious tolerance in general. Have you seen any sign that the liberal democracy is in danger now in Europe?

P: I think it's always in danger. Because the temptation to be sure about something is a very strong temptation; a temptation to listen to people with one single answer: "God is great, you must obey God." And it's tempting to do that, because it means people don't have to think any more. And people don't like thinking generally; it's difficult, and it's painful, and it's contradictory, and you don't let... And you end up by being puzzled and worried. It's much easier to be told what to think and what to feel. So it's always a danger, and we must always be wary, we must always look out for it.

T: Here is a quotation from *The Amber Spyglass*, when William and Lyra realize that they love each other and the Fall happens, somehow. You wrote that they became "the true image of what human beings always could be, once they have come into their inheritance."^[5] What kind of inheritance? With wisdom, or...

P: Yeah.

T: The gift of the rebel angels?

P: It's a true understanding of things. You can call it wisdom, or you can call it understanding, or you can call it a realization, something. It's a state of full consciousness, instead of partial consciousness.

T: Hmm. There is an American iconologist, William J. Thomas Mitchell, who wrote about John Milton and *Paradise Lost*, and he writes that God makes man of his own image out of desire not to be alone, and man has desires of his own, and for this reason, he asks for a mate to love him in turn, and in this way, desire generates image, and image generates desire.^[6] Somehow in parallel with matter loving matter.

P: Okay.

T: And God knows that he is producing a creature who will be able to produce other things, he will be able to produce other images. And this is why eating from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was forbidden.^[7] For this image-like thing, there is another quotation from you, that "the truest way for the creatures to become what they could truly be."^[8] "What they could truly be," well, I think it is not a reference to any kind of God in this way [depicted above]. I mean to resemblance, or image of any...

P: Well, it's like a baby bird. When a baby bird is very young, it's just hatched, it can't see, it can't fly, hasn't got any feathers. Little by little, as the mother feeds the bird, it grows, it becomes stronger, it's got wings. I see this happening in my barn at home with the swallows. I love watching them. And the little swallows sit at the edge of the nest, and they're very frightened, and one day they just jump and they can fly. It's becoming what it could be. So it's the difference between childhood and adulthood.

T: Yes.

P: Or, in William Blake's terms, it's the difference between innocence and experience.

T: To highlight an aspect of the Republic of Heaven, I say that for a religious person the social ethics, the sense of social community, and the sense of wonder, awe, and mystery are a kind of complete package, which is provided by religious organizations, for instance, by the Church. And for a non-religious person, there's a distinction between social ethics and a sense of social community, and also a sense of wonder and awe. So these are two different concepts. But, however, for me, it seems that the Republic of Heaven rather embodies this kind of complete package.

P: I hope it does. Yeah.

T: So it seems that it's a kind of religious concept. Altogether.

P: Yes. Yes. The only difference being that I don't feel that God is necessary. In every other respect, you should say this is a religious idea.

T: And would you separate morality from religiosity? From religious institutions?

P: No, I wouldn't separate morality from anything. Morality is *inherent* in every human interaction. There's a good way of doing things, which involves a consideration for the other person, for the other person's well-being, or happiness, or whatever, and that's different from an interaction which doesn't take any account of those things. We could treat each other well, or we can treat each other badly.

T: Mmhmm.

P: I couldn't... There's... Morality is all over the place. It's the school of morals. That we learn to empathize.

T: Yes, so I can say that the religious impulse is something that is inherent in us but we have to learn moral values.

P: We do have to learn morality, yes. We learn it in all sorts of ways. We learn by example, by seeing someone, a parent or grandparent, who is kind and good. We learn it from fiction. You see examples of people behaving cruelly, and certainly other people suffer for it. We empathize with the hero, who is moral. There are all sorts of ways of learning morality, but a lot of them involve stories of one sort or another. So as I mentioned this before: Jesus, a great moral teacher, his most successful method of teaching morality was stories, was parables.

T: [Laughing] Yeah.

T: One of the criteria of the Republic of Heaven is the enjoyment of our material life.

P: Yeah.

T: And it occurred to me that if we have only one world to live in, does it mean that we have only one body to live in, and we have to be careful... I mean we have to look after this body, to lead a healthy life-style, for instance...

P: Yes. But I was... I wouldn't say it's an inevitable consequence from reading *His Dark Materials* that you will stop smoking.

T: [Laughing] Yeah.

P: It's fine: if you want to stop smoking, you'll stop. But I would never say you won't go to heaven unless you stop smoking. It's not simple. No, that's too simple.

T: Yes, it's obvious. Our bodies [are] also material and... but [we can] say enjoying material pleasures are sometimes opposed to preserving the health of our body.

P: Well, I think that's wrong. Completely disagree with the renunciation of the body, the *hatred* of the body which you find in various Christians, especially Christian saints. They left the world and they went to live in a cave, or they lived on top of a pillar or something and they had a miserable life. No, I don't agree with that. The world is a good place. Drinking's good. Even smoking can be good.

T: Hedonism is not the better option.

P: Well, hedonism is just looking one aspect of everything and making that one thing the world. The world is too interesting and too important to be hedonistic. That would be like if you only wanted to eat cheese or something.

P: Metatron is a figure in Jewish angelic mythology.

T: And he is also called Enoch, and he was the favourite of God who...

P: That's right.

T: ... raised him up, and for this reason, that the Biblical Enoch was the favourite of God, is it the reason why Metatron is such a negative character in the trilogy?

P: Yeah.

T: Okay. [Laughing] It was obvious.

T: A key impression of mine was your innovation that death is represented as a joyful event. There's, for instance, Yambe-Akka, the witches' goddess and, you know, the happy annihilation of the souls in the wide open space.

P: That's right.

T: And why is it so happy? Why is it so positive, possibly?

P: It's inevitable. It comes to us all. I wanted to find a way of dramatizing the idea that it could be seen, noticed, tragic and hopeless and horrible... But there's a joyful culmination for the end of everything. That's all, I think.

T: So maybe I can say that representing death as a kind of joy or positive event, it's a kind of acceptance of the cycle of life that we are born, we live, and then we die. And we can do nothing to prevent it.

P: That's right.

T: The North turns up as a mysterious place, full of secrets, and a place where secrets are revealed.

P: Yes.

T: And why did you choose North, as such a place, and why not...?

P: I didn't choose it, it just happened to me. I always felt an attraction towards the ice and the snow, and the six month of darkness. They're mysterious and they're exciting, and the idea of the Northern Aurora is thrilling to me. I've never seen the Aurora. It is because I love all that, all that list of associations, that list of things that are summed up for me by the idea of the North. I'm just attracted to that, that's all.

T: And would you like to go to the North once to experience...?

P: I don't like travelling.

T: Oh.

P: I'd rather go to the library.

T: The ending of the trilogy is sad. You know, William and Lyra have to return to their own world, where they were born, because of their daemons. Do you think it could be somehow related to current political situations about (im)migration and cosmopolitanism?

P: I don't think so. I don't think so. It had to, the ending had to be sad. A happy ending would not have worked. I tried to come up with one. I tried to have them being together forever, but it didn't work. It wasn't strong enough. It's a much stronger book because they have to part. It becomes tragic.

T: So the aim was not to have a happy ending. And the idea that every character has to go back to the place where he or she was born, it means that it was just a pretext for this ending?

P: Probably.

T: Uh-huh.

P: Probably. It's not that I wanted the end to be sad. It's I felt that the ending had to be sad. I felt from the beginning that the ending would be a moment of great, great sadness. Great *love*... but of great sadness as well. There's nothing I could do about that. That's where the book had to go.

T: Okay. But, I mean, anyway, apart from *His Dark Materials*, I suppose you have no problem with migration, or someone moving into another country to live there.

P: None at all. None at all. We should welcome people who are in trouble, who are seeking asylum or something like that. Of course we should.

T: It's our duty to help others.

P: Yeah.

T: Is there anything that you would change now in *His Dark Materials*, apart from Mrs. Coulter's hair colour?

P: If I could go back, I would take a little more time. I'd take another six months to write *The Amber Spyglass*. I felt in a hurry, there were readers pressuring me, publishers pressuring me, I felt in a hurry when I wrote *The Amber Spyglass*. I'd like to go back and re-write it, I'd try to tighten the structure a little. But I wouldn't change anything.

T: Were there some details?

P: Just one or a few details. But nothing major in the story. I think the story is the way I wanted it to go.

T: And would you give me some examples of what you would change if you could go back in time?

P: Oh, I can't, it's too long ago.

T: I see. Thank you for answering *all* of my questions. I'm grateful to you for your kindness and patience.

Having signed copies of the first book of *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and let me take a few photos of him, Philip Pullman gladly accepted my gift, a bottle of home-made Hungarian brandy, ‘pálinka,’ which, he wrote me later, he found delicious.

Notes

5. Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass* (New York: Laurel-Leaf, 2000), 421.
6. W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 57-58.
7. See Chapter 1, “Vital Signs / Cloning Terror,” in Mitchell, *What Do...,* 5-27.
8. Tony Watkins, “Interview with Philip Pullman (from 2004),” *TonyWatkins.uk*, 7 September 2009. Accessed on 10 February 2016,
<http://www.tonywatkins.co.uk/media/literature/interview-with-philip-pullman-from-2004/>.

Brexit – Personal Reflections on the Referendum Campaign and its Aftermath

Robert Clark



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in 2017. His *Jane Austen and the Transformation of Capital* in 2018. Robert Clark was Founding Secretary of ESSE (1990-1996). He taught 1979-2012 at the University of East Anglia where he pioneered Erasmus and Tempus Programmes.

A quarter of a century ago, we enjoyed a period of historic optimism. The European Union was beginning to mature. The Iron Curtain had fallen. We were busy creating ESSE's institutions and embracing countries which had recently escaped Russian domination. It was a positive, idealistic, forward-looking time when dissolving national boundaries and assumptions offered hopes of a better world. Even the UK supported the idea of developing a pan-European interdisciplinary understanding of literary history. If we compare the present with the past we can see that much of our work has been worthwhile, notwithstanding the evident difficulties of European integration.

Why did 52% of Britons vote to leave? Global insularity

At about this time a British colleague of mine, a professor of French at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, asked me “Do you want to get a job in Europe?” to which I replied, a little astonished, “but I already have one.” By “Europe” I took my colleague to mean “the European geographical area” in which I had always thought Norwich was situated. Only later did it occur to me that my colleague may have meant “the European institutions”. But, if he had meant this, I assumed he would have put the question more precisely. A few days ago, I experienced a similar moment when a good and learned friend, and coincidentally a staunch supporter of the Remain campaign, mentioned “buying a bolt-hole in Europe” as a personal response to Brexit.

I can't imagine this usage of the word “Europe” occurring on the continent. It seems typical of British culture where “Europe” means those places across the

Channel and not – except in a geography seminar -- a place in which Britain is found.

This insular view of the continent from Britain is pervasive and unconscious. During the Referendum campaign, liberal intellectuals would have liked to have a debate about large cultural and political issues and the direction of modern history – our need to stand firm against Putin’s adventurism, our need to develop a bastion of European social values by way of contrast to the social model evident in the United States, our pride in a common heritage which has for two thousand or more years contributed so much to philosophy, literature, music and the visual arts. However, during the campaign such arguments were almost never made -- only Nick Clegg, the former Liberal Democrat leader, made consistent efforts -- in part because idealism seems contrary to the British down-to-earth mentality but mainly because the Leave campaign could have easily set them aside. Whilst the Referendum campaign was orchestrated by a cadre of about 50 diehard Tory MPs driven by a deep dislike of the European, they would if challenged argue that the Referendum was not about Europe but about the European Union, its bureaucracy, its aspirations to be a federal super-state, its lack of democracy, its principle of the free movement of people.

Vote Leave was thus clearly animated by the failure of most Britons to see themselves as part of Europe. Our TV historians and school teachers may occasionally talk of the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans; and of two world wars fought on European soil, but the British collective sense of Europe is as an Other in the affairs of which Britain is occasionally mired. This utterly ignorant view is so fundamental it would take decades of teaching our history differently for it to be dented. I wonder what small percentage of the British population know that British monarchs held or claimed suzerainty over a swathe of Northern France and Aquitaine until 1801; that Dutch armies garrisoned London in 1688 to secure the coup d'état of the Dutchman, William of Orange; that in the same years we were “swamped” with Huguenots who fled France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, bringing immeasurable intellectual riches to the British Isles. One could fill a book with the things the Brits don’t know about their European identity. Today, perhaps a million of them live “over there”, but they are still called “Ex-pats” like nineteenth-century members of British imperial diaspora, people stranded in exile and waiting only to come home, reluctant to mix with the “foreigners” and trapped in their monolingual identity. Some of the places where they congregate in France, Spain and Greece now resemble outposts of empire.

Ex-Pat monolingualism is but the most obvious feature of the predominant monolingualism of the British people. The nation appears to have celebrated the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 by giving up on learning foreign tongues. Between then and last year, candidates for French at A-level declined from 30,000 to 10,000, and for German from 11,000 to 4,000. Candidates for other modern languages rose from 4,000 to 9,000, mainly thanks to the increase in Spanish, but overall the number of those taking foreign modern language exams halved (from 45,000 to 23,000) whilst the number of exams taken rose about 15% (from 734,000 to 851,000).¹ Members of ESSE will know only too well

¹ <http://www.bstubb.co.uk/a-lev.htm>.

that speaking a foreign language does much more than confer a narrow technical competence: it improves the speaker's understanding of their native language, and opens or expands whole areas of the brain, increasing the ability to see the world from others' points of view, increasing lateral thinking, and even extending the lifespan. However, whilst Europeans in general have embraced learning other European languages, the British, at least until very recently, have abandoned that work to others.¹

British linguistic insularity no doubt played a considerable role in the Vote Leave campaign, and leads us on to consider another fundamental cause of some middle-class enthusiasm for Brexit. Nominally educated, a significant part of the population may have no acquaintance with the continent, tending to holiday in English-speaking lands, if they go abroad at all (17% do not have passports). At one hustings meeting I attended, Vote Leave put forward as its spokesperson Dr Peter Chadha, a Sikh "international entrepreneur" (actually an IT consultant) whose attitudes cast some light on this matter. Dr Chadha expressed all manner of seemingly informed negative views about the European Union, mainly focusing on the burden of regulation on businesses and on the restraints on international trade, opinions I later found he has expressed widely in many fora.² On this occasion he had a hard time finding any support from an audience largely composed of Remainers, and as his logical positions soon collapsed under informed scrutiny – he raged against the "secret TTIP negotiations" until the chairman, an experienced FT journalist, offered to send him the ten or more emails he received about it every week – Dr Chadha resorted to saying that his pro-Brexit position was based in "gut instinct which is how businessmen usually make their decisions" (a view which might frighten his shareholders, if he has any). When I talked with him after the meeting I discovered his businesses sold software solutions to clients in the English-speaking world and he admitted to having no experience of trading in Europe and no understanding of either its regulations or its culture. Without this information, he would no doubt have sounded very convincing to UKIP supporters.

Farcical as this example might seem, Dr Chadha seems typical of a considerable proportion of Brexiters who share an Anglo-global mindset, perceive Brussels as a monstrous wen that spews needless regulations aimed at cramping commercial freedom. However, I think it important to consider such people as another aspect of Britain's history and good fortune. Anglo-globalists allow Britain to work as the hinge between the European Union, the United States and the Commonwealth. Many commentators around the world have seen this condition as the basis of our recent economic success. The crucial flaw in the Brexit position is that when one pulls the pin out of a hinge the door falls off.

¹ When Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, who recently became prominent in the Vote Leave campaign, knew this very well and is to be commended for having in 2011 used similar observations to support his proposal that all British children should start learning a foreign language at 5 years old. His motives for taking such a prominent role in the Vote Leave campaign would therefore appear more personal and political than philosophically consistent.

² This is not the impression he gives in his frequent appearances on the internet. For example here: <http://startups.co.uk/eu-why-its-time-to-leave/>.

Do we need to look further for an explanation of why 17.4m Brits voted to Leave?

I believe we do because of the 16.1m who voted to Remain many will be similarly monolingual and share at least part of Dr Chadha's Anglo-global mindset. The Remainers, even if monolingual, were much more comfortable than the Leavers about inhabiting multiple, overlapping identities – ethnic, geographical, familial, historical, sexual, national, international, professional.¹ Their mindset tends to be open, mobile, conciliatory, ready to understand and to compromise. As many analysts have noticed, Remainers were younger, richer and noticeably better educated than Leavers: areas with high graduate concentrations voted to Remain, whereas the highest concentrations of votes to Leave were cast in areas of high welfare dependency where the relatively unskilled populations feel left behind by globalisation, neglected by the national government. It was also noticeable that most votes for Leave were cast by the old, whereas the young were much more likely to vote to Remain.²

Kick-back at the Elite

It has been widely concluded that many of those who voted to Leave saw the referendum as an opportunity to kick back at the Tories, the London elite, and the London-centric Labour party.³ Such voters were entirely deaf to the argument that leaving the EU would in all probability make their lives poorer, precipitating economic recession, reducing funds for the welfare and healthcare upon which they depend more than others. People in Sunderland, for example, a depressed area whose economy depends crucially on the Nissan car factory, voted preponderantly to leave, even though Nissan had warned that leaving the European Union would put UK car-making in question. (Ford today announced that the future of all its UK plants is in question.) Similarly, Wales and Cornwall, recipients of large European Structural Fund grants in recent years, voted to Leave; on the face of it, a gesture like that of the man who disliked the shape of his nose so took a shotgun and blew his face off. Welsh representatives are now demanding that the UK government guarantees the replacement of these European funds, even though the promise to do so was made by various members of the Vote Leave campaign who have no authority to make such promises, and who made them to so many causes that some are sure to discover they have been conned.

Those who campaigned on the streets for Britain Stronger in Europe quickly came to appreciate the visceral sharpness of the divide between Leavers and Remainers, and the imperviousness of Leavers to economic reasoning. Leavers usually refused to make eye-contact, passing by with tight lips and downcast eyes. The pent-up hostility which radiated from them would sometimes burst forth in

¹ The key text on these issues is the Nobel-prize winner Amartya Sen's *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Penguin 2007).

² <http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>; <https://next.ft.com/content/1ce1a720-ce94-3c32-a689-8d2356388a1f>

³ Among the best of many analyses, see Mathew Goodwin, "Why Britain backed Brexit" at <http://ukandeu.ac.uk/why-britain-backed-brexit%e2%80%8f/>

verbal aggression, usually directed at the women among us. Vile words, threatening gestures were a daily occurrence. On one occasion I myself was surrounded by four very large thugs, one of whom kept poking me in the chest and demanding “Where’s your fucking Union Jack, mate? Where’s your fucking Union Jack!” Had my son not been standing nearby – an officer in the Army Reserves who has served in Bosnia and Sierra Leone -- I would have been entirely undefended. Racial and ethnic abuse and hate crimes have soared since the referendum ‘success’. All readers will know of the murder of the kind and generous Jo Cox, a former Oxfam worker who was elected an MP last year, stabbed and shot several times by an enraged man who shouted “Britain First”. Whilst the BBC tried to represent the assassin as a lone psychotic, his murderous script was taken from the Britain First website which encourages the hanging of such liberal friends of migrants. The shadow of National Socialism seemed to hover over us.

The pent-up aggression of the Brexiters was at indeed surprising and a wake-up call to complacent bourgeois liberals like myself. Their anger is grounded in their sense of being trapped in poverty, side-lined by globalisation. It is only to be expected that such people have no truck with arguments based on the complexities of modern political economy. Words like “globalization” are not in their usual vocabulary, and only became meaningful when put in terms of “foreigners taking our jobs”. The wider apparatus of understanding indicated by terms that intellectuals take for granted – such as “free trade” (which sounds simple but is highly regulated) -- or acronyms such as “GDP”, “IMF”, “OECD”, “ONS”, “OFS”, have no relevance to people who live on marginal welfare payments. Even people in the next social tier (people in work but insufficiently paid to be able to get on the “property ladder”) have little idea how the UK generates wealth.¹ They only see immigrants as a threat, obscurely related to global changes and their own sense of impotence. This is not surprising since they are not encouraged by news media to understand how crucial immigrants are to sustaining the British economy, and notably the NHS which would collapse without their support. However, no one should look down on those voters who

¹ Given the lack of reliable information produced by Britain Stronger In Europe, my own ignorance on some matters, and the extraordinary misinformation and mendacity of the Leave campaign, I began compiling a brief statement of facts on which a rational decision might be made. This ‘statement of facts’ was parallel to and in part inspired by the website <https://infacts.org/> which throughout the campaign did sterling work unmasking false representations. My own statement grew longer and longer and was eventually circulated to my local network of Britain Stronger In Europe campaigners. The statement was much appreciated by some distinguished academicians and by friends and neighbours, many of whom wondered why no such clear and simple statement had been published by any of the bodies officially charged with representing the Remain campaign. Although I tried to have it published by <http://www.strongerin.co.uk/>, so incompetent was the official remain campaign that we could not even find anyone in its opaque hierarchy to make the necessary decision. It was however picked up by a colleague and published in the *Wales Arts Review* at <http://www.walesartsreview.org/euref-europe-the-facts/>. The difficulty with all such counter-propaganda is that it takes time and intellectual attention. Gut feelings and visceral prejudice easily trump rational arguments.

find these matters hard to fathom since they are inherently complex,¹ and, to judge by their recent utterances, the majority of MPs and BBC journalists are ignorant on a whole range of important matters ranging from how the IMF creates its forward economic projections, how EU laws are made, what is involved in making a trade deal, what is possible under the WTO terms, or what goes into calculating the Purchasing Managers Index.² To take one salient example, in the early weeks of the campaign the question of how much the UK pays to the EU each week came up for discussion. Vote Leave claimed it was £350m per week; those with a better grasp on the matter pointed out that after the rebate and receipts, the net outward flow was only about half as much. Very rarely did a commentator or politician put this large figure in context. It is less than half what the UK gives in international aid each week; less than 0.3% of weekly expenditure. In other words, insignificant. Yet through a lack of proper contextualisation this figure became a major reason for many to vote to leave the European Union.

With this degree of incomprehension, complex argument was certain to have a hard time winning votes. Canvassers such as myself learned over time, and with some reluctance, that intellectual arguments might be inherently interesting but in terms of the vote they were a waste of time. What ultimately drove the vote was how people felt about the world. Those who would vote to Remain were by and large under the age of 50, comfortable with their lot, welcoming of others, looking forward with confidence; those who would vote Leave divided in two. One camp, relatively well-healed, loathed the idea of Brussels bureaucrats and regulation (even though no one I spoke to had any direct experience of either, and could cite not a single truthful instance of their imposition on Britain). The second camp, aggrieved by the crowded hospitals and schools, their inability to get the housing they want, fixated on the idea that foreigners are coming over here, living off the state, taking our jobs and homes, driving down wages, pushing up prices. In other words, they held to the mythological nexus of incompatible, contradictory and fictitious representations which has been pumped out day after day over many decades by the majority of red-top newspapers, especially *The Daily Express* and *The Sun*. (These low-brow versions are complemented by *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* which have more sophisticated versions for the Tory faithful.) Almost never will one find a positive representation of affairs in other European countries by any newspaper or the representations by any Member of Parliament.

As the campaign slithered from outright lie to outright lie, from myth to myth, immigration became the simplistic and simplifying focal point of the Brexit case. This focus came about partly because it was the only “simple” position the Leave campaign could sustain (see below), and partly because it was deliberately promoted by UKIP whose primary funder Arron Banks (a self-made billionaire,

¹ Consider for example this article by Professor Nicholas Barr of the LSE on the contribution of immigrants: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexitvote/2016/05/27/dear-friends-this-is-why-i-will-vote-remain-in-the-referendum/>

² On 2 July we heard on the BBC that the PMI had fallen from 52.3 in June to 47.4 in July, falling at the fastest rate since 2009. The newly appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, remarked “Let’s be clear, the PMI data is a measure of sentiment, it’s not a measure of any hard activity in the economy.” The BBC immediately pointed out that the PMI report was packed with real-world data and not just a measure of sentiment.)

owner of insurance companies, and six diamond mines in South Africa) who gave £6.5m to Leave.EU, hired Goddard Gunster, an American political adviser who came to prominence when he organized the defeat of California's sugar tax in a campaign funded by Coca-Cola. Gunster advised the UKIP that most voters soon tire of the complexity of facts, so their campaign would only succeed if they went for emotional responses.¹ Leave.EU, the vehicle for Nigel Farage's UKIP, and various far-right groups, pushed the migration button and whipped up racism. Vote Leave, initially too polite, too middle class, saw its own campaign begin to founder on the hard rocks of economic realism, so swung to the same position. The two campaigns together thus allied many middle class and petit-bourgeois provincials with the hard pressed undereducated poor with the idea that a vote for Brexit would stop those cursed foreigners. In fact, as occasionally became evident in the hustings, most immigrants do not come from the EU, and their number could be controlled if the government wished to do so. The entire argument about "taking back control of our borders" was based on false premises. EU net inward migration amounted to about 150,000 in 2014 (nearly all them East-European Christians, multilingual, well-educated and skilled) whereas 180,000 came from Africa and Asia (often Muslim and less skilled, coming to join relatives already here).² UKIP notoriously used a poster showing a column of Syrians trekking across the Balkans to bolster claims that Turkey was about to join the EU and swamp Britain with yet more of the unmentionables who were already clogging up the NHS, taking our benefits, putting nothing back. The poster was reported to the police for its racism and caused a furore, but it worked. Anti-Muslim, anti-refugee sentiments were smuggled into the animus against Polish and Roumanian builders.

Canvassers for Remain would try to explore these complex issues with the occasional Brexiter who was interested in talking, but there was no point. Our arguments were cast aside. The more complex the argument, the more obvious it was to Brexiters that we were self-serving members of the elite, part of the cabal. On one famous occasions, a leading exponent of Vote Leave, the Conservative MP Michael Gove, the proud holder of a modest Oxford degree in English Literature, remarked (Sky News, 2 June) "people in this country have had enough of experts" because he did not like what the IMF and OECD and Bank of England were saying about Britain's prospects post-Brexit. This phrase became a leitmotiv for the Leave campaign. Since Michael Gove was formerly Secretary of State for Education, and was at this time Justice Secretary and therefore nominally in charge of an enormous cadre of highly paid experts on legal matters, one would have thought he would have more respect for their skills. Asked a little later to explain his disdain for expert advice, on 21 June he compared the expert bodies

¹ If you read this report in *The Guardian* you may well fear there is no future for our ideal of an informed democratic electorate:

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/29/leave-donor-plans-new-party-to-replace-ukip-without-farage>.

² Curiously, we discovered that Vote Leave was supported by significant cohorts of South Asians and Africans who admitted to being motivated by their wish to have more of their relatives given permission to come into the UK, permission which was being restricted by the scale of EU migration.

which concluded Brexit would diminish the UK's economy to the German scientists lined up by the Nazis to denounce Einstein's theory of relativity. The polite media recoiled at this inept parallel, but clearly not the Brexiteers.

In these days we began to perceive something I would never have expected in my homeland, a drift towards totalitarian truth. The Brexit strategy was to deride the manifestly qualified experts put forward by the Remain campaign without engaging with their arguments. Like totalitarians the world over they argued that those who held views or made statements of fact which called into question their representations must obviously be in the pay of some huge external conspiratorial body comprising the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, the EU, the Bank of England and President Obama. Anyone who published anything they had actually said or written which contradicted what they were now saying, or which showed them in a negative light, was guilty of underhand practices (and had better be very careful or their license to publish would be revoked). On the other hand, anyone who said things they liked obviously deserved high office in the state, regardless of how stupid they were.¹

So week on week we battled to evaluate the Leave proposition in terms of an objective analytic view of British economic prospects, but since the Brexiteers had no real plan, only cheery aspirations and a conviction that "freedom" would enable Britain to be "great" again, it was impossible to stabilize any argument. If we talked about the potential damage to GDP from putting the UK outside the single market where it does 45% of its trade, they would talk about how immigration reduces wages and put strains on social services. If we tried to talk about the value immigrants bring to the economy, they would talk about sovereignty. If we tried to talk about how modern states share sovereignty through many international bodies such as the UN and NATO, and the UK has signed some 17,000 treaties sharing or limiting its sovereignty, they would attack the EU as undemocratic. If we tried to talk about how the European Parliament is elected, and members of the Council of Ministers appointed by national governments, they would talk about the European Commission as a nest of overpaid, corrupt bureaucrats. If we tried to talk about the relatively small size of the European Commission (about 87,000 compared with 580,000 in the UK), they would talk about the many times the UK has been voted down in the European parliament. If we pointed out how infrequently this happened (about 3% of the time), they would talk about the proliferation of EU regulations. If we tried to tell them that all EU regulations are proposed by Council of Ministers, drafted by the Commission, sent to all member states for consideration, vetted by local lawyers and experts, returned to the Commission for final improvement, and above all how necessary most product and market service regulations are (creating uniform safety standards) they would talk about a European Army about to be formed against our will, or Turkey being about to join the EU. If we told them any member state of the EU can veto such proposals, so these things would not come to pass in the foreseeable future, they would talk about how the EU single market prevents trade and migration with non-EU nations. If we tried to talk about how

¹ I had written these lines before Andrea Leadsom was put forward as the Brexiteer's candidate for leadership of the Conservative Party, and therefore for the post of Prime Minister. See below.

much the UK depends on EU trade in general and financial services in particular to generate GDP and tax revenue and the serious damage Brexit would cause to the City of London, they would talk about how EU regulations have destroyed British manufactures. If we tried to talk about the long historical decline of British manufactures since 1945, they would talk about how they would be invigorated by free trade, how Britain once was great and would be great again if only we could throw off the yoke of these undemocratic, corrupt, oligarchs and bureaucrats and their vile regulations. If we tried to explain that EU labour regulations protect the citizen from exploitation by unscrupulous employers, they would talk about EU regulation adding to business costs, and the brave sunlit uplands that could be ours if we threw off the yoke of tyranny. (This was Andrea Leadsom's favourite pitch, intoned with the light of heaven irradiating her face)

Accompanying this heroically cheery view of life outside the European Union came the frequently reiterated claim that Britain is “the fifth largest economy in the world”, and for that very reason both “great” and capable of success outside the European Union. The bombast behind this claim was almost as astonishing as the fact that highly paid, educated and intelligent journalists never once put this in question or in context. Why is Britain such a large and important economy? When you consider how little the country manufactures, it is hard to see. The answer is of course that the UK has been extraordinarily successful since 1993 because it is a member of the European Union, and is therefore a location of choice for most international companies seeking to sell services in the European space. And whilst the UK is indeed the fifth largest economy in the world, its GDP is only a little larger than that of California, whilst the European Union as a whole is about equal to that of the USA. It would therefore make as much sense for the UK to leave the EU as it would for California to leave the USA. The UK joined the EU in 1973 because it had realized it was now a small nation state unable to determine its own destiny in a context of American hegemony and emergent multi-national capitalism. Neither side in the Referendum debate ever considered such an historical perspective. The abiding presumption of the Leave campaign was the quasi-restitution of our former but recently lost global status.

The Aftermath, and the Future?

The aftermath of the Referendum has been emotionally profound and complex, and politically tortuous. It has become even harder to get a grip on it than it was to work in the campaign itself. At least the pro-EU march on Parliament on 30th June attended by over 30,000 people on July 2nd, and the signing of an online petition by more than 4 million demanding a repeat of the referendum allowed us to share our disquiet about the decision and how it had been achieved. Individually, many felt bereft, realizing that everything they had thought and felt about their country for seemingly all their lives turned out to be wrong: democracy, subverted; cultural diversity, replaced with racism; open frontiers, replaced with hard borders; ideals of free and honest debate; trashed. Even four weeks later, as I write this essay, the country is cruelly divided, the Brexiteers insisting -- with a vigour which indicates their fears – that the decision has been made and there is no turning back, the Remainers hoping that somehow a way will be found to reverse the decision. For them the best hope resides in the fact

that a considerable majority of MPs were pro-Remain so if the House of Commons can be required to approve the decision to trigger Article 50, it may be possible to persuade a majority to vote against it.¹ For this to happen, only a couple of million voters would have to change sides. Given the probability of economic recession, such a change of heart is possible.

Brexiters rush to gloat that the economy did not crash and burn on June 24th. After all, the pound fell only 14% against the US dollar and 8% against the Euro. Small beer. Given that the UK is chronically dependent on imports of energy food and raw materials, the devaluation of sterling will soon translate into price-inflation. True the FTSE 100 rose. Brexiters said this was a vote of confidence in UK Plc., proving yet again either their ignorance or their willingness to say anything: the FTSE only rose because dollar assets became worth more in depreciated sterling. The FTSE 250 – which more accurately reflects the national economy -- fell sharply but true it has regained ground. The PMI index fell from 52 to 48, one of the most arresting falls in history. London house prices are said to be down 13% already, and where they lead the country follows. Certain commercial property funds have temporarily shut off redemptions. However some European, Chinese and Asian investors find London cheaper than before so are continuing to buy. Philip Hammond, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, who voted to Remain, expects Brexit to have negative effects over at least the next two years. Since we have not even left the EU yet, it may take five years or ten years to prove whether the confidence of the Brexiters in their “sunlit uplands” was sense or lunacy.

What is already apparent is that many economic decisions are still on hold. Everyone is reconsidering their positions. Universities will certainly lose large amounts in research grants, and the country will lose the research benefits. EU students will be less inclined to come here. Many of the most intelligent Britons will seek posts abroad. If recession takes hold, a trickle will become a flood.

Above all, large parts of the educated middle class are furious, deeply alienated from the Tories, from their country, and from sections of an almost equally alienated and angry working class. London, Scotland and Northern Ireland in particular feel cut off from the shires. The Brexiters argue we must all now pull together, but this on a par with a rapist encouraging his victim to kiss and cuddle.

The Kingdom no-longer United

As the Brexiters prated about making the Great Britain great again, they conveniently forgot its long-past and more recent history. The political violence in Ireland, only recently pacified. The 2014 Scottish referendum which only narrowly reaffirmed Scotland’s support for the union. Britain (England and Wales) only became “Great Britain” by the 1707 Act of Union between the separate

¹ The philosopher A C Grayling in “Anti-Democratic to Debate this Bad Referendum” (*The New European*, July 22-28, 2016, p. 14-15) has powerfully argued in a new weekly newspaper spawned from this crisis that the Referendum vote is not absolute, only advisory, and that modern states are ruled by representative democracy rather than popular plebiscites precisely because the issues at stake are more complex than can be properly comprehended in simple yes/no referendum.

kingdoms of Scotland and England; this Great Britain became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1800 when the separate Irish parliament in Dublin was abolished following the bloody uprising of the United Irishmen in 1798. In 1922 this became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland after the Irish Republic won its independence by armed rebellion. Notwithstanding this history, the “great” in Great Britain long ago lost its geographical sense of “greater”, being subsumed by its signification of imperial moral superiority. When Johnson, Gove and Farage talked of “making Britain great again” – a catchphrase which went everywhere-- they implied a loss of both this metaphysical quality and of the UK’s global dominion, as if Brexit would remedy a period of impotence imposed by membership of the European Union. The outcome of Brexit may very well prove to be the very opposite, giving birth to the Scottish Republic and the Kingdom of England, or the People’s Republic of Little Britain. About 52% of the English will then be condemned to face their Europhobia in splendid isolation.

Party Politics

Since the announcement of the Referendum result, the fact that the Leave campaign had only the vaguest ideas about how to re-orientate the UK economy has become painfully apparent. Of course they immediately attacked the outgoing Prime Minister for not having done the planning they should have done themselves. David Cameron rightly resigned, no doubt sickened by the mendacity of the campaign and his own inability to lead his country towards a sensible decision. Nigel Farage promptly resigned, saying his life’s work had been achieved, Michael Gove stabbed his best-mate Boris Johnson in the back. (Gove was of course right in his judgement and wrong in his timing – Johnson is a ‘show-off’, a lightweight, inconsistent, unfaithful, dallier – in his personal life as well as in his politics – whose rhetorical cleverness masks the lack of every skill needed for responsible office.) Without our three wise men to take and responsibility for the policy they had so fiercely advocated, the Brexiteers turned to their second-lieutenant, Andrea Leadsom to step forward as a candidate to replace David Cameron. Leadsom was quite evidently a woman who turned to divine imaginings to fill the large gaps in her intellect and her understanding of financial matters, but she looked good on TV. Fortunately for the nation the way she had ‘bigged-up’ (or, frankly, lied) in her statements about her very modest professional career did not long withstand the kind of critical scrutiny it should have received during the Referendum campaign. She made a quick exit after managing to commiserate with Teresa May over her inability to have children, whilst boasting that her own fecundity made her a better equipped to be Prime Minister. Finally, after all many months in which Brexiteers had seemed to prove that there was no trick too low for them to stoop to, they decided this was a bridge too far and jumped out of the car before it crashed and burned. Unfortunately, the retreat of all the front-line proponents of Brexit from the political spotlight has allowed them to resile

without appropriate shame from many of the positions they took during the campaign.¹

Charting the path to the future

The election of Teresa May as Tory Party leader, a woman who had been modestly pro-Remain but is sufficiently Eurosceptic to appease the ardent Leavers, has offered the party the chance of reconciliation around her slogan “Brexit is Brexit”. Her appointment of David Davis and Liam Fox to major roles in the negotiation, and to Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary, effectively insulates May herself from the back-bench sniping which would otherwise marred her first months in office. She has given the boys the toys they wanted for Christmas, even at the expense of forever damaging the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by putting a buffoon in charge. If and when the wheels come off, it will not be her fault; if and when Michel Barnier, the recently appointed EU negotiator) and David Davis find it hard to agree, she might afford an ironic smile. She might even, being European, risk a moment of *schadenfreude*. Meanwhile, alarmed by her cunning, the hard core of Brexeters has formed a caucus to insist on a “hard Brexit” (i.e. almost no immigration; no political compromises with the EU), fearing that she may incline to something “soft”, like the Norwegian model. In doing so, they run the risk of revealing what has been going on for years: about 50 Tory MPs, backed by an unholy alliance of newspaper proprietors, are entirely responsible for constructing this historical impasse. This is what is really meant by democracy in England.

Given than the key spokespersons for Vote Leave had only a sketchy idea of how they would steer post-Brexit Britain to the glorious sunlit uplands of global free-trade deals, and remove hundreds of thousands of references to European Union from our statute law, there will be at least six months before Article 50 is signaled.² For one thing, the British government will have to hire at least 300

¹ On the BBC breakfast programme on June 24th, Nigel Farage admitted under fierce questioning from Susanna Reid that the central claim of Vote Leave that £350 per week which is paid to the EU (which was in any event a gross exaggeration) would be made available to fund the NHS was a “mistake” and would not be possible, even though this claim had been central to the Vote Leave campaign. The falseness of the claim had been a matter of widespread public comment from as early as February 24, 2016, when exposed by the *Financial Times* (<https://next.ft.com/content/202a6oco-cfd8-11e5-831d-09f7778e7377>) but continued to be repeated by all Vote Leave advocates and was painted on the side of the campaign’s battle bus until the vote was taken. Had any company or individual sold a product on the basis of such false representations they would have found themselves in court, and quite possibly in prison.

² David Davis, who was appointed “Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union” after the referendum vote, published an interesting analysis of the UK economy with respect to the EU on February 4th, 2016 on the Conservative Home website: <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2016/02/david-davis-britain-would-be-better-off-out-of-the-eu-and-heres-why.html>. It includes some wonderful rhetorical flourishes such as “In 1975 the EU was the bright future, a vision of a better world. Now it is a crumbling relic from a gloomy past. We must raise our eyes to the wider world.” This kind of millennialist vision informs much of what he goes on to say. We will probably be able to test the intelligence of his views around this time next year.

specialists (at vast expense) to negotiate trade treaties, work which over the last 40 years has migrated to the EU which now employs over 600 such specialists, leaving a mere 20 in the UK. Months will go by. For another, for months if not years to come the civil service will shelve all manner of important progressive measures (George Osborne's encouragement of the "Northern Powerhouse" for example) whilst they wrestle with the process of extraction. In the coming months, world history will not oblige the British by standing still. Those who voted for Remain will not give up. They will cherish the hope that events will induce a greater sense of realism in the British people. In so far as they are frustrated, their loathing for the current political establishment will grow. The Labour Party, which, having been taken over by a far left clique views the European Union as an irremediable bastion of corporate capitalism, will most probably split. A new centre-left opposition party may then emerge with pro-European Union policies. The Brexiters have won the battle, but there is a conservable danger that they have lost the hearts and minds of those who today make Britain "great".

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Notes on Contributors

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