The ESSE Messenger

In this Issue:

- Journal Articles on The Reality and Permanence of Fantasy Literature
- Book Reviews
- Guest Writer: Andrei Crisan – Interview and Short Story

Vol. 28-1 Summer 2019
ISSN 2518-3567

The ESSE Messenger

A Publication of ESSE
(The European Society for
the Study of English)

Vol. 28-1 Summer 2019
ISSN 2518-3567

The ESSE Messenger is indexed in EBSCOHOST and ERIHPLUS and listed at DUOTROPE.

Editor:

Dr. Adrian Radu
Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Faculty of Letters
Department of English
Str. Horea nr. 31
400202 Cluj-Napoca
Romania
Email address: esse.messenger@outlook.com

Cover illustration:

One Ring. User: Osa 150 [Public domain].
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6e/One_Ring.png>,
Accessed 30 May 2019.

Contents

The Reality and Permanence of Fantasy Fiction

> "Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality. It's a way of understanding it." (Lloyd Alexander)

The activity of reading implies, among other things, a process of actualization of the fictional world the readers are given access to. It is the instance when readers, have to decide what they believe and what may become factual as a result of their decision to read a particular book. In the case of a fantasy work, the readers are taken to another world that apparently has characteristics similar to the common, material one. But this world is also different from the material world since the fictional world can deny many of the laws of nature and, to a larger extent, even actual reality. The aura of realism of any fictional world is the result of the readers' unconscious decision to believe that what they see is true and actually exists or, at least, may be so. At any given moment the readers are aware of the fact that a certain fantasy world has established a link with theirs, has borrowed characteristics from theirs and has transferred them to another dimension and given them different shapes and functions. For example, C.S Lewis creates a transition between the actual world and Narnia through passages and portals, J.R.R. Tolkien in his Middle-Earth denies any connection to the actual world, even though he re-cycles his own experience from the First World War to generate his own mythology. Lewis Carroll's Wonderland is a distorted and grotesque reflection of Victorian England. Others, such as J.K. Rowling, create a different kind of transition by showing that both worlds are one and the same, but still different and less visible to uninitiated minds. George R.R. Martin's world is a surrealistic Jurassic park and hyper heroic replica of medieval society thrashed by dynastic wars. All these fantastic authors made use of the willing suspension of disbelief to initiate us into seeing and believing that there was something else beyond the confines of daily existence. The representations of the fantasy worlds make the readers become aware of the fact that, out there, other dimensions and relations exist. A string of back-to-reality translations, projections and re-creations can provide the knowledge and ability to better understand the real world. It can thus enable the readers to empathize with what they see and feel and realize that visiting a fantasy world does not necessarily mean departing from actual reality in an exercise of imagination but discovering that they are endowed with extra power and lucid vision to better perceive and understand the real world and existence. (Rationale by Tudor Rusu, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

In this context, the aim of the Summer 2019 issue of *The ESSE Messenger* is to investigate how the actual world may be reassembled and (re)presented as another possible, fictional or fantasy world, how the "willing suspension of belief" functions in the process of actualization of fantasy worlds, and to discover the possible embedded cognitive functions of fantasy literature of better knowing and comprehending our reality.

Reality Uncovered through the Mummy Legend: Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned*

Kübra Baysal
Yildirim Beyazit University, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract. A pioneer of the mummy legend, Bram Stoker's novel *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) conjures the horror of the mummy through Tera, whose body is brought from Egypt to London as part of archaeological excavation. Picturing the strict struggle between the evil and the good as well as the constant imperial and racial conflict between the west and the east, Stoker's story sets an example to Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned* (1989), which revivifies the mummy of Ramses II. Despite drawing certain similarities with Stoker's horror work, Rice's romance novel focuses mainly on Ramses' humane adventures in the-twentieth-century London and Egypt. More significantly, the mummy legend is utilised in these narratives to reflect the fin de siècle pursuits of the British Empire and the androcentric and racist mind-set prevailing throughout the twentieth century through the objectification and stigmatisation of the mummies as part of the east.

Keywords: Bram Stoker, Anne Rice, mummy, gothic, imperialism, racism.

Introduction

Irish novelist Bram Stoker wrote in the gothic fiction tradition and was mostly famous for his *Dracula* (1897). In comparison to his other works, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* is often unnoticed and thought to be less popular. Nevertheless, it takes the interest of gothic scholars in the late twentieth century when it is studied as an early example of the mummy fiction. With this in mind, as Carol Senf acknowledges, "Stoker's Gothic works—*Dracula*, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), *The Lady of the Shroud*, and *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911)—receive the greatest attention" (677). As Stoker's eight novel, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* has likewise given inspiration to several productions up to the twenty-first century. It is a horror story displaying the unfortunate events and the curse which is brought upon a family during an archaeological excavation. A sorceress and a queen, Tera, the mummy desires to resurrect and get hold of the body of the archaeologist's daughter, Margaret, who happens to be her doppelganger. The story begins as Abel Trelawny, a scholar working on Ancient Egypt is found unconscious in his study in London by his daughter, Margaret. She calls her close friend, a lawyer, Malcolm Ross for help. As the officers from Scotland Yard investigate the cause of Mr. Trelawny's comatose state and Dr. Winchester treats him, Malcolm and Margaret set to uncover the mystery.

The novel starts as classical crime fiction, *whodunit*, but later turns into supernatural horror story once Queen Tera's involvement in Mr. Trelawny's illness is detected. The mummy is in the same room with Trelawny kept within her tomb, which explains the sudden illness of the man. It is revealed that Mr.

Trelawny discovered a gem, the jewel of seven stars, in the tomb under the mummy's hand and was cursed into the unconscious state right then. As the suspense is kept alive, people accompany Mr. Trelawny every night in his study where he remains unconscious. However, each night everyone in the room is killed except for Margaret and Malcolm. Much sooner, it is understood that Margaret is Queen Tera's physical double and that she wants to steal her body away, which is the reason for deep trances Margaret experiences day and night. Nevertheless, After Abel wakes up from his illness, he guides the others through his Egyptology knowledge and blesses Margaret and Malcolm in their romantic intentions for one another. They decide to send Tera to where her astral body has come from and make a scientific experiment on her, or rather a kind of ritual, which affects Margaret as much as the mummy. In the end, Tera's mummified body vanishes and Margaret, her father and Malcolm remain the survivors of the malicious mummy. Yet, it is left ambiguous whether Margaret is herself in her own soul or is just the embodiment of Queen Tera. At this point, concerning the ending of the novel, it is suggested that "Stoker may have subsequently felt honour-bound to produce a less ambiguous and more uplifting narrative when the book was later republished, a prime example of his metaphysical inventiveness unwittingly leading him into unchartered waters" (Glover 356). Thus, Stoker may have fallen into the charm of ambiguity and open-ending in his novel to create a mysterious gothic atmosphere for his readers.

On the other hand, Irish-originated American gothic fiction writer, Anne Rice is mostly popular for her *Vampire Chronicles*. She wrote *Mummy, or Ramses the Damned* first as a script for a film production. But because the producer changed her text to a great extent, she decided to make it into a novel. Turning out to be the bestselling horror novel of 1989, *The Mummy* is a modern-day pastiche of the older versions of mummy stories. Rice borrows the qualities of traditional British thriller and changes the thriller formula into an entertaining adventure story. She uses the most legendary personalities of Egyptian culture, Ramses II along with Cleopatra and incorporates them into her gothic romance novel, *The Mummy* as strong eye-catching characters. The novel starts as Lawrence Stratford, formerly a shipping magnate but now working as an archaeologist in Egypt, finds the tomb of Ramses II and reads the papyrus left by him telling his life story. He is then quite excited to take the tomb back to his house in England. However, his nephew Henry is assisting him and plans to have Lawrence's property by killing him since he refuses to force his daughter, Julie, to marry Alex, the son of the Earl of Rutherford, Elliott. Henry has made plans with Alex to build up a joint enterprise through Alex's marriage with Julie. Thus, Henry poisons his uncle with the mummy witnessing the whole crime. After the mummy is shipped along with other things to Stratford Estate, Julie inherits all her father's property, including the tomb. Henry carries his plan a step further when he attempts to poison Julie as well. Yet, the mummy, Ramses, who has already risen due to the sunlight, stops him and protects Julie. Ramses is immortal because of an elixir which gifted him with endless life. At their first encounter, Julie and Ramses fall in love and Julie teaches him the new, modern way of life as well as technological devices. Meanwhile Ramses keeps insisting to take Lawrence's revenge on Henry, but Julie convinces him otherwise. As the two of them get more intimate, Ramses decides to visit his homeland, Egypt one last time to leave his old life behind

forever. Hence, they set out to Egypt with Henry, Julie's suitor Alex, his father Elliott and Samir, Lawrence's archaeology assistant. Visiting the significant historical and archaeological sites and museums in Cairo, Alexandria and Luxor, Ramses yearns to remember his three-thousand-year-old past. Ramses and Julie are blithe together until one day Ramses sees Cleopatra's mummy in the museum and suffers for the love he had for her during the time of Julius Caesar, Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. So, he makes his mind to revive Cleopatra with his secret formula of elixir and succeeds in his efforts. After that point, Cleopatra gets out of control and murders people, which forces him to question his hasty judgement to revive her. At the end, Cleopatra is destroyed in fire and Julie is turned into an immortal by Ramses so they can love one another forever.

1. The Victorian Influence

As *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and *The Mummy* are to be tackled through a comparative perspective, it is observed that they display similar qualities. In the novels, both stories take place in the late Victorian and early Edwardian context and reflect the Victorian concept of art and beauty and the political agenda of the time. Principally, due to Victorian fascination with mummies, starting with the discovery of mummies in the 1830-40s, mummy fiction became popular for showing the imperial power of Britain on Egypt. As Briefel aptly puts it "[…] the mummy is the type of the object which becomes a commodity simply because it becomes desirable for consumers, and is thereby drawn into economic exchange" (qtd. in Daly 264). Therefore, mummies are considered consumable commodities by the British Empire, rather than creative and supernatural creatures, as exemplified with Abel Trelawny's tradesman attitude in *The Jewel*:

> I do not know how I restrained myself when I realized that, at last, I was at least close to success. I was skilled, however, in the finesse of Eastern trade; and the Jew–Arab–Portuguese trader met his match. I wanted to see all his stock before buying; and one by one he produced, amongst masses of rubbish, seven different lamps. Each of them had a distinguishing mark; and each and all was some form of the symbol of Hathor. (72)

In his trance-like state, Trelawny explains his trades to Ross and depicts the ambitious competition among the Westerners in the eastern trade. It reduces the mummies into objects of sales and exhibition in London alongside Egypt, where mummy factories produce fake mummies for monetary benefit in *The Mummy* (17). Furthermore, the mummies are clear symbols of the imperial superiority of Britain on Egypt so that Egyptian mummies are brought to England as art and beauty objects:

> Every mummy was a mystery. Every desiccated yet preserved form a ghastly image of life in death. It never failed to chill him, to look upon these ancient Egyptian dead. But he felt a strange longing as he looked at this one-this mysterious being who called himself Ramses the Damned, Ramses the Great. (9)

Similarly in Stoker's *The Jewel*, Queen Tera and her accessories, the jewel and even her amputated hand are narrated and depicted as unique pieces of art reflecting the irrevocable tradition of the past. Besides, becoming an artwork

eventually, Tera's seven fingered hand demonstrates her artistic talents and desire to produce as she kills people with that hand in her goal of stealing Margaret's body (Briefel 265). Thus, Egyptian materials have the connotations of exotic beauty and a different notion of art for the European people as observed in *The Jewel*: "Did you ever see a set of lamps of these shapes—of any one of these shapes? Look at these dominant figures on them! Did you ever see so complete a set—even in Scotland Yard; even in Bow Street? . . . Did you ever see it before; even in the British Museum, or Gizeh, or Scotland Yard?" (49).

Then again, because the main storylines in the novels take place in the Edwardian Period, with *The Jewel* in 1903 and *The Mummy* in 1914, political turmoil of the period makes itself apparent in the narratives. The British Empire had the primary goal of taking the control over Egypt through Suez Canal for strong international connections in the Edwardian Period. It explains how and why Suez Canal and Egypt were the top agenda of British people, politicians and novelists alike. To this end, Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, though unofficially, to protect its waterways and hence, Egypt became a problematic region for both Islamic nations and other European countries. Bulfin clarifies Egypt's state during that time as follows:

> The burning issue of Britain's ambiguous relationship with Egypt became popularly known as "the Egyptian Question," a recurrent plague to British foreign policy over the ensuing decades. And indeed, contemporaneously with developments in Anglo-Egyptian politics, a subgenre of Egyptian-themed gothic fiction began to grow in popularity, within which concerns over the Egyptian situation tended to find fictional expression in the form of the supernatural invader. (412)

It displays why the late-nineteenth century imperial paranoia takes the mummy narratives as their target, reflecting the fear of the empire through horror and depicting the weakest link, Egypt, in the empirical chain. If the chain was to be broken, the whole empire would be in great trouble. This paranoia was closely connected with the *fin de siècle* disillusionment in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which manifested itself with the loss of hope and rise of depressive mode in novelists such as Richard Jefferies, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot and H.G. Wells. It gave way to a rise in utopian, dystopian, post-apocalypse, apocalypse and horror fiction reflecting the gloomy atmosphere regarding the bleakness of the future of the British Empire (Ruddick 189). Richard Jefferies's *After London, or Wild England* (1885), William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) along with other horror novels, H.G. Well's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The World of the Worlds* (1897) are only some of the examples.

Within this context, the writers of the time tackled the fears and worries of their people, which resulted in the emergence of the "Egyptian Gothic" or in other words "Egyptomania," which was "a cultural formation that emerged and permeated popular culture from the 1880s to the 1930s," not just a literature, but "a set of beliefs or knowledge in a loosely occult framework" (Bulfin 418). To this point, in *The Mummy*, the problem of Suez Canal is raised by Alex for discussion as a topical issue of the time (208). In a similar manner, even the expedition which uncovers the mummy of Tera in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* coincides with the

period when Egypt was no longer a safe tourist attraction, let alone a safe site for excavation, which is almost like a foreshadowing for Tera's impending curse on the British characters. Thereto as an Irish unionist, Stoker felt the anxiety of both sides, his own country and the British Empire, and transformed the dualistic quality of the Gothic form into symbolic level through Tera's hand, the jewel and the spreading horror in a British household. Despite the technological and scientific advancement and the influence of Modernism at the time, political context is deeply incorporated into the text in the form of supernatural and metaphysical. In other words, the horror fiction "is a far less reflexive 'Victorian' elaboration of ethno-national anxiety and a far more vivisective, incipiently Modernist, engagement with the identitarian mindset" (Valente 635).

In the same line with political agenda, anthropocentric and Eurocentric Edwardian ideas such as racial discrimination, masculinity and imperialism are clearly observed in both *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned*. In Rice's *The Mummy*, even though Ramses has brown eyes by birth, his eyes turn blue after drinking the elixir of immortality, which draws on the preferred European visage of the otherwise handsome Ramses: "[t]here had been a time in his life when dark-eyed beings were all he knew; he alone was the blue-eyed one because he had drunk the elixir" (Rice 226). Even though he mesmerises both women and men with his beauty, Ramses is made perfect after he drinks the elixir and has blue eyes like a European man. On the other side, the flow of Stoker's story is structured in such a way that it seems to reflect British ideals, namely racism. All the Arab servants and slaves are sacrificed to this purpose. They die in Tera's hands while they are trying to protect their British masters, who remain untouched. Finally, *The Jewel* reflects other problems of the empire such as male/female, science/religion or society/individual contradictions "by degeneration theory and physiological criminology, shifting constructions of masculinity in imperialism and the emergence of the manly man, related anxieties about feminine sexuality, and the odd convergence of science with the occult in 'psychical research'" (Dekoven 1915). Hence, both novels depict the Victorian anxieties and points of conflict with success.

2. Gothic and Romance Genres

The two novels employ gothic fiction characteristics by bringing the horror of the mummy into safe British houses. Firstly, Tera's haunting is expressed as "fin-de-siècle gothic revival," in other words, the gothic renaissance brought about by social, political and economic turmoil at the turn of the century (Bulfin 437). Reflecting the horror to a great extent, Queen Tera strangles people for stealing her jewel, which is the key to her resurrection and leaves red finger marks on their throats as she kills them with her amputated hand. The hand has seven fingers and gives away the identity of the killer to the people in the household (59). Furthermore, both in *The Jewel* and *The Mummy*, the evil and destructive mummy character is a woman, namely Tera and Cleopatra, who are so beautiful that they take the immediate interest of men, who fall prey to their cause. Tera benefits from Margaret's youthful body whereas Cleopatra is revived through elixir and gets hold of her astonishing body with the addition of blue eyes, which

makes her all the more appealing to European men. At this point, as an interesting point of study, it is the oriental mischievous women who allure the European men into their trap, which again calls forth the political tension between the" British Empire and Egypt. Either way, "the typical mummy of Victorian and Edwardian fiction is a woman [...] who, perfectly preserved in her youthful beauty, strongly attracts the libidinous attention of modern British men" (Bradley qtd. in Bulfin 420). They are the empowered women who circumvent the power of men despite the disadvantaged and inferior position in the eyes of both the patriarch and the west. In addition to creating strong female characters transgressing the European racism and anthropocentric binary oppositions, empowerment of these women characters can be linked to and made possible through technological development in the twentieth century as follows: "the novel [*The Jewel*] is striking in its use of scientific discovery as springboard for metaphysical conjecture, bringing questions of immortality or reincarnation into the world of radium and X-rays" (Glover 81; *The Jewel* 91). In a following fashion, *The Mummy* entertains the idea of immortality and revivification in the newly-developing technological world at the turn of the twentieth century (*The Mummy* 42). This said, the power of the supernatural women characters is demonstrated to prove the possibility of metaphysical presence at the age of science and technology, which presents another threat to the well-established British mind-set. The entrance of the Egyptian mummy into the Trelawny Estate in Notting Hill brings about not only personal conflicts in the characters but also forces them question what they have learned and seen thus far based upon their scientific and social knowledge. Eventually, they are obliged to find a solution together to get rid of the mummy's astral presence. Likewise, Abel Trelawny makes a guess about the mummy through his Egyptology knowledge after he wakes up: "[t]hat Jewel, with its mystic words, and which Queen Tera held under her hand in her sarcophagus, was to be an important factor––probably the most important––in the working out of the act of her resurrection (87).

In the same line, the dread Queen Tera radiates is felt on Margaret most severely because she is her doppelganger, therefore her primal target in her aim of resurrecting in a new and beautiful body. As the group which consists of a doctor, an archaeologist and a lawyer try to eliminate Tera's evil impact on the house and especially on Margaret, she is set free from the spiritually imprisoned and trance-like state of hers. "Timidly we each looked behind us, and then at each other. Margaret was now like the rest of us. She had lost her statuesque calm. All the introspective rigidity had gone from her; and she clasped her hands together till the knuckles were white" (98). After some negotiation about the destruction of the mummy permanently, the group agree that the queen has supernatural powers dating back to the ancient Egyptian religions. She has different gods and distinct type of practices which places her far above the limited knowledge of European men. As Abel explains in a horrified manner, "[i]f the Egyptian belief was true for Egyptians, then the 'Ka' of the dead Queen and her 'Khu' could animate what she might choose. In such case Margaret would not be an individual at all, but simply a phase of Queen Tera herself: an astral body obedient to her will!" (103). Exemplified with the fright of the mummy on Trelawny family and their acquaintances, the constant roaming of the spiritual presence of the mummy inside the house and its continuous attempts to steal Margaret's body by

murdering people around with an amputated hand are evidently sufficient elements to call Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* a gothic as well as horror novel, rather than a gothic romance novel. The romantic relationship between Malcolm Ross and Margaret is described in a naïve atmosphere as Malcolm steals brief kisses from Margaret and gets great pleasure from holding her hand. However, as the book indicates Margaret is not herself most of the time after the mummy is brought to their house because it occupies her body. Therefore, the intimate moments Malcolm has shared with Margaret may or may not have been experienced by the real Margaret. Even at the end of the book, Malcolm is happy to find Margaret in one piece even though he is doubtful about her, his future-bride's true identity, all of which underlining the gothic nature of the novel which overshadows the romantic atmosphere through the permanent horror of Tera. At the end of the book nothing but fear remains as Malcolm reflects: "I did what I could for my companions: but there was nothing that could avail. There, in that lonely house, far away from aid of man, naught could avail. It was merciful that I was spared the pain of hoping." (123)

Thereafter, Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned* exposes the frightful presence of mummies through Cleopatra, who is ravenous and lustful once she is revived, trapping and killing men after she is done with them. When Rice's gothic fiction is taken into account, it has been a part of the new Gothic form and made innovations to the genre, bearing instances from Stoker's work:

> [g]othic fictions, at the end of the twentieth century, perform a double, contrary function: exhuming the traces, calling up the residues barely charged by intensities, horrors, repulsions that would restore limits and re-mark boundaries, their vague spread only signals the disturbances and insecurity of a world without limits, one consumed by general deviations or excessive expenditures, caught up in unending simulation. (Botting 75)

Rice's gothic fiction creates such favourable and charismatic characters like Ramses as if offering people the fantasy that overcoming death is possible and one can become immortal through an elixir and even have blue eyes. It also reveals new stories which are indeed the reflection of real lives that are transformed into something more appealing. At this point, as can be commented on Rice, "[i]ndeed, with the appearance of each new novel, Rice is creating, refining, and embellishing her invented mythology" (Hoppenstand and Browne 4). In other words, Rice created both Ramses II and Cleopatra as contrasting characters, man and woman, the good as well as evil, in a way to suggest that not all mummies can be bad and destructive creatures. It presents the possibility that they are able to display human qualities: love, hate, doubts, fears and remorse, like human beings. To illustrate, after he turns Cleopatra into an immortal, Ramses is devastated for she has turned out to be greedy and lustful as she was in her past life (402). On the other hand, once Cleopatra realises her own power and appeal, she kills people randomly in rage (405). Despite that, Cleopatra proves to be human after all as she feels guilty about the people she has murdered since her resurrection, especially after she falls in love with the innocent and kind gentleman, Alex, Julie's ex-suitor. She wants to take the revenge of her dead lover, Mark Anthony by killing Ramses' beloved, Julie, but she cannot do it eventually for she feels it is wrong to do it. Therefore, it can be deduced that Rice's mummies

are more embedded in the normal flow of life because they have humanly qualities and ability to wander among people without being noticed about their supernatural quality. More importantly they display conscience, they can feel and suffer for their actions bringing them one step closer to human beings. Rice's mummies are not described in black and white as in Bram Stoker's *The Jewel*. Rather, they are confined within a zone of grey as they are not only immortals exhibiting human qualities, but also embark on acts which can result in a good or bad way. Thus, the horror posited in Rice's novel does not permeate throughout the story and goes hand in hand and mostly overshadowed by the more dominant romance story flourishing between Ramses and Julie Stratford, and then between Cleopatra and Alex. At that point, it is stated that in Rice's words, "[she] had to find a way to do it so that [she] kept the Gothic elements that [she] wanted, the poetry that [she] wanted, and the magic that [she] wanted" (Riley 125). Hence, Rice's gothic romance novel vastly differs from Stoker's dreadful story of the mummy in that Stoker's mummy is more of a monster and body-thief whereas Rice's mummies are mummy-turned-immortal human beings who can love, hate and suffer all the same.

Likewise, the two novels have romance genre qualities although the intensity of romance proves to be higher in Rice's *The Mummy*. In Stoker's *The Jewel*, Malcolm Ross falls in love with the collector's daughter, Margaret and helps her in her time of need. He is the one who expresses his love for Margaret passionately when he asks for the consent of her father for their relationship (76). Moreover, he is obsessed with holding her hand and touching her ivory skin, which is the perfect reflection of the mummy, Tera (79). Another romantic incident in the novel can be observed in the part when the mummy is devastating the household by killing people, Malcolm tries to protect his beloved, Margaret. Meanwhile, Margaret thinks the queen will protect them because they are lovers or perhaps because she does not want to harm the body she wants to possess (107). Finally, as an Edwardian text reflecting the British tradition and culture of the time, Margaret is a virgin character and Ross respects her chastity all the time. He innocently kisses her hand, adores her and tries to protect her from all dangers as a gentleman.

On the other hand, in Rice's *The Mummy*, the physical and emotional attraction between the lovers gradually progresses as Julie gives up resisting Ramses' charm towards the end of the novel. Rice is a popular novelist who has penned such elegant monsters like Vampire Lestat or Ramses, as appealing to the reader's interests because they have contradicting personal qualities. Ramses is a charming, charismatic and clever character. He has the power to lead people as he was once the great king of Egypt in his past life, who had many wives and sons and defeated many communities like Hittites. He embodies animal attraction to the other sex as all women somehow feel attracted to him once they have laid eyes on him. When Julie sees him standing for the first time in her room, she is astonished and already in love with the mummy: "[s]he was going to faint. She had read about it. She knew what it was, though it had never happened to her. But her legs were literally going out from under her and things were going dim" (79). Even though Ramses becomes her guest and she sees him around most of the time, she cannot resist him and feels clumsy around him as she thinks "this is the most beautiful man I've ever seen" (82). Additionally, Ramses is an immortal and

unlike the vampires, he suffers no weak sides of immortality because he gets his power from sunlight. He is refreshed, healed and feels more alive when his body absorbs the sun rays. No human disease or human intervention can kill him. The only side effect of his immortality is that even if he does not need physical requirements such as food or sleep to live, he craves for much food, drink, alcohol, cigarette and intense sex, which again does not turn him into a victim of immortality like the vampires who have no other choice but to hide in the darkness during daytime and to drink blood as depicted in Rice's vampire fiction works. Yet, he is called "Ramses the Damned" as "Ramses' dark curse is to forever guard his knowledge of elixir that gave him eternal life" (Hoppenstand and Browne 3). Furthermore, his fascination with Cleopatra's body and beauty is another flaw to his character, which makes him more of a human and a faulty one, which makes the reader feel much superior to him in terms of judgement. After resurrecting Cleopatra, Ramses is quite confused about his feelings: "[h]e loved her, just as he loved Julie Stratford. He loved them both" (Rice 382). It is this confusion and the naïve mistakes that make him all the more real and associable for the twentieth and twenty-first century readers.

Then again, diverging from Stoker's gothic novel, *The Mummy* exposes a sexual relationship between Ramses and Julie alongside the clear hint of the homosexual relationship between Julie's father, Lawrence, and Alex's father, Elliott in the past while they were studying together. "No one really knew the whole story, except the two men themselves. At Oxford years ago, in a carefree world, they had been lovers, and the year after they finished, they had spent a winter together south of Cairo in a houseboat on the Nile" (Rice 10). Hence, Rice exposes not only heterosexual but also homosexual relationships in her novel. So, the intensity of passion and lust in the characters of Ramses and Julie is revealed in narration as follows: "He was staring at the shape of her breasts beneath the loose silk, at the contour of her hips... It was passionate suddenly. He drew closer and reached out for her shoulders and she felt his warm fingers tighten" (93). Similar to Stoker's Margaret, Julie is also a virgin but she has been so helplessly in love with Ramses that she gives in to her passionate feelings and gives up her chastity, unlike Stoker's Margaret. At the end of the novel, the sexually innocent characters, Julie and Alex, have matured through their love relationships with Ramses and Cleopatra. Similarly with the extremity of their emotions, they lose all their hope for life after they are left behind by them: "[t]hey were older now, this young man and this young woman. There was a faint grayness in Julie's expression; there was a numbness and sullen quiet to Alex as he stood at her side" (468). Thus, Rice puts romance before gothic genre and furthermore, displays the sexual aspect of an initially innocent love story, which draws quite a different path from Stoker's gothic fiction. Even the endings of the novels show the distinction as Rice's novel brings the lovers, Ramses and Julie together and makes Julie an immortal in the end whereas Stoker's novel concludes ambiguously with the lovers unharmed, yet without providing the precise situation of the mummy, Tera.

Finally, both novels employ similar characters in the same roles such as the virginal female protagonist, Margaret and Julie, the powerful and courageous male protagonist, Malcolm and Ramses, the faithful housemaid never leaving the female protagonist alone, Mrs. Grant and Rita, the man of wisdom who knows about Egyptology and provides the necessary information about the distant

Egyptian culture in the novel, Lawrence and Elliott, Scotland Yard officers investigating the murders and mysterious incidents, and finally vicious female mummies, Tera and Cleopatra, committing murders. Alongside the character similarity, both novels make use of the mummy's hand in narration. While Tera's hand strangles people in the house, Ramses makes an experiment by pouring the elixir on a mummy's hand and realises the power of the elixir (*The Mummy* 253). In either of them, the use of mummy's hand serves to the flow of the main story and contributes to the gothic and suspenseful atmosphere in the novels.

Conclusion

In brief, Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned* are similar to a great extent in that both narratives present mummies along with love stories since they are both productions of certain Victorian mentality, politics, concept of art and commodity. They reflect the general integration of romance genre into gothic fiction. Nevertheless, they have distinctive characteristics in that Stoker's novel favours the horror genre over romance and leaves the sexual implications out whereas Rice's novel refers to the gothic to create a mysterious and interesting background for the romance and exposes various sex scenes throughout the story. Despite their differences, *The Jewel* and *The Mummy* are significant and influential fantasy fiction works in popular literature as they are in pursuit of reflecting the exotic along with the scary side of Egyptian mummies accompanied with the realities of the time to the readers up to the twenty-first century, which is welcomed with great interest and fascination.

Works Cited

Briefel, Aviva. "Hands of Beauty, Hands of Horror: Fear and Egyptian Art at the Fin de Siècle" *Victorian Studies*, Volume 50, Number 2 (2008): 263-271.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Bulfin, Ailise. "The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal" *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, Volume 54, Number 4 (2011): 411-443.

Dekoven, Marianne. "Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction (review)" *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 43, Number 4 (1997): 1014-1017.

Glover, David. "Beyond Dracula: Bram Stoker's Fiction and Its Cultural Context (review)" *Victorian Studies*, Volume 44, Number 2 (2002): 355-357.

—. *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Hoppenstand, Gary and Browne, Ray Broadus. *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996.

Rice, Anne (1989). *The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned.* Docs.Google.Pdf, https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B9NWO1wQGSLzMWU1NDBhODYtYmFkZi00NTE1LWE5NDctMzEzMzU5NGE5MDJi/edit?authkey=CN3TofUN&hl=en&pli=1.

Riley, Michael. *Conversations with Anne Rice: An Intimate, Enlightening Portrait of Her Life and Work*. Toronto: Random House, 1996.

Ruddick, Nicholas. "The Fantastic Fiction of the fin de siècle" *The Cambridge Companion to fin de siècle* (2007): 189-207 (ed. Gail Marshall).
Senf, Carol. "Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis, and the Gothic (review)" *Victorian Studies*, Volume 42, Number 4, 675-677. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999.
Stoker, Bram (2001). *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Blackmask Online.
Valente, Joseph. "'Double Born': Bram Stoker and the Metrocolonial Gothic" *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 46, Number 3 (2000): 632-645.

The Fantasy Reflection of the Real in Myke Cole's *Control Point*

Ewa Drab
University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

Abstract. Myke Cole, an author of three fantasy series and an ex-soldier, uses military fantasy as a mode of storytelling in order to refer to real-life conflicts. Both the understanding of how fantasy literature filters the real to expose particular themes or motifs and the explanation of how military fantasy as a specific subgenre can be defined are necessary to be able to delve into the world of *Control Point* (2012) and outline its mechanics, useful in describing reality with the use of fantasy tropes.

Keywords: military fantasy, parallel universes, Myke Cole, *Control Point*, reality-driven fantasy

Fantasy. The processing of the real

Fantasy literature has been commonly perceived as entertainment, escapism and the play of imagination. Nevertheless, while it assumes all of the aforementioned functions by offering visits to physically inexistent places conjured in the meanders of the writer's mind as well as by depicting exciting adventures experienced from the safe position of a reader, fantasy serves also another purpose. Brian Attebery sees fantasy as something deeper than a mere fancy, which he underlines by writing: "I cannot agree with those who say that all fantasy amounts to an irresponsible evasion of reality, but certain types of fantasy do avoid full commitment to the fictional world and thus to its moral and philosophical implications" (109). Clearly, fantasy stories propose elusion to a certain degree, even if it means that the connotations to reality disappear due to the superficiality of an imagined universe. This also derives from the need of uninhibited freedom stemming from the lack of limitations associated with fantasy and imagination.

Nonetheless, when the fictional world is described in detail, it creates an illusion of being real, even if it continues to exist only in the space of literature, mediated through language and inventiveness. In such conditions, when the image of a certain reality has been created, another step can be taken, which usually means asking questions pertaining to society, politics or religion. The relevance to the real seem to be more obvious or visible in imaginary spaces modelled after the real world, drawing from the concepts of alternative realities and fantasies intruding upon the familiar reality of the planet Earth, exposed through inconspicuous changes, or "…those set in the primary world, in which context the introduction of a magical object or supernatural being is disruptive" (Stableford 217). It should be noted, however, that the nature of the intrusion does not have to be linked directly to the mundane since disruption can also concern independent fantasy worlds as the otherworldly might be rendered "…more "real" by virtue of the juxtaposition" (Mendlesohn 114). In short, the real manifests itself

in fantasy with detailed secondary worlds, the intrusion of the uncanny within the primary world or of less fantastic elements upon more fantastic ones and with the transposition of the real-life themes on the canvas of fantasy.

What is more, the latest contributions in the fantasy book market from writers around the globe prove that if the described world is deprived of the attachments to the extra-literary reality, such a universe still makes reference to it and processes it with the use of its own instruments. Abstracting Apter's remarks, this presumably results from the fact that a fantastic plot could have the same purpose as a realistic story. Moreover, "…fantasy is essential to the authors' various purposes, which must be understood not as an escape from reality but as an investigation of it" (Apter 2). Apparently, fantasy has ceased to be a space of isolation, stereotyped as a form of unserious distraction mainly targeted at younger readers or less demanding audiences and compared to fairy tales. The complexity of plots, characters and themes in fantasy narratives contributes to the upgrade of the genre's status. This particular approach towards the representation of reality in the framework of the genre correlates with what Nnedi Okorafor, writer and researcher, calls organic fantasy. In consequence, Okorafor links the uncanny with the familiar or the extraordinary with the mundane and writes that "[t]his type of fantasy grows out of its own soil" (277). Nevertheless, it needs to have a source or a base on which it can thrive, which means that it "…blooms directly from the soil of the real" (Okorafor 278). Similarly to horror, truly terrifying when processing common fears, fantasy actually works when it draws from what the reader knows, even if it has been disguised as exotic or inconceivable. This is possible because fantasy "…has the power to make something familiar strange" (Okorafor 278). As a mode, fantasy has evolved into a system which allows to draw attention to selected topics, as if looking through a magnifying glass.

In many contemporary works, fantasy communicates the real in a direct manner by incorporating into its structures numerous reality-driven themes. The prose of Trudi Canavan or China Miéville can among others provide examples of such an approach to the relation between fantasy and reality. Canavan's *Kyralia* series, including the *Black Magician* (2001-2003) and the *Traitor Spy* (2010-2012) trilogies, tackles topics such as gender equality, class division and gay discrimination. The author brings current issues from life to a fantastic world that she created based on the principles of generally accepted social interactions. At the beginning of the series, Sonea, the female protagonist, antagonizes the elitism of the magical university and suffers from oppression from her peers because of her weak social position. In *The Ambassador's Mission* (2010), the character has already achieved her goals and has won recognition from others but still struggles with reluctance towards a woman in power. Another thread in the series is the homosexual relationship of one of the secondary characters, who needs to continue being discreet about his true sexual identity because of possible negative repercussions resulting in persecution. Obviously, these topics have been repeatedly discussed in the public debate, with the lack of equal rights, different types of discrimination and deepening divisions in the center of the discourse.

Miéville, on the other hand, concentrates in *Un Lun Dun* (2007), a young adult fantasy novel, on the problem of air pollution, with the Smog presented as the main villain of the story. Thus, the author points to the urgency of the threat posed by pollution, which situates the novel in the area close to the real-life world and in reference to the era of the Anthropocene. Naturally, the plot has been simplified in order to correspond to the requirements of fantasy for younger audiences, yet the message is clear and concerns humanity's and the planet's future in a very real context. Furthermore, the real issues constitute the fragments of the extra-literary reality, which may be treated as the substance used to build a fantasy universe that will feel important, comprehensible and familiar to the reader. Hence, many contemporary writers, who perhaps search for methods to give fantasy an additional meaning, use the genre to process what they encounter on a daily basis.

Myke Cole. The author of military fantasy

Myke Cole is an example of an author who perceives fantasy literature similarly, namely as a device enabling a contemplation of the extra-literary reality. The writer observes that "[w]e want our stories to reflect the world around us, in all its unfathomable variety. Authors and fans alike are drawing attention to underrepresented cultures in genre fiction, and the result is a broadening of the market in response" (Cole, "Military Fantasy: What is "Military"?"). In other words, by referring to the life experience of the readers, fantasy becomes relevant and relatable, or closer to the recipient. With fables and myths addressing universal issues through symbolism and allegory, fantasy seems even more dedicated to describing the real world through the lens of the extraordinary. The optics discussed and applied by Cole in order to make reference to the questions of human relationships as well as social and political dynamics is mostly military fantasy and, to some extent, science fantasy. The choice of the subgenre, even if unconscious, also stems from reality, with Cole being "a security contractor, government civilian and military officer" ("About Myke"). The author served in Iraq and became a specialist in the military-themed novels afterwards.

Indeed, Cole's experience in the military equipped him with the knowledge useful in designing imaginative worlds, allowing them to grow into credible creations. He has written three fantasy series, namely *Shadow Ops* (2012-2014), *The Reawakening* (2015-2017) and *The Sacred Throne* (2018-). His debut focuses on the world in which any person can suddenly manifest magical talents and instantly become a fugitive who must be captured and restrained. The next trilogy in the author's bibliography revisits in a form of a prequel the universe conceived in *Shadow Ops*. The last series offers an entirely new premise and fantastic world, where the use of magic releases infernal forces. In consequence, an institution of the Order attempts to counteract the opening of the portal to hell by killing wizards and by following the principle according to which the end justifies the means. The writer's past as a soldier and the interest in the mechanics of war must have also contributed to the creation of Cole's historical non-fiction, such as *Legion versus Phalanx* (2018), which explores the tactics and other characteristics of the two eponymous formations.

Even if Cole does not support genre classifications or any other type of designation, the novels he writes bear the marks of military fantasy, described by the author himself in the broad sense of the term. As he states, "[w]herever two or more professional killers band together to visit violence on an enemy, you have a military," but at the same time the limits as well as the understanding of the notion remain fluid, which is demonstrated in the texts written by fantasy and science fiction authors of different predilections in the field of imaginative world-building, for example Joe Abercrombie or Jack Campbell, and it is difficult or even impossible to clearly indicate "…what the military experience means. And it is in that bloody, cordite-encrusted variety that we can see our fiction truly reflect the real world" (Cole, "Military Fantasy: What is "Military"?"). Apparently, the question of representation in literature, in terms of class and minorities, can be addressed through any means, also with the help of military fantasy. The variety of available options of how to project the subgenre on the canvas of a particular story shows simultaneously that the concept of diversity fits perfectly the fantasy optics. In other words, different perspectives adopted by the writers are used in order to embrace the multitude of themes depicting the outside world and everyday reality.

Brian Stableford's perception of the military fantasy subgenre seems to be oriented in a different direction. The researcher associates the term with science fiction, even pointing to the clear distinction of military SF, with fantasy literature being preoccupied with armies, training and tactics mostly in heroic fantasy or strictly in reference to "…a fascination for medieval arms and armor, especially swords" (Stableford 279). It is possible, however, to see Cole's stories, notably the *Shadow Ops* trilogy, as the fusion of the two views on military fantasy. Naturally, the subgenre in question has evolved over years and this fact should be taken into consideration. As a result, *Control Point*, the first installment in the said series, combines Cole's and Stableford's conceptions of military fantasy as well as modern and classical fantasy tropes by offering to the reader a world of military conflict, parallel spaces and motifs often linked to science fiction. Nevertheless, the presented conflict does not only serve the purpose of fueling the action of the story. It also constitutes, clearly as intended by the author, a tool for the deconstruction of real-life struggles, mostly connected with the questions of representation, persecution and diversity. Moreover, the story seems to encourage an interpretation of the text in the terms of postcolonial narratives.

Control Point. The world(s) of conflicts

Control Point, which opens the *Shadow Ops* trilogy as Cole's debut novel, offers a complex perspective on both the genre and the imaginative interpretation of the extra-literary reality. The initial part of the story anchors the narrative in the alternative Earth-like universe, where the environment could bring the illusion of being the representation of the world the readers are familiar with only to signalize the shift into a fantasy space by introducing the uncanny into the plot. The protagonist is Oscar Britton, a lieutenant attached to Supernatural Operations Corps, a unit dealing with magically-talented individuals, who, if not

trained, may become a threat to society. At the beginning of the story, the main character participates in the operation of apprehending a boy deemed dangerous by the command. The extraordinary nature of the situation is revealed with the description of the child's incredible abilities. The information that he is "…wreathed in a bright ball of fire" (Cole 3) needs a moment to be properly understood, with all the implications regarding the youngster's magical nature and the properties of the presented world. The reason for it may be the clash between the modern military involved in a scene resembling an attempt to terminate a terrorist and magic embodied by a child controlling fire and flames.

Nonetheless, the first chapter of the story instantaneously sketches an image of a country which operates almost the same as in the real world, with slight modifications and adjustments. In the United States of America shown in *Control Point*, the authorities have established policies facilitating the interception and the arrest of the individuals suffering from the so-called latency, a state in which random people develop special magical skills overnight. The term "…has become part of the magical jargon. […] It's the catchall for anyone touched by the Great Reawakening and a sign of how quickly we've adapted to this new reality" (Cole 1). The introduction to the novel suggests that the world known to the readers outside of the text existed in the past but has been replaced by a new one. This particular modification to the familiar opens the door to the uncanny whereas the attachment to the real references makes the story keep avoiding escapism, frequently coupled with independent fantasy worlds.

In the novel, the newly-turned sorcerers without control of their talents face a choice of being a wanted fugitive chased by the well-trained military or joining the force and learning to become a wizarding soldier, an asset to the American army in the process of suppressing unusual threats. Since they are not permitted to independently decide their fate, the behavior of the government resembles an organized oppression of the other. The society is scared of what an average person does not understand or know and treats the extraordinary skills of the chosen ones as a dangerous weapon. For them, "[m]agic is the new nuke" (Cole 42). The powers that are easier to control, namely air- or water-related, form legal schools and are exploited by the state, naturally when an individual reports their condition or is apprehended by the military as a selfer or, in other words, a rebel. However, the government establishes a prohibition on special talents that are too powerful to be manageable, such as witching or necromancy (Cole 34). In the eye of the public, the guilty of illegal magic face the risk of immediate death sentence, even if in truth their marvelous abilities might earn them a place in special military programs. People are also unaware of the fact that certain magical individuals can be used by the state to fight both magical creatures and rebellious Americans, which generates the protagonist's moral dilemmas later in the course of the story. In other words, a conflict between the non-magical majority and the magical minority shapes the reality of the novel.

Oscar Britton joins the group of spontaneous sorcerers by developing the talent for gate magic, called Portamancy, which is one of the prohibited schools of magic. His attempt to flee, prompted by the fear of being condemned to death or killed on sight for being latent, quickly ends in failure. The protagonist, who used to hunt down the magically talented individuals, explores the other side of the conflict. As the authorities insert a tracking device into his body, Britton

becomes a territory where magic and technology meet. The so-called Asset Tracking and Termination Device, or ATTD, evolves into a symbol of domination and restraint. As one of the characters phrases it: "We'll always be able to find you. We can always take you out on either side of the gate" (Cole 71-72). The question of control determines the future of the protagonist when the army surprisingly offers him a position of a government contractor working for the Entertech Corporation. Only after he accepts the job and signs the nondisclosure agreement, is he spared a death sentence. When Britton feels he becomes a slave and is riposted with a remark of slaves not getting choices, the protagonist answers with the following words: "I wouldn't call do-this-or-die a choice" (Cole 75). The theme of submission reappears regularly, also when Britton is transported to the Portcullis base and witnesses a Portamancer boy suffering from pain and excruciating effort it costs him to open a portal from Home Plane to another dimension. As the child's misery does not influence the military's decisions, his obedience is most likely forced by a similar ultimatum to Britton's.

Consequently, the protagonist joins a covert program which is supposed to facilitate the victory over a parallel universe. One of the wizards states this particular goal quite clearly by saying the following: "We're conquering the magic kingdom" (Cole 116). A parallel world constitutes "[a] world situated "alongside" our own" whereby the "[m]ovement between the primary world and parallel secondary worlds forms the basis of most modern portal fantasies" (Stableford 312). This specific trope moves Cole's fantasy to another context. The position of the presented universe changes as the alternative to the real-life USA transforms into a part of a system of parallel worlds. The juxtaposition of different spaces broadens the perspective and allows the placement of special emphasis on the questions interesting from the point of view of reality. The use of the uncanny aims at drawing the reader's attention to particular subjects, which is possible thanks to the power of contrast and exaggeration. The themes the author seems to investigate in the novel could be limited to persecution of the other, abuse of power by the state and suppression of the indigenous cultures by the white man. In short, the different becomes the enemy, as it has already been proven with the examples of how the government controls the wizarding minority.

Furthermore, the idea to structure the *Control Point* universe around the model of parallel worlds opens a path towards expansion, literally and figuratively. The structure of the universe becomes extended, which leads to the shift between the types of fantasy represented by the novel, thus morphing from intrusion fantasy into portal fantasy. This particular subgenre "…is about entry, transition, and exploration" (Mendlesohn 2) since it introduces the characters into a different plane of events to which they have access through a magical entrance or a portal. In Cole's story, thanks to the extraordinary ability of opening doors to distant places, sorcerers similar to the protagonist constitute an opportunity for the army and an incentive to explore or colonize other areas. Metaphorically speaking, the portal fantasy model makes Britton rethink the balance of power he has been accustomed to. As he crosses the frontier between the worlds, he is forced to face the other by simultaneously determining his position in relation to the invaded space. Since the human newcomers attempt to subjugate the indigenous people of goblins, discriminate against them and finally fight them, to redefine one's values and views is unavoidable. The shock of

meeting the unknown reveals itself at the first passage from Home Plane to the Source, a realm where the Forward Operating Base is located, when Britton learns the fantastic beings from legends exist and oppose the invader. Interestingly, the name of goblins come from humans, who adjust what they observe to the familiar conceptual framework. Hence, "[u]ntil somebody comes up with something better – they're Goblins" (Cole 92). Nevertheless, the indigenous creatures are at the same time denied recognition outside of human perception. They need to be subjugated with the means of language and by a familiar label which deprives them of unidentified characteristics. One of the protagonist's colleagues states that goblins call themselves differently, namely water babies or the creatures of magic, and that no one should impose the name on them, but "you start to fall into it since everyone around you does" (Cole 109).

The evolution of the plot regarding the indigenous population strongly echoes similar conflicts in the real world, ranging between different scales of the problem. The oppression of the goblins, including those helping humans and working for them, refers to the persecution of any minority, be it ethnic or sexual. The comparison to bigger-scale conflicts reveals significant similarities to any case of subjugation in the history of wars and conquest. Consequently, the attempted dominance of the human race over goblins can be discussed in relation to colonization, slavery or even fascism. The creatures are kept in the base as prisoners of war "wearing blue jumpsuits like prison uniforms" with "at least two soldiers in full battle gear standing watchfully by" (Cole 96). Almost everyone involved displays a distrustful attitude towards goblins, considered as potential threats or spies. Moreover, dissected in order to constitute an easier target for the human attackers, the indigenous population also serves as a research material.

The author illustrates the case of goblin mistreatment with the story of Marty, a goblin medic who befriends magical outcasts from Britton's unit. Thus, the reader can better understand the discrimination of the locals by engaging emotionally in their abuse. Marty attempts to adapt to the community of the base, for example by speaking broken English and coming to help whenever it is needed, despite the obstacles he must overcome, for example hostility and aggression, and the high rank he has in the goblin hierarchy. Nonetheless, Marty represents a community of sharply different individuals, dominated by the occupiers, perceived through the prism of fear of the unknown and the enforced system of power. The goblin will not be served in a bar or be treated as an equal, similarly to real-life minority groups. Even when a soldier is burned during a missile attack and needs immediate medical attention, other humans refuse to be aided by a representative of the indigenous population. One of them expresses his frustration and xenophobia by shouting: "He is a fucking Goblin, and he's going to kill him!" (Cole 113). Not until they are confronted by Britton, do they change their approach. As one of possible examples, the animosity between humans and the locals showcases how the mechanisms of real conflicts are repeated and employed in the fantasy frame of reference. Real-life antagonisms find a reflection in the imaginary proving that fantasy might have a transformative power opening a path towards various readings of the reality-based themes.

The (un)real in fantasy. Conclusion

The serious questions raised by Cole in the novel are re-read with the use of fantasy instrumentation made available to the author thanks to the introduction of the parallel worlds as well as portal and intrusion fantasy models. Once again referring to Okorafor, the uncanny grows from the soil of the real. Despite the fact that an action-packed and creative storyline remains the heart of the novel, the feeling of analyzing the real is intensified through language. For example, Cole depicts modern warfare, with its state-of-the-art weaponry and equipment, also with the help of a glossary placed at the end of the book. However, even this particular section is only partially devoted to the exploration of the real within a fantasy framework since the military vocabulary describing the reality of actual soldiers clashes with the imagination-induced devices and military institutions. By referring to what he knows in depth, Cole builds imaginary structures upon the real one and, therefore, proposes lexis which would have been used had the world gone in the direction presented in the book, with modern wizardry and magically-trained mercenaries. Clearly, even on the level of language and vocabulary, *Control Point* proves to be dedicated to the concomitance of the real and fantasy, with the latter mirroring but also reinterpreting the former. As seen in the above-mentioned examples, the said interrelationship encompasses the whole novel, understood as a system assigned to the literary category of military fantasy and as the presented story. Thus, the novel exemplifies the configuration in which fantasy literature draws from the real and, instead of coloring it, departing from or evading it, discusses real subjects as well as illustrates them with the help of a specific set of tools, similarly to other types of fiction equipped with diverse instruments.

Fantasy processes reality by adopting various approaches, namely by modelling the fantasy world after the real one, employing exaggerations or hyperbolas, constructing comparisons and parallels or debating issues present in the public discourse with the use of fantasy language, which changes the optics. It could be said that reality provides the material whereas fantasy offers the means to process it. Moreover, the genre paraphrases the real, for example by altering the perception of known mechanisms or topics and permitting the recipient to go beyond the expected interpretation. This is what Cole does in his novel. The author creates a fictitious image of a real country where a minority is persecuted and the government services embark on a task of colonizing the other. Without mentioning the magical character of the hunted outsiders or the otherworldly location of the appropriated territory, it would be natural to think that the context for the raised questions is the world as the readers know it. Therefore, in *Control Point*, these are reality-driven themes and the juxtaposition with the mundane that show most visibly how the genre has the ability to reflect the real. After all, "…fantasy is the most accurate way of describing reality" (Okorafor 279), and perhaps it is so because the fantasy filter gives the necessary distance and perspective.

References

"About Myke." *MykeCole.com*, mykecole.com/press-contact/. Accessed 12 May 2019.

Apter, T.E. *Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality*. Springer, 1984.
Attebery, Brian. *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature*. Indiana University Press, 1980.
Cole Myke. *Control Point*. Ace Books, 2012.
Cole, Myke. "Military Fantasy: What is "Military"?." *Tor.com*, 28 Jan 2014, www.tor.com/2014/01/28/military-fantasy-what-is-military/. Accessed 12 May 2019.
Mendlesohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
Okorafor, Nnedi. "Organic fantasy." *African Identities*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2009, pp. 275-286, dx.doi.org/10.1080/14725840902808967.
Stableford, Brian. *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy*. Lanham, 2005.

The Quest for Belief

(Non)-humanity in Kurt Vonnegut's Short Story "Jenny"

Fernanda Luísa Feneja
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (ULICES), Portugal.

Abstract. Genre issues pervade much criticism of fantasy, the fantastic and science fiction, generating controversy on the blurring boundaries between science fiction and fantasy. The relationship man-machine and the humanisation of man-made artificial bodies epitomise themes of science fiction that evince its intersection with fantasy. This article discusses how "Jenny", Kurt Vonnegut's short story in *While Mortals Sleep* (2011), draws together the concepts of belief and disbelief, related with fantasy, and a classical sci-fi motif — artificial creatures. The story's structure and plot develop out of this conjunction of elements — as does the reflection it invites on the essence of humanity and the contemporary meaning of the narrative.

Keywords: fantasy, science fiction, non-humans, humanity, technology

> Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves?
> And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?
> And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?
> And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?
> (Walt Whitman, *I Sing the Body Electric*)

Introduction

The dawn of the twenty-first century has witnessed incomparable technological advances in all fields of science, impacting the development of society at large and individual lives at practically every level. Daniel Dinello outlines three major landmarks in the history of human development, all of them pivotal to redefining our position in the world: Copernican heliocentrism, Darwin's evolution of the species, and Freud's findings on the human mind (Dinello, 2005, pp. 5-6). But the subsequent evolution of the human being has brought us so far that the consequences of our own achievements are now hard to control; as he notes, while computers threaten to beat human intelligence, artificial creatures such as cyborgs or clones evoke a disquieting degree of power (Dinello, 2005, p. 6). Additionally, whereas in real life this type of being is still confined to specific fields, such as technological applications or genetics, in the world of fiction non-human characters of different types challenge human power and genius. Because such invented creatures owe their existence, even if merely speculative, to the breakthroughs of science, they have been considered, mostly, as typical devices of science fiction, including in its utopian and dystopian variants. However, both in literature and in cinema, artificial creatures also play a key role in fantastic and/or horror stories and thus represent a pivotal aspect to consider when discussing the

nature and limits of science fiction and fantasy. It is important to observe that what unifies all these inventions is their non-human nature, which is definable, above all, against what we identify as human. Emblematic narratives have addressed and questioned the issue of human identity, from the genetic experiments of H. G. Wells' Doctor Moreau to the acknowledgement of emotion and compassion in *Blade Runner*, based on the sci-fi novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, by Philip K. Dick, to cite only two.

Kurt Vonnegut's novels and short stories address such issues in different ways, and although he is considered a mainstream writer, many of his writings depict characteristics that easily make them fall into the category of science fiction. This article proposes a close reading of one of Vonnegut's early short stories, "Jenny", collected in the posthumous *While All Mortals Sleep* (2011), and aims to discuss the contribution of fantasy and science fiction to the representation of human identity in a particular type of narrative construction, as well as to the questions it raises on human limits.

1. Science fiction, fantasy and the fantastic

As far back as 1970, Tzvetan Todorov defined the fantastic as the moment of uncertainty experienced by a reader in the face of events that defy the natural, normal rules of our known world. Such a hesitation relies upon the concepts of *real* and *imaginary*, which correlate, respectively, with two different ways of explaining apparently supernatural occurrences (Todorov, pp. 25-27). Todorov's theory pays particular attention to the uncanny, the marvelous, poetry and allegory. In his framework, science fiction departs from the fantastic as the supernatural narrative elements turn out to be part of our everyday life. In other words, hesitation wanes as the reader eventually acknowledges the naturalness of what initially appears as supernatural (Todorov, 1973, pp. 74-75).

Other prominent voices in the field hold similar views on the differentiation of science fiction from the fantastic and from fantasy. Ursula Le Guin, herself a sci-fi writer, contends that "fantasy" includes all sorts of imaginative fiction except science fiction. For her, the explainable and the answerable are distinctive traits of the genre; the intellect controls imagination, unlike in fantasy, where "reasons unknown to Reason" (Le Guin, 1981, p. 12) are accepted. Darko Suvin, who contributed important notions to the definition of the genre, clearly pinpoints scientific cognition as the defining element of science fiction, which means that any form of metaphysical experience would render a story supernatural (1979). Writing about the nature of science fiction in 1969, Robert Heinlein candidly avows that it is not fantasy, but rather speculative fiction that deals with the "imaginary-but-possible" (Heinlein, 1969, p. 18).

These positions all share the belief that the rational, the believable, or at least explicable, together with scientific elements, make science fiction a separate genre from fantasy. However, opposing theories do not reject such criteria. In his history of science fiction, Adam Roberts concludes that there is no consensus among critics as to what exactly should define the genre. While some even consider it a branch of the fantastic or non-realist fiction, others contend that it is defined by a differentiated world-view from the actual world, involving some

sort of technological devices and scientific discourse (Roberts, 2005, p. 2). Roberts eventually decides on the latter, thus opting for the term "technology fiction", buttressed by Heidegger's philosophical view of technology as a way of "enframing" the world (p. 18). Nevertheless, as far as the difference between fantasy and science fiction is concerned, he associates each term with the Catholic and the Protestant fictive worldviews, respectively. Even if there is not a strict correspondence between each genre and religion, the *corpus* of texts and their authors provide here a historical framework to better understand the tradition of science fiction (p. 19). Most important for the present analysis is that this "cleavage" (p. 19), as he calls it, allows contamination, which further reinforces the idea of why fantasy and science fiction so often overlap.

The theoretical discussion of this issue has been so extensive over the history of the genre/s, involving such a high number of relevant and opposing contributions in the field, that it becomes hard to map out the lines of battle. To add to its complexity, similar views also include variants. Therefore, I shall restrict this brief overview to the perspectives I consider more relevant for my analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's "Jenny", in keeping with the aims of this article.

As an example, Erik Rabkin offers a more inclusive theory. He uses an inductive approach to establish a continuum of the fantastic, ranging from Realism (at point 10 in his scale) to Fantasy (point 10) (Rabkin, 1979, p. 165). Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) is thus the paradigm of Fantasy, as both the protagonist and the reader share the same kind of astonishment in face of an ordinary experience that functions itself as a reversal of the ground rules of the real world (pp. 20-21).

Rabkin's categories list the fantastic but not science fiction. The reason why this is so, applies not only to science fiction but also to many other traditional genres, as he calls them, such as westerns, detective or picaresque fiction, among others. What is important is that each genre will fit into Rabkin's stages of the fantastic according to its minimal degree of the fantastic involved (p. 172). The use of the fantastic, he further observes, explains why the term "Fantasy" often replaces the name of the genre of a given work. In addition to this, several stories exemplify the coexistence of fantasy with any other genre (for example, Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* is, for Rabkin, both science fiction and fantasy (p. 172). Rabkin's study provides a relevant perspective, by acknowledging, on the one hand, the diversity of fantastic literature and, on the other, the overarching role of fantasy as an additional concept in the theory of genres.

Another fundamental stance as regards the permeability of science fiction and fantasy is Thomas Clareson's, who, in 1971, edited a collection of essays titled *Science Fiction: the Other Side of Realism*. In the opening chapter, Clareson himself refers to science fiction, from the late nineteenth century onwards, as a "new fantasy", a "modern fantasy" (p. 9) or "the newest form of fantasy" (p. 24). This, he argues, was initially a response to the new age of science, quite diverse from that of the rising naturalism and realism currents in literature at the time:

> The essential difference between the parallel streams of literary response lay in this: whereas realism-naturalism reacted to the threat of nihilism incipient in the newly emphasized concept of a mechanistic universe, science fiction reacted to the headlines, to the more obvious accomplishments of the age (Clareson, 1971, p. 9).

This reaction would find its expression in most motifs that became typical of science fiction, such as a Martian civilization, the fascination for prehistory and evolution, wars of the future, or the lost race (pp. 9-11). However, Clareson pertinently notes that a number of mainstream fiction works in the late nineteenth century made use of classic science fiction motifs and themes, although they are considered realist or naturalist (pp. 12-13). Clareson's position differs from Rabkin's mainly because he focusses on literary streams (the dichotomy realism/science fiction) while the latter's approach rests more on a reflection on genre (fantasy/traditional genres). Nonetheless, both lines of thought converge where the terms science fiction and fantasy often overlap, as well as when dealing with the crisscrossing nature of science fiction traits.

Other renowned contributors to Clareson's collection support the blurring boundaries of science fiction and fantasy by alluding to aspects such as the following:

(1) fantasy involves science, as it sets out both to determine the real, natural laws of the world and to change it; romantic, realistic or scientific fantasy are some of its different forms, the latter considered to be heralded by the writings of Jules Verne (Kagarlitski, 1971, pp. 53-54);

(2) Anthony Boucher's use of a broader concept, science-fantasy, to refer to the whole body of rational, imaginative, speculative fiction. This editor's importance lies, in Judith Merril's perspective, in his fight for the recognition of the literary quality of science fiction stories in the fifties (Merril, 1971, pp. 79-80);

(3) the claim that the artistic status of science fiction is better achieved when it correlates with pure fantasy — in other words, when science fiction makes use of elements typical of fantasy, even if in the form of fictional devices from the realm of science possibilities (Stevenson, 1971, pp. 102-103);

(4) the identity of science fiction and fantasy argued for by Alexei Panshin, as he contends that science fiction can depend neither on accuracy nor on science, but rather on its inner consistency while addressing "the limitless world of the imagination" (Panshin, 1971, p. 332).

It is telling that the debate over the boundaries of science fiction and fantasy has remained a key topic throughout the history of the genre, going beyond the field of literature, as works ranging from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to recent Netflix series such as *Stranger Things* (2016) consistently exemplify. Equally important is the fact that theories dating from the thirties, fifties and sixties, such as those by H. G. Wells (1933), Robert Heinlein (1947), or Darko Suvin (1968) remain central to latest academic studies and continue to generate and to support current debate.

2. Kurt Vonnegut's "Jenny": on the vague limits of science fiction

Science fiction's hybridity, diversity and wide-ranging nature, particularly as regards its connection with fantasy, constitute working premises to which the discussion in this essay adheres. How then does Kurt Vonnegut's short story "Jenny" fit into this theoretical framework? "Jenny" is the first story in the posthumous collection *While Mortals Sleep*, published in 2011 but which includes sixteen of Vonnegut's early writings from the fifties (the exact date of each

narrative is not given). Reviews of the book concur in the idea that its stories in general fall short of the writer's subsequent quality, for lack of depth in character treatment, for their simple, too openly moralist tone, or for being tailored to the specific demands of the dominant publishing milieu of the genre in the fifties – pulp magazines. Nonetheless, they are seen as incipient expressions of Vonnegut's craft that already show his humanist concerns and strong moral speech (Hopley, 2011; Britt, 2011; Sheehan, 2011), while the reviewers' tone seems somewhat determined by the halo effect of the writer's ensuing work.

Most stories in *All Mortals Sleep* depict common situations lived through by average people and share few if any narrative devices from the realm of fantasy or of science fiction. Yet, some of them, "Jenny", "With His Hand on the Throttle", "Girl Pool", explore the relationship between human beings and technology in a similar way to those branches of science fiction and fantasy that question human progress from a promethean perspective. Ryan Britt observes that the strongest stories in the collection are those that prefigure Vonnegut's later standard, such as "Jenny", even if in this, he further notes, the narrative potential of the plot is not fully developed in those terms (Britt, 2011, p. n/p). The story, in fact, revolves around an ingenious salesman who uses a robot-refrigerator called Jenny, which he himself created, to sell home appliances as he travels in a van across the country. Jenny apparently behaves like a real woman, but because the devices that make this possible are overtly exposed in the narrative, Britt considers that the story "remains small and human" (Britt, 2011, p. n/p).

This point of view raises relevant questions that the analysis of "Jenny" in this article intends to challenge, as regards (1) the story's traits as one of science fiction, (2) the discussion of human identity that it provokes, and (3) the idea of belief, which correlates with theories on fantasy.

2.1 "The Other Side of Realism"?

That science fiction can be described as "the other side of realism" in its imaginative response to the new developments in society (Clareson, 1971), or that it is a kind of literature that explores the range of the possible according to scientific knowledge, should be enough to label "Jenny" as science fiction (Butor, 1971, p. 158) despite its realistic setting.

In fact, the events take place in America, in the fifties, and the success of the General Household Appliances Company (GHA) for which the main character, George Castrow, works, reflects the post-war economic boom and the rising middle-class standard of living, which, together with technological advances, fuelled the demand for new household appliances. In addition, George's professional activity also fits in with the growing advertising industry of the time:

> Jenny and George went from appliance dealer to appliance dealer all over the United States and Canada. They would dance and sing and crack jokes until they'd collected a good crowd in a store. Then they would make a strong sales pitch for all the GHA appliances standing around doing nothing (Vonnegut, p. 4).

However mimetic of contemporary society the narrative categories of place and time may be, the robot (in the story, a robot-refrigerator) constitutes a typical motif of science fiction that embodies scientific and technological progress in

addition to defining an important body of science fiction works, among which Isaac Asimov's are paragon. The word "robot" was coined in 1920 by Karel Capek, with his play "Rossum's Universal Robots" (1921) and although these artificial creatures were made of organic material, in the vein of Frankenstein's monster, the word became used to refer to subsequent mechanical beings. When defining robots, Stanislaw Lem maintains that one of their roles in science fiction is "an attempt at futurological prediction", that is, hypothetical thinking machines (Lem, 1971, p. 312).

In the fifties, when "Jenny" was written, the utilitarian functions of robots were, from their outset, used mainly on industrial assembly lines; in the sixties, the space race further developed the potential of robotic science so as to meet the requirements of exploring the "new frontier". Only in the eighties were robots significantly included in domestic life, as self-moving machines now able to perform household chores such as cleaning on a practically autonomous basis. Hence, as a home appliance, Jenny – the character – would correspond to a future device, a humanised appliance, a domestic robot, not yet in existence at the time, which somewhat undermines the time references explicit in the text (from 1934 to 1954 – "twenty years later" (Vonnegut, 2011, pp. 4,12), thus bringing it closer to a typical sci-fi story:

> Taking modern science in its broadest acceptation, not only other devices, but technologies of all kinds – psychological, pedagogical, social, etc. … this scientific guarantee may become increasingly loose, but it nonetheless constitutes the definable specificity of SF (Butor, 1971, p. 158).

Also, the robot *per se,* as a narrative element, may testify to the combination of fantasy and science fiction, as discussed above, as objects can be considered fantastic in accordance with the following criteria: non-existing objects; those we are not familiar with; those that belong to a foreign culture; or that are only potentially possible (Cassiday, 1989, p. 4). Jenny, the robot, is part of the American culture, especially considering the socioeconomic and historical context, but meets all other criteria.

It can be seen, therefore, that Vonnegut's writing in general invites considerations about its place in terms of genre and literary streams. Major themes of science fiction, such as disquiet about the negative impact of technology on human beings or criticism of massive industrialization are approached in many of his works; for example in his first novel, *Player Piano* (1952), a dystopian narrative, or in his canonical novel *Slaughterhouse 5* (1969). In this one, although based on Vonnegut's own personal experience during World War II as a prisoner of war in Dresden, having survived the Allied firebombing in 1945, he makes use of science fiction elements such as the *Tralfamadorian* aliens. Equally important is the ever-present Kilgore Trout, a character that appears in different books and who is himself a science fiction writer. Researchers into Vonnegut's work refer to Trout as an alter ego, who enacts narrative moments within the stories, serving to restate the moral voice of his creator (Davis, 2012, p. 243).

Even so, Vonnegut refused to be labelled a science fiction writer, as he stated in a 1965 essay titled, precisely, "Science Fiction", in which he alluded to the deprecating assessment of the genre at the time, criticising people for labelling fiction as such based on the sole criterion of technology (Vonnegut, On Science

Fiction, 1965). Yet, he is most often mentioned as a mainstream writer, despite his early short fiction writings and the persistence of science fiction elements in his subsequent and more important work (Cassiday, 1989, p. 208). Roberts, when mapping out the history of the genre, alludes to Vonnegut briefly, as a "non-genre writer" (pp. 314-315), while other critics (Brooke-Rose; Weckel and Cassiday) include him in the "New Wave" trend of the sixties and the seventies, as his stories resonate with the characteristics of this movement. The term implied the need to promote the quality of the genre, on the one hand, and to introduce fresh themes and concerns, on the other (Roberts, 2005, pp. 230-231).

While Mortals Sleep to some extent reflects these aspects. The collected stories, though ranging from realistic to more speculative fiction, address central worries in Vonnegut's work and, perhaps more significantly, reflect his view of the contemporary world he lived in. New technological devices and robots are some of the narrative mechanisms that, for such a purpose, he uses in "Jenny" – but the fact that the central machine, Jenny, replicates a human female takes on special significance.

2.2 Humans, non-humans or the dream of perfection

> George might as well have been married to Jenny. He lived with her in the back of a moving van that was almost filled with her electronic brains. He had a cot and a hot plate and a three-legged stool and a table and a locker in the back of the van, and he had a doormat he put on the bare ground outside when he parked the van somewhere for the night. "Jenny and George", it said. It glowed in the dark (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 13).

This excerpt, early in the story, defines the dominant tone throughout the narrative: Jenny and George are referred to as a couple; the names on the doormat suggest a domestic, cosy atmosphere, an idea of home; the pronouns and determiners used for Jenny assume her as a human being despite the reference to her electronic brains; and the narrator, a fellow worker in the same company, henceforth consistently refers to them the same way – "Jenny and George" reads as a single unit whose elements communicate perfectly and act with perfect synchronicity.

The love relationship between a human being and some sort of artificial, man-made creature has become a common motif in that science fiction strain that deals with non-human characters, whether robots, cyborgs, androids or gynoids (female androids). This type of fiction often addresses the theme of creation, wherein the relationship between a human creator and the non-human created figure not only defies the limits of human power, but also exposes the threats posed by such an inventive spirit, as the artificial being gains control and rebels against its creator. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is the classical example of this concern, rooted both in the mythical Promethean lesson and in the recognition of the power of scientific knowledge, mainly from the time of Positivism onwards. This motif can be found in both science fiction and fantasy works, irrespective of the issue of gender, as other works apply both to male and female artificial beings.

However, when such creatures are women, additional themes are dealt with, such as the love relationship that develops out of the bond of creation, or aspects

related with women's roles, body image and the concept of beauty. These variations in the human/non-human interaction under discussion can be traced back to ancient myths and female mythical figures such as Pandora and Galatea. Actually, Pandora is regarded as the first artificial woman in literature (Fren, 2017, p. 375), associated with beauty but also with pain because, driven by curiosity, she irreparably opened the box of all human evils. Galatea, in turn, is the statue sculpted by Pygmalion that he fell in love with and was, as a result, brought to life by the goddess Aphrodite. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, two hallmarks of artificial women deserve mention: Olympia, the automaton (a lifelike doll) in E.T.A. Hoffman's *Der Sandmann* (1816), and Maria, the woman robot in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1926). Despite their different roles, both embody the representation of femininity framed by automation.

Taking this overview into consideration, Vonnegut's "Jenny" reads as a contemporary expression of this tradition. It matches the popular convention of the mad scientist in science fiction, and corresponds to the first "stereotype" in Stanislaw Lem's classification of the relationship between robot and human: man-machine (Lem, 1971, p. 313). Though originally conceived as a woman-shaped refrigerator, Jenny performs the role of the docile, sweet spouse who attends to her husband's well-being. The couple's complicity is consistently described: "He [George] didn't smile back. He didn't like me for talking to Jenny that way. You would have thought I'd spit in the eye of his mother or sister or something" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 7). Jenny, on her part, addresses George in a loving language: "What is it, Sweetheart?" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 8); "Honey, (…) are you coming in pretty soon?" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 11). Also, she acts as a real woman: "Jenny picked me out to kid around with. 'Hello, tall, dark, and handsome', she said to me" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 7); her reactions and emotions are those of a human being:

> Her face turned from pink to white. Her lips trembled. Then her lips pulled down and dragged her whole face out of shape. She shut her eyes so she wouldn't have to look at such a terrible person. And then, as God is my judge, she squeezed out two fat tears. They ran down her cheeks, then down her white enamelled front to the floor (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 7).

Jenny further suggests how physical, outer beauty opposes inner emptiness – a sign of her non-humanity, or maybe of her inhumanity, or rather of human women's frivolity:

> Jenny's door swung open. There wasn't anything inside but cold air, stainless steel, porcelain, and a glass of orange juice. It was a shock to everybody – all that beauty and personality on the outside, and that cold nothing on the inside (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 8).

As the story progresses, the reader learns that Jenny was conceived as a substitute for George's ex-wife, Nancy, who was now dying and whose face and voice, when young, he had molded and recorded, respectively, in order to suitably equip Jenny. Whenever he pushed the buttons inside his magic shoes, Jenny would act and speak according to his ingenious programming. While Nancy grew older, Jenny remained young and beautiful; while Nancy was neglected as an imperfect wife, Jenny was cunning enough to always say what George wanted to hear. This

story, apparently of betrayal, takes on new significance, though, considering how Jenny responds solely to her creator's needs. As Allison de Fen points out, the female robot "represents the promise of a simplified paying field in which the rules of the game are programmed in advance" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 387). By designing this new being, George creates a human replicate, bringing forward a type of clone made chiefly from a human voice – but, most importantly, he creates a whole new type of relationship, tailored to suit his own convenience and comfort, a practical solution to his narcissism. The quest for perfection underlying the making of this new creature unveils the quest for a perfect bond that does not seem possible, for him, among humans. Jenny's role as a modern Galatea thus reveals a primary flaw: unlike Pygmalion, who fell in love with the object he had created, George Castrow created an object to love, while trying to "make it as human as possible" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 5).

Nancy's marriage to Hoeniker, George's former colleague, offers a counterpoint that is of the utmost importance in the story, as described by Hoeniker himself: "I wound up loving her as a human being, as a miraculous, one-of-a-kind, moody muddle of faults and virtues – part child, part woman, part goddess, and no more consistent than a putty slide-rule" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 21). Such a celebration of the human condition clearly opposes the human-machine relationship of Jenny and George, which is doomed to come to an end. On seeing Nancy decades later, he considers his own ageing as part of the human condition and learns this no longer matches with the perfect, forever young and beautiful Jenny, whom he eventually leaves, thus accepting his human traits and her non-human ones. He follows Nancy's final appeal for him "to become an imperfect human being among imperfect human beings again" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 23). That is the moral voice in the story: that being human means to be imperfect, and that accepting one's own and other people's imperfection is the ultimate expression of our humanity in a world challenged by technological precision.

2.3. On belief and make-believe

Jenny's hybrid nature is represented through a particular narrative device, repeatedly used, that should be further examined. The following excerpt, her last intervention in the story, illustrates such a pattern:

> "I'll never know another man as ardent and thoughtful as you, as handsome as you, as brilliant as you," said Jenny. She meant it. She yawned again. Her eyelids drooped some more. "Excuse me," she said. "Good luck, Angel," she mumbled. Her eyes closed all the way. "Good night, Sweetheart," she said. She was asleep. Her battery was dead (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 23).

As shown, all the verbs used belong in the scope of human nature: human beings, as opposed to machines, speak, yawn, fall asleep, and, the most striking example of all, they 'mean' things and ideas. Yet, with no stylish or formal transition whatsoever, the final sentence, with the reference to Jenny's battery, attests her mechanical identity.

This simultaneous, intermixing use of language to describe Jenny's apparently human features and her mechanical ones, as if integrated parts of the same whole, correlates with the idea of belief in a challenging way. Recalling

Todorov's (1973) and Rabkin's theories (1979) on the fantastic: the first demands the reader's hesitation when faced with the inexplicable; the second considers that a text qualifies as fantasy when not only the reader, but also the characters, understand that accepted, common norms in the known world have been reversed, as, with stylistic intention, the text lays bare its devices of the fantastic. In Vonnegut's short story, both the reader and the characters are fully aware of the hidden devices that allow Jenny to behave as a human being, and those who do not know exactly what such devices are, even so, cognizant of their existence — for example, the audience of potential customers for whom George and Jenny used to dance do not necessarily understand the science behind the performance. However, keeping the audience's sense of wonder is part of George's strategy. When a little boy tells him he has discovered the truth, he makes up a story to explain how Jenny works. In the plot, this may be considered a marketing strategy; but, in terms of the meaning of the narrative, it reveals the creator's attempt at creating a fantasy, as well as other people's wish to believe in it:

> An audience is the nuttiest thing there is, if you ever stop to think about it. Here George had proved there wasn't anything inside Jenny, and here the crowd was, twenty seconds later, treating her like a real human being again. The women were shaking their heads to let Jenny know they knew what a trial it was to get a man to take care of himself. And the men were giving George secret looks to let him know they knew what a good pain it was to have a woman always treating you like a baby (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 9).

Later in the story, this interplay of the real and the imaginary, and this human yearning for the latter, are explicitly stated: "'Show's over, folks,' he [George] said. Nobody moved right away. Everybody was stunned by all this unfunny real life in the middle of make-believe" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 13). In other words, the explicable, what is known, becomes fantasy.

On the other hand, the narrator also contributes to such a construction of suspended belief – in Todorov's terms, he evinces some sort of hesitation, defying, to a certain degree, his own factual knowledge: "Her face was so beautiful, I almost had to believe there was a beautiful woman inside the refrigerator" / "And then, as God is my judge, she squeezed out two fat tears" (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 7).

These examples suggest a dual reading: on the one hand, it is the accuracy of science and technology that make an artificial creature as believable as a real human being; yet, on the other hand, the narrator's perplexity in face of such perfection, together with people's willingness to indulge in a "make-believe" world, questions the very place of science and technology in society.

That the discussion of science and fantasy is framed by the ideas of humanity and non-humanity is also a point to be underlined. As Josh Simpson writes, Vonnegut's concerns lie with the human condition:

> Kurt Vonnegut is a writer setting out to discover the mysteries of the human condition. Using irony, satire, and black humor as his helmet, breastplate, and flaming sword for battling the existential malaise of the twentieth century, Vonnegut forces his readers to consider what it means to be human in a chaotic, often absurd, and irrational universe (Vonnegut, 2011, p. 262).

Vonnegut's view of human beings is determined by his humanist vision, which often conveys a moral voice, regardless of the varied means he used in his writings to accomplish his mission. In this short story, fantasy lies at the interface of science and humanity because it somewhat makes up for the burden of technology, while human qualities eventually prevail over such challenges.

Conclusion

As with other Vonnegut's works, this early collection and "Jenny", in particular, provide a contemporary, timeless reading. The plot relies on the interplay of a realistic setting with a classic motif of science fiction, the robot, exploring the possibilities of a human-machine relationship and the particular ties established between a creator and the created object. Although this creation is a technological one, the endeavor put into its complex composition, together with the aesthetic dimension involved, gives the process an air of artistic creation that is in keeping with key mythological narratives such as those about Prometheus or Pygmalion. Nonetheless, Vonnegut's modern version suggests that, however far that bond goes, it is not sustainable from the point of view of the human condition – the gap between humans and machines becomes clear in the dénouement, as does the protagonist's acknowledgement of his own identity and that of the machine/robot, Jenny. This assertion of human uniqueness confirms human supremacy in a world increasingly dominated by limitless technology and reaffirms a moral, humanist answer to the threats of unstoppable science, which is a common concern in today's science fiction.

Most importantly, however, is the fact that the narrative openly makes known the imaginative devices involved in Jenny's creative process, thus curtailing the characters' hesitation when faced with such an inventive, weird being. Still, the creation of Jenny provides them with feelings of awe and belief, which reveals an essential paradox: the absence of fantastic elements generates people's refusal to accept empirical reality and to consider objects and events as if from the realm of fantasy and imagination instead – in other words, people's willingness to make the believable (in the empirical world) unbelievable, and, in turn, to create a mindset of belief in a make-believe setting. This encoded call for fantasy reads as a hypertext attesting to the open nature of science fiction, the type of fiction that, after all, as Alexei Panshin wrote, addresses "the limitless world of imagination" (p. 332), suggesting the hybridity of the story and claiming imagination as the province of humanity.

Works Cited

Britt, T. (2011, February 7). *Vonnegut Before Time Travel: a Review of "While Mortals Sleep"*. Retrieved March 10, 2019, from https://www.tor.com/2011/02/07/vonnegut-before-time-travel-a-review-of-while-mortals-sleep/

Brooke-Rose, C. (1981). *A Rhetoric of the Unreal. Studies in Narrative Structure, Especially of the Fantastic.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Butor, M. (1971). Science Fiction: The Crisis of its Growth. Em T. Clareson, *SF: The Other Side of Realism* (pp. 157-165). Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular University Press.

Cassiday, D. W. (1989). *The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. New York: The Ungar Publishing Company.

Clareson, T. (1971). *SF: The Other Side of Realism. Essays on Modern Fiction and Fantasy*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press.

Davis, T. (2012). Kurt Vonnegut. Em T. Parrish, *The Cambridge Companion to American Novelists* (pp. 241-249). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dinello, D. (2005). *Technophobia. Science Fiction visions of Posthuman Technology*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Fren, A. d. (2017). Technofetishism and the Uncanny desires of A.S.F.R. (alt.sex.fetish.robots). Em R. Latham, *Science Fiction Criticism. An Anthology of Essential Writings* (pp. 375-413). New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Heinlein, R. (1969). Science Fiction: its Nature, faults and virtues. In B. Davenport, *The Science Fiction Novel. Imagination and Social Criticism*. (pp. 14-18). Chicago: Advent Publishers.

Hopley, C. (2011). *Book Review: "While Mortals Sleep"*. Retrieved February 4, 2019, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/before-dystopian-settings-kurt-vonnegut-wrote-of-mere-mortals/2011/02/14/AB4voPG_story.html?utm_term=.fc7190eea5ed

Hume, K. (1984). *Fantasy and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature*. New York: Methuen.

Kagarlitski, J. (1971). Realism and Fantasy. Em T. Clareson, *SF: the Other Side of Realism* (pp. 29-52). Bowling Green : Bowlin Green University Popular Press.

Latham, R. (2017). *Science Fiction Criticism. An Anthology of Essential Writings*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Le Guin, U. (February de 1981). On Writing Science Fiction. *The Writer, 94, No. 2*, pp. 11-14.

Lem, S. (1971). Robots in Science Fiction. Em T. Clareson, *SF: The Other Side of Realism* (pp. 307-325). Bowling Green : Bowling Green Popular University Press.

Merril, J. (1971). What do you mean: Science? Fiction? Em T. Clareson, *SF: the Other Side of Realism* (pp. 53-95). Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular University Press.

Panshin, A. (1971). Science Fiction in Dimension. Em T. Clareson, *SF: the Other Side of Realism* (pp. 326-333). Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular University Press.

Rabkin, E. S. (1979). *Fantastic Worlds. Myths, Tales, and Stories*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roberts, A. (2005). *The History of Science Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sheehan, W. (2011). *Book Review: "While Mortals Sleep", by Kurt Vonnegut*. Retrieved March 2, 2019, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/before-dystopian-settings-kurt-vonnegut-wrote-of-mere-mortals/2011/02/14/AB4voPG_story.html?utm_term=.c823eb4088db

Simpson, J. (2004, August 7). This Promising of Great Secrets: Literature, Ideas, and the (Re)Invention of Realisty in Kurt Vonnegut's God Bless you, Mr. Rosewater, Slaughterhouse-Five and Breakfast of Champions Or Fantasies of an Impossibly Hospitable World. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, 45*, pp. 261-271. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3200/CRIT.45.3.261-272

Stevenson, L. (1971). The Artistic Problem: Science Fiction as Romance. Em T. Clareson, *SF: the Other Side of Realism* (pp. 96-104). Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular University Press.
Suvin, D. (1979, March). The State of the Art in Science Fiction Theory: Determining and Delimiting the Genre. *Science Fiction Studies, 6 Part 1*.
Todorov, T. (1973). *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. New York: Cornell University Press.
Vonnegut, K. (5 de April de 1965). On Science Fiction. *New York Times*, n.p.
Vonnegut, K. (2011). *While Mortals Sleep*. London: Vintage Books.
Weckel, D., & Bruce Cassiday. (1989). *The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. New York: The Ungar Publishing Company.

"Other" Readers, Other Worlds

The Female Experience of Fantasy Fiction

Sara González Bernárdez
University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Abstract. The belief that fantasy and reality are interdependent and capable of affecting each other has made it possible to argue that fantasy fiction holds the potential to subvert the imagery that surrounds marginalised social groups; a potential that is, however, often truncated by misguided conceptions of what these marginal subjectivities should experience within fiction. This essay aims to explain how the experience of fantasy fiction of otherised subjects (in this case, women, taken as a representative example) fundamentally differs from that of hegemonic subjects, through a revision of the concept of "suspension of disbelief" and Wolfgang Iser's theory of reception.

Keywords: fantasy, suspension of disbelief, reader-response, representation, Other, women

Introduction

Ever since its inception, fantasy fiction has occupied a position of relative inferiority with respect to other genres due to its alleged nature as a narrative divorced from reality, thus departing from the classical mimetic conceptions according to which fiction should embody "the simple geometry of the mirror held up to nature" (McHale 29). Curiously, however, ever since the appearance of its very earliest forms, fantasy seems to convey a certain anxiety or desire to account for reality and ordinary experience, in spite of its fantastic formal embodiments. For instance, classical myths, while of religious intent, were also attempts to explain why and how real natural phenomena occurred, while fairy tales addressed relevant behavioural patterns with an overtly didactic intent, which was meant to be applied to the ordinary lives of real individuals. In spite of this, because fantasy fiction was never fully mimetic, it was often conceived of as an encouragement to dangerous flights of fancy, breeding obliviousness and ignorance in its readers. Within this mimetic economy, maintaining this separate position was often a major concern, since "without a sharp initial distinction between fiction and reality, there could be no relation of similarity or mirroring between the two, no re-presentation of reality *in* fiction" (McHale 34). It was not until the appearance of modernist fiction that the capacity of discourse to faithfully represent reality was questioned, and not until later still, during the twentieth century, that postmodernist fiction brought it one step further by bringing attention to the questions "on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects" (McHale 10). Postmodernism thus questions the boundaries – and even the existence – of reality itself, which has opened the door to a change in the way in which fiction, and its relationship to reality, are perceived.

However, and due to the pervasive belief in the aforementioned mimetic function and in the disconnection between the fantastic and the real worlds, the perception of fantasy fiction shifted from dangerous fancy towards childish escapism, which has often justified the "popular" or "low" nature of fantasy fiction in opposition to more "serious" literary expressions, such as realist fiction. Though this notion is rather outdated, and studies of the fantastic have consolidated in academia over the years, the discussion regarding the relationship between fantasy and reality has continued. As mentioned above, Brian McHale argues that the questions posed by postmodernism are of an ontological nature: against modernism's epistemological questions regarding the possibility of knowing reality, postmodernism turns to questioning reality itself – whether that of the literary text or "of the world which it projects" (10). From this emerged a new conception of fiction as "heterocosm", as "a *plurality* of universes [...] including 'possible' or even 'impossible' universes" (McHale 27). This approach "not only complicates fiction's internal ontological structure, it also weakens its external boundary or frame [...]" (McHale 34), so that the real and fictional world(s) are not only related, but even overlap, which clearly violates the classical conception of fiction and reality as entirely separate concepts.

If fiction and reality are therefore mutually dependent categories, it follows that the subject who consumes fiction is bound to be affected in the exchange. The subject's experience of fiction is, by default, unique, since fictional worlds are open enough to support the interpretations and actualisations of each of its consumers. However, if the work of fiction is to establish a dialogue with the individual who consumes it, it needs to fictionalise this individual's identity – to construe a fictional image of its prospective reader, a fictionalised entity that is commonly referred to as the implied reader: the (fictional, hypothetical) subjectivity to whom the work itself is addressed, which "as a sort of fictional inhabitant of the text, can embody not only the concepts and conventions of the contemporary public but also the desire of the author both to link up with these concepts and to work on them – sometimes just portraying them, sometimes acting upon them" (Iser 33). This means that "by characterizing this fictitious reader it is possible to reconstruct the public which the author wished to address" (33). Although the role of the implied reader does not necessarily have to coincide with the actual reader, this is nevertheless a significant concept, because it foregrounds the relevance of the dynamic perspective interplay that intervenes in the consumption of a fictional text. Significantly, within these processes of fictional consumption, the fictionalised implied reader can often be identified with the figure of the universal subject.

The *universal subject*, a concept borrowed from gender studies, refers to the hegemonic male, white, heterosexual subjectivity, which has ensured its dominance by establishing everything else as its Other, so that different subjectivities are "defined purely against the man" (Rose 74): as something that is *not* a man, and therefore not a subject, but a negative space, a lack, and hence an inferior. If the fictionalised subjectivity built by fiction so as to establish communication with its intended reader caters to this universal subject, the fiction is at risk of disavowing or misrepresenting otherness. As a result, the otherised subjectivities who turn to fiction to look for themselves may find their experience of fiction altered or, perhaps, impaired, as their fictional experience

may overlap with their real one to the point that it becomes difficult to accept the fictional premise. The aim of this essay is therefore to explain how the involvement in fiction of marginalised subjectivities is, as a consequence of this, fundamentally different from the experience of fiction which a hegemonic subjectivity might enjoy. To do so, it becomes necessary to further examine the relationship between fiction and the subject, so as to establish the kind of effects which the former might be able to have over the latter. Considering this possibility, a parallel between the dichotomies reality/fantasy and subject/Other is established, in order to consider the potential for subversion that can be found within the fantasy genre, as well as the new possibilities it affords for marginalised subjectivities and their development as individuals. Subsequently, the concept of "suspension of disbelief", coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and its function are revised through Wolfgang Iser's phenomenology of reading, examining the effects of the fictional experience over the reader in more detail, in order to eventually consider the particularities inherent to the case of an otherised female reader, in the hopes to thus demonstrate the differences inherent to the marginalised subjectivity's consumption of fiction.

Fantasy Fiction, Otherness, and Subversion

As was mentioned above, one of the most prominent characteristics of fantasy fiction was its apparent separation from reality. The new conception of fiction as "heterocosm", however, implies that not only is there a plurality of possible realities to be represented in it, but also that fantasy has the capacity to comment on them and even affect them to some extent. Of course, the first entity over which fiction is bound to have an effect is the reader, through whom it might be possible to create a ripple of effect over society at large. Following this line of thought, I would argue that the marginal situation of fantasy with respect to reality creates an interesting parallel with the relationship between the subject and its Other. This suggests that both interpersonal perception *and* the mechanics of fiction function through dualistic conceptions, one pole of which is the negative of the other – much like the capitalised Other is that which is *not* a subject, fantasy is that which is *not* real. The parallel between fantasy and the figure of the Other ceases to seem coincidental, however, when considering the socio-political implications of their existence in relation to the hegemonic pole of their dualities.

The figure of the Other embodies everything unfamiliar or unknown to the subject, everything that is unlike itself, and thus the Other is perceived as a mirror which reveals everything that the subject wishes to hide. On the other hand, fantasy is capable of altering the real world into an unfamiliar alternative universe, in which reality is but a memory in the reader's mind, a stroke of familiarity within an unknown world. In doing so, fantasy defies the unitary conception of reality, and in fact reveals, subverts, and criticises its worst sides. The very existence of a negative implies the possibility of subversion of the hegemonic pole, and this threat to the status quo explains why these negative poles have been kept under careful control. In fact, as Lynette Hunter explains, criticism has generally tended to limit or control fantasy by "cutting it off from reality, denying all connections" (Hunter 37), which strips it of its power to affect

the real world. As a consequence of this, I would defend that the particularities of fantasy, as a genre that is capable of commenting on reality from a world that seems to be away from it, might serve to slowly begin to build an alternative way of seeing – and hence, of thinking – which avoids the dynamics of power that constrain the real world. Furthermore, using the transformative power of fantasy, it might be possible to open up a world of new opportunities which is unavailable to marginalised subjects otherwise: through fantasy, they could imagine and become involved in a world where they occupy the position of subject, where their alterity does not preclude subjectivity. This would, in turn, enable these marginalised subjectivities to begin subverting the generalised socio-political status quo which encourages the rejection of their otherness as undesirable.

However, this possibility that fantasy offers becomes diminished or truncated by the consistent creation of fantasies produced by and for the universal subject. Since the universal subject holds a position of power and privilege, the fantasy canon tends to display this as the *default* view, as well as to represent the default subjectivity to which the fantasy world bends and adapts – much as the real, non-fictional world does, by tailoring its politics, history, and fictions to the universal subject's needs. Even though the archetypal attributes of the fantasy hero are far from being a perfect picture of hegemonic masculinity (and might even be argued to deconstruct it), the very use of the word *hero* to refer to the prototypical fantasy protagonist is already revelatory of the male lens that pervades the fantasy world. If, as mentioned earlier, the fictionalised subjectivity to which fiction is addressed generally complies with the values and views of this universal subject, the author – and, by extension, his or her fiction – may neglect to portray otherness, or misrepresent it in a way that complies with prevalent cultural figurations regarding otherised identities, either through the image of the implied reader or within the fantasy world itself. The implicit address to a white, male, heterosexual subject precludes the address and adaptation of the fiction to the differentiated identity of, for instance, a black, female, bisexual subject. As a consequence of this, I contend that the fictional experience of subjects whose identities are marginalised and, as a consequence, the potential for fantasy to impact reality positively, become impaired. To support this point, a revision of the concept of suspension of disbelief and the general relationship between fiction and reader is in order, so as to determine how these two poles interact during the reading process, as well as how and in what ways the text is capable of affecting the extra-textual world.

Suspension of Disbelief and the Reader's Perspective

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's original definition of "suspension of disbelief" seemed to regard it as a sort of state of mind which the reader enters to partake of the work of fiction. According to Coleridge, such temporary suspension requires "a semblance of truth" to be present in the work (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV), in other words, a resemblance to the known world outside of the fictional universe – thus dependant on a mimetic conception of fiction. Despite the relevance of Coleridge's concept, contemporary criticism has shifted the emphasis on disbelief from the fictional work to the reader's perception of it, as Thomas

Pavel explains: "[R]eaders do not evaluate the logical possibility of the propositions they find in literary texts in the light of the actual world [...] but rather abandon the actual world and adopt (temporarily) the *ontological perspective* of the literary work" (Pavel in McHale 33, emphasis in original). Thus, rather than the work prompting the reader to acknowledge it as real through a semblance to reality, it is the *reader* who changes her conception of what reality *is*, so as to fully accept the fictional particulars that are presented as such.

However, this temporary assumption of a new ontological perspective is not enough to explain the relationship between text and reader, or the multiplicity of effects which it provokes. In fact, Wolfgang Iser acknowledges that the gap between text and reader – the gap existing in terms of space, time, or identities – "cannot be bridged just by a "willing suspension of disbelief", because [...] the reader's task is not simply to accept, but to assemble for himself that which is to be accepted" (97). This implies that the reader's participation within the text is much more active than Coleridge's initial definition would suggest; in fact, there has been a general tendency in theories of fiction to shift towards the reader actions and effects which had been previously attributed to the text itself, and hence their name of "reader-response" theories. In particular, the focus here will be on the theory Iser develops in *The Act of Reading*, wherein he discusses the process by which readers become "able to experience things that no longer exist and to understand things that are totally unfamiliar [...]" (Iser 19) through the literary text – which is, incidentally, the function Coleridge, and other scholars after him, have attributed to suspension of disbelief.

According to Iser, the literary text presents us with entirely new and unfamiliar objects, so that the natural response is to seek within them that which is familiar: in succinct terms, the reader tends to look for a mirror image of herself or of the world she knows within fiction, attempting to relate the text to, or incorporate it in, her scope of experience. However, if the text provided but a mirror image, the reader would emerge from the reading unaffected, since "[a] response that depends upon the reader finding a reflection of himself could scarcely bring the reader anything *new*" (Iser 42-43). As it is obvious that the reader is, in some way, always affected or changed by the fictional text, this interestingly implies that it is not really sameness that prompts our involvement in a text, but difference. Therefore, as Iser concludes, "[t]he whole process of comprehension is set in motion" not by the need for familiarity and recognition, but "by the need to familiarize the *unfamiliar*" (43). In addition, by contrast to the process of perception, in which "[w]e always stand outside the given object", in the process of reading fiction "we are situated inside the literary text [...]: instead of a subject-object relationship, there is a moving viewpoint which travels along *inside* that which it has to apprehend" (Iser 109). Thus, in the process of incorporating and fitting these familiar experiences into the new conception of reality proposed by the text, the reader becomes *involved* in it. Through this involvement, the text becomes the reader's *present*, to use Iser's term, whereas her own self and experience are relegated to a background, secondary position:

> The more 'present' the text is to us, the more our habitual selves – at least for the duration of the reading – recede into the 'past'. The literary text relegates our own prevailing views into the past by itself becoming a present experience, for what is

> now happening or may happen was not possible so long as our characteristic views formed our present. (Iser 131)

Of course, this does not mean the reader disappears completely in favour of what is present in the text; rather, Iser describes this interaction as a process of communication, during which the reader's previous experience interacts with that of the text and, in doing so, is altered, changing to fit with the new knowledge obtained from the text. It is thus that the act of reading is able to influence, reorient, and even radically change our perception of both our past and present extra-textual experiences: in the process of making new perspectives "present" for the reader,

> [… E]very position incorporated into the text becomes an object of observation, and as such is inevitably changeable; and if these positions represent selections from the social or literary world outside the text, it follows that the reader […] may *react* to the world incorporated into the text – in other words, he may see the selected norms in a new light. (Iser 98)

In this way, the text "makes us leave behind that which we are", which is "why we often have the impression, as we read, that we are living another life" (Iser 127); it is through this involvement that the extra-textual self and the extra-textual world can end up undergoing significant changes. This is what leads scholars, such as Gayatri Spivak, to defend the importance of fiction for the development of empathy for others – especially those who are regarded as Other, those belonging to historically oppressed groups. Because literature, and other forms of fiction, tend to move away from reality, they have the capacity to "imagine affective relationships that move beyond what 'we' already think we know or feel is true or inevitable" (Pedwell 176); thanks to this, fiction provokes an empathic reaction in the reading subject which not only transforms their perception of the world (as Iser mentioned), but also "moves the 'privileged' subject […] to acknowledgement of complicity and responsibility", and from there "to wider social action and change" (Pedwell 165). While this idea that fiction can be a catalyst for wider social change is disputable, it is easy to see how empathy is important to the reading of fiction: it is thought to involve "a stronger element of identification or 'perspective-taking' – imaginatively experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and situation of another" (Davis 403), which – as mentioned above – is what Iser believed the literary work to be capable of achieving.

Due to the fact that the reader's own experience comes into play in the communication with the literary work, I would argue that *who* that reader is in the real world, outside of the text, and how that identity influences the way in which said world perceives and treats her, hold crucial importance in the construction of her fictional experience. Therefore, I would now like to focus on the case of women as a prototypical example of a marginalised subjectivity that is very often misrepresented, if represented at all, within fantasy fiction.

Women as the Other in Fantasy Fiction

Our capacity to actualise the fictional world and to apply our experience of it to the known world can have a positive impact in the latter: it may, as Spivak and other theorists of empathy suggested, promote a better understanding of

marginalised identities, and hence feelings of empathy and solidarity; these may, in turn, encourage the subject to recognise the part he plays within the hegemonic systems of oppression, and even prompt him to action towards social change. Additionally, a positive depiction of otherised identities within the fictional world contributes to solidifying the identity of the marginalised subject, who is led towards acceptance of her own otherness. These possible effects are impeded or undermined when fictional representations, particularly those of marginal subjects, fail to convey an overall positive view. While the prototypical fantasy hero is fundamentally flawed, and these flaws are very often crucial to his personality, his virtues are still depicted and praised, as are his good deeds, in such a way that he is generally constructed as a rounded character: the reader gets a picture of both the bleak and positive aspects – and consequences – of his identity, of who he is. On the other hand, the representation of otherised minorities as characters is, generally, rather negative as a whole: either they are negatively depicted by other characters or by the narrative voice (as endowed with undesirable physical or personal characteristics, for instance), or their experience within the fiction is mostly negative (they suffer from discrimination or abuse, are tortured, or die). Alternatively, characters representing ostracised identities may be idealised to excess, presented as perfect, ethereal or exoticised beings, and as a result kept on a pedestal – which implies holding a secondary position, deprived of any real agency in their fate. This situation reflects the ambiguity attributed to the idea of the Other, a simultaneously alluring and loathed being, and yet begs the question of why it is so difficult to conceive of a fictional (in this case, fantastic) world where otherness is accepted, or at least where it does not entail the same negative consequences it does in the non-fictional world.

The case of women characters is a good way to exemplify this argument. Fantasy worlds, especially canonical high fantasy worlds, which are often based in medieval societies, tend to recreate the systematic gender discrimination found in the real world: the division of labour, the inability to inherit, the lack of educated women, and so on, are all things that were and in some cases still are present in the non-fictional world. Furthermore, women in fantasy, regardless of the extent of their power, run the risk of being abused (by strangers or their partners), sold into prostitution, trapped in abusive relationships, or raped (again, by strangers or their partners). Some examples include the women of R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, where for instance Daenerys Targaryen is consistently raped by her husband; or, in Patrick Rothfuss' *The Name of the Wind*, Denna – the main love interest – makes a precarious living by selling whatever gifts the men she seduces give her, and must run away and change her identity every time they attempt to claim the privilege they have bought. However, it is also easy to find examples of the opposite nature, whereby women are idealised as nurturing healers of immense beauty and purity, which the evil in the world attempts to tarnish, such as Tolkien's iconic Galadriel (from *The Lord of the Rings*). Whichever position the fantasy takes towards its female characters, the result is, in the end, the same: their agency and subjectivity are undermined or directly taken away, which in turn has an impact on the female reader's ability to identify with characters of her kind. I would, in fact, go as far as to argue that these examples – these two ways of treating female characters within the fantasy

narrative – condense the main possibilities that are given for the female reader of fiction. As female readers, we are either:

(A) Presented with an unattainable ideal, based on the patriarchal idea of the perfect woman, whereby the fiction is designed to highlight the reader's inferiority and hence encourage her to strive to achieve this pre-determined ideal image. This contributes to the mystification of femininity as understood by the patriarchal order, perpetuating its conception as an attractive aspiration which the fiction invites the reader to partake in, thus maintaining her social position as an inferior.

Or,

(B) Confronted with the reality of our position, and therefore denied the possibility of escape from an unpleasant reality, which readers who fit with the universal subject prerogative *do* enjoy. This forced confrontation with real experiences, which are many times depicted in uncomfortable – voyeuristic, even fetishistic – ways, tends towards the normalisation of gender-based violence.

These latter depictions of suffering, and of the general experience of discrimination which the female subject – and any otherised subject – undergoes, possess an undeniable potential value: that of arousing empathy, and therefore encouraging understanding on more privileged readers who are unfamiliar with the prevalence and traumatic consequences of these experiences. The social commentary that can be prompted by these depictions is full of possibility, and yet it is easy to find that this is often not the case. Many times, rather than help the privileged (non-female) reader to actualise the female experience, to understand its concerns, these depictions are simply taken for granted – a given part of a woman's image, a part of what makes her character, and by extension the fantasy world, a believable one. I would tie this view with Jessica Benjamin's concept of *rational violence*: within patriarchal societies, violence against women is seen as justified, reasonable, unobjectionable – and therefore, expected. In the same way, (sexual) violence against women in fiction is rationalised and fully justified because it measures up to a standard of realism, a standard which cultural (patriarchal) tradition validates and sustains (for more on the rationalisation of gendered violence, see Tietjens Meyers 77). Thus, if woman becomes an agent, if her inferiority is not somehow made clear to both her and the reader, she is *unrealistic* in the eyes of the governing forces of hegemony. It seems ironic, but when it comes to the representation of the Other, fiction seems to retreat to mimeticism.

I find it important to note that, while male characters in fiction are indeed held to a certain standard of believability (as regards the consistency of their personality and the coherence of their actions), they do not really need to define themselves against a standard of realism – not in the same way that characters representing otherised minorities do. As an example, the male protagonist in *The Name of the Wind*, Kvothe, acquires near-immediate mastery of every activity he attempts, yet has rarely been dismissed as unrealistic, or had the worth of his character questioned on this account. On the other hand, a woman not being assaulted or at risk of assault within a medieval setting constitutes an affront against historical accuracy; it is controversial and contested because the fictional woman is contradicting every cultural figuration that the patriarchal system has established around her identity. While, of course, such mistreatment of women is

– to use the dreaded word – *realistic*, perhaps the point is that it should not be. If readers are able to suspend their disbelief far enough to admit the possibility of magic or of dragons existing, surely it is also possible to admit the existence of a world where women are in an equal position to men, or where, at the very least, sexual assault and social inferiority are not a given part of the female experience.

And yet, when such worlds are imagined, it is often in explicitly political fantasies, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, for example; or, more recently, Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Both of these instances constitute politically-charged metaphors of what the world would look like, were it entirely made up of women, or were gender abolished or disregarded altogether; this means, however, that they must be read as subversive statements, whether we want to or not. They are *feminist* fiction, as are works who present us with imaginary matriarchal societies. There has been, up until very recently, very little *apolitical* fantasy for female readers, enjoyable without constant reminders of their extra-textual position as inferiors. Thus, perhaps the problem lies in the fact that women – and minorities, in general – are not represented as subjects, with fully developed identities and sense of agency, outside of very specifically political fantasies. K. LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* is full of questioning enquiries on gender and patriarchy, yet the epic fantasies of her *Earthsea Cycle* have only Tenar as a significant, fully developed female character. Furthermore, her subjectivity is also a way of introducing political questions, exploring the issues of gender and power as Tenar struggles against her imposed role within a cult of female priestesses which services the patriarchal society of *Earthsea*. In this world, women are forbidden from doing magic or becoming wizards, and male superiority is upheld throughout the novels; only in *Tehanu*, the last of the cycle, does this male domination appear to be questioned. This demonstrates that the possibility for an apolitical existence within fiction (and, arguably, with*out* fiction) is denied to oppressed collectives, as their inclusion in the narrative as active agents with full agency and subjectivity is used, and more importantly *perceived*, to be a political statement. Society has, in general, politicised the non-patriarchal representations of female subjectivities to the point that a narrative who provides them is immediately regarded to be political in nature.

While, as Iser argues, readers seek familiar elements within the text because its new experiences are at least "partially inaccessible to us" (Iser 126), this familiarity is "interesting not because it *is* familiar, but because it is to lead in an unfamiliar direction" (Iser 70). It is here where, in my view, much of the fictional experience of otherised subjectivities goes awry: because the familiarity of the experiences of their fictional counterparts does not elicit the desired response. An excessive presence of such familiar elements can have a counterproductive effect, so that instead of allowing the reader a stepping-stone to involve herself in the fictional world, these known elements might *disrupt* the reader's change in ontological perspective: "if the text makes things too clear or, on the other hand, too obscure" the reader is likely to be overcome by "boredom" or "overstrain", and as a result "likely to opt out of the game" (Iser 108) – that is, likely to interrupt the fictional pact and even the fictional experience altogether. Once again, the case of women serves as an example: in order to enter the fantasy world, women are asked to suspend their disbelief – to shift their perspective and accept the version of reality offered by the work in question; and yet, the experiences they

are presented with are all too real. As has been mentioned, women in fantasy fiction are discriminated and abused nearly as much as they are in the non-fictional universe; they rarely have the power to defend themselves and, when they do, are rarely allowed to use it effectively. Indeed, this actualises the female experience for the female reader – perhaps far too much, as she is not allowed to experience anything else: confronted with much the same experiences within the fantasy world as in the real one, women are prevented from enjoying a full experience of fantasy without the reminders of the real social position they occupy – and are, therefore, denied the escapism which ought to be a fundamental part of the fantastic experience, which results in the negative impact over their identity that was outlined above. To make such a statement merits a reassessment of the perception of escapism in fiction, and most particularly in fantasy fiction, which has been in general extremely negative. Undeniably, fantasy literature possesses the metaphorical function which enables it to comment on the non-fictional experience of reality, and its capacity to have an effect over the known, extra-textual world is demonstrated by cases such as its above-outlined impact over marginalised subjectivities. This connection to the real world, however, need not mean fantasy's capacity to provide an escape from it should be discounted or dismissed. Indeed, escapism is a capacity inherent to all genres of fiction, irrespective of their closeness to reality, and this capacity to provide a temporary retreat from one's life – one's self, even – has become reason for praise, and one of the main reasons why fiction is sought after in the first place. Furthermore, as theories of reception like Iser's would suggest, escapism is in fact the reason why fiction is capable of having that impact over reality which criticism is so intent on upholding and preserving. The fact that fiction is capable of involving its consumer, to the degree that she becomes capable of participating in an entirely new experience that was previously unknown and hence unfathomable to her, is where the potential for subversion in fiction lies. While the possible negative connotations of escapism must not be ignored, the potential for positive change that it provides should also be recognised; the denial of escapism to marginalised subjectivities, therefore, means impairing the potential for the fictional experience to positively impact their perception of their selves and their otherness.

Conclusion

Due to its capacity to alter reality and change the reader's ontological perspective, thus defying the hegemonic perception of life that was ingrained in the reader's mind, fantasy fiction holds the potential to subvert the power dynamics which rule the non-fictional world. As Wolfgang Iser indirectly demonstrated through his re-evaluation of the importance of the reader, this subversive potential depends much on the reader's involvement in the narrative, since being a full participant in it will favour the text's influence over the reader's identity and her perception of others' identities. Such involvement, however, becomes restricted or truncated in the case of readers who belong to minority or marginalised groups: the experiences the text depicts are much too familiar, so that the fiction acts as a perpetuator of hegemonic beliefs, reminding them of their inadequacy and

inequality; or, alternatively, the fiction may create unattainable ideals fitting the hegemonic image of what their identity should be in order to be accepted, which furthers the marginalised groups' sense of inadequacy and inferiority. This means that the female experience of fantasy – and the fictional experience of any otherised identity – is fundamentally limited. As readers of fantasy, otherised subjectivities in general and women in particular find themselves unable to read *themselves* as anything other than inferiors: they find their experiences, and even their existence, denied or ignored, or their sense of inferiority reinforced within and through the fiction. In this way, capitalised Others are forbidden from escape to a world where they occupy a more privileged position, a world where their identity does not carry hatred or discrimination alongside it; not only that, the sense of subjectivity and agency and acceptance of their own otherness, which fiction is capable of prompting, are truncated. Perhaps even more importantly, this has consequences for privileged subjects as well: the lack of positive or fully rounded portrayals of marginalised subjectivities within fiction impacts the way in which these hegemonic readers will continue to perceive and understand the position of these marginalised Others in the real, non-fictional world.

If the fictionalisation of suffering at the hands of discrimination and bigotry is to be productive, it ought not to be included for the sake of upholding a standard of realism or commitment to verisimilitude; instead, it ought to be included in a manner that can provoke the desirable effect on the privileged reader who belongs to hegemonic collectives: that of empathic reflection on the position of these marginalised groups, and self-examination on this reader's own part within the systems of oppression that have upheld such a position. If this real suffering is presented in a more nuanced way, through fully developed characters, and does not constitute the full extent of their experience, it will enhance the hegemonic reader's empathic understanding while refraining from detracting from the marginalised reader's fictional experience. Nonetheless, I would argue that, while entirely real, the suffering of otherised subjectivities is not a requirement for their fictional existence, and such negative depictions of discrimination and abuse need not be demanded of the fiction so as to accept the premise of the marginalised character's existence, and should not be taken as a given, inherent part of such existence. Indeed many fantasy works that include considerable representation of marginalised subjectivities and discuss their experience, without letting such discussions transform the narrative into a political metaphor, can be found in ever-increasing numbers nowadays.

Interestingly, much of the fiction featuring these representations is labelled as "young adult", an all-encompassing genre which started out as a niche, but has developed into a large literary phenomenon in which women and other minorities have found a safe space for their fictional selves to manifest. Unfortunately, young adult literature has thus far been shunned, or largely ignored, by major criticism; understandably, insofar as the phenomenon is quite recent, yet suspicious considering how this same treatment has been, historically, consistently extended to any genre that enjoyed the favour of majorly female audiences. Nevertheless, the genre stands as a good example supporting the fact that there is hope for the Other's experience of fiction, and particularly of fantasy fiction, to become increasingly less limited as authors belonging to otherised collectives begin to carve within it a space for themselves and for readers belonging to their own

communities. This makes it possible to deliver to their marginalised communities a complete experience of the fiction – escapism included – while counteracting the hegemonic perception of these communities as inherently inferior, thus fulfilling the subversive potential of fantasy, along with one of the most characteristic functions of the genre: that of questioning the known reality.

Works Cited

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. 1817. Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg. Retrieved April 4, 2019 from http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6081.

Davis, Kimberly Chabot. "Oprah's Book Club and the politics of cross-racial empathy". In *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7 (4), 2004, pp. 399-419.

Hunter, Lynette. *Modern Allegory and Fantasy*. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1989.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. 1976. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Pedwell, Carolyn. "Affective (self-) transformations: Empathy, neoliberalism and international development". In *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 13 (2), 2012, pp. 163-179.

Rose, Jacqueline. *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*. 1986. London: Verso, 2005.

Tietjens Meyers, Diana. *Subjection and Subjectivity*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Mesmerism and the Sensation of Death in Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"

Justine Shu-Ting Kao
Tamkang University, New Taipei City, Taiwan

Abstract. The startling voice of "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" is drawn directly from a mesmeric phthisis patient, presenting a striking portrait of the sensation of death in its deathbed scene. The doctor in the story confronts the reality that man cannot prevent death, although temporary deferment is possible. Furthermore, if the patient represents Virginia, the doctor stands for Poe who stayed within the transition and intended to retrieve/remember 'the voice' of Virginia from an unknown realm. Thus, the ambiguous space between life and death serves as an area overlapping between fantasy and reality. What Poe reveals to us is not the exaltation of success with regard to postponing death, but instead a horrible scene resulting from human interference in this natural process.

Keywords: mesmerism, voice, sensation of death, tuberculosis

Introduction

Mesmerism or animal magnetism began with the 18th-century Vienna-trained German doctor, Franz Friedrich Anton Mesmer, who believed that a subtle fluid circulating in the 'channels' of animals and humans prevents body from illness. He compared the fluid to the force in the cosmos that keeps the stars and planets in their correct places, using this science/pseudo-science to cure his patients by applying electro-magnetism to propel the fluid in the channels so as to help his patients recover from illness. Though his practice was scrutinized, and he was eventually banned in France, his animal magnetism laid the foundation for the mesmerism and hypnotism of the 19th century. A great number of mesmerizers continued these studies in France. Mesmerism/animal magnetism was brought to America by Du Commun in 1829 (Lavarty 285) and remained popular in the new continent well into the 19th century. In addition, some animal magnetists applied mesmerism to spiritual healing [1].

Poe was intrigued by mesmerism/animal magnetism. Critics have noticed that Poe's idea of animal magnetism in his three major mesmeric tales was inspired by records detailed by his contemporary magnetists. Sidney E. Lind in "Poe and Mesmerism" argues that Poe utilized Chauncey Hare Townshend's *Facts in Mesmerism* for his mesmeric stories, and that the story "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" is borrowed from Townshend's report about a two-month death-deferment by the practice of mesmerism (1090-1091). Thomas Ollive Mabbott argues that the probable sources of the tale include a letter from Dr. A. Sidney Doane, Chauncy Hare Townshend's *Facts in Mesmerism*, and Justinus Andreas Kerner's *The Seeress of Prevorst*. Unlike Dr. Doane's record of the successful application of magnetism, Townshend's work and Kerner's detail the process of mesmerism in which the patients did not recover, but rather died after short-term or long-term death-deferment [2]. Not all of the magnetizers achieved

their expected healing result. Perhaps Poe took more notice of the failure of magnetic healing than of its success, and his "Valdemar" is in accord with physical collapse in mesmerism.

However, Poe was not completely convinced by the legitimacy of magnetists deriving from Mesmer. Indeed, his review on mesmerism or magnetism ranges from praise to contempt [3]. On the one hand, Poe showed no difference from the magnetists who believed that individuals are powerfully affected by the exterior material world and susceptible to the control of the universal force under trance, dreams, or the process of mesmerism. On the other hand, Poe deviated from the general idea proposed by magnetists regarding the synchronization of the self and the spiritual world that improves the condition of the individual, whether physically or spiritually. While the magnetists concluded that the fluid conducted from the exterior environment to permeate the body of the subject can lead to the effect of healing illnesses, Poe believed that the intervention of the exterior force threatens the existence of human beings [4]. Far from elevating the individual to harmonious integration with an omnipresent cosmic force, mesmerism in Poe's stories disturbs the mesmerized subjects. The force that causes disturbance in the mind and body of the mesmerized does not derive from the mesmerizer [5], but from the cosmic energy to which all animate and inanimate materials, including human beings, submit.

In this essay, I will reiterate the irrevocable law of environment in Poe's "Valdemar" that mirrors the cosmic force in Poe's principle of cosmology. Poe's cosmology is consistent with the hypothesis of an expanding universe. Poe argues that "the act of Creation has long ago ceased" (*Eureka* 264). "We can no more expect, then, to observe the primary processes of Creation" (264), nor can we expect a secondary creation. Moreover, God does not intervene on Earth as His act of Creation has ceased. To return to Oneness, men have to participate in the divine re-constitution.

> God—the material *and* spiritual God—*now* exists solely in the diffused Matter and Spirit of the Universe; and that the regathering of this diffused Matter and Spirit will be but the re-constitution of the *purely* Spiritual and Individual God. (*Eureka* 313)

This re-constitution includes the process of dissolution (death) through which we go, and after this period the soul continues to thrive in our afterlife (MacDonald 329). The story "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" concerns Poe's cosmic scheme. It involves a record of an individual's merge with the Divine Heart in the process of dying. Nevertheless, those who witness the process of death-deferment through the technique of mesmerism still cannot perceive the patient's reunion with the Divine Heart. Moreover, the story implies that the acts of creating time and space by technology will render men's creation vain if those men intend to replace God's primary Creation.

In addition, I orient my study to Poe's phrenology that supports the theory that there is an extra-personal element within each human being that overbears consciousness to destruction. I will emphasize how the interior extra-personal element parallels the exterior cosmic force, propelling the disintegration of self (embodied in the loss of the voice of the dead), and functions as a significant

element for the communication of emotions, affections, and sympathy among objects/subjects, as well as fantasy with an expectation for the return of the dead

Eureka, Mesmerism, and Phrenology

Poe's mesmeric tales are not so much in accord with mesmerism/animal magnetism, but rather with his cosmology principle which appears in *Eureka*. Poe dramatizes the neuro-interlineated relationship between individuals and the cosmic force in his mesmeric tales. The electro-magnetic force in his mesmeric tales parallels the force of gravity in *Eureka* that attracts one object (or subject) to another and facilitates the orientation of all objects (or subjects) into the One (the Divine Being). Poe's mesmerism/trance registers the process of death as it mirrors the process of physical collapse, within which all objects (or subjects) collapse into the Divine Being. Physical collapse is irrevocable since it is predetermined before the formation of lives. The Divine Being is the past from which all objects are derived. It is also the future to which all objects move through the force of dissolution. The time of the cycle in the creation of life and destruction is diachronic, rather than synchronic, depending on the breathing rhythm of the Divine Being. As the Divine Being expands and breathes out, all things initiate to take leave from It, disturbing everywhere in cosmos in different forms of life. As the Divine Being condenses and breathes in, all lives in different forms from the principle of repulsion and attraction collapse into the Divine Being, in-differentially to each other. In *Eureka*, Poe assumes that all individuals (ego/self) will be inevitably dissolved, whether they are willing or unwilling to accept the determined fate. As Matthew A. Taylor notices in "Edgar Allan Poe's (Meta) physics: A Pre-History of the Post-Human," Poe claims that "'we' cannot have a positive relation to such a circumstance: 'we' cannot put it to use, be elevated by it, pray to it, or even taken solace from it; 'we' cannot even survive it. 'We' can only be (dis)integrated by it. Thus, though the general tone of *Eureka* is one of ecstatic insight, there is yet a pervasive sense of the sinister fate awaiting 'us' " (205). Poe's Gothic tales reiterate his cosmology principle encapsulated in *Eureka*. An inanimate house becomes an animate media propelling its habitants to collapse. All objects surrounding or within the house are active executors or perpetrators for the decadence or death of Poe's characters. In much the same vein, the forces in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" that can kill are not a house, nor furniture or an organic life form such as a tree or plant, but an invisible fluid of electricity—electromagnetism, which, though believed to alleviate pain or recover health, cooperates with the cosmic force propelling the living to a putrefied corpse. However, what Poe describes is not simply a process of putrefaction. He conflates the body of Valdemar with Poe's beloved families who die from tuberculosis so as to create an affectional/emotional bond between the living and the dead.

One cannot read Poe's mesmerism relating to mind/body/environment without taking notice of his phrenology, which is also grounded in his cosmology theory in *Eureka*. Like mesmerism, phrenology is a (pseudo) science in the nineteenth century, based on "the conviction that mind and body were interrelated" (Stern 161). 19th-century phrenologists believed that phrenological

organs, like other parts of human organs, could be stimulated by means of animal magnetism. Poe's contemporary phrenologists discovered the relationship between mental temperament and the structure of the phrenological organs [6]. This is also a discovery between mind/body and environment. For Poe, mental temperament is affected by phrenological organs' (in)capability of tolerating the exterior forces of destruction. Sensitive individuals are probably more likely to be affected by exterior force than those less sensitive; a certain area of their phrenological organs might be 'weak' or lack stability in defending against the exterior force of decadence. Poe accentuated that phrenological organs are sentient to the exterior forces of destruction, and this is shown in his Gothic tales such as "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Tell-Tale Heart," and many others. Poe might or might not have recognized the psychological interpretation that portends Freudian discourse of an organism's death drive. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud claims that an organism is controlled by its own death drive(s) ("Thanatos") permeating its every cell, due to which a memory storage area called germ cells "work against the death of the living substance," "though that may mean no more than a lengthening of the road to death" (48). Freud's death drive cell is indeed the counterpart of Poe's sentient phrenological organs—sensitive and surrendering to the exterior force of destruction. The mind is not simply 'spiritual,' as the mind is inseparable from the material. As the mind is material, it is not free from its destiny of destruction; all materials are beset by the movement towards the destined destruction.

Mesmerizer, Subject, and Writing

In "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," the mesmerist does not operate psychologically in the subject of mesmerism. He believes that some signs shown on Mr. Valdemar render him appropriate for mesmeric experiment, but this does not lead to manipulation of the will of the patient.

> M. Valdemar…his lower limbs much resembling those of John Randolph; and, also, for the whiteness of his whiskers, in violent contrast to the blackness of his hair—the latter, in consequence, being very generally mistaken for a wig. His temperament was markedly nervous, and rendered him a good subject for mesmeric experiment. On two or three occasions I had put him to sleep with little difficulty, but was disappointed in other results which his peculiar constitution had naturally led me to anticipate. His will was at no period positively, or thoroughly, under my control, and in regard to *clairvoyance*, I could accomplish with him nothing to be relied upon…I spoke to him frankly upon the subject; and, to my surprise, his interest seemed vividly excited. I say to my surprise; for, although he had always yielded his person freely to my experiments, he had never before given me any tokens of sympathy with what I did. ("The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" 1234)

M. Valdemar's temperament and physical condition (nervous/sentient to exterior objects) are appropriate for the mesmeric experiment that the narrator (the mesmerizer) suggests for the observation of the effects of mesmerism on a dying body. Before introducing electromagnetic fluid into the subject, it is necessary to establish the connection of the will of the patient with that of the mesmerizer. Theoretically, the more 'tokens of sympathy' shown on the side of the subject, the

more successful the mesmerism might be. Valdemar does not reject this proposal. Before the experiment starts, Valdemar allows the narrator to put him into a hypnagogic state, but as he is led to the sleep state, his will is not thoroughly under the narrator's control. It is completely possible that the hypnagogic state under the influence of animal magnetism is uncontrollable by the mesmerizer, nor by the patient. The will [7] of the narrator is "only a mechanical stimulus like drugs or sensory deprivation," and his will is "'psychedelic' rather than psychological or moral" (Falk 537); he does not intend to manipulate the patient as we see in Poe's "female vampirism" [8] (Falk 540). In much the same vein, the mesmerism is uncontrollable by the patient. Though the patient accepts the treatment of mesmerism, he cannot disobey a will unknown to both the mesmerizer and the patient—a will that intervenes and interrupts the hypnagogic state. As the patient asks to wake up, the force that interrupts is still the unknown will. The narrator attributes the failure of the animal magnetism to the illness itself. The connection of the two wills (the patient and the mesmerizer) cannot reverse the condition of physical decline towards death and dissolution. Humanity cannot conquer the third will, which is beyond mankind's recognition.

Obviously, human will permeates every cell and act of the patient against an irresistible will before the application of mesmerism on the death-bed. Though gravely ill, the patient's "mental power" is still strong. His physical state has been controlled by the irresistible will: "His face wore a leaden hue; the eyes were utterly lusterless; and the emaciation was so extreme." What is worse, "the left lung had been for eighteen months in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state…the patient was suspected of aneurism of the aorta" ("The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" 1235). Nevertheless, he is still occupied in "penciling memoranda in a pocket-book" (1235) and "profess[es] himself quite willing and even anxious to have [the animal magnetism] made" (1236). Poe does not reveal to us the patient's motivation with regard to partaking in the experiment. Instead, he presents the tenacious will of humanity—a very bull-headed manner that looks awkward in the moment of departing the physical world. Even though the invalid knows that the time of death is certain, he desires to record the process of death in his memoranda as if it will become an immortal/unforgettable event in life—a struggle against death/annihilation. The will of the narrator (doctor) is in accordance with the invalid's in terms of their common desire of deferring the death of the invalid. For this, the narrator asks an acquaintance, Mr. L—l, to take notes of the process of mesmeric experiment. Not only does the memoranda recorded by Mr. L—l and the patient himself become a valuable document from which the narrator preserves the research of animal magnetism, but it remarks a 'proof' about resistance to death or dissolution of the Self.

J. Gerald Kennedy, in *Poe, Death and the Life of Writing*, takes notice of the function of writing in Poe's literary corpus. The will to write is a will to resist against death.

> […] for Poe as for his fictive narrator, writing unfolded between dread and fascination, alternately functioning as a deferral of death and as an incursion into its domain. Significantly, in that early tale the manuscript assumes an autonomous life of its own: writing survives the writer, and set against the problematic phenomena it purports to register and inventory, it inscribes a truth that is self-revealing rather than referential. (Kennedy 29)

Writing, in the case of Valdemar, cooperates with the mesmeric experiment, ushering the subject and the mesmerized into the realm of the abyss or void. "The sudden suspension of writing signals the narrator's penetration of the void beyond language" (Kennedy 27). Writing effects a divorce from reality (death) as it creates time and space for the purpose of deferring death and suppressing anxiety and fear that accompany death. "The apotheosis of writing coincides with the disappearance of God" (30), and the manipulator of life/death is replaced by the one who can use the technique of writing, though this manipulation is a delusion. The memoranda in the mesmeric experiment can draw life from death or escape from the doom as it "embrace[s] the catastrophe of death" (31). It allows the subject (M. Valdemar) to live beyond time and space as the mesmeric experiment causes sensation among the public. It facilitates the diversion from sorrow and melancholy toward that of a spiritual world. Writing inscribes a truth that replaces the Truth of God, yet the truth that writing inscribes merely survives for a short time.

It is likely that the writing in Poe's "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" enacts the human will to resist or beguile death. Dr. Templeton applies animal magnetism to Bedloe in order to alleviate his ailment, facial neuralgia. In his hypnotic state, Bedloe descends into a battleground where he is barricaded and killed by an arrow that strikes him in the temple. As Bedloe wakes from the trance and recounts the event to Templeton, the latter is shocked since the time-travel in the hypnotic state resembles the expedition of his old friend Oldeb who died during British combat in 1780. The scene that Bedloe perceives is exactly the same as that about which Templeton has written. Critics read Bedloe's tale as either a case of metempsychosis or a disembodiment of time-travel. If this is indeed a story of metempsychosis, Bedloe might return to his before-life, or the spirit of Oldeb is reincarnated in the body of his grandson Bedloe, only to re-experience death (Lind 1083-1084) [9]. The dead can revive in the living, for a while. If this is a story of disembodiment, the application of electro-magnetic force through animal magnetism is a technique that Templeton uses to keep his dead friend (Oldeb) alive (Falk 540-543); Bedloe is actually a zombie, whose *life* depends on the galvanic force that Templeton introduces to his body. No matter what the situation, Bedloe enacts the writing of Dr. Templeton in his hypnotic state. Like the power of writing in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," Templeton's writing is endowed with a certain control over the death of Bedloe/Oldeb. It helps retreat from life, fascinate it, blur the boundaries between life and death, and in the realm of ambiguity, accomplish death-deferment through animal magnetism.

In "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," the doctor's application of animal magnetism on a dying tuberculosis patient in order to delay death and record the 'afterlife' facilitates the will of inscribing truth in the abyss. To some degree, the techniques of both mesmerism and writing execute the same mission, as they allow the dying/dead to continue to live in the realm of death, deluded by a medical technique. As the phthisis patient becomes a 'sleep waker,' he is separated from the body in pain, and because of the effect of mesmerism, he feels no pain in the moment of approaching death.

> The lips moved sluggishly, and from between them, in a barely audible whisper, issued the words:

> "Yes; –asleep now. Do not wake me! Let me die so!"
> I here felt the limbs and found them as rigid as ever. The right arm, as before, obeyed the direction of my hand. I questioned the sleep-waker again:
> "Do you still feel pain in the breast, M. Valdemar?"
> The answer now was immediate, but even less audible than before:
> "No pain—I am dying" ("The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" 1238-1239)

Not only does he feel no pain, but he is undisturbed even though a marked change over his body is obvious.

> The eyes rolled themselves slowly open, the pupils disappearing upwardly; the skin generally assumed a cadaverous hue, resembling not so much parchment as white paper; and the circular hectic spots which, hitherto, had been strongly defined in the centre of each cheek, *went out* at once. ("The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" 1239)

Unquestionably, the physical function of M. Valdemar has gone into recession and entered a situation where it is impossible to speak. Yet the doctor makes him speak; the tongue of the dead escapes the temporal and spatial order as the other organs of the subject fall into a declining state. The unspeaking words speak in a corpse-like body. The language of Valdemar reveals itself as problematic, yet it is still reliable since it is attached to the doctor's medical application as well as his nomination of the meaning of the words of the dead.

> The sound was harsh, and broken and hollow; but the hideous whole is indescribable, for the simple reason that no similar sounds have ever jarred upon the ear of humanity. There were two particulars, nevertheless, which I thought then, and still think, might fairly be stated as characteristic of the intonation—as well adapted to convey some idea of its unearthly peculiarity. In the first place, the voice seemed to reach our ears…from some deep cavern within the earth. ("The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" 1240)

The doctor, through writing, defines the words from the tongue of Valdemar as those drawn from an unearthly world. The transformation of the words into a symbolic expression occurs through the tongue of M. Valdemar under the effect of electro-magnetism. This is a moment of great achievement in the scientific community—and an ecstasy to its witnesses, indeed—if M. Valdemar can continue to remain in a kind of waking sleep when he is dying or dead. He is about to disclose its conspiracy with death, disguising itself as reality or a surrogate for the actual reality. As M. Valdemar speaks, uttering *the truth* from an invisible world, his words enact a magic play that allows the doctor and his student to record 'the afterlife.'

Nevertheless, the power of mesmerism regresses when Valdemar is dead. As midnight passes, Valdemar is entirely dead. "I *have been* sleeping—and now—now—*I am dead*" ("The Facts" 1240), says Valdemar as his body is in a moribund state. The doctor starts to feel that his mesmeric power is less effective on the subject. "I endeavored in vain to make it follow the direction of my hand" ("The Facts" 1241). The voice of the dead is now controlled not so much by human will (that demands cooperation of stating his condition), but by a will unknown to mankind. His volition to speak is "no longer sufficient" ("The Facts" 1241); he needs to take more effort at reply to the questions of the doctor. Death is arrested by the mesmeric process, but the subject seems to feel pain when demanded to

speak. The doctor hesitates between awakening M. Valdemar and keeping him 'alive' in sleep. He knows well that a speedy dissolution will occur if Valdemar is awakened. He decides to keep the mesmerized subject 'alive.' In the seventh month, the doctor and his team come back to the deathbed and try to communicate with the subject. His attempt to direct the subject fails, and the corps breaks forth his voice, asking to awaken him. "For God's sake!—quick!—quick!—put me to sleep—or, quick!—waken me!—quick!—*I say to you that I am dead!*" ("The Facts" 1242) Again, the corpse that speaks is impossible. Yet this impossibility of words is no longer nominated by mankind. These words are pressed by the will of the subject (the will to be released from pain) and death. In "total abeyance of the [human] will," the doctor cannot "re-compose the patient," and then he allows him to awaken from the long sleep and dissolute "within the space of a single minute, or even less" ("The Facts" 1242-1243).

Temporary Appropriation of Human Will

With the aid of mesmeric technology, the patient is in abeyance of physical dissolution, even in the state of pain-relief. His tongue, freely crossing the boundaries of life and death, utters the words, as if God disappears from the territory of death. Temporarily divorced from regularity of nature, Valdemar's tongue holds the capability of language as it embraces death. For the doctor and his team, the moment Valdemar speaks is the moment of the sublime, which is a form of mimetic appropriation interweaving the will of Valdemar and the will of the doctor. As the doctor and his team apply animal magnetism to the body of the subject, Valdemar confronts an environment that elevates him to a state of transcendental ecstasy; his body is disengaged from the corporal world. He is not simply a corpse, but a bridge that makes impossible things possible in a symbolic expression. The body is not the body of Valdemar, but a medium simultaneously circulating the electromagnetic fluid through the will of the subject and the mesmerizer. The body of Valdemar, since it is more sensitive to be affected by an exterior force, rapidly approaches the interconnection with its surrounding. What the doctor and his team encounter in their experiment is not Valdemar, but an alterity—a hybrid of two forces from technology and cosmos. This is a breakthrough in the medical arena, an enhancement of feeling transcendental or uncontrollable by all, yet sublime horror accompanies sublime ecstasy. As the residue of humanity 'survives' in the corpse, the deathbed scene condenses horror—a situation from which these team members desire to escape. Paradoxically, the patient, who is disoriented from the natural process of death, still cooperates with the omnipresent Universe. The soul continues to thrive, but it cannot thrive in a dead material/corpse. Thus, the appropriation of the will of the mesmerizer for the death-deferment is temporary.

Sensation of Death

The startling voice of "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" is drawn directly from a mesmeric phthisis patient, and it presents a striking portrait of the sensation of death in the deathbed scene. Upon hearing the message of death from

the dead, Mr. Theodore L—l (the medical student) swoons, and the nurse leaves the room. While the team members escape, the narrator (the doctor), aware of the fact that he will not be able to keep Valdemar alive, hesitates between awakening him and continuing the deferment. At that moment, he knows well that if Valdemar is relieved from his mesmeric state, a speedy dissolution of the body will most certainly occur. The decision of the doctor to keep the interval longer reveals his unwillingness to abandon the corpse. It is possible that the patient represents Poe's wife Virginia, while the doctor stands for Poe, who stayed within the transition (an interval between life and death) in intending to retrieve/remember 'the voice' of Virginia as she was dying from tuberculosis. Alternatively, the patient represents Poe's older brother, William Henry Leonard Poe, who died of the same illness at the age of 24, coincidentally the same age as the passing of both Poe's mother and his wife, Virginia. The doctor's unwillingness to call an end to the mesmeric experiment reflects Poe's reluctance to part from his beloved family members who had suffered from tuberculosis. In the seventh month, the doctor relieves Valdemar from the mesmeric trance. Valdemar cries out

> "dead! dead!" absolutely *bursting* from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once—within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk—crumbled—absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putridity. ("The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" 1243)

The speedy dissolution is disgusting. The cry bursting from the tongue signals a rapid process of dehumanization—removal of humanity from the body at the moment of cosmic eternity. The patient may suffer from a decaying body, and this suffering might be greater than natural death [10]. What Poe reveals to us is not the exaltation of success, but instead a horrifying scene due to human interference in this natural process. In addition, the revolting putrefaction of the body causes vehement sensations in its viewers—which is also a painful experience. Poe applies the disgust-sensation that dominates the post-1800's aesthetic relevant to the expression of passion and eroticism. As Menninghaus notes, the putrefaction "is a(n) (ironic) figure of defiguration that, starting with the advent of Romanticism, is repeatedly used in the description of libidinous desire, vice, and the historical signature of the passions in general" (qtd. in Frank 657). The loss of the voice of the dead coupled with a view into the process of putrefaction causes an unbearable sensation. The body of Valdemar is "the stuff of sympathy, affect or sensation itself" (Frank 657). With Valdemar's rapid fade into dehumanization, emotions and passions for the beloved are suppressed and condensed to an irrevocable memory.

Conclusion

The corpse of Valdemar, at the moment of putrefaction, cannot be simply reduced to a repulsive mesmerized subject, but rather is crossing boundaries connected to two bodies—a mélange of the earthly body and the ethereal body (the ultimate body). The body of Valdemar resembles the body of Morella, Ligeia, or Berenice, who in death-deferment or death/life boundaries show the imbrication of the two bodies, the two worlds, and resorts to the telegraphic communication of emotions, affections, and sympathy. In the practices of mesmerism and animal magnetism,

we perceive not only a body's irrevocable withdrawing from the earthly body and reintegration into the ultimate body, but also an emotional bond between the mesmerizer and the mesmerized. Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" anticipates a complex literary corpus in the post-human era. The rapid development of technology and medical breakthroughs have made it much easier for mankind to take adventures into the abyss or territory of death, supplementing imperatives as if the Universal Force has disappeared or yielded its authority to mankind. Nevertheless, technology and scientific experimentation cannot indefinitely inhibit illness or neutralize death. Instead, this magic in scientific experimentation, as in the case of animal magnetism, does indeed cooperate with the Cosmic Force as it pushes human beings towards the abyss and accelerates the disintegration of self. As Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* interprets, human beings cannot escape decomposition: "These body [of abjection] fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being" (3).

Works Cited

Falk, Doris V. "Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism." *PMLA*, vol. 84, no. 3, 1969, pp. 536-546.

Frank, Adam. "Valdemar's Tongue, Poe's Telegraphy." *ELH*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2005, pp. 635-662.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated by James Strachey. Edited by James Strachey, W. W. Norton & Company, 1961.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, Columbia UP, 1982.

Kennedy, J. Gerald. *Poe, Death and the Life of Writing*. Yale UP, 1987.

Laverty, Carroll Dee. *Science and Pseudo-Science in the Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*. Duke University, 1951, pp. 284-305.

Lind, Sidney E. "Poe and Mesmerism." *PMLA*, vol. 62, no. 4, 1947, pp. 1077-1094.

Mabbott, Thomas Ollive. Introduction. *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe—Vol. III: Tales and Sketches, 1843-1849*, edited by Mabbott, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 1228-1229.

MacDonald, Paul S. *Nature Loves to Hide: An Alternative History of Philosophy*. Lulu.com, 2019.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe—Vol. III: Tales and Sketches, 1843-1849*, edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978, pp.1233-1244.

—. "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains." *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe—Vol. III: Tales and Sketches, 1843-1849*, edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 939-953.

—. "Eureka." *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe Volume XVI*, edited by James A. Harrison, AMS Press, 1979, pp. 179-315.

Stern, Madeleine B. "Poe: 'The Mental Temperament' for Phrenologists." *American Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1968, pp. 155-163.

Taylor, Matthew A. "Edgar Allan Poe's (Meta)physics: A Pre-History of the Post-Human." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2007, pp. 193-221.

Notes

[1] Johann Peter Lange and Allan Kardec believed that Jesus was the greatest magnetizer, and that animal magnetism was his miracle. See Johann Peter Lange's *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Kings*, Ed. C. Scribner & Company, 1872. See also Allan Kardec's *Genesis: Miracles and Predictions According to Spiritism*.

[2] See Mabbott's *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, volume III, page 1228-1229.

For more sources referring to "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," see Laverty, Lind, and Falk. Laverty argues that the source of "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" might be C. Chardel's work. Chardel details the case of a clairvoyant's mother who has sustained her life for some days by mesmerism (Laverty 295). Falk in "Poe and the Power of Animal Magnetism" suspects that Poe might be the author of *The Philosophy of Animal Magnetism by a Gentleman of Philadelphia* (published in 1837), in which the idea of gravity, fluid, and animal magnetism is associated with Mesmer's animal magnetism and portends Poe's three major mesmeric works written in the 1840s.

[3] For example, Poe agreed with the mesmeric idea fronted by William Newnham and Chauncy Hare Townshend, but jibes at *Wakondah, The Master of Life. A Poem* as "a barefaced attempt at magnetism," and *Orion*, a pseudo-science. See Laverty.

[4] See Taylor's "Edgar Allan Poe's (Meta)physics: A Pre-History of the Post-Human."

[5] Unlike Melville's Ahab, Poe's mesmerists have no diabolic motivation; his mesmerists conduct a unifying force that they believe can prevent dissolution, rather than exert control over the will of the mesmerized. See Falk's "Poe and Power of Animal Magnetism," page 537.

[6] For example, Lorenzo Niles Fowler examined the phrenological organs of Poe and other contemporary well-known writers. In his findings about Poe's phrenology, he reached the conclusion that Poe was a "wandering star," since the area that dominated Intellect in his brain demonstrated that he could be "confined to no orbit and limited to no constellation in the empire of mind" (qtd. in Stern 159). Apart from this, Fowler discovered the cause of Poe's weak temperament: "…he had lacked stability in character and 'was wanting in Firmness, Self-Esteem, Continuity, and in the basilar brain and vital power' " (Stern 159).

[7] Poe distinguishes the will of human beings from that of an unknown force. The former is weak while the latter dominates all. Poe often presents men's feeble will at the moment of their decadence or death. Man's weakness is equivalent to base moral natures, and it will eventually disperse as "diffused Matter and Spirit will" (*Eureka* 313) regathers. The human will in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" has nothing to do with moral natures; it simply fights against death.

[8] This kind of vampirism operates psychologically, as it is aimed at an absolute possession of the will of the lover by weakening or destroying it. For more discussion of vampirism, see James B. Twitchell's *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*.

[9] For metempsychosis, see also Carroll Dee Laverty, page 291-292.

[10] As the dead awakens, the soul of the dead returns to the body which is rapidly putrefying. Since he (his soul) is in the dead body, he suffers in this process of putrefaction—a condition that he could avoid if he died in a natural way (without mesmerism). He might be free from suffering if he died and left the corpse before its putrefaction. The deathbed scene in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" is no less disturbing than that in "Ligeia," since both M. Valdemar and Ligeia are called back to a dead body and thus (re)experience physical pains.

What Lies In-Between

Conceptualizing the Island in English Canadian Fantastic Fiction

Monika Kosa
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Abstract. This paper aims to analyze the complex articulations of the Island-trope in Canadian fantastic fiction. A prevalent trope in Anglophone literature, the Island is rarely perused within the framework of twentieth-century fantastic Canadian literature. Yet in novels such as Erskine Douglas' *A bit of Atlantis* (1900), Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* (1977) and Graham Petrie's *Seahorse* (1980), the (often contrasting) symbolism associated with the island-possibility, marginality, liminality-is not merely an aesthetic or thematic obsession; the Island functions as a fluctuating metafictional landscape, a self-referential artefact, culturally and historically embedded.

Keywords: island, fantastic fiction, Canadian literature, Erskine Douglas, Jack Hodgins, Graham Petrie

In collective consciousness, the Island is a transfixing spatial entity, generally associated with romanticized escapism or is imagined as a topographical site for mysterious adventures. Yet Islands can also function as distinctive textual realms, incorporating (and interrogating) conventional representational elements and problematizing the construction of fictionality. In the essay *A Gossip on romance*, Robert Louis Stevenson commented on the isomorphic relationship between physical topographies and particular literary genres: "some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck" (141). Yet the island transcends such generic associations: its potentiality enables authors belonging to different literary traditions (be that realist or fantastic) to embed the island-trope in their narrative discourses; in other words, the Island is a "master metaphor capable of representing a multitude of things" (Ronstrom 158).

While scholars generally tend to associate the idea of the Island with contrasting binaries (for instance, heaven and hell, refuge and prison) or envision it as-"a place of exile and refuge" (James 7), a mental construction which is "a response to a need"(Stimpson 306), to name just a few [1], defining it in terms of a single conceptual framework would significantly reduce its connotative complexity. Its semantic pliability is indubitably the main reason for its centrality within 'discursive formations'. Hay even asserts that the island is "*the* central metaphor within western discourse" (26). Moreover, as islands are "maps of the imagination" (Kinane 108), [2] their connotative potentiality is unlimited. Nevertheless, the Island-trope is contingent on cultural and historical context: just as "each period of Canadian literature-Victorian, modern, postmodern [3]-has treated the North according to its cultural values and assumptions, so that the reality is filtered by aesthetic beliefs, political ideas, and so on (...)" (Weiss 113),

the Island has also undergone conceptual changes in accordance with the historical and cultural agenda of an era.

The Island-trope is deeply embedded in the Canadian cultural imagination, yet it has received little critical attention over the centuries. Island-narratives were present in Canadian literature as early as the nineteenth-century, with Susan Frances Harrison's short story, The Idyl of the Island, published in 1886, being one of the first valuable literary contribution to the island-narratives. From then onward, several short stories and novels belonging to (or rather originating from) the realist tradition constructed the island-world according to the conventions imposed by the historical and cultural context. In other words, the Island as "a metaphoric conceit or cultural signifier" (Kanine 5) is a discursive formation as well as an imaginary canvas which maps the cultural scheme of a certain era.

In Canadian fantastic fiction, the island-trope is the imaginary repository of cultural concerns and a metafictional site for reinvention as the topographical mapping is a form of re-coding real(ist) spaces. Just as "the North servers various thematic and symbolic purposes" (Weiss 112) in Canadian fantastic fiction, the Island is also a multivalent source for world building. Robert T. Tally Jr. writes that "science fiction or utopia or fantasy enable new ways of seeing the spaces of our world, while also imagining different spaces altogether". This dual endeavour enables the narrator and the reader to re-evaluate spatiality. Furthermore, the creation of new spaces implies a transference to a different ontological category. Rather than relying on mimetic world construction, authors such as Erskine Douglas, Jack Hodgins and Graham Petrie created imaginary cartographies belonging to such different ontological categories, exposing the shifting cultural landscape and the changes in literary representation.

In Canadian literature and Canadian cultural consciousness, the Island is analogous to the idea of ex-centricity [4] (in spatial, cultural and historical terms) and as part of a larger metaphor, the Island is a site of enactment of the Canadian wilderness. The Island articulates the cultural concern with Canada's geopolitical position and it has the potentiality to become a site for literary re-invention, especially in the case of (experimental) postmodernist works. When discussing the Island-trope in British science fiction, Paul Kincaid identifies "two basic contrasting responses to the island (…). Islomania: the island as dream state, the object of desire, the ideal; and insularity: the island as prison or fortress that holds us apart from the rest of the world". These disparate impulses towards the Island-motif are identifiable in Canadian fantastic works as well until the rise of postmodernist fiction in the 60s when a new approach is predominantly preferred, the one Kincaid calls "the evolutionary experiment. And here the island always seems to combine aspects of islomania and insularity".

For Kinane, the Island is "a theoretical construct, a cultural *leitmotif*, of sorts, that is representative of particular contemporary crises in modern Western society" (14) rather than an actual geographical site. In Canadian literature, the Island is a fluid spatial entity, a canvas-like setting which serves a cultural (and in some cases ideological) purpose. Margaret Atwood, in her seminal *Survival*, established a system of corresponding symbols to every culture: "every country or culture has a singly unifying and informing symbol at its core" (31). She associates America with the Frontier, whereas the central image corresponding to England is the Island, "island-as-body, self-contained, a body-politic, evolving organically,

with a hierarchical structure (....)" (31-32). Ultimately, the Canadian leitmotif is Survival, "a multi-faceted and adaptable idea" (Atwood 32), malleable to the changing historical and cultural context. In certain Canadian works, the central trope of the Island and Survival are intrinsically interwound as the Island serves as a site for survival: Alistair MacLeod's short story, *The Island*, explores the lives of a small island community and their daily struggle to survive and to reconcile traditional ways of life with contemporary lifestyle; Jack Hodgins' *Spit Delaney's Island* is a magic realist dive into the muddy existence of the eccentrics inhabiting (or rather, surviving) Vancouver Island and their peculiar bond with the Island- as a geographical frontier-place, as a figurative embodiment of their alienation and castaway existence, as a heterotopia, as a metafictional site, as a playground of the mind or the (inherently parodic) theatre on human condition.

Erskine Douglas' *A bit of Atlantis*, published in 1900, is a lesser-known Canadian adventure novel which received little critical attention at its time of publication. The novel dwells on the island trope and borrows parts from the Robinsonade novels and blends them with mythological elements. In fact, the whole novel is a concoction of mythical knowledge with (an almost obsessive) attempt to achieve historical accuracy. The novel exemplifies nineteenth-century science fiction writers' fascination with 'lost' worlds: "another important sf strain to emerge during the nineteenth century features explorations of the distant past, and of ancient "lost" worlds" (Evans 15). In the *Introduction* section, the omniscient narrator foregrounds the intertextual link between the novel and the Atlantis-myth: "the Story of Atlantis is, comparatively speaking, an unfamiliar tale; but, whether it be that it is fiction or fact, there is a strange fascination in the thought that the cradle of our civilization was in a great island (...) (48).

The novel starts with the vivid description of a storm at sea, reminiscent of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. After setting the dramatic mood, which is meant to arouse the readers' interest, the narrator shifts to account the history of the Denesmores family, focusing especially on Atalyn, a young brilliant scientist, who struggles to succeed in Paris in the field of electrical science, dismissed by other scientists, labeled impractical by the utilitarian mindset of the time. Although the novel starts on an overtly realistic tone, the reader is soon transposed to witness young Atalyn's fantastic voyage on the sea of, accompanied by Katherine, a beautiful maiden, and her 'negro' servant, Dinah [5]. Their journey and subsequent shipwreck on the paradisiac island which, at first, seemed a "civilized country" (79) is an intertextual reference to (either) the Christopher Columbus myth and (/or) Robinson Crusoe's tale of survival on a desert island (indubitably, *A Bit of Atlantis* shares common motifs with *Robinson Crusoe*, especially in the dichotomic construction of the Island as earthly paradise and a nightmarish snare). The abundance of textual references to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* foregrounds the postmodern concern with intertextuality. The narrative follows the fixed patterns of conventional adventure novels and includes a customary romance element. [6]

The narrative re-codes familiar objects on the island (secret passages, pipes carrying clean water, a tall building resembling a tower or a temple of some sort) to heighten the mystery effect. The narrator insists on highlighting the paradoxical (un)familiarity of the Island: "(...) they had felt in some strangely mysterious manner it was all familiar to them, and yet every effort to connect it

with any part of their previous experience completely failed" (105) until arriving at the conclusion "that they were revising the scenes of a long-forgotten childhood" (106). The Island also resembles Montreal, which problematizes spatial representation and literary estrangement: Atalyn "recognized the familiar outlines of the well-remembered eminence at Montreal" (92). Allegorically, if the Island is micro-representation of Canada, then Atalyn and his 'crew' can be correlated with colonizer forces, namely, the British and/or the French.

The signs of an earlier civilizations are contrasted, or rather dramatized by emphasizing the "unaccountable absence of anything to indicate that they still remained on the island" (96). The romanticized image of the Island is enhanced by referential allusions to a long-lost Edenic state:

> (…) there came over them a strange and indescribable feeling of awe and reverence, until they could almost imagine that when the majestic doors of golden bronze before them opened, it would be to usher them into that unseen world, where the sorrows and burdens of humanity are gone forever (97-98).

The island's "seemingly impenetrable mystery" (179) and allure is never decrypted in rational terms; rather, the Island is what Kincaid calls an "evolutionary experiment", encapsulating simultaneously islomania and insularity.

Atalyn's discovery of a cannibalistic ritual, "a horrible profusion, the sickening remains of a cannibal feast" (114), is a diverting plot-twist which subverts the idealism of the island-world. Atalyn, just like Prospero, is bent on 'taming', or rather, annihilating the savages who sinned against humanity: "(…) there came over him a fierce desire to utterly destroy the wretched beings, who were guilty of this hideous offence against humanity" (114). Similarly, to Prospero, Atalyn repels the 'savages' by resorting to illusion. Yet magic is not anymore a viable means to create illusion: Atalyn turns to science as weapon and opts for pragmatic knowledge over magical thinking. The novel exposes, then, the shift from an overtly 'magical' *Weltanschauung* to fetishizing and prioritizing scientific knowledge in the collective imaginary. As a modern and enlightened colonizer figure, Atalyn molds the Island driven by his sense of order, safety and reason.

Ironically, Atalyn becomes the evil wizard figure in the eyes of the 'cannibals' and the Island is conceptualized, from their perspective, as the locus of evil forces, much like Sicorax's Island:

> no savage ever again ventured near the island, but around their campfires the story of their experience on the "Island of Devils" filled the listeners with a terror which was scarcely less than felt by those who told the story (…) (127).

A believer in scientific progress, Atalyn's contribution to the mythologizing of the Island is explainable in rational terms and is can possibly be regarded an act of conquest. Thus, the Island gradually becomes a colonized space, reinforced by the melodramatic (and pathetic) appearance of the sole 'negro' left behind by the cannibals, who, conveniently, happens to be Dinah's lost son and turns out to be the perfect 'domesticated' servant, Jim (a 'amiable' version of Crusoe's Friday). Thus, the Island carries a heavy ideological and colonial undertone which becomes more apparent as the narrative progresses. The culminant discovery of

"The Last Will of Atlas, King of Atlantis" elicits the mystery surrounding the island:

> the island to which they had been so providentially driven by the storm was a 'Bit of Atlantis,' and the marvelous works they had found on it had come down from that wonderful people, through all the countless ages which had passed away since they lived in that earthly paradise (136-137).

"The Last Will of Atlas, King of Atlantis" contains a bitter warning which urges any wanderer to "escape from this island" (153) because, according to the prophetic words, the island is inhabited by evil forces. The prophecy, which turns out to be authentic, ("the island was sinking") implies a conceptual change in the perception of the Island: "their island refuge, now no longer a refuge, but threatened with the most appalling of disasters" (160). Corresponding to the imaginary transmutation of the island-refuge to "the doomed island" (164), the physical manifestation of the (negative) metamorphosis is overtuned with hyperbolic imagery:

> (...) the sky, which had been without a cloud, became overcast, and a peculiar yellowish haze gathered around the horizon. The air was absolutely still, and breathing seemed to become every moment more difficult. Everywhere the animals and birds shewed signs of the greatest alarm and uneasiness, and everything indicated some approaching catastrophe (161).

As they were leaving, the island, "which now presented grand and appalling spectacle" (163), was being consumed with fire and after returning to it with other sailors, all they found was a "sea of mud" (165). The intertextual reference to the original Platonian metaphor is apparent: "this last 'Bit of Atlantis' had disappeared beneath the ocean, as the great island itself had gone down ages before" (165).

The novel, which is predominantly descriptive (dialogue is entirely absent), is accompanied by maps and illustrations, thus, creating a paratextual bond with the potential reader while also visually embedding the spatial setting. In the *Introduction* part, the novel's indebtedness to Plato's account on the lost mythical Atlantis is self-referentially stated by reproducing the original story. While the novel repeatedly attempts to highlight its verisimilitude as part of the conventions of the earlier realist novels (directly addressing the reader, insistence on the 'truthfulness' of the story, factuality, attention to detail, 'realistic' chronotope), the island ultimately problematizes the nature of reality (and truth).The novel, while exceeding in melodramatic plotlines and pretentious storytelling, offers an interesting early fictional conceptualization of the Island trope while foregrounding some of the main concerns of postmodernist fiction (i.e. intertextuality, disrupted chronology). Erskine's Island demarcates a separate cosmos, oscillating between appearance/disappearance, governed by atemporality yet resembling Canada and its colonial, marginal position in the collective imaginary of the early twentieth century.

The Island is a fluid and highly mythologized geography in the novel, an ever-changing spatial entity molded on ancient prognostications. The myth-infused semantic transmutations-from island-refuge to doomed island-expose the fluctuating nature of the Island trope in the cultural imagination of the early

twentieth century. The interplay between the dyadic appearance/disappearance motif corresponds, in fact, to the juxtaposition of the island as real and the island as imaginary topos. The early "textual constructions of imaginary paradisiacal islands" (Kanine 9-10) in Anglophone literatures were an overly romanticized version of the Robinson-myth, perceptible in *A Bit of Atlantic* too. In late twentieth-century Anglophone fiction, the Island has conceptually mutated into "a space which enables interaction and polyphony" (Lane 15). For instance, one of the most famous twentieth-century island-narratives, William Golding's *Lord of Flies*, "creates a meta-island" (Kanine 12). As a fluctuating trope, the postmodernist Island is rather a parodic simulacrum of (post)modern spaces than a literary projection of paradise or hell imagery.

The Invention of the World, published in 1977, problematizes an entirely different literary approach to the Island trope. The novel is a postmodernist feast with mythical reverberations, a mock rewriting of the biblical creation story and a metafictional artefact. Donald Keneally's (a bull-god's) journey from the Irish hilltops to Vancouver Island symbolically recreates the paradisiacal quest and shares thematic traits with the biblical story of the Exodus, implied by the various textual references. The novel problematizes representation by combining preternatural imagery with realist elements. This narrative venture dis-places the fantastic and disrupts (or rather invalidates and subverts) the whole narrative structure and entreats for a fundamental reappraisal of the novel.

The island's genesis can be traced back to an ontological certainty embedded in the collective history of the inhabitants of Vancouver Island: "(…) that the tale which exists somewhere at the centre of his gathered hoard, in the confusion of tales and lies and protests and legends and exaggerations (…)" (ix). The 'invented' nature of the island which problematizes fictionality and the substance of *reality* is further reinforced by allusive references to parodic religious motifs: "sometimes this god-man almost believes that he owns this island, that he has perhaps invented it" (viii).

The Island's (his)story implies a reverse colonization process imbued with cultural references and metafictional self-referentiality. The 'bull-god's" arrival to Vancouver Island is rendered as the 'invasion' of the bush-people on the civilized society inhabiting the island:

> he comes over here with his pack of sheep-people and sets up his own world like the rest of us don't exist, see, like the world stopped and started at the edge of his property. He was a King in there, like something out of the Dark Ages, and the fact that the rest of us here were busy building a modern civilized society with decent values never occurred to him (174).

The metafictional commentary "all fiction is an invasion of one kind or another, or it has no point" (293) from the *Barclay Family Theatre* foregrounds the postmodernist concern with fictional representation and encompasses Jack Hodgins' artistic creed. In *The Invention of the World*, the intertextual invasion is doubled by the parodic 'invasion' of the preternatural nomads on the 'enlightened' civilization of Vancouver Island. This idea can be linked to Kanine's imagining of the Island topos as purgatorium. Moreover, the Island functions as a spatial representation- both literally and figuratively-of the juxtaposition of dyadic concepts-reality and hyperreality, ordinary and extra-ordinary,

individuality and collectivity, nature and culture. In other words, the island is constantly 'invaded' by conceptual entities which disrupt the (illusory) realness of its inherent topography.

This Island, which functions as a spatial embodiment of Hodgins' own fiction, is "a place where people disappeared into" (186), resists 'taming': "and the streets in this place, he was assured, were laid out for all time on a contour map, in England, more than a hundred years ago by a man who'd never set foot on the island. As if any man could draw proper lines on this ungovernable landscape" (221). The resistance to mapping and any regulatory practices is highly symbolic: "even the island itself was that way, he thought: defying geometry. Straight lines looked ridiculous here" (228). The continuous spatial expansion and 'ungovernability' carries a double referentiality: the island's impenetrability and the ever-changing nature of its reality.

The geographical 'ex-centricity' of the island embodies the inhabitants' quintessential marginality: "(…) you could always count on a good show when the up-island people were in town. Straight out of the bush, they didn't know any better, half of them were crazy" (4). The "craziness of bush people" (6) is a natural consequence of their isomorphic connection with the Island. Furthermore, the inhabitants' names are crafted linguistic instances of parodic appropriation meant to heighten their marginal position in society: "they were called Kyle's Krazies, sometimes. And the Revelations Colony of Cooks. By people who never stopped to think" (13). The Island is a "frontier town. It was like no town or village or city he had ever seen" (94), or "a stinking snake-hole full of abnormalities, aberrations, deviations, abortions, miscreations, monstrosities, and monsters" (95).

Hodgins' narrative parodies – and expands – the biblical creation myth. Employing Christian terminology, Kinane asserts that

> if the island represents both a paradise and a hell, as well as the implied absence of a *real* Edenic paradise, then it also represents the site for the transition or slippage between these dualistic notions. The island is thus a purgatorial space, a half-way space between places (157).

The idea of associating the island-topos with purgatorium exalts its liminal status and highlights its conceptual fluidity. The island as 'purgatorial space' is especially discernible in postmodernist fiction, which promotes an exaltation of liminal entities and is characterized by generic, thematic and structural fluidity.

The Island trope also functions as a means to ironically convey the culturally conditioned boundaries between the American, the Canadian and the European mindset:

> If I was rich or American, I guess I'd be hauling myself off to a psychiatrist, or jumping into a pool full of naked people. Or if I was European I could go off on a pilgrimage and walk barefoot up mountains, and starve myself and expect miracles that will transform me. But I'm not. This is the best I could find. I've signed up for this session on a tiny island where we'll live like medieval monks or Spartans or something and learn about ourselves (166-167).

This 'learning' process implies 'disappearing' from civilization and adopting (and absorbing) the island's alienative quintessence.

The (symbolic and literal) mainland-island distinction is associated with socially constructed normality and savagery [7]. The 'bush' metaphor, the civilized-eccentric dichotomy are all parodic means to intensify the contrast between the self-referential island and the regulatory functioning mainland. The island-people are distinctively bound to their own carnivalesque rule-making system: "island people think they can make their own rules" (227). Even the Bakhtinian reference is parodied: "typical behaviour for this island (…) they are, you see, embarrassed by anything that resembles civilization" (52). The bush-metaphor and its subsequent semantic associations are literalized not only in the spatial dimension, but also in olfactory experiences: "and Julius could look, even now, as if there were dog odours offending his nostrils. Sometimes the whole place affected him that way" (53).

The Invention of the World problematizes history and its centrality within 'metanarratives'. The problematic relationship between history and the island is embodied in the frontier metaphor: "you can't pretend there is any history on this island, this is still the frontier" (55). Hodgins' magical Vancouver Island, embodying the frontier-trope, can symbolize Canada's marginalized geopolitical and cultural position. But, as Linda Hutcheon asserts, postmodernist discourses do not simply centralize the marginal; rather, these narratives celebrate the marginal:

> "in postmodernism, though, the centre and the periphery do not simply change places. Nor is the margin conceived of only as a place of transgression. The periphery is also the frontier, the place of possibility (…)" (3).

In other words, the island becomes a metadiscursive means to exploit the 'possibilities' of marginality, to instantiate the discursiveness of history and to destabilize the Lyotardian 'metanarratives' [8]. Moreover, the island functions as a spatial embodiment of eccentricity. The (hi)story of the island subverts the universal validity of history as the island's past is constructed from gossip, local myths and speculations: Vancouver Island's past "will be little more than gossip. You can't turn that into history, no matter how hard to try. Not in a place like this. You are inheritors of a failed paradise. This island is littered with failed utopias" (54). The story itself, like the Island, is a mentally invoked 'archive'; in Becker's words,

> trust me or not, believe what you want, by now the story exists without us in the air. I am not its creator, nor is any one man; I did not invent it, only gathered its shreds and fragments together from the half-aware conversations of people around me, from the tales and hints and gossip and whispered threats and elaborate curses that float in the air like dust (69).

Hodgins' Island could be correlated with Deleuze's oceanic islands [9] which allude to transient, mythical spatial landscapes which are analogous to the conceptual shifts in the collective imaginary: "as oceanic islands appear and disappear as a consequence of various climatological and geological changes, so to do mythological utopias appear and disappear as a result of varying shifts within the cultural imaginary" (Kinane 64). Moreover, as Kinane also observed (214), the Island also corresponds to the Foucauldian definition of heterotopic space which refer to real places, effective places, places that are written into the

institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements (…) a kind of place that are outside all place, even though they are actually localizable (17).

Vancouver Island is an existing geographical place, yet Hodgins dis-places its actuality into a culturally and historically imbued topography, metamorphosing it into a liminal, heterotopic region: Vancouver Island is a mock-mythical repository of the cultural and social climate of the 60s.

Graham Petrie's *Seahorse*, published in 1980, is a highly original and metafictional fantastic novel, which combines dystopian visions with (post)Gothic elements. The narrator, who is later revealed to be a writer, travels into a remote village to study the isolated inhabitants. The sea-village is neighboured by an Island, where the evil Institute steals the villagers' dreams and turns them into living nightmares. The novel is filled with postmodernist elements: paradoxes, parodic references, ontological dichotomies, mazes, fragmentariness, illusions, soul migration references, dream topographies, self-referentiality and a heightened linguistic awareness of the precariousness and discursiveness of fiction and reality, which is epitomized in the Seahorse card-game. The narrative universe is inhabited by spectral figures and teratological creatures: vampires, werevolves, evolwers (a hybrid species, combination between evolutionists and wolves), it is a universe where "cause follows effect, answer precedes question, time is jumbled, fragmented, deconstructed" (7). Furthermore, the novel features patterns of oral storytelling and is enhanced by sudden narratorial disruptions and unexpected temporal shifts.

The presence of the evil-scientist, a conventional element in science-fiction novels, is never materialized in human form; rather, the Island functions as an embodiment of malevolent forces, the locus of the ontological abject: "dreams, someone else informs me, the Institute is a Factory for Dreams. Nightmares are manufactured there, are tested on the defenseless villagers as they sleep" (8). The wicked science of the Island is capable of transposing nightmares into objectual reality, threatening the lives of the community. The novel literalizes Shakespeare's famous "we are such stuff/as dreams are made on" by substantializing abstractions, such as nightmares and souls.

The highly superstitious villagers firmly believe that a soul goes on 'excursions' at night; their souls "were accustomed to assemble on the deserted island about a mile from the shore that I could now see quite clearly, a flat, unprepossessing place, almost barren of trees and with what appeared to be the ruins of a tower or lighthouse in the extreme left-hand corner" (9). According to a local, evil geniuses from the Institute interfere "with the villagers' souls" by impending them to get to the island: "for the souls, though immaterial, had a mysterious tangibility of their own that would not allow them through the course-spun reticulations of the nets" (10). Ironically, the nightmare-creator Island is the distorted mirror image of the island where the villagers' soul venture to rest. The literal catching of souls embodies the villagers' atavistic fear of immaterial entrapment in limbo.

The village, resembling an ancient cult or, rather, a u(s)topia [10], is atemporal and isolated. Their fluctuating social rules and their superstitious beliefs undermine the 'evilness' associated with the Island and draw attention to the discursiveness of the Island: "the almost superstitious terror with which they regard the place, however, had offered me nothing except a collection of old wives'

tales, beliefs that were obviously nonsensical and could bear no relation to the work that was actually performed there" (47). In other words, the Island is a speculative conjecture and transfigures its materiality depending on the narrating subject's perspective. For instance, "the island is-taboo is the wrong word-sacred for the villagers. It's where they believe their souls travel in the evenings, when their bodies are asleep" (107). The island's sanctity is analogous with its impenetrability; as long as no one breaks the boundary between their earthly sphere and the Island by setting foot on it, the magic works and the Island can go on to symbolize an Edenic space.

Seahorse deliberately draws attention to its own fictionality and discloses the island's sensationalist potentiality: "curious place, this, (…) Quite a treasure trove for researchers in every field, I should think. As for me, I'm just an amateur, I'll write about anything that pays" (121). Additionally, *Seahorse* playfully interrogates the limits of fiction(ality) by combining an apparently stern narratorial voice with a perpetual state of confusion concerning the substantiality of his narration. The Islands from Seahorse, similarly to Hodgins' Vancouver Island, embody the new type of fiction within the Canadian literary tradition, namely, highly experimental postmodernist fiction. Moreover, the Island can be read as a cultural allegory, symbolizing Canada's position within a larger geopolitical and cultural context.

Rather than simply transposing the reader into a well-constructed Otherworlds, these authors create a self-sustaining Island-world, governed by its own rules, familiar yet different, a transontological entity which is not a mere escapist device but a liminal imaginary geography which is a site of cultural negotiations. The studied texts depart from traditional Robinsonades (to use Johann Gottfried Schnabel's term) and re-code the Island-trope and imbue its connotative field with new associations. Whereas *A Bit of Atlantis* is a conventional lost world novel, Hodgins' and Petrie's postmodernist islands are discursive worlds, ex-centric places par excellence. According to Weiss, "one of the ways that fantastic literature conveys its themes is by literalizing the metaphorical" (116). In the above discussed novels, the island-trope functions as the embodiment of the main thematic subject: *A Bit of Atlantis* literalizes the eternal quest for lost utopias, Vancouver Island from *The Invention of the World* is the spatial epitome for the crisis in fictional representation, whereas the islands from *Seahorse* embody the performative aspects of fiction and the precariousness of human condition.

Erskine Douglas' *A Bit of Atlantis* is a lost world novel in which the Island potentiates the idea of a lost civilization. Rooted in the conventions of earlier adventure fiction, the novel constructs the Island as a paradoxical site which enacts the limits of scientific knowledge and the pitfalls of colonialism. Furthermore, *A bit of Atlantis* foregrounds the postmodernist concern with intertextuality, parody and self-referentiality. Jack Hodgins' fantastic novel, *The Invention of the World*, is a postmodernist inquiry into the 'inventiveness' of reality, history and truth. Hodgins invents a heterotopic, Bakhtinian Island, a site where the ordinary and extra-ordinary overlap and co-exist, where the fantastic is dis-placed, and 'metanarratives' interrogated; in other words, the potentiality of the Island-trope problematizes representation and the nature of fiction. Moreover, Vancouver Island is the site for the enactment of cultural anxieties and

literary experiments. Rather than merely a spatial setting, Hodgins' Island is the Canadian frontier, which, in Hutcheon's view, is "the place where new possibilities exist" (4). By associating Vancouver Island with the 'bush' metaphor (which also appears as a leitmotif in Northrop Frye's *The Bush Garden*), Hodgins reflects on Canada's position within a larger geopolitical frame: Vancouver Island embodies the postmodernist aesthetics and becomes a fluid, culturally scripted artifact. Lastly, Graham Petrie's *Seahorse* is a strange tale about dreams, soul migration, vampires and evil nightmare factories; the Island functions as an impenetrable mystery (much like the novel itself), constructed from local gossip and suppositions, a 'discursive formation' in the Foucauldian sense.

Christ Bongie writes that "every island [...] is always-already in the process of transforming" (51) yet this state of paradoxically perpetual changeability does not necessarily refer to the actual physiognomy of the island; as a culturally and historically conditioned discursive artifact, the island's transmutability is one of the main factors to its popularity in the Canadian cultural imagination. The functionality of the Island-trope as cultural earmark is predominantly visible in the literature of the late twentieth-century. The Island-motif is a speculative construct, which encapsulates the lasting fascination with the semantic potentialities of imaginary geographies. In other words, as a fluid topography, the Island is in an ever-lasting process of reinvention, a discursive formation dependent on cultural and historical context which encapsulates the changes in the collective imaginary. In these works, the long lingering and established "myth of the desert island paradise" (Kanine 6) is replaced, or, rather, challenged (even parodied) to the extent that the Island becomes a complex simulacrum of actual cultural spaces rather than a mere escapist projection.

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *Margaret Atwood: the road to Ustopia*. 14 October 2011. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/oct/14/margaret-atwood-road-to-ustopia. Accessed 24 April 2019.

—. *Survival: a Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Anansi Toronto, 1972.

Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Barnes&Nobles Classics, 2005.

Diana Loxley, *Problematic Shores: The Literature of Islands*. The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1990.

Erskine, Douglas. *A Bit of Atlantis*. A.T. Chapman, 1900.

Evans, Arthur B. "Nineteenth-century SF". *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint, Routledge, 2009, pp. 13-23.

Foucault, Michel. *Of Other Spaces, in Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Post Civil Society*, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter, Routledge, 2008.

Frye, Northrop. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. House Of Anansi Press, 1971.

Gilles Deleuze, "Desert Islands", *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, edited by David Lapoujade, translated by Michael Taormina, Semiotext(e), 2004, pp. 9-15.

Gillis, John, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Hay, Pete. *A Phenomenology of Islands*. Island Studies Journal 1, no. 1, 2006, 34. http://www.islandstudies.ca/sites/vre2.upei.ca.islandstudies.ca/files/u2/ISJ-1-1-2006-Hay-pp19-42.pdf.. Accessed 30 March, 2016.
Hodgins, Jack. *Spit Delaney's Island*. Macmillan of Canada, 1983.
---. *The Barclay Family Theatre*. Ronsdale Press, 2012.
---. *The Invention of the World*. Ronsdale Press, 2010.
James, Louis. "Unwrapping Crusoe: Retrospective and Prospective Views". *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphosis*, edited by Lieve Spaas, Brian Stimpson, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996, pp. 1-9.
Kinane, Ian. *Theorising Literary Islands: The Island Trope in Contemporary Robinsonade Narratives*. Rowman&Littlefield International, 2017.
Kincaid, Paul. *"Islomania? Insularity? The myth of the island in British science fiction."* Extrapolation, vol. 48, no. 3, 2007, p. 462+. Literature Resource Center, https://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A176374796/GLS?u=debre&sid=GLS&xid=83afa3d4. Accessed 26 Mar. 2019.
Lane, Dorothy. *The Island as a Site of Resistance: An Examination of Caribbean and New Zealand texts*. Peter Lang, 1995.
MacLeod, Alistair. *Island: The Complete Stories*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.
Petrie, Graham. *Seahorse*. Constable and Company Limited, 1980.
Ronstrom Owe. *Finding Their Place: Islands as Locus and Focus*," Cultural Georgraphies Journal 20, no. 2, 2013, 153-165. http://cgj.sagepub.com/conten/20/2/153.full.pdf+html. Accessed 28 May 2013.
Shakespeare, Williams. *The Tempest*. Simon&Brown. 2016.
Stevenson, Robert Louis. "A Gossip on romance". *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Tales*. Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 139-151.
Stimpson, Brian: "Insulaire que tu es. Ile-': Valery, the Robinson Crusoe of the Mind", *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphosis*, edited by Lieve Spaas and Brian Stimpson, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996
Tally, Robert T. *Spatiality*, Routledge, 2013.
Weiss, Allan. "Beyond the North: Nordicity in Canadian Fantastic Literature", *Beyond the 49th Parallel: Many Faces of the Canadian North*. Edited By Evaine Le Calve-Ivicevic and Vanja Polic, Masaryk University, 2018, pp. 111-125.

Notes

[1] The scholarly interest in literary islands led to a great number of theoretical works. See Kinane, Gillis, Loxley.

[2] In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood defines literature as an imaginative topography: "literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind" (19).

[3] Dividing Canadian literature into separate eras is (still) problematic since Canadian literature cannot be correlated with British literary eras in terms of literary history.

[4] In *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon talks lengthily about Canada's position as ex-centric-in terms of common history, cultural production, economic prosperity, literature- in comparison with the United Kingdom and United States. See Hutcheon.

[5] The characters fall into several typologies which correspond to the conventions of adventure fiction. Yet, Katherine Denesmore is an early exemplification of a new typology of heroine: she defies gender stereotypes by refusing to adhere to the Victorian womanhood ideal.

[6] At the beginning of the twentieth-century, Canadian literature was still anchored in realistic storytelling mode. Romances were also popular at that time, so including a love story in adventure novels was customary.

[7] In this context, savagery can mean the Bakhtinian carnivalesque.

[8] The novel can be read as a literary illustration of historiographic metafiction as *The Invention of the World* "tries to reconcile the factual history and the exaggerated legend of one Donal Keneally (…)" (Hutcheon 56).

[9] In Deleuze's conception, there are two 'kinds' of island, continental and oceanic island. The latter is originary, essential islands", whereas "*continental islands* are accidental, derived" (9).

[10] The term 'ustopia' was coined by Margaret Atwood "by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other".

Beyond Analogy: the Semiosis of Lewis Carroll's Fantasy Worlds

Asunción López-Varela Azcárate
Universidad Complutense Madrid, Spain

Abstract. This paper examines the juxtaposition of different sets of languages (natural, mathematical, geometric, hermetic) in Lewis Carroll's Alice books, arguing that this study can help understand similar mobilizing situations arising from the incorporation of layers of mathematical code over analogic interfaces in digitalization. While Alice's Adventures in Wonderland initiates an exploration on how analogic reasoning might meet certain conditions of reflexivity and symmetry which are not always necessarily transitive or reducible to the relations of equivalence present in Aristotelian logic and linear causal cognition, its sequel Through the Looking-glass and what Alice found there expands these findings and focuses on hybrid semiotic formats that move beyond analogy and inquire into the relationship between perception and cognition, between the eye and the logos; an inquiry anticipated by the development of optics, Carroll's (non-)Euclidean pursuits, his interest in photography, as well as the epistemological changes brought about by these new ways of seeing. The underlying argument is that Carroll's books anticipate experiments in complexity which introduce forms of non-linear (or fuzzy) logic among other techniques (i.e. the use of fractal loops) that would culminate in the black-mirror sites (in reference to Netflix TV series) displayed in our contemporary mobile screens as variations of Carroll's looking-glass.

Keywords: analogy, intermediality, fantasy, Lewis Carroll, semiotics, specularity.

1. Introduction to the Semiosis of Carroll's Fantasy Worlds

To this date, there are not many studies that explore Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's professional interests with regards to the differences between natural language and artificial languages. The Oxford professor of logic and mathematics who reversed the Latin version of his name to create the pseudonym Lewis Carroll was fascinated by the world of asymmetries, being his own person an embodiment of several of them. Although the Alice's books were published as children's stories that Carroll dedicated to Alice Liddell, one of the three daughters of his friend, the Dean of Christ Church in Oxford, the novels also inquire into complex forms of fuzzy logic and the use of multiple languages that frustrate any desire for semantic and pragmatic order, opening the text in various ways.

Annotated Alice (1960) by Martin Gardner and *Lewis Carroll in Numberland* (2008) by Robin Wilson are two studies that mention the relationship between Dodgson's academic publications on mathematics and physics and the Alice's books. Forms of hybrid narratology are evident in Carroll's *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* (1879), which takes the form of a play-script or a Socratic dialogue to debate on Euclidean geometry in an atypical format for scientific discourse. Other scholars (i.e. Wagner 2012) have also studied the relationship between the different types of games (races, competitions, playing cards, cricket, etc.) that

appear in the Wonderland stories, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).

Lewis Carroll became interested in the topic of symmetry and analogy in relation to his research on cryptography. His esoteric inclinations stemmed from his personal involvement with freemasonry. In 1868, he published a brief study titled *The Alphabet Cipher* on how to use the alphabet to send encrypted codes. In *Annotated Alice,* Martin Gardner also noted Carroll's interest in the exploration of symmetries, asymmetries and of mirror inversion (1960: 20), his main focus in the Alice's books.

Much of my own research has sought to unveil analogic processes that would enable the translation, ekphrasis and remediation of content across different media formats, noting that artists have a tendency to complicate such processes, often based on relations of similarity -comparison, metaphor, etc.,- in order to introduce ambiguity and multiple perceptual and cognitive reception experiences (López-Varela 2014). Indeed, various studies have shown that brain cognition follows analogic patterns (Holyoak and Thagard 1995), creating inferences based on isomorphism and symmetry, locating places in space by means of concrete landmarks, or identifying people by attending to particular facial or bodily features (du Sautoy 2009). Analogies also take the form of similes, homologies, comparisons and metaphors in a fundamental process that determines human perception, memory and communication. Conceptual metaphor studies have also signalled the analogic correspondences among different conceptual domains, which serve to translate sense across various spatiotemporal organizations of experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). However, although analogic reasoning meets certain conditions of reflexivity and symmetry, it is not always necessarily transitive or reducible to the relations of equivalence present in traditional logic and linear causal cognition. The evolution of avant-garde art in the early 20th-century, bears witness to the breaking of these patterns and the introduction of ambiguity in perception as well as forms of fuzzy logic in cognition. Carroll's books anticipate such experiments in complexity.

This paper explores both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-glass and what Alice found there*. The first book introduces the topic of analogic fracture in various ways; from Alice's strange changes in size, to the altering of physical spatial proportions and symmetries, the breaking of cause-effect relations present in her dream world and, finally, the breach in temporal patterns in the T-party episode. The second volume unveils forms of spatial and temporal inversion and multiplicity in perception exhibited at the other side of the looking glass. Flat mirrors seem to confirm a structure of equivalent identification, with analogic aspects ruled by symmetry, common directionality and the continuity of figural axes with regards to the background in which the image is framed. However, this structure is inverted at the other side of the looking-glass. Thus, the ultimate form of analogic fracture which takes place in Carroll's fantasy worlds is mediated by the mirror.

Through the Looking-glass was published six years after the first book, and the story is set some six months after the first narrative. Most critical readings compared it to the first part, concluding that it was not as good as its predecessor (Cripps 1983: 40). Such references give an idea of the importance of analogies in

everyday discourse. For instance, Florence B. Lennon described it as a "masterpiece — only *a shade less* than Wonderland" (1945: 66; emphasis added). Similarly, Harold Bloom indicates its inferior quality in comparing it to the first book:

> The movement from 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!' to 'I can't stand this any longer!' is a fair representation of the relative aesthetic decline the reader experiences as she goes from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to *Through the Looking-Glass*. Had the first book never existed, our regard for the second would be unique and immense... (Bloom 1987: 5-6).

The following lines briefly trace the impact of optic instruments, which incorporate lenses (i.e. the mirror) on the relationship between perception and cognition, between the perceiving eye and the thinking mind or logos. In other words, the development of optics and its association to epistemological changes is fundamental in order to understand the semiotic levels of analogic inquiry beneath Carroll's books.

2. The Role of Mirrors in Structural Perceptual and Cognitive Complexity

The Latin term for mirror, *speculum,* has produced a number of interesting words such as s*pectacles* (this is not just the old name for glasses; the term is used in relation to performance as well as inquiry-speculation). *Looking-glass* comes from old English *glæs*, a Germanic root related to *glow*, *gold*, y *glisten*, according to the classic dictionary of Liddell y Scott (1891). Indeed, the co-author of this famous *Greek-English Lexicon,* still in use, was Henry George Liddell (1811-1898), Alice Liddell's father.

Carroll's contemporaries were very interested in mirrors. The looking-glass frequently appears in paintings, such as those by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and in the book of short stories by his sibling Christina, *Speaking Likenesses* (1874). The use of lenses and the development of photography was possibly one of the main reasons for this interest. In 1862, Carroll, a proficient photographer, portrayed his sister, Margaret, looking at herself in a mirror. The portrait was entitled *Reflection*, meaning not just the reflective properties of the mirror but also those of the model. The first daguerreotypes were also termed 'mirrors of memory'. But this fascination with looking-glass is much older.

The first mirror may have been conceived after the contemplation of a reflection on tranquil water, as in the story of Narcissus. The most ancient ones were made of metal with a polished dark coat underneath. Some metals, like silver, were associated with feminine deities and the moon, and many mythological goddesses used them to enter the human world. Mirrors were not just domestic instruments, used for personal hygiene or aesthetic purposes, but also for their presumably magic properties, for they were thought to mediate access to times and spaces beyond, expanding their purpose of analogic representation of the real (Schwarz 1952: 90-105). It was even thought, following Platonic ideas, that they reflected a supernatural world beyond, as the words of Saint Paul in his Letter to the Corintians (I, 13:12) suggest: "*videmus nunc per speculum in enigmata tunc autem facie ad faciem*" [We see now through a looking-glass in a dark manner; but then we will see face to face]

Some beliefs identified the reflected image with the spirit/soul of the person, with vampires, for instance, not having specular reflection. In the *Golden Bough,* Sir James Frazer saw mirrors as both shadows and reflections of the other side, thus, laden with divination powers (the word 'divinari' addresses the realm of the divine and its inquiry). Mirrors occupy a prominent place in ancient myths across world cultures, examples of which I cannot provide as extensively as I would like in the spaceframe of this paper. They hold a prominent position in the Egyptian myth of Osiris, whose pieces his sister Isis gathers with the help of a looking-glass reflecting Horus' eye which symbolized clairvoyance. As mentioned, female mythological figures, like the Mesopotamian goddess Lamashtu, or the Greek Lamias, were associated to objects such as the mirror (gateway to the worlds beyond), the comb (which represented femininity), and the spindle (which symbolized the passing of time). The three items appear in *Through the Looking-Glass*.

In cabalistic beliefs, Lilith, Adam's first wife, entered the world through glass walls. In the Celtic tradition, mirrors were also related to the legendary story of Merlin and the Arthurian Legend (Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* ca. 1136), or Spenser's "Faerie Queen" (1590-6), among others. Mirrors and other types of lenses are frequent in stories about magic, often displaying crystal balls employed by magicians. Black looking-glasses are mentioned by Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) in his *Naturalis Historia* (book 7). Occultist John Dee (1527-1608), adviser of Queen Elizabeth I, was said to own a black mirror, the name given to the contemporary Netflix series which deals with the impact of screen technologies in our lives.

Studies such as those by Sabine Melchior-Bonnet (1994) and Jay M. Enoch (2006) have shown the importance of optical instruments in expanding the range of human vision in diverse ways. Technologies such as the telescope, the microscope or photography are significant in that they use lenses that enable new forms of seeing, a fact that, as Timothy Reiss (1997) explained, has an epistemological impact. According to Reiss, it was in the Renaissance when the so-called *scientific épistémè* and its analytical approach takes over the previous *mythopoetic épistémè* that Reiss situates in the Middle Ages before the apparition of technologies based on optics such as the telescope.

The *mythopoetic* and the *scientific épistémès* were established on the principle of analogy. In particular, scientific discourse needs to be inflexible in its refutation in an attempt to create the greatest similarity with the model (hypothesis). In recent years the formulation of the *neo-baroque épistémè* (see Calabrese; also Jay), in parallel to the development of new media technologies, questions the transparency of representation (mostly based on digital screens) and the epistemological paradigms based on principles of analogy, regularity and order, incorporating structural openness and emphasizing process (ideas also present in the so-called 'postmodern condition'). The *technopoïetic épistémè* (López-Varela & Sussman 2017) mobilizes meaning in various ways because of the hybrid narratology that it employs; mixing natural language, semiotic variations in adaptation and remediation, the language of medial interfaces, as well as layers of various mathematical-digital codes. Furthermore, the technopoïetic represents by means of modular and continuous acts of intermedial interventions, not just on the part of the author/sender, but also by incorporating

the reader/user as participant. Thus, the metaphor of the mirror becomes a fundamental metacognitive space that helps us look beyond representation: from Carroll's fictional wonderlands, to the looking-glass of our flat screen laptops and mobile phones, and beyond the curved lenses of stereoscopic 3D environments that incorporate the illusion of touch (see López-Varela 2015).

The mirror has also fascinated some of the most prominent semioticians. For Michel Foucault in "Des Espace Autres" (1967), it opens up a sort of *unheimlich* space: a domestic, yet unfamiliar realm. In doing so, it poses a challenge to conventional world order which Foucault exemplifies by exploring the use of the mirror in Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* (1656). He explains how the different light planes make up perspective, and how the mirror in the picture opens up a space to the observer, almost as a window to another world. For Foucault, the mirror is simultaneously a utopic and a heterotopic space, for it reflects the observer but it does so in an oblique manner. As we shall see later, we find a similar situation in Carroll's *Through the Looking-glass*.

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (1984: 4)

The mirror is also related to the concept of the 'fold' that Gilles Deleuze explored in his course on Leibniz in 1980 at the University of Vincennes (Paris 8), and which he understood as a coordinated representation of various fractal levels of knowledge.

> If the Baroque establishes a total art or a unity of the arts, it does so first of all in extension, each art tending to be prolonged and even to be prolonged into the next art, which exceeds the one before. We have remarked that the Baroque often confines painting to retables, but it does so because the painting exceeds its frame and is realized in polychrome marble sculpture; and sculpture goes beyond itself by being achieved in architecture; and in turn, architecture discovers a frame in the facade, but the frame itself becomes detached from the inside, and establishes relations with the surroundings. (1988: 141)

Although after the 1990s, the expansion of digital remediation paved the way to rethinking representation in relation to technology and media power, many of the changes brought about by the *technopoetic épistémè* were already visible in diverse disciplines since the middle of the 20th-century. Just to give some examples, the mobilization of the mimetic-symmetric structures in analogic thought processes as a consequence of technological advance is shown in "The

work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" (1936), by pioneer critic Walter Benjamin who, like Lewis Carroll, was interested in the new forms of vision enabled by photography and, in the case of Benjamin, early cinematography. Years later, in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger saw the camera-eye as capable of breaking the spatiotemporal context of the image; moving beyond passive observation and becoming a performative intervention, almost as sexual voyeurism where the observation contributes, however tacitly, to stimulate and encourage the continuation of whatever is happening. Christian Metz also established an analogy between the cinematographic screen and the mirror, arguing that by means of identification with the point of view of the camera, the spectator re-establishes what Jacques Lacan termed 'the mirror stage', a scenario that enables a "dialectic of identification with the Other" that ends up in the establishment of his/her own difference (Metz 1977: 84) Similarly, Calabrese's medial neo-baroque aesthetics develops an intentionality that goes beyond the gateway of creation, reaching the receptor in order to excite his/her desires and implicate him/her, breaking limits and situating meaning-making semiosis in borderland spaces.

In his article "Mirror and Map", Sir Ernst Gombrich indicates that the mirror constitutes a complex semiotic system that distinguishes the mimetic organization of visual data at a cognitive level, arguing that since the Renaissance, the impact of the *scientific épistémè* opened up a dialectic in the aesthetics of representation. Similarly, in his *Trattato di semiotica generale* (1975), Umberto Eco questions whether the image on the mirror is a sign, and concludes that the delimitation (frame) that contains the image complicates mirror perception:

> Not only can it not be properly called an image (since it is a virtual image, and therefore not a material expression) but even granted the existence of the image it must be admitted that it does not stand for something else; on the contrary it stands in front of something else, it exists not instead of but because of the presence of that something; when that something disappears the pseudo-image in the mirror disappears too. (1975: 202)

The lineal perspective developed by artists in the Renaissance by means of geometric executions, combined with studies on the incidence of light, its reflections and colours, allowed the recreation of the visual illusion of depth, relative to the observer, emulating human stereoscopic vision, nowadays achieved by curved lenses in 3D environments. Indeed, the introduction of visual perspective by Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1146) was discovered by painting directly on a mirror, replicated in the pictorial plane by Leon Battista Alberti (1406-72). These changing forms of visual perception would also bring about experimentation in narrative point of view. Samuel Y. Edgerton (1975 y 2006) has explored the evolution of perspective from architecture to painting, and the mapping, by means of optics, of three-dimensional structures from a bi-dimensional Euclidean plane in what became known as Alberti's quadrangle or window. Edgerton points out that Alberti's findings began to be applied to perspective studies in other arts in the experimentation developed at the *Accademia dell arti del Disegno*, established in Florence in 1563 by Cosimo I de Medici. Indeed, the academia became an important centre which promoted interrelations between intellectuals, painters, sculptures and architects interested

in the study of geometry, lineal perspective, chiaroscuro, anatomy and all the essential disciplines for the practice of the visual arts.

One of the most important statements on the mirror as an instrument that contributes to visualize the world in new ways occurs in Leonardo Da Vinci's *Trattato della pittura*. The articles collected by Da Vinci's disciples around 1542, himself a disciple of the *Accademia,* were published by Raffaelo du Fresne in 1651 and translated into English in 1721. The Italian artist writes that the mind of the painter is like a mirror that truly reflects each object "as it were, a second Nature" (1792: 59). This second nature of the mirror was seen with complacency by Socrates, and with distrust by Plato, who thought that the mirror made us believe that its reflection was real. In 1588, Tuscan astronomer, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), entered the *Accademia*, interested in perspective techniques in relation to curved optic surfaces and spherical lenses. In 1609, he designed a tube, similar to Alberti's window, intended to reproduce spherical bodies. A few months later he developed his greater achievement: the telescope.

The above lines give an idea of the importance of the mirror, an optic instrument that represents a double articulation of the analogic figure, and in the case of curved mirrors, a distortion of analogy that enables a meta-reflection on the ambiguity of representation. Thus, the specular relation can be seen as simultaneously staging a mimetic representation or copy of the real, or as a window that opens up other possible realities (as it occurs in Science Fiction narrative). Inversion on flat mirrors depends on the observer's position, with objects facing the mirror inverted laterally (raising the right hand shows the left in the mirror) and not vertically. However, if we look between our legs with our back to the mirror the image appears inverted upside down, not laterally.

The analogy of the mirror unveils a reflexive-refractive process that constitutes consciousness as the negotiation between perception and cognition, between the eye and the logos, amid the complexity that stems from spatiotemporal changes in point of view. This is shown in Carroll's Wonderland, where the author complicates analogic reasoning not only through the questioning of linear causal cognition and traditional logic, but also through Alice's experiences with asymmetrical patterns and the breaking of space and time. In spite of the less positive critical reception of the second book, this paper hopes to show the connections between both volumes, and the innovative aspects of the sequel with regards to the scientific and epistemological impact of the looking-glass.

3. Analogic fractures in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Let us begin by looking at the first book which deals mainly with analogic fracture in terms of space (although time is also addressed in the T-party episode). Sitting with his older sister by the riverbank and unable to come to terms with a book that contains only letters and no pictures, seven-year-old Alice falls into a summer slumber as well as into the rabbit-hole of her dream, leaving behind a stela of broken and ambiguous linguistic constructions that no longer make sense: "The Multiplication Table don't signify: let's try Geography. London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome—no, *that's* all wrong, I'm

certain!"(*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 1866: 20) Alice's descent into wonderland is full twists and turns, including size changes and of all sorts and weird asymmetries that pursue her wherever she goes. Chasing the White Rabbit, Alice enters into a non-Euclidean fantasy that turns head over heels her perceptual experiences. In each chapter the little girl faces the breaking of communication rules, increasing paradoxes and strange nonsensical worlds. Many of the signs she encounters are empty signifiers, like the label of the marmalade bottle that contains nothing. Referential statements are complicated at every step of the way, as when in Chapter III she listens to the story of the Mouse: "[…] the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable… Found *what?,* said the Duck. Found *it,* the Mouse replied rather crossly: of course you know what 'it' means. I know what 'it' means well enough, when *I* find a thing, said the Duck: it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?" (1866: 32) Similar perplexities that expose the limitations of linguistic propositions and linear logic emerge during the career without rules that takes place right after this conversation and which has no fixed starting point nor fixed destination, and where prizes acquire value depending on what the group of animals decides, as in Wittgenstein's language games.

Alice faces persistent issues related to her critical thinking and problem solving abilities, no longer valid in this nonsensical world. In Chapter V, the caterpillar tells Alice that in order to avoid losing her head, she must "keep her temper"; in other words, keep a sense of proportion over all the situations she encounters, many of them involving analogic metamorphosis. For example, in this episode, Alice's neck enlarges so much that a pigeon thinks that she is a snake who wants to eat its eggs. The breaking of body symmetry is also alluded in the following chapter, which takes place in the Duchess' home, guarded by a fish who looks sideways, a gesture that Alice perceives as impolite but which is due to the particular body symmetry of fish.

In this episode, Carroll is mainly interested in the fracture of acoustic symmetries and the disorder they originate in the Duchess' kitchen. All actions point in the direction of a growing exchange of information but no necessarily communication, what in postmodern media theory is known as 'noise'. The characters move frantically and talk aimlessly: the cook keeps adding pepper to the boiling soup; the duchess rocks her child singing disorderly bits from popular nursery rhymes; Alice also has an abstract conversation with the Duchess about speed and time. In thermodynamics, the increase of movement, heat and information-exchange among molecules leads to what is known as a greater level of 'entropy' or molecular disorder, eventually conducting to a change of physical state (i.e. solid to liquid or liquid to gas). Indeed, in this episode, Carroll offers the reader an example of metamorphosis because, at the end, the Duchess' child turns into a pig in Alice's arms. A few years before Alice's story was published, Rudolf Clausius had formulated the laws of thermodynamics that inform the episode. Some years later, Georg Cantor explored the visual aspects of symmetry in its relation to geometry.

The "Pig and Pepper" episode not only shows Carroll's interest with regards to contemporary science; it also explores its relevance for the idea of time reversibility or non-reversibility. The concept of entropy, developed by Clausius, showed that heat not only increases the dynamic energy of molecules but also

their level of disorder, accelerating the arrow of time, that is, the irreversibility of the process and its relation to changing states of matter. The ending of the episode (the child becoming a pig) can be predicted if one bears in mind the use of various kinds of semiotic languages:

> Alice caught the baby with some difficulty, as it was a queer-shaped little creature, and held out its arms and legs in all directions, "just like a star-fish," thought Alice [...] snorting like a steam-engine when she caught it, and kept doubling itself up and straightening itself out again, so that altogether, for the first minute or two, it was as much as she could do to hold it. As soon as she had made out the proper way of nursing it [...] she carried it out into the open air. (1866: 86)

Alice's subsequent encounter with the Cheshire Cat explores changes in point of view depending on the physical surface: the Euclidean plane, the hyperbole or the sphere. It would be Henri Poincaré who, in *Analysis situs* (1895), studied the topological problems that originate when a plane is spherically deformed. However, Carroll anticipates such formulations in the puss' enigmatic smile, a hypothesis reinforced by the discussion that Alice maintains with the cat in relation to directionality and curved trajectories.

> "Cheshire Puss [...] Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from her?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat. "I don't much care where——" said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you walk," said the Cat. "——so long as I get *somewhere,"* Alice added as an explanation. "Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough." (1866: 89-90)

Directionality is a constant preoccupation for Alice. It is associated with strange people, nonsensical situations and with disorder in general. In this episode, and the following ones, it is associated to madness: "What sort of people live about here? "In *that* direction," the Cat said, waving its right paw round, "lives a Hatter: and in *that* direction," waving the other paw, "lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad."(1866: 90) Alice's insistence in maintaining her head prompts her reply: "But I don't want to go among mad people," The cat replies: "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."(1866: 90)

The following discussion turns to the scholastic problem of names, categories and Aristotelian logic. In order to define a madman, the cat mentions a dog: "a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased" and he goes on to define himself in opposition to the dog because "*I* growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry" in order to conclude that he is mad (1866: 91). The figure of the Madman (ambiguously known as the Fool or Jester) is one of the so-called Major Arcana of the Tarot deck of cards. More than just a game, among the many types used by Carroll in his Alice's stories, which would later inspire Wittgenstein's investigations, in ancient times the Tarot was used in divination and magic.

The Madman frequently symbolizes supreme knowledge and the entropic disorder of an eternal irreversible process, marching to his future, resting on a walking stick that represents willpower and reminds of Hermes/Mercury's caduceus. In divination as well as for the esoteric branches of freemasonry, and in Joseph Campbell's myth-criticism (see, for example, his book *The Hero's*

Journey), the Madman or Fool invites the liberation of creative energy while announcing unpredictable turns along the way. It also represents the myth of the hero who continues his initiation journey alone or accompanied, like Don Quixote. He can also be followed by a dog or a cat (animals represent the irrational powers of the mind).

Interestingly, turning to mathematics and their ancient use in divination, each of the 22 Major Arcane of the Tarot are associated to numbers, and the Madman is both 0 and 22. The Madman is alpha and omega, the origin and the end, equivalent to ouroboros, the serpent that devours its own tail; often dressed with noisy jingling bells. In ancient traditions sound also announced transformations, like the fall of the walls of Jericho. Noise was also associated to metamorphosis in the "Pig and Pepper" episode, as we have just explained. The figure of the Madman/Fool is also related to the vision of ambiguous multiplicity present in the metaphor of carnival that Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin used in his book on François Rabelais (1984: 303-436) in order to highlight the multiplicity and ambiguity of analogic processes and discourses present the work of this French author. Like Carroll, Rabelais, who used the anagram Alcofribas Nasier as pseudonym, was fond of paradoxical situations and obscure characters.

Allusions to madness appear most prominently in Alice's conversation with the Cheshire Cat and in the following episode, the so-called "Tea Party" (or T-party). Melanie Bayley has explained that it explores the theories of Irish mathematician and philosopher William R. Hamilton, who died the year Alice was published. Hamilton, who also befriended William Wordsworth, studied the rotation of three axes, adding in 1853 a four spatial dimension that he associated to time. Indeed, the breaking of spatial symmetry exhibited in previous chapters of Carroll's book (i.e. the episode in which Alice's neck becomes elongated) can be related to the temporal dimension, which is always asymmetric (the arrow of time), as formulated by Clausius.

However, Alice's temporal progress throughout the story is also complicated; it is 'always already' (Paul Ricœur's expression, taken from Martin Heidegger's work, was popularized by Jacques Derrida in "La différance", where he used it to refer to the temporal breach between signified and signifier) too late. Alice is constantly chasing the White Rabbit who is always delayed too. The figure of the Herald may have been inspired by Alice Liddell's father, Dean of Christ Church Oxford (Gardner 1996: 37). Apparently, in order to reach the church coming from the deanery, Alice's father had to cross the Great Quadrangle (or Tom Quad) with its statue of Hermes/Mercury in its centre. This long path caused him to be frequently late. The Herald also hints to the figure of the same Greco-Roman god, messenger of the other gods as well as psycho-pomp or guide into the underworld. Hermes/Mercury carries the caduceus, a gift from Apollo which features two symmetric snakes coiled around. Mercury was also an appreciated metal in alchemy, often used in processes of metamorphosis or chemical transformation, seeking to develop the Philosophers' Stone by means of magic processes (alchemic beliefs were assimilated by the Hermetic tradition and the esoteric branches of freemasonry). In the Victorian period, mercury was also used in the making of hats. Interestingly, its toxicity lead to intoxication symptoms which involved the loss of spatiotemporal perception, including visual and aural alterations as well as speech impediments and generalized cognitive

deterioration, popularizing the expression "mad as a hatter". Both the White Rabbit and the Hatter are messengers, and both a little mad. Michel Foucault's research on madness and its power of subversion would lead us to yet another possible unwelcome digression that would complicate the reading of this paper. In order to avoid this, let us return to temporal dissociation as the main topic explored during the T-Party, with constant references to clocks, watches and time, such as: "What a funny watch!" she remarked. "It tells the day of the month and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!" "Why should it?" muttered the Hatter. "Does *your* watch tell you what year it is?" "Of course not," Alice replied very readily: "but that's because it stays in the same year for such a long time together." (1866: 99-100) The changing of locations in which the Hatter, the Dormouse and the Hare engage at the T-Table symbolizes the space sphere to which Alice is the unwelcomed forth guest.

However, the episode offers another interesting way of complicating time perceptions: the loop. According to Douglas Hofstadter (1979), whose own work was inspired by Carroll, a loop is a self-referential structure that may operate at hierarchies of different levels, including objects, structures or processes (digressions are an example of such patterns of complexity). For instance, literary fiction often makes use of intertextual mechanisms by placing quotes, poems or stories within other stories. This serves to highlight and reflect complementary or opposite ideas, almost as a mirror would. The story of the "three little sisters [whose] names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie", who "lived at the bottom of a well" (1866: 105) is one of these loops. Lacie is the specular image of Alice Liddell, just as the bird character of DoDo in the third chapter reflected Carroll himself.

Alice's story folds (the metaphor of the folded handkerchief/mandala is mentioned later in this paper) at various spatiotemporal levels: "'I could tell you my adventures—beginning from this morning,' said Alice a little timidly, 'but it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then.'" (1866: 155) Indeed, in chapter 12 Alice "had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn't a bit afraid of interrupting him" (1866: 184). The sentence refers to the King of Hearts, whom she now sees as "nothing but a pack of cards" (1866: 187) because the book shows how Alice grows not only in physical size, but also changes from a child into a young woman. A few pages before, the King, sensing Alice's growing power, mentions "Rule Forty-two. *All persons more than a mile high have to leave the court.*"

> Everybody looked at Alice. *"I'm* not a mile high," said Alice.
> "You are," said the King.
> "Nearly two miles high," added the Queen.
> "Well, I shan't go, at any rate," said Alice; "besides, that's not a regular rule: you invented it just now."
> "It's the oldest rule in the book," said the King.
> "Then it ought to be Number One," said Alice.
> The King turned pale, and shut his notebook hastily [...] (1866: 180)

The binary representation of 42 is 101010 and in ASCII programming is represented by * (asterisk), that is, a wildcard standing for anything. The number has also a cabalistic esoteric tradition, which matches other hermetic references in the novel. Carroll had asked his friend John Tenniel for 42 illustrations for his

story. Number 42 is another loop that continues to engage Carroll's readers and scientists too (see Smith 2007). In Chapter VII of Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded,* published some years later, the author formulated a hypothesis to reach the antipodes, a word that is also constantly in Alice's mind as she falls through the rabbit-hole at the beginning of her story. The trip, through a kind of tube free of friction, would last 42 minutes, with the first part being free fall and the second including a process of deceleration due to the force of gravity, as calculated by mathematician Paul Cooper in 1966. And this is exactly when Alice's first book ends, just as the little girl is propelled out of wonder-dream-land rabbit hole on account of her growing size (both physical and mental).

4. Mirrors of Complexity: *Through the Looking-glass*

Through the Looking-Glass is set on a winter Wednesday (the day of Mercury). Alice is sitting with her cat Dinah and her two kittens. Alice recalls how the previous day she wanted to play to impersonate all the figures on the chess-board but her sister, "who liked being very exact, had argued that they couldn't because there were two of them." (1872: 8) Anticipating the fractal multiplicity we encounter in the book, Alice replied that her sister could be one figure, and that she would be "all the rest." (1872: 8) While her sister is described as "being very exact", conforming to the parameters of binary logic, Alice's questions singularity insisting that she will be all others.

Two is a crucial number in the story, where besides the dual chess pieces, there are two kittens as well as dual figures such as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Indeed, the novel presents mutant spatiotemporal pairings beyond binary forms of analogy and similarity. The mirror in the story functions not as a flat surface that reflects reality in an inverted dual way, but as a telescopic curved mirror that opens up a multitude of worlds.

As Alice climbs upon the fireplace and touches the surface of the looking-glass above it, she realizes that it melts. Entering the other side, where the world is the same but inverted, Alice finds herself surrounded by the two Tower pieces, chatting and walking hand in hand (the image is closely associated to freemasonry). In order to protect Lily (the name alludes to Lilith, Eve's shadow, who uses a mirror to enter the world), one of the White Queen's little Pawns whom she also calls "Imperial Kitten", the Queen accidentally pushes the King into the ashes of the fireplace. Rubbing his nose the King exclaims: "Imperial fiddlestick!"(1872: 15), an expression used several times in the story. Cecil Spring-Rice authored a famous hymn in honour of Oxford University "I vow to thee my country", where two of the main streets of the city (the Broad and the High) are mentioned in the following terms: "I am the Dean of Christ Church Sir./This is my wife, look well at her. /She is the Broad; I am the High: We are the University." (cited in Watkins 2002: 130) The rhyme was later adapted to allude to Henry Liddell, father of the real Alice, and his wife: "I am the Dean, this Mrs. Liddell./ She plays first, I, second *fiddle*./ She is the Broad/ I am the High/ We are the University" (emphasis added).

Alice notices a book on the bookshelf featuring an illegible poem. She realizes that "Jabberwocky" (1972: 21) is printed backwards and can only be read

with a mirror. Alice tries to make sense of the poem but, frustrated by the effort, she decides to continue her journey in search of the beautiful garden she perceives far beyond the curved path. Alice's efforts to reach the hill are in vain because of the twisted inverted perspective. Indeed, Carroll's narrative follows the odd topography of a fractal structure, as Hofstadter noted (1979: 43-45).

> 'I should see the garden far better,' said Alice to herself, 'if I could get to the top of that hill: and here's a path that leads straight to it – at least, no, it doesn't do that – ' (after going a few yards along the path, and turning several sharp corners), 'but I suppose it will at last. But how curiously it twists! *It's more like a corkscrew than a path*! Well, this turn goes to the hill, I suppose – no, it doesn't! This goes straight back to the house! Well then, I'll try it the other way.' (1872: 26 emphasis added)

In the garden, Alice speaks to the flowers and in particular to the Rose and the Tiger-Lily (which carry additional hermetic and freemasonic layers of meaning). Like the Cheshire Cat in the first book, the Rose tells her that in order to get somewhere in the world within the looking-glass, she must walk backwards, moving away from her objective because in the mirror the laws of symmetry operate inversely.

> This sounded nonsense to Alice, so she said nothing, but set off at once towards the Red Queen. To her surprise, she lost sight of her in a moment, and found herself walking in at the front-door again. A little provoked, she drew back, and after looking everywhere for the queen (whom she spied out at last, a long way off), she thought she would try the plan, this time, of walking in the opposite direction. (1872: 34-35)

The Red Queen asks her: "Where do you come from?' 'And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely, and don't *twiddle* your fingers all the time." (1872: 35; emphasis added). The word 'twiddle' appears here for the first time and alludes to Alice's confusion and the circular movement of her thumbs, a sign of indecision, nervousness but also analogic ambiguity. She decides to follow the Queen's indications in order to cross the large chess board she sees at a distance, almost like Alberti's quadrangle.

> For some minutes Alice stood without speaking, looking out in all directions over the country – and a most curious country it was. There were a number of tiny little brooks running straight across it from side to side, and the ground between was divided up into squares by a number of little green hedges, that reached from brook to brook. 'I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!' Alice said at last. (1872: 38)

Alice wishes to become a chess piece, and the Queen assures her that "That's easily managed. You can be the White Queen's Pawn, if you like, as Lily's too young to play; and you're in the Second Square to begin with: when you get to the Eighth Square you'll be a Queen." (1872: 39) Suddenly, Alice sees herself transformed into a White Pawn, and the Red Queen tells her to gather all her strength and run quickly in order to advance. However, Alice notices that things around her seems to be always in the same location.

> The most curious part of the thing was, that the trees and the other things round them never changed their places at all: however fast they went, they never seemed

> to pass anything. 'I wonder if all the things move along with us?' thought poor puzzled Alice. And the Queen seemed to guess her thoughts, for she cried, 'Faster! Don't try to talk!' [...] 'Are we *nearly there*?' Alice managed to pant out at last. 'Nearly there!' the Queen repeated. 'Why, we passed *it* ten minutes ago! (1872: 40; emphasis added)

The spatiotemporal delay that objects suffer through the looking-glass is reflected in Alice's thoughts and words; particularly in her "nearly there" which the Queen observes it has already taken place. The antecedent of 'it' ("'Why, we passed *it* ten minutes ago!") is precisely "nearly there"; similar to the 'always already' structures which appeared in the first book, as pointed out before. The Queen explains that if one wants to get somewhere, one must run twice as fast (1872: 40). She then advances some of the moves that will occur in the story:

> A pawn goes two squares in its first move, you know. So you'll go very quickly through the Third Square – by railway, I should think – and you'll find yourself in the Fourth Square in no time. Well, that square belongs to Tweedledum and Tweedledee – the Fifth is mostly water – the Sixth belongs to Humpty Dumpty [...] the Seventh Square is all forest – however, one of the Knights will show you the way – and in the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun! (1872: 44)

Alice jumps and finds herself in a train where the Guard asks her for a ticket she does not have: "Don't keep him waiting, child! Why, his time is worth a thousand pounds a minute!'[...] The land there is worth a thousand pounds an inch!' [...] Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!" (1872: 48-49), another allusion to the belatedness of semiotic representation. Sitting with Alice are a gentleman dressed in white paper, a goat, a beetle and an insect. Without space to enter the interpretation of the episode in detail, let us just say that it deals with an inquiry into nominalism, categorization and linear logic, frequent in Carroll's books; in this case, the difficulties in naming are related to various species of insects. But Alice also realizes that she has forgotten the name of things, and thus, their singularity, as enters the woods, "where things have no names". She is fearful of "what'll become of *my* name when I go in?" Almost as in Shakespeare's *Midsummer's Night Dream,* Alice meets the Fawn, who tries to make fun of the issue of momentary oblivion. "Then it really *has* happened, after all" And now, who am I?" she wonders. This questioning appears time and time again in the first book and also in its sequel. Here, Alice tries to remember if her name begins with L (1872: 62). The movements of White Knight (who emulates Carroll himself) also follow the L shape of the chess horse ride, continuously 'falling' (of his horse) for Alice L., as we shall see later.

Lost without direction, Alice's trajectory abandons the linearity of alphabetic naming and counting, and enters a world of oscillations between one and twos. The semiotic signs on her path mirror each other in specular indecision "TWEEDLEDUM'S HOUSE" or "THE HOUSE OF TWEEDLEDEE" (1872: 65; capitals in the original). Alice's moving thumbs materialize as if by magic:

> They were standing under a tree, each with an arm round the other's neck, and Alice knew which was which in a moment, because one of them had 'DUM' embroidered on his collar, and the other 'DEE.' 'I suppose they've each got "TWEEDLE" round at the back of the collar,' she said to herself. (1872: 66)

The twins Tweedledum and Tweedledee were the protagonists of a famous nursery rhyme which referred to rivalry among equals, in particular between the musicians Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747) and Georg Friedrich Händel (1685-1759) who had famously argued about the prominence of music or words in opera (Opie and Opie 1997: 418). In Carroll's story, they are brothers, and although it would seem as if they contradict each other, this is not really so. They appear not in opposition but in complementary relation. The expression "Dum Dee Dum" is a sort of pun, to be used when someone does not know what to say. It is a specular expression, where 'Dum' sounds like 'dumb', and 'Dee' might be a wink to John Dee, Elizabeth I's alchemist as well as the first English translator of Euclid in 1570. The loop also takes us back to Henry Liddell's rhyme 'fiddle-dee-dee' (nonsense), and forward to various other forking paths (i.e. H.P. Lovecraft's "The Call of *Cthulhu*").

In *Annotated Alice,* Gardner indicates that Carroll does not mention that Tweedledum and Tweedledee were twins, even if John Tenniel drew them as if they were. Gardner confirms that Carroll would have thought about these characters in relation to a special kind of crystals called enantiomorphic (a pair of crystals -like quartz- that are structural mirror images).

> Alice did not like shaking hands with either of them first, for fear of hurting the other one's feelings; so, as the best way out of the difficulty, *she took hold of both hands at once*: the next moment they were dancing round in a ring. This seemed quite natural (*she remembered afterwards*), and she was not even surprised to hear music playing: it seemed to come from the tree under which they were dancing, and it was done (as well as she could make it out) by the branches rubbing one across the other, like fiddles and fiddle-sticks. (1872: 69-70; emphasis added)

Possibly, this is one of the adventures where the (non-lineal) crystal-fractal structure of Carroll's narrative is more evident (in fractals, analogic structures replicate by means of jumps from one level to another, as water ripples, rather than in a linear way). Tweedledum and Tweedledee make constant allusions that carry associations that refract in various directions, spaces and times, forking only to converge as if forced by the specular perspective. The rhymes the twins sing and the poems they recite, such as "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush" or "The Walrus and the Carpenter", carry several levels of fractal intertextuality, difficult to summarize in a few lines.

The episode of Alice lost in the woods and losing her name, and her encounter with the twins, are moments of contingency that replicate, as the movement of a pendulum, the topic of oneness and duality as limiting. In the words of Tweedledee: "'Contrariwise' [...] 'if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't.'" (1872: 68). Alice's naming problems parallel her difficulties in counting. "First boy" she calls pointing at Tweedledum, and "Next boy" she says passing on to Tweedledee.

Humpty Dumpty, whom Alice meets in the Sixth Square, returns to the topic of naming and counting which he discusses in terms of power relations and the perils of growing up. When Alice protests "I mean," she said, "that one ca'n't help growing older." "*One* ca'n't, perhaps," said Humpty Dumpty; "but *two* can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven." (1872: 120) At the other side

of the looking-glass, where time progress is reversed, Alice is advised to get off at the next square (seven) but it is 'always already' too late. Reversibility becomes threatening in the episode as Humpty Dumpty relates counting and naming to the distinct possibility of disappearance, and thus, death, a topic also introduced at various moments in both books. In the sequel, at the end of Alice's encounter with the twins, their discussion is interrupted by the snoring of the Red King, who sleeps under a nearby tree (the image of the tree is also omnipresent in the narrative). Alice is afraid to wake him up because according to Tweedledum and Tweedledee, she only lives in his dreams. This points back to the ancient tradition of Hermes/Mercury as psycho-pomp guide to the underworld (death) by means of dreams, and also to Platonic fears about the nature reality (the world of ideas) as mediated by representation (the non-real; the world of forms) and the complex relationship between perception and cognition.

Alice manages to get rid of the twins and meets the White Queen who appears as a cyclone, her clothes in disarray and her hairpins out of place (like the spindle, they represent the temporal axis). Alice rearranges her tangles while the Queen explains that "'That's the effect of living backwards,' 'it always makes one a little giddy at first" (1872: 95). The ensuing conversation deals with the effects of the inverted mirror temporality upon memory. When Alice asks her which events she remembers more clearly, the Queen says:

> 'Oh, things that happened the week after next,' the Queen replied in a careless tone. 'For instance, now,' she went on, sticking a large piece of plaster on her finger as she spoke, 'there's the *King's Messenger*. He's in prison now, being punished and the trial doesn't even begin till next *Wednesday:* and of course the crime comes last of all.' 'Suppose he never commits the crime?' said Alice. (1872: 95-96: emphasis added)

The allusions to the King's messenger and Wednesday bring us back to the beginning of the narrative and, thus, to the hermetic/occult tradition, which seems to be unjustly accused of an obscure crime. Without space to develop this aspect, related to freemasonry, in the present paper, the episode ends with the idea of the anticipation of the future within the present, reminding us that Alice will eventually become a White Queen at the end of the story.

Another example of the fractal folds of the narrative occurs with reference to the Queen, who might have prickled her finger with the pin of her cloak (see quote above). Indeed, the cloak is like a cosmic mandala, appearing later also in the form of handkerchief in Chapter IX. Alice finds the cloak lying on the ground before the Queen arrives. As anticipated, the Queen prickles her finger, and Carroll insists on the idea that language is always too late in its representation of the present: "'But why don't you scream now?' Alice asked, holding her hands ready to put over her ears again. 'Why, I've done all the screaming already,' said the Queen. 'What would be the good of having it all over again?'" (1872: 98)

Soon after, the Queen, covered by her cloak when crossing the river, suffers, like many other characters in both stories, a metamorphic change that turns her into a ball of wool like the one Alice was using to play with the kittens at the beginning of the adventure. Magically, the wool metonymically becomes a bespectacled sheep who sits at a counter in a shop. Alice looks around at the shelves, first empty, then suddenly filled with strange objects that change location

under her persistent gaze. The sheep asks her if she is a *teetotun* (1872: 104). Another fold, and the hairpins, now knitting needles, turn into the oars that Alice holds sitting in a small boat next to the sheep. The animal insists that Alice is a *feather* (105) which in navigation jargon means to use the oar in a horizontal position, almost as an axis over the specular water. The sheep also refers to Alice as "goose", a word which mediates associations to the collection of tales by Jean Loret (1660), popularized by Charles Perrault, *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* (1697), and which featured the obscure Mother Goose as storyteller. In turn, these tales were based on Aesop's (620-560 BCE) story of the goose with the golden eggs. The chapter ends with Alice back in the shop, buying an egg from the moving shelves. The egg becomes Humpty Dumpty (the cosmic egg). "[…] she went off to the other end of the shop, and set the egg upright on a shelf. 'I wonder why it wouldn't do?' thought Alice, […] 'The egg seems to get further away the more I walk towards it," (1872: 112) becoming "larger and larger and more and more human." (113).

The character of "Humpty Dumpty", whom Alice meets in Chapter VI, appears in a collection of rhymes by James William Elliott, published in 1870. Some interpretations relate the rhyme to a brandy that was drunk with beer and whose effects made the drinker very clumsy. Another interpretation relates it to a cannon which had been employed against royal authority by the Scottish Jacobites, in allusion to the following episode of the Lion and the Unicorn: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall/ Humpty Dumpty had a great fall./All the King's horses and all the King's men/Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty in his place again."

The episode deals with the power of words as instruments of control. Humpty Dumpty boasts of being able to change the meaning of words to his liking. He alludes to "Jabberwocky", the poem that Alice had encountered at the beginning of the story and could not decipher. Humpty Dumpty explains how language-games work, and how they can be used in service of the person who holds power.

> 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.'
> 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'
> 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.' (1872: 124)

Humpty Dumpty laughs at Alice's name: "With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost." (1872: 115-116) In *Annotated Alice,* Martin Gardner writes in a footnote that for Humpty Dumpty, common nouns have specific functions, while proper names, like 'Alice' can slide back into generic meaning, transcending the person's singularity. The episode replicates the problem of naming, explored previously in both books. However, here Alice's name begins to acquire new resonances. It comes from ancient Greek Aliza, meaning happiness, nobility and truthfulness, and used later in cryptography and coding, along with that of Bob, corresponding to the first two letters of the Western alphabet. In digital coding, asymmetric cryptography is used to increase security. Introduced by Diffie Whitfield and Martin Hellman (1976), it uses a different key for each pair of users, coded in chain format. The secret key is always called Alice, and the public one is called Bob (in reference to the Hatter, the messenger). As mentioned before,

Carroll was very fond of developing cyphers using poli-alphabetic transposition and symmetric algorithms. Along with his grill for the study of perspective, Leon Battista Alberti had also developed a famous cypher in 1467.

The topic of naming and the use of multiple language codes is another example of Carroll's hybrid narrative techniques which anticipate the complexity behind the *technopoetic épistémè*. Such complex multiplicity impacts epistemology, since naming is related to power relations, as Humpty Dumpty explains to Alice. Indeed, as noted, much of the complex intertextuality in Alice's stories is hidden under the appearance of children's games and rhymes. Bakhtin and Foucault noticed that this popular, almost infantile use, secretly unveils the functioning of the 'order of things', apparently related to non-important situations. In other words, under the language games, children's fantasy tales, and apparently innocuous songs and nursery rhymes, lie important aspects related to the use and socio-political functional control of communication, an issue Wittgenstein also pointed out.

Returning to Carroll's story after my digressive (hopefully eventually clarifying) loops, Chapter VII sees the King's soldiers falling one on top of the other as in Humpty Dumpty's rhyme. Alice tries to avoid them and comes out of the forest. She finds the White King, busy taking notes in his logbook (1872: 139). He tells Alice, cryptographically, that he has sent 4207 men and asks her if she has seen any of his two Messengers. If the number 0 equals A, 1 equals B and so on in the Latin alphabet, 4207 would mean ECAH as noted by Gardner, mirror anagram for ACHE (H) and EACH. Alice responds that she has seen nobody on the road (1872: 140). The King congratulates her on her excellent sight and describes his H Messengers as Haigha, the March Hare, and Hatta, the Mad Hatter. The emphasis on double coding is obvious when the King explains that "I must have two, you know – to come and go. One to come, and one to go." [...] I must have Two – to fetch and carry. One to fetch, and one to carry.' (1872: 141) Another cryptic or hermetic aspect is the emphasis on the letter H: 'I love my love with an H,' Alice couldn't help beginning, 'because he is Happy. I hate him with an H, because he is Hideous. I fed him with – with – with Ham-sandwiches and Hay. His name is Haigha, and he lives – "He lives on the Hill,' (1872: 140-1) Haigha brings news that he whispers in the King's ear, "putting his hands to his mouth in the shape of a trumpet" (1872: 144) but shouting instead "They are at it again", referring to the lion and the unicorn (England and Scotland in their respective heraldic representation) fighting for the crown. "And the best of the joke is, that it's my crown all the while!" says the King. John Tenniel's illustrations used caricatures of Benjamin Disraeli as the unicorn, and William Gladstone as the lion, although there is no evidence that this may have been under Carroll's suggestion. Hatta, the second messenger is watching the fight. He is just out of prison.

> 'The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown:
> The Lion beat the Unicorn all round the town.
> Some gave them white bread, some gave them brown;
> Some gave them plum-cake and drummed them out of town.' (1872: 145)

When the fight is over, as in the rhyme above, Alice is asked to cut the cake, symbolising the sharing of imperial powers, but she remarks that "'I've cut several

slices already, but they always join on again!' 'You don't know how to manage Looking-glass cakes,' the Unicorn remarked. 'Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards.'"(1872: 154) In classical mythology, the white unicorn tamed by a lady referred to representations of virginity and purity as conquering powers. One of the most famous ones is the series of tapestries displayed at Cluny Museum in Paris (ca. 1500). Five of them represent the senses. In the one representing sight, the lady holds a mirror where the kneeling Unicorn is reflected. Next to them we can see a Hare and a Lion holding a banner. The crossing of points of views in the tapestry corresponds to what is known as "Venus effect" (see Bertamini, Latto and Spooner 2003 for further associations beyond the scope of this paper).

In her White Pawn role, Lily's avatar, Alice runs away covering her ears as the drums start again and the fight between the lion and the unicorn resumes. In chapter VIII she reaches the seventh square after crossing another river-stream which leads her deeper into the woods of the Red Knight, who wants to capture her. In Chapter II the Red Queen had warned her: "the Seventh Square is all forest – however, one of the Knights will show you the way – and in the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun!' (1872: 17). The White Knight (standing for Carroll himself) comes to help Alice in clumsy L movements that make him fall of the horse several times (1872: 166). John Tenniel's illustration and Carroll's description remind of Don Quixote. His physical clumsiness does not discourage him from pulling new words and worlds out of his inventive magic mind: "'What does it matter where my body happens to be?' he said. 'My mind goes on working all the same. In fact, the more head downwards I am, the more I keep inventing new things.'" (1872: 173) Before saying goodbye he sings a ballad for Alice; a ballad of multiple names, as everything else in *Through the Looking-Glass*. It echoes associations and refractions under the titles *Haddock's Eyes*, *The Aged Aged Man* (the repetition functions as a superlative), *Ways and Means*, and *A-Sitting on a Gate*. This last title points out exactly to what Alice is doing: sitting at the gateway of the mirror.

The White Knight's ballad tells the story of Alice's journey and echoes the poem that Carroll annotated in his diary narrating his trip with the three Liddell sisters along the river Isis: "Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey through the Looking-glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday." (1872: 176) The chapter is entitled "It's my own invention" and ends with the Knight asking Alice to wait until he turns the last loop of the path before saying goodbye with her handkerchief.

> As the Knight sang the last words of the ballad, he gathered up the reins, and turned his horse's head along the road by which they had come. 'You've only a few yards to go,' he said, 'down the hill and over that little brook, and then you'll be a Queen – But you'll stay and see me off first?' [...] You'll wait and wave your handkerchief when I get to that turn in the road? I think it'll encourage me, you see.' [...] After the fourth or fifth tumble he reached the turn, and then she waved her handkerchief to him, and waited till he was out of sight. 'I hope it encouraged him,' she said, as she turned to run down the hill, 'and now for the last brook, and to be a Queen! (1872: 181-182)

Handkerchief code is a means of non-verbal communication used in various environments (i.e. in bull fighting, or in *flagging* among the gay community). The English term "kerchief" comes from Middle English "courchef", in turn from old French "couvrechief" (*chief* ="chef" and "head" or boss). It also referred to a kind of cloak, like the one worn by the White Queen. In this episode, it might also point to the continuous head-falls of the Knight.

Alice crosses the stream and enters the Eight and last square at Chapter IX. The White and the Red Queen are sitting together in deep discussion. The chapter functions as a sort of cosmic Vāstu-mándala (see Burckhardt 1969 for the relation between mandalas and chess) that folds up in order to capture the many layers of Carroll's story. The intertextual word-games carry mental images that open up associations only to return to Alice's coronation. She must struggle to define herself as Queen among Queens. They test her, asking her to recite the alphabet and do mathematical calculations, but she now controls the rules of the game and knows her ABC and words of only one letter, she says. Invested with a unique status on the chessboard, Alice keeps on counting and finding alternative ways of conceptualizing. Frustrated by the disorder and complexity that originates when one wishes to know and control everything, Alice takes an unexpected turn and pulls the chessboard (which is also a tablecloth and a mandala-handkerchief), causing the pieces to fall and leave the Red King in check-mate.

Chapter X sets off the countdown, and the Red Queen returns to its original chess size. At 11, a specular number, Alice is again at the mirror gateway with kitten Kitty in her arms. At 12, almost as if a clock struck, Alice rubs her eyes asking herself, like philosopher Berkeley, if she has dreamt it all, or if it is the Red King who has dreamt her.

5. Conclusions

Lewis Carroll's Alice books present various forms of spatiotemporal projections (i.e, the Red King and Alice dream each other), reflections and refractions; symmetries and asymmetries where mathematical, geometrical and natural languages intermingle, and where what seems to be brought into the light might be perhaps lying in the dark. Martin Gardner has already mentioned the esoteric and hermetic component of Alice's stories (1960: 53). Charlie Lovett also included a complete catalogue of the books that Charles Dodgson had in his library at Oxford; among them, books on homeopathic medicine, spiritualism, magic and astrology (Lovett 2005: 11) These aspects of the occult add up to the multiplicity of languages and codes present in the novels.

This paper has briefly approached *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel *Through the Looking-glass and what Alice found there* (1871) in order to explore how both novels anticipate structures of complexity present in the *technopoetic épistémè* that, with the onset of digitalization, has complicated the relationship between reality and fiction, poles at both ends of a sort of specular relationship. Carroll's use of multiple fractal loops converge at points of hermetic speculation, combining scientific and humanistic pursuits as

well as the negotiation between the eye and the logos, perception and cognition, by means of an inquiry into analogic processes as well as their fracture. Wordgames, numberlands, successive (linear) and simultaneous (fractal) multiple identities, specular symmetric and asymmetric geometries, populate Carroll's fantasy worlds; an infinite entropic multiplicity within a pepper soup that never quite reaches its bubble point.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 1984.

Bayley, Melanie. "Alice's adventures in algebra: Wonderland solved", *New Scientist*, 16 December 2009. http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20427391.600-alices-adventures-in-algebra-wonderland-solved.html?full=true#.VTX8NyHtmko Accessed 10 May 2019

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Translated by Harry Zohn. Schocken/Random House, ed. by Hannah Arendt, 1936. https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm Accessed 10 May 2019

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin 1972.

Bertamini, Marco; Latto, Richard & Spooner, Alice. "The Venus effect: people's understanding of mirror reflections in paintings" *Perception* vol. 32, no. 5, 2003, pp 593-599. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.898.6383&rep=rep1&type=pdf Accessed 10 May 2019

Bloom, Harold, editor. *Lewis Carroll*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.

Burckhardt, Titus. "The Symbolism of Chess." *Studies in Comparative Religion*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1969, pp 1.5 http://www.studiesincomparativereligion.com/uploads/ArticlePDFs/93.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019

Cripps, Elizabeth A. "Alice and the Reviewers." *Children's Literature* vol. 11, 1983, pp. 32-48.

Calabrese, Omar. *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*. Translated by Charles Lambert. 1992 [1987].

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* New York: Appleton & Co. 1866. http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Carroll__Alice_1st.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019

Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking-Glass and what Alice found there*. London: MacMillan & Co. 1872. http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Carroll__Alice_1st.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019

Carroll, Lewis. *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*. Macmillan and Co. 1893.

Cooper, Paul. *"Through the Earth in Forty Minutes." American Journal of Physics* vol 34, no. 1, 1966, pp. 68-69 doi:10.1119/1.1972773.

Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Trattato della pittura*. Online. Translated by John Francis Rigaud. London: Royal Academy of Painting, 1835 https://archive.org/details/davincionpainting00leon Accessed 10 May 2019

Deleuze, Gilles. *Le Pli - Leibniz et le baroque*. Paris : Les éditions de Minuit-Coll. Critique, 1988. *The Fold*. Translated from French by Tom Conley. Continuum, 2006.
http://criticaltheoryindex.org/assets/deleuze%2C-gilles_the-fold-leibniz-and-the-baroque.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019

Dodgson Collingwood, Stuart, editor. *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*. London: Fisher Unwin, London, 1898 (2nd ed. 1899)

https://archive.org/stream/lifelettersoflew00colluoft/lifelettersoflew00colluoft_djvu.txt
Accessed 10 May 2019
Du Sautoy, Marcus P.F. *Symmetry: A Journey into the Patterns of Nature*. Perennial 2009.
Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press/Midland Book, 1976.
https://monoskop.org/images/b/b3/Eco_Umberto_Semiotics_and_the_Philosophy_of_Language_1986.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019
Edgerton, Samuel, Y. "The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective." *Icon,* 1975, pp. 136-152.
Edgerton, Samuel, Y. "Brunelleschi's mirror, Alberti's window, and Galileo's 'perspective tube' 2006.http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-59702006000500010 Accessed 10 May 2019
Enoch, Jay M. "History of Mirrors Dating Back 8000 Years." University of California at Berkeley: *Optometry and Vision Science,* vol.83, no.10, 2006, pp.775-781 DOI:10.1097/01.opx.0000237925.65901.c0
Foucault, Michel Foucault. "Des espaces autres", Conferencia el Cercle des études architecturals, vol. 14 Mar.1967. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec. Printed in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, vol, 5, 1984, pp.1-9 http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019
Gardner, Martin. *The Annotated Alice*. Clarkson N. Potter, 1960
—. *The Universe in a Handkerchief*: *Lewis Carroll's Mathematical Recreations, Games, Puzzles, and Word Plays*. London: Copernicus 1996.
Gombrich, Ernst H. "Mirror and Map: Theories of Pictorial Representation," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*. Series B, Biological Sciences vol. 903, no. 270, 1975, pp. 119-149.
Hofstadter, Douglas R. *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.
Holyoak, Keith and Thagard, Paul. *Analogy in Creative Thought*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1995
Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I-Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Écrits*. Translated by Bruce Fink. NY & London: Norton and Co., 2006, pp. 75 – 81.
Lennon, Florence Becker. *Victoria through the Looking Glass*. *The Life of Lewis Carroll,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945
Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
Liddell, Henry George and Scott, Robert. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989 [1891]
Lakoff, George & Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press, 1980
López-Varela, Asunción and Sussman, Henry. "Technopoïesis: Transmedia Mythologisation and theUnity of Knowledge." Introduction to special issue. *Icono 14 Revista Científica de Comunicación y Tecnologías Emergentes* vol. 15, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-34 https://icono14.net/ojs/index.php/icono14/issue/view/15-1-17 Accessed 10 May 2019
López-Varela, Asunción and Sukla Ananta, editors. *The Ekphrastic Turn: Inter-Art Dialogues*. New Directions in the Humanities book series. Champaign, Univ. of Illinois Research Park: Common Ground Publishing, 2015.
López-Varela, Asunción. "Antiabecedarian Desires: Odd Narratology and Digital Textuality," *Icono 14*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2014, pp. 29-55 doi:10.7195/ri14.v12i2.727

Lovett, Charlie. *Lewis Carroll among his Books: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Private Library of Charles L. Dogson*. McFarland, 2005.
Melchior-Bonnet, Sabine. *Histoire de mirroir*. Paris: Imago 1994.
Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier, Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977,
Opie, Iona and Opie, Peter. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. Oxford University Press, 1997 [1951].
Reiss, Timothy. *Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe: The Rise of Aesthetic Rationalism*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Schwarz, Heinrich. "The Mirror in Art," *Art Quarterly* vol. 15, no.2, 1952, pp. 97-118.
Smith, Mol. *42 – The Answer to Life, The Universe, and Everything*. Wallington : Onview.net, 2007
Wagner, David. "The uses of nonsense. Ludwig Wittgenstein reads Lewis Carroll." In Lütterfelds, Wilhelm, Majetschak, Stefan, Raatzsch, Richard and Vossenkuhl, Wilhelm, editors *Wittgenstein-Studien* 3.1. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012, pp. 205–216. DOI:10.1515/wgst.2012.205
Watkins, Peter. *The Soul of Wit*. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002.
Wilson, Robin. *Lewis Carroll in Numberland*: *His Fantastical Mathematical Logical Life*. New York & London: Norton, 2008.
Whitfield, Diffie and Hellman, Martin "New Directions in Cryptography." IEEE *Transactions on Information Theory* vol. 22, no. 6, 1976, pp. 644-654 https://ee.stanford.edu/~hellman/publications/24.pdf Accessed 10 May 2019

As God is Our Witness

Healing Fiction in Jewish literature

Alexandru Paul Mărgău
Independent scholar

Abstract. This article sets out to analyze a book that was written by Otto Weiss during his imprisonment in the Terezin ghetto in 1941, as a birthday present for his wife, Irena. In addition to the text itself, I am analyzing the importance of the drawings made by his daughter during the same time, at the age of 10. In taking these into account, I am looking at how the fantasy of God coming down to Earth in the form of a Jew, Aaron Gottesmann, supplies Otto and his daughter with an escape mechanism out of the horrors of the Holocaust. Having been published in the meantime, the book allows today for a whole people, be it Christian, Jew or Agnostic, to join the fantasy while remaining anchored in one's own reality, and picture what it would have been like as a Jew and as God to live during the Nazi party's regime.

Keywords: Shoah, drawings, fantasy, testimony, witness, Jewish

In 1941, as a ten year old girl, Helga Weissová-Hošková and her parents, Otto and Irena, were taken to the Terezin ghetto, inside the famed fortress called Theresienstadt, a way station for the Jews' deportation to the concentration camps. Created in the late 18th-century by Emperor Joseph II of Austria and named in honor of Empress Maria Theresa, his mother, the fortress became a Nazi development by 1940.

According to the site dedicated to the history of Terezin, to the arts and to the remembrance of the Jews either killed at or deported from there, the ghetto

> held primarily Jews from Czechoslovakia, as well as tens of thousands of Jews deported chiefly from Germany and Austria, as well as hundreds from the Netherlands and Denmark. More than 150,000 Jews were sent there, including 15,000 children, and held there for months or years, before being sent by rail transports to their deaths at Treblinka and Auschwitz extermination camps in occupied Poland, as well as to smaller camps elsewhere. Less than 150 children survived. [...] Many educated Jews were inmates of Terezin. Unlike other camps, Terezin's detainees included scholars, philosophers, scientists, visual artists, and musicians of all types, some of whom had achieved international renown, and many of these contributed to the camp's cultural life. The Nazis kept a tight rein on the world's perception of activities within Terezin. In a propaganda effort designed to fool the Western allies, the Nazis publicized the camp for its rich cultural life. (The History of Terezin)

Figure 1: Photo of the original cover to the book, title in Czech (Cover page)

Part of this 'rich cultural life' included Otto Weiss and his daughter, who worked together on a birthday present for Otto's wife, Irena, a book written by him and illustrated by his daughter, entitled *And God Saw That It was Bad*, a counterpart to the biblical text of Genesis where we read that "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

I encountered the book, nowadays with a different cover, drawn by Helga Weiss, at the bookstore of the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem, after having just visited the museum's exhibit. Chilled to the bone by what had been an overwhelming sensory experience built out of photos, videos and sound recordings, I retreated into the bookstore to regain my composure and the title, as well as the drawing on the cover, caught my eye.

Figure 2: Cover used for the 2010 edition of the book, found at the Yad Vashem Museum, Jerusalem. Also, drawing of Jews deported to Auschwitz, among them Vitěslav Taussig (p.37)

In the *Foreword* Helga says about the book that it "was not originally intended for publication. It does not assess the importance of events, nor their causes. At the time and place that it was written, it had its raison d'être" but also moves on to say that the book is "a personal account of one man's feelings of pain and disillusionment marked by the conflict of faith with doubt, of hope with anxiety" or "a simple tale [...] endowed with profoundly heartfelt sincerity" (Weiss, 2010: 6).

Otto Weiss wrote the book for his wife as a birthday present and had his daughter illustrate the book having already told her to draw what she saw in the ghetto. The manuscript survived through Terezin, Auschwitz, Freiberg and Mathausen, together with Helga, who never saw her father again after she and her parents were each deported to Auschwitz.

To find the book among the bestsellers at the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem is proof enough that this once small present from a ghetto citizen to his wife is a voice among the nations, having survived Theresienstadt and Auschwitz before finding its way to the printing press. Despite the manuscript's initial purpose, as stated by Helga, "the pretense at humor hides much bitterness and sadness. It reveals the refined bestiality of the lying Nazi propaganda, used so effectively to hoodwink world opinion" and this is so effective that at first "even the dear Lord believed it, too, in His simplicity and goodness of heart. Then, He came down to Earth and entered Terezín incognito to see for Himself. He came and He saw that it was bad" (6).

The story starts with a typical day in Heaven, where "God was seated comfortably on His majestic throne" having heard the latest reports from his elders about what was going on down on Earth, where "the war had been going on for three-and-a-half years now – a terrible war, for sure, but one that was inevitable. It was not even in God's power to prevent it. Mankind no longer believed in Him; they bowed down to other gods, and it served them right! His consciousness was clear; there was nothing He could do about it. Of course, the innocent had to suffer along with the guilty. That was always the way of the world" (11).

Figure 3: Page 11

Despite this, God is fascinated by one man of faith, Vitěslav Taussig, who "never prayed for anything for himself; he simply praised and thanked God for all His mercies" until one day when his voice betrayed that he was hungry, at which point God sent him a parcel for which Vitěslav never said 'Thank you' which in God's opinion "must mean that he never received the parcel" (12).

From this moment on, God decides to go in person down on Earth to see Vitěslav and help him in person. He sends His servants away, packs a small suitcase, and sows a yellow star to his coat, then heads straight down to Earth to the Bohušovice railway station, where all Jews were transported in 1941 and made to walk on foot three kilometers into the ghetto. He becomes Aaron Gottesmann (God's man), gets taken to the ghetto and initiated right away into the way the Chosen People were treated when his escorts ask "Where'll we šlojs him?" a word that "seemed to be a mysterious word of many meanings; a noun used as a verb, the verb had alternately active and passive meanings. There was something exceedingly funny about it, but at the same time it had horrifying undertones" (16). The word, meaning sluice or *schleuse* in German and "conjugated in an ironic Czech version, it referred to the reception area where the new arrivals were checked, and where the SS confiscated part of their belongings. [...] In its various forms and conjugations, the word referred to the place where this took place, the fact of being searched, and the active 'claiming' of belongings by those in charge" (16).

Figure 4: Page 16

After the claiming, Gottesmann is lodged together with the other Jews, eats the food served in the ghetto, finds Vitěslav Taussig but loses him to the draw for Auschwitz where Taussig is sent to be killed, gets accused of stealing by a fellow

barrack lodger, does Klodienst duty (latrine duty), goes through a session of delousing – stripped naked, shaved all over, washed in Lysol and then in scalding hot water, held outside naked in the cold – and finally contracts pneumonia in order to be able to return back to the Heavens without making it seem like an escape, which would reflect poorly over everyone left in the ghetto who would be punished on behalf of the 'escapee'.

Helga's drawings of the delousing, pneumonia and the charnelhouse complete the mental images her father created in his telling of the story of Gottesmann, whether in the first or third person. I found these to be the most representative for the figure of God in human form:

Figure 5: Delousing of Aaron Gottesmann

Figure 6: Gottesman's death of pneumonia

Figure 7: Literally "Central Corpse Hall"

When they refer to the Nazi regime and its mass murders, the Jewish people use the word *Shoah*, defined by the Oxford English dictionary as "the mass murder of Jews under the German Nazi regime during 1941-5; the Holocaust" (OED), but this word, just like most words in Hebrew, has so much more meaning attached to it, being literally translated as 'catastrophe.'

The written words of a banker and the drawings of his 10 year old daughter create an alternate reality in which the Lord of the Chosen people, having been ignorant to the plight of his beloved ones, takes human form, like the Savior of the Christians, and joins in their day to day life in the ghetto. There is no guarantee at salvation from the horrors of the Holocaust, just like there was never any guarantee during the slavery years in Egypt but the Jews retain hope still. And then, God joins them and sees that this is bad. He suffers the pangs of hunger, the difficulty of providing for one's self the most basic things, such as a spoon or a plate.

In creating a version of the world in which God himself experiences measure for measure what the Jewish people experienced, Otto and Helga Weiss made it possible for the common Jew to escape into fantasy, by having said fantasy projected into the real world where a whole people can willingly suspend their belief in order to make sense of the horrors that they and their loved ones went through. God coming down to Earth and experiencing firsthand the same horrors is a powerful image that His people, a people with an intimate relationship and connection to Him, would have never summoned had it not been for Shoah, which caused a rift between the people and God that for decades stayed frail at best, only to heal gradually as new generations were born and reared in a mindset of healing begun by their survivor parents, grandparents, uncles and neighbors. This does not cancel the horror, it does not erase the collective memory, but it offers instead a safe space for taking on the roles available in the story, and re-enacting the events of Shoah over and over again until one derives a sense of self awareness, a

consciousness of the Self and of the status of Other when dealing with collective hate.

As readers, we can stop at any time, the book can be laid down and picked up again later on, when the psyche can handle another round of reading. Unlike the writer of the story, who actually had to go through Terezin and later on died at Auschwitz, ours is a superficial experience of role playing in which as readers we are confronted with Otto and Helga's trauma, and at best we empathize and draw life lessons and principles out of their shared experience. We decide on what we would have done, had we been condemned to a life in the ghetto or, better still, what we would have done had we heard about the horrors or had we witnessed these, as non-Jews living in those times.

In my book on how we read about monstrous entities, and how this changes us as readers, I analyzed one of Freud's studies on the psyche in which he analyzed the relationship between the artist and the common man in terms of how the former creates a universe in which the latter gains access, both of whom derive a sense of psychological and emotional release. In the case of the Jewish people, and within the context of Shoah, this goes beyond emotional and psychological release and into spirituality. Freud describes the artist as "an introvert, not far removed from neurosis [...] oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs" who is unable to satisfy these and as such he creates a fantasy in which he transfers his oppressive reality, resulting in effect in an alternate reality. In doing this, the artist finds a way back to reality as opposed to the common man, for whom "the yield of pleasure to be derived from the sources of phantasy is very limited" because access to fantasy "is permitted by the universal assent of mankind, and everyone suffering from privation expects to derive alleviation and consolation from it". Freud further explains that only artists can detach the personal component of their own fantasy, subverting the conscious in favor of the subconscious mind, making it "possible for other people once more to derive consolation and alleviation from their own sources of pleasure in their unconscious which have become inaccessible to them; he earns their gratitude an admiration" (Freud 1973: 423 qtd. in Mărgău 2018: 120).

However, I would say that in the case of Weiss' book there is no detachment possible but rather that the fantasy encompasses both himself and his daughter, the sole survivor of the family, because of what Laub calls "the imperative need to tell," a compulsive need of the survivors of the Shoah, he himself among them, in order "to come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life" (Laub 1995: 63). Moreover, he explains,

> "this imperative to tell and to be heard can become itself an all-consuming life task. Yet no amount of telling seems ever to do justice to this inner compulsion. There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech. The pressure thus continues unremittingly, and if words are not trustworthy or adequate, the life that is chosen can become the vehicle by which the struggle to tell continues." (63)

In the interviews with Otto Weiss' daughter, Helga, herself an author and accomplished artist, this imperative to tell is present every time and the trigger is always her father's encouragement that she would draw that which she saw and not that which she would have liked to see, i.e. imaginary drawing. This encouragement created the witness that the child became through the drawings in the book, although Laub believed that the Holocaust had no actual witness at the time that the event took place, mainly because the Nazi propaganda was so effective, but also because people refused to believe what they heard in those rare instances when someone did speak of what was being done to the Jewish people. Given the fact that anyone could have played the role of witness, Laub, just like Weiss, comes forth with a bold idea: "God Himself could be the witness" (66). However, for him this idea serves the purpose of emphasis since, he explains that "as the event of the Jewish Genocide unfolded, however, most actual or potential witnesses failed one-by-one to occupy their position as a witness, and at a certain point it seemed as if there was no one left to witness what was taking place" (66), so it may as well have been that man or God, whoever the witness was, the event was so well planned that it inflicted the maximum damage, with no one to see it or stop it.

As a child survivor himself, Laub feels everything he describes himself, the imperative to tell, the lack of sufficiently coherent tools for the act of telling, and the dilemma of being a witness to an event without witness. That is why he does not even allow for him and his fellow survivors to play this role, instead stating that "it was the very circumstance of *being inside the event* that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed" (66).

Without negating Laub's hypothesis, I see in *And God Saw That It Was Bad* an attempt, and somewhat of a success, at creating a space in which the traumatic event could be processed. The man on the inside, Otto, and the child, Helga, in combining words and images, allowed for a whole people to share in the fantasy that God might bear witness to Shoah and that He may even go through it all alongside them, not necessarily as a form of rebellion or punishment, but as a means of preserving their faith which was greatly eroded. Not only would this grant the reader – whether a Jew or not, whether a survivor, relative of one, or just a reader – a chance at the willing suspension of disbelief, but it would also awaken unforeseen realizations about the past or about human potential for evil as well as for good. It would allow the readers to play God and place themselves in His position and wonder 'what would I have done in His place?'. It would grant access to healing for a people disillusioned, battered and almost made extinct. For the survivors and their kin, the escape into fantasy would allow them to reclaim their right to an Other, and to be called for the first time 'witnesses' to The Catastrophe as Laub explains: "the testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal 'thou,' and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself" (70).

The feast of Sukkot is one of the most important celebrations in the Jewish faith. Thousands of people from all over the world traveled to the Holy City on

this occasion, during my stay there, to celebrate the return of the Messiah of the Jewish people, who has not yet returned, but will return one day, during the celebration of this feast. The Old City was packed with people, with voices and with a sense of awe. There was a constant feeling of being in the presence of something great, from the Hassidic man holding his son while reciting his prayers at the Wall, to the wives wearing flowered dresses and turbans who dote on their and each other's children, while reciting their prayers. When the dancing began in the street, Jew, Christian, survivor, descendant and human alike, all danced, all sang, and the sacred scrolls were passed around from one person to the next. There was no more sign of the horrors of the Shoah, only a living testimony of the healing that was chosen instead of repression and bitterness.

And God saw that it was good …

Works Cited

History of Terezin, The – Web source: http://www.terezin.org/the-history-of-terezin.

Laub, Dori *Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle* in Caruth, Cathy *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 61-75.

Mărgău, Alexandru Paul *Reading Monsters*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Casa Cartii de Stiinta, 2018.

Shoah: OED definition – Web source: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/holocaust.

Weiss, Otto. Bondy, Ruth (ed.) *And God Saw That It Was Bad: A Story from the Terezin Ghetto*, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publications, 2010.

Arleen Ionescu, *Romanian Joyce: From Hostility to Hospitality.* Peter Lang, 2014, 267 pp. ISBN: 978-3631652916

Paul Mărgău
West University of Timisoara, Romania

Arleen Ionescu's book, as she herself states in its *Introduction*, comes as "the first attempt to deal extensively with James Joyce's literary heritage in Romania" and "it offers a systematic account of the mixture of hostility and hospitality which prevailed towards the Irish writer's work in a country that took successive turns between cultural receptiveness to foreign models and dogged isolationism, before finally reintegrating the politico-cultural European landscape after 1989" (15).

In addition to a brief overview of each chapter, the Introduction also discusses Èmile Benveniste's definition of the concept of hospitality, in order to set the context of the entire book, as including both the guest's being welcome and the host's possibly turning into a despot, enforcing his/her own rules, an idea which Derrida took a step further, coining the term 'hostipitality', to point out the ambivalence of the concept of hospitality which can include both hospitality and hostility, on both the host's and the guest's side.

The first chapter, entitled "A Short History of Literary Romania. From Early Twentieth Century to the Post-Communist Age", attempts to delineate the origins and constituent elements of the Romanian modernist movement in literature, as well as define modernism through the point of view of critics such as Matei Călinescu, Adrian Marino or Gabriela Omăt, restricting the Romanian modernism to the period between the 1880s and 1945, with influences such as those of Joyce and Woolf. Ionescu explores the predominantly French influence in both education as a whole and literature, taking time to consider a wide variety of influential writers and critics from the previously mentioned time span, some of which were influenced in some way by Virginia Woolf or Joyce, such as C. Petrescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, or Mircea Eliade, seen as "the most Gidean Romanian novelist" (49) and very much influenced in his technique of interior monologue, ending the chapter with a brief overview of the development of communism and modernist and postmodernist literature in Romania, of the censoring of the national literature and its survival in the face of restrictions through the use of the absurd.

With the second chapter, entitled "Joyce's Critical Reception in Romania", Ionescu begins tracing the responses that the Irish writer drew from contemporary Romanian critics, in the inter-war era, beginning with the first review of *Ulysses* in the French literary journal, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, by Valery Larbaud in 1922. Because the Romanian literary world read in French and was guided by the French literary aesthetics, there was an initial attraction towards Joyce's use of the interior monologue, followed by a subsequent

disenchantment caused by the shadow of Marcel Proust. Thus, Ionescu traces on the one hand the hospitable attitudes of Romanian critics – such as Cezar Petrescu, Ion Biberi, F. Aderca, or Petru Comarnescu – and the hostile attitudes on the other – Camil Petrescu or Dragoș Protopopescu. Under the Stalinization of literature, Ionescu discusses the hospitality shown to Joyce beginning with the year 1965, when Ceaușescu was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party, especially by Petre Pandrea who discussed the relationship between Constantin Brâncuși and James Joyce and presented them both – for the sake of hospitality – as innovative figures of the socialist revolution, as well as other critics who served as examples of hospitable hosts to the Irish writer between the 1970s and 1980s and then self-exiled themselves in the West when their support was no longer plausible, and ends the chapter with a detailing of the scarce critical work written on Joyce after 1984 and the gradual progress registered after the 1989 Revolution.

With the third chapter, "Hos(ti)pitality in Translation: Joyce into Romanian", Ionescu offers a more detailed description of Derrida's language as a rule of hospitality and the impossibility of any real translation in favour of a transformation of the language, Ricoeur's concept of linguistic hospitality which entails that the translator has to be first a guest of the original language and then a host while translating. She groups translations of Joyce's works – mainly *Ulysses* and *A Portrait* – into three main periods, inter-war, during Ceaușescu's time (1989), and the period of loosening of copyright restrictions (2012). Starting from the notion of 'hostipitality', Ionescu analyses existing translations of Joyce's works, Marxist interpretations of foreign literature, removal of those literary texts seen as subversive and the issue of censorship in translation, comparing translations such as those of Frida Papadache, Mircea Ivănescu, or Antoaneta Ralian, all of whom faced some difficulty in approaching religious, political and sexual references during translation. For Ionescu the act of translation thus became an act of subversion of the regime through either stylistic rewritings of language which kept the original meaning (sexual innuendos), or elimination of some words and entire phrases, that proved too difficult to tackle in translation. Although Joyce's obscenity posed a heavy ordeal, especially during a repressive regime such as communism, Ionescu maintains that *Ulysses* was "one of the novels most heavily laden with explicit sexual talk or allusions" (170). Furthermore, she ends her chapter with an account of the food and drink references which the translators mentioned before, either failed to render faithfully in Romanian, or adjusted to the nation's present culinary *status quo* by using familiar words of Romanian equivalent foods, whether accurate or approximated, analysing the hostility in translation apparent in their works, justifiable by the regime, the non-existence of some words in Romanian that only during that time appeared, or simply by the desire of the translators to make the text pass censors' scrutiny and thus ensure its survival.

The final chapter, "From Translation to Re-Creation", begins with a brief mention of Romanian authors who tried more or less to imitate Joyce's techniques, as well as the impossibility of the Romanian language to portray effectively the Joycean narrative ambiguity, and then moves on to discuss Mircea Eliade's love-hate relationship with the Irish writer and his own use of interior monologue in some of his works around the 1930s, such as *Lumina ce se stinge*

[Failing Light]. Ionescu moves on to compare the myth of the Odyssey in *Ulysses* with the myth of the summer solstice in *Noaptea de Sânziene [A Midsummer's Night]*, in order to illustrate the contrast between Joyce's aesthetic epiphany and Eliade's hierophany. The second part of this chapter takes the reader through an in-depth analysis of Ion Biberi's novel *Procesul*, relying heavily on Joyce's narrative technique, which was received with the same degree of 'hostipitality' that Joyce himself had by the Romanian critics, being demolished by George Călinescu's review in *Istoria Literaturii Române de la Origini până în Prezent [The History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present]*, creating a link between the Irish writer and his most dedicated admirer and supporter in the Romanian criticism. Ending her novel with some examples of postmodern reworkings or evocations of Joyce's techniques, Ionescu lists writers of the 1980s and onwards whose works incorporate – besides Woolf, Gide, Proust or Faulkner – either Joyce's *A Portrait* or *Ulysses*, such as George Bălăiță, Paul Grigorescu, Radu Petrescu, Mircea Cărtărescu, Nora Iuga or Gabriela Adameșteanu, or *Finnegan's Wake*, such aș Silviu Lupașcu.

Ionescu's book includes many references, an extensive bibliography as well as an interesting topic and is a great critical inquiry into Joyce's presence in Romania. It is a book for the beginner Joycean as well as for the more seasoned researcher.

Philip Coleman and Maria Johnston (eds.). *Reading Pearse Hutchinson.* Irish Academic Press, 2011.

ISBN: 978-0716530831.

Eoghan Smith
Carlow College, Ireland

Pearse Hutchinson, who died in 2012, was a remarkable figure. Born in Glasgow in 1927, raised in Ireland and well-travelled throughout Europe, he was a rare breed: a cosmopolitan Irishman who was equally as comfortable within his own culture as he was in others. But that statement can be adjusted: better to say that Hutchinson's immersion in diverse cultures is key to his humanistic vision. A highly prolific writer, he has gifted us a vast and rich collection of original poems, prose works, reviews and essays in both English and in Irish, along with translations of works in those languages from Dutch, French, Italian, Portuguese, Castilian, and Catalan among others. So much more than a poet, he was also, in Robert Anthony Welch's words, a "man of letters, translator, scholar [and] linguist" (17). Hutchinson's fluency in and engagement with different languages through a lifetime of travel, his immersion in literary and philosophical traditions from the classical world to the contemporary and the unwavering intellectual courage in his subject matter all speak to the global reach of his poetic vision and aesthetic. This excellent volume, which brings together fifteen essays (including an introduction), a comprehensive bibliography and an interview with the poet himself, is an attempt to establish an initial critical body of work on the work of a

writer, who in Alex Runchman's words, had an "illimitable range of interests". It is astonishing to think that *Reading Pearse Hutchinson*, edited by Philip Coleman and Maria Johnson, is the first collection of essays published by an Irish press on Hutchinson's life and work. It is often the case that academic scholars claim their subjects to be neglected, as do the editors here in their clear and insightful introduction, but there is no doubt that Hutchinson *has* been overlooked, at least by literary critics. Coleman and Johnson are to be congratulated for redressing that neglect.

The volume begins with an essay by Robert Anthony Welch that manages a rare feat: it is part personal reflection on Hutchinson the person, part biography, and an illuminating critical exploration of the writer's ideas and themes. Emphasising how deeply learned he was, Welch asserts Hutchinson's "force of intellection" (27). This intellection was always attentive to the shiftiness of human experience. At the heart of Hutchinson's writing, suggests Welch, is the idea of poetry as a *translation* of "the intimacy with the ways in which things change" (20). As with many of the authors in the volume, Welch draws close attention to Hutchinson's use of language. Maria Johnson, in her essay, concentrates on the aural aspects of his poetry as a kind of music. Citing poets such as Whitman, Eliot and Hopkins as important influences on Hutchinson, Johnson argues that to understand Hutchinson it is necessary to understand the centrality of music to his work and that "his most achieved poetry is shaped by a determined musical intention" (34). This musical aspect of Hutchinson's poetry is also important in another way: music is one of the few artforms that can traverse national and cultural boundaries and, in the process, attain new, local meanings.

A theme which emerges from the volume is that culture, for Hutchinson, while rooted in a collective tradition, is not personally prescriptive. For Andrew Goodspeed, Hutchinson's work is inscribed by the humanist values of tolerance, plurality and patience, while the poet himself rejected "collective identities" (45) in favour of the autonomy of the individual. Goodspeed explores with clarity Hutchinson's sense of justice as expressed through his revulsion towards political violence. In poems about Northern Ireland, Franco's Spain and anti-semitism, Hutchinson voices a sense that state violence can never ultimately defeat the stronger will to endure. His essential faith in the human spirit finds cultural expression in a poem such as "Achnasheen", Goodspeed argues, in which the destruction of the Irish language is only partially completed: its remnants exist in the bastardised English version of the Irish placename, remaining, however corrupted, in its transformation. Phillip Coleman's scholarly contribution, on Hutchinson's poetics – as opposed to poetry – of friendship broadens out further the humanist element of the poet's worldview. For Coleman, Hutchinson was not just a poet of friendship, though he was an important contributor to that tradition, but one who made friendship an important part of his aesthetic method. Moynagh Sullivan takes up Coleman's linking of the centrality of love to his transnationalism. Sullivan offers in her dense essay on love and sex in Hutchinson the view that such transnationalism is not an ideal other to the repressive Ireland the poet left behind in the 1940s, but is circumscribed its own imaginative and political limitations. Echoing Andrew Goodspeed's argument to a degree, she argues that whatever revolutionary spirit exists in Hutchinson is found in small, personal acts of human goodness.

Perhaps that is all very idealistic and there are some cautious notes about Hutchinson's moral vision in the volume. Sullivan's contribution draws attention to some of the limitations of Hutchinson's humanism (the body is largely absent, as are social and cultural bonds such as the family and parents). Kit Fryatt does not avoid critiquing a lack of nuance, as she sees it, in Hutchinson's anti-imperialist representations of England and Englishness in a number of poems, but especially in the title poem of his 1995 collection, *Barnsley Main Seam*. Fryatt acknowledges the achievements of the poems themselves – particularly drawing attention to the many historical and social references to British culture seamlessly integrated into the works – but concludes that Hutchinson is a "sentimental" writer who depends on mutual self-congratulation between poet and reader for sharing the same set of apparently incontrovertible values (95). For Fryatt, this means Hutchinson's reflections on "Britain and England turn on manipulations of received ideas about identity or imperialism" to generate sympathy, which can be lost at any moment (96). It is a delicate balancing act, and not one that Hutchinson always managed to pull off in Fryatt's view. Perhaps that lack of nuance occasionally found its way into Hutchinson's view of history and poetry as a form of protest; as Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin points out, his work ignores the "revisionist interpretation" of Ireland's past as his tendency was to take the side of downtrodden more generally (105).

The next two essays, by Lucy Collins and Ciaran O'Driscoll, offer close readings of selected poems by Hutchinson. One of the key recurrent themes in the volume is Hutchinson's faith in the actual. Arguing that Hutchinson emphasises the reality of language, Collins focuses on the complex role of memory in his negotiation of the real, while O'Driscoll's essay highlights that although Hutchinson was concerned with the broad sweep of culture, history and politics, he was equally attentive to minute detail, such as colour. Contrary to the excessive interiority of romantic idealism, for instance, it is this intellection, as Welch terms it, that gives Hutchinson's work its great moral and ethical vision, one which is rooted in the ordinary experience of being human and which allowed him to deal with the terrors of history alongside the mundanity of dandelions.

Throughout *Reading Pearse Hutchinson* great attention is paid to the importance of Hutchinson's linguistic fluidity and the centrality of his deep engagement with cultural variety to his ethical worldview. Four essays in particular expand on Hutchinson's engagements with the relationship between language and culture. Martín Veiga offers a useful and much needed survey of Hutchinson's representation of the cultures and history of Spain and Portugal, again emphasising, as so many of the contributors do, the poet's faithfulness to reality. Benjamin Keatinge points out that Hutchinson's skills in language acquisition – he could translate from nine languages – made him keenly not only aware of the distinct politics of every language but also the need to protect minority languages against the tyranny of monolingualism and monoculturalism. Perhaps this is one of his greatest achievements: he inhabited his convictions in whatever form they took as a way of *being* rather than simply paying the kind of political lip service that has threatened the very existence of minority languages. Bernard Escarbelt's arresting contribution considers some of the difficulties Hutchinson faced when translating from Irish into French. Irish itself was an important language for Hutchinson. Máirtín Coilféir contextualises his

emergence as an Irish language poet at the start of the 1950s after an important period in the history of Irish language publishing after the foundation of the Irish Free State. Although Hutchinson published many poems in Irish in a variety of journals, Coilféir concentrates on the background and major themes of two collections *Faoistin Bhacach* (1968) and *Le Cead na Gréine* (1989). Placing Hutchinson's Irish language poetry in the context of the achievements of major twentieth century writers in Irish such as Máirtín Ó Díreáin and Seán Ó Ríordáin, Coilféir suggests that Hutchinson's engagement with Irish declined as his humanistic vision evolved, and that a comparison between the two works in Irish, separated by over twenty years, demonstrates effectively how Hutchinson's outlook changed over the course of his life. That Coilféir's essay is in Irish is in keeping with the spirit of Hutchinson's commitment to bilingualism in an Irish cultural context; for so long Irish writing has been divided into two distinct and irreconcilable language spheres, mainly through the education system, instead of being seen as the composite and complementary literature of a bilingual culture.

Fittingly, *Reading Pearse Hutchinson* concludes with the voice of the poet himself. Broadcaster Vincent Woods' offering is ostensibly a short account of Hutchinson's career in broadcasting, replete with lengthy reproductions of some scripts for the radio programme, *Óró Domhnaigh*, which Hutchinson wrote and presented on the Irish state broadcaster, RTÉ, between 1977 and 1978. Unfortunately, the recordings of these programmes are almost completely lost now, and Woods argues for the saving, gathering together and publishing of Hutchinson's extant prose writing. This is surely a case that needs no special pleading. The collection concludes with an interview between Philip Coleman and Hutchinson himself, ranging over such themes as Hutchinson's publishing career, his travels, his major themes, his family and early life, his politics, and his interest in languages. In this interview, all the more poignant in the wake of Hutchinson's death, we get a strong sense of his passion for the arts, his tireless commitment to the intellect, his lightly-worn erudition, and infectious *joie de vivre*. A comprehensive bibliography, compiled by Alex Runchman, of Hutchinson's works completes the collection. Lastly, the editors of *Reading Pearse Hutchinson* are to be congratulated for the sequencing of the essays: each one feels as if it is in exactly the right place and follows on logically. A great number of individual poems are discussed in this volume which will be of interest to scholars of his work, and a great many more deserve the attention which this collection will hopefully bring. Pearse Hutchinson's archive is now housed at Maynooth University.

Benjamin Keatinge and Mary Pierse (eds.). *France and Ireland in the Public Imagination*. Peter Lang, 2014.
269 pp., ISBN 978-3-0343-1747-4 pb.

Aidan O'Malley
University of Rijeka, Croatia

According to Pascale Casanova, one of the factors behind the success of the Irish Literary Revival was the way in which it created a literary space that spilled beyond the boundaries of Ireland to encompass not just the metropole of London, but also Paris. In this enlarged context, Irish writers were freed from "conformity to the standards of national poetry and submission to English literary norms." (*The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, 318) Samuel Beckett's famous "*au contraire*" in response to a journalist who inquired if he was English neatly gestures to these wider horizons. While the focus of *France and Ireland in the Public Imagination* goes far beyond the Revival period (Moore, Yeats, Synge, Joyce, Beckett and other writers who spent time in France receive little more than ritual nods), it illustrates how France has long held a position in Irish life as an alternative to English criteria in the spheres of culture, art, politics and gastronomy. More specifically, this collection explores discrete episodes from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century to illustrate how France has been construed in the Irish 'public imagination'. As the editors note in their Introduction, this is a very fluid concept that essentially privileges the significances that have been attributed to aspects of French political, cultural and social life. In other words, how France has been imagined in Ireland is, to a considerable degree, how it has come to be understood.

Such a loose conception of cultural interaction describes an appropriate framework for the study of the ties between Ireland and France as it provides space for the various ambivalences that have characterised this relationship. Many of these were generated by the fact that, for a host of linguistic and political reasons, England played a large role in this dynamic. Pierre Joannon opens up the first section of this volume with an overview of how English and French conflicts over religion and subsequently, in the wake of the French Revolution, political regimes were interpreted in diverse ways by different Irish political and cultural actors. For the Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, France almost always represented a threat; and if the non-sectarian republican ideals of the Revolution were an inspiration to the late eighteenth-century United Irishmen (many of the leaders of which were Ulster Presbyterians), this breaking of the link between church and state provoked elements in the Irish Catholic Church to oppose its erstwhile ally, France. These ambivalences are further developed by Mary Pierse who, amongst other things, outlines how the increasing Catholic wariness of French societal mores in *fin-de-siècle* Ireland did not prevent the language functioning as a symbol of achievement for the rising Catholic middle classes: "French was *de rigueur* in the more prestigious convent schools" (45).

Ernest Renan's 1856 'The Poetry of the Celtic Races', a key text in the pan-European fascination with Celticism, links Ireland and Brittany as peripheral sites where alternatives to the modernity fostered by the industrial revolution may be

found. Anne Goarzin offers another perspective on this relationship in her account of Irish painters who worked in Brittany in the 1880s. She convincingly argues that they ultimately sought in the region an alternative aesthetic space in which to inaugurate styles of painting that might challenge the dominant Victorian artistic norms. Michèle Milan's contribution keeps us in the nineteenth century, as it resurrects the career of Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780-1857). While this name has little resonance now, in his lifetime Béranger was not only "hailed as France's national poet" but "appears to have been the most translated and the most popular French-language poet in Ireland" (79-80). This chapter is a fine piece of literary recovery that carefully unfolds how the social and cultural conditions of Ireland moulded the ways in which Béranger was translated and received.

Milan concludes her essay with an extract from John Thomas Rowland's 1858 lecture on Béranger at the Drogheda Mechanics' Institute (one struggles to imagine such an event taking place in a location like that nowadays), in which he declared that the French poet had "taught us [Irish] how to love our country" (cited, 97). Four of the essays in this volume consider the social role of contemporary French and Irish writers. Michel Brunet mines the second volume of John Montague's memoir, *The Pear is Ripe* (2001), to uncover how its representation of his time in Paris in May '68 conforms in large part to media representations of *les événements*. Reversing the trajectory, Eamon Maher examines a French writer who lived for a period in Ireland: Michel Houellebecq. In the course of offering a synopsis of how Houellebecq has created his public image as *l'enfant terrible*, Maher pays particular attention to the ways in which the Irish landscape is constructed as an almost mystical, but also endangered, escape from Western materialism in the novel *Atomised* (2001). A considerably more affable public persona is cut by the Irish poet Brendan Kennelly, the subject of Benjamin Keatinge's chapter. Recognising that performativity is at the heart of Kennelly's poetics, Keatinge analyses how Kennelly has performed as a public intellectual. While acknowledging his contribution to Irish public life, Keatinge astutely punctures the manner in which some other critics have positioned Kennelly as a voice for the marginalised by pointing out that, as a Professor at Trinity College Dublin who was a ubiquitous presence on Irish television in the 1970s and '80s, "Kennelly's interventions emanate more from the centre than from the periphery." (179) Another Irish poet whose work relies, to a considerable extent, on being performed for its effect is Paul Durcan, and Conor Farnan provides an exploration of how Chagall, Balthus, Picasso's minotaur etchings and the Lascaux cave paintings operate in his work. Both this essay (implicitly) and Keatinge's (more openly) pose interesting questions about whether the quality of poetry suffers the more publically engaged the poet becomes.

The interpretation of political discourse is examined in two highly contrasting essays by Karine Deslandes and Eugene O'Brien. Deslandes charts the coverage of the career of Ian Paisley in the French press, which would appear to differ hardly at all from the ways in which he was portrayed in the Irish and English media. This is not surprising considering his extreme, sectarian politics, which left little room for misunderstanding his positions. O'Brien takes a very different tack and employs French theory to rethink what constitutes the republic in Ireland in light of the on-going economic crisis, which has laid bare the

implacable and unsustainable operations of capitalism. As O'Brien notes via Lacan, Irish people were offered nothing more than a forced choice by its government, which at this juncture was merely the puppet of the so-called Troika (the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank): either they nationalised, and so assumed, the private debts of the banks or face worse consequences. (159) Citing Žižek, O'Brien concludes by calling for a utopian response to the crisis that is "*more* internationalist and Universalist than the universality of global capital." (cited, 167)

The final three chapters deal with French gastronomy. While Brian Murphy samples some of the ways in which the local concept of the *terroir* is being employed to market French produce globally, Dorothy Cashman and Tara McConnell serve up two fascinating takes on how French food and drink were consumed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ireland. Consulting a wide variety of sources including Maria Edgeworth, Cashman illustrates how attitudes to French cuisine in this period were entangled in political considerations. Once again, Ireland's relationship with France involved negotiating with England; in this instance, the Irish Ascendancy had to acknowledge a rising English culinary nationalism that trumpeted its solid plain fare, while not foregoing the best of French flair. Both these essays contain numerous accounts of visitors to Ireland who barely survived the lavish hospitality they encountered there. In particular, they were stupefied by the amount of claret that was consumed: McConnell shows that before the 1800 Act of Union the Irish imported considerably more of this wine than the British. This was facilitated by the Wild Geese, the Irish Jacobites who emigrated after the Williamite Wars; so many of these ended up in Bordeaux, where they became wine merchants and wine makers, that a historian has dubbed them the winegeese (228).

This volume is published in Peter Lang's vibrant Reimagining Ireland series, which was founded in 2009 and now lists 72 titles. The series aims to expand and complicate Irish Studies by, amongst other things, opening it up to different disciplines and exposing it to transnational and comparative explorations. Embodying this ambition and these approaches, the essays in *France and Ireland in the Public Imagination* rewardingly realign our understanding of the cultural flows between these two countries.

Whitney Standlee, *Power to Observe: Irish Women Novelists in Britain, 1890-1916*. Peter Lang, 2015.

278 pp. ISBN: 978-3034318372.

Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka
American College Dublin, Ireland

Whitney Standlee's book is a superb overview of a group of key nineteenth century writers, discussing their work's relationship to Irishness, female experience, and personal experience.

The study considers six Irish novelists, Emily Lawless, L. T. Meade, George Egerton, Katherine Cecil Thurston, M.E. Francis, and Katharine Tynan, all of whom spent a considerable part of their professional lives in Britain. The study focuses on the years between 1890 and 1916, an important period both for Irish nationalism and for the women's movement. Doubly excluded from political discourse as Irish women, these writers "managed to circunvent the terms of their exclusion" by engaging in public debate and activism, from a wide range of positions, through their fiction (21). There is an often-remarked-upon tradition of Irish writers embracing travel or exile as a natural ally of creativity and ambition, but as the Introduction points out, this is emphatically presented as a male tradition. Despite the fact that these politically-engaged women were educated and reasonably secure financially at the time of their leaving Ireland, gendered expectations suggested that literary accomplishments and recognition matching that of their male counterparts where equally unlikely.

Despite this, the writers considered here were in fact some of "the most popular, prolific, and critically acclaimed authors of the period" (9). So why is it that they remain scandalously under-researched, and glaringly absent from the curricula? Standlee's stated aim is to contribute to "filling the critical gaps to which the debates surrounding the fourth and fifth volumes of *The Field Day Anthology* allude" (7), as she discreetly and gently puts it. *Power to Observe* queries the canon implicity, but it is concerned with advancing urgently needed ground-work rather than with polemics.

Chapter 1 looks at Emily Lawless' "Rebellion Novels" (Standlee's inspired framework) and reviews Lawless' commitment to political fiction, the influence of her pro-Irish (though not pro-Home Rule) stance on British policy, and the critical reception of her books in Ireland. Chapter 2 looks at L.T. Meade's rally against insularity in her Irish-themed novels, a small but interesting part (10% of her 270 volumes of fiction) of the work of a writer who pioneered 'social problem fiction' and 'medical detective fiction', and is credited with inventing the 'schoolgirl novel' genre. Chapter 3 looks in tandem at George Egerton (Mary Chavelita Dunne) and Katherine Cecil Thurston's novels of revolt and escape, where female subjectivity and non-normative longings challenge Irish Catholic morality from the perspective of feminist modernity. Chapter 4 looks at M.E. Francis (Mary Sweetman Blundell), accomplished at portraits of local communities and plots of entanglements that test the self, together with Eliot and Gaskell, and a Catholic moralizer notorious for her ability to show both sides of a story, be it the 'Irish question', or the question of women branded as 'sinful'. Chapter 5 looks at Katharine Tynan, the poet of Ireland, who turned to novel-writing as a means of "boiling the pot" (her admission, 210), only to produce politically-minded samplers of class and culture shifts, of fruitful negotiations and enduring alliances, in an attempt to expand the dialoguic ground in which she herself stood after her relocation and marriage in England.

Power to Observe is a healthy exercise in measured selecting and discarding. Noticeably, there is a sparse use of other scholars and critics. This reflects Standlee's priorities —even if conditioned by the scarcity of relevant studies—, and in her book it feels apt, because her assessments are sufficiently informed by direct sources. On a few occasions, Standlee suggests the possibility of comparative analysis, but rightly stays within her self-set parameters. Brief

mentions to Kate O'Brien's 1934 *The Anteroom* (linked to Thurston), or to Synge's 1907 *The Playboy of the Western World* (linked to Francis), are interesting and illuminating – and have the potential for further discussion elsewhere. Similarly, the focus on fiction forbids concentrating of a dramatic monologue of 1884 where Tynan develops tropes later associated with the Irish Literary Revival, or discussing Lawless's role in the committee of the Abbey Theatre, but these flickers of the foundational role of women in the Revival movement may well point to a lighthouse. Within the target period, and among Irish novelists who took up residence in Britain, some writers had of necessity to be left out, and all for sound reasons, although one can not help but long for the inclusion of the exceptional work of Sarah Grand, or to learn more on the early feminist fiction by May Laffan.

The book is well-judged throughout. Masses of materials have been consulted – yet they are well distilled. I remember my own expectations on approaching the Lawless Papers at Marsh's Library, and my initial disappointment when the Papers turned out to be first editions and scrapbooks of reviews collected by Emily's brother Frederick. To Standlee, the archive yields a handwritten line of grief at Emily's death, jotted down on a volume, providing a bitter-sweet note against the strident family background which marked the reception of her work in Ireland. The mountains of positive and intelligent reviews published during Emily Lawless' lifetime, also received by the other writers in the study, are the most effective and affecting challenge to today's critical silence. Elsewhere, Standlee's attentiveness allows her, for example, to bring to light again what is Emily Lawless's most revealing statement on her nationalist youth, plucked from the long forgotten but spritely gardening diary she published in 1901.

With Irish-content novels as her starting point, Standlee sidesteps onto biographical records, using them effectively to delineate each woman author as representative of, or exception in, a wider group. Correspondence and memoirs – an impressive array of often unpublished and unseen materials– is used judiciously. *Power to Observe* is gossip-free; although the potential for sensationalism is there at every turn, a focused Standlee is refreshingly unconcerned by it (regretably, respected scholars before her have felt the need to flash lurid details on Egerton, Lawless, and Thurston's lives). Standlee unapologetically uses biographical data as a vector of culture. There are no hagiographies here, but a scrutiny unweakened by the author's obvious sympathy for her subjects. The book offers an impecable use of biographical material to elucidate ideology, style, form of production, and reception.

When Standlee asserts that such is Thurston's most accomplished novel, or such is Egerton's motivation to cease publishing, those statements are conferred authority by her thorough assessment of each author's writings and by her lack of interest in spectacular claims or tug-of-war criticism. The use of footnotes rather than endnotes is a constant reminder that Standlee is a literary historian first. While the historical contextualisation throughout the book is more than adequate, a closer look at the intersections between gender equality and national aspirations in Irish political history would have been welcome, perhaps in the Introduction – for example by mentioning how the inertia of Irish nationalists in parliamentary debates on women's suffrage was designed to apease potential allies, or by briefly discussing the articulation of a feminist, anti-colonial,

sometimes internationalist agenda (as in the writing and projects of Alice Milligan or Eva Gore-Booth).

The measured approach extends from the analysis to the exemplary clarity of the prose, which moves steadily in functional and unobtrusive sentences, with unfailing economy in the choice of words. The terms 'liminality', 'capitalism', or 'homophobia' are used as required, without anxiety, without fuss. The word 'feminism' does not need to be paraded — the preocupation of the book with women's lives as sediments of political, social, cultural, historical hurts and humiliations, is as matter-of-fact as the blackened print stamped on the powdered paper. This is a scholarly, confident, and efficacious book. In one word: solid.

In terms of the selection of writers, located in a specific gendered historical frame, *Power to Observe* rises up another Atlantis of literature in English, as *New Women, New Novels* did for the late nineteenth century, as *The Voyage In* did for the bildungsroman, as *Surpassing the Love of Men* did for close readings, as *The Gender of Modernism* did for the early twentieth century, as *Pillars of the House* did for poetry. This is another exceptional and essential study on a group of *key* writers who have been previously ignored, and an invitation to carry on with the project. *Power to Observe* is a welcome indication that the 'archival turn' is finally upon us.

Andrei Crisan

Andrei Crisan graduated from the Faculty of Letters in the summer of 2019 with a BA thesis titled *Conquering the Angelcynn: A Discussion On Anglo-Saxon Identity, Heroic Vocabulary And Germanic Ideals* and a Bachelor's exam average of 9.75. His articles include *Heroic Ideals: Dying with One's Lord* (Students' Conference, Timişoara 2019) and *A Collective Destiny – The Identity of the Angelcynn* (Scientific Session, Cluj-Napoca 2019). He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Medieval and Classical Philosophy at the Faculty of History, Cluj-Napoca. His field of expertise is related to but not limited to Anglo-Saxon studies, including a functional knowledge of Old English and Latin, European Medieval History, Codicology and Paleography. He is currently working on a translation of Wulfstan's *Institutes of Polity* and plans on undertaking the *Diplôme Européen d'Études Médiévales* (DEEM) courses in Rome next year. He also knows German and Russian. Other interests are Japanese Medieval History, Slavic languages, writing, traditional archery, horse riding and hunting.

Interview with Andrei Crisan

Interviewer: Adrian Radu (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)

AR: *Andrei Crisan, besides your interest in bygone worlds noticeable in your research fields, you also started writing literary pieces, where the imaginary is present prolifically and unrestrainedly, thus recreating for your readers other worlds beyond the tangible one. Do you really have to create a world when writing fantasy?*

AC: Well, you do, and you do no not. Indeed, you could place anything anywhere, this is the writer's prerogative. One might even argue that using an already existing world, our world, for example, when writing regular fiction demands less from the reader. In other words, it makes the suspension of disbelief easier: the London of Huxley is not the London we see in *Mrs Dalloway*. However, the point of reshaping or even reimagining a world from scratch is not that it should attempt to facilitate a suspension of disbelief. Quite on the contrary, the point should be rendering any need for such a suspension virtually inexistent; obviously orcs and elves do not exist, yet the question of their existence is a problem with which we are never faced in Tolkien's work. We are never asked such a thing; it is not even implied that we have passed into fantasy, for all we know, we are simply reading the English translation of the Red Book of Westmarch. To quote a relevant article on the matter, Rudolf Schmerl's *Fantasy as Technique,* 'if fantasy asks us to pay something extra, it is extra attention' (644). However, the main aspect about a completely fictional world is its tendency to feel isolated,

unreachable, locked away behind some manner of unbreakable barrier, and that is a risk any writer of fantasy must undertake. Narnia is hidden, the entrance disappeared, Middle-Earth is forever changed, the age of elves, dwarves and such now lost and forgotten, Camelot is so deeply shrouded into an unhealthy mixture of historicity and myth, that to exploit one would further damage the other and so on and so forth.

AR: *Is the world important in 'Her Figure Stood Still'?*

AC: A fantasy world cannot be built in a story of such length, and it would have been detrimental to everything else, were the focus to fall mainly upon creating such a world. This is the harshest of tests when it comes to such worlds: the veridity or shallowness of the world assaults the 'fundamental transaction' (29), as Attebery calls it in one of his studies, between reader and writer, because both of them preemptively acknowledge the inevitable falsity of the world presented. Too clustered with unnecessary details and it detracts from the happenings inside it, too shallow and the happenings lose value. Is the world itself important in *Her Figure?* No, I would say not really, with a few exceptions. Obviously, the inn is an inn, as much as the village is just a village. When it comes to the fantasy world presented, I would venture to say it is not the world itself of utmost importance, but rather how it is perceived, in its multiplicity of layers. The Keeper, the hooded woman, transforms the old man's world, she enables him, as well as the reader access into a superior layer of what could truly be described as *fantasy landscape,* since the word *world* would be too ambitious for a text of this size. To be completely blunt, I have found myself wondering if the world really does matter when it comes to reading contemporary fantasy. *Beowulf* would have had little impact in Anglo-Saxon England were Grendel to supposedly have broken through the doors of *Winteceaster* (present-day Winchester) instead of the 'iron-wrought doors of Heorot', a mythic hall in a far-away land, yet the supposed existence of Hogwarts in modern day England poses no problem to contemporary readers, nor does it take away from the credibility of the story. In other words, no, I do not feel the world itself is vital to my story, at least, and it should not be vital to any work. Had Frodo's adventure taken place in Medieval Europe, with Mount Doom and the Plains of Gorgoroth being situated somewhere perhaps in the close Middle-East, I dare believe the weight of the story would have carried the *Lord of the Rings* forward all the same, albeit perhaps with less gravitas. The process of creating the world itself should be one of two things to the writer. The first is solely creation, creating something from scratch, learning topography and drawing maps, studying geomorphology and rising jagged mountains or digging ravines of unspeakable depths, designing an entire array of botanical variety, become versed in anthropology, in historical linguistics and assume the quite intimidating role of a Creator. Stories will inevitably begin to formulate themselves, one cannot after all have a people without a story. The second is placing the story in a dark and unexplored world in which the only charted path is the one the story takes, where everything else is as good as inexistent.

AR: *Is suspension of disbelief imperative for your story?*

AC: It is only perhaps in that there are no ravens of such size. Otherwise, without context, it is hard to disprove the existence of perhaps the Keeper, whom, for all we know, might by any of the women to have ever lived on this Earth, much like it is impossible to disprove the existence of the miller or of the village or of a land that existed 'once upon a time'. The theme of a fantasy story cannot rely on the suspension of disbelief alone or, better said, it cannot mainly rely on it. In other words, it cannot depend on a reader's ability to discern what is real and what should be suspended, since not all readers might be educated or experienced enough to be able to clearly distinguish markers of reality from signs of fantasy. To conclude, I would argue that as far as creating fantasy worlds is concerned, one must always be aware of the implied compromises: the more complex and real the world, the more probable one single story might become muddled and lose significance (that is after all the way of the world), and the more rudimentary the imagined universe, the more significance should the story have, in order to brighten the trodden path so strongly, none would even dare think about going into the empty darkness.

AR: *Thank you for your interview and good luck in your future research and literary projects. I hope that the readers of* The ESSE Messenger *enjoy reading your short story that we reproduce below.*

AC. Thank you, too!

Works Cited

Schmerl, Rudolf B. "Fantasy as Technique." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1967, pp. 644–656. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26443024. Accessed 16 May 2019.

Attebery, Brian. "Fantasy and the Narrative Transaction." *Style*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1991, pp. 28–41. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42945882. Accessed 16 May 2019.

Her Figure Stood Still

The wind rampaged untamed and unchallenged through the jagged peaks. Beyond them, far and wide, spread a seemingly endless ocean of green, scarred at times by lonely edges of estranged rocks, piercing through like ruined spears on a long-forgotten battlefield. The grass billowed in the lighter and gentler winds, the flowers – strange and beautiful beyond imagining – heaved up and down the waves of the plain.

With a final stretch of His wings, the Raven broke through the storm, and the violence of the northern gale, ever at war with the mountains who dared intrude on his domain, made way for the fresh embrace of the western breezes. The bird cawed and there was delight in His raspy cry; the journey's end was close at hand.

It all began as a single glistening point, unapproachable in its solitude. Gently, it formed into a delicate argent thread. Then, the thread gave way to a new

dimension – depth – and became a blinding mirror of silver. The lake seemed to stretch to no perceivable end, yet the Raven knew He was close, merely years away – a droplet of time in the ocean that had been His journey. Suddenly, a lonely leaf passed Him by, untouched and untroubled, and brought with it an all too familiar scent. The Raven cried aloud once more and hastened on.

***

The cloaked figure stood still, as motionless as the mighty tree nearby. From underneath the ebony hood, a long raven braid, timidly dancing in the gentle whiffs or air, reached out to the ancient roots slithering on the ground. Her gaze stretched across the sea of silver. A slight groan behind her caught her attention and she smiled, for it meant it was about time. With a deafening roar, creaking and crackling, the tree seemed to bend, heralding the arrival she had awaited for so long.

As the Raven landed, she took a deep breath and sighed, attempting to pay the stinging pang in her chest no heed. There was nothing left beyond the mountains, not even for her. It was indeed time to leave. Stretching her arm, she tenderly caressed the neck of the Raven. The black bird towered over her, as mighty as the tree nearby, eyeing her expectantly. She knew He would not be delayed any longer.

"It would seem", she murmured, "our time here is at an end. Oh, how I've longed for rest, not even You can imagine. Singing everyone to sleep I've walked this earth, whilst mine own eyes grew weary, oh so weary. Now, it is ended. Now, I rest. Let us go…" She climbed atop the Raven's back.

"Come, old friend, He's here at last…" she gestured towards the shade of the great tree. The old man came forth and bowed his head at the Raven. Before joining her atop the bird's back, he paused. How distant the night of their meeting now seemed, ancient and blurred, he thought, yet how enticingly endless the journey ahead. A light whiff of air, frailer and purer than a breeze, as gentle as autumn's auburn leaves hopelessly falling to the ground, encircled him, a final forlorn embrace of what had been his home.

"Master miller?" Her kind voice stirred him from his final musing. Shaking his head, he took her hand.

As the Raven spread His wings, it suddenly seemed to her that they went on to the ends of the world, and beneath them lay the foundation on which she had trodden. She could see towns and cities, villages and hamlets, rivers, forests, mountains, and oceans and the sun and moon. All had grown old, and some, she contemplated with unbridled delight, some had learned to go to sleep by themselves. Her purpose had been fulfilled. And for the first time in what had been an eternity, she laughed, in echoes of crystal-clear bliss, as the Raven speared through the unknown.

***

The man glanced at the hill in the distance. Two alien shadows could be seen presiding over the top: one strange, seemingly spread in every direction, formless, the other, rather simple – a singular thin line. Set against the darkening crimson sky, they seemed terribly misplaced in that realm of mellow contours and gentle

curves. The man, however, did not bother himself with such impractical thoughts and hastened towards the sounds of the careless merrymaking echoing throughout the village from the inn.

The cloaked figured stood still, as motionless as the lifeless tree nearby. The hood rose towards the top of the branches, looking at something. From high atop the tree, a raven studied it curiously, as if awaiting an answer.

"Let him be the last, then…" the shadow suddenly murmured.

The two appeared to remain precisely the same for the longest of times when, at length, the shadow let out a heavy sigh and started towards the lights which could be seen in the distance. In the meantime, the light of the summer sun slowly faded and burnt away.

Amidst the rowdy chatter of the village folk gathered at the inn, the old wooden door creaked open, and a lone figure sidled in. Yet such was the revelry, that the sudden appearance of one rather unremarkable figure did little to disrupt the joyous merrymaking that took place. And indeed, were one to glance at the newcomer, little would have been found to be said. The innkeeper alone paid some notice to her since such was the nature of his establishment and the way of his trade.

"Water, if you would be so kind… And something to quench mine hunger" she said to the inquisitive innkeeper. In understanding her, the gracious host had no obstacle, for she always seemed to open her mouth in the precise moment all the others were closed, and ever did her words come pristine to his old ears, much like the flowing of fresh rainwater through weathered pebbles. To his queries, however, she answered worthless little.

"Alas, 'tis no wonder" was her answer to his humdrum curiosity. "Such is the nature of so distant a place from whence I come, that none might know of it. Yet, who's to say if that's for good or ill?"

"Lonely places oft make for lonely lives" remarked the gray-haired innkeeper.

She said nothing more and the gracious host understood. With a short and polite bow, he excused himself and went about welcoming a new guest, alongside whom he promptly reappeared at her table. The inn was indeed packed to the brim, so she made no objection. The stranger, his faced scarred time and time again by the relentless passing of the years, sat down and gratefully nodded to the innkeeper for the mug and to the woman for the company. He had not yet finished his drink when he caught a glimpse of the woman's face amid the dancing shadows that roamed through the hall. There was something he did not like in her eyes, yet what it was, he could not name it. Now that he thought of it, her very eyes were of strange nature, caught somewhere between dark and silver-grey, ever so slightly changing and shifting. *'Such beautiful eyes she has, this woman… A pity we've not a single girl like her in the whole village. Perhaps she'd get the lads more eager to finish up work.'* Pity… It struck him hard as hammer. It was pity he saw in her eyes, warm pity mingled with grief. He furrowed his brow and straightened his back, paying but little attention to the painful sting he felt.

"It's for naught you're looking at me like that… The mill has treated me well. I'm afraid I'm very much as spry as I was in my youth. Many have died younger and more brittle than I." She said nothing, so he went on. "To my mind, Death is indeed fickle, much like an unknowing and brash tiller, late to sow and impatient to reap." From outside the inn, a raven cawed somewhere in the distance. The old

man frowned and reached to close the window. “Bad omen, a raven’s cry…”. She flashed him a sorrowful smile and sighed, shaking her head in seeming disapproval. For a while, they said nothing, the man meddling with his drink, the woman unphased. Suddenly, with a gracious gesture, she rose and brought the ebony cape all around her. He looked at her with confusion. Surely, she did not intend to leave, she had just only gotten there.

“Be it as you say, master miller… Yet, before I go if you’d indulge me with one question, who other than Death knows best the value of life, for isn’t life the most precious currency to her ancient trade?” Before answering, he stood up as well. *Strange,* he thought, *for me to go so early. Perhaps the mill wasn’t so kind to me after all.* He smiled.

“I’d best be on my way as well. It’s ways to go until home.”

Before they parted, the woman looked him in the eyes and in the moonlight, her pale and delicate face, gently framed by her long and raven hair, so exquisitely beautiful and yet so desperately melancholy struck him speechless.

“My question, master miller… I’m afraid you have left me wanting.” He frenziedly collected his thoughts, scrapping for an answer, but found none. Most men were afraid to die, he thought to himself. And those few that were not, cared not for when the time came. He himself prayed for a few more *good years* as he called them. What a strange question and from such young a woman.

“I’m afraid so… Such a heavy question for an old fellow already carrying the weight of his years, wouldn’t you say?” Again, she sighed. *Such a poor sport I must have been…Not long ago I told her the mill’s been kind to me, he* shunned himself. He wished her a fond farewell and started walking towards the hills when, to his great surprise, her footsteps soon echoed behind his.

“Seems our road is similar, is it not?” He nodded and hurried on. There had been a torpor clawing its way inside him for some time, a need of sleep that made him uneasy, cold. For a while, they said nothing and simply walked side by side. Suddenly, he stumbled. The rocky road approached with terrifying speed, and soon a fiery throb in his left side made itself present. The breeze thickened, and each breath seemed to plague him, fatigue him. He turned his head towards the woman, gasping for air.

Her cloaked figured stood still, as motionless as the open field. A single tear glittered in the moonlight.

“Is this it?” When she answered, her voice froze his heart. It was a voice of a thousand whispers. He could feel warmth, love, and sorrow. He felt a hatred that made him shrivel and joy that sent his heart racing. In her voice lay all that he had ever been. The very air around him seemed to talk, from afar, like a soft breeze, yet with palpable clarity, much like a shroud of the softest silk being wrapped over his head, each word numbing him further and further.

“I am afraid so, master miller… I am afraid so.”

“I had hoped for a few more good years.”

“You needn’t. They’re gone already. Any more wouldn’t have been good.”

He managed to painfully smile as he drew breath.

“A brash tiller, I said… Mayhap I was wrong.”

A raven’s cry echoed through the night.

“Mayhap you were wrong, indeed…”

"Will I…" he broke off. Every breath drained him. "Will I be going alone? I might get lost …" he suddenly whispered, more for himself than for her. The sudden jolt of warmth in his cheeks took him unawares. What a foolish thought to voice. To his wonder however, a tender smile flourished on her soft lips. She kneeled and clasped his hand.

Meanwhile, the bird's cry drew closer.

"No, my dear master miller" she eventually said. He felt his throat dry; her answer made him uneasy. *Some company will do me well, I suppose…*

The faint flapping of wings drew his attention for a single moment. Oh, how he wished a few more good years, despite what she had just said. The things he would have done. He would fain have liked to put his affairs in order. Yet, what was left that was not in order? The thought surprised him, and, with renewed efforts, he struggled to find something to hold on to, a purpose, a goal, a task to fulfill. And then, he suddenly realized she was right. A few good years weren't needed. Her graceful hands delicately tightened their grasp, and all his fears seemed to fade, washed away by a mellow wave of warmth. As the raven's cry drew closer, she wouldn't let go. And then, he finally understood what she had meant, and the thought filled him with a desperate happiness.

"Are you, perchance, the one coming with me, my dear lady?"

"Yes."

His breath began to abandon him, his eyes darkened. He felt a warm breeze embrace him and, for the briefest of moments, a vision of everlasting fields of green overtook him. In the middle of a lake of blinding silver, there lay an undying tree, tall and mighty beyond his wildest dreams, with an endless bough made of the finest emeralds, glistening in the rise of the bright fresh Sun. And underneath the tree, in the welcoming coolness of the newborn dew, she already waited.

"Good…" he murmured. "I was afraid I'd get lost."

In the end, a brash tiller she was not. He had been wrong all along.

Notes on Contributors

Kübra Baysal graduated from Hacettepe University English Language and Literature Department in 2008, had her MA degree at Atatürk University English Language and Literature Department in May 2013 and her thesis was on Doris Lessing's novel, *The Cleft*, from an ecofeminist perspective. She earned her Ph.D title from Hacettepe University English Language and Literature Department in January, 2019. The focus of her dissertation is a study of Richard Jefferies's *After London, or Wild England*, Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* and Adam Nevill's *Lost Girl* from the perspective of the Anthropocene. She works at Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, School of Foreign Languages as a lecturer. She has translated a novel by Irwing Stone named *The Passions of the Mind* from English to Turkish, which is published in two volumes as *İnsan Ruhunun Derinliklerinde Cilt 1* and *İnsan Ruhunun Derinliklerinde Cilt 2* in Ankara, 2011. She has presented papers at several conferences and holds a number of papers and book chapters published in conference proceedings, journals and books.

Ewa Drab works as an assistant professor at the University of Silesia in Katowice. Her area of research is contemporary fantasy literature, mainly Anglophone but also French and Polish, as well as its translation, which is a topic she has examined in her PhD thesis. She is also interested in other speculative genres, especially steampunk or dystopia, also in the context of the Anthropocene. Her publications comprise articles in international journals, for example "Crossroads. A Journal of English Studies," "Fantasy Art and Studies," "Svět literatury" or "Między oryginałem a przekładem." Recently, she has explored the topics of Canadian medievalisms in Guy Gavriel Kay's Ysabel and of Polish fantasy's relationship with history.

Fernanda Luísa Feneja holds a PhD in American Literature (2007) and a Master's degree in American Studies (2000). She is a permanent teacher of English and German in Portuguese secondary education. She is a researcher at the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (ULICES – RG 3 – American Studies) and a member of the Portuguese Association for Anglo-American Studies. Her research interests focus mainly on twentieth-century American Literature (narrative fiction, modernist fiction, and science-fiction and fantasy narrative), American culture, and literary theory. She has presented papers and published articles in these areas.

Sara González Bernárdez graduated in English Language and Literature from the University of Santiago de Compostela, where she is currently undertaking her first year as a PhD student. Her research focuses on fictional representation and its effects over individual subjectivities, particularly marginalised or Other identities. As such, her academic interests include primarily gender studies, as well as twentieth and twenty-first century fantasy literature, her current object of study; nonetheless, she has also enjoyed working on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, especially Jane Austen's novels.

Justine Shu-Ting Kao earned her MA at National Cheng Kung University and Ph.D. at Tamkang University. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor and teaches English at several universities in Taiwan. Her research interests include nineteenth century novels, dark romanticism, and Edgar Allan Poe. She is currently publishing on Poe and dark romanticism.

Monika Kosa is a PhD candidate at the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Her academic interests include fantastic literature, Canadian literature, Victorian literature and the twentieth-century Canadian

novel. Her doctoral thesis explores displacement in contemporary English-Canadian fantastic fiction.

Asunción López-Varela is Associate Professor at the Department of English Studies, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Her research interests are Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, as well as Cognitive and Intermedial Semiotics. Since 2007, she coordinates of the research program Studies on Intermediality and Intercultural Mediation SIIM. A proactive member of the profession, currently, López-Varela is Deputy Head of the Department of English Studies at UCM, President of the European Society of Comparative Literature and member of Executive Committee of the Association of Alumni of the Real Colegio Complutense at Harvard University and of the Marie Curie Alumni Association MCAA, where she forms part of the Grant & Awards Committee. López-Varela also serves as external evaluator for various EU programs. In order to strengthen relations between Europe and Asia, López-Varela coordinates an annual Seminar Series on Cross-cultural dialogue funded by the One Asia Foundation. She is honorary member of the Poetry Award Committee of Beijing Literature and ArtNetwork and editor and a member of the scientific committee of various academic journals. For more information on her pursuits and publications, please see https://www.ucm.es/siim/asun-lopez-varela https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1616-5830.

Alexandru Paul Margau is a graduate of the Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj, with an MA in Irish Cultural Studies, and of the Western University of Timisoara, with a PhD on the changes of perception that occur in Gothic fiction throughout the centuries. He is currently an independent researcher with his first book, Reading Monsters, having been recently published. In addition to independent research that focuses mainly on cultural studies and the development of the reader-critic in contemporary fiction, he is also a guest lecturer on Jane Austen or Bram Stoker at his alma mater university. His main interests are Gothic literatures, contemporary fiction about issues such as race, skin colour or instances of the repressed turned monstrous. Some of his articles include 'The Birth of the Reader-Critic as a Matter of Literary Perception' or 'Authorial Realism or how I Learned that Jane Was a Person.'