University of Kairouan
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
English Department

Research Laboratory: Innovation in Research Methodologies and Pedagogy in Humanities

Proceedings of *Celebration*

Edited by:
Mansour Khelifa&Adel Bahroun

Introduction by Mansour Khelifa

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Adel Bahroun

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Introductory

Talking about ‘Celebration’ brings to mind its corollary, commemoration. Where the former is often equated with rejoicing and merrymaking, the latter is closely associated with solemnity and mourning. Celebrating Independence Day or Mardi Gras, for example, comes as a colorful pageant. Commemorating the death of war heroes or of martyrs felled cowardly by the hand of treason is staged as ‘marche funèbre’ and as ceremonious display of chrysanthemums. In many parts of the world, however, celebration and commemoration tend to be celebrated on a par. The death of heroes has always been elevated to celebratory, if pathetic, apotheosis. In many Arab countries nowadays, one watches such tragedies with mixed feelings and pathos. Palestinian mothers are often shown on TV ululating shrilly and desperately over the killing of their children by Israeli soldiers. These ululations of the wailing mothers sound like some atavistc rituals, signifying an ambivalent celebration of life and death, joy and pain, pride and sacrifice. The mothers are, at once, mourning and rejoicing at their siblings’ bridal, heroic death! Though Celebrating and Commemorating may often clash, they nonetheless overlap in such epic moments! Human culture at large and religious events, in particular, are the sum total of social practices and spiritual rituals being celebrated as colorful

feasts or sad remembrances, usually in the form of boisterous Festivals and self-castigating Penances. One of the most eloquent dialectical oppositions can be epitomised by Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 16th-century painting called 'The Fight between Carnival and Lent' (1559), which dramatises a festive 'Inn' way of life, i.e., beer drinking and merrymaking, on the one hand, and the fasting, law-abiding 'Church' people, on the other hand; or, put differently, between Eros and Thanatos as two antagonistic, yet complementary, aspects of human experience.

The academic event – 'Celebration' as is aptly 'celebrated' by the Department of English in Kairouan, and as is primarily presented as a postmodern condition – duly examines, in a multiplicity of ways, the above-mentioned binary views on human culture and art. Besides, it also endeavours to show how celebrating the non-canonical becomes a crucial strategy of postmodern culture and mindset. Celebration, in this sense, hinges upon the mixture of genres and the hybridisation of gender. The carnivalesque, the festive, the loss of grounding, the proliferation of meaning, the marginal, the ephemeral, the parodic construct, the trompe-l'œil, the pastiched (mis)representation, the dissemination of unfinished projects, simulacra, the hyperreal, fragments of experience, all of which, first, partake in the subversive thrust of postmodernism – taken here as a poise, a gesture, a flourish ; second, account for the rock bottom Eclecticism of postmodern art ; and third, announce, not only, the death of the godlike author, but also that of late-modern and pre-modern, monolithic hegemony of 'grand narratives' or 'metanarratives'. Jean François Lyotard claims in his *The Postmodern Condition*, 'Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives' (Introduction

xxiv). More than just 'incredulity'-bent, the postmodern mindset of the artist is deliberately and provocatively deconstructionist ; it tries to lay bare the very mechanics of 'metanarratives' in order to reinstate instead some relativistic expression, the genesis of which is rooted in skepticism, in indeterminacy, and in kitsch or collage.

Drawing on Charles Jencks's notion of the pluralism and 'the radical eclecticism of the post-modern style', Samuel Amago[1], states that:

> Pluralism is perhaps the most agreed-upon 'ism' of post-modernity. The postmodern celebration of pluralism represents the end of a single monolithic worldview and the death of the traditional colonial cultural hegemonies. Postmodernism is based upon a concerted resistance to single explanations, a respect for difference, and a celebration of the regional, local, and particular (11). The postmodern is, in short, characterized by hybridity, mixture, ambiguity, and double coding. (52)

Postmodern artistic production celebrates, with equal force, a host of muffled, if shrill, voices, and a cluster of destabilizing, if destabilized, discourses that are raised against the hegemony of the canon and that of the so-called authenticity of authorship and origin. As Postmodernism playfully espouses the power of discourse, it ambiguously courts and/or resists the discourse of power, in a desperate attempt to democratise and de-essentialise culture and art. Everything becomes a suitable site for celebration and for a cultural happening. Jean François Lyotard coins postmodern eclecticism in a much-celebrated statement : 'Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games. It is easy to find a public for eclectic works' (*The Postmodern Condition* 76).

[1] Amago Samuel. *True Lies : Narrative Self-consciousness in the Contemporary Spanish Novel*. Bucknell University Press, 2006. Web.

The deliberate splintering of conventional and archetypal models characterises, to a large extent, the postmodern era. Such 'atomisation of the social' (Lyotard) and of fixed norms culminates in the celebration of a fireworks-like mosaic of genres, sub-genres, texts, inter-texts, fragments of culture, gender and cross-gender, extravagance, self-contradicting character, grand gesturing, ethnic groups, race, mass-culture, marginality, deformity and the uncanny; in short, that is, all that makes human experience sound like an open-ended narrative resisting the closed finality of a given meaning.

The following papers are the proceedings of a study day on 'Celebration'. Eclectical as they may be, the authors of these papers undertake to explore the multifaceted, postmodern celebratory paradigm as is associated with different literary productions and minority languages status in a globalised context.

In his paper 'Modern American Theatrical Schema : Celebrating Schizophrenia and Fascism in O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms*' Adel Bahroun claims that the dramatist celebrates the transmogrification of his characters into 'desiring machines' under the rule of Capital.

Arguing for 'a politics of celebration' in his article titled 'Unbinding Genre (Bending Gender) in *Good Night Desdemona* (*Good Morning Juliet*)' Wajih Ayed wittily addresses the parodic and playful postmodernisation of Shakespeare's plays by Ann-Marie MacDonald.

Borni Mahmoud Lafi's paper 'Erskine Caldwell, Zora Neale Hurston and Life's Lower Elements in the South of the United States: Celebrating Region and Race' endeavours to rehabilitate these writers' art by drawing attention to its subversive strategy of

inclusion of Southern characters who have been excluded by Harlem Renaissance.

Hanen Mahmoud's article 'Which 'Bharat-Mata ?': Celebrating a New Mother Image in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shame*' reveals the novelist's demystification of the 'mother figure' through the subversive portrayal of the female characters who, 'like the postmodern cosmopolitan nation', are 'Janus-faced, luminal, impure, deceitful, (and) incestuous', resisting the decency of representational consistency.

Farhat Ben Amor's paper 'Shelley's Construction of Festivities in the Coda of *Prometheus Unbound:* A Panegyric of Triumph or an Unswerving Fit of Poetic Ecstasy?' addresses the controversial esthetic and/or technical significance of the fourth act in Shelley's poem. Is it mere 'Coda'? An aesthetic Celebration of Love's triumph? Or an emotional overflow of the poet's own ecstatic mystique?

Last but not least, Mourad Ben Slimene's article 'Reading Welsh Language Celebration from Technology Appropriation' explores the 'plight of minority languages within the context of globalisation'. As a case in point, Welsh, like other minority tongues, seems to oscillate between two fates or fits: Celebratory Revitalisation and Menacing Extinction!

Prof. Mansour Khelifa

April 14th, 2017

Modern American Theatrical Schema: Celebrating Schizophrenia and Fascism in O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms*

Adel Bahroun

Abstract

In this paper, the concepts of schizophrenia and fascism are reconsidered in relation with the notions of Libido and Capital in the capitalist society. O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* is laden with schizophrenic desires and fascist discursive practices. The American dream and capitalism console the subjects with mythical beliefs and irrational promises, transforming them into desiring machines. Desire for economic investment and acquisition inscribes a schizophrenic struggle in O'Neill's libidinal theater. His subjects are territorialized in delirious and neurotic conditions. When led by their desire for capital, they become fascists. Thus, O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* celebrates schizophrenia and fascism in postmodern American theatrical schema. The capitalist economy, which increases the burden of guilt, alienates the subjects, in O'Neill's tragedy, from the real essence of life: belonging and stability. Money increases material desire and unconsciously fates the subjects to a terrible psychic depression. The main objective of this paper is to map the relation between the subject's libidinal desire and capitalism from a schizoanalytic perspective, as the additional site to research on modern American drama, schematizing anti-oedipal complex and new modes of struggle. Indeed, O'Neill's theatrical language, evasive style and stage directions carry tragic transmutations and shifts of perspectives.

Keywords: celebration, schizophrenia, fascism, libido, capitalism, anti-oedipal traps, desiring machines, schizoanalytic.

> Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.
>
> Deleuze and Guattari, 1980

New England (1850) is the setting of *Desire under the Elms* wherein O'Neill depicts the tragic experiments of a family torn apart by greed and passion, tracing an absurd circuit of desire in a capitalist society. The play starts with sunrise and ends with sunset, drawing the cyclical vacuity of human existence in the materialist world. The obsession with capital and the schizophrenic behavior of the protagonists underlie the flaws in the play. In the patriarch's house, the members of the Ephraim family are territorialized and engulfed in fatal conflicts. They share the same flow of libidinal desire, struggling for a state of worth. The lust for land coincides with that for the body, shaping the main seeds of the tragic plot in the play. The Ephraim family has been fragmented by the desire for lucre and sex, which transforms all members into schizophrenic fascist agents.

In my critical reading of the play, I assume that the playwright problematizes postmodern controversial dramatic issues. The ways he perceives libidinal desire and human struggle for wealth and appropriation are based on profound experiments with history and philosophy. Modern critics such as Gerald Berkowitz, Travis Bogard, Anne Fleche, Brenda Murphy and Black Stephen focused on crucial issues and provided different perspectives on O'Neill's modern literary production, but they did not deal with capital, anti-oedipal complex[2], schizophrenia and fascism as focal

[2] It is different from the oedipal complex – daddy-mummy complex, which is stimulated by incestuous desire. Rather, Anti-Oedipus Complex is introduced by Deleuze and Guattari as an outcome of the interaction between Libido and Capital. It manifests in the libidinal desire for capitalist investment. The schizophrenic and fascist subject suffers from ant-oedipal complex.

topics with postmodern philosophical implications. These concepts suggest reliance on the schizoanalytic perspective advanced in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's philosophical works *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. O'Neill's dramatic schema[3] has a bent towards the postmodern views of these philosophers. There seems to be a radical deviation from the subjective essence of libidinal desire to its dynamic and revolutionary process, which is echoed in O'Neill's dramatic thought.

It is noteworthy that some contemporary critics concerned with O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* restrict their investigations of the dramatic work to Marxism and psychoanalysis. Although these approaches are pertinent, they seem to be limited, deterring an outstanding phenomenological insight into a specific human condition in a world governed by capitalism. At this point, the method adopted to attain original findings is termed, by Deleuze and Guattari, schizoanalysis. Thus, "schizoanalysis must devote itself with all its strength to the necessary destructions. Destroying beliefs and representations, theatrical scenes" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 314). In the same book, they argue that "the first positive task of schizoanalysis consists of discovering in a subject the nature, the formation, or the functioning of his desiring machines[4], independently of any interpretations" (322). In O'Neill's

[3] O'Neill's dramatic schema is a launch of extensive endeavors to map the complexity and fluidity of current human conditions under the restraints of capitalism, as an economic and political system. He anticipates new plateaus for the subject's acting, prefiguring new crisis of subjectivity, new modes of struggle and new forms and appropriation. Schizophrenia and Fascism are to be celebrated as new modes of existence and resistance in the confined capitalist world.

[4] Desire is working within the subject transforming him/her into desiring machine. The subject's will is limited because there is no free will in desire. In *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, Taylor and Winquist clarify the philosophical view of Deleuze and Guattari that desiring machines are forces modeled on Nietzsche's 'will-to-power,' that exist only in relation to one another. They are not essences. They are subjects propelled by libidinal desire. The latter is an energy

Desire under the Elms, the theatrical scenes reveal subjects as desiring machines, suffering from anti-oedipal complex. This inference finds its echo in Sim's argumentation that for Deleuze and Guattari, individuals are 'desiring machines', who lack the sense of unity we generally associate with individual identity, but who find the opportunity to express their desire being curbed by the socio-political authorities (with fascism as the most potent example of how the process works (6). Libidinal desires shape the fascist character of the subject.

The main goal of schizoanalysis is to re-interpret Marx, Freud and Lacan in terms of a theory of desire, exploring the link between libido and capital. This theory is adopted as a model to avoid more conventional views that claim that desire is always propelled by a lack and necessity. In Deleuze's perspective, the politics of desire is deeply explored and extended to be radically understood beyond the Freudian orthodox psychoanalysis. In this context, Eugene Holland argues that schizoanalysis "drawing substantially on Marx, transforms psychoanalysis so as to include the full scope of social and historical factors in explanation of behavior and cognition" (4). Indeed, in this essay, I attempt to re-assess O'Neill's dramatic work and undertake a deeper exploration of the politics of anti-oedipal desire on the one hand and schizophrenia and fascism on the other hand.

From a schizoanalytic perspective, O'Neill dramatizes the network of social and historical forces that not only compel the individual to, obsessively, invest his desire for capital, but also lead him to act in a schizophrenic and fascist manner. O'Neill is the

creating the intensities of life. The flows of desire are created and mediated by Capitalism. So, it is systemic oppression which leads to the birth of new alienated machines called 'desiring machines', because their entity is formed by desire and its interaction with the oppressive capitalist forces.

American playwright who envisages new postmodern planes of existence where subjects are led by the desire for libidinal economy[5], exposing them as new models of schizophrenia and fascism. In *Anti-Oedipus,* Deleuze and Guattari state:

> Libidinal economy is no less objective than political economy, and the political no less subjective than the libidinal, even though the two correspond to two modes of different investments of the same reality as social reality. There is an unconscious libidinal investment of desire that does not necessarily coincide with the preconscious investments of interest, and that explains how the latter can be perturbed and perverted in "the most somber organization," below all ideology. (345)

In *Desire under the Elms*, desire for libidinal investment leads to neurosis and delirium, as symptoms of schizophrenia and fascism. This issue can be conveniently investigated from Deleuze and Guattari's perspectives. Schizophrenia and Fascism take new definitions. In O'Neill's dramatic schema, these conceptions have psychological and social implications; thus "meanings exist before language names them" (Malpas and Wake 44). Here, it is worth advancing the conception of fascism as introduced by Michel Foucault the preface of *Ant-Oedipus.* It is the desire for power and anything that dominates and exploits the subject. It is not only a historical and political term as Hitler and Mussolini put it "to mobilize and use the desire of the masses so effectively, but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (xiii). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's fascism is a social and psychological movement against the power

[5] It is the capitalist economy/system which lures the subject by the materialist success until he/she becomes Schizoid. It is also working within the subject like a machine, driving him/her into delirious and neurotic condition. For Lyotard, the libidinal economy (attempts) to emancipate desire and intensities from their alienation (Best and Kellner 158).

of capitalism as an oppressive socio-economic system. They give much importance to the way desire operates in the social sphere. In *Molecular Revolution,* Guattari contends that "fascism is a key motif in considering the problem of desire in the social sphere" (217).

Schizophrenic/fascist struggle is a radical research in the forms of appropriation in the modern society. In his tragedy, O'Neill is mapping the relation between Libido and Capital, insisting on their reciprocity which transforms the subjects into desiring machines who are trapped by the territorialities of a consumerist culture, essentially the desire for economic acquisition and the accumulation of wealth. Thus, in Deleuze's philosophical view, man under social and psychic repression functions like a machine coupled with other machines either amorously or capitalistically. In this respect, Abbie, Cabot and his three sons Eben, Peter and Simeon in *Desire under the Elms,* are machines, territorialized by the flow of capital. They are anti-Oedipal figures willing to make great investments in the capitalist field. Indeed, the connectivity between libido and capitalism inspires anti-oedipal thinking and fascist acting in O'Neill's theater.

Cabot, his wife, Abbie, and his three sons Eben, Simeon and Peter are led by a strong desire for capital, entangling them in a perennial struggle for appropriation. On the one hand, Abbie is seducing her stepson Eben to be the conspirator against his father Cabot, scheming for the inheritance of the land and the house. This desire of possession lures her at the end of the struggle to act madly, killing her baby who is the product of her adultery with Eben. On the other hand, Simeon and Peter are the stereotypes of the American utopians who are deluded by the American dream.

They escape to California seeking profit from the Gold rush. Indeed, O'Neill's subjects are territorialized in delirious states, being unconsciously transformed into desiring machines. They are repressed and oppressed by their thirst for economic acquisition and production, which inscribes schizophrenia and fascism in their psyche. Here, the subtle issue is that the intense desire for Capital makes the American subject bound up with moral guilt and schizophrenia. Cabot's excessive desire for materialistic investment and gain of money entangles him in a schizo-revolutionary process. As a patriarch, Cabot is engulfed in constant duels with all his three wives and sons, because he insistently claims his absolute ownership of the farm. The economy of the libido therefore depresses the individual subject to be oedipalized, territorialized and neuroticized. In this respect, Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that

> there is no doubt that at this point in history the neurotic, the pervert, and the psychotic cannot be adequately defined in terms of drives, for drives are simply the desiring machines themselves. They must be defined in terms of modern territorialities. The neurotic is trapped within the residual or artificial territorialities of our society and reduces all of them (les rabat toutes) to Oedipus as the ultimate territoriality. (35)

Craving to own property and its symbols in the patriarchal capitalist society drives the subjects to continuously 'delire'. In this context, Taylor and Winquist write that "Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, hold that delirium is directly related to the socio-political realm: one "delires" about history, geography, tribes, deserts, peoples, races, and climates, not simply one's mother and father" (40). Cabot, Eben and Abbie 'delire' about the farm and the house -the capital:

> EBEN. (with a queer excitement) It's Maw's farm agen! It's my farm! Them's my cows! I'll milk my durn fingers off fur cows o' mine!
> SIMEON. Like his Paw.

> PETER. Dead spit an image!
> SIMEON. Waal- let dog eat dog!
> EBEN. It's purty! It' damned purty! It's mine! (He suddenly throws his head back boldly and glares with hard, defiant eyes at the sky.) Mine, d'ye hear? Mine!
> ABBIE. (with great lust for the word) Hum! (Her eyes gloating on the house without seeming to see the two stiff figures at the gate) It's purty – purty! I can't b'lieve it's r'ally mine. (*Desire under the Elms 331,* 335)

The repetitive use of the first personal possessive pronoun "my" and the possessive adjective "mine" asserts the subject's libidinal struggle for holding properties. The lust for capital drives Peter and Simeon to act brutally as enemies to their father Cabot. They liken him to a "dog." This sarcastic comparison reveals the inhumane character of the children who attribute the worst image to their father. Then, Cabot's thirst for libidinal investment turns him into a schizoid. He has deliberately chosen to marry a young woman (third wife) although he is an old man. It is his pride as a fascist patriarch which compels him to be adventurous in his sensual life. In fact, there is an age gap between him and Abbie, the Italian woman; Cabot is seventy–five while Abbie is thirty–five. He believes in his fascist will and that he is hard like God, as if there was no other power controlling his psyche. The hardships of the farm prevent him from rational thinking. Indeed, Cabot's excessive pride and corporeal experiments are the constituents of his complex subjectivity.

> CABOT. Waal- this place was nothin' but fields o' stones. Folks laughed when I tuk it. They couldn't know what I knowed. When ye kin make corn sprout out o' stones, God's livin' in yew! They wa'n't strong enuf fur that! They reckoned God was easy…. An' I growed hard. Folks kept allus sayin'he's hard man like 'twas sinful t' be hard… (*Desire under the Elms* 348)

The libido for capital functions within Cabot like a machine, making him act like a despot. Thus, "the despotism so often prevailing in marital or family relationships grows out of the same

type of libidinal engagement in society" (Guattari 218). Cabot is libidinally engaged in his society seeking material success. But, his anti-oedipal desire makes him suffer from loneliness and alienation.

> CABOT. I was allus lonesome…I tuk - Eben's Maw other wife ... She never know'd me nor nothin'. It was lonesomer 'n hell with her ... Then this spring the call come- the voice o'God cryn' in my wilderness, in my lonesomeness- t' go out an' seek an' find! (turning to her with strange passion) I sought ye an' I found ye! Yew air my Rose o' Sharon! Yer eyes air like…
> (*Desire under the Elms* 350)

From a schizoanalytic perspective, the tragic flaw in the play is that the Ephraims are fragmented by an anti-oedipal complex. They are alienated from self-identity, integrity and happiness. Cabot's marital outlook is mysterious. Indeed, he is figured with a stony heart and limitless freedom. He is psychologically/sexually the fascist who is driven by violent passion. This flaw entangles him in schizophrenic tensions with his children Eben, Simeon and Peter, and his third wife Abbie. He overloads his first wife, Eben's mother, with inhuman work, so her death chains the family in hatred and revenge. Simeon, Peter and Eben assert to the audience Cabot's hardness and fascist treatment of Eben's mother:

> ..PETER. (reminiscently She was good t' Sim 'n' me. A good Step-maw's curse.
> SIMEON. (reminiscently) She was good t' everyone.
> EBEN. (greatly moved, gets to his feet and makes an awkward bow to each of them- stammering) I be thankful t' ye. I'm her – her heir.
> PETER. She was good even t' him.
> EBEN. (fiercely) An' fur thanks he killed her!
> SIMEON. (after a pause) No one never kills nobody. It's allus somethin'. That's the murderer.
> EBEN. Didn't he slave Maw t' death?
> PETER. He's slaved himself t' death. He's slaved Sim 'n' me 'n'yew t'death- on'y none o' us hain't died- yit. (*Desire under the Elms* 322)

Eben expresses his disappointment and annoyance at his father's fascist behavior; "he murdered her with his hardness!" says

Eben sorrowfully (*Desire under the Elms* 354). Cabot has a hard nature, because, as he says, "God's hard, not easy! God's in the stones! Build my church on a rock – out o' stones and I'll be in them!" says Cabot (*Desire under the Elms* 349). Cabot adheres to the principles of capitalistic ethics. Actually, in Weber's viewpoint, the protestant work ethic becomes a force behind the development of capitalism. It seems that O'Neill is capable of drawing a channel between protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism. Capitalism develops in light of adherence to religion. There is a positive alliance between the 'calling' and investment of 'libidinal economy'.

To torment Eben's mother to death is an evil act, showing particles of fascism in Cabot's psyche. This develops in Eben not only hostility, but also neurosis while he is suffering from isolation and maternal deprivation. He is therefore determined to revolt against his family's heritage. His schizophrenic condition manifests the core of O'Neill's tragic overview of the figure of the subject when he is agitated by the turbulent effects of irrational/ impulsive desires. Indeed, underneath anti-oedipal strife, the playwright is sub-plotting incestuous relation between Eben and his step-mother Abbie, prescribing the moral nature of desire as an escape from fascist greed.

> EBEN. (to the presence he feels in the room) Maw! Maw! What d'ye want What air ye telling me?
> ABBIE. She's tellin' ye t' love me. She knows I love ye an' and I'll be good t'ye. Can't ye feel it? Don't ye know? She's tellin' ye t' love me, Eben! (*Desire under the Elms* 354-55)

Cabot, Abbie and Eben, Simeon and Peter are staged on the farm, a confined territory, where they are misled in loose absurd circuits. They are the lunatics who act under the dispensation of the materialist lure, which has been inscribed in the libido of the capitalist community. Indeed, O'Neill's protagonists' consciousness

and understanding of the deep collision of the libido and capital determine the configurations of the capitalist American society. At this level, I can assume that capitalism inspires fascist desire in the subject until he/she becomes schizoid. In this respect, Ward argues that

> like Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the institutions and discourses of modernity were a soft kind of fascism which exercised dominance by inserting repression into all aspects of every day existence. Under modernity's capitalist system, repression and dominance were not so much forced on to people as lived by them. (150)

In the Ephraim family, the clash has an anti-oedipal characteristic. Cabot, Abbie and Eben, Peter and Simeon are repressed and dominated by the capitalist system. Consequently, they become schizophrenic subjects who appear in a revolutionary process. They act beyond the sphere of the familial triangular complex. They are in steady rebellion against each other. They are triggered by what Deleuze and Guattari call, in *Anti-Oedipus*, 'the desire of desire' (206), which makes them deliriously suffer from anti-oedipal complex. They are territorialized by the absolute value of the land, which transforms them into war machines[6]

> ABBIE. (jerking her hands away – harshly) So ye're plann' t' leave the farm t' Eben, air ye?
> CABOT. (dazedly) leave …? (then with resentful obstinacy) I hain't a-givn' it t' no one!
> ABBIE. (remorselessly) Ye can't take it with ye.
> CABOT. (thinks a moment – then reluctantly) No, I calc'late not (after a pause with a strange passion) But if I could, I would, by the Etarnal !'R if I could, in my dyin' hour, I'd set it afire an' watch it burn – this house and every ear o' corn an' every tree down t' the last blade o' hay! I'd sit an' know it was all a d-dying with me an' no one else'd ever own what was mine, what I 'd made out o' nothin' with my own sweat 'n' blood! (a pause – then

[6] The subjects are compared to war machines because they are led by the mechanization of desire. For Deleuze and Guattari the war machine is the nomad who declares war against the state apparatus/systemic power, but avoiding terror and violence. This philosophical formulation is confirmed by Raunig who argues that the war machine operates on a line of flight. It consists in the power of change and creation of other worlds.

> he adds with a queer affection)'Ceptin' the cows. Then I'd turn free.
> ABBIE. (furiously) So that's the thanks I git fur marrying' ye- t' have ye change kind to Eben who hates ye, an' talk o' turnin' me out in the road. (*Desire under the Elms* 345

Peter and Simeon are striving to invest the land with Cabot, becoming his enemies.

> PETER. I calc'late we might git him declared crazy by the court.
> SIMEON. …They'd never believe him crazy. (pause) We got t' wait - till he's underground." (*Desire under the Elms* 321)

The land is a source of income. For the Ephraims, it becomes the only savior from annihilation and loss.

O'Neill's modern American society is governed by capitalistic forces. Desire for money drives the subject to lose faith. This is echoed in Ward's view that "money, more than anything else, was now the anonymous social force which mediated and 'objectified' the relationships between people. This could create a sense of alienation and dehumanization as people lost their sense of purpose, stability and belonging" (124). Peter and Simeon get their share before they escape to the gold mines of California, which strengthens their intrinsic fascist will to capital:

> EBEN. … It says fur three hundred dollars t' each ye agree yewr shares o' the farm is sold t' me. (they look suspiciously at the paper. A pause.)
> SIMEON. (wonderingly) But if he's hitched agen-
> PETER. An' whar'd yew git that sum o' money, any- ways?
> EBEN. (cunningly) I know whar it's hid. I been waitn' – Maw told me. She knew whar it lay fur years, but she was waitn' … It's her'n –the money he hoarded from her farm an' hid from Maw. It's my money by rights now. (*Desire under the Elms* 328)
> PETER. An' don't sign nothin' till we does!
> SIMEON. Nor till we've tested I's good money! (the with a grin) But if Paw's hitched we'd be selln' Eben somethin' we'd never git nohow!
> (*Desire under the Elms* 328-329)

The above exchanged speeches reveal the utopian condition of the American community in New England. Peter and Simeon are the

stereotypes who reject the social and economic codes that deter them from appropriation. Their daily struggle aims to unleash their desire for lucre. But, O'Neill's tragic scheme, here, is that the pursuit of lucrative success leads the utopian American subject to tragic stasis. In fact, money as an impulsive economic force increases desire for capital and, unconsciously, territorializes the subject in a delirious condition. Money is the dominant and repressive force that makes the Ephraims delire every day.

Moreover, socio-economic territorializatio[7]which engenders schizophrenia and fascism as psychical movements may become the ground for evolutionary processes towards a state of deterritorialization. Indeed, the West may be the ground of genuine transformation as there is gold and freedom:

> PETER. Waal – in a manner o' speakin' – that's the promise. (growing excited) Gold in the sky – in the west – Golden Gate – California! Goldest west! - Fields o' gold!
>
> SIMEON. (excited in his turn) Fortunes layin' just atop o' the ground top waitin' t' be picked! (For a moment they continue looking up at the sky – then their eyes drop.)
>
> PETER. Here – it's stones atop o' the ground– stones atop o'stones – makin' stone walls – year atop o' year atop o' year – him 'n' me 'n' then Eben – making stone walls fur him to fence us in!
>
> SIMEON. California's t' other side o' earth, o' most. We go t' calculate.
>
> PETER. If we plowed in Californii-a, they'd be lumps o'gold in the furrow!
>
> (*Desire under the Elms* 320)

O'Neill schizophrenizes his protagonists, engaging them in the quest for strategic lines of flight beyond the spatial boundaries of 'the field

[7] It is a state of entrapment where subjectivity cannot escape the mechanization of anti-oedipal desire. Capitalism creates alien territories where the subjects are engulfed in wars with the capitalist society. Libidinal desires promulgated by the capitalist stream transform modern subjects into desiring machines, who are striving to overcome the current ideological barriers through schizophrenic movement. From a postmodern perspective, O'Neill's subjects launch new sites of anti-oedipal traps and territorialization in drama.

of stones' to fulfill their dream in 'the fields of gold'. Gold rush at the other side of earth in California is the pulling force that submerges the subjects into fascism, making them 'delire' in an eternal manner. At this level of thought, O'Neill's theatrical schema prefigures the postmodern world, which like the modern and the ancient world, would be another stage unmasking (anti-)oedipal complexes, and schizophrenic/fascist desires and myths. In fact, "myth is not a reference anymore but, rather, a transitional fantasy, a theater of deterritorialized events," argues Felix Guattari in *The Anti-OedipusPapers* (157). Here, it might be argued that O'Neill's theater celebrates deterritorialized events, schematizing a process of liberation from the cylindrical frame of ant-oedipal desire.

O'Neill is mapping this crisis of subjectivity on the stage. Beyond the scope of modernity, the psychic devices that determine the subject's schizophrenic condition are reconceived, thereby reformulating the psychoanalytic concept of libidinal desire and its subjective relation with capital. O'Neill's theatrical schema underlies a radical transmutation towards anti-oedipal/schizophrenic desire that gives birth to a fascist subjectivity. This is reminiscent of what Guattari contends in the glossary of *Molecular Revolution*, that:

> Subjectivity is not envisaged here as a thing in itself, an unchanging essence. There is or there is not subjectivity of such a nature, according to whether an arrangement of enunciation produces it or not (for example: modern capitalism, by means of media and the collective facilities, sets out to produce a new type of subjectivity on a large scale. (289)

O'Neill seems to implement the seeds of the Guattarian philosophy in modern American theater, circumventing the conventional analytical views of the libido's functioning when subjectivity is territorialized by the temptation of capital. Accordingly, the

playwright seems to anticipate postmodern planes to liberate the subject's libido from anti-oedipal subjection. This supports my claim that *Desire under the Elms* celebrates the mutation from schizophrenia as a state of breakdown and subjection to a state of breakthrough and flight; and fascism from political dominance and subjugation to psychological struggle for appropriation and transcendence.

In the Ephraim patriarchal family, capital represses subjects compelling them to act madly. Cabot admits (confusedly): "I rested. I slept good – down with the cows. They know how t' sleep. They're teachin' me" (*Desire under the Elms* 357). This avowal conveys a spiritual affinity that displays Nietzsche's philosophical impact on O'Neill's dramatic nihilist thinking. Thus, Cabot, like Zarathustra in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, evolves in a nihilist world praising the value of the sources of capital: "But when he looked around to find those who had comforted his loneliness, behold, they were cows standing together on a knoll; their proximity and smell had warmed his heart" (Nietzsche 268). Cabot's admiration of life with the cows as well as his satisfaction with and inspiration by their smell suggests his sickness as a schizoid/fascist postmodern subject.

The tragic irony is that what warms Cabot's heart and suffuses him physically with energy is not love or sex but, rather, the smell of cows. Cabot's adoption of an eccentric lifestyle and his inclination to talk to the cows and, even, sleep with them are evidence that he is neurotic, suffering from anti-oedipal complex. He is a psychically fragmented subject whose rest lies where he experiences the pleasure of capitalist profits and not in sexual satisfaction with his wife. Paradoxically, Cabot's neuroticism and delirium find their counterparts in Abby's wild passion and burning

desire to own the farm and the house. She overtly expresses her psychic repression and greed to Eben: "This is my hum. This is my farm!" (*Desire under the Elms* 354). Thus, Abbie's unconscious desire to marry Cabot is inscribed in the fascist libidinal desire to become a capitalist bourgeois.

Capital is dramatically schematized by O'Neill as a force which territorializes the subject in a cyclical paranoia. The American subject, in New England, is entrapped in the massive dreams of lucre. The puritan ideals give way to this thirst for acquisition and investment. This economic conduct forms the national character such as in the case of Abbie whose willingness for enjoyment and the possession of the land is an evidence of her fascist character. She acts without respect for ascetic ethics. Her thirst for the possession of the land, which coincides with her sexual fascism, is the deadliest of sins in the Puritan New England. In this line of thought, Max Weber advances the idea that "wealth is thus bad ethically only in so far as it is temptation to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life, and its acquisition is bad only when it is with the purpose of later living merrily and without care"(59). This is the capitalist curse which ultimately submerges Abbie into madness and nihilism. Her will is not a manifestation of God's will. The lack of grace and faith under the temptations of wealth is a decisive determinant of her fascism.

Desire under the Elms also provides the ideal model of the effects of the dialectic material intensities on the will of the religious man in New England. The last tragic scene is haunting the audience, revealing the vanity and frailty of the Sheriff, who is supposed to judge the guilty Abbie and Eben. At the moment of arresting them, he is sidetracked and instantly lured by the beauty of the farm and its material value, losing faith in religion. Like the other subjects in the

play, he is damned by the spell of possession. The closure of *Desire under the Elms* conceals secrets about the effects of the libidinal economy on the conscience of the religious man, the Sheriff. The subject's libido is not immune to the inducement of capital. Irrational impulse hinders the implementation of laws. The deviation in the Sheriff's discourse expresses the tragedy of the subject who is crushed in an alienated materialistic world. Indeed, the case of the Sheriff seems to be the optimal O'Neillian model of schizophrenia and fascism in the American capitalist society. He falls into the capitalist desire, losing his reputation.

Before the fall of the last curtain, the Sheriff enviously takes in the whole farm with his embracing glimps, admitting: "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wished I owned it" (*Desire under the Elms* 378). This is reminiscent of Guattari's conception of desire in *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*: "Desire is (dispars) disparate at heart. But, this disparateness, insofar as it is also the void, is mythical" (196). Here, it is possible deduce that the Sheriff is unconsciously driven to invest desire for libidinal economy. The Sheriff falls in the contingent sphere of schizophrenia and fascism, losing self-control in a delirious state. Escape from libidinal necessities grafted upon the configuration of the capitalist New World seems to be inevitable. Like the Ephraims, he is dramatically territorialized in the cylindrical frame of libidinal economy.

Accordingly, O'Neill's subjects may be the pattern of real figures in the modern American society whose dialectic fascist desire becomes a force served and nurtured from Capitalist desire for wealth and power, which is rooted in American history and ideology. The sense of fascism drives the Ephraims to act schizophrenically in a world devoid of principles and values.

Material success, which means an achievement of a state of worth, is measured by material possessions. O'Neill's modern theatrical schema provides a survey of desire for Capital as a strong libidinal energy. He seems to adopt a schizophrenic style as if he was schizophrenic, which designates a revolutionary process against the repressive and oppressive chains of the capitalist system.

O'Neill extends his dramatic perceptions to grasp the intricacy of the current human condition under the shackles of capitalism. Schizophrenia and fascism are produced by the capitalistic systemic power, ranking the playwright in the international scene as a forerunner of postmodern thought. In fact, his perspicacity enables him to draw the chart for the politics of desire as it is accounted for by Deleuze and Guattari. They meet in an intrinsic cross question related to new perceptions of schizophrenia and fascism. Their schizophrenic fascist view is not based on a fixed conventional phenomenological scheme, but rather tends to produce radical theatrical schemata which are triggered by the continuous interaction between Libido and Capital, that powerful machine constituting subjects as social machines.

The main finding of this research paper is that the experiments of the subject with the volatility of capital bring to the fore new conceptions of schizophrenia and fascism, which are to be celebrated as modes of existence and resistance. O'Neill dives his protagonists substantially into schizophrenia as a breakthrough to free the libido from the manacles of capitalism. His theatrical schema maps virtual planes for new subjectivity, based on the production of new modes of endurance beyond the religious and psychological spherical static structure. Indeed, O'Neill's schemata reveal theater as a war machine, where revolutionary subjects

struggle for lines of flight. At this level of thought, it is adequate to quote Gerald Raunig who contends that "the material dimension of the war machine consists in the power of invention, in the capacity for change, in the creation of other worlds" (57, 58). Building on this philosophical formulation which is based on Deleuze's theory, O'Neill designates theatrical schema mapping realms that are yet to come and celebrating new modes of bearance and struggle in the (post)modern capitalist world.

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Unbinding Genre (Bending Gender) in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*

Wajih Ayed

Abstract

Mourning becomes Shakespeare, perhaps; celebration too. *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) and *Othello* (1604) are tragedies of sweeping passion and rash action where love falters and lovers fall. In her 1988 play entitled *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, Ann-Marie MacDonald (1958—) parodies the two Shakespearean texts and visits the intersections between genre and gender where tragedy modulates into comedy and liminal gender identities fade in and out across permeable genre spaces. MaC DONAld's protagonist, Constance Ledbelly, is sucked into the wonderland of her unconscious mind where she outwits her opponents, Iago and Tybalt, and moderates the extremes of her avatars, Desdemona and Juliet. She thus breaks free from her stalking shadow, Night the Professor, and realises that she is the unwitting Author of the play. Her unconscious leap onto the stages of mourning becomes a farewell to the night, and a greeting of the morning that becomes the queerness of the postmodernist world—laughing off its past and laughing at its present. The golden pen which Constance finds at the end of her toying with genre, language, and gender is a reward for the author who takes refuge in a world where the fool of court is king of wit, and where the pandemonium of tragedy becomes the playground of parody. In this paper, I study the alchemy of Constance's change and MacDonald's reconsideration of genre and gender through parody, her postmodern philosopher's stone. My main objective is to argue for a politics of celebration revisiting the aesthetics of mourning.

Keywords: tragedy, parody, gender bending, comedy, celebration

> [T]he outcome, if successful, in both alchemy and individuation is a union of opposites … leading to alchemical gold, the philosopher's stone, the elixir of life, or, in Jungian terms, the Self.
>
> Gary Lachman, 158

Introduction

Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet) is a postmodernist reconsideration of William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. While it borrows the names of its title characters from the Shakespearean tragedies, MacDonald's play complicates its generic affiliation through parody. Before its subversive potential can be gauged, parody needs an initial theoretical frame as an aesthetic device. Dismissing Frederic Jameson's critiques while insisting on its difference from pastiche, Linda Hutcheon defines postmodernist parody as "a form of imitation" marked by "ironic inversion" and by a measure of "critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (*A Theory of Parody* 6). *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*[1] is a farewell to tragedy in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but for this parody to fare well in the realms of comedy, an appropriate context for its imitation of and departure from the tragedies parodied must be established by the audience.

[1] Henceforth, *Goodnight Desdemona*.

1. Goodnight Tragedy (Good Morning Comedy)

The title of MacDonald's play evokes its Shakespearean referents and creates the need for some familiarity with the stories of the heroines. "The parodist," as a matter of fact, "addresses a highly 'knowing' and literate audience" ("Parody") who can take the critical distance necessary to trigger the ironic potential of inversion. While this parodic "activation of the past," as Hutcheon astutely notes, gives it "a new and often ironic context, it makes a similar demand on the reader ['s] knowledge and recollection" (*A Theory of Parody* 5). MacDonald's expectations would accommodate the readers, spectators, or viewers with minimal knowledge of the characters and plots of the parodied tragedies, but only the 'knowing' reader (or spectator, or viewer) can measure the distance marked by irony and experience the impact of its inversion. The critical distance between the hypotext and the hypertext would increase in proportion to the informed audience's familiarity with Shakespearean scenes, *dramatis personae*, and scripts. Only they can realise when bathos displaces pathos and anti-climax replaces its more anticipated opposite. In *Goodnight Desdemona*, most characters are drawn from the two plays parodied, but their speeches, actions, and relationships are ironically bent. So is the dramatic structure, which explores alternative trajectories for the plots to rework the

Shakespearean ore and transform it through the alchemy of parody.

1.1. Dramatic Structure and Parodic Inversion

The dramatic structures of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* are both subject to "parodic play by the plot" (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* 14). The basis of this ironic visitation is a questioning of the structural norms of tragedy as a genre that is traditionally pitted against comedy because it presents the fall of the flawed hero as a necessary, if not as a wholly deserved punishment. Far from the common misconceptions about the rigidity of genre topology in Early Modern English drama, boundaries between tragedy and comedy at that time were permeable (Snyder 392) because genres were for Shakespeare's contemporaries rather flexible "sets of expectations and possibilities" (Orgel 123). The parodist taps the elements in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* which lean towards comedy.

This is how *Goodnight Desdemona* begins—not with a prank, but with a murder. When the curtain is raised, three mimes are concurrently presented *in medias res*. Othello smothers Desdemona with a pillow; Juliet commits suicide with Romeo's rapier; Constance Ledbelley resigns her position as an assistant professor of literature at Queen's University, throws her research assets into the dustbin, and leaves her office (*Dumbshow* 5). These

vignettes portend tragedy, with the murder of an innocent, the self-immolation of a teenager, and the metaphorical suicide of an academic. These deaths paint the colour of blood on the peak of the tragic pyramid, in perfect accord with the classical norms of tragedy. The *d'après* pattern is indeed set in what initially appears to unfold as a pastiche, rather than a parody of the Bard's two tragedies. For the readers of the play, the bleak, dumb show flirts with situational irony because the vivacious front cover page would have evoked a different view. For its spectators and viewers, however, parody in not operational yet because the playwright has so far only replicated established generic conventions. Romeo's rashness kills Juliet, jealousy takes Desdemona's life, and egoism destroys Constance's career; parody, however, saves their lives.

For Constance, the writing is in the dustbin. Parodying the solemn demeanour and grim prophesies of the Chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* (1.1.1-11), his postmodern counterpart in *Goodnight Desdemona* enters her office *ex machina*, indecorously lights a cigarette, then casually speaks. Directly addressing the audience, he says that Mercury has steered the academic's stars to clement regions, so that she now has a second chance to undergo "a double-edged re-birthday" and find "the key to her Philosopher's Stone" (*Prologue* 6). Still, the rising action only makes her bend lower; indeed, as Act 1 begins,

Constance is on the brink of meeting the fate ominously enacted in the *Dumbshow*. In her unfinished thesis, she argues that the two Shakespearean plays were initially comedies which the Bard re-scripted as tragedies when he eliminated the Fool, that comic mouthpiece of wisdom who obviates tragedy (1.1.14).[2] She then postulates that he consigned the secret to his (fictional) friend Gustav the Alchemist who encrypted it in the manuscript which she has been trying to decode for years (1.1.17). For years, too, her supervisor, Professor Claude Night has been pulling the soft wool of romance over her credulous eyes, but only to pull the rug from under her feet in the end. When he visits his supervisee for the last time, he breaks her heart and wrecks her small expectations. Not only is he getting engaged to Ramona, a young student of his, but he is also taking a lecturing position at Oxford which Constance was hoping to obtain (1.1.19). Heartbroken and hopeless, she is about to resign her job, abandon her thesis, and throw the tome of doom into the dustbin when, looking at an inscription on its cover, she experiences her first epiphany. Arrested as if by magic, she reads an injunction to find her

[2] Surprising as it may be, Constance's thesis statement finds unconditional support in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1599?). Indeed, the presence of such a character uncovers Don John's scheme to indict Hero of adultery, thereby saving the lady and bringing her in marriage to her lover, Claudio. Dogberry's comic malapropisms aside, his fortuitous arrest of Don John's henchmen and the consequent revelation of Hero's innocence avert certain tragedy and effectively turn the play into a comedy.

"true identity," and to "discover who the Author [of the two plays might] be" (1.1.22). Her fate is suspended, and tragedy is given a respite.

As she stoops to pick up three pages which have fallen into the wastebasket, she is pulled into the wonderland of her unconscious (*Goodnight Desdemona* 1.1.22), where, as the Chorus has announced, she can face her worst nightmares and turn them into her best dream. In an alternative mindscape where *Othello* is performed, she prevents Iago from successfully seducing his general into strangling his wife. In the nick of time, she interrupts the fateful scene in the Shakespearean tragedy where the ensign instructs the general not to poison Desdemona, but to

> [IAGO *hands a pillow to* OTHELLO]
> IAGO. *Strangle her in bed.*
> CONSTANCE. No!
> [*Both* IAGO *and* OTHELLO *turn and stare at her, amazed*]
> Um . . . you're about to make a terrible mistake . . . m'Lord. (2.1.24)

The Canadian girl in Othello's citadel pulls her courage together and Desdemona's handkerchief from Iago's hose, thereby bearing out his treachery and bringing in not only an anti-climax to the plot, but also to the false Venetian a humbling punishment as a latrine cleaning servant. Having been spared the sting of jealousy, the grateful lovers befriend Constance. To her surprise, she discovers that

Desdemona cannot be farther from the Mona Lisa, the patriarchal ideal of femininity, and that Othello cannot be nearer the stereotype of "the *miles gloriosus*, or braggart soldier" (Djordjevic 95), the genitor of all lies. Tragedy is diluted in bathos and the play even leans towards melodrama when Othello and Desdemona delight in their love while Iago stews in his punishment.

The jealousy plot of *Othello* is ironically replicated for the second time when Iago musters the demons of his wit to turn Desdemona against Constance for her alleged wooing of Othello by means of magic. Moved by revenge, the demoted ensign explains the visitor's odd behaviour and anachronisms as parts of her plan to marry the general. Desdemona is eventually taken in by his plotting and takes up Othello's lines (repeated verbatim or with some changes) from the Shakespearean tragedy (*Goodnight Desdemona* 2.2.47-49). She is even made to see a fake proof when Othello shows his guest a necklace which he actually intends to present to his wife. Iago makes Desdemona mistake the pendant for a gift presented to Constance. *Goodnight Desdemona* pitches into tragedy when the jealous Venetian (mimicking the absent Moor) nearly stifles the unwitting Canadian to death. Clutching at a straw, Constance produces the necklace, and, seeing the inscription engraved on it, Desdemona releases her (3.7.81). Through parody, the classic pyramidal structure of

tragedy is deprived of a climax, just like Othello's forged pyramid yarn. Constance is initially horrified at the swerve that the plotline has taken: She "wrecked a masterpiece" and "ruined the play," thus turning "Shakespeare's *Othello* to a farce" (2.1.25).[3] Little does she know that she is about to turn another tragedy into a comedy.

The structure of *Romeo and Juliet* is likewise remodelled through parody. At the beginning of Act 3, Constance finds herself a witness of the fateful duel between Mercutio and Tybalt. Deciding to intervene, she herself ironizes, "[o]ne Mona Lisa down, and one to go" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.1.50). She interrupts the fight and brings to a standstill the tragic train. The infuriated duellers demand answers about her identity and the reason for her intrusion. She surprises everyone:

[3]These instances of *metatextuality* are ironic because Constance is saying the contrary of what she postulates in her thesis. Her evocation of the farce establishes a relationship of *architextuality* with the *hypotext*. The words italicised are parts of Gerard Genette's concept of *transtextuality*, which he defines as the "*textual transcendence*" of a text, or "everything that brings it into relation with other texts" (*Architext* 81, emphasis in the original). He identifies five types of relationships, namely, *intertextuality*, or "the literal presence of one text within another" (81-82); *paratextuality*, which involves the relationships of the text with "its paratext: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc." (*Palimpsests* 3); *metatextuality*, or the "relationship that links a commentary to the text it comments on" (*Architext* 82); *hypertextuality*, which describes "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (*Palimpsests* 5); and *architextuality*, a term that designates "the relationship of inclusion that links each text to the various types of discourses [or genres] it belongs to" (*Architext* 82).

> CONSTANCE. A stranger here, my name is Constan—tine.
> I couldn't let you kill each other for,
> young Juliet and Romeo have wed;
> and by th'untying of their virgin-knot,
> have tied new blood betwixt you cousins here. (3.1.50)

Revealing the young couple's union is the shortest way to short-circuit tragedy, but neither the Friar nor the Nurse dares it in *Romeo and Juliet.* As Constance does the office of the wise Fool, her spontaneous involvement in the scene brings the duel to a friendly conclusion and the duellers to the bathhouse. Also, it ends the generational feud between the two gentle houses of Verona. The tragic climax is ironically mirrored for the second time in the boneyard. When Tybalt resolves to rid the city of the alien, the odds are clearly against Constance, who is no match for to the rapier expert. Yelping and vainly trying to escape this fox trap, her fate seems sealed. Wearing Juliet's clothes, Romeo timely intervenes and Tybalt's sword, "*rather than skewering CONSTANCE under ROMEO's arm, gets caught in the flowing fabric of ROMEO's dress*" (3.6.75). Tragedy is once again averted, and, once again, the psyche traveller escapes.

As Constance meddles with the plots of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, dramatic action sidelines the tragic crescendo of inevitability and keeps disaster at bay. Rejecting the necessity of reversal in *Romeo and Juliet*,

Susan Snyder asserts that it "*becomes*, rather than is, tragic;" as a matter of fact, she argues that the change of fortunes in the play "is so radical as to constitute *a change of genre*: the action and the characters begin in familiar comic patterns, and are then transformed—or discarded—to compose the pattern of tragedy" (391, emphasis added). Likewise denying the necessity of reversal in the two Shakespearean plays, Stephen Orgel aptly notes that "[m]uch of their dramatic force derives from the way they continually tempt us with comic possibilities" (122). He further contends that "[w]e are told in a prologue that Romeo and Juliet are star-crossed, but if inevitability is a requisite of tragedy, neither play will qualify for the genre" for "they are the most iffy dramas in the Shakespearean canon" (Orgel 122). In each of the revisited plays, increasing dramatic tension nearly brings about the conventional tragic climax, but then takes a sudden dive towards a parodic reversal that saves, rather than destroys the hero. For each of the hypotexts, the tragic dramatic structure is mimicked to the fringe of catastrophe and then turned upside down—with the resulting bathos of comic relief, rather than the pathos of tragic downfall. If the incremental tragic swell of the play is punctured by the ironic anti-climaxes of the plot, *dramatis personae* are likewise suitably remodelled after the parodic mode.

1.2. Desdemona and Juliet are Not Dead!

Hutcheon's succinct comments on *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* lend themselves with ease to *Goodnight Desdemona*. "Whenever an event is directly taken from the Shakespearean model," she asserts, "[Tom] Stoppard uses the original words," adding that he also "'trans-contextualizes' them through his addition of scenes that the Bard never conceived" (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* 14). MacDonald's editing of the scripts of the *dramatis personae* in the hypertext further augments its ironic distance from its hypotexts. The dramatist 'trans-contextualises' (parts of) lines and speeches reprised from Shakespeare, but she also re-contextualises these or reassigns them to other speaker[4]. Notably, parts of Othello's long dialogue with Iago in the hypotext (*Oth*. 3.3.100-287) are given to Desdemona, who is deceived by the disgraced ensign's scheming against Constance in the hypertext (*Goodnight Desdemona* 2.2.38-45). These instances of intertextuality result in the extension of the scripts of Desdemona and Juliet at the expense of Othello

[4] The hypotext and the hypertext are typographically marked. Quotes from Shakespeare come in italics in the 1998 edition, yet many are reassigned to other characters or transposed in different situations. For example, in *Goodnight Desdemona* (2.2.37), Constance's fictional homeland, Academe, becomes the lair of the cannibals about whom Othello talks in Shakespeare's play (*Oth*. 1.3.157).

and Iago.[5]

The conventional representations of male heroes and villains in the Shakespearean hypotexts as proactive, potent, and rational are passed over to women in MacDonald's parody. Professor Night is affected, arrogant, selfish, and dishonest. A liar to academia, he has built a career of plagiarised secrets shared only by his prescript muse and indentured scribe, Constance. A wolf in a sheep's clothing, he is ready to appropriate the findings of her thesis (*Goodnight Desdemona* 1.1.16-17). He also sadistically taunts his supervisee with the diamond ring which he shows her but intends for Ramona (1.1.19). A liar too is Othello. No sooner does he begin the proud narrative of his marvellous adventures in fantastic worlds that he is interrupted by Constance, who says that she knows them already; in an aside, Iago mockingly adds, "([s]o know we all the wag and swagger of this tale" (2.1.26). When the Moor of Venice brags of the 'ingenious' stratagem of the "pyramid on wheels" in which he supposedly hid his men to take by surprise the unsuspecting Turks in Egypt, Constance cannot help protesting that it "sounds like Troy,"

[5] Some emblematic lines and speeches are "reassigned and reshuffled among the characters—a technique that elicits laughter through absurd incongruity" (Djordjevic 101). Only the perfectly informed spectators or viewers are concerned by this remark. Cued by italicised passages directly quoted from the hypotexts, readers can more easily notice reshuffled quotations and experience their jocular inappropriateness or absurdity. Differences in medium can thus increase or decrease the parodic effect.

to which Iago in a second aside acidly adds that it is "[n]ot [like] Troy, but false." As for Iago, one of Shakespeare's arch-villains, his rhetoric-saturated poison finds its antidote in Constance's candid assertion of truth (2.1.24) and pragmatic show of the necklace (3.7.81). Deflated as a villain who meets his just punishment as a latrine cleaner, the comic effect of his humiliation is heightened by the audience's knowledge of, and expectations from the character in the source play (Djordjevic 99). This poetic justice is an ironic catalyst of melodrama, rather than tragedy.

The Shakespearean aesthetics of plot, character, and speech can arguably be seen to be parodied through reshuffles of script, variations of distance, and inversions of structure. These updates to the hypotext do not only complicate the dramatic genre of the hypertext, but also interrogate its intersections with the considerations of gender in the metatext. If there is truth in the claim that drama has been a male-dominated aesthetic field, there must be more credibility to the claim that tragedy has been the *chasse gardée* of patriarchy. Predominantly male dramatists have indeed scripted tragedies where challenges to orthodox gender roles and spheres threaten the community and therefore bring about exemplary punishment. Antigone, Cleopatra, and Clytemnestra may be the most relevant illustrations of women who committed

agency and incurred the wrath of the patriarchal idols. Constance, the remote descendant of these women, receives a more clement treatment in the script of MacDonald, the remote descendant of the women who were denied the sacred fire of writing. The author *in* the play and the author *of* the parody radically depart from the gender-biased patriarchal politics of misrepresentation. To the ('informed') readers, the cover page promises a programme of re-presentation.

2. Gender Bending and Gender Parody

The layered image on the front cover of the 1998 print version of the play is a graphic *collage* which sets the tone for gender parody. The Bard's most authoritative painting sinks to the bottom of the artefact, bathed in an eerie light blue. Superimposed on the right eye is an insert from Alexej Von Jawlensky's Expressionist painting, "Mosaic" (1913); the left eye and lips are borrowed from what appears to be the photo of a woman. Superposed on the background painting, these sensual inserts blur Shakespeare's gender identity and stratify the visual field where his perception was conventionally recognised and validated. These are female eyes that replace his, perhaps to change the opaque pearls with translucent diamonds; and these are cynic lips that gloss over his, perhaps to reveal a secret that the nether ones kept untold. This spectral portrait

unmakes the bonds of monochrome gender. Defiantly hermaphrodite, as a matter of fact, its composite corporeality sees through polychrome eyes vibrant with colour and provocative with an inviting challenge. The function of this cover art paratext is proleptically parodic.

2.1. I Sing the Gender Fluid

Goodnight Desdemona questions the rigid patriarchal gender roles encoded in its hypotexts and proposes gender fluidity as an alternative process of subjectivity. In the *Prologue,* the Chorus praises Mercury, "that changing element, / portrayed as Gemini, hermaphrodite and twin" (6). Coupled with the explicit and implicit references to Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology,[6] this allusion evokes the latter's theory of the collective unconscious, particularly with reference to his concept of *anima*, or the female component in a man, and its mirror archetype, *animus*, the male component in a woman (Lachman 94). The Chorus's gay promises will eventually be fulfilled.

At the end of Act 2, Scene 2, Constance miraculously flees Cyprus and the fury of jealous

[6] The prefatory quote following the dedication is taken from Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (343-44). Other references include the 'Gustav Manuscript,' which may have borrowed its given title from the psychologist's middle name, and the allusions to *Self*, *secret*, *unconscious*, and *alchemy*, which are key concepts in Jungian psychology.

Desdemona, but she leaves without her skirt, which the revenge-minded Venetian impaled on her rapier when the science-fiction warp began. Fortuitous as it is, this incident significantly impacts gender identities in the play. Constance lands in Verona, in the middle of the duel that seals Romeo's fate. Wearing longjohns, without a skirt, she is misrecognised by everyone for a boy, an opportune mistake which Constance readily embraces:

> CONSTANCE. [*A moment of decision. She clears her throat to a more masculine pitch*]
> From Cyprus washed I here ashore,
> a roving pedant lad to earn my bread
> by wit and by this fountain pen, my sword.
> (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.1.50)

Posing as an itinerant male academic, the intruder brandishes her small, green sword which nevertheless fends off the violence of duellers high on patriarchy. Through Mercury, this Venus is reborn as Apollo in Verona. Thanks to her improvised "stylization of the body" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 421) in terms of masculine phonic and sartorial norms, Constance waxes out of her given somatic mould and follows the curves of bent gender identifications.

Her politic assumption of masculinity notwithstanding, the steady quester makes both Romeo *and* Juliet fall in love with her at first sight. Weary of his wife, Romeo declares his flame to masked Constance in the masque in Capulet's mansion:

> ROMEO. Speak not of Juliet, 'tis thee I love.

CONSTANCE. What?
[*ROMEO drops to one knee and seizes her hand*]
ROMEO. O Constantine, O emperor of my heart!
It is my sex that is thine enemy.
Call me but love, and I'll be new endowed.
(*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.4.61)

In spite of his biological sex, Romeo offers to divest himself of his given gender in exchange for Constantine's returned sexual love. His 'straight' sexual orientation bending, he crosses the gender Rubicon when he uses a queer innuendo to express his newfound bent for feminine endowment; as a matter of fact, he kneels, begging the transvestite woman to "quench myself at thy Priapic font" (3.4.62) and wishing he were "a fountain pen within thy hand" ready to "spurt forth streams of eloquence at thy command" (3.4.63). At the climax of this scene prolific with same-sex erotic fantasies, transgender Romeo moves on Constantine and actually kisses 'him.' His bid on bedding the 'Greek' beauty is foiled by his Veronese wife, however—which intensifies the frustration of his feeling of sexual inadequacy.

Set to win Constantine's love, forlorn Romeo resolves to don "a woman's gown" to the end of his days (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.4.65), so he wears Juliet's clothes and calls on the *kouros* at night. "[*Softly, from off,*] Romeo squeaks, "Constantine … it is I, *Romiet* …" (3.5.72, emphasis added), a parodic name diminutively shrinking *Romeo* and conveniently rhyming with *Juliet*. This

self-styling androgynous subject of desire dresses, acts, and speaks in a manner considered by his patriarchal community to be constitutive of femininity.[7] He also calls himself by a hybrid name that mocks his own, as well as the very notion of a stable identity moored in flimsy affixations of external signifiers of gender identity. Fulfilling his promise to be "*new* endowed" (3.4.61), genderqueer Romeo adopts a hybrid identity styled after his newfound bisexual orientation. He thus becomes a drag queen with a fluid and dynamic gender. In imitating Juliet, Romeo-as-drag, "implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 418). Transvestite and transgender, 'Romiet' stages a transhistoricised burlesque of gender ontology as mere travesty posing as performance.

This Apollo is to Juliet what heat is to ice. Love-struck at first sight, the pining beauty sighs, "[t]he Greek hath taught not just the world to see, / but also me" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.4.63). She is so infatuated with 'him' that 'his' resistance only fuels her desire. Mistaking 'his' admission that 'he' has been trying to "penetrate your [pre-Shakespearean literary] source" (3.4.64), for a

[7] Romeo is indeed furtive in his nightly venture: He speaks in a low voice and uses the back door because "[his] father must not see [his] woman's weeds" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.5.72). Old Montague can, from a Lacanian perspective, be seen as the no/name of the father barring access to the object of desire, the back entrance to Constance's balcony.

declaration of love instead of 'his' desire to decode the Gustav code, Juliet retorts, "I'd have thee penetrate my secret source, / and know me full as well and deep as thou / dost know thyself O dreamer, Constantine" (3.4.64). When Romeo comes back to the dance and leads 'the Greek boy,' Juliet thinks that the perpendicular "slant of Constantine's desire" is "to match his stick to light his fire" (3.4.65). Seeing him gay, she still decides to pay him a visit, dressed as Romeo. This gender fluidity goes on in Act 3, Scene 5, a parody of the orchard scene in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.), which has been celebrated as an iconic *locus amandi* of heteronormative love.

Still a drag king, Constance is on her balcony, and Juliet is below, now also a drag king pining (slightly modified) lines which her lover says in Shakespeare's play: "*But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and* Constantine *the sun*" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.5.67). When 'the Greek boy' asks if this is Romeo, she replies,

> JULIET. *I know not how to tell thee who I am.*
> My sex, dear boy, *is hateful to myself,*
> *because it is an enemy to thee*;
> therefore I wear tonight, this boyish hose. (3.5.67)

Aroused beyond patience, Juliet's roving desire turns her into a trans-gender subject whose cross-dressing is only the outward expression of her inward gender-expansiveness. Juliet's visit denudes the artificiality of cisgender identities.

The two transvestites tread on brittle ground where sex and gender are intertwined. The orchard of desires is visited by new gatherers of different fruits. When Constantine declines Juliet's *demande d'amour*, she calls 'him' "a deviant" (3.5.68), but even when 'he' protests that 'he' is straight, Juliet pursues her wooing, offering an alternative venue for his pleasure. Framed by genre parody, this extended drag scene shreds the gender ontology of Shakespeare's lovers into shifty gender games, now king, now queen—but ever crowing desire sovereign.

Heterosexual normativity in the parodied Shakespearean plays fails to deliver sustainable gender ontologies which survive the test of desire, unadulterated by cultural constraints. Thanks to extensive gender parody in *Goodnight Desdemona*, "we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 418). This doing and undoing of gender comes to a head when Juliet's despair makes her attempt a suicide, forcing 'Constantine' to admit that 'he' is a woman (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.7.77). The revelation causes Juliet no trouble; instead, it relocates her desire into a same-sex sphere. Realising that her culture's sanctified gender relations will block her newly reconfigured sexual orientation, she forestalls rejection, complaining that her "[u]nsanctified desire" is

"more tragic far / than any star-crossed love 'twixt boy and girl!" (3.7.77), a recast allusion to Shakespeare's stellar metaphor.

Although Constance denies any filiation with Lesbos, Juliet breaks the glass ceiling of orthodox gender relations when she pleads to be taken to the curvy shores of the island, there to lay on the sands inland and make Sapphic hymns to their ecstasy (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.7.77-78). She coaxes Constance into rekindling the ambers of her repressed homosexuality, which she nearly sets ablaze when she invitingly reclines,offering her breasts to her partner's groping hands. So far led in love and sex, Constance now leads the erotic encounter. This "sexual stylization of butch/femme sexual identities," to invoke Butler once again, parodies the "notion of an original and primary gender identity" (*Gender Trouble* 418). The scene would plausibly be seen to encode a second-degree irony because the two transvestite women discover their lesbian desire only when dressed as men. The erotic crescendo is abruptly interrupted, however, when Constance finds "a Manuscript page" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.7.79) in Juliet's shirt telling her to retrieve Desdemona.[8]

The hilarious misrecognitions and *quid pro quos*

[8] Although incomplete, this episode of returned same-sex love contrasts with Desdemona's rejection of the love declaration made by Romeo (dressed as Juliet) (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.8.83) and her (rhetorical) question, "[d]oth no one in Verona sail straight?" (3.9.85).

resulting from genderbending and genderqueering in Act 3 expose the fragility of cisgender masculine/feminine categories, and also the provisional nature of all gender production. Gender-binary identities are seen to depend on the continuous production of value judgements of the kind that a reactionary like Tybalt makes: For him, the 'Greek boy' is "a deviant" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.4.62), a "[h]ermaphrodite," (3.6.74) and an "inverted nature" (3.9.83). These sex-based instruments of profiling and slander pave the way for his attempt to kill Constance at the end of the play. The murderous plot gives credence to Butler's claim that "gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (*Gender Trouble* 420). For Tybalt, Constantine's fashioning of her gender is so disturbing that it can only have mortuary consequences. These are averted by ruse—and through parodic inversion.

Through the reversed viewpoint of parody, dominant gender discourses and practices appear to be constructed, performed, repeated, and imposed in ways that hide their contingency and make transparent their opacity. Without pressure, gender *doxa* cannot hide the fissures subtending its dissonant texture, so its paradoxes lose any seeming logic and beg for laughter. Withdrawing from the solemn heads of Verona to meet the grinning skulls of the boneyard, Tybalt's *alpha* patriarchy is seen shaking, uncertain, and in need for external validation. Indeed,

traumatised by Constantine's sexual appeal to his cousins, Tybalt is anxious to measure the size of the stranger's penis, for fear lest the other should possess the Phallus. When he is interrupted by 'Romiet,' he abducts 'him' and carries him away, presumably a rapist. In *Goodnight Desdemona*, heteronormative gender ontology is "put into crisis by the performance of gender in such a way that these judgments are undermined or become impossible to make" (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 214). By ridiculing Tybalt, genderbending and parody unbind subjects of desire heretofore manacled by rusty judgements. Once the repressive architecture of gender roles and relations is undone through parody, as in the cases of Romeo, Constance, and Juliet, the "temporal and contingent groundlessness" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 421) of gender identities appears as an accessory of political expediency maintaining the existing power imbalance between the two culturally recognised genders in favour of masculinity. Gender-bending unbinds both gender and genre.

2.2. I Am Constance, 'Come from the Dead'

When the play begins, conquered Constance is stooping to the victor. Professor Night's final visitation leaves her devastated. Her intimate life was an appositive clause in a passionless play which was ruined when the man that she had expected would be her lover for life stole away.

Her dream job was stolen also by the false academic, and her thesis came to stasis when the Gustav Manuscript kept secret the identity of the Author. In academia, she is 'the Mouse' to her students and 'Connie' to her colleagues (*Goodnight Desdemona* 2.1.30). She is the literal and figurative 'pet' of her supervisor, who patronisingly pats on her head to show his satisfaction. During her jolly unconscious peregrinations in Cyprus and Verona, however, she gathers pages unbound from the Manuscript and meets the women who bring her closer to the object of her quest, the identity of the Fool who turns tragedy into comedy and who bends alienation into identity.

When she first meets Desdemona, Constance introduces herself as "an academic" who "comes from Queen's" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 2.1.27). She is mistaken for a Pedant, from the land of Academe, which is "ruled by mighty Queens, / a race of Amazons who brook no men" (2.1.29). Her reality cannot be farther from this fiction. In her first moment of recognition, guilty Constance confesses to Desdemona that she has been writing reviews and articles for her supervisor which "he would have writ himself" (2.2.36) and thus "helped him in deceiving Queen's" (2.2.37). Moved to compassion, Constance's new Venetian friend tells her that she has been "ten years an inky slave in paper chains" (2.2.36) whose "eyes were shrouded by the demon Night" (2.2.37), then promises to

help her find the object of her desire. They both rally in the indecorous and bathetic battle cry, “Bullshit!” (2.2.38). In her embittered soliloquy, later on, she looks back at her life, realising how little esteem her students and colleagues have shown her and vows vengeance (2.2.45-46), thereby resolving to initiate action for the first time in the play. Her duel with Tybalt nearly costs her dearly however (3.6.75), so she learns to be sly enough to throw dust in his eyes by feigning death (3.7.82), her supposedly just reward.

After her erotic proximity to Romeo and Juliet, and after her close call with Desdemona and Tybalt, Constance moves from passivity to a measure of individuating agency. Meeting the Venetian lady’s mortuary invitation and the Veronese teenager’s suicidal injunction with “nay … both of you” (*Goodnight Desdemona* 3.9.86), she squarely rejects the extremes parodied in the play. She is then able to bluntly speak with them, telling Desdemona that she is “gullible and violent” and Juliet that she is “more in love with death, ’cause death is easier to love” (3.9.86). They suitably realise their excesses, admit that she speaks wisely, and swear “to live by questions, not by their solution” (3.9.87). In her final epiphany, Constance ascertains that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* “were comedies after all,” that she is the Fool, and that “[t]he Fool and the Author are one and the same” (3.9.87). Uncanny understage laughter by the Chorus*/Hamlet*’s ghost resounds as she delightedly

recognises her newfound agency. She is presented with a scroll and a golden pen, but her most precious reward is the well-deserved greeting expressed in unison by Desdemona and Juliet, "[h]appy birthday, Constance" (3.9.88). Now addressed by name, not by demonyms or diminutives, the mind traveller reaches a heightened level of dignity and an increased measure of agency. It is through her constant redefinition of her relationships with her *animus* and *anima* that Constance negotiates her identity.

Through parody, Constance's encounters with her two *alter egos* make her swing between extremes of identification until she herself finally becomes the element of mercury under the sign of Gemini. Before the curtain falls, the Chorus comes back, commenting on the academic's progress, then the players dance. Still, the festive ending should not suggest that all is or will be well. There is no happy *dénouement* for the parrot, the turtle, or the Turk's head. The two pets incur the disfiguring playfulness of humans, become symbols of helplessness, and then fade out of the script. Carrier of "a looting list" (*Goodnight Desdemona* 2.2.35), the 'heathen' head is an ironic comment on its own status as the trophy of a villain plucked from his dead body, then tossed casually out of discursivity. The acid of parody does not dissolve the immoderate violence done to human and inhuman others.

Now 'looking awry' at the dominant ontologies of

genre and gender from the slanted perspective of parody, Constance can change and face other ideological forcefields. She will probably be able to come back to academia as a passionate scholar who will no longer look through the eyes of the dumb, nor give credit to the despicable, or destroy the books of the academics. She may also avert the tragedy of subjection to the avid capitalist commercialism marketing light cigarettes and beer for credulous consumers. Her newfound philosopher's stone may turn greedy academics into generous intellectuals who will no longer "each other eat" (*Oth*. 1.3.157) or steal the sweat of non-tenured colleagues and supervisees.

Conclusion

Although it initially seems a contemporary adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, *Goodnight Desdemona* invests in the tragic as a threatening inevitability, but only to reinvest it with mere potentiality. Revisited through parody, the two Shakespearean plays depart from tragedy to flirt with comedy. MacDonald ironically comments on traditional representations of genre and gender, the crossing of which in her play stimulates a queer parody of generic conventions and sexual orientations. As a (radical) comedy, *Goodnight Desdemona* parodies its Shakespearean hypotexts, lays bare the iffiness of their codes, and celebrates alternative venues of their

reconfiguration. The conventional dramatic structure of tragedy is given the lie, like Othello's monsters. The binary pair *comedy*/*tragedy* is triangulated through parody almost into a problem play. The excesses of her Jungian avatars, Desdemona and Juliet, are moderated into a more refined subjectivity. Likewise, the pair *masculine*/*feminine* is triangulated through gender parody into a fluid category where desire is porous, protean, and permeable.

The passage from play to praxis is a shift from aesthetics to politics. *Goodnight Desdemona* is redeemed from tragedy by its parody of the pyramidal structure and its invalidation of the inevitability pattern. Through its enmeshment with the identity politics of postmodernism, the cisgender aesthetics of the parodied Shakespearean plays is reinscribed by a celebration of the queer that becomes Constance's creative quest for identity. The textual intersections between genre and gender open interstices in dominant ideologies, ones that parody widens and underscores. Parody is for MacDonald an aesthetic frame for her deglamorization of tragedy and liberation of authorship. For Constance, it is the mode of her quest for identity whereby she puts suicide at bay and desire at hand. This is the actual alchemy that turns the past participle *led* to the infinitive *lead* and refines the substantive *lead*, the base metal used in cheap pencils into the substantial *golden* fountain pen of self-fashioning.

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Erskine Caldwell, Zora Neale Hurston and Life's Lower Elements in the South of the United States: Celebrating Region and Race!

Borni Mahmoud Lafi

Abstract

Erskine Caldwell and Zora Neale Hurston are two southern authors who wrote about the American South and its people. They wrote mainly about life's lower elements or about the poor and the downtrodden of both races in the region. The present paper examines how these life's lower elements allowed Caldwell and Hurston to explore and develop a rich artistic tradition structured around celebrating what was deemed unworthy of literary representation and critical scrutiny. Caldwell and Hurston failed, it seemed, to satisfy the literary politics of the 1930s depressions years and of the Southern and the Harlem Renaissance. Such failure was caused in Caldwell's case by *a shift in critical perspectives* which was marked by the end of the Proletarian or Marxist veneer in American Literature and by the emergence and establishment of New Criticism as a major critical strategy in literary study and analysis. As for Hurston's failure it was caused, as this paper argues, by *a shift of interest*- her own shift of interest. She gradually distanced herself from the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement through focusing on intra-racial conflicts instead of on interracial ones. Both Caldwell and Hurston were accused, as a consequence, of betrayal and of selling out region and race. This paper argues that instead of betrayal and of selling out region and race, what Erskine Caldwell and Zora Neale Hurston actually did was claiming or celebrating the South and its people through refiguring and foregrounding what the Southern Renaissance and the Harlem or New Negro Movement sought to exclude and marginalize.

Keywords: Race, Region, South, Celebration, New Negro, Literature of Immersion, Literature of Ascension, Southern Renaissance, Proletarian Literature, Marxism, Critical Perspective Shift, Interest Shift.

The following is a comparative study in which I attempt to look at how the South of the United States was celebrated by both Zora Neale Hurston and Erskine Caldwell. Despite their gender and racial differences- Hurston is female and black, Caldwell is male and white- both writers, I argue, were closely connected with their native region and its people. Both dealt, each according to her/his vision, with life's lower elements in the South and explored the rich artistic possibilities these lower elements offered. By life's lower element I mean the poor, the neglected and marginalized among both whites and blacks.

Hurston and Caldwell rose to eminence during and after the depression years of the 1930s- a time known for its social and literary realism in America and more so in Europe. But since both did not adhere to the ideologies of the era- as championed by the Southern apologists as well as the proponents of proletarian literature for Caldwell and by the black literary intelligentsia under the aegis of Richard Wright for Hurston- they, Hurston and Caldwell, were soon dismissed as marginal and insignificant literary figures. After decades of negligence and dismissal, Hurston's literary achievement, similar to that of Caldwell, attracted the attention of critics and scholars the world over. This was not due to mere reversal of fortunes. It went, rather, I maintain, to the heart of both authors' unconventional perception of the South or Dixie: the land

and its people.

Zora Neale Hurston (1903-1960) lived and died in the small town of Eatonville, Florida. She was a recipient of two Guggenheims, authored four novels, a score or so of short stories, two musicals, two books on black myth and mythology, dozens of insightful and highly claimed essays and an autobiography. She achieved late fame and recognition thanks to her much celebrated and controversial novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). The novel depicted the surfacing of a colored woman from self-effacement to self-assertion and empowerment- something that could be interpreted as a serious assault on the black patriarchal world view and structure. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* exhibited Hurston's deep knowledge and skillful manipulation of black life's culture and folklore.

Whatever the merits of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, it was Hurston's choice to focus on her people's culture and folklore that made her one of the main auspicious figures of the Harlem Renaissance. Yet, because of reasons related to gender, race, and politics, Hurston's promising career soon sunk into oblivion. Those who contributed to her demise were, oddly enough, people of her own color and race. Prominent black literary figures like Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright were from the beginning antagonistic, to say the least, to

Hurston. To them, she was not serious or relevant enough in her depiction of Negroes and Negro life in the South at a time when almost every leading black figure was concerned with social and racial significance.

They dismissed her representation of the region and of its black people, as too easy-going and carefree. Hurston's characters were, in the words of Richard Wright, pseudo-characters " who eat and laugh, work and kill; they swing like a pendulum in that safe and narrow orbit in which America likes to see the Negro live: between laughter and tears."[1] Behind Wright's off-hand dismissal of Hurston's topic and mode of representation lied his ideological perception of the function and purpose of literature in a racially besieged America. Being a proponent of social realism-a realism which relied on melodrama and naturalism- Wright dismissed Hurston because, I think, she used the same turf to write a different story and provide a different picture of black life in the American South. The bone of contention between Hurston and Wright- and soon with her male Afro-American antagonists- was rather about territorial literary positioning as well as about who was qualified or not to speak for the American Negro, and, in what manner and for what purpose.

[1] Wright, Richard. 1937. "Between Laughter and Tears." *New* Masses.5 Oct. pp. 22, 25. Print

If Richard Wright, for instance, traduced the American South for its racism which had reduced blacks to mere ciphers, she, Hurston, rejected this idea because it was, she claimed, "upheld by the sobbing school of Negrohood who [think] that nature somehow has given them a dirty deal…"[2]According to Hurston, black life in the American South was, despite of and perhaps even because of its callous and debilitating racism, rich and full of possibilities which ought to be celebrated. Her favorite metaphor for this richness and abundance was the muck in Florida's Everglades and in which most of her characters, seeking communion with their blackness, immersed themselves. The literature that Hurston produced was, by all means, a literature of immersion and not a literature of ascension.[3] It was a literature that claimed and celebrated

[2] Hurston, Zora Neale. 1938. "Stories of Conflict." *The Saturday Review of Literature*. 2 April. p.32. Print.

[3]The scholar and critic Robert B. Steptoe identifies two narrative modes characterizing the fiction produced by Afro-American writer: Ascension and Immersion. Ascension implies a movement to a real or symbolic North. It privileges literacy, linguistic purity and the appropriation of a dominant discourse. The Hero of the fiction of ascension is always lonely and isolated. S/he moves beyond the limits of restraining group identity. S/he seeks freedom from both family and community. Ascension rests on a linear plot and on a past to future orientation. The Fiction of ascension is centered on the idea of self-creation. Conversely, the fiction of immersion implies a movement to a real or symbolic South. It privileges 'orature' or orality, eclectic as well as folk language. Here, the hero seeks community and ritual insight. S/he seeks movement beyond the limits of individual power in order to be anchored in family and community. The fiction of immersion has a circular or recursive plot that is anchored in past and tradition. It strives towards racial healing and recovery. See Robert B.

black folk and black folk culture because they epitomized the roots of regional belonging and racial pride. It was not a literature that moved or ascended North in order to chronicle the displaced southern Negro in Chicago, Detroit, or New York.

Hurston's importance resided also in her celebration of black cultural tradition especially when dealing with issue related to women and womanhood. Indeed, before feminism and womanist writing[4] became unavoidable modes or forms of literary criticism and representation, Hurston not only debunked certain gender stereotypes but also revisited and renegotiated black cultural traditions in order to claim and empower black women. Her artistic agenda explains why her critical revival was initiated, after many decades of total neglect, by Black American women authors and critics like Alice Walker and many others. These women initiated Hurston's literary revival not because she was a woman but because she "has become a metaphor for the black woman writer's

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Steptoe, *From Behind the Veil*

[4] Alice Walker defines womanism among other things as follows: "From *womanish*. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.)A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings.Acting grown-up.Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge.*Serious*. See Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. p. xi. Hartcourt Brace and Company. New York. 1983. Print.

search for a tradition". They also celebrated her because her work presents "black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings."[5]

If Hurston's characters were considered by her opponents as ciphers and pseudo-characters, those depicted by Erskine Caldwell were brandished from the start as sub-species who were simply motivated by their biological functions and mal-functions. These negative assessments tremendously hindered Caldwell's fledging career, and ultimately categorized and pigeonholed him as a purveyor of filth. Caldwell was a Southerner from the state of Georgia. The South that he depicted was basically made of the region's poor whites or lower elements. It was the "Dixie of the Forgotten People."[6] His characters' lives were made of "Passion and Pellagra"[7]. Caldwell's literary territory extended all over the backwoods of his native state where sharecroppers and tenants of both races were "God Forsaken, People Forsaken" during the depression

[5] See Erik D. Curren. "Should Their Eyes Have Been Watching God? Hurston's Use of Religious Experience and Gothic Horror", *African American Review*,p.17.V.29. N. 1. 1995. Print.

[6] J. Wayne Flynt. *Dixie's Forgotten People*. Bloomingdale: IndianaUniversity Press. 1950. Print.

[7] Conroy.Jack .*The New Masses*. 7 April. 1932. pp. 24-25. Print. In his review of Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, Conroy asserted: "Erskine Caldwell has told with a great deal of skill the story of the decay and dissolution of the Lester family. Yet somehow his characters fail to emerge full-blown. They are all dying of pellagra and starvation, yet other organs beside their stomachs seem to plague them the most…"

years of the 1930s and beyond.[8]

When Caldwell published his first and second novel, respectively *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*, he was hailed by the American left as the champion of those who were left behind and unaccounted for. The subscribers to social realism and the practitioners of the proletarian novel wished to have him among their ranks. From the other side of the spectrum, the Southern intellectuals- be they the Fugitives or the Agrarians of the manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* (1932)[9]- criticized what they considered to be Caldwell's unfair depiction of their native region. They even accused him of catering for the taste of "the thrill goaded New Yorkers and would be New Yorkers of his time."[10] Caldwell was accused of outright regional betrayal. To his detractors, he sold the South and its people in order to please a northern audience ever ready to believe the worst about the region and its people.

Moreover, Caldwell's opponents in the South dismissed his subjects and topics as unfit for literary representation and critical scrutiny. This was due mainly to the author's sustained efforts to call attention to the plight of the hopeless and forlorn of both races during the

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[8] See Harvey Klevar's "Something Holy in a God Forsaken Land". *Pembroke Magazine*. pp. 65-76. XI. 1979. Print.

[9] *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.*By Twelve Southerners.Harper and Brothers.New York and London. 1930. Print.

[10] John Donald Wade, "Sweet are the Uses of Degeneracy" *Southern Review,* I (1935-6). Print.

depression of the 1930s and beyond in the South.

Caldwell did not limit himself to providing a gloomy picture of the people he depicted. He went as far as taking a stand through condemning the exploitative treatment and barbaric conditions under which many lived and labored. This earned him critical labels ranging from 'social realist' to 'proletarian novelist' and 'naturalist.'[11]Caldwell's exposure of life's underside in the South, through fiction and documentary photographs, placed him among the most influential and caustic critics of American capitalist society. His name came to be associated with the American Civil Liberty Union, with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P), with Consumer Federations, with Defense Leagues, and with Labor Organizations. This exposure enticed millions of readers to sympathize with Caldwell's starved and often degenerate characters. Caldwell's writings on poverty, illness, and degradation in the South, during the depression times, signaled to his sympathetic readers the end of the capitalist system and opened the door for forging a new and different America.

[11] Naturalism as a mode of representation captures the travails of characters whose lives are marked by devastating circumstances and whose means of coping do not always correspond with what is deemed acceptable in bourgeois terms. Realism, in contrast, suggests that everything has a moral sense when located in an orderly world. For an in depth definition of 'Proletarian fiction', see Walter Rideout's *The Radical Novel in the United States*. Cambridge. Harvard Press. 1977. Print.

The years of the depression, also known as the red decade, witnessed a phenomenal growth of the communist party in the United States. The communist party appealed to many disillusioned Americans and increased its followers or members at the beginning through downplaying revolutionary dogma and through calling for united stands against fascism. While some Americans became actual card-carrying members of the communist party, others were merely content with being sympathizers or fellow road travelers claiming the aims of communism and participating in front organizations such as the American Youth Congress and American Writers League. Caldwell never completely satisfied the left. He was, however, influenced by it. Being a southerner, from a region where the depression was deeply felt, Caldwell was receptive to the arguments of a political mood that understood and prioritized the social realities of the poor. But the poor he depicted and celebrated failed generally to measure up to left-wing literary standards and expectations.

Thus, most proponents of proletarian literature held the view that Caldwell's characters were not socially or politically conscious and that Caldwell himself lacked the social understanding necessary for truly proletarian art. This view was motivated by the fact that the salient features of Caldwell's fiction were a deliberate emphasis

on human sexuality and a propensity for the grotesque and the bizarre. Caldwell often reacted to these charges by emphasizing that he was simply exploring a favorite naturalistic theme: the beast within. His interests in this theme were evident in most of his work where he appeared to be more fascinated by people's stomachs than by their souls. To Caldwell, there was no better way to deal with beastliness than by stressing the sexual nature of his characters.

As a consequence, Jeeter Lester in *Tobacco Road* could be interpreted, in view of his degeneration and decadence, as standing for a warped Darwinian perception of mankind where it is more accurate to speak of devolution instead of evolution. By the same token, TyTy Walden along with the union leader Will Thompson in *God's Little Acre* could be assessed as typical celebrators of uninhibited sexuality. TyTy lived unconventionally whereas Will moved from speech to act only after sexual intercourse. His death by the end of the novel was futile and meaningless from a leftist political perspective. Neither the destitution of the Lesters in *Tobacco Road* nor the decadence and degeneration of the Waldens in *God's Little Acre* achieved the awareness and social relevance long sought by the proponents of proletarian fiction.

What these novels achieved, however, was establishing the fact that poverty and deprivation were

universal problems. They undeniably established the fact that there *is* no virtue in poverty or deprivation. In dealing with these problems, Caldwell combined tragedy and comedy. Implicit within that combination was what some critics called 'the Erskine Caldwell paradox' which prevailed during the 1930s and 1940s. The tragic scenes in his stories and novels resulted, on the one hand, in horrified protest. On the other hand, the comic aspects of those same stories and novels made the painful realities of his characters aesthetically more bearable and palatable to the reader. The first critic to grasp the above mentioned paradox was Joseph Warren Beach. In his insightful *American Fiction; 1920-1940*, Beach saw Caldwell in an aesthetic dilemma: how could the horrible conditions he was so serious and well informed about be created so as to give aesthetic pleasure? Beach considered that

> Caldwell is probably the best example we have of the artistic imagination working consistently in matter of concern to the social conscience, and yet not subdued, like the dyer's hand to what it works in. By this I mean that dealing with data of the most obvious economic and sociological significance, he does not treat them in the manner of sociological treatise or reformist propaganda, but keeps_ in his novels and stories _ within the strict limits of aesthetic presentation. And the result is curiously enough, that he is the cause of bewilderment and scandal to many serious and cultivated readers.[12]

Warren's suggestions contained one of the most positive

[12] Beach, Warren Joseph, *American Fiction; 1920-1940*. New York. MacMillan. & Co. 1940. Print.

and rare responses to Caldwell's work and aesthetic imagination. Unfortunately, this response was not taken up or expanded by other critics and Caldwell's ensuing criticism was, I believe, largely a failed enterprise.

As Sylvia Jenkins Cook has shown, the failure of Caldwell's criticism derived from the critics' fundamental refusal to face the nature of the author's goals and achievements. Bearing in mind this fact, one is tempted to add that the failure of Caldwell's critical enterprise was also due to *a shift in critical perspectives* during the late 1930s and beyond. This shift was marked by the end of the Proletarian and Marxist veneer in American Literature and by the emergence and establishment of New Criticism as a major perspective in literary study and analysis.[13] Being a textual approach, New Criticism focused on the text and neglected everything that was outside it: author, society, history, etc. Moreover, most of the American New Critics were the former Southern Agrarians whose hostility to Caldwell, to say the least, was secret to none.

As Caldwell persisted to ground his literary output in a social reality that he blamed for his characters

[13] 1936 marked the end proletarian trend in American Fiction. Among the famous novels belonging to this trend we can mention: J.T. Farrell's *A World I Never Made*, Michael Gold's *Jews without Money*, Jack Conroy's *The Disinherited*, Robert Cantwell's *The Land of the Plenty*, and John Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*. For more data see Rideout, Walter; *The Radical Novel in the United States*. Cambridge: HarvardUniversity Press. 1977. Print.

shortcomings, the New Critics went on ignoring his work and dismissing him as a minor if not a marginal author. Reminiscing about his relationship with his critics and criticism in general, he wrote in a manner that implied his injured pride and bruised ego:

> It was a revelation to find that the majority of reviewers, when not unconsciously demonstrating an ignorance of their calling, were often contemptuous or sadistic in their appraisal of a book of fiction. There seemed to be reasonable evidence, after all, that there might be some truth in the belief that a good many reviewers and critics were impotent lovers or unsuccessful authors. Perhaps, a would be reviewer or critic should be required to demonstrate his ability either to make love or else to write a published book.[14]

Caldwell's reminiscences about his critics occurred in the late 1960s, at a time when his bookstore fame was firmly established both at home and abroad due, mainly, to new traditions in the publishing industry.[15] Yet, this bookstore fame was still met with a failing critical reception. The few critics who returned to Caldwell's work, tended to repeat most of the standard assessments about him. And when they returned to his work, they did so either because they were under pressure from the academic system to

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[14] Erskine Caldwell, *Call it Experience: The Years of Learning how to Write*. New York. McFadden Book. 1966. p. 68. Print.

[15] I refer here to the advent of the twenty five cent pocket sized books initiated by Kurt Enoch and Weybright who launched the label 'Signet Books'. 1946 witnessed the reissue of Erskine Caldwell's *God's Little Acre* and within six months the sale of this quarter reprint amounted to a million copies.

publish or because they themselves wanted to be published.

Caldwell's personal trajectory with his early critics brings to mind Hurston's personal trajectory with her own critics. Like Caldwell, Hurston appeared to be heading towards a promising career as an author. Yet, she was soon pushed to oblivion by reviewers and critics of her own race and color. She was accused, as pointed out earlier, of racial irrelevance and lack of seriousness. But whereas Caldwell's critical demise was caused by a *critical perspective shift*, Hurston's was caused, one is tempted to say, by a *shift of Interest*- her *own* shift of interest. Indeed, she started to distance herself from the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro movement where the racial politics during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were bent on refiguring the depiction of black life in literature and entertainment. Instead of dealing with interracial conflicts, Hurston preferred *to focus* on intra-racial issues. She chose to focus on the rural black folk in the South as they evolved away from the prevailing racist attitudes and images with which sentimental and reactionary literature of the previous decades was replete.[16] Thus, when Hurston

[16] Popular fiction such as Thomas Dixon's *The Klansman* (1905) sought since the Post Reconstruction Era to reinforce perceptions of blacks as barbaric, rapists, and sub-humans. When the *Klansman was adapted* as the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) by D.W. Griffith, the images of hordes of uncontrolled blacks fed the fears, anxieties, and political attitudes of white mass audiences. The movie *Birth of a Nation*

published *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), where her blacks laughed at ease, seemed unconcerned about racism and completely unaware of being a 'problem', she generated critical controversies which mushroomed and spread over the 1940s and 1950s.

Hurston's choice of the rural South as locus and landscape for her work was perceived by many as a discursive displacement, a kind of diversion from the political contingency that urban Afro-America was offering. That contingency meant that black authors and artists must be political and race people; they must defend black people and protest against racism and oppression through focusing on the tragic black. As evidenced in Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* (1937); *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945), the theme of the tragic black became the yardsticks by which racial protest and significance were gauged. Wright's ability to depict the violence and brutality of oppression in urban and ghetto America cast him as a race author. His perspective clashed radically with Hurston's where being black did not necessarily mean being tragic.

In *Mules and Men* as well as *Their Eyes Were*

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led to officially implementing segregation in the White House and in all the federal facilities in the United States. Woodrow Wilson, the 1st Southerner to be elected President of the U.S since the civil war, ordered the implementation of segregation in the white house.

Watching God, Hurston deliberately eschewed the tragic black theme and dealt instead with Negroes content with isolation and simple life in the Everglades of Florida. She focused on black life as it existed apart from racism, injustice, segregation, and oppression. Her characters were plain blacks rooted in an insular folk tradition and depicted within a specific culture rather through the prism of their relationship with whites. As a consequence, Hurston drifted away from mainstream black radical thought and was labeled reactionary and publicity hound always ready to sell out her people in order to promote her books. Her run-in with her critics and mainly with Richard Wright reached beyond sheer distemper. It was, I believe, a quarrel over literary positioning fed by a genuine shift of focus.

Within this quarrel, Hurston refused to share the assumption, widely present in Wright's opus, that black life was nothing but a response to white stimulus. She also objected to the frustrating violence that characterized the work of black male authors. Hurston's rejection of violence was in reality a rejection of the enervating masculanism of black protest literature. Juxtaposed with her male black peers and as a woman author who grew up saturated with the wisdom of folk culture, Hurston refused willingly to submit to their pressures. Her refusal to acquiesce or go along with Wright’s favorite theme of the

tragic black caused her critical demise.

We can, thus, lay out the similarities between Hurston and Caldwell. Both of them were victims of misinterpretations if not of deliberate misunderstandings. Indeed, to accuse Hurston and Caldwell respectively of racial and regional betrayal was ill-founded and lacked intrinsic or extrinsic textual evidences. Also, to deny Hurston and Caldwell racial and/or social relevance had no bearing whatsoever. Thus, instead of selling out race and region, what Hurston and Caldwell actually did was claiming and celebrating both race and region. And the most striking feature of their respective opus when dealing with the race issue was their positive attitude to whites and blacks respectively. Indeed, Caucasians who appeared in Hurston's work were positively drawn.[17] Likewise, blacks who figured in Caldwell's texts were depicted as whole, healthy, and not stunted by the effects of racism when not in contact with whites[18].

Zora Neale Hurston and Erskine Caldwell were, then, two southerners who dealt with the downtrodden and the misrepresented. They were closely linked to two

[17] See Hurston's novel *Seraph on the Suwannee* which focuses on Arvey Hensan Meserver, a white protagonist, who battles against oppression and more importantly against the mental submission to oppression.

[18] All Caldwell's black characters appear to display a moral integrity superior to that of their white counterparts. Blacks are happier, healthier when they evolve among themselves and away from whites.

twentieth century American literary movements: The Harlem Renaissance and the Southern Renaissance. Both were deeply interested in folk and folk culture. Hurston was a trained anthropologist and her work was permeated with black and African traditions namely voodoo and hoodoo. Caldwell also experimented with folk culture through supervising and editing the series "Folkways". Their careers swung from appraisal to dismissal. Hurston was dismissed by her fellow black males and Caldwell by his fellow white southerners. At the core of Hurston's contention with her fellow blacks was the representation of the Negro: how to represent the Negro?, which Negro to represent and for what ideological purposes? As for Caldwell, he basically went through the same trajectory in his open conflict with the southern agrarians and regionalists on the one hand, and with the Marxists and proletarians on the other. In the long run, Caldwell's art was antagonistic to both and therefore dismissed as not serious.

The revival of both writers took place in the last decades of the 20th century. Their themes- namely vitality of folk tradition, race and gender- allowed Hurston and Caldwell to resurface again. Yet if Hurston’s revival was sustained due mainly to feminist, gynocriticism and/or multi-culturalist studies, Caldwell's critical renewal in the eighties was irresolute. And regardless of their respective

fortunes, both Hurston and Caldwell were forced to pay the price for being autonomous and for having authentic imaginations at a time when there was no room for autonomy or authenticity. Hurston did not feel tragically colored or black[19] and Caldwell was not swayed by belligerent reactions. He wrote about human vagaries and in doing so, "he counted as one of the most important group of writers who, in interpreting the region to the rest of the world, had taken the magnolias out of the South"[20].

[19] See her single act play *Color Struck* (1925). "Color Struck" means according to the anthropologist John Gweltney "accepting Euro-American aesthetics and racial values".

[20] W.M.Frohock.*The Novel of Violence in America: 1920/1950*. Dallas. Southern Methodist University Press. 1950. p. 133. Print.

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Which 'Bharat-Mata'?: Celebrating a New Mother Image in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shame*

Hanen Mahmoud

Abstract

In his novels and essays, the British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie celebrates a new cosmopolitan female model. His deconstruction of the long-cherished idea of the subservient housewife and sacrificing mother of India in *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* is not only meant to demystify the mother figure but, and more importantly, to question the mythological underpinning of the nation as whole, pure and forgiving. For many decades, the foundational discourse of the nation in India has successfully deployed the female body as a protean semiotic terrain which can synthesise the incongruous elements of the nation and, thus, guarantee its circularity. Writing against the grain of the essentialising rhetorics of the discourse of the nation, Rushdie invites his readers to reconsider a set of normative readings of the nation, notably the concept of national allegory, the cartographic representation of the female body and the mother-son relationship. Like the postmodern and cosmopolitan India of the twentieth-century, Rushdie's female characters in *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* are fragmented, janus-faced, impure, deceitful - in short, uncontainable within the boundary-limits and prescriptive paradigms of the traditional discourse of the nation.

Kewords: celebration, new mother image, India, discourse of the nation, national allegory, female body, postmodernism, cosmopolitanism.

Literally translated, ‘Bharat-Mata’ means mother India. This idea aligned the duties and responsibilities of the mother with the duties of women towards the nation. In this regard, the nation is no longer perceived as an empty space but as a mother. Within the thematic of the nation, the mother functions as a protean semiotic terrain. Like the metaphor of the family, the potency of ‘Bharat-Mata’ stems from its ability to synthesize the incompatible elements of India (the spiritual and the material, the inside and the outside, the domestic and the public).

Up to the present the mother image holds sway. People still identify themselves in terms of ‘mother country’, ‘mother land’ ‘mother language’...etc. Such quintessential designations make part and parcel of what might be identified as ‘the national imaginary’. In the Indian context, in particular, the mother-nation connection is a recurrent theme that stretches from the Mughal past up to the present. Back in time, the Sanskrit epic the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* conceived of the Indian soil as a mother.

In effect, the mother-nation nexus provides the mythological underpinning of the nation as whole, pure and forgiving. During colonialism and the fight for independence the mother figure gained strong national resonances in so far as it becomes a powerful symbol in the cultural mythologizing of the nation. Following the Indian

nationalist script, the mother should be chaste, nurturing, and forgiving. She is expected to overcome all odds and to survive in a patriarchal dominated society; she should be a mainstay of good values and should not hesitate to shoot her own son(s) when they go astray.

In the famous 'Bharat-Mata', Abanindranath Tagore (son of the nationalist poet Tagore) captured the semiotic richness of the mother in a powerful and inspiring tableau. The four-armed mother-Goddess points to the infinite aspects of the nation. The four symbolic objects the mother holds (food, clothing, secular knowledge, and spiritual knowledge), and the lotus blossoms at her feet consolidate the image of the mother as someone who unconditionally grants love, knowledge, nourishment and protection.

Moreover, in the famous film *Mother India* (1955) [1], Mehboob Khan the director of the movie, immortalized Nargis Dutt as a peasant woman who meets the requirements of the Hindu fundamentalist project and acts as an emblem of nationalist aspirations. To a large degree, Nargis becomes "a fetishistic sign of India's unified national identity: she is the guardian of national culture,

[1] This movie succeeded in endorsing the already existing notion of an Indian woman as chaste, nurturing, mother goddess; this stereotyping paved the way for the consolidation of a Hindu fundamentalist project in India.

indigenous religion and family tradition" (Shetty 53). By performing such a role, mother Nargis becomes the incarnation of a valiant historical figure and subservient mythical wife.

Given its currency, the 'Bharat-Mata' becomes an indispensible constituent in the formulation and completion of the national project. As Partha Chatterjee noticed: " it served to emphasize with all the force of mythological inspiration what had in any case become a dominant characteristic of femininity in the new construct of 'women' standing as a sign for 'nation', the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, and so on" (*The Nation and its Fragments* 131). In this regard, the mother figure provided the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture and functioned as its ideological justification. As Chatterjee puts forward "it followed that as long as India took care to retain the spiritual distinctiveness of its culture, it could make all the compromises and adjustments necessary to adapt itself to the requirements of a modern material world without losing its true identity" (120).

The interplay between the material and spiritual thus was seen as detrimental in shaping India's national consciousness. Moving from the sphere of the material to the semiotic, the female image becomes a means to imagine and safeguard a unified and pure India. It is this liminal and

transitional impetus of the mother that enabled the nationalist to resolve the contradiction and contingency germane to the Janus-faced. As Shetty aptly puts it " from the perspective of nationalist signification, the demand for a figurative recognition of 'mother' – for a perception of the sign as trope in a substitutive relationship with an intelligible order of meaning – is a serious one"(53).

Like Benedict Anderson's print capitalism[2], these films and paintings conferred to the nation a sense of longing and belonging. So, one way of destabilizing official nationalism is to revise the mother figure as a powerful nationalist iconography. In his novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie attests to the currency of this idea: "Motherness- excuse me if I underline the point- is a big idea in India, maybe our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as land, as the firm ground beneath our feet" (137). Yet, few lines later he flattens this idealistic image by evoking the dark memory of Indira Nehru Ghandi: "and as for its leading lady- O Nargis with your shovel over your shoulder and your strand of black hair tumbling forward over your brow! – she became, until Indira-Mata supplanted her- the living mother-goddess of us all" (137).

[2] In his influential book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Throughout the book, Anderson sheds light on the cardinal role played by print capitalism in giving the discourse of the nation its currency and circulation.

By opposing the almost godly and immortal figure of Nargis to that of the self-imposed and authoritarian 'Indira-Mata', Rushdie captures the ambiguities that impinge on the act of defining the modern nation. In effect, all Rushdie's novels seem to be fluctuating between an allegiance to the idea of the nation as mother and a strong critique of this metonymic conjunction. The first chapter of his novel *Shame* subverts the nation-as-mother pattern by putting into trial the moral and spiritual integrity long attributed to it. In fact, the depiction of the three Shakil daughters de-doxify the figure of woman as chaste and whole. Right from the first page, we step into a domestic realm which is bewildering:

> In the remote border town of Q., which when seen from the air resembles nothing so much as an ill-proportioned dumb-bell, there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters. Their names… but their real names were never used, like the best household china, which was locked away after the night of their joint tragedy in a cupboard whose location was eventually forgotten, so that the great thousand-piece service from the Gardner potteries in Tsarist Russia became a family myth in whose factuality they almost ceased to believe.(11)

The silences and the ambiguities which are condensed in a single chapter put into sharp relief the metonymic solidity of the mother figure. On the one hand, they interrogate the validity of the founding of the nation on the basis of the matriarchal home. As clearly seen, the domestic space the three female characters occupy is no

longer a spiritual realm but a stifling border zone replete with silence and inscrutability. On the other hand, the names (Chhunnie, Munnee, and Bunny) are empty of meaning. Sterile, they strip the mother-figure of the significance of the name, reducing it to a cipher, an empty signifier that points nowhere and achieves nothing.

Indeed, throughout the whole novel, the three mothers are never presented as full-fledged individuals; rather, they are always alluded to as an enigmatic compound triumvirate identity. Still in the same chapter, Rushdie deconstructs the ideal of collectivity which becomes a cover for betrayal and conspiracy. The enigmatic nature of the 'collective', unwed pregnancy not only dismantles the cult of chastity ascribed to the mother figure, but drains the concept of the 'nation-as-mother' of its spiritual transparency.

As the narrator and illegitimate child of the Shakils states: "in spite of biological improbability I' am prepared to swear that so heartedly did they wish to share the motherhood of their siblings- to transform the public shame of unwedlocked conception- that, in short, twin phantom pregnancies accompanied the real one, while the simultaneity of their behavior suggests the operation of some form of communal mind" (20).

Rushdie's obliteration of the boundaries between the real and the fake, the original and its copy, the

individual and the collective, the sacred and the profane undermines our perception of the national imaginary in terms of the spiritual and destabilizes the ontological parameters within which it was encoded. More significantly, the illusion of group baby the three mothers create betrays a monstrous false unity. The shadowy nature of motherhood as it keeps wavering between the real one and the two mirror ghosts is indeed perplexing and disorienting.

Yet, read from another angle this doubling is reminiscent of Tom Nairn's perception of the nation as inescapably 'Janus-faced'. In tune with Nairn's view of the 'modern Janus', Rushdie foregrounds the fundamental dubiety and conceptual indeterminacy germane to the idea of the modern nation. Beside, by punning on the real and its two ghostly mirror-images in *Shame* he translates Homi Bhabha's belief in the "liminal image" of the nation. It is this fracture between essence and appearance that renders impossible the unity of the nation as symbolic force. Like the Shakils' unfathomable motherhood, the nation can not be contained within a single definition or rubric. In other words, the idea of the nation is neither fixed nor whole; it becomes a site of doubling for it hides different layers of conflicting meanings. Like the Shakil mothers, the nation is two-faced, fluid, misleading, and unbounded. The occult triumvirate motherhood ironically indexes the idealized

undivided mother of nationalist allegory.

By proliferating and disseminating ironic maternal metaphors, Rushdie drains the concept of the Bharat-Mata of its cultural piquancy and mythic longevity. Rushdie's incredulity towards the foundational and essentialising rhetoric of the nation is also seen in his re-working of the mother-son cathexis (which is by extension a re-working of the subject-nation connection). Omar's feelings toward his mothers are loaded with hatred and revulsion. Instead of foregrounding a mutual love and loyalty, Rushdie depicts an atmosphere of mutual imprisonment. The cage-like mood that surrounds the space occupied by the protagonist and his mothers dismantles the seamless wholeness of the nation-space. As re-imagined by Rushdie the nation is an oppressive and confining myth:

> Omar Khayyam passed twelve long years, the most crucial years of his development, trapped inside that reclusive mansion, that third world that was neither material nor spiritual, but a sort of concentrated decrepitude made up of the decomposing remnants of those two familiar types of cosmos, a cosmos, a world in which he would constantly run into – as well as the mothballed, spider-webbed, dust-shrouded profusion of crumbling object-the lingering, fading miasms of discarded ideas and forgotten dreams. (30)

The neo-gothic, almost claustrophobic, depiction of the family mansion (reclusive, concentrated decrepitude, decomposing remnants, mothballed, spider-webbed, dust-shrouded, crumbling…etc.) alludes to the ambiguities that haunt the nation space. Both the home and the

joint-mothers become for Omar a symbol of captivity and an obstacle in his journey to self-fulfillment. Hence, "[Omar] dreamed of exits, feeling that in the claustrophobia of Nishapur his very life was at stake" (30). Given this yearning, it is no wonder then that Omar's twelve-year birthday wish is: Freedom. In a rhetorical manner, Omar asks: "who would not have wanted to escape from such mothers?"(40).

Rushdie's exploration of the indeterminacy that impinges on any attempt to define the nation as indivisible continues in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. "In the novel", writes Alexandra Schultheis, "Rushdie invokes and subverts the familiarity of the image of Mother India by revealing the layers of conflicting meanings it contains" (582). Like the multi-layered quality of *Shame*, Rushdie's *The Moor's Last* Sigh celebrates many facets of Mother India, embodied in the protagonist's mother, Aurora Zogoiby.

To many readers of *The Moor's Last Sigh,* Aurora is indefinable because she embodies contradictory images of the nation: she is fluid, protean, forgiving, betraying, ever-changing and constantly constituting herself. By making Aurora internalize incompatible elements, Rushdie celebrates a new and incongruous sort of Mother India:

> Mother India with her garishness and her inexhaustible motion, mother India who loved and betrayed and ate and destroyed and again loved her children's passionate conjoining and eternal quarrel stretched long beyond the grave… A protean mother

> India who could turn monstrous […], who could turn murderous, dancing cross-eyed and kali-tongued while thousands died. (61)

Indeed, it is in this novel that Rushdie confesses his desire for a different sort of Mother India. The novel as a whole reflects such quest for " an alternative vision of India-as-mother, not Nargis's sentimental village-mother but a mother of cities, as heartless and lovable, brilliant and dark, multiple and lonely, mesmeric and repugnant, pregnant and empty, truthful and deceitful as the beautiful, cruel, irresistible metropolis itself"(204).

So, Rushdie through Aurora presents us with an alternate version of Mother India – she is not the traditional Indian woman, living in an India of acceptance and tradition, enduring social or emotional oppression. Aurora is open-minded and independent, defying conventional norms. In fact, she could be considered as a complete antithesis to this iconic 'Bharat-Mata'**.** It is this dual nature of Aurora as incorporating both the avenging angel and the nurturing mother that Rushdie wants to explore. Aurora's relation with her children translates this duality as she oscillates between extreme love and disparaging hatred, affection and affliction, forgiveness and revenge. To a large degree, Rushdie subverts the whole idea of the ideal Indian mother who is ready to sacrifice her whole life for the sake of her children.

Against the norms of the idealized Bharat-Mata,

Rushdie plumbs the depths of a new cosmopolitan model of motherhood in which Aurora constantly complains about children who "...can't growofy fast enough for [her]. God! How long this childhood business draggoes on! Why couldn't I have kids- why not even *one* child- who grew up *really* fast" (141). Rushdie's reworking of the classical image of mother-child relationship finds echoes in the way Aurora hurriedly and indifferently named her three daughters (Ina, Minnie, and Mynah).

The latter are not only reminiscent of the empty Shakils' names (Chunnie, Minnie, and Bynny) but also suggestive of a new image of an independent modern mother India. As Moraes points out: "My three sisters were born in quick succession, and Aurora carried and ejected each of them with such perfunctory attention to their presence that they knew, long before their births, that she would make few concessions to their post-partum needs. The names she gave them confirmed these suspicions" (139).

Broadly thought, the fate of Aurora's three daughters is tragic: Ina dies of cancer, Minnie of chemical poisoning, Mynah of terrorist attack. Indeed, in one of her paintings Aurora draws a powerful mother-goddess both nurturing and devouring her children. In a generic tone, Aurora confesses that "we all eat children… if not other people's, then our own" (125). "She had four of us," the

Moor puts further, " Ina, Minnie, Mynah, Moor; a four course meal with magic properties"(126). Against all logics, this statement reverberates in *Shame.* Addressing his daughter Arjumand, Iskander Harrapa states that: "as a nation we have a positive genius for self-destruction, we nibble away at ourselves, we eat our children, we pull down anyone who climbs up" (184).

As we come closer to diagnose the character of the Moor, we notice Rushdie's deviation from the classical pattern of the mother-son relationship. Instead of the rigid one-dimensional reading, Rushdie defamiliarizes the readers' expectations by presenting an Aurora-Moor symbiosis from a different and incongruous perspective:

> In one picture—*Courtship*—I was Moor-as-peacock, spreading my many-eyed tail; she painted her own head on top of a dowdy pea-hen's body. In another (painted When I was twelve and looked twenty-four) Aurora reversed our relationship, painting herself as the young Eleanor Marx and me as her father Karl. *Moor andTussy* was a rather shocking idea—my mother girlish, adoring, and I in a patriarchal, lapel-gripping pose, frock-coated and bewhiskered, like a prophecy of the all-too-near future. 'If you were twice as old as you look, and I half as old as I am, I could be your daughter.'...Nor was this our only double, or ambiguous, portrait; for there was also *To Die Upon a Kiss,* in which she portrayed herself as murdered Desdemona flung across her bed, while I was stabbed Othello... (224-5)

Moving from a peacock to Karl Marx to Othello Moraes outlines the multiple subject positions the postcolonial can take. Using Moraes as an artist model, Aurora turns her

son into a complex schema of different and conflicting symbolic layers. Instead of being the incarnation of the all-encompassing national subject, Moraes, therefore, becomes the site of doubling and dubiety. In the light of this new image, we can safely argue that Rushdie's aesthetic agenda in *The Moor's Last Sigh i*s to "slip the undivided entity of Mother India into a multiplicity of changing positions" (Prakash 400); positions that re-work the classical pattern of tradition versus modernity. This interplay makes the female image a precarious one. Indeed, in his doomed affair with Uma Saravatsi (Aurora's opponent in art and love), the Moor insults his mother and trades an eroticized relationship with her.

By so stating, Rushdie not only unravels the Moor's disloyalty but renders incestuous the mother-son relationship. Concerning this deviation, Alexandra Schultheis argues that: "*The Moor's Last Sigh* investigates impurity in all its forms: it details how love of the country and, thus, the nation-as-family metaphor become eroticized, breaking the fundamental (in Freudian terms) incest taboo and resulting in a seemingly endless array of sexual, economic, political, and religious corruptions " (579). Throughout the novel, the eroticization of the nation as mother is evoked in many instances. On one occasion, Aurora confided to the famous movie star of *Mother India* that: "The first time I saw that picture, I took

one look at your Bad Son, Birju, and I thought , O boy, what a handsome guy- too much sizzle, too much chilli, bring water …What sexy lives you movie people leadofy: to marry your own son, I swear, wowie"(137).

In this passage, Aurora takes for granted the fictional aspects of the film and conflates them with reality. Against the expectations of the party's guests, Vasco Miranda (Aurora's devotee and , later, the Moor's persecutor) joins Aurora by giving her commentary a national dimension : " Sublimation , of mutual parent-child longings is deep-rooted in the national psyche[…] *Mother India* is the dark side of the Radha-Krishna story, with the subsidiary theme of forbidden love added on. But what the hell; Oedipus-schmoedipus!" (138)

By transgressing the boundary of the literal and the metaphorical, Rushdie invites us to rethink the tenability and currency of the nation-as-mother metaphor. In other words, the conflation of the factual and the fictional is a deliberate strategy which is meant to push the reader to reconsider the film as the most widely recognized national cultural icon and assess its accessibility to India's post-independence context. "The incest motif", Shetty rightly observes, "disarticulates the wholeness and vitality of the iconic mother and the too ideal totality of the 'India' she signifies" (62). Thus, it demarcates the limits of the nationalist discourse. On page one hundred ninety seven,

for instance, Rushdie implicitly compares Aurora and Moraes's relationship with the unhealthy relationship between Mrs. Indira Ghandi and her son Sanjay, assuming that "the whole nation is paying for that mother-son problem".

After his banishment and bereavement, Moraes contrasted Aurora's image with the mythologized mother Goddess, Nargis Dutt:

> In Mother India, a piece of Hindu myth-making directed by a Muslim socialist, Mehbob Khan, the Indian peasant woman is idealized as bride, mother, and producer of sons; as long-suffering, stoical, loving, redemptive, and conservatively wedded to the maintenance of the social status quo. But for Bad Birju, cast out from his mother's love, she becomes, as one critic has mentioned, 'that image of an aggressive, treacherous, annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males. I, too, know something about this image; have been cast as a Bad Son in my turn. My mother was no Nargis Dutt- she was the in-your-face type, not serene. (139)

In this passage, Moraes depicts his mother as the antithesis of the glorified mother of the nationalist discourse. Against the traditional model, Rushdie shifts the focus from the Indian woman as a passive recipient of the nationalist aspirations to a metamorphic subject. Exiled and banished once and for all, Moraes comes to think of his mother as "[his] immortal mother, [his] Nemesis, [his] foe beyond the grave" (405). As the scorpion of fable, stinging the very frog that is carrying it across the river, Aurora cold-bloodedly apologizes: "I couldn't help it […] It's in

my nature" (170). She egoistically puts her own personality and needs before her family's and pragmatically uses her son as an artist model for her erotic-oriented paintings. "Her children", Moraes bitterly confesses, "were shown no mercy. '[…] No special privileges for flesh-and-blood relations! Darlings, we munch on flesh, and blood is our tipple of choice'" (5).

Seen in retrospect, Rushdie's revisiting of the mother image in *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* questions the tenability of the national imaginary. Embodying the very contradictory aspects of India Rushdie's female protagonists resist being inscribed as the nation's pedagogical objects and celebrate their own 'space of enunciation'. Liminal, deceitful, violent, rebellious, cosmopolitan – in short uncontainable within the boundary-limits of a male-centered national paradigm – Rushdie's women largely perform their own subjectivity, thereby disrupting the traditional mother-nation prototype.

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Shelley's Construction of Festivities in the Coda of *Prometheus Unbound*: A Panegyric Pageantry of Triumph or an Unswerving Fit of Poetic Ecstasy?

Farhat Ben Amor

Abstract

Shelley's dramatic work, *Prometheus Unbound*, is a 'poetic' drama that rapturously sings the historic reunion of the mythical figures, Prometheus and Asia, after a separation of thousands of years during which Prometheus is kept bound to an 'icy' rock, while being constantly tortured by the tyrant god, Jupiter. What accentuates the degree of mirth in this reunion is its enshrining of an ideal world in which love eternally reigns. Hence, Shelley chooses to round off *Prometheus Unbound* with a fourth act which constitutes but a rehearsal to the feats achieved in the previous acts. Generally, this fourth act is referred to as a 'coda' to connote its purely aesthetic dimension, which might foreground Shelley's deliberate construction of an air of festivities as he imagines it to be. The purpose of this paper is to study this coda while taking into account both the manifestations of the celebratory rites that are performed and the effects which are produced out of that. My chief concern is to examine the content of the whole coda. Namely, my aim is to study whether the coda seeks to offer a pageantry that panegyrically sings the triumph of good over evil, at large, and of love over hatred, in particular; or the coda is part of Shelley's frequent ecstatic sinking into visualizing an ideal world which starkly soars above reality and, therefore, remains a mere fit of poeticism. My ultimate aim is to inscribe both postulations within the high measure of mysticism coloring the coda's texture.

Keywords: Asia, coda, ecstasy, festivities, mysticism, panegyric, Prometheus.

In its denotative sense, the term ‘coda’ means “a final passage of a piece of music” (*O.A.L.D*). Perhaps, in relation to a song being just heard by an audience, the coda gets its importance from its superb ability to sustain the song’s longevity in terms of time. To some respects, the coda provides the audience with a synthetic account of the whole song. Not only does the coda consolidate the emotive effect the song is meant to raise, but it also imparts a poetic quality to the text of the song, whereby it could communicate the message *symbolically*, rather than verbally. The symbolic basis of the coda in encoding meaning might presuppose a universal appeal whose likelihood to escape the confines of time and space makes the coda associated metaphorically with infiniteness. Consequently, the coda does not constitute a dismembered organ of the song, despite its independence from language in getting shape. Rather, the coda is an integral part of the song, insofar as it is owing to the coda’s metaphorical association with the ideal of ‘infiniteness’ that the song is, eventually, granted a universal proportion.

In a way, the coda acts to liberate the song from the temporal and spatial finiteness imposed on it, which bespeaks the pre-eminence of the coda’s complementary role in bringing into perfection the song’s ethical and aesthetic values. Michael O’ Neill, who reads P. B. Shelley’s fourth Act of *Prometheus Unbound* connotatively

as a "coda" (107), must have partly retained the implications we have gathered from the denotative meaning of the term. Virtually, the same relation that binds the coda to the song governs the tie that links this fourth Act, which seals his dramatic work, with the previous three Acts. As C. M. Bowra notices, "the whole of Act IV is nothing but a series of magnificent songs accompanied by no action. For all dramatic purposes, the action closes with the end of Act III" (122). So, just as the coda in a song functions, primordially, to complement it and grant it infiniteness, the fourth Act (for which I am going to apply the metaphorical term 'coda') of *Prometheus Unbound* acts to magnify the denouement reached by the end of the third Act. This means that, structurally speaking, the coda does not add anything to the plot of the text of the play.

By the end of the third Act, the different intricate twists of the plot are perfectly unknotted. The mythical figure, Prometheus, after defying the omnipotent power of the envious god, Jupiter, succeeds in his rebellion through bringing fire, the symbol of knowledge, from the god's realm to man's. Thanks to that feat, he is, eventually, crowned as the redeemer of mankind, for whom he was kept for three centuries bound to an Icy Rock, prone to the direst forms of superhuman torture. That coronation is festively celebrated and accompanied by Prometheus' marriage with Asia who is identified by Richard Holmes as

"love militant" (qtd.in.Foot 116), thanks to her steadfast loyalty to her lover throughout this very long period of their separation.

Certainly, then, Shelley's addition of the 'coda,' though it adds nothing to the plot of *Prometheus Unbound,* is meant to poeticize the denouement through symbolically heightening the effect of the cathartic purge it yields. In the words of Michael O'Neill, "Act IV (the coda) repeats the images of the earlier Acts, re-circulating them to act out the energies of circulation and movement. It is constructed out of dialogue and dance, echo and reflection, but gives primacy to none of these paradigms of relationship, simply including them all" (107). By implication, rituality constitutes the basic element Shelley uses in the coda to sing the event of Prometheus' liberation of himself and mankind from the shackles of ignorance and to confer on the bliss of his marriage with Asia a majestic apotheosis.

Hence, despite the different approaches critics adopt to read the coda, there seems to remain a unanimous agreement on the centrality of rituality in it. Eric J. Evans, who seems to opt for a new critical reading that is based on the exclusion of extra-textual analysis of the coda, characterizes it as "a wonderful paean of rejoicing" (73). Because a 'paean' is, by definition, "a song of praise or victory" (*O.A.L.D*), the patterns governing any ritual act, like those of repetition and intensification of the emotive

fervor, are to conjure up, in the audience's mind, a celebratory atmosphere where the degree of joy is brought to its apex.

The same ritualistically festive atmosphere is inevitably to be induced by critics who apply other approaches in reading the coda. For instance, Bruyan Shelley, who seems to rely on intertextuality, as a postmodern method that consists in opening the text to other texts, argues that the coda offers "a biblical model for which is the period of Edenic restoration, known as the millennium" (113). Thus, he reads the coda in light of the biblical allusions it contains. Desmond King-Hele's application of a Platonic philosophy, which puts forward a metaphysical superiority of the idealized world of stasis that is time-unbound over the demeaned ephemeral world of fact that is time-bound, yields a reading of the coda as signaling "a new world [of] timelessness" (187).

Meanwhile, Patricia Hodgart, through revealing a tendency to deploy a liberal humanist spectrum while unveiling the 'reflectiveness' of the coda, subjects the coda's text to the precepts of mythological criticism which "explores the artist's common humanity by tracing how the individual imagination uses myths and symbols common to different cultures and epochs" (Kennedy 610). For Hodgart, the coda represents but "a great cosmic epithalamium, a symphonic celebration of the wedding of the gods sung and

danced by choruses of Spirits and Hours" (100). The 'gods,' here, are no more than the reunited couple, Prometheus and Asia, whose gaining of divinity comes as a reward to the care for humanity they evince after the sacrifice they have paid all along three centuries.

Discerning the centrality of the ritual in it, I read Shelley's coda within a purely romantic view. In particular, I contextualize it in the romantic tendency to express rebellion against the confinements of the 'real' and resistless attachment to an envisioned 'ideal.' For that project to be accomplished, I need to explore the Shelleyan peculiarities in envisaging the celebratory atmosphere that follows the majestic event of Prometheus' release and his marriage to Asia, while taking into account the fact that the Romantics, at large, and Shelley, in particular, tend to "instinctively choose symbolic rather than logical presentation of their alternatives to a mechanical universe viewed logically" (Woodring 31). This means that the coda's text represents but a Shelleyan construction of festivities that is symbolically loaded and, therefore, unaffected by the regularities of logics.

As such, the whole coda is characteristically marked by what might be called 'a hyperbolic thrust' that runs, to a great deal, in tune with the symbolic structure governing its fluid texture. Within this vein of exaggeration, implied by such a hyperbolism, I notice that Shelley begins his coda

with a magnificent exposition of victory before erupting into a high measure of poetic celebration of the feat. As he elaborates on exposing victory, Shelley envisions forces, which are commonly deprecated by the Romantics, like time and tyranny, announcing their complete defeat by much more benignant ones in a highly symbolic context. Thus, I read the first one hundred and eighty-four lines of the coda as a panegyric pageantry of triumph; whereas, the remaining lines (which constitutes most of the coda's body, for they extend over more than three hundred lines) as marking a fit of poetic ecstasy.

In this respect, the entire fabric of the coda is unified by what might be fairly called 'the ever-expanding extension' of the happiness the couple, Prometheus and Asia, experience, on their reunion, to every particle of the universe. Though they do not appear in the coda's text, Prometheus and Asia are made the very source of that ever-increasing degree of mirth that peoples the coda's different scenes. It is as if the festivities that accompany their reunion were more than a mere celebration of a love story being consummated by marriage. More importantly, the reunion seems to enshrine immortal love, as an ideal that is the fruit of superhuman sacrifice, demanding even the challenge of the god, Jupiter.

If there were to be festivities, it should amount to that romantically-envisioned happiness on winning

immortal love. By implication, Prometheus and Asia need not mark their presence corporeally, for, now, they escape the finiteness of time and space. In other words, they are made dissipated everywhere. Certainly, then, that omnipresence of Prometheus and Asia results in making their marriage become "a mystic union" (King-Hele 184) and, eventually, in rendering the couple hold "an equivocal position between the gods and men" (Ridenour 8).

In reality, that measure of mysticism seems to find a fertile soil in the coda where Shelley seeks to accentuate the festivities symbolically. The choice of the dramatis personae per se is fraught with mysticism, for the whole coda is peopled by personified spirits whose celerity of action and airy lightness has led Bruyan Shelley to identify them as having "pneumatic selves" (10). In addition, their diction and the imagery they use may convey such a predominating mysticism. Hence, what seems to matter in the coda is not whether Shelley's construction of festivities constitutes a panegyric pageantry of triumph, or an unswerving fit of poetic ecstasy. Rather, what is most important is how both of these alternatives are made to consolidate the mysticism of the festivities that ritualize the reunion of Prometheus and Asia and, by extension, how they help amplify the hyperbolic thrust of the whole dramatic text of *Prometheus Unbound*.

In other words, the panegyric and the poetic work

hand in hand to make the coda consolidate, in itself, the general atmosphere of *Prometheus Unbound*. Over-blissfulness might best define that atmosphere and explain why *Prometheus Unbound* is considered as "Shelley's great rhapsodic poem-drama" (Ford 91), as being "dramatic in form, but lyrical in essence" (Evans 75) and, again, as "alive with passion and fervor, and with music of the highest order" (Cohen 26). All these attributes do find their expression par excellence in the coda.

As far as the panegyric is concerned, Shelley evinces much adeptness at coloring the triumphant orgy of happiness accompanying the festivities of the couple's reunion with a supernatural undertone that is vital in sustaining the air of mysticism. Indeed, the coda opens with a voice of unseen spirits and, then, of a train of dark forms and shadows that "passes by singing" (8). In a procession-like appearance, these hardly detectable forms and shadows ritually sing their "bearing Time to his tomb in eternity" (15). What is supernatural, here, is the personification of time as enacting, through its implied death, its complete defeat by 'eternity.' Time, which is sarcastically referred to as "King of Hours" (21), becomes a mere "corpse" (21), on its death.

The main import of the sum of the songs, then, is to mock the descent of time, while eulogistically celebrating the ascent of eternity. For certainty, the celebration of that

ascent is to be unrivalled in terms of the degree of its happiness. It is a celebration which sings the triumph of man's existential presence over the confines of time which sternly works to subject man's existence to an ineluctable end. As Northrop Frye maintains, "time is the enemy of all things, the universal devour that reduces everything to non-existence" (100).

In the context of *Prometheus Unbound*, the descent of time, that 'enemy of all things,' comes as a result of the couple's eventual winning of eternal love. In metaphorical terms, then, the different songs that people the whole coda are meant to congratulate Prometheus and Asia for getting access to immortality. If we were to use a biblical analogy, the songs would become like thanksgiving addressed to the couple, the generators of eternity. The first personified spirits who detect these songs are Asia's sea-sisters, Ione and Panthea, who emblemize respectively "the spirit of hope and the spirit of faith" (Evans 71). It is, then, through 'hope' and 'faith' that the thanksgiving-like songs get substantiality and ever-penetrability. So, the triumphant joy in the first part of the coda is contained within a process of aggrandizement, whereby the circle of festivities witnesses such a continuous growth that, for sure, makes it mystically embalmed.

Actually, the aim of intensifying the emotive fervor is clear through the hyperbolically-loaded expressions like

the phrases “the storm of delight,” “the panic of glee” (45), “shakes with emotion” and “dance in their mirth” (46). That air of dynamicity, implied in these phrases, precedes the actual emergence of the choruses of spirits as distinguishable shapes that are sensually-apprehensible by Ione and Panthea. Indeed, the latter ones are presented as helplessly trying to identify the source of the unseen voices which mirthfully filter their song and suffuse the whole setting with such a dynamic vivacity of happiness. Admiringly, Ione asks in a rhetorical question: “What charioteers are these?” (56) Meanwhile, Panthea wonders “Where are their chariots?” (57)

Panthea’s wonder starts to be dissipated, as the ‘chariots’ of these happy singers begin to be unveiled. Delineating their genealogy, the hitherto hardly-detectable voices, while developing into two semi-choruses who could be, thus, better identified, are heard singing triumphantly:

> A hundred ages we had been kept
> Cradled in visions of hate and care,
> And each one who waked as his brother slept,
> Found the truth. (64-7)

It is this ‘truth’ which was ‘found’ one day as they awake which accounts, then, for the semi-choruses’ ritualization of their mirth through their songs that have been etherealized by Ione and Panthea, on their waking, too. In fact, the stage direction of the opening scene of the coda delimits the setting as follows: “A cave of the Forest near

the Cave of Prometheus. Panthea and Ione are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first song."

The singing semi-choruses offer an extension to what happened to Panthea and Ione. Besides, the 'truth' which was once induced to the singing semi-choruses is implied to define metaphorically the locus of the 'chariots' which befuddles Panthea and, implicitly, Ione, too, for she affords no answer to the wondering Panthea. Thus, just as the semi-choruses manage to 'find the truth' on their waking, both Panthea and Ione are to be led to 'truth.' Actually, the focus of the singing semi-choruses on the labyrinthine process that led them to 'truth' might be meant to offer a parable to its seekers, including Ione and Panthea. In the meantime, while highlighting the 'hundred ages' that were marred by 'visions of hate and care,' the singing semi-choruses focus on the secret of their defiance.

This secret reveals its anchorage in the Promethean arm through which he fights against Jupiter's mercilessness, throughout the three centuries of torture. Such an arm is verbalized by the semi-choruses in these terms: "We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep, / We have known the voice of Love in dreams, / We have felt the wand of Power, and leap" (69 – 70). One might recollect, here, the secret which Prometheus possesses to defy Jupiter. I mean instances like "Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim, / Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick, I

feel / Faint, like one mingled in entwining love" (Act I. 158-60) or "I wait, / enduring thus the retributive hour / Which since we spake is even nearer now" (I. 444-6).

It is that glimmering hope shining in the midst of the obscurest shades of despair that facilitates the most insupportable form of pain and makes it, paradoxically, a good omen of an oncoming brighter day. By extension, the voices that Ione and Panthea hear, on their waking, are suggested to be good omens, too. As these voices gain gradually noticeability (from unseen voices to semi-choruses and, ultimately, to choruses), they become associated metaphorically with the moment of the realization of that good omen. So, the mirth of the semi-choruses and their dynamic vivacity is implied to come after they have a full grasp of 'Hope,' 'Love' and 'Power.'

Symbolically, then, the semi-choruses' celebration of the transplantation of these idealized quality from the confines of dream to reality may offer an extension to Prometheus' own victory over the tyrannous god, Jupiter. As one reads the three Acts preceding the coda of *Prometheus Unbound*, one is led to discern that Prometheus's triumph has been, likewise, animated from within before being finalized and crowned by his marriage with Asia. Thus, the coda registers symbolically (and in a highly mystical context) the process of manifestation of

good omens in reality. This process regulates the festivities that ritually celebrate, in their congregate, the symbolic ever-expanding extension to Prometheus, acted out by the different dramatis personae.

In reality, that whole air of mysticism, which surrounds the springing of hope over despair in a triumphant atmosphere, is given more significance with the metaphor of birth that is interspersed throughout the coda's text. Actually, while tracing their genealogy, the semi-choruses round off their singing of 'Hope,' 'Love' and 'Power,' which have animated them from within, with the verb 'leap.' It is as if these inner forces were like the period of gestation that necessarily precedes any physical eruption of a living organism. Read symbolically, the physical act of 'leaping' marks the instigation of life.

What is probably most important with respect to the presence of the metaphor of birth in the coda is to highlight the impulse of life in man's deep-seated reality. That impulse – Shelley seems to be saying – does not begin with birth. Rather, its might exists a long time before (a long period that may reach three thousands of years, as is the case of Prometheus) and, after undergoing an unseen embryonic gestation, life is to be got. This may account for the marked use of what Stephen Spender calls "volcanic imagery" (17) in the coda, as a metaphor of the agonies of birth that engenders life. To a certain extent, the moment of

birth resembles that of release from the torturous confinements of imprisonment.

Birth and the impulse of life ought to be sung as a moment of victory in order to mock all forces that, in vain, try perpetually to retard the precipitation of any sort of life. Indeed, the more dynamicity and celebratory ardor the triumphant festivities assume in the coda, the clearer the rebellious undertone against what might be called 'enemies of life' gets. Besides, the special focus on the sheer difference between the past (when life is in the process to be formed) and the present (when life is not simply got, but eternally-won) is certainly to deserve the remarkably ever-increasing accentuation of the mirthful fervor accompanying the triumphant celebration of the 'birth of life.'

In its panegyric singing of the 'birth of life,' the chorus that emerges, afterwards, draws attention to the complete opposition between the painful past and the blissful present. Enthusiastically, the chorus sings:

> Once the hungry Hours were hounds
> Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
> And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
> Through the nightly dells of the desert year.
> But now, oh! weave the mystic measure
> Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
> Let the Hours and the spirits of might and pleasure,
> Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite. (77-84)

It is obvious that such an opposition between the past and

the present is allegorical to Prometheus' historic story of torture that precedes his release. In addition, the Shelleyan aim of accentuating the dramatic importance of the 'present,' symbolically associated with the 'birth of life,' is translated through conferring an emotive dimension on the process that leads to its emergence.

The urge to appeal to the emotive response is already established in the first stanza through the metaphorical association of the personified Jupiter-like 'hungry Hours' with 'hounds,' while victimizing the Prometheus-like vulnerability of the personified 'day' which emblemizes life. Certainly, the fervor of happiness is to increase tremendously at the announcement of the release of the victimizer from his victimized – a fact which the second stanza establishes. Now, the celebratory enthusiasm that accompanies the miraculously-gained freedom from the victimizer is indicated explicitly to acquire a 'mystic measure,' out of the intensity of happiness.

Besides, that measure of mysticism might spring from the unity of opposites, wherein the variables of time (including mainly the past, the present and the future) are transformed into a unifying 'whole.' Indeed, the personified 'Hours' are mystically united with 'the spirits of might and pleasure,' as a symbolic indication of the shift these 'Hours' undergo: from being associated

metaphorically with the frightful image of ‘hungry hounds’ to being identified ideally in equal terms with ‘might’ and ‘pleasure.’ Since that shift is conveyed in a context of a transition from being imprisoned in a state of victimization to that of liberation, the chorus’s songs are implied to constitute a heightened form of celebrating the triumphant orgy that accompanies the release of Prometheus from the imprisonment of Jupiter.

Mysticism is induced out of the chorus’s bringing of the whole triumphant context to its extreme. By virtue of that mysticism of triumph, the coda becomes veritably a panegyric pageantry of a celebration that magnificently sings the victory of the romantically-idealized notion of ‘eternity’ over the confines of transience which is, conventionally, deprecated by the Romantics as an evil force. As C. M. Bowra generalizes it, “his [Shelley’s] ‘triumph’ is that through the enchantment which his poetry sets on us, we are able to explore regions of which he is the discoverer and almost the only denizen” (125).

It seems that ‘these regions’ which Shelley indulges in ‘exploring,’ while caught in the most intense ardor of celebrating triumph, are never-ending, for they define, in their entirety, eternity. Symbolically, eternity is given expression through personifying the spirits of ‘might and pleasure,’ along with ‘Hours,’ who, all, emerge as a united chorus singing the ever-expanding extension offered to

Prometheus' triumphant release. While reverberating what has already been sung, that united chorus highlights the ever-penetrability of the joy that accompanies Prometheus' triumph to every corner in the universe. That exhaustiveness could be induced from its mirthful singing: "Then weave the web of the mystic measure; / From the depth of the sky and the ends of the earth" (134-5).

The urge of the united chorus, now, is to grant that air of mysticism, surrounding the panegyric pageantry of triumph, a cosmic proportion. It is as if the introduction of the united chorus in the coda were meant to transform the whole cosmos into a large stage where the ritual celebration of triumph is forever being enacted and unanimously detected. Thus, the whole shape of the world is expected to be changed, as emerging from the song of united chorus: "We will take our plan / From the new world of man / And our work shall be called the Promethean" (161-3).

As for the 'Promethean new world of man' that is being festively built in a triumphant context, it must run in complete contrast to the old world of man when Jupiter used to rule. Man's 'new world' is symbolically introduced by the united chorus while singing as follows: "Wherever we fly we lead along / In leashes, like star-beams, soft, yet strong, / The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain" (182-4). The oxymoronic harnessing of 'softness' and 'strength' to each other might pertain to the subtlety of the

Promethean arm, through which he fights against his own victimization. While the hope animating him from within could be indicative of the softness of the Promethean arm, Prometheus' release (which, metaphorically speaking, represents 'birth into life') might palpably signal the strength he is, ultimately, endowed with. That strength is translated symbolically through the ever-expanding extension his festively-acclaimed liberation causes to the whole cosmos.

It is probably out of his discernment of the 'softness' and 'strength' of Prometheus' might that Shelley moves beyond offering a panegyric pageantry of triumph to succumb, eventually, to an ecstatic poetic celebration of the transformation of the 'ideal' into a 'real.' That measure of poeticism begins with heightening the effect of such a mystic ever-expanding extension and penetrability of Prometheus' release to every corner of universe on Panthea and Ione, the spirits of faith and hope. Emphasizing their happiness at their being eventually able to fully detect the songs of the mirthful chorus, both of them talk very rhetorically, which results in conferring much stateliness on their symbolic 'birth into life,' too.

Perhaps, simile represents the main figure of speech Asia's sea-sisters adopt. Panthea, while asked by Ione ("feel you no delight from the past sweetness?" (185), uses an extended simile to elaborate on her delight:

> As the bare green hill
> When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
> Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
> To the unpavilioned sky. (186-9)

In these lines, life – which, as we have seen, constitutes a deep-seated impulse within man – is aestheticized. Life is conveyed in a highly poetic context that compares it to the verdure and blossoming of nature after rain.

If we were to relate the aestheticism contained in that image to the ethical dimension, we could argue that Shelley's option for extended simile symbolizes the attempt to aestheticize the ever-expanding extension of Prometheus' newly-got eternal life to the world without. This comes as no surprise with respect to Shelley who "seeks Truth in his poetry, but it is *oetic Truth*" (Ridenour 15, italics mine). Indeed, the entanglement of the aesthetic in the ethical, which signals but the reciprocity that dialectically links the poetic with the moral, continues to stuff Ione's and Panthea's highly rhetorical diction. Ione makes use, also, of simile in instances like:

> Listen too
> How every pause is filled with undernotes,
> Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,
> Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
> As sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
> And gaze upon themselves within the sea. (196-201)

Reading these lines retrospectively with the knowledge we gather about Ione and Panthea at the

beginning of the coda, we discern a substantial change to their respective states. Now, both of them are not hampered by inability to detect the source of the sweet songs they hear. Even ‘pause,’ which indicates silence, becomes brimming with ‘undernotes’ that are known, beforehand, to assume soon ‘awakening tones.’ Essentially, that certitude emanates from the organic link that binds ‘the sense’ to ‘the soul’ while gestating these ‘tones.’ So, ‘pause,’ which ‘is filled with undernotes,’ does not indicate lifelessness, but ‘life within the soul.’

The cluster of ‘pause,’ ‘undertones’ and ‘life within the soul’ are reminiscent of and, therefore, *extension* to the impulse of life animating Prometheus from within, throughout the three centuries of his torture by Jupiter, and, thus, causing all forms of pain to be supportable. Meanwhile, the riotous festivities, which are accentuated by ‘keen awakening tones’ that, eventually, ‘pierce the sense,’ are evocative of Prometheus’ release and his gaining of immortal life that is coupled with his winning of the immortal love of Asia. Hence, the aestheticization of the ever-expanding extension to Prometheus is made palpable. That aestheticization is reinforced by the simile which likens the Prometheus-like emergence of ‘notes’ of music from ‘pause’ to the ‘stars’ which, as they appear and ‘pierce winter’s crystal air,’ are reflected in the ‘sea.’ This is certainly to further consolidate the Shelleyan urge of

subjecting the idea of the ever-expanding extension of the whole cosmos to Prometheus to the poetic.

Aesthetically, the interaction of the within and the without with each other, by virtue of which the orgy of triumph is felt even in pause, yields a perfect 'whole' induced by the fecundity of Shelley's poetic imagination. The exercise of the imaginative faculty in envisaging the festivities surrounding the mystic ever-expanding extension of happiness to every particle in the cosmos seems to lead Shelley to indulge into a fit of poetic ecstasy, allowing him to soar above the confines of the sensible world.

The presence of the 'ecstatic' in Shelley's poetic world implies a complete self-commitment to clothing his coda with imaginative postulations of the way the world would be if the ideal of eternity were to be reached. Actually, "the ecstatic [discourse] is distinguished by its ability to give some glimpse of a better world, an alternative to this one" (Pippin 39). Therefore, Majorie Boulton argues that "ecstasy means fantasy fit" (111). The 'fit,' which is denotatively associated with "the sudden rush of laughter, activity etc, especially one that is difficult to stop" (*O.A.L.D*), seems to delineate Shelley's poetic ecstasy, while festively singing the new world of freedom. Perhaps, the marked run-on lines used in the second part of the coda is symbolically telling of the 'difficulty' Shelley

faces ‘to stop’ his fit of poeticizing the ecstasy of the mystically-rapturous glee which his imagination induces.

Shelley’s inability to finalize his fit could, also, be felt in the process of interweaving the web of the ever-expanding extension to Prometheus in such a subtle organic link that makes the extreme form of rapture capable of bringing birth infinite alter-egos to Prometheus. It is this symbolic dissociation of Prometheus from other dramatis personae that keeps infinitely granting the festivities of joy, which accompany his release, momentousness and vivacity. Shelley, the creator of that supreme joy, seems to be intent on drawing a universal emotive fervor out of that symbolic dissociation of the dramatis personae from Prometheus, whereby the feeling of happiness at winning immortality is made a truth that is poetically-envisioned.

The ‘poetic truth,’ which being sung by the end of the coda, is conveyed within a marked use of prophetic diction, which highlights the might of the fit the Shelleyan imagination is caught into, while ecstatically engaged in conferring immediacy on what is purely poetic. Northrop Frye, while expatiating on the centrality of the ecstatic in the operation of the prophetic, notices that “the medium of the oracle is often an ecstatic or trance-like state: autonomous voices seem to speak through him [the one who undergoes that experience], and as he is concerned to utter rather than to address, he is turned away from his

listener, so to speak, in a state of self-communion" (136).

It is true that the concern 'to address' constitutes a focal aim of the conversing characters in the coda. Indeed, there is an obvious urge to communicate that high measure of over-blissfulness experienced from within the characters to their addressees. Certainly, Panthea seeks to communicate to Ione her 'delight' at the interspersion of the ever-expanding extension of the glee Prometheus' release brings forth. Ione, also, must be eager to acquaint her sister, Panthea, with the overflowing music she detects even from silence. The same is for the personified spirits of Earth and of Moon who emerge as a couple, affording an extension to Prometheus and Asia.

Prometheus and Asia fervently delve into communicating to his / her partner the elixir of happiness experienced during their nuptials. Even, Demogorgon, "the symbol of Absolute" (Ridenour 17), chooses to address himself to a particular audience while sealing the coda. As he erupts into the scene, he is seen calling such a happy couple through these terms: "Thou, Earth" (538) and "thou Moon" (542) and, then, shifting his address to call other personified spirits like "ye kings of suns and stars" (547) and "ye happy dead" (553), to round off his address with calling "Man, who wert once a despot and a slave, / A dupe and a deceiver" (568-9).

However, the concern 'to utter' seems, indeed, to

matter more than that ‘to address,’ for none of these characters remains unaffected by that ‘state of self-communion.’ Anaesthetized by that state, they appear completely drunk by an ecstatic rapture that grants them enough stamina to talk prophetically. Consequently, they grow as if ‘possessing autonomous voices speaking through them.’ In their congregate, these ‘autonomous voices’ find their origin from Shelley himself who is introduced by George. M. Ridenour as “the architect of a universe idealized by love, in which accident disappears, incongruous and conflicting elements vanish, and all is harmony” (13-14). In other words, these characters’ urge to rapturously ‘utter’ their prophesized happiness at winning immortality could be read symbolically in conjunction with Shelley’s lapse into an unswerving fit of poetic ecstasy.

By virtue of that fit, Shelley seems to ‘turn away from his listener’ (including the critics of his time and his infinite readers) to lyrically sing the ideal world he envisions in his poetic imagination which is too remote from the real world he lives in and against which he rebels. In a way, Shelley’s fit of poetic ecstasy allows him to cleanse the world through subjecting it to a cathartic purge that is poetically verbalized by his characters whose ‘uttering’ of their rapture lyrically makes them share the same ever-expanding expansion to him as they do to Prometheus’ release.

Symbolically, then, the unswerving fit of poetic ecstasy, in which Shelley is caught, amounts, in terms of its heightened emotive effect, to the superhuman happiness that Prometheus is inferred to experience on winning eternity and, with it, the immortal love of Asia, which comes after a long process of superhuman patience. By implication, the Prometheus-like Shelley constitutes the fountainhead of the orgy of happiness being festively celebrated and lyrically 'uttered.' There is implied, all the time, the presence of Shelley in the background of whatever his characters rapturously 'utter' and sing. As a matter of fact, such a markedly rhetorical diction, with which the characters talk, is probably meant to highlight the creative potential of the Shelleyan fit of poetic ecstasy if brought to its extremes of intensity. Thanks to that fit, Shelley manages to construct a festive atmosphere in the audience's mind.

He also proves how much mystic his poetic imagination is, for, as Northrop Frye, holds, "the people we ordinarily call 'mystics' are those for whom eternity is not endless time, but a real present, a 'now' which absorbs all possible hereafters" (211). Perhaps, the stylistic embellishments that bathe the coda's text might incarnate such a mystic thrust of making eternity an ever-expanding 'now' whose infinite absorption of 'all possible hereafters' do certainly emulate symbolically the ever-expanding orgy

of happiness the coda is meant to celebrate. This is what might be imbibed from Panthea's gleeful diction, where extended simile is again used: "I rise as from a bath of sparkling water, / A bath of azure light, among dark rocks, / Out of the stream of sound" (519-21).

That highly-poeticized 'bath' might convey the therapeutically-efficient fruit of Shelley's fit of poetic ecstasy. Hence, the implied interspersion of the ethical in the aesthetic, throughout the coda, may symbolically match the Shelleyan urge to marry opposites together. As Keith Hanley maintains, "part of the power of this play [its coda, in particular] lies in its attempt to incorporate and to rise above rival ideologies, to appear meta-ideological" (256). Perhaps, the only ideology the coda seeks to advance is best verbalized by Demogorgon, who, according to Paul Foot "represents the idea of 'necessity' which comes from William Godwin. It is founded on the belief that the perfectibility of man will eventually triumph over tyranny and destruction" (193). In the coda, Shelley appears to be eager to see that expected 'perfectibility' being implemented.

Therefore, both his panegyric pageantry of triumph and his unswerving fit of poetic ecstasy do feed each other, as to culminate in Shelley's festive ritualization of an ideal world which has not been realized yet. Hence, the marked use of the demonstrative pronoun 'this,' while singing that

idealized world, should be read in conjunction with Shelley's zeal whose mystic fervor can be accounted for his proleptic enthusiasm. Thanks to that, the 'will be' is to become an 'is' so that Demorgorgon is allowed to round off the coda apostrophizing Prometheus with the affirmation "This, like thy glory Titan! Is to be / Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free; / This is alone life, Joy, Empire, and Victor" (595-7).

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Reading Welsh Language Celebration from Technology Appropriation

Mourad Ben Slimane

Abstract

Celebrating minority language revitalization is a hotly debated issue that has recently gained a great deal of importance in many academic circles because of the wide variety of insights it yields and the large spectrum of pertinent implications it leads to. My article will focus on the situation of minority languages in general and Welsh in specific, since this language can be taken as a case in point that has been subject to oscillation between decline and survival. First, I will talk about the plight of minority languages within the context of globalization, as the world's linguistic diversity is being under assault. Then, I will try to investigate the manifold reasons that push minority language community advocates to revitalize and celebrate their languages, which are subjected to decline, in an attempt to survive. Moreover, I will try to support my investigation by some insights, which I have gathered from many Welsh experts in the field.

Keywords: Language celebration, Welsh, linguistic diversity, digitization.

1. Introduction

In academic circles, language endangerment and language revitalization are considered highly interesting topics, which have been discussed extensively by many linguists and authors. They have also been approached from differing perspectives and with various degrees of emphasis. As Tsunoda explains:

> In almost every part of the world, minority languages are threatened with extinction. At the same time, dedicated efforts are being made to document endangered languages, to maintain them, and even to revive once-extinct languages. (2006: V)

This article will investigate the reasons that push minority language communities in general and Welsh in specific to revitalize their languages. According to Coupland et al. (2006: 352), "Wales is well known as that part of the British "Celtic fringe" hosting the most resilient of the Celtic languages, which has hung on to vitality despite a long and acrimonious history of minoritization and Anglicisation." As regards the methodology to be adopted in this article, I will attempt to confirm the aforementioned ideas by analyzing some data collected via some interviews conducted in 2008 and some e-mails received from media experts in the field.

Abbi (2000: 13) argues that the idea "of 'minority' brings in the picture of underprivileged, dominated, subservient people who lag behind the idea of progress and

development. The notion of ‘minority’ also brings home the idea of smallness.” This idea of smallness intimately pertains to the minority or regional languages of the EU. About 40 million people of the Union, which is developing with the expansion of the EU, often use a regional or minority language. Cunliffe reflects on the definitions that have been given with regard to minority languages, saying that it

> is indicative of the complexity and sensitivity surrounding minority languages that even the decision as to what term to use to describe them has been problematic. Aside from ‘minority’, a plethora of terms have been used, each with slightly different connotations: ‘lesser-used’, ‘disadvantaged’, ‘threatened’, ‘endangered’, ‘indigenous’, ‘heritage’, ‘local’, ‘non-state’, and so on. (2005: 133)

According to Cole et al. (1997: XVI), the information age “is characterized by a fast growing amount of information being made available either in the public domain or commercially.”This massive circulation of information has been facilitated by the development of new technology and has increasingly acquired important function for many aspects of people’s professional, social, and private life. It is to be noted that the Welsh minority has established its position within the context of the digital age because of the new media it has appropriated to promote its language on different platforms, which can be regarded as a community resource.

It should be said that several areas of the world have

been witnessing a digital revolution in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), according to the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) (2001).[1] In a recent United Nations report (2000: 3), it is claimed that the world is undergoing a revolution in information and communication technologies, which has great implications for the present and future social and economic situation of all countries of the world.

Clearly, linguistic diversity is being confronted with the forces of globalization. Nettle and Romaine (2000: 30) highlight the extent to which the spread of English around the world is linked to the pervading dimension of English speakers in the areas of science and technology—something which has paved the way for greater control of the world's economy. Indeed,

> those who control particular resources are in a position of power over others. Linguistic capital, like other forms of capital, is unequally distributed in society. The higher the profit to be achieved through knowledge of a particular language, the more it will be viewed as worthy of acquisition. The language of the global village (or McWorld, as some have called it) is English. (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 30-31)

Globalization has increasingly led to layers of diglossia on an international scale. In Sweden, for example, the Swedish language is in a diglossic relationship with

[1] This description is available at Rice (2003)—a detailed account about Information and Communication Technologies as well as the Global Digital Divide.

some other languages, such as Finnish and Saami. Usually, it seems enough for a Swede to know both Swedish and English. Yet, the Saami often need to know the dominant language of the area where they live—either Swedish, Norwegian, or Finnish—as well as some other languages enabling them to communicate beyond national territories (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 31).

Focusing on the issue of globalization, McCarty points out that "[a]t the dawn of the twenty first century, the world's linguistic and cultural diversity is under assault by the forces of globalisation—cultural, economic and political forces that work to standardise and homogenise, even as they stratify and marginalise" (2003: 147). Pattanayak (2000: 47) says that "[b]y luring people to opt for globalisation without enabling them to communicate with the local and the proximate, globalisation is an agent of cultural destruction." To give a further insight into the drastic phenomenon of globalization and its aftermath, I refer to this quotation by Neville Alexander where he depicts the whole picture:

> Colonial conquest, imperialism and globalisation have established a hierarchy of standard languages, which mirrors the power relations on the planet. The overall effect of this configuration has been to hasten the extinction of innumerable language varieties and to stigmatise and marginalise all but the most powerful languages. Above all, English, in David Crystal's coinage, is 'global language,' indeed, *the* global language. From all parts of the world, including the continent where the English language originated, we

> hear the same complaint: *English is destroying our languages*. Tové Skutnabb-Kangas has taken the issue furthest by attacking the phenomenon of 'linguistic genocide' which, as she explains, is the direct result of globalisation. (2005: 1)

2. Why Celebrating Welsh?

In this section, I am going to display the major reasons that push minority language communities to revitalize their languages, with a specific emphasis that is going to be placed on Welsh.

2.1. Diversity

Crystal (2000: 32-33) points out that the idea of diversity is a further development of the ***ecological frame of reference.*** The arguments, which support the need for biological diversity, can also be applied to languages. Many people would agree that ecological diversity is an excellent thing whose preservation should be enhanced. Likewise, the preservation of linguistic diversity is also crucial because language is an attribute of human beings. Accordingly, when language transmission breaks down through language death, then there is a serious loss of inherited knowledge.

Although there are many arguments that support the idea of linguistic diversity, I would argue, on the basis of Grenoble and Whaley (2006), that since the end of the Cold War, minority language communities have gained

visibility, increased flexibility, as well as formulated different ways in pursing their own agendas to counter the globalizing impact of English, as can be exemplified by the situation of Welsh. Indeed, the Welsh language community has deployed many strategies to favor Welsh at the expense of English. So, one can clearly see that the major issue for the Welsh language community is not only about linguistic diversity. Indeed, there is a tendency to compete with English and provide services in Welsh—a tendency which stands at the heart of the revitalization activities undertaken by the Welsh minority, something which can be confirmed by Ifor Gruffydd.[2]

2.2. Marker of Identity

A Welsh proverb can be used to reflect on the concern directed towards the death of languages:

> *Cenedl heb iaith, cenedl heb galon*
> A nation without a language is a nation without a heart

Identity is an entity, which is at the core of language. To talk of endangered languages in terms of identity, for instance, monolingual speakers of thriving languages focus on the role of dialect within their community. Indeed, those who are concerned about this issue often group themselves

[2] This insight is from an interview (2006), which I conducted with Ifor Gruffydd, the head of Welsh Language Services at Cardiff University.

into dialect societies by compiling lists of old words and preserving old stories. Up to this level, one is driven to say that the concept of identity is what makes the members of a community recognizably the same physical appearance, local customs (such as dress), rituals, beliefs, as well as personal behaviors.

However, language, which is regarded as the most interesting form of behavior, is available even when one cannot see other people (shouting at a distance) or see anything at all (talking in the dark). Therefore, language is viewed as the primary symbol of identity (Crystal 2000: 36-40). Studies, such as Maguire (1991: 94, 98) on the revival of Irish in Belfast and Jones (1998: 128) on the revitalization of Welsh, have revealed that one of the underlying motivations behind these movements is concerned with identity (Tsunoda 2006: 140).

As regards identity, it is through the different platforms of Welsh media that the Welsh *culture of virtuality* is conveyed. For example, through the investigation of the digital library, I have come up with several insights with regard to this form of technology. In fact, the major idea that revolves around the availability of the digital library is that it is a clear attempt by the Welsh community to foster its image and further propagate its symbolic identity. The Welsh identity is reflected through the visual artifacts and historical pieces, which have been

digitized on the Website of the digital library. Another point that relates to the symbolic dimension of my investigation is the continuous building of bridges between Welsh and American communities, as the videoconferencing project demonstrates, according to JNT Association (2003).[3]

2.3. Language as a Repository of History

When he was in Scotland with James Boswell, Dr Johnson formulated a remark that made him very famous:

> Alas! What can a nation that has not letters [=writing] tell of its original? I have always difficulty to be patient when I hear authors gravely quoted, as giving accounts of savage nations, which accounts they had from the savages themselves. What can the M'Craas tell about themselves a thousand years ago? There is no tracing the connection of ancient languages, but by language; and therefore I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigree of nations.[4]

A language embodies the history of its speakers. "Language is the archives of history," says the American essayist and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1844). Indeed, language texts, through their layers of grammar and lexicon, reveal past events and happenings. Many people

[3] 'How the World Plays' is a continuous project where children are treated as researchers of their families and communities, and connect through the videoconferencing technology to a partner research team from another place of the world.

[4] Boswel (1785: n.p.): the day is 18 September 1773. 'M'Craas is one of the Scottish clans.

give considerable importance to these linguistic scraps of personal documentation, which they have gathered from their ancestors–for instance, a grandparent's diary or the name written on the back of a photograph–provide ample evidence for their own pedigree. According to Crystal (2000: 41), this clearly indicates the level to which people are dependent on written language to understand their origins.

The fact that people wish to know about their ancestry is something universal. Yet, this tendency requires a language to achieve that need. And, once a language becomes extinct, the links with their past may disappear. The application of technology to Welsh language texts shows that the digital library of Wales preserves linguistic material in Welsh, which entails the archives of its history. Therefore, it could be said that the digital library acts as a double preservation technique. The digital library of Wales[5] is viewed as a medium that helps Welsh learners get a close insight into works of Welsh literature and other linguistic references. In this way, it provides access to academic resources and also saves time, as the physical library is located in Aberystwyth—a place which is not easy to come to due to the specific nature of roads in Wales. Therefore, through the appropriation of the library, it

[5] The digital library of Wales (https://www.llgc.org.uk/) is a digital archive that captures several aspects of Welsh life and history.

becomes highly evident how facilitating the electronic technology is in the sense that it helps learners assimilate the structures of the Welsh language as well as access a huge body of Welsh literature and visual artifacts.

2.4. Source of Pride and Survival

Tsunoda (2006: 141) points out that a certain stigma has been attached to minority languages. However, measures have been taken to reverse this denigrating tide, according to Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977: 338). Hudson and McConvell (1984: 38) use an example from Kimberly, Western Australia: "The speakers of the languages are proud of their languages." In the same way, Jocks (1998: 222-223) explains the view of Mohawk people of the USA: "the mere fact of speaking [Mohawk] even in rudimentary form is a potential source of pride and identity."[6] Perspectives reminiscent of 'language as a source of pride and self-esteem' are also reported by scholars such as Tovey, Hannan, and Abrahamson (1989: 33) on the topic of Irish. As regards the digital library of Wales, digital collections are specifically chosen in so as to foster the concept of Welshness. Indeed, through the circulation of these

> artifacts, digitized purely because they mythically represent the essential heritage of the country, the LLGC has continued to keep within the remit of its

[6] For some Welsh language perspectives, see Jones (1998: 328).

> original Charter, and focus its digital presence on a localized role of examining and displaying artifacts of heritage that have, in some symbolic way, enabled the nation to survive. Priddle (2004)

2.5. Solidarity

Tsunoda (2006: 141-142) refers to an instance of language as a factor promoting solidarity. This example, which has been mentioned by Suwilai (1998: 155), deals with So (Thavung) of Thailand. This instance revolves around a woman who stated that she will be ready to teach her children So (Thavung) so that when her offsprings get older and may experience some difficulties in their lives. They could then return and live with their parents and families. Expanding further on such concern, Wardaugh argues that solidarity is a feeling of equality that people have with one another as well as a common interest around which they will bond.

The author (2002: 30) further argues that "[a] feeling of solidarity can lead people to preserve a local dialect or an endangered language to resist power, or to insist on independence." It should be noted that information technology can be viewed as a community resource. Indeed, the representative case of videoconferencing epitomizes the idea of interconnectedness as well as enhanced communication, as Frank Hartles confirms

(2006).[7]

2.6. Knowledge

Crystal (2000: 44-45) argues that identity and history are combined together to ensure that each language reflects a unique interpretation or vision of human existence. This highlights another reason for caring when languages die. Linguists care about endangered languages because there are many important things to be learnt from them. For example, the view that languages other than the native language provide people with a means of personal growth has been a crucial theme in literature at various levels of intellectual depth. Indeed, it is argued that humanity draws many benefits from each reflection of itself in a language, as this quotation spells out: "The world is a mosaic of visions.[8] With each language that disappears, a piece of that mosaic is lost."

> Crystal further claims that one story does not make a world view. A world view gradually emerges through the accumulation of many sources from a community... But all over the world, encounters with indigenous peoples bring to light a profound awareness of fauna and flora, rocks and soils, climatic cycles and their impact on the land, the interpretation of the landscape, and the question of the balance of natural forces... And it is language that unifies everything, linking environmental practice with cultural knowledge, and transmitting everything

[7] This piece of insight is taken from an interview conducted in the summer of 2006 with Frank R. Hartles—a member of Media Resources Center at Cardiff University.

[8] This has been reported in Geary (1997:n.p.).

> synchronically among the members of a community, as well as diachronically between generations. (2000: 46-47)

According to Fettes (1997), the indigenous knowledge can be very powerful and relevant to community members. Indeed, the technological platforms, through their display of Welsh, convey the indigenous knowledge of the Welsh people,[9]as the BBC Wales news website reveals, though the prevalent tendency has often been to put emphasis on language and dissociate it from its social and cultural contexts. Electronic technologies, which have been characterized by their multidimensional facets, reveal that the knowledge, which is displayed on their various platforms, is captured and maintained for future generations.

3. Conclusion

This article has focused on highlighting the different reasons for revitalizing minority language in general and Welsh in particular. Indeed, this has revealed a plethora of sociolinguistic issues that shows the increasing stress on minority language celebration, without forgetting the significant role of technology in all of this, as technology

[9] BBC Wales news website, accessible at (http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/cylchgrawn/llyfrau/index.shtml), is a doorway into the latest daily Welsh events and news that attempts to promote the Welsh language.

has become the crux of both majority and minority language efforts. Commenting on the motivations to reverse language shift, I would argue on the basis of Cormack (2005) that there are many ideas, which support the promotion of minority languages.

For minority language advocates, the issue is about linguistic survival. But for linguists, the issue of minority languages along with their specific characteristics is a matter to be discussed in academic circles and conferences. The idea of bridge building between non-indigenous and indigenous communities is an innovative dimension of my exploration. This has been considered a perspective lacking in previous studies on minority language media. Yet, the exploration of videoconferencing activities between the Welsh and American communities has highlighted the issue of interacting with non-indigenous communities through different forms of linguistic as well as cultural exchanges. This has resulted in opening a room for dialogue between different cultures. It should be pointed out that the contribution of my investigation is that it dwells on a variety of issues such as linguistic imperialism, globalization, media and politics, the Internet—areas where Welsh language technology could be useful especially in the context of Postmodernism.

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Digital Library of Wales: http://www.llgc.org.uk/

Celebration is a crucial event that converges on the well-being and the well-becoming of communities. It signals a transition and evolution gearing humanity towards a condition of appropriation. Celebration is an important occasion which is organized in an artistic manner, deviating the subject from malaise to a virtual world where harmony and happiness can be attained. Indeed, in the scope of art, philosophy and culture, celebration of breakdowns becomes a breakthrough. Postmodern theorists and critics celebrate what was evaded and lamented in modernity. Thus, alienation, division, fragmentation, death and disorder which were tragic events are celebrated as signs of mutations, building new identity and creating new subjectivity. In the postmodern thought, celebration becomes a revolutionary ceremony, liberating the attender from the spectrum of fixed visions and closed circles of outlooks.

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