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RAPE TRAUMA AND IDENTITY IN ALICE SEBOLD'S *LUCKY*

Ayad A. Abood Al-Saymary¹

Abstract: *This article addresses rape trauma and its impact on identity in Alice Sebold's Lucky. Rape is a brutal act against women and a violation of women's rights. Trauma of rape ranges from mild indulgence with alcohol or drug addictions to severe suicide attempts. To prevent or reduce such acts to happen, raped women should know and be instructed that recovery from trauma is always possible. This article argues that narrative is one of the most important elements in the process of healing from rape trauma. Telling the story of rape experience could be a step forward towards developing identity and self-concept about oneself that have been greatly affected by sexual abuse. By returning to trauma, Alice Sebold overcomes her fear of facing painful memories and becomes able to reengage in life that is satisfying and rewarding.*

Keywords: *Trauma; identity, rape, recovery, narrative, Lucky.*

Etymologically, the word trauma is derived from the Greek language, meaning 'wound'. The term refers to either physical or psychic wounding. Trauma is a shock or the aftermath of a shock only to be remembered later on after the event. Trauma causes a psychological or emotional wound to the mind due to disturbing or shocking events a person encounters. Caruth (1996) defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). Sztompka (2004) suggests that the occurrence of trauma is "sudden, comprehensive, fundamental, and unexpected", such as a death in the family, the collapse of the stock exchange, a terrorist attack, rape, etc. (159).

Trauma is a universal phenomenon that could happen to any person. Traumatized persons feel that their insides do not match up with their outsides. Trauma could break the chain of a person's life, but this chain can be repaired. When a traumatic event occurs, the traumatized person should know that recovery is always possible. Trauma causes an injury to the mind. Something strange infiltrates the mind, destroying the defensive lines of the mind, causing some disturbances to the person. The atrocity of the traumatic events seems to force

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the traumatized to remember and relive the events. Langer (1991) states that trauma "stops the chronological clock and fixes the moment permanently in memory and imagination, immune to the vicissitudes of time" (175). The traumatic event is a moment in a person's life where the person thinks that time has stopped at that moment. Belatedly, the traumatized person begins to remember the traumatic event in the form of repeated dreams, flashbacks, or hallucinations. The memory of the traumatizing events will be kept in the mind of the victim, fragmented, unsayable, and unassimilated. Kilby (2007) suggests that trauma remains unassimilated, untold, and unknown only in moments of testimony (34). This means that, when the traumatized establishes a good relation with a trusted person, such as a good friend or a therapist, the trauma memory will be told and known.

In the late twentieth century, domestic violence, such as women's rape, marginalization, and child abuse, has overwhelmingly increased. The advent of feminism in the 1970s has led to increasing studies about the psychological impact on rape, thanks to the research and writings of Burgess and Holmstrom (1974) who invented the term 'rape trauma syndrome' to refer to the severe traumatic reaction of the sexually assaulted victims. Burgess and Holmstrom (1974) described the main feature of anxiety in the rape trauma syndrome as 'a subjective state of terror and overwhelming fear of being killed'. This syndrome (Burgess and Homstrom, 1974) is divided into two phases, which can disrupt the physical, psychological, social, and sexual aspects of the victim's life. The first is called the acute or disruptive phase which is characterized by general stress response symptoms. It can last from days to weeks. The second phase is characterized by a process of rehabilitation and recovery during which the victim's task is to restore order of his/her life and reestablish a sense of control of the world around him/her. This phase can last from months to years (Pettrak, 2002:20; Burgess, 1983:100).

Many empirical studies warn of the risk of sexual abuse that may cause psychological trauma or future illness for the victims. Obviously, many sexual assaults result in physical violence. Victims can suffer from cuts, bruises, and scars during the assault. These injuries can cause a permanent memory of the attack that develop psychological trauma. For example, a raped woman may become pregnant, sexually assaulted men and women are vulnerable to contract diseases such as HIV (Hedge, 2002:205). Webster (2002) maintains that sexual abuse can have an impact on the reactions of the victims and can develop sexual dysfunctions. Sexually assaulted victims are likely to avoid any sexual activity later on because this may

remind them of the feelings of fear and helplessness associated with the original event (188-89). Moreover, this may trigger sexual aversion which means that the victims avoid sex in any form and even they evade seeing movies with sexual contents (194). Rape of women, Herman (1992) affirms, is a life-threatening event, as they generally fear mutilation and death during the attack. Following rape, victims complain of insomnia, nausea, sudden responses, and nightmares, as well as dissociative or anesthetic symptoms (22). Sanderson (2013) reveals that complex trauma and sexual abuse can make it very difficult to trust or come close to others. Fear of being hurt again or being sexually coerced can motivate victims to avoid an intimate relationship. Though this strategy can help survive, it usually engenders traumatic loneliness and difficulties in relationships. However, this generates contradiction for the survivor who yearns for closeness, but is forced to avoid it (236). Nevertheless, Abrahams (2007) asserts that one of the most important and useful ways to recover from rape trauma and its aftermath is to reestablish social support and to avoid isolation caused by violence and abuse (10).

Traumatic events often have a great impact on the psyche. Exposure to any type of trauma, whether psychological or physical, makes it more susceptible to depressive disorder or borderline personality disorder. Experiencing such events may contribute positively in emerging ways to cope with these situations and developing a stronger personality. Following a traumatic experience, persons respond in different ways. Some persons surrender themselves completely to this experience and find it difficult, if not impossible, to heal. Others reconcile with the traumatic experience itself. The reconciliation is either positive or negative. The positive is to forgive, the negative, what I call to counterattack, is to avenge or to have an antagonistic feeling towards the perpetrator.

Previously mentioned definitions of trauma entail that the behaviors, emotions, reactions, and the psyche of the traumatized radically change. This means that following the traumatic event, the result will be two identities of the same person, a before and an after the catastrophe. The physical and psychological trauma of a catastrophic event mostly leads to the questioning of self-identity. Hutchison and Bleiker (2008) demonstrate that emotions are very important in the process of social healing (389) and are active component of identity and community (392). Feelings help people understand themselves and their position in relation to others and the world around them. Admittedly, "by framing forms of personal and social understanding, emotions are inclinations that lend individuals to locate their identity within a wider collective" (392-93). It can be said then that the relationship between trauma, emotions and reconciliation is very important. In the aftermath of a traumatic experience, it is important

to know how an alternative, less divided sense of identity and community can be constructed. Creating such an idea requires an understanding of the personal and social impacts of trauma in an effort to devise practical strategies that promote emphatic and humanizing ways to reconcile past grievances (394).

Man (in a generic sense) is a socializing creature who affects and is affected by other people around him/her. The first step of their identity formation begins at home and at later steps, their identity is polished by social interaction. Pérez-Sales claims that identity is the realization a person feels of themselves and their role in the society in which s/he lives. Identity is formed since childhood through a relation between the person and his/her environment (Pérez-Sales 2010:408). Bohleber points out that identity can be both defined psychologically and sociologically:

At a psychological level, "identity" represents the bridge between the intrapsychic and the intersubjective. The concept of identity has the advantage of containing two aspects of the self: the autonomous aspect and the belonging aspect... At a sociological level, [identity] conjoins internal core structures within the individual with external social structures and concepts, and provides a link between inner personal development and external social development (Bohleber 2010:50).

Alice Sebold's *Lucky* announces, from its beginning, a special illustration of what rape trauma can lead to as far as a teenager is concerned. Sebold, both the author and the title character, contributes to the unfolding of the narrative by telling her story of rape and its aftermath. The novel proves itself a self-discovery of a character whose sense of security and identity are shaken by her experience of rape and the society in which she lives. *Lucky* is autobiographical novel, written in 1999, by the American novelist Alice Sebold. It chronicles Alice Sebold's experience as a rape survivor. As a sub-genre of autobiography, this memoir identifies such an unhealthy issue in society, definitely, rape and the aftermath that follows. It covers a specific experience in the past life of Alice Sebold. The novel is highly applauded by critics for its genuine and authentic description of a rape survivor.

The events of the story take place in 1981 where 18-year-old Alice Sebold was a college student at Syracuse, New York. One day, on her way walking home through a park near the campus, Alice has been brutally attacked, beaten, and raped by a stranger. Her assaulter threatens her that he has a knife and if she utters a noise or shows a resistance, he would not hesitate to kill her. When Alice reports the case to the police, they told her that she is 'Lucky'

to escape alive because a young woman once has been found murdered and dismembered in the same location. An investigation begins but the police find no clues.

During the summer, Alice returns home to Pennsylvania to live with her family before the beginning of the academic year. One day on the sidewalk, Alice spots her rapist who grimaces at her. Alice calls the police and after a series of events, the assaulter is arrested. Unfortunately, during a lineup procedure, Alice would not be able to correctly identify her assaulter perhaps because he brings with him a friend who looks very similar to him. However, after a long and a tiresome trial, which takes several months, Alice Sebold wins the case and Gregory Madison goes to jail.

Caruth (1996) argues that Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experiences because, like psychoanalysis, literature has an interest in the complex relationship between knowing and not knowing at which point "the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet" (3). In this paper, I would say that besides instructing and entertaining, literature heals trauma as Burrows (2004) suggests, "It is in the pages of fiction or poetry that we are imaginatively empowered and sometimes healed by understanding how it *feels* to be somebody else" (23). Moreover, narrative is an essential component to heal from trauma. Interestingly, fictional narrative has an advantage over theory and history in that "fiction adds in much greater complexity the inner depth of emotional and psychic responses that cannot easily be encompassed within the other two genres" (22). Once narrative is attainable, traumatic memories vanish towards healing. Charles (2019) asserts that "at the core of identity, development is the ability to tell a coherent story through which our becoming makes sense and can proceed." In search for oneself in others or in achievements, a traumatized person will fail if he cannot find someone who sees his/her personal experience of trauma to be the starting point of the journey (6).

Lucky vicariously shows the effective power of narration in the healing process of a traumatized individual. The narrative technique Sebold adopts in telling her experience of rape and its aftermath is profoundly touching as it traces the different stages of Alice's life from the time of the rape accident until her response to recover. All throughout the story, readers feel how Alice struggles to cope with the aftermath of the rape trying to distinguish herself as an independent character able to integrate into society again. Duncan (2004) asserts that one effective way to help facilitate the eventual incorporation of the traumatic experience into a victim's life history which will ultimately lead to the reestablishment of a life full of contentment is to have a progressive talk about the trauma experience. The integration of the

traumatic experience into the victim's life history occurs at the mental and emotional level where the victim tells the events in a narrative form and rebuilds the system of belief that encompasses the trauma. This will decisively help reduce the symptoms that disturb daily functioning and increases a sense of personal control and safety (4).

Individuality is one of the most important themes in the novel. Over the course of the novel, Alice strives to find a balance between her memories of rape and her future life. She seeks commitments to love and be loved, virtue, and self-respect. At the end, Alice finds and creates her own personality apart from the feeling of being psychologically impaired by her trauma of rape. Indeed as Duncan (2004) avows, the most important thing a raped woman should know about the trauma of rape is that recovery is always possible and that she could recoup and reestablish a healthy life (30). *Lucky* establishes itself as an outstanding story in which the title character, Alice, strives to get independence regardless of the restrictions of the society that victimizes her.

A raped woman experiences physical and sexual violence that often leads to psychological disorders that develop to trauma. Often she loses the ability to confront because of threatening with a weapon, gagging her mouth, or restricting her limbs. Moreover, she may be threatened with death, or actually be killed. A raped woman faces moments of horror that shook her psychological well-being and cause massive psychological rifts and cracks. Her dignity is violated, and of course, in some societies the stigma of honor pursues her as if she wants to, as if the family's honor is dependent on her virginity. What worsens her psychological state is that she is also afraid of the perception of the family and society. Therefore, when we see her immediately after the crime, she is in a state of confusion, distraction, astonishment and intense fear, and she is overwhelmed with a feeling of embarrassment, shame, insult and anxiety.

A commonly held belief is that a raped woman should live the rest of her life stigmatized with shame. Those who have been raped are expected to feel shame and indignity, and keep the rape secret because it stigmatizes them rather than their perpetrators. However, there are people who do not believe that rape is a cause of shame and thereby do not take actions that suggest it. Some of these people truly feel that there is no reason to be ashamed or there is no need to express feelings of shame, and some of them do not do things that suggest that they feel ashamed. Alice did not feel ashamed: "I told the police not to call my mother. Unaware of

my appearance, I believed I could hide the rape from her and from my family. My mother had panic attacks in heavy traffic; I was certain my rape would destroy her” (Lucky 11).

She has veiled herself with a protective shield to encounter her trauma of rape. The first thing she did to go to inform the police and then to inform her mother. The only one thing she was concerned about was how to inform her mother. Forgetting her physical and psychological pain, Alice is concerned about her mother who has had panic attacks. Alice, for the first moment, thinks that she could succeed in hiding her rape. Besides, she is afraid of what would other people think of her if they know she is raped. Though the above excerpt shows clearly Alice's bewilderment and fear, it suggests how Alice was in control of herself to manage the situation.

The sense of insecurity permeates Alice. She becomes sensitive when her body is touched. The rapist's words 'worst bitch', are still echoing in Alice's ears feeling them repetitively for years when she is undressed even in front of females:

She [Tree] reached through the water and got the large square brick of soap. She drew it down my back, nothing but the bar of soap touching me. I felt the rapist's words, "worst bitch," as I would feel them almost constantly for years when I undressed in front of other people. . (Lucky 13)

In the aftermath of the rape, Alice develops an acute feeling of sensitivity to her body. This feeling will have an impact on her relationships later on. She keeps remembering her rapist's words every time her body is touched. For instance, later on in the novel, Alice tells a lie just to hide her fear of having sex and being naked:

We continued to drink. I was alone now, I knew that. If I had told the truth he would have rejected me. The pressure I felt to "get it over with"—in my words to Lila—was overwhelming. I was afraid if I went too long, the fear involved in having sex would only increase. I didn't want to be a dried-up old woman, or become a nun, or live in the house of my parents and stare at the wall ceaselessly. These destinies were very real to me. . (Lucky 95)

Prior to this excerpt is a conversation between Alice and Jamie in the bar. Alice cares about Jamie imagining herself falling in love with and marrying him. During this conversation, Jamie asks Alice whether she has slept with anyone since the rape. Alice lies to Jamie telling him moreover that she has slept with three different men. In this excerpt, while she is alone, Alice is revealing that if she has told the truth, she might lose Jamie. More importantly, she does not want the fear of having sex increase. Alice only wants to live a very normal life away from the

rape incident. This sense of insecurity is also expressed later on: ““When I was raped I lost my virginity and almost lost my life. I also discarded certain assumptions I had held about how the world worked and about how safe I was” (Lucky 151).

With these thoughts in the aforementioned excerpts, Sebold expresses that rape has damaged her relational life. Her trauma of rape has fundamental effects not only on her psychological state but also on the system of connection that binds her with the society. The rape event has destroyed her assumptions about the security of the world in which she lives, her self-confidence, and her trust in people. Herman (1992) refers to this idea as disconnection. She maintains that the traumatic events of rape

[...] breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim’s faith in a natural or divine order...” (37).

Recovery depends on the personality of the raped before the rape, the degree and severity of the threat and violence she faces during the rape, the extent of her resistance to the act of rape, and the care she was provided after the incident. It has been found that many of the negative effects of rape can be avoided. This can be achieved by providing adequate and prompt psychological and social care to the raped, encouraging the victim to tell her story to a close friend or relative, providing psychological service by a sympathetic medical team, and providing legal aid that helps the raped to obtain her rights. Regardless of the psychological pain Alice feels, she comes to realize that she should try to recover:

I knew, now that I had been raped, I should try to look good for my parents. Having gained the regulation freshman fifteen meant that my skirt that day fit. I was trying to prove to them and to myself that I was still who I had always been. I was beautiful, if fat. I was smart, if loud. I was good, if ruined. (Lucky 17)

Here Alice considers facts only. She realized that her rape is a fact and she knew that this affected her family or at least she felt how the family looked at her. Nonetheless, she has to adapt herself to this incident. What Alice tried to do was to prove to her family and to herself that she did not change. However, she was fat but still beautiful, loud but keen, brutalized but still good.

Furthermore, Alice has come up with the idea of sorting and organizing her life. She decides to give priority to some things and people in her life. Gradually, Alice begins to realize

that she should share her story with primary people such as her parents, sister, and her dear friend Mary Alice but of course maintaining the particulars of her rape to only herself:

And so, soon after, I began to come up with my theory of primary versus secondary. It was okay for primary people, my mother and father, my sister and Mary Alice, to share the story... In this way, I thought I could contain the news of what had happened to me (Lucky 20).

Duncan (2004) insinuates, "As women recover, they talk about the trauma of sexual abuse in a way that is comfortable and forthright yet also maintains their privacy about details of the abuse. The more comfortable women become within the healing process, the more confident they become about what aspect of the abuse they choose to share with others" (157). Actually, Alice has lost belief in those people who give her that glance which dictates that she is guilty. The rape event becomes a dividing point in Alice's life: "My life was over; my life had just begun" (Lucky 20). With this idea, Alice contemplates how after the rape she thought her life had ended. She is completely shattered, but in reality, this opens a new life for her. This idea shows the contrast between her life before the rape and afterward. Alice's life before and after the rape is seen as entirely different, she enters this experience weak and comes out very strong.

Indeed, lack of social support hinders the process of recovery of a rape survivor. A raped victim shows anxiety that is the expected result of the personal state of terror the raped person experiences and the devastating fear of being killed. One of the most important ways to quickly recuperate from the trauma of rape and its outcomes is to reestablish a social support and avoid isolation. In Alice's case, it might be entirely possible that her recovery process from the trauma of rape has taken so long because she did not receive the good family support she needed most of all. Her father was always busy with his obsession of Spanish literature, her mother with her panic attacks, and her sister buried herself in her books to forget everything. Another reason that impedes Alice's recovery is that she feels embarrassed of what her family would think of her if she tells everything in details:

They [the family] had no idea, because I had not told them, what had happened to me in that tunnel—what the particulars were. They were fitting together the horrors of imagination and nightmare and trying to fashion what had been their sister's or child's reality. I knew exactly what had happened. But can you speak those sentences to the people you love? Tell them you were urinated on or that you kissed back because you did not want to die? (Lucky 36)

Alice does not share the particulars of her rape story with her family. She does not tell them that she has been humiliated and insulted by her rapist before raped. Nevertheless, due to their treatment to her, Alice feels what her parents and sister fashion in their minds about what has happened in the tunnel. Actually, she could read this in their eyes. Actually, Alice does not want and does need pity. All she wants is that justice done her. That is, her rapist should be caught and punished for what he has done to her.

In fact, it was Alice's courage, determination and audacity to speak in front of the jury that made her win the case and regain her normal life. Alice turned her suffering from the trauma of rape into a decisive victory that made her able to face a society that often did not do her justice and did not consider her a victim of rape, but rather considered her a person who should be kept away from. Alice reflects with satisfaction that within a year, from rape to trial, she has passed through a death and rebirth phenomenon. She is convinced that her life has changed considerably and that this experience has opened to her new horizons: "I remember agreeing with my mother that I had gone through a death-and-rebirth phenomenon in the span of one year. Rape to trial. Now the land was new and I could make of it anything I wished" (Lucky 129).

Nonetheless, Alice can hardly forget some disappointing events. Some of these events though saddened Alice but they made her stronger later on. For instance, following Lila's rape, Lila decides to leave Alice. Alice thinks that they share the same experience. Now Alice feels that Lila betrays her. Alice reflects with sadness on her happiest moments when she and Lila were close friends. She gave her everything she needed; she gave her things she did not ask for. Failing to regain her relationship with Lila, Alice decides not to attend the day of graduation. She could not imagine celebrating and seeing Lila and her friends are still there. Alice wants to leave Syracuse as soon as possible.

After graduation, Alice curses the bad and sad memories of Syracuse. She will go to Houston University to get an MA in poetry. She decided to spend the summer rehabilitating her destructed soul. She thinks that rape will not follow her there. In this reverie, Alice is trying to convey that she will try to forget everything about the rape experience, the fear, and the disappointment. She thinks that she will be able to begin a new life:

Syracuse was over. Good riddance, I thought. I was going to the University of Houston in the fall. I was going to get an MA in poetry. I would spend the summer trying to

reinvent myself. I had not seen Houston, never been south of Tennessee, but it was going to be different there. Rape would not follow me. (Lucky 148)

Sebold concludes her memoir reflecting on the irony of life: I live in a world where the two truths coexist; where both hell and hope lie in the palm of my hand. (Lucky 154). In the world in which she lives, there are two fundamental facts, hope and hell. Sebold is realizing that everything depends on her and not on anybody else to be happy or sad; she is the one who determines her own destiny.

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THE DYSTOPIC AUTOMATION NIGHTMARE IN VONNEGUT'S *PLAYER PIANO*

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Abstract: *Kurt Vonnegut, like Isaac Asimov, was an outstanding SF author who dealt with imagined and all-too-real consequences of the increasing power of the machine world at the expense of the human world. Quite significantly, the two authors were distinguished members of the American Humanist Association, Vonnegut having succeeded Asimov as Honorary President of that organization. In that capacity they might be seen as animated by high minded utopian ideas. However, to raise consciousness and warn humans about the mixed blessings that science and technology involved, Vonnegut, like Asimov, considered the artistic possibilities of dystopia and anti-utopia. Dealing with dystopia and anti-utopia was a preoccupation that Vonnegut and Asimov shared in their works, *Player Piano* and *The Naked Sun* being notable illustrations. The current article is the first instalment of this comparative approach to the two authors and the two novels, focusing on the dystopic automation nightmare in Vonnegut's *Player Piano*.*

Keywords: *SF; utopia; dystopia; anti-utopia; informat.*

In Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), the end of the meaningful human existence is brought upon human race by technology. This seems a softer kind of end compared to a good old traditional one of man against man. The insidious and constant confrontation of humans versus machines turns into an automation nightmare in a dystopic world. Vonnegut provides a warning from the perspective of 1952 A.D. to the future readers that "[it] is not a book about what is, but a book about what could be" (Foreword to *Player Piano*). Generally, dystopias explicitly or implicitly contain warnings of bleak future. The novels describe what could happen if the warnings fail to be taken into consideration. In post-World War America, both in *Player Piano* and in the real world, the dystopian nightmare has a multifaceted manifestation.

In Vonnegut's novel the perspective over the society's status quo shifts according to the particularities of the well-defined and strictly bordered three parts of Ilium, New York: "In the northwest are the managers and engineers and civil servants and a few professional people;

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in the northeast are the machines; and in the south, across the Iroquois River, is the era known locally as Homestead, where almost all of the people live” (PP 1).

While Eduard Vlad notes that the three distinct parts of Ilium, New York appear to parodically imitate the beginning of Julius Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*, he also goes on to comment on the hint to the ancient Ilium (Troy) as foreseeing another impending confrontation:

The name of the American Ilium is reminiscent of another ancient history development, and Vonnegut appears to connect it ironically to this postindustrial setting. The Greeks had defeated the Trojans, the inhabitants of Ilium, by means of a tricky machine. Is automation the new Trojan Horse? Another war is obviously about to break out in this postindustrial Ilium, different from the one that brought about the triumph of automation (Vlad 2004: 35).

The administrative delimitation of Ilium in three zones (a spatial metaphor for the social hierarchy), with a major geographical border that of the Iroquois River separates the large lower class from the upper class of intellectual elite and the machines (the last two cannot go one without the other). In this way two different worlds function independently, “If the bridge across the Iroquois were dynamited, few daily routines would be disturbed” (1). The bridge - a symbol of communication and connection lost its function, “Not many people on either side have reasons other than curiosity for crossing” (1). But the luxury of curiosity belongs to the powerful ones in this fragile balance as the story develops itself. Even the name of Ilium reminds one of the ancient cities of Troy best known for the Trojan War and the “Trojan horse” siege model. Here the technology plays such a role in the citadel destruction, by man against man, that there are “hundreds of Iliums over America” (1). The utopian harmonious state is not possible with a social stratification that fractures society. Human society, per se, loses its unity when incorporates large percentage of artificial machines. A world that is dominated by machines is a dystopic nightmare for humans.

In *Player Piano* (relevant for the 1950s dystopian literature and ever since), the major unifying and destructive spider-web element is the relation between man and machine in a post-World War III society. If “a living thing in Ilium Works” (the automated area) moves, it will be “a curiosity” (PP 14); machines have replaced human labour and presence. Vonnegut explores the idea of a non-conventional apocalypse for humans. The machines saved the world

as people knew it, putting an end to a dreadful conventional war period. Initially, the need for manpower was fulfilled by the machines created by the managers and engineers. When “men and women, who went to fight” depopulated “hundreds of Iliums over America” (1), as it is explained on the first page of the novel, an economic decision changed the fabric of the society. Thus, America’s production capacity carried on its business as usual with “almost no manpower” (1). Since the people could not grasp the fact that “there is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare” (Tzu 6), the machines stepped in because “it was the know-how that won the war” (1). Therefore, man-made peace was a thing of ancient history, the machine-made peace carried out the general symbol of the almost legitimate right to take everything from the hands of man. In today’s world, the know-how establishes global superpowers, it begins and ends economic or informational wars, thus, people are irrelevant. The global society functions in the World Wide Web and the unauthorized access to regional, national or international informational systems has a mass destructive potential.

In *Player Piano*, after the war, the American people “render[ed] therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's” (*Authorized King James Version*, Matthew 22:21) but with a twist: the melting of religion, authority and society into the idolised figure of automation. It was a surrender unwillingly given after a ten-year period of both men and women killed in riots or jailed under “the antisabotage laws” (*PP* 1). As the war winning machines became army leaders, they replaced man, “thus it may be known that the leader of armies is the arbiter of the people’s fate, the man on whom it depends whether the nation shall be in peace or in peril.” (Tzu 8). Vonnegut clearly states from the first page of his novel that “democracy owed its life to know-how” (1) in the post-war society the machines not men controlled various aspects of people’s life, starting with all house furniture and appliances identically replicated everywhere and ending with every citizen’s professional options and careers. One of the characteristics of dystopia is that the society worships a figurehead or a concept, in *Player Piano*, it is the technology. One might say that many people in the twenty-first century worship technology, even more than Vonnegut’s characters, whether they use it for entertainment, work, education or communication.

The novel’s protagonist, Doctor Paul Proteus illustrates, through his name and actions, the mythological dimension of the Greek god who served Poseidon. Proteus possessed the gift of prophecy, but unwilling to share any secrets of fate with those who attempted to force him, his escaping mechanism was the form changing ability. Doctor Paul Proteus, “the most important, brilliant person in Ilium, the manager of Ilium Works” (*PP* 1), at thirty-five

years old is a young god of the technology realm. An extensive knowledge of how every automaton works recommended him for the highest-in-command position. The secrets he knows force him to play multiple roles until he decides to share any one of them with his wife, peers or Homestead people. Upon revealing these secrets, he changes himself into the eyes of the beholder, whether in private, professional or new life outside the former two. Only by comparison and direct interaction with Homestead people, their way of life on one hand and the country house void of electrical devices on the other Doctor Proteus finally understands the automation nightmare he is part of. His first revelation is the sight of an old player piano in a Homestead bar. A glimpse of the atomized bar seen as a failure whereas a classic bar with human interaction used to be an “immediate and unflagging success” (26). The three young engineers Ed Finnerty, Lawson Shepherd and Paul Proteus created this level of automatization, they “had designed the fully mechanized saloon” (26), an idea concretized into the perfect serving deliverer without personal interaction with a human bartender: “They’d set up the experimental unit about [...], with coin machines and endless belts to do the serving, with germicidal lamps cleaning the air, with uniform, healthful light, with continuous soft music from a tape recorder, with seats scientifically designed by an anthropologist to give the average man the absolute maximum in comfort” (26). An epiphany like experience to see what a perfect lab creation made for people turns out to be unfriendly in scope and purpose since it lacks human contact. Doctor Paul Proteus finally perceives the oddity (when living it) of an automated piano placed in the middle of the people, for the people, but without a human player. Rudy Hertz, one of the characters from the bar, remarks “You can almost see a ghost sitting there playing his heart out” (32). Humans who appear to be like ghosts create the analogy that triggers the alarm. If today there is the player piano, tomorrow there may be any of us, soon there may be all of us.

Vonnegut’s inspiration for *Player Piano* benefited from the years he worked as public-relations man for General Electric in Schenectady, New York (1947 to 1950), as he explained in a 1973 interview given to David Standish:

I was working for General Electric at the time, right after World War Two, and I saw a milling machine for cutting the rotors on jet engines, gas turbines. This was a very expensive thing for a machinist to do, to cut what is essentially one of those Brancusi forms. So they had a computer-operated milling machine built to cut the blades, and I

was fascinated by that. This was in 1949 and the guys who were working on it were foreseeing all sorts of machines being run by little boxes and punched cards. *Player Piano* was my response to the implications of having everything run by little boxes. (*Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut* 93).

Reality provided to the author the basic industrial models for much of *Illum Works* and the household devices and appliances present in the narrative of the novel. He refers to Brancusi's sculptures, suggesting that even art modelled out of human imagination, sensibilities, originality, exquisite production, ultimately all that is essentially human heart and soul can be reproduced by "little boxes". The idea of little boxes and of the major role that machines play in a real factory, underline their effects on the people who, consequently, are made redundant. Consequently, this fact leads to jobless people: "The idea of doing that, [...], made sense, perfect sense. To have a little clicking box make all the decisions wasn't a vicious thing to do. But it was too bad for human beings who got their dignity from their jobs" (*CKV* 93). This is the permanent situation for most people in *Player Piano*, in which, basically, the machines do all the work, resulting in a wide spread of a terrible feeling of emptiness and uselessness among the members of the almost dissolute community. In the same interview, Vonnegut refers to the underlying common ground of a functional and sane community, one that he illustrates in his novel:

It's a longing for community. This is a lonesome society that's been fragmented by the factory system. People have to move from here to there as jobs move, as prosperity leaves one area and appears somewhere else. People don't live in communities permanently anymore. But they should: Communities are very comforting to human beings. (*CKV* 79)

He describes the American society of the late Sixties and early Seventies when, because of the economic trends of the jobs market, notions such as family and community received new interpretations. It seems that, with every decade since Vonnegut's interview, these notions are subject not only to interpretation but also to redefinition.

In *Player Piano*, the process of replacing workers with machines started with the lathe machinist Rudy Hertz convinced that in the new "industrial democracy" he is the most important out of thousands of machinists since he "had been chosen to have his motions immortalized on tape" (*PP* 10). Dr Paul Proteus records the major replacing moment:

[...] this little loop in the box before Paul, here was Rudy as Rudy had been to his machine that afternoon—Rudy, the turner-on of power, the setter of speeds, the controller of the cutting tool. This was the essence of Rudy as far as his machine was concerned, as far as the economy was concerned, as far as the war effort had been concerned. [...] Now, by switching in lathes on a master panel and feeding them signals from the tape, Paul could make the essence of Rudy Hertz produce one, ten, a hundred, or a thousand of the shafts. (*PP* 10-11)

The lucrative essence of thousands of Rudys becomes easy to be reproduced by machines, but the spiritual essence, their human value is unneeded and irrelevant in the new “industrial democracy” (*PP* 10). The notable exception is the category of scientists (engineers and managers) who run the machines and whose lucrative purpose and high social status is well defined. Just to mention as an example, the prominence of Doctor Paul Proteus’s father, Doctor George Proteus, was “at the time of his death the nation’s first National Industrial, Commercial, Communications, Foodstuffs, and Resources Director, a position approached in importance only by the presidency of the United States” (2). Such plurality of offices from basically unrelated major fields held by one single individual illustrates that even the apparatus of the “ruling class” of scientists reached a high level of self-reduced personnel. Another significant example of this continuing tendency is that of Doctor Bud Calhoun, “manager of the petroleum terminal in Ilium, [who] worked only when shipments came or went by barge or pipeline” (3) and had “the fourth-highest-paid job in Ilium” (72). The painful irony is that Doctor Calhoun lost his job to a machine he himself invented:

‘Ah haven’t got a job any more,’ said Bud. ‘Canned.’ Paul was amazed. ‘Really? What on earth for? Moral turpitude? What about the gadget you invented for—’ ‘That’s it,’ said Bud with an eerie mixture of pride and remorse. ‘Works. Does a fine job.’ He smiled sheepishly. ‘Does it a whole lot better than Ah did it.’ ‘It runs the whole operation?’ ‘Yup. Some gadget.’ ‘And so you’re out of a job.’ ‘Seventy-two of us are out of jobs,’ said Bud. He slumped even lower in the couch. ‘Ouah job classification has been eliminated. Poof.’ He snapped his fingers. (*PP* 72-73)

Bud’s exit is shocking for Paul, since he considers Bud to have a “peculiar American mentality [...] –the restless, erratic insight and imagination of a gadgeteer” (*PP* 4-5) and in technical terms, Bud represents to Paul the embodiment of “almost all of American industry integrated

into one stupendous Rube Goldberg machine” (5). He is looked at as a creator of devices that are complicated and beautifully designed, though sometimes unnecessary and unpractical, a creator replaced by its creation in a blink of an eye. If a machine can do the job, humans are expendable, regardless of their previous social status or intelligence, since no human being can compete with the machine in terms of performing a task. A machine operates based on a code written and implemented by humans. A code details informational paths that result in the machine’s proper function. Codes can be perfected, but once human creative intelligence has completed the job, the human becomes futile and, by consequence, the creation becomes independent.

To understand the level of automation described in *Player Piano*, there are few technical breakthroughs that were most likely known to the author from the period prior to 1952. In 1945 the Moore School of Electrical Engineering (funded by US Army) part of the University of Pennsylvania completed the development of an experimental project for the U.S. Army Ordnance Department namely the first electronic general-purpose digital computer ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer). Such a machine of forty black eight-foot panels became possible and functional by the work of a team of computing scientists including the project manager Herman Heine Golstine, and his wife Adele Goldstine (the ENIAC’s first programmer). Since it was developed by the U.S army, initially the ENIAC computer was classified, but in 1946, it was unveiled before the public and the press.

Both the technology and scientists previously mentioned, are models for the computer deity and human characters in Vonnegut’s novel, namely EPICAC XIV and high skill human professionals of managers and engineers of Ilium. The *Player Piano*’s world is dominated by the supercomputer EPICAC XIV (developed from the real ENIAC) and run completely by machines. Its power resides in the fact that it controls the economy to the extent of deciding what commodities “America and her customers could have and how much they would cost” (PP 118). The commodities are not only things (refrigerators, turbine-generators, door-knobs, pinochle decks, so on and so forth) but also human beings for EPICAC XIV decides:

[...] how many engineers and managers and research men and civil servants, and of what skills, would be needed in order to deliver the goods; and what I.Q. and aptitude levels would separate the useful men from the useless ones, and how many Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps men and how many soldiers could be supported at what pay level and where, and . . . (PP 118).

A machine that decides everything is above any administrative authority and becomes an almighty and feared deity in the eyes of the common people. By contrast, the President Jonathan Lynn, “born Alfred Planck” (*PP* 118) proves firstly that identity is not essential for such a position. Secondly, he checks many boxes for other qualifications except the ones normally needed for the highest seat of a leader. He resembles much to a manufactured movie celebrity, a camera loving puppet, he “had gone directly from a three-hour television program to the White House” (*PP* 119); he is not necessarily bright since he “hadn’t even finished high school” (119); he is not a friend of the English language, reading for example “order out of chaos” as “order out of koze” (119); nevertheless he is still “elected to more than a hundred thousand bucks a year” (119) to read speeches now and then.

The people from Homestead, the south part of Ilium, perceive the automation as equivalent to the end of their lucrative purpose, a slowly and painfully road to social extermination, whereas for the machines, such an outcome would only be expected and effective. In fact, this type of unconventional war carried out is subtle, since it has the form of an ever-growing mechanization. These warfare strategies of territorial invasion and enemy subjugation has the beneficial (yet phony) declared purpose of high performance in error proof work. The ongoing process results in the most devastating effect of eliminating meaningful work for people and, therefore, meaningful human existence. Briefly, progress has turned into nightmare. But like any other process, this one too had its own quantifiable stages “the First Industrial Revolution devalued muscle work, the second one devalued routine mental work” (*PP* 14) as the secretary Katharine Finch comments on a written speech of her boss, Doctor Paul Proteus, the manager of Ilium Works, the most important human in the world of the machines. Doctor Proteus dares to predict that the end of The Third Industrial Revolution (which is the novel setting) will involve “thinking machines...that devaluate human thinking” (15), based on the fact that, for instance, EPICAC XIV, does just that “in specialized fields” (15). When real brainwork of the human beings with astonishing or simply ordinary minds will disappear, that indeed will be the final chapter of the technological control, as Doctor Paul Proteus expresses in his educated opinion “I hope I’m not around long enough to see that final step” (15). This “final step” implies an automata apocalypse.

The reality outran fiction in terms of the similarities to modern life of the Earth’s inhabitants of the twenty-first century namely the global widespread of new or perfected technologies and machines. These include the internet, industrial and domestic robots, self-

driving cars or autonomous vehicle (AV), electronic coins, wireless mobile telecommunications technology (from pre-cellular/zero generation to a constantly higher number for each generation, from 0G to 5G), e-books, 3D printers, bio-engineering, so on and so forth. The epitome seemed to be the animal cloning which offers scientific grounds for the perspective of human cloning, a cancellation of human DNA uniqueness, a chilling next stage of human possible upgrading and most likely a new definition of humanity, a dystopian palpable world.

Are all the above achievements of The Third Industrial Revolution have been announcing the coming of The Fourth Industrial Revolution? The answer to this specific question might be positive. There are proofs suggesting that this is the stage the world is currently in. Considering for example the vision of Klaus Schwab in *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (2016). The main difference between the Third Industrial Revolution and the Fourth Industrial Revolution is “the inexorable shift from simple digitization [...] to a much more complex form of innovation based on the combination of multiple technologies in novel ways” (Schwab 53). The development of global on-line platforms produces new business models which prove to have a rapid pace and impact on the world economy. The Fourth Revolution is a global development that aims to change not what and how people do things, but to augment people themselves. The target of bringing together digital, physical, and biological systems may blur the distinction between natural and artificial (inanimate and animate) at a scale never seen before. Jon-Arild Johannessen in *The Workplace of the Future: The Fourth Industrial Revolution, the Precariat and the Death of Hierarchies* (2019) offers his analysis on how “automation, digitization, artificial intelligence and robotization have affected the entire labour market” (Johannessen 14) together with the global dimension of competition that forced down the wages of a multitude of professionals. The hypothesis is that “robots, artificial intelligence and informats [i.e. globally interconnected robots] are destroying bureaucracies and hierarchies” (Johannessen 1). Most of the human work activities will be performed by the non-human artificial entities.

Johannessen describes new definitions of the social classes' hierarchy in *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*: the super-rich (the 1% class), salaried élite (innovation and knowledge workers with Master's degrees and doctorates), the precariat (with its four types: underemployed – hired on demand, underpaid – temporary jobs, knowledge entrepreneurs – temporary contracts and vagabond workers – migrants who are able to do part-time work), the working poor (can barely live off their wages), and the class of people receiving social benefits.

In his 2019 study, Johannessen suggests that at the end of The Fourth Industrial Revolution the social and economic landscape will look completely unrecognizable:

Robots will have destroyed bureaucratic hierarchies and torn apart the middle classes. What will remain will be contract workers with insecure jobs. We are seeing the emergence of a new class of pyjama-workers—people who can do their jobs in bed or alternatively at a café table. Slightly further into the future, we can see a major transformation in professional environments (*WFFIRPDH*, Foreword, vii).

A disturbing conclusion is that robots and informats will take many middle-class jobs, thus reshaping the entire social hierarchy and forcing the representatives of this class to accept lower-paid jobs.

A new social stratification in the Fourth Industrial Revolution detailed in Johannessen's research from 2019 resembles to that imagined by Kurt Vonnegut in his 1952 *Player Piano*, to the U.S.A. country scale. On top of the pyramid stands the bourgeoisie (the “super-rich” of political environment, such as Edwing J. Halyard, of the U.S. Department of State and leaders from private industry – which own the machines, like Kroner and Baer); then going downwards, the “salaried élite” (the managers and engineers of hundreds of Iliums); the “working poor” (citizens, employed by government, basically “any man who cannot support himself by doing a job better than a machine is employed by the government, either in the Army or the Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps” (*PP* 20-21) or by their own naming the “Reeks and Wrecks” (25). An outsider, the Shah of Bratpuhr, the “spiritual leader of 6,000,000 members of the Kolhourai sect” (19), in his official visit in America to learn about the benefits of industrialization, generally names the members of the working poor class as “Takarū” meaning “slaves”, emphasizing on the synonymy for him of “Takarū—citizen. Citizen—Takarū.” (22). The major missing social class is the precariat in *Player Piano*, maybe the reason for it being that the machines have completely replaced the middle class.

The social hierarchy is interconnected with the educational system, which in *Player Piano* uses The National General Classifications Test, based on IQ testing, mandatory for all citizens, to give access to higher education (college) for those considered intelligent or to place the unintelligent working force with lifelong service in either the Army or the Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps. Powerful bureaucrats, like Matheson, “manager in charge of testing and placement” (*PP* 30) decide the lucrative fate of every individual. As engineer Edward

Francis Finnerty “member of the National Industrial Planning Board” (17) remarks, “It’s about as rigid a hierarchy as you can get, [...] How’s somebody going to up his I.Q.?” (93). The general intelligence is not good enough, the hierarchy is, as Lasher explains “[...] built on special kinds of brain power. Not only must a person be bright, he must be bright in certain approved, useful directions: basically, management or engineering” (93). The testing does not consider the human potential at the age of eighteen, in terms of “heart in the right place” or “clever with his/her hands” when there are for college “only twenty-seven openings, and six hundred kids trying for them” (30). In conclusion, the educational system divides the young generation into two unequal parts: the rewarded privileged few and the punished inferior many, the two opposite ends of a social scale with nothing in-between.

The injustice of the entire system derives from automation thus it becomes a social nightmare that fuels revolts. At the beginning of the novel, the world seemed to have reached a golden age:

[...] after the great bloodbath of the war, the world really was cleared of unnatural terrors—mass starvation, mass imprisonment, mass torture, mass murder. Objectively, know-how and world law were getting their long-awaited chance to turn earth into an altogether pleasant and convenient place in which to sweat out Judgment Day. (*PP* 7)

Such heavenly outcome has another bloodbath behind, an entire decade after the war when “the men and women had come home” (*PP* 1) and when they realized the “managers and engineers [had] learned to get along without their men and women” (1). The working people fought unsuccessfully to take back their normal lives and, “after the riots had been put down, after thousands had been jailed under the antisabotage laws” (1), they gave up.

Those who “had been the rioters, the smashers of machines” (*PP* 29) would do it again, successfully, this time, at the end of the novel, with the inside help from Doctor Paul Proteus and Ed Finnerty. They were leaders of the revolution that had “at the bottom of it [...] a promise of regaining the feeling of participation, the feeling of being needed on earth—hell, dignity” (92). The seemingly end of the machines and the beginning of a “new era” has an emotional impact on both of them: “He and Finnerty were feeling a deep, melancholy rapport now, sitting amid the smashed masterpieces, the brilliantly designed, beautifully made machines. A good part of their lives and skills had gone into making them, making what they’d helped to destroy in a few hours” (332). This process describes a fatherly involvement to basically inanimate

Pygmalion, an affectionate reaction of creators towards the death of their creation to which they contributed by choosing their human side. In a sense, creators have always been torn apart between going to the limits of their abilities and the possible misuse or impact of their innovations. Lasher, “the Reverend James J. Lasher, R-127 and SS-55. Chaplain, Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps” (89) notices that “It isn’t knowledge that’s making trouble, but the uses it’s put to” (92). This wise man classification means: Reverend=Protestant minister, SS=social scientist, 55=anthropologist with a master’s degree, who he is currently out of work. Ultimately, humans are simultaneously the delivers and receivers of any good or evil they create.

The complete circle of creation and destruction spins once again when, at the end of the novel, people start to rebuild a machine, specifically “an Orange-O machine [...], excretor of the blended wood pulp, dye, water, and orange-type flavoring” (*PP* 337), a simple yet fascinating little machine in need to be fixed, and indeed it is fixed. Is there a sort of human surrender in front of the machine or is it just a newly found purpose and dignity in the ability to make things with bare hands? Is Doctor Proteus right in believing that “What distinguishes man from the rest of the animals is his ability to do artificial things” (312)? The rhetorical questions remain unanswered. People never stop dreaming about a utopian society even when they have experienced the reverse of it.

How does a seemingly good thing become nightmarish, how does workers become “thorough believers in mechanization [...] even when their lives had been badly damaged by mechanization” (*PP* 253)? Similarly, every bad thing, people or idea have been sold to the public, through fake advertising and ideology. When every way one’s look perceives the same message, despite its lack of truthfulness, the message becomes real, even more so, it becomes the norm. The State Apparatus works on it through multiple mechanisms and promoted professions, for instance the Public Relations, an important profession, as Halyard explains to his guest, The Shah (242).

The concept of State exercising ultimate control on every professional and personal aspect of its citizens is implemented for “the greater good” of the State itself. The State becomes a living entity everyone must love, listen to, obey to the point of believing what the State is telling to its people, even that it takes God’s place. The technocratic capitalist society emerged from the blending of the State with private mega corporation where “the economy had, for efficiency’s sake, become monolithic” (82). This has resulted in an economic war on

the battlefield of workforce and technology which can only be carried out by high members (like Kroner or Baer) of the combined business and bureaucracy social class. In fact, “the machines and the institutions of government were so integrated that trying to attack one without damaging the other was like trying to remove a diseased brain in order to save a patient” (PP 313).

The solid monolith is a seemingly unbreakable force that will crumble when faced with the power of the revolution of average people. The power of the people resides on their uniting democratic values as a nation as much as on their individual human worth to themselves and the society. This is the driving core of human revolt against oppression of any kind, as Doctor Paul Proteus states “The main business of humanity is to do a good job of being human beings, [...], not to serve as appendages to machines, institutions, and systems” (PP 315). A warning for anyone interested to listen, extended by an Honorary President of the American Humanist Association having made an honest living as an influential fiction writer, Kurt Vonnegut.

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METHODOLOGY THAT “DISABLED” LEARNING IN CHARLES DICKENS’S AND ION LUCA CARAGIALE’S LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract: *Both Charles Dickens and Ion Luca Caragiale mention the use of Johann Pestalozzi’s methods and principles in their fiction. Therefore, the literary representations of his methodology will be compared to the theoretical notions formulated by the Swiss pedagogue. For this purpose, the article will analyse the methodology used by teachers as described by Charles Dickens in *Hard Times* and *Nicholas Nickleby* and Ion Luca Caragiale in *Un pedagog de școală nouă* (“A New School Pedagogue”). The focus will be on determining how efficiently Pestalozzi’s ideas were put into practice and to what extent the methods employed by teachers managed to enable students to learn. It is obvious that in order to draw attention to the drawbacks of the systems they were satirizing, the two authors are determined to teach by negative examples, by what their fictional characters do not properly do. It is for the enlightened pedagogues to show the way, not for these fictional characters who only hamper and disable learning.*

Key words: *Education; nineteenth-century schools; methodology; object lesson.*

Introduction

Most relevant cultural figures, not only Dickens and Caragiale, are aware that a nation deprived of education would certainly be headed for extinction. This is and has been obvious in the first place for important voices promoting the benefits of education, such as the Swiss pedagogue, Pestalozzi who knew that education is, without a doubt, a key factor in the evolution of the human race. It helps people acquire the skills needed for their future careers, but it also teaches them moral principles and values meant to shape individuals not only for work, but also for life and society. Although its importance is now acknowledged this has not always been the case. In the nineteenth century, there was a growing interest concerning the need to spread education and to improve it as well. The fact that education spread to a larger number of people and to various levels of social hierarchy meant teachers had to be better trained and theoreticians of education such as Johann Pestalozzi proved to be an invaluable source of inspiration and guidance. The way in which his theoretical ideas were put into practice can be inferred by

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making an analysis of a few literary works which display the process of teaching and thus allow the reader to observe the methodology being used. The works selected for this purpose are: *Hard Times* and *Nicholas Nickelby* by Charles Dickens and *Un pedagog de școală nouă* (“A New School Pedagogue”) by Ion Luca Caragiale.

Education is a concept that can be better understood when it is analysed in a historical, geographical and cultural context. Whenever one of these variables changes, so does the education process with its principles, aims, methodology and curricula. Therefore, establishing a particular framework will help avoid ambiguity and allow for a careful consideration of the link between education and other factors such as politics, economy and society which prompted the changes in education. In the nineteenth century, England and the Romanian Principalities were going through major changes brought about by scientific discoveries and industrialization. The process of urbanisation and the use of machinery led to an urgent need for skilled labour. Furthermore, due to the fact that new laws were passed to meet with people’s demand for suffrage, the electorate increased and with it the position of democracy was strengthened. However, the spread of the right to vote meant that the fate of the nation was no longer in the hands of the privileged few but in the hands of the uneducated many. Consequently, the education system was transformed and reshaped through a series of educational reforms. The aim of these reforms was to increase literacy and to make education compulsory for all the children for a certain period of time.

Efficient and Deficient Methodology

Although the reforms in education were a step in the right direction there was definitely room for improvement in the education system. Some of the most serious problems that the nineteenth-century society faced were: the insufficient number of learning establishments, the lack of teaching materials, the small number of teachers and the lack of training that could help the teachers by providing useful methodology. The situation improved slowly but gradually throughout the century. The number of schools increased with the help of state funding and this also meant that more children had access to education. What could help teachers deal with the large number of students and the shortage of teaching materials was an efficient methodology. A key role in the development of this methodology was played by Johann Pestalozzi, who was a Swiss pedagogue and education reformer.

The extent to which his principles managed to influence most European countries can be easily inferred from the large number of articles and various types of books written about his methods by many authors of different nationalities. A list of such publications, although

not exhaustive, is provided by Gabriel Compayré in *Pestalozzi and Elementary Education* (1907) in an attempt to establish the impact of Pestalozzian ideas on the educational climate of several European countries (108-117). So many writers's preoccupation with the study, interpretation and development of his theories, as well as the use of his methodology in a number of textbooks reveal the Swiss pedagogue's invaluable contribution to the progress of the nineteenth-century educational practices.

There is overall agreement over the direct impact of his educational principles in Germany and Prussia among researchers and there is also general consensus over their belated and more limited effect in other European countries. According to Auguste Pinloche in *Pestalozzi and the Foundation of the Modern Elementary School* (1901) Germany was the first country that managed to put Johann Pestalozzi's ideas into practice with good results which later served as a source of inspiration to other countries such as France, England and even the United States (302). This comes to show that although his theory was not an immediate success in many European countries, it eventually penetrated the established methodology and even crossed the continental boundaries. It is also a clear indication that many Pestalozzian beliefs offered much-needed guidelines for nineteenth-century teachers.

The most successful educational institution where he applied his teaching principles was in Yverdun. The establishment, which was later called the Pestalozzian Institute, became a place of pilgrimage for teachers and other visitors interested in his methods. In *Pestalozzi : His Life and Work* (1897), Roger de Guimps mentions the Czar Alexander of Russia and the Emperor of Austria as some of the most renowned visitors of the institution as well as Johann Pestalozzi's interaction with the King of Prussia. The Czar awarded him the Cross of Saint Vladimir and both the Emperor of Austria and the Czar sent him gifts as tokens of their appreciation (308-309). However, not all world leaders were impressed by the endeavours of the Swiss pedagogue. In *An Introduction to the History of Educational Theories* (1899), Oscar Browning reveals that the meeting with the First Consul Napoleon was not as fruitful as expected. In spite of his failure to arouse Napoleon's interest, many teachers and scholars who went to Yverdun were fascinated by his views and this allowed his principles to be diffused into many European countries (160). Johann Pestalozzi's interaction with the rulers of some of the most powerful European nations, regardless of the outcome, proves the world-wide fame achieved by the Swiss reformer. Even though the methods used to put his principles into practice were not flawless, his ideas were a source of inspiration that many of his disciples

managed to take one step further and successfully apply in the educational systems of their countries.

Johann Pestalozzi's influence on the English educational system was only felt during the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the reasons for this delay is explained in *The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi* (1905) by John Alfred Green. He claims that a significant role was played by the language barrier. According to him, Johann Pestalozzi's ability to speak German enabled easy access to his principles and ideas for both German and Prussian people. However, the use of this language became an obstacle for other nations and consequently, his principles only reached England when they were translated in the form of letters by J. P. Greaves and later published after Johann Pestalozzi's death in 1827. Even then, they had little influence until Herbert Spencer introduced the Pestalozzian theory in his essays in 1863 (183). This gradual diffusion of the Pestalozzian doctrine in England also shows the conservative attitude of the British towards external influences.

A more detailed analysis of the reasons behind England's reluctance to adopt Johann Pestalozzi's ideas is provided in *A History of English Education from 1760* (1971) by Howard Clive Barnard:

But progress was slow. In spite of the work of the pioneers, there were many obstacles to overcome—the mechanised routine and passive receptivity of the monitorial schools, the excessive reliance on rote work and verbalism, jealousy between the churches and the growth of the 'religious difficulty,' the eagerness of industrialists to obtain child labour, the fear of the governing classes that popular instruction might result in discontent and revolution (62).

It is therefore obvious that Johann Pestalozzi's ideas failed to spread as quickly and efficiently as they did in other countries due to: the unwillingness to change traditional methodological practices, the concern about the religious implications of the new methodology and the special focus on utilitarian education in England. In spite of all these obstacles, Johann Pestalozzi's methods were not uncommon in English schools in the second half of the nineteenth century as it can easily be inferred from their portrayal in the literary works of Charles Dickens.

In order to assess how efficiently Johann Pestalozzi's principles were applied by the teachers portrayed by Charles Dickens and Ion Luca Caragiale, it is essential to understand them as they were initially formulated by the Swiss reformer. Johann Pestalozzi's ideas did not

focus only on making the learning process more effective, but also on creating a more pleasurable learning experience for the students. Instead of using the established methods of teaching that relied greatly on rote learning Johann Pestalozzi experimented and formulated the principles he thought were important in the process of teaching. In his book *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (1907) he expresses his beliefs about the most relevant factors that could influence children's education and the means by which it could be improved. According to Johann Pestalozzi "Sense impression of Nature is the only true foundation of human instruction, because it is the only true foundation of human knowledge" (200). This clearly shows that he considered learning should take place by observing things with the help of the senses. Thus, the teacher ought to provide the adequate context for learning and not ready-made answers. This method allows the child to experience and discover by himself and it is the opposite of learning abstract notions and facts provided by teachers which would impede true understanding. The knowledge acquired in such a way would empower students and help them grow them beyond their status.

The effect of Johann Pestalozzi's way of teaching is made clear in the observation he makes in *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*:

They [children] felt their own power, and the tediousness of the ordinary school-tone vanished like a ghost from my rooms. They wished, tried, persevered, succeeded, and they laughed. Their tone was not that of learners, it was the tone of unknown powers awakened from sleep; of a heart and mind exalted with the feeling of what these powers could and would lead them to do (17).

This proves that an efficient manner of teaching provides students with the necessary skills for their future existence. It increases the students' confidence and reinforces their self-esteem. It also demonstrates that, by assigning students an active role in the process of learning, they learn with eagerness and excitement and they feel confident in their capacity. Furthermore, the fact that students are motivated to learn means that they will do their best to reach their potential. In order to achieve these goals, apart from the active role of students, Johann Pestalozzi identified the need for a secure environment.

Although discipline was extremely strict in most schools and physical punishment was a common habit, Johann Pestalozzi's view on the matter was quite different. According

to Frank Pierrepont Graves, Johann Pestalozzi was in favour of a more gentle approach so as to create an environment in which children felt safe (149). School was supposed to be a like a second home and kindness and love, not fear, were the feelings that were meant to stimulate children to learn. Frank Pierrepont Graves also points out Johann Pestalozzi's desire to "psychologize" education which refers to his realisation of the fact that children need to be taught by taking into consideration their level of psychological development (Graves, 133). This means that what was taught and the activities used to enable learning had to be adapted to children's development stage. This approach made it possible for students to learn according to their understanding abilities and prevented them from getting bored with notions that would be too easy or confused by items whose understanding they could not grasp.

Johann Pestalozzi changed the perception of education by reassessing its aim. He no longer considered education as having the sole purpose to provide intellectual development. K.K. Mookherjee refers to the needs identified by Johann Pestalozzi as the "3-H's" (72). This stands for: the hands, the head and the heart which are all areas that teachers should aim to shape and improve. Consequently, the process of teaching ought to focus on the psychomotor, cognitive and affective aspects of learning. By managing to balance these three elements children were expected to develop physically, intellectually and morally in a harmonious way. K.K. Mookherjee interestingly points out that although Johann Pestalozzi is claimed to have been influenced by Rousseau's ideas and principles, he managed to take these one step further by providing practical means of applying them in the educational context (75-76). His contribution to the development of methodology in the nineteenth century is therefore invaluable.

One of the means by which Johann Pestalozzi could put his ideas into practice was the use of the "object lesson". Frank Pierrepont Graves explains that these lessons were based on the method of "observation" and they evolved from very basic features to more complex, gradually, so as to enable the learning process (Graves, 147). Students observed what they were supposed to learn by making use of their five senses and by analysing in detail the objects presented. Thus, understanding came as a result of careful sensorial observation. This method was an attempt to avoid mechanical learning which usually implied little comprehension of the concepts that pupils studied. It was actually a means of adapting the learning process to the students' abilities of assimilating and understanding new notions. This method became quite popular among teachers in the nineteenth century. The use of the "object lesson" spread to

Europe, was adopted by writers, most probably former students, and represented in literary works.

The literary representations of learning and Pestalozzi's methodology

The use of the "object lesson" can be noticed in the novel *Hard Times* written by Charles Dickens. The new student, a girl called Sissy Jupe, is asked to define a horse and even though she is well acquainted with the animal because her father works with horses she fails to explain what it is. Her classmate, Blitzer, manages to offer a complex definition "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth" (6) which satisfies Mr. Gradgrind's need for facts. It is obvious from this excerpt that what the superintendent values is not the actual understanding of different notions, but the ability to explain them as if quoting from the dictionary. Thus, when he says facts are what matter most he refers to the ability to describe them in words and not to the ability to grasp their meaning. According to Philip Collins in *Dickens and Education* (1963) "Mr. Gradgrind's questions are a parody of the object lesson" and the reactions of the two pupils show "the contrast between verbalised head-knowledge and the knowledge of the senses and the heart" (154). Pestalozzi believed in the need for balance between the head, the heart and the hands and Mr. Gradgrind's preference for the intellectual aspect shows the inefficiency of his method, which failed to facilitate learning. What it actually managed to do, was to ensure the acquisition of shallow knowledge that would prove of little practical use for the students' future lives and careers.

After the "correct" definition of a horse is established in *Hard Times*, the government officer who is present in the classroom continues the discussion by asking whether the students would use wallpaper with horses for their room or whether Sissy would use a carpet with flowers. What he aims to make students realise is that they should rely solely on reality and facts and not on imagination in their lives. It is quite clear from the children's responses that they fail to follow his line of deduction. What actually guides their responses is the facial expression of the man the first time and the analogy with the answer to the first question the second time. In other words, they rely on observation and previous experience just as Pestalozzi suggested knowledge was acquired. The government officer then explained that "What is called Taste, is only another name for Fact" (8). This statement was meant to discourage children from using their creativity and expressing their individuality. The obsessive insistence on the

importance of facts reveals the superficial level of the process of learning. The teachers strove to make students memorise as many irrelevant pieces of information as possible, which they could use as a means to display the fruitfulness of their teaching endeavours.

The fact that Sissy was also called “girl number twenty” indicates that in the classrooms students lost their identities and became mere numbers. This is a noteworthy detail because it shows that the focus in the process of teaching was on what the students were supposed to learn, on the highly praised facts, and not on the pupils, whose development should have been the main concern. Therefore, it is quite obvious that the psychological aspect of education that Pestalozzi insisted on is ignored. Without adapting the methods of teaching to the level of psychological development of the children, the success of the instruction was measured only by the quantity of notions memorised and not the quality of the students’ acquisitions. Consequently, Sissy’s failure to learn what was expected actually demonstrates the teachers’ inability to educate through proper means. The identification of the girl by the use of a number also seems similar to the common prison procedure of assigning numbers to convicts. Therefore, by making this association it could be argued that the experience of the students in the school is similar to a period of detention because, just as prisons deprive prisoners of freedom, Mr. Gradgrind’s school tried to restrict the students’ freedom of thought, imagination and independent reasoning. This idea is expressed by the government officer’s words “But you mustn’t fancy ... You are never to fancy” (8), which plainly warn against the use of one’s imagination as if it were a serious mistake.

Another novel in which Charles Dickens presents the methodology used in the process of teaching is *Nicholas Nickelby*. The short excerpt that describes the lesson taught by Mr. Squeers is according to Philip Collins a parody of the Pestalozzian method of observation that encouraged the acquiring of knowledge through the use of the senses (156). Although Squeers claims he is using “the practical way of teaching” it is not difficult to understand that his use of this method is simply an excuse to put his students to work. When he is informed that two of the students are doing various chores he is very pleased to explain to his new assistant that once a notion is understood, the pupils go and put it into practice. The discussion presented in *Nicholas Nickelby* about the definition of a horse provides useful information about the teacher and his methods “A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped's Latin for beast, as everybody that's gone through the grammar knows, or else where's the use of having grammars at all?” (69). It is clear that he does not possess the theoretical knowledge that a teacher should because his Latin translation is in fact the repetition of the word already provided by the student that was

being questioned. Squeers expresses his satisfaction with the pupil's understanding of the notion and concludes that he is now able to move on to the practical aspect of learning which involves taking care of the teacher's horse. This comes to show that he uses teaching as a means to an end.

If the method used by Squeers is compared with Johann Pestalozzi's hands, head and heart principle of teaching it is easy to notice that the method of teaching used at Dotheboys Hall focuses almost entirely on the first aspect. Although developing the psychomotor abilities is important, this teacher's purpose seems to be that of exploiting the children under his care instead of educating them. As far as the head principle is concerned, the fact that Squeers appears to be poorly educated implies that his ability to impart knowledge is also limited. The third important aspect that influences the process of learning is that of the heart. Dotheboys Hall fails to provide the safe and loving environment that Johann Pestalozzi recommended. The conditions at the school are so dire that the students barely manage to stay alive:

By degrees, however, the place resolved itself into a bare and dirty room, with a couple of windows, whereof a tenth part might be of glass, the remainder being stopped up with old copy-books and paper. There were a couple of long old rickety desks, cut and notched, and inked, and damaged, in every possible way [...] and the walls were so stained and discoloured, that it was impossible to tell whether they had ever been touched with paint or whitewash (67).

Besides the uninviting atmosphere of the dirty and cold school that was almost a ruin, the students were also poorly fed and clothed and often beaten without mercy. All these elements prove that the methods used by Squeers are the opposite of what Johann Pestalozzi described as efficient methodology.

The reference to Pestalozzi's method also appears in Ion Luca Caragiale's *Un pedagog de școală nouă* ("A New School Pedagogue"). The teacher, Marius Chicoș Rostogan, proudly declares the use of the method introduced by "Pestalotiu" at the end of a lesson while talking to the inspector (69). By analyzing the dialogue between the students and the teacher it is easy to notice that the teacher fails to do what he claims. He addresses his students in various offensive ways when he wants to admonish them, but also when he intends to praise them. He also treats his students and their parents in different ways depending on their social status. He

is strict and gets easily angry with students that do not have influential parents, while towards the students that belong to the upper-class he shows understanding and lowers the standards of evaluation. This unfair attitude does not promote the development of the pupils and the improvement of their skills and knowledge. It goes against Johann Pestalozzi's idea of using kindness and love to improve the learning process and it decreases students' motivation to learn and reach their potential. Although Ion Luca Caragiale describes him as the absolute teacher it is easy to notice that he does it in an ironical way. The knowledge he has seems deficient and his speech becomes ridiculous in the attempt to appear elevated. Furthermore, his method, which is supposed to be based on observation and deduction, does not achieve successful results because he makes false assumptions and guides the pupils towards errors of judgment. Surprisingly, these methods are seen as efficient by both the teacher and the inspector which implies he will continue to use them in his teaching career.

Conclusion

Education is one of the themes often present in many of the novels written in the nineteenth century partly due to the numerous reforms in education. It was also a means of portraying the harsh realities of a flawed system and a way of raising awareness about the problematic areas that were in need of improvement. By analyzing the way in which the methods of teaching are portrayed it is quite obvious that the principles and ideas that were meant to educate better are actually misinterpreted and misapplied by the teachers in Charles Dickens's and Ion Luca Caragiale's works. Thus, instead of enabling learning, the methodology used managed to obtain the opposite result. The methods used by Gradgrind, Squeers and Chicoş Rostogan "disabled" learning in the sense that rather than making instruction more straightforward, they managed to hinder the acquisition of knowledge and hence failed to educate. While Johann Pestalozzi provided useful ideas and principles for the purpose of educating, Charles Dickens and Ion Luca Caragiale provided examples of how this should not be done. They castigate the wrongdoers in two education systems by means of irony and satire.

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FEMALE BODY AND POWER IN YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: *The hero trope has for a long time been a male dominated territory. Even the Harry Potter series, although written by a woman, feature a male hero. The female readers of the Harry Potter series, however, wanted a hero to identify with, thus, The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins came to fill up the space left by Harry Potter. These novels offer their female readers not just an opportunity to identify with the hero, but also a critical view on what it is like to be a hero and a woman at the same time. This article aims to identify the main differences between the male and the female hero within the same genre (young adult literature).*

Keywords: *young adult literature; dystopia; agency; female hero; female body; power.*

Young Adult (YA) literature has become a phenomenon of mass literature which shapes the mass culture constantly. It has recently acquired a huge readership with the rise of popularity of Joanne Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The reason behind this type of literature becoming so popular is that it sells well (Squires, 166). After the final installment of *Harry Potter* series hit the market, the publishing houses started looking for books that would sell just as well as *Harry Potter* did. Today YA explores a wide range of themes and in the last decade it has expanded throughout multiple genres. Yet, one might still find the words "the next *Harry Potter*" written on the cover of yet another YA novel, which clearly shows that the next *Harry Potter* has not arrived yet. This leads to the conclusion (or rather the observation) that the contemporary YA novels compete with *Harry Potter* and try to exceed it. Or, in other words, the publishing market tries to find the "perfect product" as Claire Squires points out in her study on the contemporary British literary market: "the literary marketplace revives and renews itself through a continual creation and recreation of marketing stories with which to surround, celebrate, and ultimately, sell literature" (171).

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Yet, there are a few YA novel series that have become cultural phenomena, one of them is *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins. One of the reasons behind the popularity of this series is that it appealed to the female readers who read the *Harry Potter* novels when they were children or teenagers. This trilogy has offered them a hero they could identify with (something they lacked in the *Harry Potter* novels). Katniss Everdeen (the main character of *The Hunger Games* trilogy) shares a lot of traits with Harry Potter: she has had a difficult childhood marked by the loss of a parent, she is driven by her sense of justice and is willing to protect the people she loves, she is forced into becoming a hero by circumstances. She becomes a symbol of freedom and hope for many people and even faces the same type of enemy Harry Potter does – a person who wants nothing but power and has a clear inclination for dictatorship. Yet, it is the contrast between Katniss and Harry that makes *The Hunger Games* trilogy something more than just a poor imitation of *Harry Potter*. The main difference between these two characters is their gender, and it is not there just to please the crowd, but rather to challenge the way in which a hero (especially a female one) is perceived, such as caring about her looks while fighting. In other words, Katniss' experience as a hero is shaped by her gender. It is, at the same time, a metaphor of survival through performance, or in Judith Butler's words: "as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (178). Thus, Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* trilogy is a response to the male hero constructed in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

It is safe to assume that such novels as *The Hunger Games* trilogy have become so popular due to the fact that nowadays feminism sells. In her study of the fourth wave of feminism, Nicola Rivers claims that: "currently feminism sells, or at least those strands of feminism uncomplicatedly promoting the neoliberal principles of agency, choice, and empowerment do" (Rivers 57). Moreover, dystopian literature sells well too, since we live in a highly technologized society and do not have a full comprehension of the outcomes of the abundance of technologies in our lives. Needless to say, these anxieties are a perfect ground for dystopic scenarios, since we observe technology "producing impersonalized mechanization and exploitation" (Claeys 283). Dystopian novels show the clash between power and individual, or to put it in Foucault's terms, they show the clash between the power over the body (discipline) and the power of the body (desire) (Foucault 1995: 29). The dystopian aspect of *The Hunger Games* trilogy is represented by the cruel way in which those in power treat people; it is also reflected in the unjust distribution of bodies. The country (Panem) consists of

13 districts and a capital (Capitol); the thirteenth district is believed to be destroyed after the failed attempt to overthrow the government, and the further the district is from the capital the poorer it is and the harder the people from it work. Panem is also a panoptic country, since there are cameras everywhere and people are constantly surveyed both by cameras and by the peacemakers (the armed guards trained to execute anyone who challenges power). The constant surveillance makes people aware of the way they behave and forces them to perform the roles of exemplary citizens.

This performative aspect can also be observed in Katniss' behavior, especially when she arrives in the capital to join the Hunger Games – a battle for survival performed by young people selected by pairs (called tributes) from all the districts; the battle is organized by the capital in order to commemorate the failed attempt to overthrow the government and broadcasted in every district (Collins, *Hunger Games* 43). Due to the fact that Katniss grew up in the poorest district of Panem, she has excellent survival skills, and one of those skills is performance. She performs in order to survive, and her performance would make people believe in her and they will take her for a symbol first of hope and then of revolution. This brings in the idea that Katniss has never merely assumed the role of a hero, she has performed it. This idea encapsulates the most striking contrast between Harry Potter and Katniss Everdeen, that his heroism is assumed, and her heroism is performed.

When analyzing both series from the point of view of the hero's journey defined by Joseph Campbell, the contrast between the two protagonists is even more evident. For instance, Harry Potter receives the call for adventure in a magical, even heart-warming way. He is saved from his oppressive family by Hagrid (the groundskeeper at Hogwarts), who tells Harry that he is a wizard and belongs in a magic school and even brings him a cake for his birthday (Rowling, *Sorter's Stone* 50). Whereas Katniss volunteers to take her younger sister's place in a bloody slaughter called Hunger Games. Both series are coming of age stories, which teach the young readers that in order to grow up they have to accept responsibilities and challenges. One might even consider the idea that, for girls, the path to adulthood is more perilous than for boys, but I would not go that far.

However, *The Hunger Games* trilogy challenges to a certain extent both sex and class privileges. For instance, the tributes from other districts (especially those closer to Capitol) are better prepared physically for the battle, and for them to be called to Hunger Games is not a death sentence but a privilege. Moreover, the consumerist society of Capitol perceives tributes as objects of adoration during the time of their training for the battle (which also consists of

interviews and excessive grooming that will bring the tributes closer to Capitol's beauty standards), whereas during the battle they are nothing more than objects of entertainment. Katniss' brave act of sacrifice is viewed positively by the audience, yet they fail to see a human being in her, as her acts and emotions are mere sources of entertainment. In other words, Katniss has to constantly prove herself human, she has to get everyone's attention (because attention means sponsorship, which is one of the key elements of survival on the arena) with her skills, whereas other tributes take such things for granted. Gregory Claeys in his study of dystopia claims that "[d]ystopia is intimately interwoven with discourses about 'crisis'" (Claeys 14); in this sense, the depiction of Panem (especially Capitol) mentioned above might as well be a metaphor of our reality of celebrity culture, in which we perceive other people through multiple filters of social-media, brand representation or public persona; another "crisis" Collins might refer to is that of thoughtless consumerism. Consuming goods without awareness and taking privilege for granted are not just harmful for the planet but might also stir hate and misunderstanding.

Peeta Melark (the fellow tribute from district 12) is an example of how a man's words are accepted without questioning. When both Katniss and Peeta are introduced to the audience for the first time, they hold hands; this gesture might be viewed as a subversion to the power of Capitol (Ruthven 51), as the tributes are supposed to hate each other, not join their hands. To put this gesture in Foucault's terms – the power finds itself counterattacked by the same body it was invested into (Foucault 1980: 56). Thus, the gesture of defiance is quickly turned into yet another source of entertainment – a love story. Peeta and Katniss are forced to perform the star-crossed lovers' scenario, because romance is entertaining, whereas solidarity and care are dangerous. When Peeta claims on the camera that he is in love with Katniss, everybody believes him immediately and never questions his words or motives, whereas Katniss has to constantly prove that she is in love, she is the one whose words are under scrutiny. Coming back to Harry Potter and his beginning of the journey, the contrast between his story and Ms. Everdeen's is quite obvious. When Harry arrives in the wizarding world, he is already viewed as a hero, everybody admires him for doing something he was too small to even remember doing. Harry's arrival to the wizarding world is full of celebration and promise²; he was easily

J.K. Rowling constructs a narrative of friendship and acceptance; this is why children of all ages are still ² drawn to *Harry Potter* series from the very first pages. It is every child's fantasy to come into a new, magical world and to be loved and appreciated as he/she is. This is why I will not insist too much on the comparison with Katniss's arrival to Capitol, because Harry too had his fair share of mistrust when he was Katniss's age.

offered everything he dreamed of along with a promise of greatness (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 72-79). What was Katniss given? A death penalty. Yet, for both Harry and Katniss the process of initiation with its road of trials was not easy; both heroes faced mortal dangers, lost friends and family in the battle and bravely defeated the enemy. Somewhere on the road they both have become objects of hope and inspiration for freedom and resistance, and in light of objectification and dehumanization the contrast between the two heroes is the most obvious.

Harry's heroism is assumed by both himself and by the people of his world. The fact that he was going to defeat the Dark Lord and free the wizarding world from his influence was stated in a prophecy when he was very little. His every achievement (like mastering the art of flying a broomstick) was celebrated and regarded as yet another sign of his greatness. Thus, his very existence was a symbol of hope, this is why the Dark Lord was so keen to destroy him (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix* 841). Similarly, Katniss had the same effect on the people of Panem; they saw a glimpse of hope and resistance in her little gestures of care and kindness; first when she volunteered to become a tribute instead of her little sister, second when she formed an alliance on the arena with another tribute, a little girl (Rue) from district 5, who reminded Katniss of her little sister (Collins, *Hunger Games* 257). Thus, when Rue was killed and Katniss took care of her body, she passed a departing song to mockingjays³, a gesture of hope and care that was later used by forces of resistance. From that moment on, Katniss has become a symbol herself. Later on – in the final novel of the trilogy – she was forced by circumstances to join the resistance in district 13 (*Mockingjay* 14). The country of Panem imitates the consumerist society, all the power is concentrated in the hands of Capitol, while the other districts work to provide for the Capitol's consumerist needs. While most of the people are starving, the citizens of Capitol are able to throw feasts that could have sustained a district for a month. One of the Capitol's tools of maintaining the districts under control is propaganda. Thus, when the district 13 starts to air their own messages featuring Katniss as a symbol of revolution and calling people to rise against the oppression of Capitol, Katniss herself has to perform on the camera. She is once again intensely groomed to look good for the people and is provided with lines she has to say on camera. In other words, she is deprived of agency and personality and is no longer perceived as a human being. Although people perceive

The Capitol has a very good grasp of genetics and they constantly produce new breeds of birds and animals³ for entertainment on the arena (like highly poisonous bugs) and spying on people. They had sent a breed of birds called jabberjays, who would pick up the conversations in districts and then repeat them exactly, thus passing them to Capitol, but when people discovered the ability of these birds, they proved useless and the capitol tried to extinct the breed. Yet, the birds mated with mockingbirds and thus a new breed appeared – mockingjays – a symbol of resistance to Capitol's power.

her as a symbol of revolution (and she would not be one if people did not see her as such first) she does not have any real power beside the one she inspires; this situation is what Diane Elam would describe as subject position being occupied by an object (Elam 29). Katniss' human gestures were the ones that ignited the fire of revolution, but for the success of the later she was dehumanized and forced to perform a role she has never asked for. Katniss resists her role as an object, but that only makes her more "likable", her little out of the script gestures make people believe that there is a person behind the role, the person whose little gestures of resistance inspired the whole country. Yet, Katniss is trapped within her fictionalized body of revolutionary symbol, or as Debra Walker King would describe it: "body fictions produce overwhelming confrontations that act out violence against the mind and spirit of the individual whose body is gazed upon (ix). Thus, there is no surprise that, at the end of the trilogy, Katniss is overwhelmed by the trauma of her experience and loss and slips into a long-lasting depression. Harry Potter, on the other hand, has never been forced to perform his heroism, in the eyes of his community; he was already a hero and an inspiration no matter the extent of his actual implication. The propaganda of the Ministry of Magic denied the truth of Harry's claim that the Dark Lord had risen and the wizarding world was in great danger. However, he did not need to perform in front of people to be believed, and definitely needed no grooming for that. Moreover, Harry's motives were never questioned; he fought for a noble cause, for greater good, for freedom and survival. Katniss's motives are more down to earth; she does whatever she is asked to do for the survival of the ones she loves and cares for, especially her little sister.

Needless to say, Collins condemns (or at least places under scrutiny) the kind of male heroism celebrated in *Harry Potter*. For instance, Gale – Katniss's best friend who becomes one of the key characters in the trilogy – illustrates the kind of stereotypical male hero who would probably be the protagonist of such series if it had been written a decade prior to the date of its publication. Gale is brave and more than willing to fight for the noble cause and, more alarmingly, he is willing to sacrifice not just himself but others too. Ironically enough, he is one of the motives for Katniss to act the part she was forced to perform. Gale designs the bombs that the president of district 13 (Coin) orders to be dropped on the children of Capitol; he also develops a strategy for these bombs to be dropped, that is, to drop the ones that would produce little damage, and when more people would come to help the injured, the deadlier bombs are dropped. Thus, when Katniss's sister, who by that time is trained as a nurse, jumps in to help the injured children, she dies in the second attack. From that moment on, Katniss has

no one to protect and thus she lets herself act as she would not dare before for fear to lose the ones she cares for. When she is assigned her final act, that of killing President Snow before the eyes of the whole country, she instead shoots president Alma Coin, for Katniss knows that the new president will not be any better than the previous one, because she too had no problem killing children to make a spectacle for the citizens and gain their support through lies and propaganda. This way, Collins shows that the narratives of care and kindness usually assigned to women are nothing more than a part of patriarchal discourse, which portrays women as weak and ultimately aims to strip them of agency (Melzer 200).

Ironically enough, the film adaptations of *The Hunger Games* trilogy inspired a quite different reading of the series. The novels focus on the idea that an act of resistance can be turned into entertainment, thus annihilating its subversive capacity. Peta and Katniss' gestures of resistance to violence through care and sympathy are turned into a love story for the amusement of the Capitol. The film adaptations, although being faithful to the source material and showing a great deal of violence both from Capitol and forces of resistance, shift the focus from the story of a woman coming of age in a hostile world governed by greedy consumerism and injustice to something as plain as a love triangle. It is true that Katniss is romantically interested in both Peta and Gale, yet, her main interest in the novels is the survival of her family and other people she has become friends with. The films, however, seem to give too much screen time to her romantic life. Moreover, the critique of modifying one's body to conform to a beauty standard, although still present in films, is subverted by the mere fact that the stars of *The Hunger Games* films are also excessively groomed and subjected to training in order to adhere to Hollywood beauty standards, or, as Andreea Ruthven puts it, are turned "into bodies for public consumption" (Ruthven 59).

This essay does not aim to represent the *Harry Potter* series as inferior or less important for the generation that has grown up reading it or for the next generations. These novels teach children to be kind and to challenge injustice when they see it. Yet, Susanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy teaches children to question the injustice that lies on a much deeper level. They show that consumerism and individualism that avoid care and responsibility are not something to be perceived as given and must be questioned and challenged. They show that perceiving other people as mere objects of entertainment is wrong; they show that the gender roles assigned to people also have to be questioned and not taken for granted, for the reality is much more complicated than one can superficially perceive at first sight.

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CULTURE, ORDINARY EXPERIENCE AND LARKIN'S POETRY

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Abstract: *For more than two decades, Philip Larkin was unofficially called the Poet Laureate of Britain. His poems dealt with what had been seen at that time as the ordinary experience of ordinary British subjects. He had been a controversial poet from the beginning of his career, more precisely from his rise to literary prominence with his second collection, *The Less Deceived*. Many factors led to his being controversial and associated with unillusioned, down-to-earth, ordinary people, with no aspiration to the elevated thoughts and feelings that Matthew Arnold, in *Culture and Anarchy*, published more than a century before the above-mentioned collection, had called "culture" as "the best that has been thought and said in the world" (Arnold 6). The current article both examines ways in which a new view on culture links prominent figures of the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies and Larkin's poetry, but also how this poetry transcends the ordinariness of daily human experience through its crafting into art.*

Keywords: *cultural studies, gentility, persona, anti-intellectualism, little-Englandism*

LARKIN, THE 1950S, CULTURAL STUDIES AND ORDINARINESS IN BRITISH CULTURE: SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

It is with Richard Hoggart, the first director of the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies, that significant links between Larkin's poetry of the ordinary and the major cultural theorist, four years his senior, are to be made. Apart from the similarity of the language of "ordinariness" that Hoggart will promote all the way to one of his last volumes, *Everyday Language and Everyday Life*, the poet – librarian and the staff tutor in the Department of Adult Education, must have rubbed shoulders in the University of Hull in the mid 1950s, when Larkin published his *The Less Deceived*. These links are to be further explored in the subsequent pages in due time.

What does ordinariness mean in such a distinguished context as that offered by an academic and a head librarian? Some of the most famous quotes taken out of context from Larkin's poems appear to encourage an interpretation of "ordinariness" in its worst meaning, rather than as a very special way to celebrate his representation of ordinary life and its modest

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aspirations. Two of the main directions that this report is dealing with are a preoccupation with placing Larkin not only in a long tradition of British poetry, the way scholars writing literary histories usually do, but also in relation to cultural developments in post-war Britain which, in this dissertation, are mainly linked to the theorists of the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies. The overall context in which this is to be seen is provided by the unheroic days of the end of the British Empire and the beginning of a more modest post-colonial existence both of the state.

The first post-war years, broadly speaking up to the mid 1950s, when food rationing was finally stopped, were not reminiscent of the grand historical episodes of the British Empire. After the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, following Britain's loss of India less than a decade before, the country's present looked quite bleak. As Eduard Vlad notes, "It was a period of caution, skepticism, agnosticism. The war and its aftermath had killed many golden idols, and God was farther away than previously"(Vlad 18).

In many ways, it was a grey, post-colonial Britain in which poets like Larkin or cultural critics like Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart were reaching their mature years. For such left-wing thinkers as Williams and E.P. Thomson, the additional disappointment of the abuse of totalitarian power in Soviet Russia and the invasion of Hungary in 1956 disoriented the British Marxist-oriented intellectuals. They were looking for a way to define themselves not in relation to Eastern Marxism which had gone wrong, but in relation to traditions of ordinary British forms of existence and their post-war challenges. For them, as well as for such poets as Larkin, a sympathetic exploration of ordinariness became a key preoccupation. Connections between these intellectuals, who were to be associated with the emergence of British Cultural Studies, and Philip Larkin will further be explored in the following pages. This link is also to be placed within the literary contexts provided by what critics and poets such as John Powell Ward call "the English line," in an attempt to create a tradition of the "unpoetic" from Wordsworth to Philip Larkin himself.

GENTILITY, ALVAREZ AND PHILIP LARKIN

Before the English line is explored, a few remarks on what was happening on the British literary scene in the 1950s and 1960s are worth considering. Thus, the title of Larkin's 1955 volume, *The Less Deceived*, and the poetry associated with some of Larkin's peers of the time are reminiscent of what, one year before, J.D. Scott had announced in a *Spectator* article, its title

giving a name to a group of poets, “the Movement poets,” appearing to share the same poetic vision. The article’s name was “In the Movement,” and the article’s author gave a definition of those poets’ work: “The Movement, as well as being anti-phoney, is anti-wet, skeptical, robust, ironic...”(Scott 399).

In retrospect, David Lodge speaks about the movement of the artistic pendulum from metaphor to metonymy, places Larkin in the context of The Movement and in connection with the Angry Young Men of the time. He sees these writers in opposition to the experimentalism of the Modernists, more specifically in opposition to Dylan Thomas’s “self-indulgent romanticism” and “metaphysical pretentiousness”:

Dylan Thomas epitomized everything they detested: verbal obscurity, metaphysical pretentiousness, self-indulgent romanticism, compulsive metaphorising were his alleged faults. They themselves aimed to communicate clearly and honestly their perceptions of the world as it was (Lodge 72).

Obviously, not everybody in the literary world was in favour of this movement of the pendulum, especially in poetry. As far as poetry is concerned, Alfred Alvarez tended to link a preoccupation with ordinary experience in opposition to more heroic engagements with superior realms of existence where myth was still reigning. Alvarez had a special word for this unheroic, empirical, ordinary way to create poetry. The word was “gentility” and Philip Larkin appeared to be the key figure of this poetic trend. If Sir Winston Churchill in political discourse and Dylan Thomas in poetry had been seen to employ elevated forms of heroic neo-Romantic diction, Larkin’s second volume of poetry, *The Less Deceived*, had introduced the most telling illustration of this trend. Gentility was seen to be illustrated by such figures as the persona in Larkin’s “Church Going.”

Alvarez equated the central persona in “Church Going” with the poet himself and with the drab, unheroic post-war Welfare State Englishman, the epitome of ordinariness:

This, in concentrated form, is the image of the post-war Welfare State Englishman: shabby and not concerned with his appearance; poor – he has a bike, not a car; gauche but full of agnostic piety; underfed, overtaxed, hopeless [...] This is an attempt to show that the poet is not a strange creature inspired; on the contrary, he is just like the man next door – in fact, he probably is the man next door (Alvarez 1962: 24 – 25).

Alvarez exaggerates; he is biased, being a close friend of the new emerging poets of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath-Hughes. However, the observation about

the persona being gauche but full of agnostic piety is connected with one of the best poetic statements about ordinariness that the poem comes up with: “Hatless, I take off/ My cycle-clips in awkward reverence (Larkin: 58). An analysis of the poem will show that the poem combines down-to-earth unillusioned views with a final, more complex vision. Alvarez could have chosen a better illustration of narrow-minded ordinariness in such poems as “Mr Bleaney,” but even there, a closer look would reveal more elevated questioning at the end of the text, making the overall vision much more problematic.

A more prosaic, less challenging, excessively metaphoric poetic mode of the 1950s as a reaction to the rhetorical excesses of Dylan Thomas was dismissed by Alvarez as gentility, but praised by Donald Davie as “purity of diction.” His volume, *Purity of Diction in English Verse*, published in the early 1950s, turned out to be a sort of literary manifesto of some of the new poets of the decade, especially those considered to belong to The Movement. In that volume, Davie advocated clarity, traditional forms and reason, under the general principle of “economy in metaphor”(Davie 1952).

EXPLAINING CHARGES OF ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM IN LARKIN’S POETRY: A CONFUSION OF REALMS

Failure to understand how Larkin’s poems deal with ordinary experience is largely caused by confusing the speaker in the poem, a form of Modernist persona, with Larkin himself. One might call that a confusion of realms as far as identifying the voices speaking in a literary text are concerned. It is true that, more often than not, the speaker and the poet seem to overlap to a large extent. It is probably better to see the poem’s persona as a mask, fashioned by the poet, but not Larkin’s reliable spokesperson, although they might have a lot in common.

A good expression of this *mask vs. poet* situation appears in “A Study of Reading Habits.” In that poem, the persona, equated by those like Alvarez with the poet himself, is critical of the lack of sophistication of his younger self. The speaker finally states, “Don’t read much now [...] Get stewed:/ Books are a load of crap”(Larkin 102). Is this an illustration of narrow-mindedness that some might associate with the worst examples of Little Englandism? Is this Larkin the librarian commenting on the value of reading?

Terry Eagleton is quoted by Gary Kissick in an apparent undertaking to prove the anti-intellectualism of such voices as that in Larkin’s poem as examples of a key feature of narrow-minded, ordinary English people. This amounts to dismissively explaining Larkin’s popularity

among ordinary English people with such a declaration of anti-intellectualism as the one voiced by the persona in “A Study of Reading Habits”: “his plain-speaking verse appealed to English anti-intellectualism and parochialism [...] Somehow, he tricked his readers into joining him in this bleak world”(Eagleton qtd. in Kissick 64).

Andrew Motion, in *Philip Larkin: A Writer's Life*, shows a different person. In the first place, Larkin was an ordinary, respectable citizen, a very conscientious librarian, from his first job as librarian in Wellington in 1945 to a job at Leicester University library in 1946, then at Queen's University, Belfast in a similar capacity, to finally get a job as Head Librarian at Hull University Library in 1955. His ordinary job gives the opportunity to explore the world which some of the cultural critics with whom this dissertation are concerned also paid attention to. Thus, the literary and the ordinary are brought together, which is what another critic, James Booth, also notes: “The poet's day-job gives him an anchor in the ‘real world’ of ordinary, unliterary people with ordinary jobs” (Booth 2005:35).

The poet who notoriously wrote that “books are a load of crap” turned out to be one of the respected librarians in Britain, showing his love of books and of his work. “A Study of Reading Habits” is dated August 20, 1960. The head librarian was then acknowledged as a distinguished professional in the world of books, both as a librarian and as a poet of ordinary experience. The writing of the poem happened one year after Richard Hoggart had left the University of Hull, where his neighbor and comrade in arms as far as books are concerned was no other than Philip Larkin, the head librarian, already famous after the publication of his 1955 volume of poetry. As for Hoggart, he had worked since 1946 as staff tutor and senior staff tutor in Adult Education at Hull University. Significantly, Hoggart and Raymond Williams came from working class backgrounds. Teaching adult people who had not benefited from the same conditions as better off, higher class young people, is the experience that the two key figures of the British Cultural Studies' first wave will support the writing of Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) and Williams's *Culture and Society: 1780 – 1950* (1958). More than Hoggart and Williams, Larkin appears to detach himself from “ordinariness,” while at the same time identifying himself, to a certain extent, through his personae inside the poems, with ordinary people and ordinary experience.

LARKIN'S DIALOGUE WITH THE PREDECESSORS OF THE ENGLISH TRADITION OF "POETRY OF THE UNPOETIC"

Larkin's first volume of poetry, *The North Ship*, clearly shows the influence of Yeats, while from then on, the poet acknowledges his artistic indebtedness to Thomas Hardy, not as novelist, but as poet of ordinary experience and "life's little ironies." John Powell Ward sees Hardy's poetry

[...] characterized by a melancholy moodiness, a certain elusiveness of its material as we have seen, and a sense of the presence of the familiar and everyday as the only things - if even those - that can be relied on at least to be present. A greyness and colourlessness fills the present, making for a yearning for the past (Ward 4).

The greyness and colourlessness of ordinary experience is often tinged with the melancholy and nostalgia that the past evokes in some of the poems, a formula which Larkin also adopts in many of his poems. In so doing, Larkin places himself within a longer tradition, which John Powell Ward calls "the English Line." In this tradition some of the features of Larkin's poetry go back to the poetry of ordinary, humble people in some of Wordsworth's and John Clare's poems. This is a poetry of simple, daily experience that seems to claim that ordinary, common people have always kept their feet on the ground. It is typically lyrical, usually spoken in common language in the first person, thus equating the poet and an ordinary person, while stressing the ordinariness and commonality of its diction as well, as Ward notes: "But finally, and from a poetic point of view most importantly, the language is what is often called 'simple' or ordinary. The poets seem to write as they might speak, and indeed often state their positive suspicion of any sumptuous language or poetic adornment" (Ward 4).

An interest in ordinary language and ordinary experience can be seen in Wordsworth's early poetry from the beginning. Thus, in his introductory Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads*, the Romantic poet describes his poems to be experiments undertaken in order to see "how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure" (Wordsworth ...). In such poems as "We Are Seven," "Simon Lee" and "The Idiot Boy," Wordsworth pushes very simple poetic language to represent very simple people in rural setting to the extreme. One such extreme experiment happens in "The Idiot Boy," a controversial poem at the time because of Wordsworth's peculiar choice of character, subject and ordinary language. The poem shows Johnny, the idiot boy, sent by Betty Foy, his mother, to bring a doctor for a neighbour who feels unwell. The poem represents

Johnny's erratic and disorganised journey, his innocent joy in the middle of nature, with the moon shedding its light on an ordinary expedition and on its humble protagonist. Stephen Gill and Duncan Wu note that the persistent use of ordinary language to deal with humble topics and characters has a link to significant developments of that time, which would become more obvious at the middle of the 19th century:

Much in these poems, especially their emphasis on the worth of simple men, can be related to the political and social ferment of the times. Hazlitt was not the only one to see that Wordsworth's poetry "partakes of, and is carried along with, the revolutionary movement of our age ... His Muse ... is a levelling one (Gill and Wu: x).

It is also true that the same poet will leave the revolutionary and the ordinary and will rise toward the sublime, with the long poem *The Prelude* as the most representative illustration. In the tradition of the so-called ordinary and of the unpoetic it is the Wordsworth of the rustic settings and humble people of the *Lyrical Ballads* that is an illustrious forerunner of poems of the ordinary created by a long line of artists leading all the way to Philip Larkin. However, it is Thomas Hardy whom Larkin acknowledges as his immediate predecessor in this English line, in terms which have to be clarified while reading the poems proper.

I don't think Hardy, as a poet, is a poet for young people. I know it sounds ridiculous to say I wasn't young at twenty-five or twenty-six, but at least I was beginning to find out what life was about, and that's precisely what I found in Hardy. In other words, I'm saying that what I like about him primarily is his temperament and the way he sees life (qtd. Hassan 22).

Larkin here mentions Hardy's temperament and the way he saw life. In this report and in this doctoral dissertation the connection between the two poets has more to do with how they transform ordinary experience and ordinary people into the artistic material that their poems are made of.

ORDINARY PEOPLE, LITTLE ENGLANDISM, INNOCENCE AND THE NOSTALGIA FOR THE LOST EMPIRE

A nostalgia for an age of "innocence" is evoked in "MCMXIV." Like in Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* where the past is idealized from the less "innocent" perspective of the present, controlled by the American mass culture, Larkin's poem evokes a past in which the

main characters are not the grand figures of history, but the innocent, ordinary young people who are usually left out, leaving room for kings, emperors and generals.

The title, written in Latin, rather than in ordinary numerals (“1914”) gives historical importance and dignity to the ordinary people who will be memorialized in the poem. It is the end of what might be called “The British Century,” from the defeat of Napoleon and the rise to global prominence of the British Empire to the beginning of WWI, which will see the rise of a new hegemon, the United States and its main challenger, Germany, with Britain somehow stepping back a little, keen on cultivating its emerging special relationship with its former transatlantic colony. However, the poem is not about kings and emperors, about a great empire at the height of its glory. It is about young innocent people who are about to become the victims of geopolitical games.

“MCMXIV” does not evoke the past glamour of the English horseraces as an icon of upper-class Englishness, but something seen in relation to another two Englishness icons, associated with the British working classes, football and cricket. The long lines, it will turn out, are of people usually queuing up for cricket or football matches (the Oval or Villa Park would suggest that). Now these young, innocent, ordinary people are enlisting to go to war, not anticipating the bloodbaths of the so-called, at that time, the Great War, or the war to end all wars: “Those long uneven lines/ Standing as patiently / As if they were stretched outside/ The Oval or Villa Park,/ The crown of hats, the sun/ On moustached, archaic faces / Grinning as if it were all/ An August Bank Holiday lark” (Larkin 99).

Long English lower middle class traditions, customs, brands and places are evoked, “the established names on the sunblinds,” the now gone farthings and sovereigns, “tin advertisements for cocoa and twist,” pubs which are still open all day. It is interesting to note how both Larkin and Richard Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy*, celebrate one very important illustration of ordinariness, the cultural institution of British culture: the pub. Thus, while Hoggart and Larkin may have patronized the same pubs in Hull at the same time in the mid and late 1950s, they also look back with nostalgia to memories of ordinary working class and lower middle class ways of life. Thus, Hoggart, in the first part and then in the second part of his *The Uses of Literacy*, compares the “authentic” British pub of the inter-war age with the Americanised milk bar of the post-war age, where the jukebox plays mass-produced American music for the apathetic “jukebox boys.”

There will follow the idyllic English countryside and then an allusion to the stability of the imperial class-system, featuring “differently-dressed servants/ with tiny rooms in huge houses,” with their masters not mentioned, but present by implication. The last stanza of the poem is one of the best illustrations of post-imperial nostalgia for a lost, “innocent age,” where power relations are veiled and stability reigns supreme in an empire that still spans the world: “Never such innocence,/ Never before or since,/ As changed itself to past / Without a word – the men/ Leaving the gardens tidy,/ The thousands of marriages/ Lasting a little while longer:/ Never such innocence again” (Larkin 99).

A nostalgia for the past glory of the Empire, is, quite surprisingly, experienced by many ordinary people, mostly uneducated. This does not necessarily look back in time at the Edwardian time evoked in *MCMXIV*, but to such figures as Sir Winston Churchill’s and Britain’s “finest hour,” a narrative in which the British Empire heroically resists the attacks of Hitler’s 3rd Reich.

The mentality that the British Isles (but actually England) have less to do with Europe and more to do with its former colonies, among which the US plays a prominent part, still prevails at present among the less educated, more working class sections of British society, especially in Northern England. A survey, if conducted at that particular time, might have indicated that most of those who voted Leave are devout readers of some of Larkin’s poems as expressions of “Little Englandism.

“The Large Cool Store” in *The Less Deceived*, like Richard Hoggart’s second section of *The Uses of Literacy*, deals with the “artificial” forms of popular culture having emerged after the Second World War. The ending of the poem draws a conclusion, whereas the preceding parts of the poem provide illustrations. The conclusion is that our wishes are unreal, “synthetic, new,/ And natureless in ecstasies (Larkin 101). These unreal, synthetic, natureless dreams are obviously nourished by the large cool store which sells cheap clothes in all sizes and colours, for ordinary working people “Who leave at dawn low terraced houses/ Timed for factory, yard and site.” Long enumerations of items and brands to be bought at the large cool store abound throughout the poem, a poem of the ordinary and of the mass-produced, in keeping with the artificial, synthetic wishes and dreams that they are linked to in a world of cheap consumerism.

The short poem “Deceptions,” as the name shows, is the one associated with the title of the collection, *The Less Deceived*. Its connection with ordinary people appears from the epigraph taken from a Victorian book, Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1861. The epigraph reproduces the words of a poor rape victim, while the two

stanzas of the poem show the speaker's attitude to both the victim and to the rapist. Initially, the impression is that the persona feels empathy for the unfortunate woman only. Even if the incident happened one century before, the speaker vividly "tastes" the bitterness of the woman's experience: "Even so distant, I can taste the grief,/ Bitter and sharp with stalks, he made you gulp" (the stalks obviously refer to a straw bed in a poor London tenement). No one paid attention to the rape victim's predicament, as "bridal London bows the other way" (respectable, honorable brides look elsewhere and inhabit a better part of the city). In the meantime, the speaker imagines the light of the following morning, "unanswerable and tall and wide," preventing the victim's wound to heal. He then comes up with a memorable metaphorical expression to describe the young woman's mental turmoil: "Your mind lay open like a drawer of knives"(Larkin 67).

The speaker then returns to the present, failing to comfort the poor representative of the Victorian London poor: "Slums, years, have buried you. I would not dare/ Console you if I could." So far, nothing is unexpected in this poem about the suffering of a person from another age, where class and gender could have been great handicaps and sources of unspeakable suffering. However, Larkin's special gift is to come up with something unexpected to relieve the ordinariness of a sadly unfortunate story. He goes on to imply and then to state that the victim's suffering has a certain weight, but the rapist's desire was an even greater deception, whose amplitude is hard to measure: "What can be said,/ Except that suffering is exact, but where/ Desire takes charge, readings will grow erratic?/ For you would hardly care/ That you were less deceived, out on that bed,/ Than he was, stumbling up the breathless stair/ To burst into fulfilment's desolate attic"(Larkin 67).

Some might say that the most extreme advocacy of ordinariness with a difference is likely to be found in Larkin's poem, "Born Yesterday." If the speaker is arguably Philip Larkin himself, his interlocutor does not appear to be an ordinary reader, but a new, and, most probably, a beautiful baby. The baby is no other than Sally Amis, the daughter of Larkin's best friend, Kingsley Amis. The girl will grow up to be at least as good-looking as her father.

However, the persona, in this particular poem, identical with Larkin himself, like a special kind of fairy godmother, wishes her something extraordinarily unexpected. At first, one gets what one expects from such a happy event, wishing a newborn all the very best. The baby is metaphorically called a tightly folded bud, and the male, Larkinesque fairy godmother (or godfather) goes on: "I have wished you something/ None of the others would: / Not the usual

stuff/ About being beautiful, / Or running off a spring/ Of innocence and love -/ They will all wish you that,/ And should it prove possible,/ Well you are a lucky girl” (Larkin 54). It all sounds very touching, and very unusual for a poem by Larkin that praises ordinary experience.

The speaking voice (Larkin himself talking to Sally Amis, Kingsley’s dear newborn child) expresses an “extraordinary” wish for ... ordinariness: “May you be ordinary;/ Have, like other women,/ An average of talents:/ Not ugly, not good-looking./ Nothing unc customary/ To pull you off your balance (Larkin 54).

The speaker pushes things even further, apparently making things worse (at least for more conventional parents who consider their babies unique), coming up with a very special definition of what, in this particular poem, “May you be dull” might mean: “In fact, may you be dull - / It that is what a skilled,/ Vigilant, flexible,/ Unemphasised, enthralled/ catching of happiness is called”(Larkin 54). It so happens that by means of this very special twist in the tail of the poem, Larkin turns what appeared to be an offending wish of a wicked fairy godfather into a wish for ordinariness and dullness seen as an “enthraling catching of happiness.”

Another memorable poem dealing with the regularity of a modest ordinary life lived in a rented room is “Mr. Bleaney,” the second poem in *The Whitsun Weddings*. The man in the title is the former tenant of the room which the speaker in the poem wants. The beginning of the poem shows the bits of conversation between the landlady and the prospective new tenant. What is supposed to be a conversation about the room the speaker wants to rent turns out in a description of Mr. Bleaney’s monotonous life, his habits, his hobbies.

What is special about this poem in the context of Larkin’s mature work is the extremely regular rhyme scheme pervading the whole text. For a poet who only pays attention to the occasional rhyme to stress certain words, this is very unusual. However, the rhyme scheme and the regularity of the stresses inside the lines and stanzas clearly suggest the monotony of a very ordinary life, Mr. Bleaney’s life. Gradually, the poem shows the speaker turning into the new Mr. Bleaney, repeating the humdrum pattern of the predecessor’s ordinary existence: “...So it happens that I lie/Where Mr. Bleaney lay, and stub my fags/ On the same saucer-souvenir, and try/ Stuffing my ears with cotton wool, to drown/ The jabbering set he egged her on to buy”(Larkin 81). In addition to the exact rhymes, both grammar and vocabulary contribute to the monotonous pattern showing the regularity of a boring life.

DEALING WITH ORDINARY COMMUNITY FEELING, FROM THE CHURCH TO THE HOSPITAL

Compared to America and some other Western countries, Britain has turned agnostic over the last century. Matthew Arnold himself, in the heyday of the Victorian age, was aware of that in his *Culture and Anarchy*. As he observed that religion was no longer able to keep the masses from disorderly conduct, his replacement for religion was elite culture, meant to prevent Britain from falling into anarchy. Both religion and culture are supposed to give people, especially ordinary people, a sense of both continuity and of belonging to a stable community, with shared values and beliefs. Philip Larkin was well aware of that. Although he was not a religious man, and often he gave the impression that he was against religion, the church, religion and what they stand for provide many opportunities to represent situations in which community feeling is being dramatized, sometimes in poems where the persona appears to be a longer, an isolated individual who eventually appears to be fascinated, or at least interested, in what such special places as a church stand for in the preservation of a certain community feeling.

The poem with which Larkin's public persona is usually associated is "Church Going." It appears to evoke an awkward agnostic who pays a short visit to a church, making first sure there is nobody around: "Once I am sure there's nothing going on/ I step inside, letting the door thud shut./ Another church: matting, seats, and stone,/ And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut/ For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff/ Up at the holy end; the small neat organ." The tone is initially very disrespectful, but it soon acquires a tone of awkward reverence. He first acknowledges a "tense, musty, unignorable silence," and then, hatless he takes off his cycle clips "in awkward reverence"(Larkin58).

Most of the poem focuses on this persona of an isolated agnostic who vacillates between displaying an ironical attitude and unwittingly showing reverence. The vacillation between seriousness and mockery goes on and on: the visitor signs the book and donates an Irish sixpence before stating, on exiting the holy place, that the experience "was not worth stopping for." He, showing the same indecision in terms of his attitude, adds, "Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,/ And always end much at a loss like this,/ Wondering what to look for"(Larkin 58). The protagonist is wondering, among other things, about what will happen when churches fall out of use. Will a few cathedrals be kept on show or will what were once holy places be avoided as unlucky places? He goes on and on with similar questions, openly showing his disbelief and disrespect. Gradually, he has to admit that the place appeals to him

for a reason he is not aware of yet, calling the church in ever more respectful terms: a cross of ground, then a special shell. But then, to quote Bachelard, “an empty shell, like an empty nest, invites day-dreams of refuge”(Bachelard 1994 107). This refuge, where the speaker comes from time to time, connects him with other ordinary people, even if he does not openly seek their company. He suddenly switches from a solitary “I” to a “we” that shows commonality and shared beliefs and rites of passage. The church connects “us” through the common rituals of birth, death, marriage. “Our” ordinary compulsions are here turned into something that transcends ordinariness: “A serious house on serious earth it is, In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,/ Are recognised, and robed as destinies”(Larkin 59). The speaker comes to admit the power of the church which was initially not worth paying a visit to. The church and going to church with other people are bound to bring a community together with its rites of passage, thus combining the ordinariness of mortality with the solemnity of the eternal or of the perennial.

“The Whitsun Weddings,” the poem that gives its name to Larkin’s 1964 collection, is one of the author’s best-known artistic creations. Once again, what will emerge from a close reading of the poem is Larkin’s approach to the ordinary experience of ordinary people whose relation to ritual leads to the realization of the dignity of human existence. Once again, in a fashion which is reminiscent of contemporary trends in British cultural studies, one can see a good illustration of Williams’s idea that culture is ordinary and, as such, is worth everybody’s consideration.

The poem evokes a train journey from somewhere in the North all the way to London a few days before Whitsunday, when weddings are again allowed by the Christian Church. “The Whitsun Weddings,” will facilitate the reader an artistic journey from the description and realisation of ordinary human experience to the realisation of some sort of spiritual discovery. It all starts with the time and space coordinates of a very common situation. By the look of it, like in “Church Going,” it a very solitary event. The speaker appears to be someone like Larkin himself, travelling from Hull to London. Apparently a bit bored, the speaker describes what he sees out of the window, leaving out the people in his train compartment. The speaker’s initial solitude is due to the fact that the train is almost empty.

Very soon though, from the middle of the first stanza, the reader can again distinguish a significant change from “I” to “we,” thus changing the angle from which this experience will be perceived. The common “we” perspective is rare in Larkin, “Church Going” supports this

statement up to a point, when some final remarks are made from a common perspective, an illustration of some ordinary, common, shared realisation.

However, what follows next is not extraordinary, the passing images of such sights as industrial canals, scattered isolated farms, small, nondescript urban settings. There follows the human show of ordinary, provincial people. As the title of the poem indicates, it is the time of the year when weddings are again allowed. The show the speaker now sees out of the window is in connection with that moment. At first, the brides are seen unsympathetically. They are “grinning and pomaded,” attired in “parodies of fashion.” They are dismissed as lower class, vulgar rural brides, wearing “nylon gloves” and “jewellery-substitutes.” They are in the company of men making dirty jokes (an uncle is shouting “smut”) and “loud and fat” mothers. It all amounts to a “wholly farcical” effect, eliciting a superior smile rather than empathy.

A succession of participants in wedding parties are getting on the train at each new station. The protagonists, the ridiculous figures in the show seen out of the window now turn into travelling companions. They now become part of a community of “We” people, partaking of the “secular communion” of the journey south on that “sunlit Saturday” before Whitsun. This ordinary communion in which the speaker becomes one of the many marks a sudden change, the speaker moving back to “I” for an additional realization of the show going on in each station. He now sees everything with new eyes, in different terms. The characters outside now appear to link the present moment which something which transcends ordinary existence, “As if out on an end of an event/ Waving goodbye/ To something that survived it”(Larkin 93). What that means and what that amounts to, is left unsaid for the reader to guess, but the end of the poetic piece appears to give an intimation, in poetic form, of what this “travelling coincidence” is all about. It is something transcending the ordinary, “to be loosed with all the power/ That being changed can give.” Swarbrick notes the significant change operated at the end of the poem: “A poem that began with his sense of isolation, then amused detachment shifting to distaste and now a closer involvement, ends with moving compassion”(Swarbrick 51). The “we” on the train, whom the speaker has again rejoined, appear to be all aware of this solemn transformation: [...] “We slowed again, / And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled/ A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower/ Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain” (Larkin 94).

“The Whitsun Weddings” starts with a typical Larkin “I” individual feeling uncomfortable in an almost empty train. It ends with a community of “we” people on that same

train feeling the presence of “an arrow-shower/ Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.” One cannot help linking this with the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost come down to the Christians (“like an arrow-shower”?). Thus, an ordinary train journey from the provinces to London is shrouded in very solemn clothes, leading to a religious moment of community and inspiration. Gillian Steinberg notes that “ Even poems that seem initially to resist affiliation with the characters described, like ‘The Whitsun Weddings,’ alternately offer a kind of empathy and even a kindness”(Steinberg 2010: 121).

Larkin brings juxtaposes the images of the church or cathedral and of the hospital in “The Building.” The building in the poem is a hospital, which is linked through its prominent position in the urban space to both an imposing cathedral and to a “handsome” hotel. Do they stand for magnificence and power or do they stand for something else? Initially, the impression one gets is that they only tower over ordinary people: “Higher than the handsomest hotel / The lucent comb shows up for miles, but see,/ All round it close-ribbed streets rise and fall/ Like a great sigh out of the last century (Larkin 136).

The building is also referred to as a “clean-sliced cliff,” which rises above ordinary lives through a dignity which reminds one of the cathedrals and their centuries old existence. In what appears to be a typically Larkinesque strategy, opposites come together. On the one hand, there is the feeling of a common mortality and on the other, there is the willingness to transcend it. Both tendencies appear to many mainstream British readers. The clean-sliced cliff, the lucent comb, in what may be called typical Larkin fashion, seems to “outbuild” cathedrals. For their part, crowds of people, some of them already patients, are represented, as if in a common religious ritual, holding “propitiatory flowers”(Larkin 138).

Thus, the hospital as both building of the mortals and cathedral of the transcendental evokes the power of ordinary people to show their strength through their common fate, perpetuated by various social rituals, confirmed by such symbolic gestures as the holding of propitiatory flowers. Larkin’s poem itself is a building of words, a construction that outbuilds cathedrals. The art of turning the lives of the ordinary people living their daily lives between the church and the hospital, sometimes celebrating happy rites of passage, sometimes mourning the departed ones, occasionally riding trains from the provinces to the capital, is one of the defining features of Larkin’s creative work. James Booth is quick to note the poet’s art of finding essential artistic beauty in such banal places as advertisement-boards and railway rides, in such banal place like ordinary lives in general: “Larkin himself projected a self-

conscious artistic myth to mediate between his personal experience and his impersonal art, depicting himself as the bachelor hermit of Hull who finds essential beauty in advertisement-boards and profundity on the railway” (Booth 49).

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COMPLEXITIES OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: THREE MAIN PARADIGMS ON THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

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Abstract: *The present article examines some important theories and definitions related to the concepts of nation and nationalism in order to better understand their role in today's ever-changing, cosmopolitan, globalizing context. It has become more and more challenging to specify enduring features of nationhood, to draw clear boundaries, to frame identities and there has been much talk about the challenges of globalization to the constraints of the nation-state. However there is no denial that nations and their attending discourses of nationalism have remained determining factors driving contemporary historical phenomena, and the article addresses the relevance of three main theoretical paradigms dealing with the current rise in nationalism.*

Keywords: *nationalism; primordialism; modernism; ethno-symbolism; diaspora nationalism.*

Post 1990 contexts for the resurgence of nationalism

The major changes on the international political scene after 1990, marked by the collapse of the Communist block, with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, have triggered a worldwide upsurge in nationalism: the need to promote national identity has been expressed through “both peaceful and violent examples of national secession” (Smith 2003: xi).

More recently, we have been witnessing the long process of separation of Great Britain from the European Union. This process in itself is closely connected to a profound need for reassertion of national identity. The Brexit referendum organized in 2016 tilted the scale towards the “Leave” resolution: in the minds of the Brexit supporters, if the United Kingdom continued to give up their own sovereignty to a superstate like the European Union, that would severely impact upon the control over domestic affairs, and more generally upon the British autonomy and national identity.

During the speech delivered in Florence on the 22nd September 2017 the former Prime Minister Theresa May insisted on the necessity to respect the British people's choice to take back full control over their destiny as a sovereign nation, rather than accept “the profound pooling of sovereignty that is a crucial feature of the European Union”. The overall tone of the

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speech is one of calm invitation to mutual respect, trust, wisdom, friendship and furthering cooperation between the European Union and the United Kingdom in order to defend the common values of “liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law” against shared threats (of which she insists on terrorism and mass migration).

The British Prime Minister uses repeatedly phrases like “work together”, “dialogue”, “cooperation”, “partnership”, “shared values” and she includes the metaphor of “the bridge” which needs to be built between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Theresa May refers to Europe as “our continent”, she includes the British history into “our European history” and she underlines that “We may be leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe”. Nevertheless there is a permanent emphasis on two separate entities which are no longer tied but will be henceforth “free to chart their own course”: on the one hand there is reference to “we [...] a sovereign United Kingdom in which the British people are in control” and on the other hand “you [...] the nations of the European Union” (T. May web).

Theresa May provided two reasons to explain the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union. The first one was the need for asserting full sovereignty: to the British people the status of membership felt like an unacceptable limitation of “the power of domestic democratic control”. That is why “the United Kingdom has never totally felt at home being in the European Union”. The second explanation of the “leave” decision lies in the country’s insularity: “perhaps because of our history and geography, the European Union never felt to us like an integral part of our national story in the way it does to so many elsewhere in Europe” (T. May web).

Nationalism and nations constitute an important topic for numerous researchers in various fields - historians, sociologists, anthropologists - not only in Britain but in the rest of the world. Nationalism moves culture and cultures in their complex configurations, politics and power relations acquiring and preserving prominence both in the public space in general and in the realms of literary and cultural studies. Nationalism in its variety of forms has reemerged as a defining dimension of identity at all levels: individual, group, national, even global.

Various analyses and theories regarding the definition and origins of nations and nationalism may be grouped into three main approaches: *primordialism*, *modernism* and *ethno-symbolism*. We will have a closer look at each of these three main paradigms in order to point out differences and similarities between various perspectives on nations and nationalism and

have a deeper understanding of these concepts and of their significance in the present-day world.

How it all started: primordialist nationalism

The primordialist approach is the oldest paradigm used to explain nationalism and the origins of nations. Fervent nationalists have embraced this primordial view, looking back in history to find antique roots, animated by “the feeling that the further back in time a nation’s identity can be traced, the stronger and more resilient that identity” (Kumar: 59). Primordialism views nations as „naturally occurring social groupings” distinguished from others through shared cultural features such as history, language, religion, customs and traditions. (Ichijo: 52).

One of the main concerns of theorists promoting the primordial approach has been to find explanations to „what is regarded as the non-rational, ineffable yet coercive power of nations” (Ichijo: 51). In other words what is it that compels individuals to be so loyal even to the point of sacrificing themselves for their nation? According to these theorists, the answer lies in the primordial nature of nations: there are fundamental needs, inherent to human nature, of identification, grounding and belonging not only to the mundane but also to a sacred realm and nations fulfill these needs. (Delanty, Kumar: 518). Nations’ origins can therefore go back to the Middle Ages, or even further, and when a new nation emerges this is often explained as “an ‘awakening’ of a dormant entity” (Ichijo: 51).

Hans Kohn, an important academic pioneer in the study of nationalism, distinguished between the *organic* and the *voluntarist* types of nationalism. The organic view, promoted by the German enlightenment philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, claims that there are “organic” bonds which tie the members of a nation beyond their will, such as their ethnicity or their language and “by nature and history men are above all members of their national community” (Kohn: 429). Primordialists support this herderian perspective, claiming that nations are not a product of modernity, but a timeless, natural form of social organization. By contrast, the *voluntarist* perspective views nations as associations based on free will, voluntarily entered into by rational individuals; this is the perspective promoted by the Swiss French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Voluntarist nationalism claims that “all true nations [...] must be constituted by a voluntary act, by an oath administered with great public solemnity” (Kohn, 253). This fits more the description of the modern state, which, from a primordialist perspective is opposed to the concept of nation - viewed as a natural, organic grouping. Modern states are, by contrast, an artificial creation, in which „rationality and

calculability have become dominant at the expense of the power of kinship and blood tie – the ‘givens’ ” (Ichijo: 51).

Clifford Geertz talks about “givens” such as kinship, shared territory, shared customs and traditions, same religion, language or dialect (all of which have been considered defining features of a nation). He points out in his essay, “Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States” the importance of these “givens” - “or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens"” (Geertz: 59) in creating powerful primordial ties or attachments among the members of a community, including a nation: individuals speaking the same language, related by blood ties, who share the same customs feel connected in “an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coercive” way. These givens connecting them “seem to flow more from a sense of natural - some would say spiritual - affinity than from social interaction.” (Geertz: 60)

The concept of “primordial ties” was first introduced in the nineteen fifties by the American sociologist Edward Shils. While focusing on the study of primary groups – military, industrial and religious - Shils remarked that there are generally strong attachments “not merely to the other [group] member as a person, but as a possessor of certain especially ‘significant relational’ qualities, which could only be described as primordial” and there seems to be “an ineffable significance” generally attributed to those kind of primordial ties (Shils: 142).

From a primordialist perspective, ethnicity – or extended kinship - is at the core of any definition of nationhood. In this sense it is also worth considering the sociobiological approach to discussing human behavior proposed by Pierre L. van den Berghe in his book *The Ethnic Phenomenon*. Van den Berghe insists that in order to understand human behavior, including their propensity to organize themselves into - and stick to - social groupings as large as the nations, it is necessary to take into account three interrelated types of factors: *genetic*, *environmental* and *cultural*. Most social scientists have attempted to explain human behavior by taking into account only the man-made cultural environment. Although he does not deny the importance of Culture - the “impressive bag of tricks” developed by humans “to control, modify, indeed, create an important part of our environment”- van den Berghe points out that this is closely intertwined with genetic and environmental factors, which, therefore, cannot be overlooked. Environmental conditions influence the selection of genes; culture is also influenced not only by genetic factors but also by the environment in which it develops. In its

turn culture lays its imprint on the environment. Therefore “nothing is gained by trying to maintain a categorical distinction between nature and nurture.” (van den Berghe: 6)

Van den Berghe further discusses three basic principles which regulate competitive and cooperative interaction between social animals – including humans - directing it towards the maximization of their fitness and survival: *kinship*, *reciprocity* and *coercion*. The first principle of *kin selection* or “nepotism” is the tendency to favor “kin over nonkin, and close kin over distant kin” (van den Berghe: 7) in order to maximize chances for survival and reproduction. This is a propensity discernable from the levels of genes and cells to those of larger groups of social organisms.

Secondly the principle of *reciprocity* – giving and returning favors – intervenes between social individuals when there are reciprocal benefits through cooperation. Reciprocity does not apply only among related individuals but also to non-kin. The system of cooperation based on this second principle has become extremely complex in the case of humans: as “intelligent[...] highly self-conscious animals, capable of self-consciously pursuing their interests” they have developed a system of “mental “book-keeping” of favors given and returned” based on two inherently human mental abilities “long-term memory” and “recognition of individuals” (van den Berghe: 8-9).

Cooperation through reciprocity becomes even more intricate with the intervention of various forms of deception, which further trigger the necessity to develop means to detect and exclude “cheaters from subsequent interaction”, followed by even more sophisticated deceptive strategies meant to evade such detection and exclusion. Intelligence has again allowed humans to refine forms of deceit to a level of complexity that exceeds any deceptive strategies applied by other animals. Van den Berghe talks about religion and ideology as the most refined forms of human “collective self-deceit”. Religion characterizes humanity in general: through religious beliefs humans respond to their existential need to deny mortality. Ideologies are ultimate forms of deception used as a subtle, complex form of control and defense of group interests most often applied at state level as “sophisticated belief system[s which] facilitate the transmission of credible, self-serving lies” ” (van den Berghe: 9) usually between a ruling class and the ruled. Nationalism has been described as such an ideology. Religion can also be applied at state-level as a successful ideology.

In general ideologies are used as justification when relationships within a group or among groups are asymmetrical or parasitic. When such imbalance of power is hard to maintain through mere deception, the use of violence is usually applied – in other words coercion - which

is the third way in which interactions among social individuals function. Van den Berghe considers that

...the rise of states marked the extension of the realm of coercion and parasitism within societies as well as between them [...] the very essence of the state is the centralization of power in the hands of the few in order to extract surplus production from the many within the same society. Police, courts, taxation, forced labor and slavery are so many coercive institutions that thrive together with the development of states. The history of the last six or seven millenia is the history of the rise of bigger and bigger states, ever better organized and armed for outside aggression and internal coercion. (van den Berghe: 11)

Later on van den Berghe points out that political centralization is accompanied by “the growth of national consciousness” which is “usually fostered by a myth of common origin” (van den Berghe: 66). Ethnicity is defined as “common descent, either real or putative, but, even when putative, the myth has to be validated by several generations of common historical experience.” (16). The nation is a “politically conscious ethny [...] that claims the right to statehood by virtue of being an ethny” (61). The ties between the members of an ethny are not necessarily based on attested biological descent (they may be “putative” as it was mentioned above); but even if relatedness may not be genetically proved, the myth of common descent must be sufficiently strong and deeply believed by the members in order to hold the ethny - by extension, the nation - together:

One cannot create an instant ethny by creating a myth. The myth has to be rooted in historical reality to be accepted. Ethnicity can be manipulated but not manufactured. Unless ethnicity is rooted in generations of shared historical experience, it cannot be created *ex nihilo*. (van den Berghe: 27)

How do members of an ethny decide who is part of their group and who is an outsider? Van den Berghe describes several criteria which are often applied in order to decide whether an individual belongs to a group or not. Thus, he mentions *the test of acquaintance*, through which membership is ascertained “prima facie” - that is through simple recognition by the other members; this can be applied in small-scale groups, where all members know each other. He also records *the genealogical test* – applicable in groups of moderate size – through which an unknown individual is required to demonstrate belonging by tracing his kinship to the known members of the community. These tests are much more difficult to apply for large social groups in which “ethnicity can no longer be so easily ascertained and, therefore, it can be faked” (van

den Berghe: 28). There are however discernable “ethnic markers” – either genetic or cultural - which can be used as tests of belonging even for societies with hundreds of thousands of members. According to van den Berghe these may fall into three main categories.

The first is the category of *genetically transmitted phenotypes*. This applies whenever such genetic differences are perceived as easily discernable and reliable means to predict group membership; if this is the case “racism can be expected to develop and thrive”. This has usually happened when “rapid and massive [...] long-distance migration across a wide genetic gradient” has occurred. The European colonial expansion for instance led to this phenomenon. Van den Berghe points out that “racially based systems are peculiarly conflict-ridden and unstable” (van den Berghe: 32- 33). In time miscegenation occurs and racial differences should become blurred and irrelevant within several generations. The second category is that of “*man-made ethnic uniform*.” An individual can be acknowledged as a member of a group if (s)he wears distinctive cultural markers peculiar to that group such as tattoos or body mutilations; although these are easily discernable, they can also be easily faked, therefore not always reliable. The third category is identified by means of *the behavioural test*. An individual must demonstrate that s/he is competent in performing a certain behaviour characteristic to the group s/he claims to belong to. Such behaviour is much more difficult to acquire outside the group, therefore much harder to fake. From this category of cultural markers language is probably one of the most reliable: it is almost impossible for a second-language learner to replicate the conditions of acquisition of a native language: all the pronunciation subtleties as well as the special meanings in natural contexts acquired by a native speaker in his primary groups since the earliest age cannot be rendered by a foreign speaker of the same language. It is not surprising therefore that language is often mentioned as an essential distinctive feature in defining nationality.

The modernist perspective on nationalism

Unlike primordialists, modernists consider nations as modern artifacts. According to theorists supporting the modernist view the emergence of the nations and of the ideology of nationalism has been triggered by modernity and industrialization. One of the key theoretical studies bringing arguments in favor of the modernist approach, which most researchers tend to agree with, is Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism*. According to Gellner nationalism emerged through the imposition and “generalized diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised

[...] high culture” controlled by the state, gradually replacing local cultures, which previously determined the lives of smaller communities. Therefore

nationalism is [...] the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves. (Gellner, 1983: 57).

In his opinion, “it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round” (Gellner, 1983: 55). Humans have always lived in groups and, in order for a group to form and endure, two opposing crucial “agents or catalysts” are necessary: an inward drive expressed through “voluntary adherence and identification” on the part of the group members; an external force that should produce “fear, coercion, compulsion” (Gellner, 1983: 53). These two agents are also identifiable as catalysts of nations. Coexistence of “willed adherence” and of “a shared culture” is necessary, but it is not sufficient to define a nation. Special circumstances need to arise, in which access to “standardized literacy and education-based systems of communication” (Gellner, 1983: 54) is open to the members of a larger community – preferably both to “the power holders and [to] the rest” (Gellner, 1983: 89) in order for the nations to come into being. Gellner uses an interesting parable to illustrate a typical course in the evolution of nationalism and the emergence of a nation: the birth of Ruritania within the fictional empire of Megalomania. (Gellner, 1983: 58-62). Although the model is not necessarily universally applicable, a closer analysis can reveal interesting analogies with concrete examples such as the emergence of the nations from the former Habsburg Empire or the situation of the British/English empire and nation(s).

Taking into account the distribution of power and the access to education in a society, Ernst Gellner identifies three main types of nationalism: *classical Habsburg*, *classical liberal or Western nationalism* and *diaspora nationalism*. In the case of *classical Habsburg nationalism* access to education is reserved to the power-holders; the “powerless” do not typically benefit from education. However, a group of “intellectual-awakeners” coming from the latter group manage, through sustained effort and propaganda, to raise the culture of the “powerless” into a “rival new high culture” – the culture of the emerging nation (Gellner, 1983: 97-98). *The classical liberal or Western nationalism* is typical for the situation which happened in the case of the German and the Italian nations in the nineteenth century. Society in this case can still be divided into the power-holders and the ruled, but unlike the previous situation, both

groups have access to education. The third situation described in Gellner's work is that of *diaspora nationalism*, of which the most famous, successful situation is that of Israel (Gellner, 1983: 101-109).

Like Gellner's volume, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* provides an in-depth analysis of nationhood from a modernist perspective thus completing the theoretical framework that the German scholar had contributed to the discussion of nation-states. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as "... an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." It is virtually impossible for all the members of a nation to know each other personally. However they imagine themselves in togetherness, as a communion, different from other communions of the sort, from which their own is separated with definite – even though not necessarily rigid – frontiers.

The concept of nationhood, according to Anderson, emerged in the age of the Enlightenment at the same time with the dismantlement of "the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm". Therefore by contrast, this newly born imagined community conceived of itself ideally as flourishing under the shape of the free sovereign state (Anderson: 6-7). Once come into being, Anderson observes, the nation system as a cultural product has been able to raise genuine strong emotions and attachments; it has also become adaptable and easily integrated into different socio-political and ideological contexts.

Anderson attempts to explain how this imagined communion was gradually achieved. He identifies a close connection between the emergence of national consciousness and the development of printing in vernacular languages in the age of mechanical reproduction. More and more books were published and Latin gradually lost terrain in favor of vernacular languages: the target group of consumers in the case of Latin was limited to the educated elite who could understand the language, whereas publishing in vernacular considerably widened the market for books. Reformation also played an important role by encouraging the translation of the Bible in vernacular languages (Anderson: 40).

Print-capitalism was therefore a key factor in the shaping of imagined national communities, with its revolutionary possibility of allowing a widespread sharing of ideas through books and especially through press. Reading the printed press gradually became a ritual of sharing, performed simultaneously by –otherwise unrelated – readers or printed press consumers. This very experience of sharing through reading made them aware of the existence of other members belonging to this new type of community – the nation.

Further on, Anderson points out three paradoxes related to the concept of “nation”. The first paradox is that historically considered nations are a product of modernity; however there is always a subjective antiquity attached to any nation in the mind of nationalists. Another paradox refers to the idea that on the one hand nationality is a universal socio-cultural concept – “in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender”; but on the other hand it manifests in innumerable concrete ways – there are no two identical nations. A third paradox is that although nationalisms can acquire immense political power describing a nation is extremely difficult, any attempted definitions being often marked by inconsistencies and poorly established philosophical grounds (Anderson: 5).

Anderson discusses two opposing evolutionary trends in the type of nationalisms shaped along time: “*popular national movements*” and “*official nationalism*” (Anderson: 86). The former can be applied to describe for instance the evolution of the American colonies with their gradual emancipation from the central colonial powers, or the birth of the European nations, for example of France - triggered by the 1789 Revolution and the Enlightenment. Even within this category there are different paths of evolution identifiable: in the case of “*creole nationalisms*” (Anderson: 61), typical of the American continent, language had never been an issue in the sense of proclaiming it as a defining, differentiating feature opposed to “the other”, against whom the new nations were willing to define themselves.

On the other hand, in the case of what could be defined as “*vernacular nationalisms*”-category which most European nations could fit into - the national language is indeed one of the defining differentiating features. Be them creole or vernacular, the evolution of “*popular national movements*” was somehow more natural, less controlled or controllable.

On the contrary, “*official nationalisms*” were more artificial movements imposed from above, programmed, closely controlled by political authorities as “a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power [...] or, to put it another way, for stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire”. This type of nationalism can be distinguished for instance in the evolution of the British Empire, where a certain frame of mind ready to accept the “willed merger of nation and dynasty” was imposed and gradually instilled through a closely controlled policy applied mainly through formal and informal education (Anderson: 86).

Anthony Smith summarizes the modernist perspective into a list of characteristics defining nation in terms of several coordinates: co-nationals normally occupy a certain territory

which has clearly defined frontiers; their social, economic and political activity and relationships are regulated by a unified legal system and political institutions; there is a centralized public educational system which gives the citizens of the same nation access to a common national culture; state institutions ensure national autonomy; nation-states cooperate with other nations and constitute an inter-national organizations; nationalism functions as a legitimizing ideology which consolidates a national community. (Smith, 2005: 95)

Although it does not lack coherence and clarity, according to Smith this is a limiting definition which can only account for a particular ideal type of nation, that is the modern nation “imagined and created by [...] the civic-territorial kind of nationalism”, which emerged in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment culture in North America and Western Europe. It cannot be applied to other geographical, historical and cultural contexts elsewhere in the world. He therefore proposes a different, less limiting approach which could broaden the perception to take into account all types of nations.

Ethno-symbolism and nationalism

Ethno-symbolism provides a third approach to the evolution of nationalism and nations. The first and most important advocate of ethno-symbolism is Anthony D. Smith. He lays a strong emphasis on the importance of “the symbolic elements - myths, memories, traditions, values rituals and symbols – in the formation and persistence of nations” and he points out that “many of these elements derive from prior ethnic and ethno-religious symbols” (Smith, 2005: 98). He argues that “ethnicity, like history, is crucial to an adequate understanding of nationalism” (Smith, 2003: 45) and he considers that

...the ethnic community resembles an extended family, or rather a ‘family of families’, one which extends over time and space to include many generations and many districts in a specific territory. This sense of extended kinship, of ‘kith and kin’, attached to a particular ‘homeland’, underlies the national identities and unity of so many modern nations and endows their members with a vivid sense of kin relatedness and immemorial continuity (Smith, 2003: 46).

In one of his earlier works, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Anthony D. Smith defines *ethnies* as “named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity” (Smith, 1988: 32). According to Smith, ethnic communities are based not so much on genetic descent or kinship

but on “the sense of cultural affinities [...] embodied in a *myth* of descent, shared historical memories and ethnic symbolism” (Smith, 2003: 192).

Such communities can turn into nations under the influence of special social and cultural processes. Smith discusses five such processes which are essential in the emergence of a nation. First of all there is increasing identity awareness in the community which leads its members to name and define themselves as a nation different from other nations and this definition is acknowledged by other such communities. Secondly the members of a nation share a distinctive culture, built by fostering „distinctive myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols”. A third process is the co-nationals’ attachment over time to a certain territory which has well-defined frontiers, where most of them reside throughout their lives and which they view as their „ancestral homeland”. In the fourth place a common public culture consisting of „shared traditions, values, symbols and knowledge” is reinforced and disseminated at national level. Finally common laws and customs are also created, widely disseminated and observed by all the members of the emerging nation. Taking into account these processes Smith was able to provide a broader definition to the concept of nation as “a named and self-defined community” fostering “common myths, memories, symbols and values”, promoting “a distinctive public culture”, inhabiting a clearly defined “historic homeland”, possessing and observing the same customs and laws. (Smith, 2003: 98).

The ethno-symbolic perspective differs both from modernism and from primordialism in that it argues that nations are neither a modern invention, nor perennial entities, but they have evolved historically in different particular ways from previous ethnies. It is hard to identify precisely the emergence of nations at some specific point in time. In Smith’s view a nation can be compared to a palimpsest on which “older layers of writing are not wholly erased”. Therefore, in order to answer questions about a nation’s emergence and evolution, researchers must take on the challenging but not impossible task of deciphering and providing “a nuanced understanding of its many symbols, texts and messages” (Smith, 2005: 109).

The end of nations?

There have been many theorists foreseeing the decline of the socio-political organization based around variegated and segregated nation-states. Such apocalyptic views are suggested by titles like Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*. Contrary to some expectations or interpretations however, Fukuyama’s is not a pessimistic view upon the future of mankind. Since his first article had provoked controversy and confusion, Fukuyama brought further

clarification in his subsequent book with the same title: “[...] what I suggested had come to an end was not the occurrence of events, even large and grave events, but History: that is, history understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times” (Fukuyama, 1992: xii).

According to Fukuyama, human history has unfolded driven by two main forces: ‘the logic of modern science’ and ‘the struggle for recognition’ (Fukuyama, 1992: xv- xvi); these two combined factors have gradually led to the collapse of tyrannies and the triumph of universal liberal values. It is this generalization of the model of capitalist liberal democracy which represents in Fukuyama’s theory the final stage of the historical process. Therefore Fukuyama’s perspective does not envision the erasure of boundaries between nation-states but rather a reciprocal recognition among them through an uniformization of the political system.

Liberal democracy replaces the irrational desire to be recognized as greater than others with a rational desire to be recognized as equal. A world made up of liberal democracies, then, should have much less incentive for war, since all nations would reciprocally recognize one another’s legitimacy. (Fukuyama, 1992: xx)

Another frequently used phrase with an apocalyptic resonance is ‘the end of the Nation-State’. Interestingly, there are two reputed works with this same phrase as a title: one of them was written by the French diplomat Jean-Marie Guéhenno - published initially in French as *La fin de la démocratie*, subsequently translated and published in English as *The End of the Nation-State*. The second volume titled *The End of the Nation State. The Rise of Regional Economies* was written by the Japanese organizational theorist Kenichi Ohmae.

According to Guéhenno the nation states are being gradually driven to their demise under the pressure of two forces: one acting from the outside, the other from inside the state itself. The former consists in the pressure of continuously expanding global trusts and networks, the power of which is reinforced by means of information technology and the global communication network. The latter pressure comes from multiple ethnic communities residing within a given nation-state. Guéhenno considers that after the fall of the Berlin Wall the world has been going through a transition from an age having nation-states as the main political units towards an imperial age, in which space is no longer defining and shifting interests linked to supranational organizations become dominant (Guéhenno: 115). He goes on to replace political space with dominant perceptions, featuring atomization and homogenization in a society which is continually fragmenting itself (Guehenno 30).

Similarly, Keinichi Ohmae considers that the nations have become an obsolete form of organization; in reaching his conclusion Ohmae mainly takes into account the global economic developments. He identifies four main economic ports or what he calls the four I's - investment, industry, information technology and individual consumers – all of which display a marked tendency towards internationalization. Under these conditions nation-states have become an obsolete political construct, with artificially maintained boundaries exerting permanent pressure upon the newly emerging regional-states – which seem to grow more naturally out of the global economy developments.

With all these global tendencies however it cannot be denied that nationalism and its related concepts are still of paramount importance in recent developments in Europe and elsewhere. Faced with the undeniable reality of the current revival of nationalism, Ernest Gellner, one of the prominent scholars who had foreseen “the inevitable withering away of nationalism”, saw himself compelled to reconsider the syllogism that had led him to what has proved to be an incorrect prediction. In a more recent book, *Encounters with Nationalism* published in 1995, Gellner reflects upon the premises and the conclusion drawn from them more than a decade before: he rightfully pointed out that industrialism deeply altered the previous medieval organization of society, which was based on the coexistence of different micro-cultures or ethnies cultivating specific sets of skills. This differentiation was gradually effaced by imposing through a centralized educational system a standard macro-culture aimed at training all citizens into standardized skills useful for industrial production. The logical conclusion was that the loss of cultural differentiation, hence of ethnic diversity would lead to the fading away of nationalist feelings. “In other words, the withering away of nationalism is inevitable. In even simpler terms: the more industrialism, the less nationalism.” (Gellner, 1994: 37-38).

Indeed we can speak nowadays of a “cosmopolitan brotherhood of the personnel of the large multinational corporations, [or] the members of specialized professions cutting across 'national' boundaries.” However this phenomenon of “industrial cosmopolitanism” is much less obvious than “the emphatic, sometimes violent affirmation of national delimitation and sentiment.” What is it that has provoked this revival of nationalist feelings and manifestations?

Gellner explains that the “High Cultures” promoted in modern societies through centralized education are not just a vehicle for the transmission of formal skills. High cultures are different as they have to be articulated in various languages and they also carry different

sets of behavior rules. These differences may constitute grounds for defining sameness and otherness, drawing boundaries and causing exclusion from newly defined communities:

Those excluded from the new community are excluded not merely in virtue of having failed to acquire the necessary skills, but also in virtue of having acquired them in the 'wrong' idiom. Modern industrial High Culture is not colourless; it has an 'ethnic' colouring, which is of its essence. The cultural norm incorporates expectations, requirements and prescriptions, which impose obligations on its members. An Englishman is expected not merely to speak the language of Shakespeare, but also to be white - which imposes problems for men who by birth, language and culture are English, but who by pigmentation, fail to conform to the, expected stereotype. (Gellner, 1994: 42-43)

An important factor drawing deeper boundaries between different regions, groups and nations was the uneven emergence and development of industrialism. This led to “enormous and painful frictions and conflict [...] between more and less developed populations.” (Gellner, 1994: 43). As it becomes more and more difficult for less developed areas to compete with the more economically advanced ones, the former often resort to politics of isolationism which is viewed as more favorable to their growth, especially more advantageous to local elites.

Another phenomenon triggered by this uneven development is the tendency to minimize costs of production in the more economically advanced areas by importing massively cheap labour force from less developed areas. But the workers arrived from poorer countries have often had to face difficulty adapting to the employing countries and discrimination, being regarded as “culturally distinguishable pariahs”, which further pushed many of them to criminal activities that reinforced prejudice against entire communities of newcomers. “The resulting situation strengthens nationalist sentiments amongst both populations” (Gellner, 1994: 43).

Gellner emphasizes the necessity to accept that in the contemporary world “the appeal of cultural ('ethnic') identity is not a delusion” and it is necessary to try and understand its roots rather than unrealistically attempt to dismiss it “either by sheer good will and the preaching of a spirit of universal brotherhood, or by the incarceration of the extremists”. (Gellner, 1994: 46). More than three decades ago, Gellner saw some hope however in the “diffusion of economic prosperity,” which was likely to reduce the tensions resulting from the vehemence in the affirmation of ethnic feelings or nationalist sentiments. Those hopes and pronouncements were stated in specific historic circumstances. Since then, the collapse of the Communist state system, of the USSR itself, and the wars in former Yugoslavia have further complicated the

nationalist picture and its trends, for the better or for the worse. As already mentioned in this article, the special case of the UK, with the resurgence of nationalism on the occasion of, and in the aftermath of, the 2016 Referendum, is worth consideration, in relation to other important developments such as the rise of populism in both developed and developing nations.

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SELLING SHORT THE AMERICAN DREAM: ARTHUR MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

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Abstract: *The 1950s and early 1960s in the US are usually seen as an age of conformity. Mainstream America is affluent and vacillates between indulgence in consumerism and the anxiety that the impending confrontation with the Soviet Union produces, considering the possibility of Mutually Assured Destruction by nuclear weapons. This anxiety is also linked to such forms of response to the ideological rival as the anti-Communist witch trials of the McCarthy years. The current article places Arthur Miller in the context of his age, among the minority of artists and thinkers that are critical of the Establishment culture which manufactures consent. Two notable illustrations of his artistic discontent are *The Crucible*, a play which is a more than indirect allusion to the anti-Communist hysteria of the time, and *Death of a Salesman*. The latter play provides the scope for a discussion of the inability of some ordinary citizens to cope with the elusive American Dream.*

Keywords: *American dream; the Salem witch trials; tragedy of the common man.*

Ranked with Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams as one of the three classic pillars of 20th century American theater, Arthur Miller can also be seen in connection with the post-war age of anxiety and discontent, in such company as Edward Albee the dramatist, but also Allen Ginsberg and the other rebels of the conformist 1950s and early 1960s. The connection with the age is clearly marked through such plays as *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*, the latter a veiled allusion to the McCarthy anti-Communist witch hunt of the 1950s. At that time, the core myth of what was developing as American Identity, the American Dream, was both coming true for some successful mainstream individuals and was being critically reconsidered by a minority of thinkers and artists.

Arthur Miller's dramatic work is particularly relevant to the time of discontent of the post-war age. His public posture as a committed intellectual highlights the responsibility of artists in what Enoch Brater, in his tribute to Miller, calls America "a changing and always volatile society" (Brater 2005: ix).

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Like many 20th century dramatists looking back in time to more heroic stages, Miller will equally try to deal with tragedy and its ironies in both *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. If Willy Loman is a low man, he ironically appears to aspire to a tragic condition, the tragedy of the common man, toward the end of *Death of a Salesman*. Contradictions and their attending ironies are present not only at character level, with Willy Loman figuring prominently here in *Death of a Salesman*. There is more than a salesman here, and the figures of several generations of business people and of their business ventures reflect developments in America leading to the post-war corporate culture that a number of thinkers wrote about at the time C.Wright Mills's *The Power Elites*, is a good case in point, while Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* exposes the business culture and its dangers to ordinary citizens. Brenda Murphy makes a very perceptive remark to that effect, linking ordinary Americans to the predicament of Miller central character in his best-known play: "In the character of Willy Loman, Arthur Miller has established a metonymic representation of the contradictory beliefs and value-systems that were at the heart of American business culture in the decade after World War II" (Murphy 2007: 107).

Is there the possibility of human redemption in such trying times, referring to both Willy Loman and Proctor (in *The Crucible*), but also to people who betrayed themselves and their colleagues in the conformist 1950s? Steven R. Centola appears to answer in the affirmative, as far as both of the above-mentioned of Miller's characters are concerned (Centola 2010: 75 – 78).

One can safely say that Arthur Miller the discontent was lucky with his first outstanding theatrical success, *Death of a Salesman*. Had he come up with the play one year later or had Joseph McCarthy begun his anti-Communist witch hunt one year earlier, things would have become difficult both for the play and for its author. As it happened, things went more than smoothly for Miller. The play had its first performance in February 1949 in New York, met with laudatory reviews and with a remarkably good audience response as well. The play's success earned its author *The Pulitzer Prize*, the *New York Drama Critics Circle Award*, the *Theater Club Award*, and a *Tony Prize* (Abbotson 2007:11). The play's considerable commercial success as well as the sudden fame that it brought Miller also gave its author the necessary material independence to be able to voice his discontent openly.

Death of a Salesman was also seen as opening new perspectives for American theater, bringing together in its dramatic formula comedy, poetry, tragedy, to which a strong dose of realism and elements of expressionism were added. From the beginning, Miller, in his advocacy

of the tragedy and the common man theatrical formula, was willing to bring forth his equally critical, equally progressive views on American politics and American theater alike. He was thus joining a number of sociologists, philosophers, poets and novelists, most of whom are examined in this dissertation, in showing the dark side of the American Dream in the age of conformism and consent of the long 1950s, once again borrowing Keith Booker's famous phrase from his volume, *The Post-Utopian Imagination*.

The play's complete title is *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem*. The certain private conversations of the title obviously allude to the family debates in which Willy Loman is the central figure, but it also refers to the major character speaking to himself, reviving scenes from the past, while the other Lomans think that the man is hallucinating (which may be seen as true). The play is not set during the Depression years, the time when Arthur Miller's father had experienced the predicament he shares with Willy Loman. However, both the play as a whole and its central character bear the mark of those years as they left a mark on both American culture and on the playwright himself. As John S. Shockley notes about the sudden and enormous popularity of the play among both theatergoers and critics, "All of them seemed to find something of the American creed, and of themselves, in the play" (Shockley 2007: 79).

An American family story

The sound of a flute introduces Act One of *Death of a Salesman*, thus operating what in a written narrative would be a flashback. The mysterious music turns out to send Willy Loman back to his childhood years when he, in the company of his father and older brother were traveling in a wagon across America. As the sound of the flute fades, the setting allows one to see that beyond the transparent coordinates of the Lomans' house one can discern that large apartment houses have almost crushed Willy Loman's modest abode. Symbolically, the individual is seen, from the beginning, suffocated by the advance of material progress in prosperous post-war America. Either he becomes one of the numerous organization men, having a job in a large corporation and obeying orders or he will have to vanish.

The first move in the action of the play shows elderly Willy Loman returning home. It will turn out that he is sixty-three years old, but he is desperately playing his role of a traveling salesman, always on the road. Willy admits that he is exhausted and that he had to stop and

return home rather than going to his business destination. In the subsequent sections of the play, Willy will commute between the present and past scenes of his life, which will gradually explain his current failure to cope with life. On the stage, his travels into the past will be achieved by means of one particular section of the stage where previous actions and situations will be revived, while the other character in the present will be unaware of that.

Willy's wife Linda is worried seeing the state her husband is in and entreats him to ask his boss to give him a desk job. Willy is delusional, insisting that he is essential in his capacity of a traveling salesman, that customers are awaiting him. He then asks about his two sons, as the older brother, Biff has returned home after a long absence and Happy, the younger one, is anxious to communicate with the long estranged brother. For the time being, the two brothers are asleep.

It appears that there has been a serious communication gap between Biff and his father over the years, whose cause will be revealed later in the play. Willy is seen as having an ambivalent, or rather confused, attitude toward his elder son. He first claims that he is lazy to Linda: "The trouble is he's lazy, goddammit" (Miller 1998: 5) then a little later when his younger son hears the loud noise and wakes up Willy tries to convince himself and Happy of the opposite: "There's one thing about Biff – he's not lazy (Miller 1998: 6). Biff, who is now in his mid-thirties, has been away, having worked at a number of manual, low-paying jobs. Biff, his younger brother, is determined to help him get a better occupation now that he is back home. As for Willy, he promises to his wife that he will avoid having an argument with his older son. Willy is still shown talking to himself as he is going to the kitchen to get something to eat, while the action on the stage moves to the section showing the boys' room.

What follows might provide a link between the father's and his sons' failures. Are the sons inheriting their father's flawed vision? The younger Happy is sharing his frustration with Biff about their father's inability to face reality, about his frequent returns to the past, which will become obvious to both the characters on the stage and to the audience. Biff and Happy remember their younger days where their father had encouraged them to use their masculine charms, when the older brother had taught the younger one how to deal with women. Studying is not that important, the boys, like their father, must try to be well-liked by women and people in general.

Although he prefers living and working in the city, Happy encourages his brother Biff to pursue the dream of starting a ranch by first trying to borrow the necessary money from Bill Oliver, his former employer. However, another crack in the house of Loman appears, so to

speak. Biff cannot help remembering how he had improperly taken (not stolen, of course) a carton of basketballs from his employer some time ago. Has Bill Oliver forgotten the incident and will he trust Biff with the vital loan? One feels tempted to doubt that. Deceit and self-deception seem to be shared by the father and by his sons, and more details will reinforce this impression, while Willy Loman loudly speaking to himself downstairs keeps disturbing the two brothers' conversation in the bedroom upstairs.

The focus now moves downstairs to Willy Loman and his imaginary incursions into the past, which will provide more evidence about the mistakes of the past and their impact on the present. Bill remembers proudly watching his teenage boys cleaning his car and himself almost encouraging Biff for having stolen a football from school. Since he is a good American football player, the stolen object is more useful for Biff than for the school in general. He also advises him not to make any serious commitments to the women he dates. Willy at that time was dreaming of having his own business. Although his neighbor Charley has one, his prospects are bad, Willy claims, because he is not "well-liked."

Charley's son Bernard is shown warning his classmate Biff that he is likely to fail math because of his lack of interest in it. He runs the risk of failing to graduate. Willy and Biff pay scant attention to such a detail. Willy encourages his son: he is good-looking and "well-liked" by the football fans, boys and girls alike. He will succeed in life. Biff's dream is to get a football scholarship from a university, but he neglects the fact that in order to enroll, he will have to graduate. It is implied that he did not graduate.

Linda interrupts Willy's daydreaming, hears that her husband has barely sold as much as to pay for their bills, while the salesman suspects that people like him less these days, while showing respect for this neighbor Charley. By way of consolation, Linda tries to lift his spirits, saying once again that he is the most good-looking man in the world. At this moment, the light on the two spouses fades, and Willy is brought back in the past by the laughter of a woman, who will turn out to be the traveling salesman's mistress. The woman was a secretary who had helped Willy with his sales, by putting him in contact with potential buyers. The woman's constant laughter from the past disturbs Willy's guilt-ridden mind and he shouts back to the past, trying to silence the woman.

The next move and the accompanying stage light focus on Linda and Charley's studious son Bernard back into another past scene. They are aware that Biff does not study for school. He deals improperly with girls, drives his father's car without a driving license, steals things.

Hearing them, Willy is outraged: all this has nothing to do with his paternal influence. Happy comes to calm down his father, who tells him about Ben. Willy's older brother Ben had discovered a diamond mine when he was 21, thus becoming immensely rich. Willy is now sorry he had not followed his brother on his straight journey to success and riches. Relying on good luck and good looks in one's quest for a diamond mine is an unconvincing version of the American Dream. So is Biff's idea of borrowing a lot of money and starting a ranch that will make him rich in no time. Like father, like son. Michelle Nass rhetorically asks herself, "Does Arthur Miller present an achievable American Dream in his play?" (Nass 48). Such rhetorical questions are normally followed by a negative answer.

More scenes from the past interrupt the family's doings, completing the picture of Willy's pathetic failure, the bad advice and the bad examples he had given his sons. When Biff joins his mother in an effort to find out what is wrong with his father, Linda reproaches the son for becoming estranged from his father. She considers that his alienation and lack of communication with Willy is at the root of the father's decay. What she does not know, and Biff will not tell him, will appear in a subsequent scene in which very young Biff catches his father in the red with his mistress. Linda keeps telling her sons to show their father more respect, aware that something terrible is happening to him: he seem to have come close to several road accidents and he is hiding a piece of rubber tubing in the garage. She suspects that Willy has suicidal thoughts. The two sons agree that they have to handle their father more carefully in the future to avoid a terrible situation.

When Willy joins the rest of the family, Biff tries to cheer his father up, telling him about his plan to borrow money from Bill Oliver and to own and run a sporting-goods shop with his brother. Willy, unaware of Oliver's opinion of Biff, is happy at the idea. To keep him in high spirits, Happy declares his intention to get married, an unbelievable undertaking that nobody takes very seriously. The first act ends with Willy going to bed while remembering his older son's greatest achievement ever: his contribution to the winning of the high school football contest. In the meantime, Biff goes to the garage in order to take the rubber tube out of harm's way.

The second act begins the next morning with Willy and his wife having breakfast together and looking confidently toward a possibly auspicious future. Willy is determined to turn a new leaf. He is going, on Linda's advice, to ask for a better desk job position in the corporation for which he has been working for so long. Howard Wagner, his boss, turns a deaf ear to him, showing him in exchange a new gadget he has bought for his family: a new and

expensive tape recorder (the year is 1948). As for Willy, he has no available job for him, he claims. Willy desperately evokes to his boss the man who had inspired him when he was young, Dave Singleman. The name is obviously symbolic. Like Willy's father who had lived on his own, making flutes and successfully making a living selling them, Singleman had been a popular, well-liked salesman who had lived his whole life on the road. Like him, Willy says, he had spent his whole life serving his boss, a claim which does not seem to impress Wagner. What is more, he fires Willy, advising him to look for assistance from his grown up sons.

Willy goes to his neighbor Charley's office where the secretary is alarmed at hearing the elderly man talking to himself. She calls Bernard, Charley's son, now a successful lawyer, to meet Willy. Charley is not an arrogant man and he tries hard to spare Willy, but their discussing reveals how the wrong behavior that both Willy and Biff had led to the failure of the former sports star bright prospects. Charley joins the discussion and, unlike his modest son, he openly shows his paternal satisfaction: Bernard is going to plead his first case in front of the Supreme Court. Although he asks for and receives another small sum from his friend, Willy is too proud to accept a job from someone he has looked down upon for so long. He still hopes that his two sons are on to something big, and is looking forward to meeting them after their encounter with Bill Oliver.

When Willy Loman reaches his sons at the restaurant announcing his latest failure he is so shocked by Biff's own bad news that he goes into complete denial. Several contradictory exchanges follow, alternating between lucidity and denial on all sides, ultimately leading to Willy reliving in the restaurant's washroom the traumatic scene for both himself and for teenage Biff that exposed to the admiring son his father's infidelity with the previously mentioned young lady with the stockings. It thus becomes clear why Biff both broke with his father and what probably ruined his feeble effort to pass his Math exam at that particular time. Willy has been trying hard to push this shameful episode into his unconscious. Now the repressed is coming back, again and again, more and more clearly.

After the unhappy episode at the restaurant, Biff and Happy spend some time before arriving home. Linda is scolding her sons for their lack of consideration for their father, Happy accepts the criticism, while Biff is willing to confront his fake of a father. In the meantime, Willy has brought some seeds which he has been planting now, while talking to Ben about his plan to take his life while also cashing in the insurance money. He is planning to simulate a car accident. Gassing himself in the garage would have obviously been suicide, but a car accident

would have brought money to the rest of his family. He imagines for himself a grand funeral like that of his role model, Dave Singleman, one rite of passage that is bound to show to everyone how important he had been. This last fantasy, like everything so far, is based on deception and dishonestly, although Willy, as usual, fails to see that. He has been a salesman that has been selling himself delusory dreams that were doomed to failure. In this imaginary private conversation, brother Ben is skeptical about Willy's pathetic plan: the insurance company might not pay the money, considering the previous road incidents that looked like attempted suicide. Besides, he claims, Biff might consider him a coward, having thus found an easy way out of difficulties. After Ben's apparition vanishes, Biff announces his father that he is leaving. A heated argument ensues, in which accusations and self-accusations follow in quick succession. Willy tries hard to convince himself and Biff that he is not responsible for his son and his sons' failure. Biff, in front of his brother and his son, brutally attempts to make everybody face the facts: they are all worthless, "a dime a dozen" individuals.

The father is unwilling to admit defeat, though. He will later start his car, drive off and crash it in his last, and this time lethal, accident.

Selling and buying the American Dream in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

In the final Requiem, the five people by Willy's grave debate the significance of his death and of his dreams. Ironically, it is the successful Charlie who appears to make some sense of Willy's life and death. He claims that Willie was a great man, as dreams make all the difference to such special people. Whether his claim has any weight is for the audience to decide, to the extent that each individual might identify to some extent with the tragedy of a common man. There is a lot of evidence to contradict such a claim if one remembers that Willy the salesman has been trying to sell to himself and to the others dreams under false pretenses. What he was trying to sell was fake, unfortunately.

John S. Shockley comes up with a peculiar interpretation in his "*Death of a Salesman and American Leadership: Life Imitates Art.*" He makes a connection between Willy's salesmanship and no other than President Ronald Reagan himself. Both of them did (although one must say that Willy mistakenly so) firmly believe in themselves before delivering their goods to the others, the American Dream as they saw it in their own vision:

Both understood that a salesman has got to believe in himself and his product before he can sell it to others. Both were selling themselves and the American dream. Ronald

Reagan, of course, was a salesman for General Electric, “living well electrically” while touting the corporation’s conservative political agenda. But most of all, as he gave “The Speech” to 250,000 GE employees while traveling all over the country, he sold the American Dream (Shockley 2007: 80).

From the vantage point of the 21st century, one may go so far as to add another figure to this illustrious duo. That important person started as an authoritarian figure that sold his popular product to vast American audiences in his capacity to hire and fire as he thought fit. The Apprentice TV series was followed by the Make America Great Again and about a term as President of the United States, where his hire-and-fire technique did not work as well as in his TV series. Like Willy Loman, he failed to sell his dream for a second term, although some of his stories still appeal to a number of devoted fans.

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TRAUMATIC MEMORY AND ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION IN VONNEGUT'S *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* AND HELLER'S *CATCH-22*

Florian Andrei Vlad¹

Abstract: *The two novels and the two authors display remarkable similarities. Both authors had trouble turning their war experience into fiction, and trauma theories are able to shed light on the ways in which memory and artistic representation work together to come up with outstanding narratives. The two books artistically transform such traumatic episodes as the fire-bombing of Dresden for Vonnegut's novel and the helplessness of a war comrade witnessing his friend's death in the air during a flying combat mission in Heller's book. Both in the case of the "traumatized" authors themselves and in the case of the two novels' protagonists, the distinction that LaCapra makes between acting out and working through while addressing the impact of trauma is worth considering. What follows will focus on the relevance of aspects of traumatic experience and their artistic reflection in these two novels, both at character level and at the more general level of the narrative.*

Keywords: *trauma; acting out; working through; postmodernism; the absurd; satire; anti-hero.*

War, trauma, Heller, Vonnegut

There are many ways in which Heller's and Vonnegut's best-known books can be linked to each other and to significant episodes in America's 20th century history. One of these ways has not been explored much, as other authors and texts were considered more relevant to that perspective. This approach has been offered since the 1980s and 1980s in literary studies under the name of Trauma Theory or Trauma Studies, in the wake of previous Freudian and post Freudian research going back to the end of the 19th century. In literary investigations from the end of the 20th century and into the third millennium, the focus has been on expressions of cultural trauma in the wake of the Holocaust but also in the wake of slavery in America's history.

Joseph Heller is of Jewish American descent, while Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is a fourth-generation German American, as he advertises himself in the long title of his *Slaughterhouse – Five*. Apparently, in terms of ethnicity, they have no traumatic experience to share. However, World War II interweaves their traumatic experiences, as illustrated by their best-known books, *Catch – 22* and *Slaughterhouse – Five* in very definite ways.

The two novels were written by World War II veterans. Although inspired by their respective authors' war experience, they were not completed and published in the immediate aftermath of that war. Thus, they did not artistically exploit the formidable reality they were responding to for an audience that was still affected by the cataclysmic events of a historic

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development in which America had successfully played the important role of the savior of the world. Not artistically exploiting that moment, as it will be seen, was fortunate for the final design and for the ultimate reception of the two novels. Arguably, the novels were not written for those who witnessed or went through that war but, as it will turn out, for their children or for those that would be called the baby boomers of the post-war age.

The writing of the two novels took a lot of time, largely because of the traumatic impact that the war experience had on the future novelists. The long period of artistic gestation was finally beneficial to the two texts, as they were published after a succession of important national and international developments and they addressed a new generation, likely to read them with different eyes from those of their predecessors' eyes. Both Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Heller's *Catch – 22* are seen by many as the two authors' masterpieces, although they emerge from the ashes of their wartime experience. The two narratives artistically transform such traumatic episodes as the fire-bombing of Dresden for Vonnegut's novel and the helplessness of a war comrade witnessing his friend's death in the air in Heller's book. What follows will focus on the relevance of aspects of traumatic experience and their reflection in these two novels. Reading the two texts in close relation, as the current article invites everyone to do, in their various contexts, but from the perspective of contemporary trauma theory studies, can shed more light on each of them. The focus here is on ways in which trauma is experienced by Vonnegut the war veteran, Vonnegut the author, and Billy Pilgrim the traumatized protagonist, with Joseph Heller the war veteran and author, with his protagonist Yossarian, ready to bear testimony, if necessary, in the second section of this text.

A short outline of historical and theoretical contexts of trauma

Although the record of traumatic experiences caused by both human and natural factors go back in time several millennia, what is relevant to a discussion of Vonnegut's and Heller's war experiences and the artistic expressions of them comes from more recent times. The two devastating world wars were the major causes of trauma becoming central in human experience. Post – Traumatic Stress Disorder was initially identified as shell – shock on a larger scale than the previous instances of trauma among the select group of female upper-class patients of such therapists as young Sigmund Freud in Habsburg Vienna. The individual cases of PTSD were to be added to the colossal trauma caused by such weapons of mass destruction as the gas chambers in the Nazi extermination camps or the firebombings of large cities by conventional weapons or by the atomic bomb. Holocaust Studies took some time before turning into an important field of inquiry, but its seeds were there all right. The survivors of traumatic experiences had to find ways to cope with their deranged lives, and so had the therapist and the specialists who became interested in describing and dealing with the consequences of trauma.

The most important context for the study of trauma is that of medical specialists in the fields of surgery and psychology, psychiatry, public health, even ophthalmology. This goes on to show that trauma (etymologically, “wound”) affects both the body and the mind of individuals, but also whole communities, cultural trauma thus featuring very prominently in times of crisis like wars and epidemics/ pandemics. In the field of literary and cultural studies, Holocaust Studies in particular, then trauma studies in general, have been addressing large scale traumatic experiences, including the 9/11 episodes. Apart from the already mentioned Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, with his reinterpretation of the *acting out* vs. *working through*

distinction as specific responses to trauma, as well as such scholars as E. Ann Kaplan and Judith Herman have given substance to the interdisciplinary field.

The first feature that appears to shed light on the way the two authors shape their narratives in relation to trauma they themselves experienced and to the characters and plot structure of their novels may be traced to Freud. Cathy Caruth, in one of the seminal texts inhabiting Trauma Studies at the end of the previous millennium, especially since the 1980s, notes this important feature. In her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Caruth notes that “Freud wonders at the peculiar and sometimes uncanny way in which catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for those who have passed through them” (Caruth 1996: 1). These obsessive repetitions appear to be escaping the victim’s rational control, somehow representing some kind of blind fate, a series of traumatic episodes that take control of their helpless victim.

Freud refers to literary expressions of this symptom in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*, but these obsessive, hallucinatory repetitions are also to be traced to real individual and collective trauma in both *Slaughterhouse – Five* and *Catch- 22*.

Vonnegut’s and Heller’s best-known novels have more in common than authors as war veterans or books with numerals in their short titles. A series of general readers and critics alike have read and interpreted the two novels within the framework provided by postmodern theories proclaiming the skepticism, the “incredulity toward metanarratives”(Lyotaard 1979: 259) that is typical of certain members of developed Western societies since the second half of the 20th century. Eagleton appears to distrust the concept and what it denotes, considering that “a lot of postmodernism is politically oppositional but economically complicit” (Eagleton 1996:132).

Brian McHale, in *his Postmodernist Fiction*, first drew attention to how unproblematic, how unsatisfactory the concept of postmodernism had been. In the same breath, he quotes Richard Kostelanetz (“No genuine avant-garde artist would want to be “post” anything”), John Barth, who finds the term “awkward and faintly epigonic” and Charles Newman, for whom the concept “inevitably calls to mind a band of vainglorious contemporary artists following the circus elephants of Modernism with snow shovels” (McHale 2004: 3). McHale then goes on to come up with his own view on postmodernism, which gives the concept some respectability, thus contributing to the seriousness with which two apparently very funny novels, such as Heller’s and Vonnegut’s, deal with fundamental, existential issues. Brian McHale starts from the concept used by Jurij Tynjanov, but advertised and made known by Roman Jakobson, the concept of the dominant. This is the defining component of a literary text that determines and shapes the other components. He then compares the dominants of modernist and of postmodernist fiction. He claims that “modernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as [...] “How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?”, epistemological questions, while postmodernism’s dominant is ontological or “post-cognitive”: “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?” (McHale 2004: 10). Taking these questions very seriously, partially accepting Eagleton’s statement that postmodernism is (at least) politically oppositional, one can safely say that a combined framework accommodating issues from postmodernism and trauma theories provides an adequate starting point for an examination of the two “post-traumatic novels” and of the postmodern condition that they critically engage with.

A generic starting point for *Slaughterhouse - Five*: the science fiction connection

McHale's post-cognitive, postmodern questions about the puzzlement, the confusion about the kind of world one lives in and about what is to be done about it apparently redeems the subgenre or genre of science fiction from a far from respectable drawer in the realm of literature, which thus throws a favorable light on *Slaughterhouse – Five*. The complete title of the novel, spanning the whole title page, appears to take the content of what follows very lightly, at least at first sight, combining different tones and perspectives, with SF as one of the key ingredients. Out of a context, the novel will depict a “children’s crusade,” not a major world war about glamorous heroes about to decide the fate of humankind for a long time to come. In several sentences, arranged graphically in the way initiated by Guillaume Apollinaire in his *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War 1913-1916*, Vonnegut describes his own artistic confrontation with another war as authored by

A fourth-generation German-American/ now living in easy circumstances/ on Cape Cod/
[and smoking too much], /who, as an American infantry scout/ hors de combat, /as a
prisoner of war, /witnessed the fire-bombing /of Dresden, Germany, /"The Florence of
the Elbe,"/ a long time ago, /and survived to tell the tale (Vonnegut 2000:1).

Vonnegut then moves from the documentary dimension to the wildly fictional, in which science fiction features prominently. He thus goes on to metafictionally comment on the style and genre of a book, obviously referring to the way in which he engages with established science – fiction conventions, as well as to the pacifist message which is likely to emerge: “This is a novel/ somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic/ manner of tales/ of the planet Tralfamadore,/ where the flying saucers/ come from. / Peace.” (Vonnegut 2000: 1).

Vonnegut’s 1969 fiction was initially seen as a continuation in a series of novels that had been less focused upon by critics before *Slaughterhouse – Five*’s spectacular rise to fame. He had been dismissed as a second-rate writer of science fiction, as the author humorously notes in the reminiscences included in *Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon: Opinions* (1974). Vonnegut recounts how he had a job for General Electric in Schenectady, with sophisticated machinery all around him, often getting the best of the people attending to them. This set the future author thinking of exploring the consequences of such situations becoming even more serious in the future in a kind of narrative that he soon discovered was far from “respectable”: “And I learned from the reviewers that I was a science-fiction writer. I have been a soreheaded occupant of a file drawer labeled ‘science fiction’ ever since, and I would like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal” (Vonnegut 1974: 1). In what is to follow, the science fiction ramblings of the narrative and of the protagonists are placed in a more comprehensive context than the one evoked by the author himself in the quote above, a context which is entirely justified by the overall design of a novel expressing in creative ways the intersection of fiction and trauma theory.

Adding trauma theory and contemporary history to SF

The “schizophrenic, telegraphic style,” which will be reflected in a disorderly narrative, creates the impression of meaninglessness, the lack of linked cause and effect. Apparently, there is no character development, although the novel reads easily. It is, quite unexpectedly, extremely funny, enjoyable in spite of the horrible historical moment focused upon, at least for the young

generation of baby boomers that enthusiastically responded to it in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

But is there chaos or deliberate pattern in the narrative, even if the title advocates a schizophrenic style? As the narrator claims from the very beginning of the second chapter of the novel, the first one focusing on Billy Pilgrim, he has “come unstuck in time,” or at least that is what he claims, the narrative voice does not fail to add. As a consequence, Billy thinks that he travels in time, periodically revisiting both his traumatic wartime experiences and his post-war life in America. To all this time travelling one should also add Billy’s science fiction experience of the planet Tralfamadore, where the flying saucers come from. All this invites the consideration of Dominick LaCapra’s reworking of psychoanalytical and deconstructive ideas in his *Writing History, Writing Trauma* and his examination of the effect of trauma on one’s sense of self and of one’s “being in time.” Here follows how he starts from undecidability and difference to link it to the defense mechanisms, to the confusion of self and other and in the consequences that follow:

undecidability and unregulated difference, threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions, including that between present and past, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and in post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes - scenes in which the past returns (LaCapra 2014: 21).

This is what will happen both in Vonnegut’s novel and in Heller’s. The past will be chaotically relived or, better said, the protagonists will be, in LaCapra’s words, “haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes - scenes in which the past returns,” as the quote above claims. It remains to be seen whether trauma is to be examined at the level of the author or only at the level of its protagonist.

From the very beginning, from the very title, the documentary and the highly speculative, the science fiction dimensions are brought together, to be dealt with throughout the text. The last word of the long title conveys the anti-war message, and firmly places the book in the age in which it was first released, at the core of the time of the American engagement in the Vietnam War. Donald J. Greiner does not take the novel’s message lightly, tending to see the book as less wildly humorous than his previous ones: “Significantly, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, although funny, is not as wildly humorous as his previous fiction. The lack of outrageous comedy is not a flaw but rather a comment upon how deeply Vonnegut feels about the bombing of Dresden” (Greiner 112). One feels tempted to argue with Greiner. The outrageous comedy is there all right, but the pattern in which it is shaped is obviously affected by a traumatic memory which is consistently trying to come up with a coherent narrative.

The circumstances surrounding Vonnegut’s novel’s publication are dramatically recounted in the second of the autobiographic sections, the last unit of the book, Chapter 10. They are equally traumatic both at the strict family level of the bereaved, but also at national level, combining personal and national trauma. They are the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and of Martin Luther King within a few weeks, and the painful prolongation of the unpopular military intervention in Vietnam, with a succession of full body bags returning to America. All

these episodes evoke the national trauma that a large section of the American population experienced.

Both the firebombing Dresden experience and the traumatic experiences of the 1960s surrounding the novel's publication are likely to lead to the "patient" having his memory blocked by the detachment mechanism that dissociates the traumatic narrative from reality. Traumatic memories can be totally blocked, but they can also be dramatically altered, assuming sometimes unexpected shape. Vonnegut speaks both about the difficulty of recovering a coherent, meaningful narrative that might be his book on Dresden as well as about the devastating effect that trauma exerted both on himself and on the book, "a book written by a pillar of salt." In the first, autobiographical chapter, Vonnegut compares God's firebombing of the depraved Gomorrah and Sodom in the Old Testament to his own experience of the firebombing of "the Florence of the Elbe" in February 1945. In an ironic postmodern gesture, Vonnegut identifies with Lot's disobedient wife, which explains the shape of a text written by a pillar of salt, a metaphor which aptly describes the paralysis of traumatized minds to make sense of their catastrophic experiences:

Those were vile people in both those cities, as is well known. The world was better off without them. And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she *did* look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human. So she was turned to a pillar of salt. So it goes (SF 18).

From the beginning, the author, in a very surprising manner, "sells" his book as a failure. Obsessively, the narrative represents all kinds of failures, in keeping with the content and style he adopts. It is about the condition of ordinary people subjected to trauma and their inability to assert their agency. However, the novel is also a "literary document" about how two entities, a real author and a fictional character, deal with trauma in their different ways. Vonnegut will come up with a work in which the postmodern trappings having to do with style and perspective are genuinely motivated by the apocalyptic experience that led to the genesis of the text (in another postmodern ironical tone, one might say that Vonnegut starts with Apocalypse, his experience of destruction and special revelation, and ends up with the genesis of a creative text, that combines acting out and working through perspectives. For his own part, Billy Pilgrim will play more than the role of a pathetic patient. He survives the firebombings in Dresden at the end of the war, but is also the only miraculous survivor of a plane crash in postwar America. The combined trauma of the two events obviously leaves an indelible trace on his mind. He then comes across the novels of Kilgore Trout, the unsuccessful SF writer, and becomes an ardent SF fan. As a consequence of the Dresden experience and of the plane crash to which SF perspectives are added, Billy Pilgrim develops his own response to trauma. He becomes a postmodern, SF pilgrim, traveling in space and time, learning from the Tralfamadorians very special ways to make sense of life on Earth. Instead of paralysis, his trauma experience leads to very postmodern revelations that the novel ironically displays.

From the absurd to trauma

Shape and content associated with the war experience and traumatic memory link Vonnegut and Joseph Heller. The latter's *Catch-22* was his artistic response to first-hand experience that he acquired as a young combat bombardier, having had sixty sorties before he was honorably discharged. Heller's squadron was based in the Mediterranean, like that of the protagonist of the novel, Captain Yossarian. Although Heller claimed that at first flying war missions was OK with him, something he did not specify made him change his mind. One can only guess that it was a traumatic experience which is not initially mentioned in *Catch-22* and which haunts the whole novel, contributing to the chaotic perspective on the perception of war as insanity. Like Vonnegut's novel, Heller's text is more than an anti-war novel. It appears to be an artistic response to something far from artistic, constantly being represented as meaningless. *Catch-22*'s crazy satiric vision appears to address war, business, politics, in the kind of incredulity toward metanarratives comparable to that of *Slaughterhouse – Five*. This would run counter to modernist interpretations of the novel, such as that by Jon Woodson, who thinks that "Heller interrogates but the mythological and psychological meaning of war both in individual and collective terms at a particular moment in the evolution of Western culture"(Woodson 2001: 103). It is obvious that the author sets the protagonist's private traumatic experience against a vast background, in which both war and business are central, but his is far from the mythic method usually associated with such modernist giants as James Joyce or T.S. Eliot. His is, arguably, a combined pattern of irony and satire, a dialog with the vision of the absurd, in which trauma acquires prominence.

Before satire becomes apparent, it is the chaos and absurdity that one is likely to associate with the theatre of the absurd, a connection that Barbara Lupack does not fail to make. She sees the disorderly configuration of scenes and events as echoing "the discordance inherent in the reality of the human condition" and "using absurdist drama as a model"(Lupack 1995: 32).

Catch – 22 employs, like *Slaughterhouse – Five*, a multitude of incomplete flashbacks that initially offer misleading, comic, absurd clues about the key scenes of the narrative. These will later be completed with significant details, the previous scenes initially perceived as farcical and absurd reinterpreted and leading to a very serious, dramatic human situation. The successive shifts in point of view from apparently omniscient at first, with a very crazy figure being highlighted to a complex of unreliable, omniscient, and focused narrative on different other characters as well makes all the difference. The shifting of narrative perspectives, as well as the pulverization of the narrative and the attending destruction of any idea of discernible series of cause and effect can be seen, on a second, more critical reading of the novel, as a way to represent the shattering that trauma has exerted on the world view of the person (both the author as a person and the fictional character) experiencing it. It turns out that both Heller and Vonnegut attempted to, and succeeded in, articulating an initially puzzling, chaotic literary landscape, at the same time using this apparently confusing fictional formula to create the effect of trauma exerted on the victims of both individual and collective catastrophic episodes.

Working through trauma in *Catch - 22*

Yossarian and Billy Pilgrim appear to be very different from the beginning. Billy is a pathetic pawn, a Private First Class, unaware of the big power games controlling his humble existence. He is one of the countless children in a crusade that he does not understand, until the effect of trauma and science fiction turn him into an ironic prophet of the wisdom of Tralfamadore. Unlike him, Yossarian in *Catch - 22* initially appears to assume a higher status. He is a combat airman in a squadron temporarily based on the fictitious and fictional island of Pianosa during the all-too-real Second World War. Although not explicitly shown first, at the beginning of the text, not of the story, Yossarian has already done more than his share of the war effort. He has already flown 4 missions more than the required number of 40 that the Twenty-Seventh Army Air Force command requires of its airmen. The readers do not know yet, but they will learn at last, what is the traumatic experience that haunts Yossarian, prompting him to behave very strangely. The squadron head, Colonel Cathcart, seeks promotion by getting his people to go on risking death, and sometimes dying, in more and more missions. Yossarian has already decided that his worst enemies are his superiors, such as the colonel, not the Germans that he had kept bombing in more and more missions, that he will be required to keep bombing each time the number of mission is raised: 45, 50, 55, 60, and so on *ad infinitum*.

After the initial perception (in the text, not in the story) of him feigning illness and spending time in hospital rather than fighting, Yossarian eventually rises in terms of moral stature. The last-but-one chapter chronologically predates the other narrative sequences of the novel and provides the climactic scene that reveals the horror of Snowden's painful dying moments at the time of one of the flying missions. In those traumatic moments Yossarian's previous fits of madness are eventually being made sense of, as an idiosyncratic answer to a meaningless and malevolent world. It is his initial rebellious response to authority.

Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn consider Yossarian's rebellion dangerous, as his example might contaminate the other airmen. They want to make a deal with Yossarian. The two shrewd officers will give Yossarian the option of leaving the scene "honorably," asking him in exchange for a very small favor. He can choose to accept promotion major and subsequent honourable discharge without the need of additional combat missions. Yossarian will only have to publicly "like" them and show his acceptance of their authority for a brief space of time.

Yossarian hesitates, then he will turn down the offer. He is now conscious that he has rebelled against a hostile system that endangers all airmen's lives and despises their dignity. Accepting the individual deal involves becoming the accomplice of the enemy of his comrades, thus legitimating through his submission their authority. No more missions for him, but more and more missions for his war buddies, who would no longer think about his initial gesture of resistance.

Instead of being promoted to major and getting an honourable discharge, but thus abandoning his comrades, Yossarian considers another gesture of rebellion: desertion. He chooses to paddle his way in an inflatable boat from the middle of the Mediterranean all the way to Sweden, which is obviously possible only in an ironic situation in a work of fantasy sold as a war or anti – war novel.

United in their creative, satirical work on trauma: Vonnegut and Heller

By the unusual denouement, Yossarian also acquires a considerable moral status in a novel in which he was initially seen as an anti – hero. If Simmons had seen Yossarian as another prominent illustration of the anti-hero, in tandem with Billy Pilgrim (Simmons 2008), the protagonist’s newly acquired moral status allows him to preside over an an effective satire of both the corporate world (the strange story of Milo Minderbinder the petty military figure having become a big business tycoon) but also of the absurdity and meaningless of wars.

In his survey of the reception of Kurt Vonnegut’s fiction, Klinkowitz refers to Broer’s *Sanity Plea: Schizophrenia in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*, whose comment aptly refers to the function of fiction for the survivor of a traumatic event, for whom the use of the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse – Five*, as well as the plot, are also ways of overcoming the terror of history. Broer, he notes, sees Billy Pilgrim “as a tendency Vonnegut has first externalized and then excised from himself, making his writing of the novel a form of self-therapy” (Klinkowitz 2011: 29). This perfectly applies to what Joseph Heller does in his own confrontation with his own trauma in *Catch – 22*. What LaCapra calls *working through* is what both Vonnegut and Heller do in the two respective war novels with a difference. They both add the satiric dimension to turn individual experience into texts of wider significance and relevance. However, if Billy Pilgrim is a good illustration of *acting out* and of the anti-hero, Heller’s Yossarian moves from the initial perception of an anti-hero to that of a hero transcending genres and trends, refusing a postmodern label, sending messages reminding one of the importance of grand narratives and of the values and beliefs that they used to convey.

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Book review: Florian Andrei Vlad on Oana-Celia Gheorghiu's *British and American Representations of 9/11: Literature, Politics and the Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Oana-Celia Gheorghiu's well-documented book-length investigation of British and American literary representations of 9/11 places fiction within the more comprehensive framework announced by the title of her very perceptive work. Adopting a new historicist approach, Dr. Gheorghiu examines the interweaving of significant discourses that encode 9/11 in literary texts, in the media, in relation to emerging ideological reconfigurations. In the opinion of the author of the volume, the fiction that she investigates does not limit itself to indulging in technical acrobatics and postmodern pastiches of political and media discourses and artistically repackaging them as mere alternative worlds. They appear to strive to compete and engage in a dynamic dialog and confrontation with political and media discourse, contributing their perspectives to what appears to become, increasingly, more and more unreal and representational.

The collection *Literature After 9/11*, edited by Keniston and Follansbee Quinn, featuring essays, novels, poetry and witness accounts, Dr. Gheorghiu notes, anticipates, but not very convincingly stresses, the link between non-fiction and fiction in the representation of 9/11. Kristiaan Versluys's *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (Columbia University Press) follows a perspective that has become important in the literature under investigation in Dr. Gheorghiu's volume, driven by trauma studies, in which what has been deemed inexpressible and unrepresentable by others is addressed by means of allegory and indirection. Versluys balances his emphasis on the shock of trauma in the first part of his book to the representation of the experience of otherness, which is just as relevant from a cultural point of view, while firmly believing in the healing powers of the narrative. Gheorghiu obviously shares Versluys's opinion that the intensity of trauma in such novels as Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* or DeLillo's *Falling Man* is less impressive, although artistically commendable, than the first-hand accounts of witnesses of the dramatic event, which explains the relatively limited space that the author of *British and American Representations of 9/11* devotes to the two novels. Another significant reference volume noted by the author is Tim Gauthier's 2015 volume *Fiction, Empathy and Otherness*, which moves from the empathic experience of trauma to its perception and representation, a strategy that Gheorghiu largely takes into account in her own work.

Dr. Gheorghiu arrives at the formula that describes her approach, foreshadowed by the title of Chapter 1: Introduction: Towards Another Reading of 9/11 Neorealist Fiction. She notes the return to realism of such acknowledged postmodernists as DeLillo, while the impulse to experiment, to deal with and challenge realism is to be observed in younger writers, such as Foer. In the comprehensive scope of her approach of this neorealist literature, the author does not fail to outline and assess, in this first section of her book, the relevance of a series of trauma-oriented critical works, in addition to postmodern theory and more traditional genre approaches.

Apart from the introductory chapter, advocating neorealism and trauma theory as proper ways into 9/11 representations and outlining significant theoretical works that the author has acknowledged, the volume features two sections. The first section is called "Encoding 9/11 in the Media and the Literary Text," while the second one, like the first part, does what its

respective title claims, examining “Ideological Reconfigurations of Identity in the Literary Representations of 9/11.”

The first part, “Encoding 9/11 in the Media and the Literary Text,” competently interweaves politics, the media and literature in their contribution to the making of history in the current century. It focuses, as the title of the second unit of Part I declares, on “Literary Rewritings of History and Politics After 9/11,” more specifically on Iain Banks’s 2002 novel *Dead Air*, one of the first attempts at fictionally representing the September 11 attacks. The novel, while not topping the best-seller charts of that year, is duly acknowledged and favorably assessed by Dr. Gheorghiu for its engagement with contemporary politics and with the role of the media, the way the two apparently different discourses fictionally rewrite and reinterpret the catastrophic events.

In the second part, “Ideological Reconfigurations of Identity in the Literary Representations of 9/11,” the author goes on to retrace developments in all-encompassing alterity studies aimed at addressing injustice in relation to such sensitive issues as racism, nationalism, sexism affecting the prevailing discourses of politics and the mass media, as well as the literary field. They all contribute to the articulation and dissemination of representations of the contemporary world as significantly marked by divisive ideological confrontations, in which “the Muslim Menace” (a phrase borrowed from Said’s 2003 edition of his classic *Orientalism*) in the War on Terror narrative features in one of the most prominent representations of “extreme otherness.” Oana-Celia Gheorghiu moves from one of the most controversial representations of this hostile otherness, which its author clearly relates to Islamism, not to Islam, Martin Amis’s *The Last Days of Mohamed Atta*, written in the heat of the shock and awe produced by the 9/11 attacks, past DeLillo’s less vitriolic representation of otherness, all the way to “the other side,” so to speak. Toward the end of the continuum rather than the divide, she sympathetically and empathetically examines Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* and, continuing the ideological and literary journey, Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Almost two decades after the dramatic events of September 11, 2001, echoes and repercussions of the collective trauma brought about by that day are still afloat in a very young third millennium. Although an initial response from writers claimed that it is all but impossible to represent the unrepresentable, the apparent meaninglessness of those chaotic moments, fiction writers, journalists, sociologists, politicians and political analysts, historians have invested since then what came to be briefly called “9/11” with particular power dimensions. Oana-Celia Gheorghiu, in her turn, and from the vantage point of the end of the second decade of the present century, defies the unrepresentable through her lucid, but involved scholarly intervention. *British and American Representations of 9/11: Literature, Politics and the Media* is required reading for anyone interested in the literary and extra-literary phenomena linked to an event that dramatically heralded a new age, prompting reappraisals of the world we live in.

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