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# Orienting the Coppolas: A New Approach to U.S. Film Imperialism

AARON NYERGES

Every cultural critic must experience the frustration of encountering an exhausting and exhausted text, one that overruns the interpretive rubric designed to understand it. This article suggests adopting manifold critical models to approach and parse rich textual constructions or tense combinations of texts. The manifold I'm proposing is postcolonial, psychoanalytic and feminist. The combined texts to be appraised are by three members of a well-known Hollywood family, the Coppolas: Francis Ford's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), a loose adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; his wife Eleanor's insightful diary of their family's stay in the Philippines during the making of the film, published under the title *Notes* (1995); and finally their daughter Sophia's *Lost in Translation* (2003), which intensifies yet partially resolves the aesthetic and neo-imperial contradictions that emerge at the junction of the former two.

My conjecture is that wider and more lively landscapes of reading surprisingly elicit far more focused and defensible claims about themselves. A family of texts elucidates all of its members more clearly. Here I mean to define a family of texts without any reference to the supposed biological or social configurations of human family structure or normative 'family values.' Instead, I take a text to be 'familied' with another out of its ability to squabble, to elucidate the limitations and inequities of the other because it secretly or avowedly contains related limitations. Families of texts tie themselves together into a politically directed environment of discursive enunciations that lay bare their internal prejudices and faults as well as those mirrored in the world around them. In the case of the three Coppola texts, the internal structure of each text repeats the structure of the social relations that sustained it.

Widening the ambit to include a family of texts rather than privileging a single text will, I hope, alleviate the fatigue that texts and their readers experience in critical environments overly-saturated by the fascination with

cultural totems like *Apocalypse Now*. By demystifying that filmmaking event, and making its international politics more familiar and even more familial, this multi-generational portrait of the Coppolas will reveal the role cultural history and criticism has played in carrying the processes of American deimperialisation into a pacific century of critical inquiry.

As recently as 2010, Kuan-Hsing Chen, a proponent of situating centres of Asian Studies within Asia itself, complained that the ‘presence of the United States in East Asia as an imperial power has not been seriously taken up as an object of study, and we must try to account for this lack of analysis.’<sup>1</sup> Scholars of American and Asian studies outside of America are uniquely positioned to correct the lack of analysis Chen describes. One way of doing so would be to recognise that the cultural and aesthetic products of the United States, such as those authored by the Coppolas, frequently identify the intrusion of America, both as rhetorical figure and political force, into Asia. Such textual families take imperium as an object of study, and they can study themselves (or fail to) as facilitators of American power’s irresponsible excesses.

For practitioners of American and Asian studies who work toward deimperialising the role of the U.S. in East Asia, recent feminist scholarship has suggested that the family is not only a basic organisational unit of American imperialism, but also a discursive realm where private and public oppressions can be intimately addressed and even resolved.<sup>2</sup> Those ‘foreign affairs’ that produce the lasting guilt and resentment of American colonisation have long depended on the family to advance them and socialise them, and so private affairs both parallel and disrupt the geopolitical machinations of foreign policy. After the work of Mary Ryan and Amy Kaplan, any understanding of American imperialism requires an understanding of American domesticity and the evolving, historical construction of the family. Such a critical perspective displays both Francis’ *Apocalypse Now* and Sofia’s *Lost in Translation* as comprised of internal aesthetic relations that repeat the discursive domestic relations of

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<sup>1</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> For important work in this area see Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity, 1830–1860* (New York: Routledge, 1982); Ella Shohat, ‘Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema’ in *Visions of the East* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Amy Kaplan, ‘Manifest Domesticity,’ in Donald Pease and Kaplan (eds.) *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

the family life that surrounds them. Eleanor's diaries—with their reflections on film theory, housekeeping, historical colonisation, gender oppression, family rearing and travel—provide an indispensable key for uniting the family's film aesthetic to an atmosphere of political oppression that it both internalises and resists.

In early 1977, when the excesses of the *Apocalypse Now* production started to make headlines, Eleanor Coppola sent a telex from San Francisco to the Philippines insulting her husband in light of what she saw as his tyrannical carelessness. She copied the telex to his Director of Photography, Vittorio Storaro, his production manager, his production designer, Dean Tavoularis, and the helicopter pilot coordinating the aerial cinematography, Dick White. The memo suggested that the sycophantic atmosphere around the director, where everyone supported his genius without reservation, was producing a 'kind of franticness,' whereby Francis had lost 'the discrimination that draws the line between what is visionary and what is madness.'<sup>3</sup> More to the point, Eleanor told Francis

what no one else was willing to say, that he was setting up his own Vietnam with his supply lines of wine and steaks and air conditioners. Creating the very situation he went there to expose. That with his staff of hundreds of people carrying out his every request, he was ... going too far. (177)

At first Francis was furious, but, by the time he was introducing *Apocalypse Now* to an audience at Cannes, he had absorbed Eleanor's critique of his megalomania into his own vision of himself. 'My film is not about Vietnam,' he stated: 'it *is* Vietnam.'<sup>4</sup>

Eleanor's contrary telex was aimed at exposing her husband's chauvinist politics—his dictatorial control over an army of cultural industry workers—but if her complaint aims at the national trade hegemony that authorised the hubris he demonstrates at Cannes, it aims too at Francis the husband. Condemning his 'supply lines,' she couches her attack in the vocabulary of foreign affairs, which Francis co-opts in France, while her anger is equally directed at the oppressions of their marital affairs, an issue Francis omits in France. Tellingly, two months after Eleanor's angry, anti-imperial telex, the couple were discussing divorce, and by September

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<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Coppola, *Notes* (New York: Faber, 1995), p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Coppola in Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper, and Eleanor Coppola *Hearts of Darkness: a Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (Paramount Pictures, 1991).

Francis admitted that he ‘was in love with another woman’ (211). While happy to self-publicise as oppressed by his own genius and even as a dictatorial oppressor of his crew, the private oppressions inflicted upon Eleanor are recorded by her diary not by his press conference.

Published in 1995, Eleanor’s *Notes* on the making of *Apocalypse Now* present a fragmented travelogue of her time in postcolonial Philippines. She moved there precisely 30 years after the nation’s full independence from the United States, and 75 years after the American genocide of Filipinos secured it as a colonial possession.<sup>5</sup> That the Coppolas are aware of the bloody history of the Philippine-American War is evident even in *Apocalypse Now*, though obliquely evidenced, by the title of Colonel Kurtz’ Harvard MA Thesis: ‘The Philippines Insurrection: American Foreign Policy in South East Asia, 1898–1902.’ The ‘Philippines Insurrection’ refers to a protracted American occupation of the Islands from 1898 to 1907, during which, in Mark Twain words, ‘Thirty thousand killed a million.’<sup>6</sup> Indeed by 1902 there were 70,000 U.S. troops on the islands, waging a brutal war against a local guerrilla insurrection. Upwards of 1.6 million Filipinas died. The U.S. ignored the Hague convention on humane warfare, using outlawed ‘dum-dum’ bullets, placing civilian populations in *reconcentrato* camps, and torturing captives with the ‘water-cure’ to simulate their drowning.<sup>7</sup>

Though historians tend to mark 1898 as a watershed date that announced the arrival of the U.S. onto the stage of world colonialism, Walter Williams writes, in an essay published the year after *Apocalypse Now* premiered, that the that United States did have a ‘tradition of holding alien peoples as colonial subjects’ well before 1898, and that the brutal annexation of the Philippines needs to be situated in the longer history of

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<sup>5</sup> Luzviminda Francisco, *The Philippines: The End of An Illusion* (London, 1973); William Pomeroy, *American Neo-Colonialism: Its Emergence in the Philippines and Asia* (New York: International Publishers, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> Mark Twain, ‘Thirty Thousand Killed a Million’ in *Mark Twain’s Weapons of Satire: Anti-imperialists Writings on the Philippine-American War* (ed.) Jim Zwick (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Luzviminda Francisco, ‘The First Vietnam’ in *The Philippines Reader: a History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance*. (Boston: South End Press, 1987)

U.S. American Indian Policy.<sup>8</sup> Though Eleanor's diary investigates the repercussions of America's colonial war in the Philippines, Francis' film tends to place Vietnam in the deeper history of the American Indian genocide, especially in the discomfiting USO scene, where the U.S. soldiers gawk at Playboy Playmates of the Year come to comfort them. Dressed as a Cowgirl, an Indian, and a Cavalry Officer, the three playmates fondle M-16s like phalluses. Surrounded by even more obviously phallic rocket cut outs, the audience of American GIs, who are trapped in yet another unfinished project of American imperialism, are distracted and entertained by tokens of preceding historical conflicts, which, from the point of the view of the colonising military, are reassuringly over, present now only in erotic simulation.

However, the scorched earth policy implemented so fiercely in the Philippines (or in the napalming of Vietnam) was first ordered by U.S. commander General George Washington, who ordered John Sullivan to raid and burn Seneca villages in Western New York State. This historical violence, clothed in the USO Indian costumes, resurfaces in softer forms of pleasure and entertainment, and so its menace extends to the women conscripted into the fantasy of American military power. One dramatic upshot on the playmate of the year, which should underline her towering and powerful stature, also frames a helicopter blade, unseen to her, whirring ominously over her head, foreshadowing the violence that will befall the playmates down the river, when their bodies are traded in exchange for petrol.

*Apocalypse Now* insistently interweaves threads of geopolitical and gender oppression in a way that takes clearer relief against the background of Eleanor's private record of resentment. In her diary, the consequences of America's mistreatment of the Philippines are evident in her close attention to the local political economy. For instance, on 1 May 1976, Labour Day in the Philippines, Eleanor records that President Ferdinand Marcos 'raised the minimum wage in Metro Manila to 10 pesos, a day, approximately \$1.25' (46). This Labour Day entry comes after several months of considering local inequity and its relation to geo-colonial politics. Francis had recently been pleading with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for the ability to rent U.S. military equipment, as opposed to the older helicopters that the U.S. had sold to the Philippine Air Force. On 2 April,

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<sup>8</sup> Walter L. Williams, 'United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism,' *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 4 (March 1, 1980): 810–831, doi:10.2307/1887638.

those Filipino aircraft were diverted from the middle of rehearsing a complicated shot, to 'fight the rebels in a civil war about 150 miles to the south.' Eleanor complains that there is 'no news of the war in the government-controlled' newspapers and discovers from a Filipino crewman that the attack was directed toward a guerrilla group in the southern islands that is 'fighting for independence' (26).

Whether she is misled by her native informant, or purposively misdirects her readers, Coppola frames the ongoing military struggle in the erroneous terms of postcolonial nationalism and even American patriotism, reporting that the rebels are 'fighting for independence.' In reality, the group that Marcos attacked on 2 April 1976 is a Marxist-Leninist military organisation called the New Peoples Army, which makes Marcos' strike a function of the American cold-war policy of containment that Coppola's film hopes to expose as problematic. His renting of equipment from the Philippine Air Force funds the suppression of a leftist group who are not so much promoting the nationalism of postcolonial independence movements, but who are, in fact, still resisting the neocolonial tendencies of globalisation today. On 26 March 2011 the NPA ambushed a local trucking convoy, disrupting the Australian mining company Xstrata Copper, a giant of capital intently divesting the Filipina mountains of their rich stores of copper and gold.<sup>9</sup>

As the diary continues its critique of Francis' imperial film policy it exposes the limits of its own critical position. For example, the copper that multinational commodities traders extract from the earth make possible the cheap appliances that Eleanor misses in 1970s Manila but marvels over in Hong Kong. For her, Hong Kong is

the supermarket of Asia like Las Vegas is the gambling centre of the United States. Every aspect of the city is focused on one thing, buying and selling international products. The neon signs say Sony, Sanyo, and Gucci, instead of Golden Nugget and Caesar's Palace. Francis loves to look at all the new products and gadgets. He went to see all the cameras and tape recorders and equipment in the stores. I went to two places where they sell products from Mainland China. I love the incredible embroideries, especially the old ones. (92)

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<sup>9</sup> Guanqun, Wang. '3 Killed in Leftist Rebels Attack in S Philippines.' Xinhua. 26 Mar. 2011. Web. Accessed 21 Oct. 2013. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-03/26/c\\_13799301.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-03/26/c_13799301.htm).



Whereas Hong Kong shines with the post-mining excess of Las Vegas, living in Manila is 'like stepping back in time,' not toward the ancient allure of an old Chinese embroidery, but to a cheap past where instant coffee is 'very chic,' plastic plants are 'really in' and servants carry silver trays laden with big jars of Maxwell House (66). The Filipino tendency to value cheapness extends even to domestic labour, the corollary concern Coppola binds to the issues of anti-colonial warfare and international trade.

Three weeks before Marcos' Labour Day concession to the left, and a week after he attacks the leftist rebels in the south, Eleanor resumes threading some narrative about the domestic space she is establishing for her family in the Philippines, when she advertises her discomfort with having a laundry maid:

I like our laundry maid Cecilia, but it really bothers me that I have a human washing machine. She washes everything in the laundry tub by hand and irons in this heat. She is also the dishwasher. It makes me feel bad when I put my dirty clothes in the basket. I was complaining to the woman next door. She told me that Cecilia was glad to have a job with a nice family, that I was providing much needed employment. She earns, in pesos, about 55 dollars a month plus room and board. Here a major appliance costs more. (30)

Eleanor shows a fascination with domestic practices more manual and essential than those attracting the attention of feminist critics like Kaplan and Ryan, who see the nineteenth-century home as a place where a mother's education shaped the imperial mindset of national subjects. Eleanor's diaries certainly display attention to that kind of ideological fashioning, especially as she orients Sofia's fascination with Japan, but *furnishing* as such occupies her mind as much as fashioning, and she carefully catalogues the chores of shopping, cleaning, decorating and repairing. The severing of those tasks from her personal responsibility troubles her as much as the possible exploitation of Cecilia, as one gets the sense that her divestment of household responsibility is making her feel bad when placing her clothes in the hamper as much as any abstract colonial shame. Coppola operates in that familiar environment where those who make a little serve those who make a little to a lot more, and in the final instance, she justifies her employment of Cecilia economically, and maybe even selfishly, by considering that in her month-to-month life in

Manila a human washing machine is more cost-effective than purchasing the several copper-wound home appliances it would take to replace her.

The interwoven themes of domestic practice draw Eleanor's eye from one example of handicraft to the next, from one instance of manual labour to the next, from one maid to one servant to the next. One of the first things she does in the Philippines is visit the art department of the film's production office.

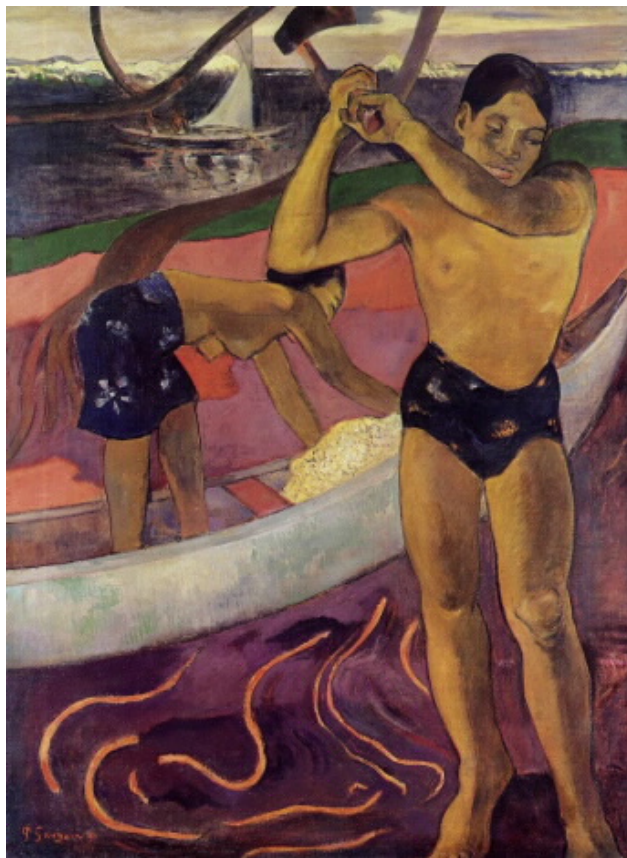
Outside was a large studio with a sculptor and five or six assistants carving the huge head and temple decorations in clay that will be cast for the temple buildings at the main set called Kurtz Compound. They were working from Dean's drawings and photographs of Angkor Wat. The model for the big head was a beautiful young Filipina Maid from a nearby boardinghouse. Now she was sitting in the studio by the window in the afternoon light listening to the radio and crocheting. (23)

Eleanor captures the same mixture of tropical labour and indolence supposed by the modern primitivism of Paul Gauguin.



Paul Gauguin, Tahitian Women [*Femme de Tahiti*], 1891

In 'Tahitian Women', the turned muscular arm of the girl in the floral-printed *lavalava* extends upward to the apex of a triangle marked by her shoulder, the third point of which is the blunt fragmented foot that refuses to stay suppressed in the background. The wilted frond and tense fingers of the girl in the pink colonial mission dress repeats the figure of the folding toes in her single visible foot. Petal, box and sand-sketch are tensely arranged in front of her; and for the forlorn pair of maids, the beach is not a place of repose, but of intense activity, as their contemplative moods seem to express the same flux as the cresting, folding ocean that engulfs their heads.



Paul Gauguin, The Man with an Axe [*L'homme à la hache*]

This arrangement of activity and stasis is reversed in ‘The Man with Axe’ where the triangle of the man’s arms supports the effortlessly floating axe-handle. His tool seems gravity-defying in the same way that the swirling tree trunk suggests a whip, cracked in mid-air, uncoiling towards the back of the man with the axe. The tree roots end in the pink-in-purple swirls of the foreground, as they make visible the breeze that pushes the sailboat further into the background. Mid frame, the second triangle of the woman’s body seems to tip breast-first into the swab of pink surrounding the pair, the colour of which is repeated in the mouth of the man with the axe. Despite their labour and the tree’s whip-like insistence, their bodies are relaxed by the erotic infusion of colour and shape that lavishes them like a tongue. The indolent Tahitian women seemed seized in stress, while the working couple labour in ease.<sup>10</sup>

Coppola’s portrait of the Filipina maid sitting in the afternoon light, crocheting and listening to the radio, obtains an additional level of reflexivity over Gauguin’s portraits. Her postmodernist primitivism shows us the process by which a European totem of exoticism is constructed, as the men labour like the man with the axe, carving the iconic face of the Filipina beauty as she sits embroidering one of the many textiles that Coppola weaves in and out of her diary. Her reflexivity stitches closed the gap between her observational writing and the maids’ practice of being observed stitching. Tapestry-like and conscious of its construction as such, the diary ceaselessly ornaments itself like Eleanor’s carefully furnished interiors, whose walls you’d expect to find bedecked with Orientalist touches: ‘Japanese-patterned paper, Chinese paper cuts of bright colored opera masks and a round embroidery’ (238).

Like Eleanor’s diary, a decorative documentation of her decorating, Francis’ film tends toward an abstraction of a baroque tapestry, patterned by repetitive and interlaced threads of colour. One interwoven visual thread is the face of a young South East Asian woman, whom Eleanor observes being immortalised in stone, sitting in the sun. The Art Department model would become the Angkor Wat inspired temple edifice that rises over the main set of Kurtz’ Compound. Even as the maid Eleanor observes in the studio is the model of orientalist fascination and beauty, in that she seems to sit placidly and let the fineness of her face be exploited for the gain of

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<sup>10</sup> My reading of ‘The Man with the Axe’ is indebted to Bruce Gardiner, ‘Talking of Michelangelo: Routine and Radical Inquiry into Literature and Aesthetics,’ *Literature & Aesthetics* 21, no. 2 (February 23, 2012), <http://ojs-prod.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/LA/article/view/5770>.

the Hollywood industry, she is the perfect match for the face of Martin Sheen. For however central Sheen becomes to the film's history, spot-lit by cinema stardom, the uncredited woman falls deeper into oblivion. His star power rises inversely to the dark historical descent that the film creates in what it excludes from its credits. Though her name is lost, her face becomes emblematic of the film's ponderous power, as her stone effigy is part of a triple superimposition made during the film's opening sequence.



Here the orientalist image and the Hollywood icon of Martin Sheen are inverted, with Sheen upside down and the temple sculpture right-side up, as their faces balance both sides of the screen, framing the scorched environment of a fire-bombed Philippine/Vietnamese forest.

Just as Eleanor inspects the mechanisms whereby the local service staff are converted into a labour resource for Hollywood's industrial gain, Francis and Eleanor discuss the ethical implications of drawing the life out of an actor, extra or model by capturing their performance with the camera, or their image in stone. Eleanor's attention to the use of the maid in the making of the Ankor Wat effigy is resumed by a discussion with her husband about the direction of Willard's infamous breakdown scene:

Francis asked him to go to the mirror and look at himself and admire his beautiful hair, his mouth. Marty began this incredible scene. He hit the mirror with his fist ... His hand started bleeding. Francis said his impulse was to cut the scene and call the nurse, but Marty was doing the scene. He had gotten to the place where some part of him and Willard had merged. Francis had a moment of not wanting to be a vampire, sucking Marty's blood for the camera, and not wanting to turn

off the camera when Marty was Willard. He left it running. He talked Marty through the scene. Two cameras were going. (104)

The pair of cameras documenting the emotional breakdown appears to Francis as a set of vampiric fangs drinking the actor's blood. This resonates with a famous metaphor for capitalist violence:

Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him. If the worker consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist.<sup>11</sup>

The Coppolas' attention to capitalist expropriation comes into conflict with their theory of American imperialism in general, as well as their specific interpretation of how the *Apocalypse Now* production recreated the foreign policy situation it sought to critique. While Francis' USO scene critically places Vietnam amid frivolous simulations of previous colonial wars, and while Eleanor's concern for the exploitation of models, actors and servants suggests a sensitivity to neocolonial iniquity, the figure of excess that Eleanor's telex critiques simultaneously underwrites an essentially exceptional vision of America's imperialism in East Asia. The fantasy of American imperialism as an act of superabundance mystifies the horror of vampiric extraction as it advances a theory of America's cultural contributions to the world.

Through post-war cultural promoters like Jack Valenti and New Hollywood directors like the Coppolas, American imperialism narrated itself in contradistinction to European imperialism, which might be understood as the mercantile extraction of resources and the destruction of local economies to create market imbalance between colonial metropole and colony. By contrast, American imperialism narrates itself as a fable of abundance, an indulgent 'supply line,' with its only sin being its ineffectiveness, its uncritical and repetitively flawed misdirection of resources. The Coppolas' nervousness about exploiting the labour power of both unionised Hollywood culture-industry workers, as well as the local

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<sup>11</sup> Marx, *Capital Vol. I* (New York: Penguin, 19), Ch. 10. p. 342.

service and crew members, troubles the view of America as a mere promoter of goods, and the good capitalist way of life.

The problem of American imperialism, as something self-delusionally exceptional, as subject to what Donald Pease calls 'strategies of disavowal,' whereby it is denied to be imperialist at all, is nested within a second problem, the problem of domesticity.<sup>12</sup> Eleanor's second theory regarding *Apocalypse Now*, after her theory that it recreates the political conditions it seeks to critique, is that it serves as an allegory of the faltering marriage that sustains it. The film's disorder is inseparable from the disintegration of the family it fails to depict directly as subject matter, but whose operative laws it cannot help but obey. Francis tries to resolve the film through the strategies of American imperialism, with his hubristic excess, while the aesthetically superior way to resolve the film, Eleanor seems to suggest, would be to free his family from the same poisonous resentment that chokes both postcolonial Philippine history and her attitude toward him as spouse.

As if in response, Francis makes an incredibly attenuated attempt to construct a sentimental family space within the interior of Kurtz's Compound. At the end of the film, Captain Willard has progressed up the river to the compound, on a mission of assassination to remove Kurtz from command of his mad mercenary army. To prevent Kurtz's death from being bathetic, Coppola attempts to formulate some structure of sentiment around Kurtz, who is played by a very overweight Marlon Brando, bathed in shadow to hide his heft. To proxy the fiancé that Conrad's Kurtz wants contacted by Marlow, Brando's Kurtz mentions a son whose understanding he covets. Willard closely inspects the family photos pinned to Kurtz' bedside. But the primary prop that affects a family space is the placement of a young Cambodian girl who haunts the fringes of Kurtz's domicile.

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<sup>12</sup> Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).



The camera cuts suspiciously to the Cambodian woman's face when Kurtz is telling a particularly emotionally rendering story about American soldiers who have attempted to inoculate a village against polio. After they leave, the Viet Cong enter the village and hack the inoculated arms off the children. Sitting on the edge of Kurtz' room, within earshot of his voice, the girl's eyes drift downward at just this moment of the narrative, as if she's dejected and dismayed by the Americans' failure to protect the Vietnamese from the disease of their own remorseless will for self-definition. When, in the final moments of the film, Willard is approaching Kurtz to kill him, the young woman again appears, following worriedly behind Willard. For a moment we think she may intervene to protect Kurtz. In her motion, she perfectly visualises her source's text:

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high ... She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress.<sup>13</sup>

Despite all the controversy that Conrad's portrayal of the 'savage' African woman has attracted, critics have said very little about her being recycled by the film as an enigmatic figure on the cusp of Kurtz' intimacy. At an obscure age, she could be mistress or adopted daughter. On the physical fringes of Kurtz' quarters, she treads a liminal space between concubine and innocent. Like the name of the maid whose beautiful face provided the

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p.99.



model for the temple statue, the name of the uncredited young Filipina or Ifugao woman who played this undefined role has slipped into historical darkness. In the context of the Coppola family drama, it makes less sense to read her presence as an allusion to Conrad and more sense to see her as a way that Francis proxies Eleanor's and even Sofia's equally unattributed voice, as a part the family's often unrecognised contributions to the film.

If Kurtz' death avoids bathos, it's not because of the meagre family dynamic Francis' dialogue and *mise-en-scene* produces. The assassination of Kurtz compels because of the concurrent animal sacrifice proceeding outside his domicile, sound-tracked by the disordered spasms of The Doors' rock and roll. The ceremonial sacrifice of the carabao, which Francis uses as metaphor for the assassination, restages an Ifugao ceremony that Eleanor and Francis attended out of *her* ethnographic and documentarian intuition. Her diary informs us that Francis went reluctantly. Enhancing its fragmentation, the fractured family picture of the Kurtz compound is surrounded by the interwoven kinship pattern implied by the tribe. The familial immanence of the tribe and the closeness of the military company present what the Coppola family is distinctly *not*. In comparison with the tribe, or, perhaps, amid the capitalist exploitations of the studio, the film is distinctly *not* interwoven, wholesome, organic or complete. In one of the many appropriating manoeuvres made by new-age Eleanor, she draws from the expertise of the *I Ching* to complete her analysis:

Twice I have gotten number 37, 'The Family': 'The family shows the laws operative within the household that, transferred to outside life, keep the state and the world in order . . . when the family is in order, all the social relationships of mankind will be in order.' (276)

Amid the disorder of America's disavowed colonialist exploitation, Eleanor and Francis begin to assume that their social relationship would be reordered once they get out of the Philippines and move to Tokyo, a place that ultimately promises to resolve not just their own marital problems but also the technocratic and spiritual contradictions of American society. According to Eleanor, Japan is

the one place in the world where the material and the spiritual world, the yin and the yang, the left side of the brain and the right side of the brain, the masculine and the feminine are coming together. (270)

Together Francis and Eleanor collaborate on daydreaming into being a 'romantic vision' of Japan as a place of marital cohesion and spiritual synthesis, which at the same time will allow his hubris to rise to an occasion of grandeur. According to Francis, 'Hollywood thinks people don't want to see films set in Japan,' but he aims to prove them wrong (270).

Sofia did that instead. 2003's *Lost in Translation* chronicles the ennui, melancholy and disorientation of newly-wed Charlotte (Scarlett Johansen). A critical success, *Lost in Translation* is also an egregious example of Hollywood orientalism. It provoked the disdain of Japanese critics, as well as Asian Media Watch, an anti-racism organisation in Los Angeles that campaigned against the film's four Academy Award nominations.<sup>14</sup> In his introduction to cinematic orientalism, Mathew Bernstein writes that by 1927 the studio-produced Orientalist film was so standardised as to be the subject of sharp parodies, simulating the saturated conventions of 'unbridled passion, miscegenation and wild adventures' set against exotic backdrops.<sup>15</sup> Hardly parody, *Lost in Translation* seems to bridle these conventions into quietude, while preserving what Ella Shohat calls the 'colonial gaze' of orientalist cinema in all Charlotte's curious inspections of Japanese life and texture.<sup>16</sup> Her point of view makes Tokyo an inscrutable, exotic object of Western fascination, wrapped in the comforting strains of her indie rock playlist, as the My Bloody Valentine songs seem to assimilate the uncanny Japanese landscape into something easily recognised by Charlotte's comforting melancholy.

Whereas Eleanor's diaries ask to be read as personal testimony, Sophia's films do not. Yet even as they deny the status of autobiography, they place themselves obviously enough in a history of family textuality. In a compound linkage between biography and fiction, the painful marginalisation of film Charlotte, another stay-at-hotel artist's wife, not only connotes Eleanor's time in the Philippines, but Sofia's recent relationship, as Charlotte's photographer husband proxies indie film-maker Spike Jonze, whose long shadow as the director of *Being John Malkovich* fell over his wife Sofia in the previous years. In another point of contact

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<sup>14</sup> Homay King, *Lost in Translation: Orientalism, Cinema and the Enigmatic Signifier* (Durham: Duke, 2010), p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Bernstein, 'Introduction' in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Shohat, 'Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema' in *Visions of the East*, pg. 19–68.

with biography and fiction, Francis sat beside Akira Kurosawa in a series of 1970s commercials for Suntory whiskey, the same brand that Bob (Bill Murray) promotes in *Lost in Translation*. While following these family relations, it is equally important to dispel the notion that Charlotte is determinately Sofia and Bob Francis. Despite the fact that Marina Heung notes the frequency of Freudian ‘family romance’ being played out in the post-Vietnam era, reading the Coppolas in Asia as a literal Oedipal arrangement seems impertinent, nor does it seem fair for critics to define Sofia consistently as ‘Francis’ daughter.’<sup>17</sup> As Homy King warns, seeing Francis as playing a ‘Bob-like’ function to Sofia’s Charlotte verges on the simplistic, moralistic, and condescending, keeping the female director colonised by a protective patron.<sup>18</sup> Under close inspection, Sofia’s film cleverly subverts and seduces a number of her father’s artistic methods. In place of his hubristic claim to answer questions and solve the mythic riddles of human existence, she arranges a careful series of open-ended, enigmatic questions.

In the main, Francis’ attempt to sentimentalise the finale of *Apocalypse Now* failed because of his recourse to a structuralist brand of modernism. Family sentiment was marginalised by what Margot Norris has called his adoption of T.S. Eliot’s mythic method.<sup>19</sup> Francis’ readings of comparative mythologists James Frazer and Jesse Weston convinced him that human narratives have always been underpinned by a universal interest in the figure of rebirth. In a film interview on set, Francis speculates that the first man would have been dismayed by winter and rejoiced over spring, a figure of ‘renaissance.’ His reading of structuralism drives him to answer the big human questions, demanding an answer ‘on about 47 different levels.’<sup>20</sup> Resisting the demand to answer, Sofia Coppola’s *Lost in Translation* orchestrates questions and composes enigmas. In her ‘Speculum of the Other Woman,’ Luce Irigaray fragments Freud’s misogynist insistence on his own ability to answer the riddle of female

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<sup>17</sup> Mariana Heung, ‘The Family Romance of Orientalism: From *Madame Butterfly* to *Indochine*’ in *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> King, ‘Lost Girls,’ 169.

<sup>19</sup> Norris, Margot. ‘Modernism and Vietnam: Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*.’ *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 44, no. 3 (1998): 730–766. Coppola’s swerve toward modernism and structuralist myth threatens to transport what Norris calls the ‘ideological freight’ of modernism into his film, reanimating its ‘incriminating relationships to colonialism, nationalism, class hatred, misogyny, and racism.’

<sup>20</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, interviewed in *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse*.

sexuality (what he admitted was to him a ‘dark continent’) by subjecting it to what Jane Gallop, in *The Daughter’s Seduction*, describes as series of impertinent questions.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Sofia responds to her father’s hubristic claim to be able to account for the experience of the universal ‘first man’ with a series of contemplative riddles.

As Homay King notes, the daughter and father relationship, like the marital one, threatens to repeat the pains of colonisation. As much in the relation between Francis and Sofia as between him and Eleanor, the Coppola family romance with Asia raises problems and possibilities for the processes of ‘decolonization’ and ‘deimperialisation’ formulated in Chen’s *Asia as Method*. Concerned that postcolonial cultural studies are mired in an ‘obsessive critique of the West,’ Chen outlines the language whereby former colonies and former colonisers can collaborate to remove the imprint of historical shame. Decolonisation, for instance, is the ‘attempt of the previously colonized to reflectively work out a historical relation with the former colonizer, culturally, politically and economically.’ Formerly colonised populations face these painful histories out of the ‘desire to form a less coerced and more dignified subjectivity.’ If decolonization is the work of the formerly colonised, deimperialisation makes demands of colonizing and imperializing populations, asking them to ‘examine the conduct, motives, desires and consequences of the imperialist history that formed [their] own subjectivity.’<sup>22</sup>

The family of Coppola texts—three instances of American travelogues in Asia—provide both American and Asian studies scholars with unique textual grounds for testing and elaborating on the processes of decolonisation and deimperialisation. Francis’ project in the 1970s was undone by its insouciance towards the family structures it needed and the original grounds of Filipina conquest in arguably stained anew. If *Lost in Translation* fails to ‘examine the conduct, motives, desires and consequences of the imperialist history’ that formed colonial subjectivity in Japan, it does so because it is intently decolonising itself from the masculine, modernist, and structuralist impulses run rampant in *Apocalypse Now*.

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<sup>21</sup> Jane Gallop, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: the daughter’s seduction* (London: Macmillan, 1982), Chapter 4, ‘The Father’s Seduction’. Published in the U.S. under the preferable title *The Daughter’s Seduction*.

<sup>22</sup> Chen, *Asia As Method*, p. 4.

By the same stroke, if Sofia's film fails as a force of deimperialism in Japan, it is because the film is suffused with theories of postmodernism, shocked by the schizophrenic symbolic breakdowns of post-structuralism. Frederic Jameson's contention that 'everything has reached the same hour on the great clock of development,' that the logic of capital and the law of the markets have penetrated every territory on earth, seem in striking accord with neocolonial economics models rather than the critique of late-capitalism postmodernism might have been.<sup>23</sup> In Eleanor's diary, Sofia establishes herself as a privileged spokesperson of the postmodern. As a five year old, she experiences the jungle in Philippines as if it were Disneyland, decades before Jean Baudrillard would claim that Disneyland only exists to conceal the fact that the rest of America is just as much an amusement park, years before he theorised that our experience of jungle rivers are preceded by our rides in fun-park lazy rivers, as a precession of simulacra.<sup>24</sup>

In *Lost in Translation*, Charlotte takes a train to Kyoto and enters a demonstration of post-structuralist linguistics. Kyoto heightens the orientalist mode of the film, as Charlotte looks, captivated and intent, at a series of what King calls 'enigmatic signifiers:' Kanji logograms, the train window, landscape, the Kyoto gardens, school girls in uniform, a stone footbridge, a geisha decorously embraced by her consort, the temple, a tree bough tied with paper prayers. After her trip to the shrine, Charlotte tells her friend over the phone: 'I didn't feel anything.' In Jameson's 1991 essay *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* he describes Lacanian schizophrenia as one of the 'constituent features' of postmodernism. This schizophrenia occurs with the breakdown in the logical links or conjunctions that connect signs and symbols into a meaningful experience. Charlotte's experiences—train—geisha—footbridge—schoolgirls—temple—paper prayer—a disconnected series of discrete present moments that fail to connect temporally or cohere semantically. She walks through what Jameson calls the 'rubble' of affectless signification. Charlotte's inability to make meaning from this

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<sup>23</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 310. Also, see Julian Murphet, 'Introduction: On the Market and Uneven Development.' *Affirmations: Of the Modern* 1, no. 1 (July 15, 2013): 1–20.

<sup>24</sup> The introduction of Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality to America come through the following publications: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e) 1983), *America* (London: Verso, 1988) and *Simulation and Simulacra* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

series of discontinuous ‘nows’ preserves a carefully composed enigma, making the structuralist certainty of her father’s modernist method empty and facile. Riddling the answers of modernist masculinity with enigmas that are compacted by their orientalist energies, Sofia’s film decolonises itself from patriarchy only to reinscribe the assumptions of U.S. imperialism in Asia. However, even its failure as a cosmopolitan language of translation exposes problems that future films of deimperialisation might solve, as the Coppola family romance reorients the important place of family relations and film aesthetics in the ongoing pursuit of global justice.

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# H. G. Wells's Interwar Utopias: Eugenics, Individuality and the Crowd

MAXIM SHADURSKI

## Introduction

The problem of revitalizing the nation and bringing up good citizens acquired a renewed significance during the interwar years in Britain. In the words of David Matless, '[d]ebates over an 'A1' or 'C3' nation went back to the eugenic 'National Efficiency' drive which followed the revelation of poor physical capacity in Boer War recruits'.<sup>1</sup> This persistent trope was also related to, and frequently informed by, a more general socio-cultural climate that involved a complex coexistence and cross-fertilization of evolutionary ideas and Nietzschean philosophy. As David Stack explains, G. B. Shaw, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Ramsay MacDonald, among others, used the ideas of evolution as a caveat to the degenerative drift of capitalism and as a bulwark of an organically developing society.<sup>2</sup> Just as Darwinism preoccupied writers and thinkers across the political spectrum, Nietzsche's impact on the Edwardian and interwar views on degeneration was felt, according to Dan Stone, across nationally conscious discourses.<sup>3</sup> Given its contemporary urgency, the problem of national revitalization also galvanized H. G. Wells's utopian imaginings, which were in conversation with evolutionary ideas and with the projections of the overman.

As early as 'Human Evolution, An Artificial Process' (1896), Wells argued that the differences between the natural and the evolved man were minimal in terms of evolutionary changes. The more significant

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<sup>1</sup> David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> David Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism, 1859–1914* (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2003), pp. 88, 115.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p. 65.

distinctions would consist in the accumulation of 'moral suggestions and knowledge', which characterized the evolved man.<sup>4</sup> Wells's evolutionary perspective on the two types of humanity can be placed in the wider context of the literary practice of doubling, which was particularly prominent in the fin de siècle. As Linda Dryden demonstrates, 'horrors occurring in the heart of the modern metropolis' activated the images of degenerate souls (in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and R. L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*) and subterranean sweatshops (in Wells's *When the Sleeper Wakes*).<sup>5</sup> These representations of the darker sides of life threw into relief the duality of human nature and exposed 'metropolitan anxieties springing from the lived experiences of the late-Victorian public'.<sup>6</sup> In utopian fiction, the practice of doubling heralds a substantial betterment of mankind, insofar as the horrors of living are ironed out not only by social, but also by physical reconstitution.

Indeed, in *A Modern Utopia* (1905), Wells supplies the contemporary Englishman with an evolved, and therefore superhuman, double. While visiting Utopia, the main character comes to a realization that his thumb marks, collected for the purposes of identification, happen to match the personal record of a Utopian. He first deems this coincidence to be a mere failure in the Utopian database storing up individual information. Then he allows the possibility of 'a grotesque encounter, as of something happening in a looking glass'.<sup>7</sup> The protagonist's anticipated projection of his identity into the future permits Harvey Quamen to discern in *A Modern Utopia* 'a hall of mirrors: Wells resembles, but is not identical to, the Owner of the Voice who in turn resembles, but is not identical to, the main character who resembles, but is not identical to, his Utopian double'.<sup>8</sup> This chain of resemblances arguably testifies to an underlying continuity whereby the main character ascertains 'a strange link of essential identity, a sympathy, an understanding' between himself and his Utopian double.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the Utopian double is reported to belong to a caste of highly

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<sup>4</sup> H. G. Wells, 'Human Evolution, An Artificial Process,' *Fortnightly Review* 60.358 (1896), p. 594.

<sup>5</sup> Linda Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* [1905], intro. Mark R. Hillegas, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey N. Quamen, 'Unnatural Interbreeding: H. G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* as Species and Genre,' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33 (2005), p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Wells, *Utopia*, p. 229.



accomplished citizens, and is therefore superior to the protagonist: 'He is a little taller than I, younger looking and sounder looking ... His training has been subtly finer than mine; he has made himself a better face than mine'.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that the Utopian double improves on the Englishman's physical and social qualities has further resonances in Wells's interwar utopian fictions. This conception permeates both *Men Like Gods* (1923) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933). In *Men Like Gods*, the Utopians display visible signs of superiority in their longer lifespan, taller build, and fairer complexion. In the perception of Mr Barnstaple, the protagonist of *Men Like Gods*, 'theirs was a cleansed and perfected humanity, and it seemed to him that they were gods'.<sup>11</sup> Distinctive features are also intrinsic to the Utopians' character, which is noted for 'cleanliness, truth, candour and helpfulness, confidence in the world, fearlessness and a sense of belonging to the great purpose of the race' (*MLG*, p. 375). *The Shape of Things to Come* charts the progression of the world up until the year 2106, from 'the Age of Frustration' to 'the Modern State in control of life'. The rise of the Modern State entails the expansion of a regulated education and the subsequent proliferation of polymaths, who are eventually replaced by what Wells envisages as a new species of man that will live longer and more cooperatively.<sup>12</sup> From the above brief outline, it follows that the assets of the Utopian double are premised on the transformations that involve humanity's appearance, character, and social milieu.

This article examines the ways in which Wells's conception of the Utopian double mediates a response to the nation-wide fears of a degenerative drift. In order to comprehend how the contemporary emphases on national revitalization filter into the vision of a World State, this article reads Wells's utopian fictions in the context of his other writings, which problematize the use of education and eugenics in the imagination of a global future. A further question this article addresses is one of individuality. If the Utopian double is to bear the hallmarks of a superman, to what extent is his character commensurable with existing national susceptibilities?

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>11</sup> H. G. Wells, *Men Like Gods* [1923], in *H. G. Wells: Classic Collection II*, (London: Gollancz, 2011), p. 372. Hereafter referenced parenthetically as *MLG*.

<sup>12</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* [1933], (London: Gollancz, 2011), p. 421. Hereafter referenced parenthetically as *STC*.

## 1. Education and Eugenics

Among factors contributing to Wells's conception of the Utopian double, education and eugenics acquire a special and frequently conflicted prominence. Urthred, one of the characters in *Men Like Gods*, points to the dividing chasm between the mind-sets of the Earthlings and their Utopian counterparts, which he attributes to education:

Yours are Age of Confusion minds, trained to conflict, trained to insecurity and secret self-seeking. In that fashion Nature and your state have taught you to live and so you must needs live until you die. Such lessons are to be unlearnt only in ten thousand generations, by the slow education of three thousand years. (*MLG*, p. 272)

The growth of a World State is inseparable for Wells from the spread of education, which lays the foundation of what he terms in his economic study *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1931) 'the universal human persona'.<sup>13</sup> However, the attainment of such a persona is seriously hampered, in Wells's judgement, by the lamentable state of education, when viewed from the vantage point of a fulfilled utopian future. *The Shape of Things to Come* provides the following assessment: not only did education in the Age of Frustration indulge in 'patriotic twaddle' and keep knowledge explicitly outside formal schooling, but there was also 'practically no philosophical education at all in the world, no intelligent criticism of generalizations and general ideas. There was no science of social processes at all' (*STC*, p. 82). Such a retrospective diagnosis is fully consonant with Wells's other criticisms of the contemporary system of education. In *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), Wells comments that the 1870 Education Act was meant 'to educate the lower classes for employment on lower-class lines, with specially trained, inferior teachers who had no university quality'.<sup>14</sup> Whereas Wells as a student of a National School had to undergo training mainly in his teacher's volatile moods and deficient professionalism, the protagonist of his 'condition-of-England' novel *The New Machiavelli* (1911) is exposed to a schooling in which there are always model replies to the same questions. Similarly, the main

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<sup>13</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* [1931], (London: William Heinemann, 1932), p. 718.

<sup>14</sup> H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (since 1866)*, (London: Victor Gollancz and The Cresset Press, 1934), p. 93.

character of *The History of Mr Polly* (1910) bears the brunt of educational mismanagement. The imaginary picture of Empire instructing her 'English children' about 'their essential nobility and knighthood' falls short of Polly's long-term expectations. Instead, he is eventually left with the compression of his 'mind and soul in the educational institutions of his time', indigestion and mispronounced words.<sup>15</sup> Notably, John Carey construes Polly's lost educational opportunities as 'Wells's rage at the national expenditure on armaments, which ... has stunted the lives of millions of children'.<sup>16</sup> But what Carey importantly overlooks is Polly's constant search for a difference that his ordinary life could not provide. Undoubtedly, his failed suicidal attempt at his house, as well as his fluke heroism at the Potwell Inn, contain an ironic commentary on the lengths to which Polly goes in seeking maturity and self-fulfilment. He learns more from life than his formal education ever afforded. Much as this statement brings the effectiveness of institutional schooling almost to a minimum, it throws into relief the protagonist's inherent receptivity to learning and his disposition to change. The penultimate chapter of *The History of Mr Polly* tellingly opens with a line central to Wells's utopianism: 'If the world does not please you, *you can change it*'.<sup>17</sup> The state of national education in England, as Wells depicts it, may be deficient and mismanaged, but the first stirrings of the Utopian double are with those who are responsive and resolute.

Whereas Polly's character evolves in a largely idyllic rural England, the eponymous protagonists of *Joan and Peter: The Story of an Education* (1918) gain insight into the more valuable qualities of the English character in the company of their uncle Oswald Sydenham. The novel is interspersed with the latter's pronouncements about the duality of Britain, which is at once badly and properly placed to manifest its genuine character: 'We have an empire as big as the world and an imagination as small as a parish'.<sup>18</sup> The nation's alleged parochialism is solely assigned to the system of education: as in *The History of Mr Polly*, it comes across as inappropriate. It effectively disseminates habits and attitudes of isolation that are incongruous with the necessity to maintain a more knowledgeable international outreach. As Oswald notes, '[t]he habit of detachment was too

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<sup>15</sup> H. G. Wells, *The History of Mr Polly*, (London: Thomas Nelson, 1910), p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> Wells, *Polly*, p. 283.

<sup>18</sup> H. G. Wells, *Joan and Peter: The Story of an Education*, (London: Cassell, 1918), p. 276.

deeply ingrained. Great Britain was an island of onlookers'.<sup>19</sup> The fundamental sense of isolation to which the novel refers does not seem to do sufficient justice to the national system of education, especially before the Great War. In a study of English patriotism, Stephen Heathorn observes that the ideas about the nation propagated in the classroom 'were ultimately successful enough to induce millions of working-class men and women to willingly sacrifice their lives and loved ones to the demands of the nation-state in the cataclysmic clash of rival nationalisms that erupted in 1914'.<sup>20</sup> This statement sheds some light on the vividly patriotic, if not nationalistic, aspect of English education. However, both Heathorn and Wells's mouthpiece in *Joan and Peter* are reluctant to acknowledge the immediate effect that the Great War produced on all those 'onlookers' who found themselves fighting for England in Belgium and France. Their professed sense of isolation would not have taken them far. Growing sensitive to this realization towards the end of the novel, Oswald tones down his critique and reveals his understanding of the English ideals:

I tell you there is no race and no tradition in the whole world that I would change for my English race and tradition. I do not mean the brief tradition of this little Buckingham Palace and Westminster system here that began yesterday and will end tomorrow, I mean the great tradition of the English that is spread all over the earth, the tradition of Shakespeare and Milton, of Newton and Bacon, of Runnymede and Agincourt, the tradition of the men who speak fairly and act fairly, without harshness and without fear, who face whatever odds there are against them and take no account of Kings.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 578.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880–1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 218.

<sup>21</sup> Wells, *Joan and Peter*, p. 725.

The mention of Bacon in the company of Shakespeare, Milton and Newton immediately brings back the figure of Francis Bacon, the English statesman, empirical thinker and essayist. In *A Modern Utopia*, Wells aligns his vision of Utopian science with what Bacon pictured in *The New Atlantis* (1627) as Saloman's House, a body of scientists obtaining knowledge from all corners of the globe. Advocating the continuous growth of science, Wells relates more to Bacon's 'foreshadowings' than to Morris's return to nature (Wells, *Utopia*, p. 100). Besides, in articulating Oswald's views on fairness, Wells might also have in mind Roger Bacon, a medieval English philosopher. In his autobiography, Wells paralleled his own vocation in life with that of Roger Bacon: 'I play at being such a man as he

Oswald's confession indicates his fundamental attachments to national culture, rather than the political continuity vested in the monarchy and parliamentary government. It also brings out the idiom of the English character, which is associated with fairness. In his account of Britain's intellectual life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Stefan Collini elucidates the discourse of the national character through the notion of fair play, typical of organized games such as cricket. Extending the principle of fairness to the discourse of character, he contends that, during this period, it 'was an expression of a deeply ingrained perception of the qualities needed to cope with life, an ethic with strong roots in areas of experience ostensibly remote from politics'.<sup>22</sup> Along these lines, Oswald's privileging of fair actions and words points up a quality which is closely linked with a wider understanding of the English character.

Wells puts the ideal of fairness to a number of imaginative and highly suggestive lengths in his conception of the Utopian double. On proclaiming as their motto 'Our education is our government' (*MLG*, p. 254), the Utopians have acted consistently in dismissing both politicians and lawyers as anachronistic phenomena. Utopia's revenue from natural resources gets fairly distributed in such a way that a child is granted a credit 'sufficient to educate and maintain him up to four- or five-and-twenty, and then he was expected to choose some occupation to replenish his account' (*MLG*, p. 382). If one fails to start a job, his or her idleness figures as a psychological disorder, not a financial crime; the Earthlings receive a further explanation of the Utopian work ethic: 'It is a pleasant world indeed for holidays, but not for those who would continuously do nothing' (*MLG*, p. 254). As a result, this beautiful and just society is largely secured by its citizens' access to, and acquisition of, professional knowledge, and subsequent work. If read in this light, Wells's vision of a World State/Utopia fully outgrows the educational deficiencies of contemporary England, making education a central socio-political force.

Alongside education, the nationally conscious ideal of fairness lies at the foundation of the Utopians' attitudes. While briefing the Earthlings about the socio-political arrangements in Utopia, Urthred promises: 'We will try our utmost to deal fairly and friendly with you if you will respect

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was, a man altogether lonely and immediately futile, a man lit by a vision of a world still some centuries ahead, convinced of its reality and urgency, and yet powerless to bring it nearer' (Wells, *Experiment*, p. 729).

<sup>22</sup> Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 116.

our laws and ways' (*MLG*, p. 272). This pledge of fair treatment evokes the opening scene of Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1627). A crew of English sailors are equally promised admittance to the island of Bensalem, provided that they swear by their Christian faith and own up to not having shed blood, either lawfully or otherwise, in the last several weeks. Once through this searching interrogation, the company later find themselves in a fair city with three fair streets, a fair and spacious house, a fair parlour, among 'men more fair and admirable'.<sup>23</sup> The ninefold repetition of the epithet 'fair', which is used to describe the comely appearance of buildings and people, is bounded up with Bensalem's consistent and moderate practices which can also be regarded as being fair. The island's scientific advances render the laws redundant, as everyone abides by 'the reverence of a man's self, ... the chiefest bridle of all vices'.<sup>24</sup> The pun on the word 'fair', implicit in *The New Atlantis*, thus becomes deliberate in *Men Like Gods*.

However, what complicates the realization of fairness in its two major meanings (just and beautiful) is the entanglement of Utopian education with eugenic practices, resulting in a pool of fair-looking people. On the eve of his forced departure from Utopia, Barnstaple looks back on the fairness of the Utopian order and wishes to see it take effect in his space-time: 'Earth too would grow rich with loveliness and fair as this great land was fair. The sons of Earth also, purified from disease, sweet-minded and strong and beautiful, would go proudly about their conquered planet and lift their daring to the stars' (*MLG*, p. 403). Barnstaple's anticipations are clearly informed by his attention to the Utopians' physical fairness. Besides education, Patrick Parrinder detects in Wells's utopias 'an unrecognizable physical evolution, brought about by eugenics rather than natural selection'.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, two times in *Men Like Gods*, Wells indicates that eugenics has begun in Utopia (*MLG*, pp. 263, 313). Wider applications of positive eugenics are signalled in *The Shape of Things to Come*, again in tandem with the educational effort, which is expected to guide man's becoming 'generation by generation a new species, differing more widely from that weedy, tragic, pathetic, cruel, fantastic, absurd and sometimes sheerly horrible being who christened himself in a mood of oafish arrogance *Homo sapiens*' (*STC*, p. 420).

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* [1627], in *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, New Atlantis, The Isle of Pines*, ed. Susan Bruce, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999), pp. 152, 155, 173.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Parrinder, *H. G. Wells*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), p. 10.

Apart from exposure to the educational impact governing Utopia, the conception of the Utopian double is derived from the theory and practice of eugenics. In *Men Like Gods*, Barnstaple, overwhelmed by ‘the firm clear beauty of face and limb that every Utopian displayed’, learns about the limits of eugenics: ‘The Utopians told of eugenic beginnings, of a new and surer decision in the choice of parents, of an increasing certainty in the science of heredity.’ (*MLG*, p. 263). Wells takes eugenic policies much further in his later vision of a World State conjured up in *The Shape of Things to Come*: ‘[T]his painless destruction of monsters and the more dreadful and pitiful sorts of defective was legalized, and also the sterilization of various types that would otherwise have transmitted tendencies that were painfully undesirable’ (*STC*, p. 388). The disturbing aspect of these policies is prompted by the historical context in which they were proposed. Before and during the Great War, when Britain was again faced with anxieties about the nation’s mental and physical decline, eugenic ideas continued to emerge in the mainstream of the political agenda. In his critical examination *Eugenics and Other Evils* (1917), G. K. Chesterton labelled the initiatives to legalize sterilization as the advent of the Eugenic State: ‘The first of the Eugenic Laws has already been adopted by the Government of this country; and passed with the applause of both parties through the dominant House of Parliament’.<sup>26</sup> Here Chesterton refers back to the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, which defined three categories of mental defective (‘idiot’, ‘imbecile’ and ‘feeble-minded’) and prescribed institutional detention, not sterilization, of people with relevant handicaps. Chesterton apprehended that England was likely to tread down the path of eugenics and arrive at what Hilaire Belloc called ‘the Servile State’.<sup>27</sup> In Chesterton’s words, England ‘has almost certainly missed the Socialist State. But we are already under the Eugenist State; and nothing remains to us but rebellion’.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, after this outspoken response to the reputed flowering of eugenics in England, there was only one major parliamentary campaign to legalize voluntary sterilization in 1931, which had not garnered sufficient support. According to Desmond King and Randall Hansen, ‘[t]he request, which was portrayed by its opponents as

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<sup>26</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* [1917], (London: Cassell, 1922), p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *An Examination of Socialism*, (London: Catholic Trust Society, 1908), p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Chesterton, p. 21.

fundamentally anti-working class, was defeated by 167 votes to 89'.<sup>29</sup> In this context, Wells's intermittent advocacy of both positive and negative eugenic methods appears to be more marginal than it would have been during the earlier decades of the twentieth century.

The publication of *The Shape of Things to Come* coincided with the adoption of the Eugenic Law in Germany in 1933. Initially imposing sterilization in the case of mental illness, genetic malformations, and alcoholism, the Law culminated in the 1935 'Act for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour'.<sup>30</sup> In the estimation of Peter Weingart, who has investigated the attempts to rationalize human evolution in Germany, the aforesaid Act 'reflected the unholy combination of eugenic thinking and Germanic race doctrines which under the Nazis had crystallized into a government-sponsored anti-Semitism'.<sup>31</sup> However, what matters is not only a temporal coincidence with Wells's eugenic concerns, but that these concerns had a long history of their own. In *Anticipations* (1901), for example, Wells gives voice to his understanding of the Jewish question: 'If the Jew has a certain incurable tendency to social parasitism, and we make social parasitism impossible, we shall abolish the Jew, and if he has not, there is no need to abolish the Jew'.<sup>32</sup> The ambiguity of such considerations is connected with the verb 'to abolish', which suggests extermination. But given Wells's insistence on the coalescence of identities into a cosmopolitanism, 'to abolish' may mean to re-educate the Jew. *The Shape of Things to Come* confirms the latter interpretation in a number of ways. Pinning down the Jewish sense of exceptionalism to their religion, Wells describes the Jew as 'a breach in the collective solidarity everywhere ... One could never tell whether a Jew was being a citizen or whether he was being just a Jew' (*STC*, pp. 376–7). To that end, the World State is devised to rectify the Jew's peculiarities 'in the food of either of his body or his mind' (*STC*, p. 377). This arrangement is expected to engender a complete solidarity of the world, rendered by Wells as being 'full as ever it was of men and women of Semitic origin, but they belong no more to

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<sup>29</sup> Desmond King and Randall Hansen, 'Experts at Work: State, Social Learning and Eugenic Sterilization in 1930s Britain,' *British Journal of Political Science* 19 (1999), p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Weingart, 'Eugenic Utopias—Blueprints for the Rationalization of Human Evolution,' *Nineteen Eighty-Four: Science Between Utopia and Dystopia*, ed. Everett Mendelsohn and Helga Nowotny, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1984), p. 184.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> H. G. Wells, *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* [1901], (London: Chapman and Hall, 1914), p. 316.



“Israel” (STC, p. 378). Although some of the conceptual premises of the eugenic legislation in Nazi Germany and Wells’s support for respective practices sound worryingly homologous, there is clearly—crude as it may sound—a difference between the educational coercion of the Jews in the World State and their physical extermination in the Holocaust. There is also an undeniable difference of degree between the Mental Deficiency Act in England and the Eugenic Law in Germany, to say nothing of their subsequent applications. These differences, to use Stone’s classification, fall into two categories: a ‘theoretical and ideational background’, and ‘action’. So long as eugenic ideas did not fully cross the boundary between theory and practice in England, they have been interpreted as ‘the extremes of Englishness’.<sup>33</sup> To use this conciliatory and largely normative logic, Wells’s conception of the Utopian double may be made to seem nearly un-English. Because Wells negotiates the Utopian double on the basis of eugenic practices, his conception, at least retrospectively, occurs in the margins of the contemporary constructions of England.

Wells’s other writings on the theme of a World State further demonstrate his consistent adherence to eugenic principles, but with one noteworthy peculiarity. As Chesterton insightfully concedes, ‘if I were restricted, on grounds of public economy, to giving Mr Wells only one medal *ob cives servatos*, I would give him a medal as the Eugenist who destroyed Eugenics’.<sup>34</sup> Chesterton explains his commendation by the challenge that Wells presented to the eugenicists as early as *Mankind in the Making* (1903), in which he questioned the inheritance of health. Since health is not a quality but a balance, its breeding in the course of parental selection proves impracticable. Perhaps Wells’s attention to this legitimate challenge eventually allowed him to project ‘a different animal’ in the citizen of the Modern State, who had emerged ‘from the honest application of the Obvious to health, education, and economic organization, within little more than a hundred years’ (STC, p. 322). Aside from these measures, Wells enforces an ethical limit beyond which the creation of the Utopian double may be accomplished solely by educational means. As a caveat, Wells proceeds to conclude in *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*: ‘The deliberate improvement of man’s inherent quality is at present unattainable. It is to a better education and to a better education alone, therefore, that we must look for any hope of ameliorating substantially the confusions and distresses of our present life’.<sup>35</sup> This

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<sup>33</sup> Stone, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Chesterton, p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> Wells, *Work*, pp. 679–80.

conclusion echoes Wells's views on the role of a fair education discussed above, and ties into the ethical foundations of his idea of the 'artificial factor'.

In his study of Wells's *Cosmopolis*, John Partington traces the idea of the 'artificial factor in man' to T. H. Huxley's conception of ethical evolution. Even though T. H. Huxley distinguished the 'cosmic process', which permits the fittest to survive, from 'social progress' that favours 'those who are ethically the best', he did not consider these two factors in opposition.<sup>36</sup> As Partington clarifies, 'not only is "ethical man" the result of natural evolution, but humanity's use of ethics to tame the "cosmic process" is also a part of nature'.<sup>37</sup> Along these lines, Wells's aspirations for the improvement of humanity, either biological or social, target the 'artificial factor in man' and are not ethically at variance with natural evolution. In *The Shape of Things to Come*, the narrator Dr Philip Raven supplies a most valid confirmation of this theory: a citizen of the World State is presented to be 'less gregarious in his instincts and less suggestible ... but he is far more social and unselfish in his ideology and mental habits. He is, in fact, for all the identity of his heredity, a different animal. He is bigger and stronger, more clear-headed, with more self-control and more definitely related to his fellow creatures' (*STC*, pp. 408–9). Because this profile of the Utopian double is focused on attitudinal and mental characteristics, it makes little use of heredity. Whereas the betterment of man's physical qualities originates from parental selection and breeding the defective out, ideology and mentality at large can only be the outcomes of education.

Because Wells's reservations concerning the use of eugenic methods are not rare, his vision of a World State is in conflict about education and heredity. Even though education and eugenics reinforce each other in his conception of the Utopian double, Wells repeatedly stresses the need of an education that would guarantee fair provisions. In an essay on eugenic thinking, Partington fully rehabilitates Wells the eugenicist, who, afflicted by a knowledge of the death camps operating in Central Europe during the Second World War, was forced 'to reject [eugenics] out of hand'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics* [1893], in T. H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics, 1893–1943*, (London: The Pilot Press, 1947), p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> John S. Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> John S. Partington, 'H. G. Wells's Eugenic Thinking of the 1930s and 1940s,' *Utopian Studies* 14.1 (2003), p. 79.

However, if the Utopian double is to epitomize fairness, being both just and beautiful, his identity is inextricable not only from the idiom of the English character, but also from the contemporary national conundrum: during the interwar years, eugenics and education continued to exchange discursive energies.

## 2. Utopian Individuality and the Crowd

Both *Men Like Gods* and *The Shape of Things to Come* promote individuality. Because Wells's vision of a World State forbids anyone without an individualizing distinction, it becomes an onus for a Utopian to study and work hard, in order to develop in several directions, like a polymath. Thus, Crystal, a thirteen-year-old youth, apart from majoring in natural sciences and mathematics, 'is reading history in a holiday stage of his education' (*MLG*, p. 372). *The Shape of Things to Come* complements this understanding of individuality: 'We do not suppress individuality; we do not destroy freedom; we destroy obsessions and remove temptations. The world is still full of misleading doctrines, dangerous imitations and treacherous suggestions, and it is the duty of government to erase these' (*STC*, p. 347). However, some Wellsian scholars are prone to question the theoretical foundations and practical implications of individuality in Wells's writings. Parrinder and Partington are unanimous in arguing that Wells rejected liberal individualism,<sup>39</sup> while Carey suggests that with time 'Wells began to doubt not only whether individuality could be allowed but whether it existed at all'<sup>40</sup>.

The individuality of the Utopian double may be read as a reaction against the theory and practice of *laissez-faire*, which had its roots in free trade and later came to refer to governmental non-involvement in the domestic economy and other social spheres. The Utopian double, conceived in Wells's utopias, notably contests *laissez-faire*, which is implicated in the Spencerian formula of 'the survival of the fittest'. In *The Shape of Things to Come*, the project of a regulated capitalism, set forth by J. M. Keynes, one of the leading economists of the time, is viewed as being insufficient, despite the fact that it wins 'an increased adherence' (*STC*, p. 249). Indeed, in his polemical pamphlet *The End of Laissez-Faire* (1926), Keynes gives vent to his deep concern about the precepts of *laissez-faire*

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<sup>39</sup> Parrinder, p. 13; Partington, *Cosmopolis*, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Carey, p. 147.

individualism: 'It is *not* a correct deduction from the Principle of Economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it true that self-interest generally *is* enlightened'.<sup>41</sup> Alongside individual enterprise, which, as Keynes believes, cannot be abolished unless it fails to deliver, the state should be permitted to take over 'those things which at present are not done at all'.<sup>42</sup> The Keynesian compromise instigates state control over unemployment and labour, savings and investment, as well as population. Regardless of Keynes's opposition to the expansion of *laissez-faire*, Wells censures these proposals as an attempt at safeguarding 'some existing political system by all sorts of artificial barriers and restraints from the world at large, in order to develop [a] peculiar system within its confines' (*STC*, p. 249).

Conversely, in *Men Like Gods*, the Utopian system of controls displaces 'a limited and legalized struggle of men and women to get the better of one another', and sanctions the 'idea of creative service' (*MLG*, pp. 249–50). In the eyes of Rupert Catskill, this transition can only end in degeneration, once competitive forces are withdrawn from social interaction. Yet Catskill's opinion is found to be exclusively reliant on factors external to the actual process of competition. As Urthred contends, 'it is not true that competition has gone from our world ... everyone here works to his or her utmost—for service and distinction ... There is no way but knowledge out of the cages of life' (*MLG*, p. 269). True, the transition from *laissez-faire* to the Utopian type of individualism is paradoxically based on the totality of state intervention, which Wells promotes in *The Shape of Things to Come*: 'Never before was man so directed and disciplined' (*STC*, p. 392). But on the way to the further realization of a World State, the role of the state diminishes, and creative service allows immediate occasions for the expression of individuality; in *Men Like Gods*, Barnstaple observes:

And down there under the blue haze of the great plain almost all those who were not engaged in the affairs of food and architecture, health, education and the correlation of activities, were busied upon creative work; they were continually exploring the world without or the world within, through scientific research and artistic creation. They were continually

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<sup>41</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The End of Laissez-Faire*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1926), p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

adding to their collective power over life or to the realized worth of life. (*MLG*, p. 311)

The Utopians' professional occupations afford additional insight into the practice of individualism. Some of the Utopians, with whom the Earthlings interact, represent certain departments of knowledge to which their society attaches importance. Barnstaple remarks: 'Everyone was doing work that fitted natural aptitudes and appealed to the imagination of the worker. Everyone worked happily and eagerly—as those people we call geniuses do on our Earth' (*MLG*, p. 374). As a specialist in physio-chemistry, Serpentine explains the theories of 'space-and-time universes, parallel to one another and resembling each other' (*MLG*, p. 236). Cedar works as a cytologist, running an improvised sanatorium where the Earthlings are quarantined in order to prevent the epidemic from spreading (*MLG*, p. 318). Urthred's expert areas include ethnology and history. These competences allow Urthred to trace the development of humanity into a Utopian race whose progress hinges on the applications of the will.

The Utopians understand will as key to harnessing nature, whose actions they see as illogical, ruthless and incompetent. In Urthred's words, nature 'made us by accident; all her children are bastards—undesired; she will cherish or expose them, pet or starve or torment without rhyme or reason'. In order to combat nature's adverse and whimsical conduct, the Utopians rely on their will 'to learn it and cease to fear it, to know it and comprehend it and master it' (*MLG*, p. 270). The mastering of nature by the force of will governs the most ambitious cosmological interventions, to which Sungold, probably the oldest Utopian with whom Barnstaple holds conference, refers as 'no more than a beginning' of a 'Life of which you and I are but anticipatory atoms and eddies, life will awaken indeed, one and whole and marvellous, like a child awaking to conscious life' (*MLG*, p. 396). The continuously expanding horizons of the Utopian endeavour are signalled by the vocabulary that describes an existence on the threshold of a higher order of reality. Where the Utopians aspire to reach the stars and other planets through their constant applications of the will, for Barnstaple the will promises a plausible passage of humanity to Utopia: "'Given the will," said Mr Barnstaple. "Given the will." . . .' (*MLG*, p. 403). Being an active force in Utopia, the will is also associated with power. In her dissenting evaluation, Lychnis equates her fellow Utopians' projects with the following aspirations:

They have changed a wild planet of disease and disorder into a sphere of beauty and safety. They have made the wilderness of human motives bear union and knowledge and power.

And research never rests, and curiosity and the desire for more power and still more power consumes all our world. (*MLG*, p. 368)

Engrossed in the study of compassion, a quality almost completely absent from the Utopian society, Lychnis laments the staggering lack of emotion. In a conversation, Barnstaple learns about her nephew: 'Crystal, Utopian youth, was as hard as his name. When he had slipped one day on some rocks and twisted and torn his ankle, he had limped but he had laughed' (*MLG*, p. 387). By the same token, death, should it be confronted fearlessly, is the cause of gladness, not sympathy. Falling out with such sentiments, Lychnis discerns overhuman qualities in the Utopians' impregnable psychology. Such a forsworn capacity for self-pity and empathy, coupled with relentless yearnings for the stars, suggests equivalences with Friedrich Nietzsche's projection of the overman in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1885). The immediate impact of Nietzsche on Wells's utopianism is a largely contestable and unexplored area. In a recent monograph on the early fiction of Wells, Steven MacLean has ascribed the scorn for 'universal morality', which characterizes Griffin in *The Invisible Man* (1897), to 'a possible Nietzschean influence'.<sup>43</sup> This declaratory remark, interesting in itself, requires further critical analysis on the level of textual evidence and Wells's direct responses to Nietzsche. Always intent on 'overcoming itself', the overman, like the Utopians in *Men Like Gods*, is goal-oriented and presents the pinnacle of mankind's ascent from the depths.<sup>44</sup> These textual homologies are in direct correspondence with G. B. Shaw's earlier vindication of the overman. In his preface to *Major Barbara* (1907), Shaw tellingly disowns 'the despotism of a single Napoleonic Superman'.<sup>45</sup> Instead, he sees sense in Nietzsche's promotion of the overman as 'the modern objection to Christianity', the latter being 'a

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<sup>43</sup> Steven MacLean, *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 84.

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [1883–85], trans. Adrian Del Caro, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 89.

<sup>45</sup> Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara* [1907], ed. Dan H. Laurence, (St. Ives: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 13.

pernicious slave morality'.<sup>46</sup> In *The World of William Clissold* (1926), Wells further registers the contemporary perceptions of Nietzsche's ideas:

Neither Nietzsche's Overman nor Shaw's Superman was really to be thought of as an individual person. Both were plainly the race development, the whole race in progress. But writers with the journalistic instinct to capture got hold of these ideas and cheapened them irremediably, and the popular interpretation of these phrases, the Overman and the Superman, had come to be not a communion of saints but an entirely ridiculous individual figure, a swagger, a provocative mingling of Napoleon Bonaparte, Antinous, and the Admirable Crichton.<sup>47</sup>

Just as William Clissold reacts against a denigration of the allegedly useful concept of the overman, Wells apparently holds Nietzsche in reasonably high esteem. In a letter of 21 February 1922, urging the editors of several literary journals to publish a complete edition of Leo Tolstoy's works in English, Wells commends Nietzsche, alongside Richard Wagner and Henrik Ibsen, as 'three giants': without them 'the XIX century bookshelf of our national libraries' would have been incomplete.<sup>48</sup>

However, Wells's paramount acknowledgement of Nietzsche and his philosophy as a break-through in conceptualizing mankind's progress takes exception to the principles of morality exercised by the Utopians. In *Men Like Gods*, the conception of the Utopian double is interlaced not only with overhuman qualities, but also with responsibility. Thus, Crystal points Barnstaple's attention to the existence of latent frustrations and agonies that the Utopians have learnt to muster: 'There is plenty of spite and vanity in every Utopian soul. But people speak very plainly and criticism is very searching and free. So that we learn to search our motives before we praise or question' (*MLG*, p. 383). The practice of enquiry into one's own motives sets a universal moral benchmark which steers the will towards perfecting individuality. Furthermore, in *The Shape of Things to Come*, Wells defines individuality as 'a responsible part of a species. It has become an experiment in feeling, knowing, making and response' (*STC*, p. 423). This definition shapes the Utopian double, enabling a complete change of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> H. G. Wells, *The World of William Clissold: A Novel at a New Angle*, (London: Ernest Benn, 1926), pp. 93–94.

<sup>48</sup> *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, in 4 vols. Volume 3: 1919–1934, ed. David C. Smith, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), p. 97.

sensibilities and mediating an antidote to those irresponsible individuals who, in retrospect, hampered the rise of the World State. Undergirded by the discourse of responsibility, the Utopian double's individuality outgrows the predominantly overhuman implications. At the same time, this version of individualism seems to be uniform and bland; the Utopians' characterless light-heartedness is endorsed with a 'broad' and 'pleasant' smile typical of Urthred, Cedar and Sungold (*MLG*, pp. 242, 319, 389). Moreover, the demise of Serpentine and Cedar in the battle with the Earthlings, which in essence means the loss of two highly qualified scientists, is not duly recalled or remembered. This attitude not only confirms the Utopians' understanding of death, which is never to be bemoaned, but it also implies the ordinariness of each allegedly unique Utopian who can so remorselessly be dispensed with.<sup>49</sup> If 'men like gods' are conceived of as individuals whose character manifests itself in their collective work, how are they different from the crowd?

In Wells's interwar utopias, the crowd stands in conceptual opposition to the Utopian double. While conversing with Crystal in *Men Like Gods*, Barnstaple recollects images from 'the world of the Crowd, the world of that detestable crawling mass of un-featured, infected human beings' (*MLG*, p. 385). Crystal in turn assures Barnstaple that '[t]here are no more Crowds in Utopia. Crowds and the crowd-mind have gone for ever' (*MLG*, p. 385). Having witnessed the irrational and barely controllable behaviour of crowds, Barnstaple associates them with mass gatherings and celebrations, like sport, war demonstrations, coronations, and public funerals. The protagonist's critical assessment of the crowd phenomenon is redolent of the social trends in England's national life in the early twentieth century. According to H. Cunningham, changes in the social dynamic

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<sup>49</sup> In the 'Memorandum' that prefaces *Things to Come: A Film Story Based on the Material Contained in His History of the Future The Shape of Things to Come* (1935), Wells stipulates that '[m]en will not be reduced to servitude and uniformity, they will be released to freedom and variety ... The workers to be shown are individualized workers doing responsible cooperative team work. And work will be unobtrusive in the coming civilization' (H. G. Wells, *Things to Come: A Film Story Based on the Material Contained in His History of the Future The Shape of Things to Come* [1935], intro. Allan Asherman and George Zebrowski, (Boston: Gregg Press, 1975), pp.13–14). In a commentary on Wells's 'Memorandum', Laura Marcus observes that 'while Wells may have insisted ... on the individuality of the workers, in the representations of the machine age and the technological utopia, in the final parts of the film the human beings almost disappear from view' (Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 67).



became acutely visible with the growing circulation of newspapers and a notable increase in the popularity of football matches, seaside resorts and admissions to the cinema.<sup>50</sup> On all such occasions, the number of consumers had risen in geometric progression by 1939. Earlier on, Gustave Le Bon, one of the first critics of the crowd, connected the pervasiveness of crowds in his time to the enfranchisement of the working classes and exhorted that '[t]he age we are about to enter will in truth be the era of crowds'.<sup>51</sup> Since Utopia has distanced itself, both temporally and mentally, from the era to which Le Bon referred, the crowd phenomenon re-emerges solely on cinematographic film, designated in *Men Like Gods* for educational purposes.

In *The Shape of Things to Come*, the crowd and the crowd-mind figure in tandem with the growth of the World State. Wells follows gradual transformations in the make-up of crowds, which initially acquire a military element, then become 'a medley of uniforms' (*STC*, p. 50), and finally develop 'candid interested faces' (*STC*, p. 188). Despite this somewhat favourable improvement on the characteristics of crowds, Wells disparages the group sentiment that unites them; that is, crowds may act, when terror- or panic-stricken, 'like madmen, all formations and distinctions lost' (*STC*, p. 65). Apart from this, Wells registers a pseudo-democratic malaise of the period, which presupposes the treatment of the electorate as a mere crowd of 'prejudiced voters' holding manipulated opinions (*STC*, p. 116). Most importantly, in the context of 1930s Europe, Wells suggestively comments on the propensity of crowds to form an alliance with dictators who offer an 'imaginative refuge ... from hard and competent aristocracy' (*STC*, p. 333). Wells is alert to the danger of crowds ruling against individuality. On this note, his critique resonates with José Ortega y Gasset's condemnation of the masses as a threat to the order of civilization. In *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930), Ortega, to whom Wells dedicated *The Shape of Things to Come*, voiced serious concern about the qualities of the average man that result from the levelling of incomes, culture, social classes, and sexes. Ortega further asserted that the masses were capable of ruling through the state, whose power might become

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<sup>50</sup> H. Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture,' in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, vol. 2: 'People and Environment,' ed. F. M. L. Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 311–14.

<sup>51</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* [1895], intro. Robert K. Meron, (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 14.

embodied in a dictatorship erasing 'everything eminent'.<sup>52</sup> In an attempt to prevent crowds from gaining power, Wells eventually restricts their presence to pictorial depictions in the Modern State, which is a practice similar to preserving their images on cinematographic film in Utopia. In *The Shape of Things to Come*, the narrator observes: 'The notebooks ... contain sketches of various members of the Council and some brilliant impressions of crowd effects in the main pavilion' (*STC*, p. 371). The aforesaid notebooks happen to belong to the local artist and poet Theotocopulos, who stands out as a non-conformist and is therefore extremely individualistic.

This latter connection of dissidence and individualism creates a palpable tension between Wells's disavowal of the crowd as a mainstay of irrational behaviour and its arguable validity for questioning authority. Theotocopulos's dissenting nature is given a socio-political prominence in the script of *Things to Come* (1935), as he continues to challenge the progress that incessantly limits human freedom and precludes the joys of living in the here and now: 'Is man *never* to rest, never to be free? A time will come when they will want more cannon fodder for their Space Guns ... Make an end to Progress now ... Between the dark past of history and the incalculable future let us snatch today—and *live*'.<sup>53</sup> But this conflicting campaign, charged with Luddite overtones, is later presented as a platform for the haphazard activity of the crowd: 'The crowd hesitates ... re-entering the city, in a straggling aimless manner, and pausing ever and again to stare at the sky'.<sup>54</sup> In these scenes, the crowd emerges as a de-individualized riposte to the social order. Followed by a featureless mob, Theotocopulos contests the major scientific enterprise of space exploration with his reactionary attitudes. Notably, in *The Shape of Things to Come*, Wells mentions the protagonist's 'anarchistic soul' in one breath with the latter's objections to state intervention into 'private flying, the difficulties in finding scope for his genius, and the general want of beauty and graciousness in life' (*STC*, p. 363). Indeed, Theotocopulos is shown to be atavistically disposed to a bucolic past. His disposition is made to contrast unfavourably with the Utopian type of cooperative individualism, corrected by responsibility.

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<sup>52</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* [1930], trans. Anthony Kerrigan, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 173.

<sup>53</sup> Wells, *Things*, p. 122.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

However, the presence of crowds as occasions for mass mobilization suggests that Wells's investment in the triumph of scientific progress is not absolute, which reaffirms an underlying connection between Utopian individualism and the crowd. This link can be expounded by contemporary discussions of the national character that manifests itself in the crowd phenomenon. In the interwar years, the social situations, which tended to assemble crowds, permitted people to find 'their identities both individually and collectively' in activities outside religion.<sup>55</sup> Besides, Gary Cross and John Walton emphasize, in their book on the geographies of pleasure, that the mind-set of crowds 'reflects less the refinement and manipulation of the masses, than the triumph of particular strands of middle-class and "respectable" popular culture'.<sup>56</sup> In this light, considering that a dominant 'respectable' culture in Wells's utopias is represented by technical and scientific elites, the crowd mind is a necessary extension of the Utopian double. Therefore the revolt of the crowd against technological progress indicates a deep uncertainty which can equally, if covertly, beset the elites. Much as Cabal unequivocally opts for 'conquest after conquest, to the stars', when the crowd is unable to abort the launch of a space gun in *Things to Come*, he never orders Theotocopulos to be suppressed, no matter how outspoken the latter's castigation of progress sounds. So long as the dissenters, such as Lychnis and Theotocopulos, are allowed to critique their respective societies, the crowd provides additional, albeit regressive, opportunities for free discussion. The fact that the crowd is brought back to life on film in *Men Like Gods* and in Theotocopulos's notebooks in *The Shape of Things to Come*, to say nothing of its active role in *Things to Come*, closely follows a contemporary England of ever changing susceptibilities that Wells proposes to acknowledge and re-educate.

## Conclusion

The conception of the Utopian double traverses Wells's long-term project of bettering humanity by social and biological means, and by balancing out challenges to individuality. Immersed in a properly managed and fully accessible system of education, the Utopian double's character is fostered in the tradition of fairness that springs from the national emphasis on fair play as an active strategy in the Englishman's life. Alongside eugenics, the

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<sup>55</sup> Cunningham, p. 339.

<sup>56</sup> Gary Cross and John K. Walton, *The Playful Crowd: Pleasure Places in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 256.

overhuman qualities of the Utopian double's physique and character equally signal Wells's steady interest in revitalizing the nation (and humanity at large). Having rejected *laissez-faire*, Wells invests individualism in the functional aspect of a progress-oriented World State. In depicting potential opposition to progress, he nevertheless designates the crowd as both a dissenting agency and a critical corrective to Utopian individualism. This ambivalence suggests Wells's underlying uncertainty about the forms in which residual attachments to England may be allowed to survive in a rational World State.

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# Surviving that place: language and violence in the poetry of Ingrid Jonker, Ingrid de Kok, Gabeda Baderoon and Phillippa Yaa de Villiers.

MARIAN DE SAXE

No foreign sky protected me,  
no stranger's wing shielded my face.  
I stand as witness to the common lot,  
Survivor of that time, that place.<sup>1</sup>

Witness literature, or the literature of testimony, has been the focus of much analysis in South Africa since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 1996 to 1998.<sup>2</sup> Heidi Grunebaum maintains that 'reconciliation discourse ... places very particular boundaries around what is spoken, written, remembered, represented, mourned and claimed.'<sup>3</sup> In this paper I intend to juxtapose these boundaries with rhythm and poetic formalism, of which Finch writes: 'I can think of no more poignant a model for the paradox of boundaries than the way a vibrant, living, boundaryless poem flows in the consistent, defining shape of its form.'<sup>4</sup> This paper deliberates the paradox of boundaries in a broad sense: how boundarylessness, language and rhythm within poetic form or formlessness gives or withholds freedom to write the witnessing of violence and death.

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Akhmatova, 'Requiem,' *Against Forgetting* ed. Carolyn Forché (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1993), p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> For example Antje Krog, *Country of my Skull* (Johannesburg: Random House 1998); Eric Doxtader and Charles Villa-Vicencio eds., *To Repair the Irreparable* (Claremont: David Philip Publishers, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Heidi Grunebaum, 'Talking to Ourselves: Among the Innocent Dead: On Reconciliation, Forgiveness, and Mourning,' *PMLA* 117, no. 2 (March, 2002): p.307.

<sup>4</sup> Annie Finch, 'Female tradition as feminist innovation,' In *The Body of Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 89–94, 93.

Politically engendered, inscribed violence and state-sanctioned deaths are deeply embedded in the politics and landscape of South Africa and have been at the heart of South Africa's cultural production and representation since the eighteenth century. This paper looks at three contemporary South African poets, Ingrid de Kok, Gabeda Baderoon and Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, in order to examine the ways in which they use form, rhythm and imagery to imagine, experience, witness and contain death, while a certain degree of metrical experimentation enables a response to freedom by situating place and people at the forefront of memory. My reading also concentrates on the poetry of Ingrid Jonker whose poetic struggle with subjectivity and observation prepared a path for de Kok, Baderoon and de Villiers to successfully escape the boundaries of reconciliation discourse within relatively conservative poetic and rhythmic structures. These poets personalize allusions to violence in everyday life while the imagery, rhythm and structure of their poems reveal a set of related ideas about violence and language which are particular to the form of their poems.

### **Ingrid Jonker**

Ingrid Jonker was a white Afrikaans poet whose works were translated by her two lovers, the poet Jack Cope and the South African novelist André Brink. She struggled to overcome a fractured childhood overshadowed by the strict, Calvinist-Afrikaner conservatism of her father, a minister in the South African nationalist government. Jonker committed suicide at the age of thirty-two in 1965. The manner of her death (she walked into the sea in Cape Town) coupled with her emotionally expressive, highly subjective and, for the period, unusual poetic imagery and form, assured her an almost mythological status as the South African Sylvia Plath.

Jonker's poems are both attempts at metrical form as well as free-verse poems where the metrical stress is often on important, penultimate words in a line with pattern, structure and breaks in rhythm declaiming or hiding emotion. Images often play with contradictory and ambiguous tones and voices. Jonker tries to place her poetic boundaries around subjectivity by seeking redemption from violence in imagery:

The child is not dead  
the child raises his fist against his mother

who screams Afrika! shouts the scent  
 Of freedom and heather  
 In the locations of the surrounded heart.<sup>5</sup>

‘The Child who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga’ had been a constant source of annoyance to Jonker’s publishers who judged it too political to be included in collections of her lyrical works. One publisher would only publish it under the title ‘Die Kind’ (‘The Child’); nevertheless Jonker had to argue to have this poem included in the anthology. Jane Wilkinson<sup>6</sup> finds a positive and hopeful message in Jonker’s resurrection of the dead child in a transformed South Africa as the child strides, without a pass, into the world.<sup>7</sup> I differ slightly in my interpretation as it seems to me that the deliberate rhythmic breaks within the careful structure of the poem present an authentic, internal struggle from which Jonker could not escape. The inability to hold death within a poetic frame allows imagery and emotion to coalesce in, as Brink describes, ‘raw despair.’<sup>8</sup> Jonker objectifies the child to represent a poetic or artistic expression that she could not quite reach: the jagged sentence structure and interruption to rhythm are circuitous. Jonker did not see this poem as political,<sup>9</sup> however contentious it would be for the reader to abolish its signifiers.

The poem is divided into four stanzas, the first three of five lines each, the last of ten lines in which rhythm and form are disturbed to convey the intensity of meaning. Jonker uses rhythmical repetition as a means of emphasis as metre cannot express or contain her emotion. This perseverance of utterance is typical of witness accounts of violence which objectify, list or state, producing evidence to reiterate the veracity of an account to the witness (speaker or interlocutor) as well as the audience. Jonker did not see this event but recorded her personal response to its

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<sup>5</sup> Ingrid Jonker, *Selected Poems*, trans. Jack Cope and William Plomer (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Wilkinson, ‘Re-visioning the Child: Mourning and Survival in Poems by Ingrid Jonker, Ingrid de Kok and Karen Press,’ *Working and Writing for tomorrow. Essays in honour of Itala Viva* ed. Annalisa Oboe, Claudia Gualtieri and Roger Bromley (Nottingham: Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, 2008), pp. 9–26

<sup>7</sup> Wilkinson, p.13 quotes Ingrid Jonker: ‘Poetic technique...slowly developed like any workman who improves his skill by hard work.’

<sup>8</sup> André Brink, *A Fork in the Road* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p.105.

<sup>9</sup> Jack Cope, *The Adversary Within: Dissident Writers in Afrikaans* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1982), p.83.

reportage by taking on the role of witness.<sup>10</sup> The poet thrusts her outspoken and rebellious fist at those who failed her as a child, personalizing the narrative: ‘The child lifts his fists against his father’ as well as his mother. Here was a child too who:

is present at all gatherings and law-giving  
 the child peers through house windows and into the hearts  
 of mothers  
 the child who wanted just to play in the sun at Nyanga is  
 everywhere  
 the child grown to a man treks all over Africa  
 the child grown to a giant travels through the whole world  
 Without a pass

Jonker’s ‘everywhere’ child appears to exteriorize the poet, the poet-as-mother and the poet-as-child, with multiple voices alternating as witnesses to death and violence. The child-as-child is witness too, peering through house windows, being present as a silent observer at all family gatherings and legal proceedings, a watchful child condemning the creation of unjust laws to which the poet’s father was a party. The child peering through ‘house windows’ domesticates violence ‘in the shadow of the soldiers/on guard with rifles Saracens and batons.’ ‘Saracens’ was a word used by black South Africans to describe the armoured personnel carriers used by the police, conveying also a hint of infidel warriors. Jonker attempts to universalise her imagery, a bid for freedom, not only from South Africa but also from her own points of reference.

The image of the child is persistently propelled through the violence of the poem to the final words ‘without a pass’ which appear almost as an anti-climax, a denouement after the creation of the child’s ubiquitousness, boundarylessness. Jonker repeats the words ‘the child’ ten times in the twenty-five line poem ensuring a rhythmical insistence on the innocence of the not-dead, dead child who could have ‘grown to a giant’ to ‘travel the whole world.’ Brink notes that as Jonker travelled abroad she experienced ‘increasing *dépaysement*’<sup>11</sup> (homesickness), feeling her self negated by her displacement: neither at home in herself, in South Africa or outside ‘that time, that place.’ She physically distanced herself from family seeking any experience she could to live independently and write. The whole poem

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<sup>10</sup> Wilkinson, p.13 quotes Ingrid Jonker: ‘I saw the mother as every mother in the world. I saw her as myself...I could not sleep.’

<sup>11</sup> Brink, *A Fork in the Road*, p. 106.



builds towards the final symbol of the restrictive and notorious South African 'pass' which was an identity document carried by all blacks in South Africa, designating compulsory locations of residence and restrictions of movement. By the end of the poem Jonker has become the voice of the child which seems to cry out through the regular beat and metre of sentences abruptly broken by lack of punctuation, pleading to march away from restriction, fear and confinement which lead, it seems to me, only to death. The poem struggles to contain death in an ambiguity of imagery and declamation which Wilkinson interprets as hope, concluding that death 'is not so much erased, as under erasure.'<sup>12</sup>

The language and tone of Jonker's poems wrestle with a desperate randomness inherent in the emotional landscape of her youth which becomes a difficulty in her writing, experimenting to settle on a comfortable poetic form. Jonker cannot quite frame an order on her poetic vision as her emotion runs over her writing. In 'Homesickness for Cape Town,'<sup>13</sup> the city is a 'She' (or Jonker's hidden I) personified as both the child's mother and the poet-as-mother as well as the mother-figure of Africa so beloved of the anti-apartheid poets. Jonker's ten line stanza places the emphasis on the 'She' which opens nine sentences. Here the she-figure is not quite the everyday mother that Jonker could not become but rather a witness to or harbinger of violence and death.

Jonker carefully crafts the sentence structure so that the comforting, though chilling, words of the mother appear to contradict themselves leaving us in no doubt of the child's fear. Simultaneously we are exposed to the poet's ambivalence:

She shelters me in the profusion of her lap  
 She says my throat is not going to be cut  
 She says I'm not being put under house-arrest  
 She says I'm not dying of the galloping consumption of love  
 .....  
 She is my mother  
 With cups of tea she paralyzes Table Mountain  
 And her hands are as cool as spoons

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<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson, 'Re-visioning the Child,' p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Ingrid Jonker, 'Homesickness for Cape Town,' In *The Lava of This Land: South African Poetry 1960–1966*, ed. Denis Hirson, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p.18.

The tone and metre of the opening sentences are flat and unemotional with the exception of the repetition of 'she' while the imagery is harsh and dramatic, sitting uncomfortably with the child-like declamations. Again we presume protection and warmth from the parent until Jonker harshly imagines the possibility of child murder as she longs for assurance and knowledge. The city is personified as a mother with 'hands as cool as spoons' who can make tea, a link between the throat as a passage to living and the cut throat of the dying. The sudden insertion of this image insists on its own truth, that fear is real and that ambivalence is deadly. There is tension in Jonker's house-arrest,<sup>14</sup> the house of the desired mother brings with it enclosure, separation, silence, disappearance, death.

The poem contains and paralyzes Cape Town so that the sentiment of remembering becomes suffocating despite a desire to capture Cape Town as the mother protector. The mother figure's protection is all consuming and overbearing. Place is personified as the domestic image of tea-maker, albeit as a mother who is also unknowing and the child who conceals:

She doesn't know I am hungry  
 She doesn't know I am afraid  
 She doesn't know cockcrow and house-arrest are a pair  
 She is my mother.

Having lived with a mother, grandmother and two step-mothers and being a mother herself, Jonker's ambiguity is reinforced by the repetition of 'she doesn't know,' which could be read as failure and despair.

Jonker's *Selected Poems*<sup>15</sup> consist of several lyrical love poems which cascade back and forth between acceptance and rejection, using images of nature and loss to expand her world:

I went to search for my own heart  
 and after I had lost my way  
 in the days that trail by with their leaves  
 ('I went to search for my own heart,' 23).

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<sup>14</sup>House arrest was a common form of detention in apartheid South Africa in which opponents of apartheid were confined to particular places of residence with their movements strictly curtailed and their visitors monitored. Often house arrests involved daily visits to the police.

<sup>15</sup>Ingrid Jonker, *Selected Poems*, trans. Jack Cope and William Plomer, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968). Further citations of this work are given in the text.

There are recurrent images of being alone: ‘they picked me from the others to endure / me in this prison where I stand alone’ (‘At the Goodwood Agricultural Show,’ 14); likewise the constant ‘unreality’ and ‘the rejection / of the world’ (‘On all the faces,’ 17). Her poems hide the self deep within metaphors: in the poem ‘Bitterberry Daybreak,’<sup>16</sup> a broken relationship is reflected in the ‘bitterberry sun,’ ‘the highway’ becomes lost in the twisting ‘tracks’ of ‘words,’ and memory becomes ‘pinewood’ in which to ‘stumble into pain.’ Wooden and stolid, this poem rambles inwards.

In ‘Pregnant Women’ (18), form fails to successfully contain her attempt to universalize her emotion though a singing quality emerges as an experiment with the lyric. Loss is coated in blood. Jonker plays ‘that I’m happy’ (18) as her ‘bloodchild’ is born. She lies ‘under the crust of the night singing, / curled up in the sewer, singing.’ Imagery is violent. Jumping quickly from one thought to another, her predominant mood is distress. Between ‘sewer’ and ‘sadness’ and ‘still singing fleshrose,’ ‘our bloodsong’ builds intensity and despair in an almost operatic crescendo:

My yesterday hangs under my heart  
 My red gladiolus my cradling world  
 And my heart that sings like a cicada,  
 My cicada-heart sings like a cicada;  
 But sewer oh sewer,  
 My bloodchild lies in the water

The song cannot quite hold the lyric as emotion overflows despite containing the musical qualities and metre of a well known verse (‘My bonnie lies over the ocean’). The overall affect of this explosion of imagery is of a very violent red of birth encircling the poet’s fragile heart as she cradles her inner self singing a ‘bloodsong’ of loss and sadness, ‘free from my womb but besmeared.’ The poem is situated in the landscape of her Cape childhood:

I play that I’m a child  
 gooseberries, gooseberries and heather  
 kukumakrankas and anise

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<sup>16</sup> Ingrid Jonker, ‘Bitterberry Daybreak,’ In *The Lava of this Land*, p.16.

but place has been displaced by ‘play’ and ‘trembling’ and appears no more in this poem of pain.

After Jonker’s father ceased to have any contact with her, increasingly depressed and unhappy as relationships failed, content only when being a mother to her daughter, Jonker wrote her own death as a witness to her sense of being censored into silence and negation: ‘I looked down from the mountain and saw I was dead’ (‘Seen from the wound in my side,’ 29). Jonker’s poetic form reaches out to containment and realisation even as she writes what could be her own epitaph in the beautifully evocative poem ‘Daisies in Namaqualand.’ (33) Jonker creates the delicate but hardy, sun-loving and drought-proof daisy as the symbol of exile from her crumbling world:

Behind the closed-up forehead  
where perhaps another shoot falls  
of a drowned springtime  
Behind the shot-down word  
Behind our divided house  
Behind the heart shut against itself  
Behind wire fences, camps, locations  
Behind the silence where unknown languages  
fall like bells at a burial  
Behind our torn-up land

sits the green praying mantis of the veld  
And we hear still half-dazed  
little blue Namaqualand daisy  
something answer, and believe, and know.

The familiar, repetitive technique produces a funereal recitation of death and violence, a place where springtime is ‘drowned’ and words ‘shot-down.’ The censorship of words has grown from ‘our divided house,’ ‘behind the heart shut against itself.’ Images of violence come from ‘wire fences, camps, locations.’ We almost hear the poet’s cry but her exile is too deep, too sorrowful and too ‘unknown’ to reach us. Surprisingly fresh, the contrasting image of the ‘little blue Namaqualand daisy’ startles itself into our reading. This little blue daisy which we can imagine bobbing its new head cautiously amid the barbarism coupled with the solitary pose of ‘the green praying mantis of the veld’ are South African images which seem to appear from nowhere in this roll-call of boundaries, reminders not just of

the continuity of nature but also of the poet's faint glimmer of hope for some reassurance and continuity. The final line has a closure in its structure and beat and a hint of a prayer for peace.

Jonker wanders through the divided torn-up land with her heart confused by the hardness of those in power, hidden 'away in my word' ('L'art poétique,' 35) from the 'violence of a simple recollection / in your drowned hands.' Then, towards the end of her short life, Jonker suddenly and powerfully surprises us once more with her death-laden pessimism as witness. 'I am with those' is almost factual so that it speaks to anyone with its contradictions and shifting voices:

I am with those  
 Who abuse sex  
 Because the individual doesn't count  
 .....  
 with those coloured, African disposed  
 with those who murder  
 because every death affirms anew  
 the lie of life

And please don't forget  
 About justice it doesn't exist  
 About brotherhood it's deceit  
 About love it has no right  
 ('I am with those,' 50)

Who is the poet with? Where do we stand? If the individual doesn't count, and justice doesn't exist, death can only affirm 'the lie of life'. Here her courage fails her; she loses hope, there is no utopia or promise of reprieve: 'my parents have broken themselves off from my death' ('I drift in the wind,' 51) and indeed Abraham Jonker forbade poetry reading at his daughter's funeral. In an allusion to the culture of her father, Jonker finally calls 'my nation' to 'follow my lonely fingers / . . . my Black Africa.../ My people have rotted away from me / what will become of the rotten nation.' (51) Her detachment and disillusionment drift in the wind; there is no solace, no hope and no joy and in the end only a bitter and tragic exit from her unhappy world as Jonker could not out write death.

Mandela, tellingly, gave Jonker a home beyond her poetry. While 'no foreign sky protected' her, a 'stranger's wing' appeared in the figure of

Mandela who recited<sup>17</sup> ‘The Child who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga’ at his inaugural address in May 1994 as South Africa’s first democratic president. That the poet’s tragic death has been mythologised in relation to the difficult passage and symbolic importance of this poem was not lost on Mandela. He selected the poem of a dead, white, Afrikaans woman as a gesture of defiance and resurrection which was part of a reconciliation discourse to verify deeply felt truths as written into Jonker’s poetry.

### Ingrid de Kok

Ingrid de Kok is part of a generation of South African women writers that includes Karen Press and Antjie Krug, all now based in the Cape, who have written about South Africa’s transition to democracy from the perspective of whiteness and privilege. We find a counterpoint to Jonker’s juxtaposition of fear and violence in the language of Ingrid de Kok’s 2002 collection of poems *Terrestrial Things* but without emotional turmoil spilling from the page. This volume has four sections, the titles of which extend beyond the borders of South Africa: ‘Foreign and Familiar,’ ‘A Room Full of Questions,’ ‘Stretched Horizons’ and ‘Freight.’ De Kok moves between place and memory, between testimony and recollection, family and violence, using vivid and evocative descriptions of place to inscribe the loss of liberty, returning in the latter two sections to images of childhood and relationships. Jonker struggled with the poetic process as an attempt to reconstruct a personal emotional response; De Kok’s concerns extend to the process of writing itself as a means of authenticity:

If we go on like this, everyone  
Will know somebody this week dead,  
Watch somebody die, kill somebody  
Or film it, write about it.<sup>18</sup>

We are all implicated in this violence with the stress on the final words of ‘everyone,’ ‘dead,’ and ‘somebody.’ Violence and death reduced to ‘it.’

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<sup>17</sup> There are two You Tube recordings of Mandela’s voice reading part of the poem. It is worth noting that Mandela creates a three to four-part rhythm in his reading conveying a sense of metre. The difference between spoken and written poetic testimony is worth further exploration.

<sup>18</sup> Ingrid de Kok, ‘Today, again’ in *Terrestrial Things*, (Plumstead: Kwela/Snailpress, 2002), p. 35.

In one of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Tereus, Procne and Philomela, despite 'finally losing their humanity and being changed into birds,' are not silenced. Horace Enghald<sup>19</sup> interprets their 'animal cry' as a testimony to horror. De Kok's poems in the section 'Foreign and Familiar' metamorphose animals in the Italian landscape into instruments of death or witnesses to violence and unimaginable horror to the point that the familiar is both strange and 'contradictory.' In 'Italian Cats,'<sup>20</sup> the poet caustically suggests that cats are accorded the rights denied illegal immigrants:

Rumour has it the Italian constitution  
 Defends cats, wherever they live and breed,  
 Against starving and persecution

Here rumour is presented blandly for our consumption with almost a caesura after 'it' and again after 'cats' containing a metrical arrhythmia that appears to point to an irregularity in the Italian constitution. The foreign appears erroneously foreign from the eyes of Africans:

What have we Africans to do with this?  
 With holy water, floating graves and cypresses

The periphery questions the centre as residents, illegal immigrants and de Kok's Africa meet in a perhaps slightly clumsy attempt at dialogue as in the subdued rhyming couplet of dialect and papers which 'never are correct.'

On the Rialto, tourists eye the wares  
 Of three of our continent's diasporic sons  
 Young men in dreadlocks and caps, touting  
 Leather bags and laser toys in the subdued dialect  
 Of those whose papers never are correct

Here I will concentrate on two of de Kok's poems to show how she discloses loss through incidental and random acts of violence. De Kok's opening poem 'Spring custom'<sup>21</sup> begins with twelve line and six line stanzas to depart into eighteen lines divided into an uneven eleven and

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<sup>19</sup>Horace Enghald, ed. *Witness literature* (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2002), p.13.

<sup>20</sup>De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p.15.

<sup>21</sup>De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p. 11.

seven as if to intensify the violent impact of her imagery. De Kok chills us with the poem's possible image of the poet as 'the wild canary,' kept 'all winter long' in a cage in a cellar. The wild canary is now an imprisoned, domesticated bird that has lost its voice: 'it sings no more.' The poet becomes the voiceless canary who, silent in the 'damp dark,' no longer responds to 'a dose of daily cellular light.' De Kok's portrait is a melancholy one intent on the detail of rhythmic song so that the reader sways with the moving cage as, at the end of winter, 'before dawn' we are carried outside. We see only 'shafts of moving light' and smell soil 'strong as coffee' as outside the cage is 'hooked high in a spreading chestnut.' Here we witness buds and shoots and 'blue sky feathering trees.' Moving between objective narrator and the subjectivity of the bird, de Kok creates a forceful, experiential field of emotions as she ponders the complex, paradoxical meanings of freedom and responsibility in writing as well as living:

The bird hiccups, tests its unpadlocked voice,  
and again, and then soars into song-  
calling, we imagine, its lungs to free its wings.

Embedded in each image is a reminder of something out of tune with the place, a portent or some shadow which arrives with each minute observation: the bird's voice is unpadlocked as de Kok steps back observing that maybe we 'only imagine' the bird-poet is summoning a hidden reserve of strength to fly.

In the chestnut, pert and curious,  
a bird party sings  
without shadow or memory.

Also in the chestnut, an uncaged bird party is free, the poet suggests, to become 'pert and curious' unburdened by memory or illusions. De Kok allows herself a moment to reflect on the process of writing, how 'we project our longings' into the bird conversation 'despite our forebodings.' At this point in the poem we are locked into an uneasy pause which de Kok extends by describing how the scene should appear but for the cause or nature of our anxiety. The poet herself is suspended in the ritual of rhythmical seduction as if an uneasy witness to its charm:

because: there, we say,  
are the trees, spring, and the wild birds



and there, the caged one about to be freed  
and the farmer sharing the sun beside it.

But death enters the poem, violent death akin to the burials in Jonker's 'Daisies in Namaqualand.' We have moved through the poem with this whispering fear, from the cage, the cellar, the 'wooden shutters,' 'the stamp' of the farmer's boots until

... the farmer lifts his gun  
and shoots as many as he can,  
their bodies mostly too small to eat  
though large enough  
to spasm in the sky  
before they fall  
and are collected in a bag  
on this bright morning.

The imagery is strongly reminiscent of Jonker's children, bodies in spasm as they are gunned down. Another rural idyll is not as it seems as man intrudes on nature and its rhythm, the horror reflected in the shorter sentences of the staccato stanza as the small bodies fall. The bright morning is enclosed in a bag of horror. And quickly, incidentally, de Kok places her poem in 'the glittering Tuscan hills' where the cruelty of the custom shatters a tradition of tourist dreams. The poet herself is overwhelmed:

The caged canary,  
shocked rigid  
by the sudden shots,  
smelling its betrayal  
in gunpowder,  
stops singing  
until the following spring.

De Kok personifies the canary's response to violence as an intuitive reaction overcome only by the inevitability of nature's rhythm. She implicitly asks the reader to note her own surprised response to shots fired in a romanticised Italian landscape. After Nyanga and Sharpeville in 1961, South Africa experienced a series of violent riots culminating in Soweto in 1976, with the Marikana Mine shootings repeating state-sanctioned violence in post-apartheid 2012. But we are not in South Africa, de Kok

reminds us, we are witness instead to another custom amid the glittering Tuscan hills. De Kok bears witness to what appears habitual, ritualised death, almost a banality except to the caged observer who is ‘shocked rigid.’ ‘Betrayal in gunpowder’ becomes a universal image that starts to appear ritualistic and natural. For de Kok therein lies the horror: that, as Jonker imagined and Arendt named, from the banal evil can ooze.

De Kok retains this theme when describing the ‘Birds at Bellagio’<sup>22</sup> who ‘except for the undertaker-crows’ ‘expect to die from gunshot wounds/on autumn afternoons.’ The casual rhyming of wounds and afternoons, and the rearrangement of the letters in ‘except’ and ‘expect’ emphasize the simplicity with which violence can change life. Death intrudes easily into the contained scene. De Kok returns to revisit the patterning and structure of her rhythm insisting on a casual familiarity to emphasise the simplicity of observation. The birds disappear

into impenetrable green gloom,  
 their pewter throats sealing song  
 in the trussed cypresses that guard  
 mass graveyards of Italian birds,  
 shot once for food, and then for sport  
 through the venal centuries, in peace and war.

We are in a land of mass graveyards and violence, the undercurrents of venal centuries. De Kok cannot, and has no desire to, shake the past. In these two poems, the poet’s birds assume the symbolic resonance of witness even as the poet remembers that the ‘undertaker-crows’ sneer from ‘elegant branches overhead.’ De Kok places these crows as witnesses too, albeit as perpetrators or watchers, witnesses who reveal only their own underbellies of darkness.

By the time we reach a later poem, the poet spells out the unpredictability of violence and death using anaphora. Death is again reduced to ‘it’ even though ‘its’ reiteration at the beginning of each line reinforces death’s importance. In ‘Death Arrives:’<sup>23</sup>

It never occurs the way one predicts  
 It never does.

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<sup>22</sup> De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p.13.

<sup>23</sup> De Kok. *Seasonal Fires* (New York: SevenStories Press, 2006), pp. 168–169.

It won't ever disclose the year or hour  
It only contradicts.

The poem holds death at bay with rhyme and simplicity of form. Emotion is restrained despite the familiarity of repetition. I suggest that in these poems de Kok's imagery speaks as witness to the past and present of a global, rather than specifically South African, imaginary of violence and representation. Her poems contain violence through the use of mockery, sarcasm and irony:

Turned out, inside out  
Only safe in the hearse.  
Women and children first.

These are techniques which Jonker could not use to hold subjectivity at bay.

In 'Women and Children First'<sup>24</sup> the success of the last rhyming couplet resonates beyond Jonker as does the rhyming intonation and incantations of de Kok's new poems 'Body Maps' and 'Sketches from a Summer Notebook.'<sup>25</sup> In these poems de Kok embraces the freedom of travel and the joy inherent in nature. These images tell us 'how we too should grow and live.'<sup>26</sup> De Kok's poems press the edges of poetic boundaries as her imagery expands beyond violence, memory and South Africa allowing experimentation with the formal structures of metre, voice and rhythm to convey meaning. She leaves behind the constraints of reconciliation discourse.

### Gabeda Baderoon

To 'grow and live' beyond violence is almost a *lief*-motif of the current generation of South African poets. As part of this generation, Gabeda Baderoon and Phillippa Yaa de Villiers (who were both in their mid-twenties at the end of apartheid) have consciously adopted poetic forms which enable them to explore subjective experiences of South African violence albeit with very different voices and tonal qualities. Like Jonker and de Kok, both poets imbue narrative with symbolism and

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<sup>24</sup> De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, pp. 139–186.

<sup>26</sup> De Kok, 'Sunflowers' in *Seasonal Fires*, p.185.

personification using detective-like forensic qualities of slow revelation. Baderoon engages with South Africa's violent past by projecting her experiences into a global imaginary enclosing South Africa in a broader though personal frame. De Villiers faces the violence, encases it in imagery and experimentation, and throws metaphors at us in a daring poetic engagement with the personal.

As an academic working in America and South Africa, Baderoon is acutely aware of critical theorizing grounded in South Africa. She thus attempts to break through the nomenclature and 'entanglements'<sup>27</sup> of South African violence by writing tightly constructed, restrained and controlled poems within a free-verse formlessness. Baderoon's poetry deliberates on the witnessing of silence and repression as constant, violent undercurrents to ordinary life. Her language and imagery is simplified to the point of containing emotion well within the poetic line. Images which would appear symptomatic of reconciliation discourse or the witnessing of overt violence are excluded within personal boundaries of language choice and poetic structure. In an interview,<sup>28</sup> Baderoon both acknowledges the force of apartheid in her life and rejects it as an overt subject of her poetry. I suggest that this ambivalence informs the sense of place and violence in her poetry.

Baderoon's slow disclosure of place departs from the easier identification of politics and violence in the work of many South African poets including Jonker and de Kok. Exploring the language of confession, secrecy and repression that has been part of South Africa's social discourse, Baderoon's poetic tone is bound by rhythmical lines and repetition within simple structures. Her poems signal that transitional point of distance when the past slips inexorably away unless recorded and remembered in minute detail. Detail is punctuated by moments of silence to contain that slippage from the past. When the disruptions of everyday life in South Africa slide into her poems amid the paraphernalia of normality,

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<sup>27</sup> Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement: literary and cultural reflections on post-apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Amatoritsero Ede and Gabeda Baderoon, 'Interview: beauty in the harsh lines,' *Sentinel Poetry (Online)*, 37, 3rd Anniversary Issue, (December, 2005), [www.sentinelpoetry.org.uk/1205/interview.htm](http://www.sentinelpoetry.org.uk/1205/interview.htm), accessed 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2013. This is an extensive interview in which Baderoon discusses her thoughts about South Africa, poetry, violence and beauty as well as the meaning of apartheid to her, as a black South African.

their casual appearance shocks the reader out of a reverie created by the very simplicity of poetic structure and rhythm. Violence intrudes.

In Baderoon's first collection *The Dream in the Next Body*, the poems are personal, tentative explorations of self and travel to places outside the confines of self-defined boundaries and limits. Disorder is displaced in our imagination as words hint at another world such as in the poem 'Old Story' (DB, 18) where a snake 'throws itself sideways after her, as it must.' In the 'empty' landscape, there is a 'purity of silence' before the whip-fast struggle of woman and snake. This silence always precedes or conceals moments of disruption in Baderoon's poems.

A certain creative tentativeness of expression is offset by a gravity of tone: 'Track memory. Loss lets you see/again.'<sup>29</sup> Baderoon turns loss into the familiar landscapes of everyday objects and memory. Instances of specifically South African vernacular in 'My Tongue Softens on the Other Name,' are paradoxical and unexpected: Kapokbos (cottonwool bush) and wityolyf (white olive) (DB, 31–32) hint at a South African landscape which softens the 'corner in the lee of the house' where Baderoon's childhood garden begins to grow, however these are two words which signify the unfamiliar to an outsider. Baderoon is comfortable enough with her memories to leave South Africa as a specifically defined place as an absence in this collection, with this poem suggesting that she is exploring how to write about her childhood without being defined by apartheid's violence. To do so, she must grapple with how to describe a South African childhood under apartheid. Place is constructed as family in contrast to Ingrid de Kok's 'Childhood at Stilfontein Mine' where family becomes the paradoxical world of white violence: 'Safest white childhood of the fifties/if your father didn't beat you.'<sup>30</sup> Baderoon places other spaces in Proustian memory so that the past is clearly situated in the sounds, sights and tastes evoked by family and childhood and not essentially in apartheid South Africa. Violence is excluded from the private domain.

Baderoon's poetic world expands in her second volume *A Hundred Silences*.<sup>31</sup> As her inner dialogue becomes more evocative she allows

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<sup>29</sup> Gabeba Baderoon, *The Dream in the Next Body* (Plumstead: Kwela Books/Snailpress, 2005), 28. Further citations of this work are given in the text as DB.

<sup>30</sup> De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p.42.

<sup>31</sup> Gabeda Baderoon, *A Hundred Silences*, (Plumstead: Kwela Books/Snailpress, 2006). Further citations of this work are given in the text as HS.

South Africa as a complex geopolitical reality to enter memories of everyday life as her poems translate into remembrances of significance: 'this place on the West Coast' is 'never disclosed' (HS, 'Give,' 9–10) although the fish caught by her father on these fishing trips on the West Coast are particular to South Africa, namely the 'galjoen and yellow tail.' 'My father and his friend' go fishing, Baderoon recalls, 'his days off'<sup>32</sup> always in the middle of the week.' Off they 'drive away,' to become a receding memory even as Baderoon writes her poem, 'they stand unwatched', no-one keeping track of their movements, their days and their time. Baderoon 'wonders about the empty days, more frequent' as if her father and herself both stood in the dark at the edge

of something vast, sea and sky  
 throwing a thin line into the give of it  
 and waiting, silent and waiting,  
 until something pulls  
 against your weight.  
 ('Give,' HS, 10)

Unwatched, in private, unseen except in her imagination, the poet's father is written into history in a specific place and juncture of time in Baderoon's memory. These lines rock back and forth with the peaceful rhythm of fishing while the pun on the words 'weight' and 'wait' gives weight to the poem as the poet steps towards the immensity of an unknown past and future symbolized by the vastness of the sea and sky. This sense of stillness conveys the unspoken and the private, silences in which moments of personal reflection became possible for Baderoon's father amidst the reality of apartheid.

Baderoon cannot completely avoid a South African rhetoric centered on dislocation. Images shift and revolve in her poems so that the imperceptible worlds of childhood and uncertainty haunt her travels abroad. Travelling away from images of certainty she loses 'a centre / To which I can return, / but do not' ('The Call', DB, 15). South Africa is identified through loss—a letter to 'the address' she has 'left behind', the misplaced nutmeg grater 'in another cupboard' 'another place' ('Point of View,' DB, 13). She leaves behind memory and people including her

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<sup>32</sup> In South Africa, 'day off' was slang for time granted at the benevolence and convenience of the boss (master) who was generally white. *A Dictionary of South African English On Historical Principles*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Dictionary Unit for South African English, 1996), p. 516.

mother: 'I fear/ I will never see her again' ('The Call,' DB, 15). She watches cooking shows in a new country 'for the company of colours', the colours of her grandmother's cooking, 'to keep from crying' ('Hunger,' DB, 24). As her self unfolds in the outside world, she tries not to 'fall off the edge of the world' ('The Machine,' DB, 26), 'my every glance a line pulling/against an ancient undertow of doubt.' (DB, 26) She ruminates on the German word 'unheimlich' ('the country after midnight,' DB, 35), 'home but not home / home like the cellar or dark stairwell' (DB, 35). This 'shadow /of loss falling from the future' ('The Forest,' DB, 30) is only named and described briefly ('My Tongue Softens on the Other Name,' DB, 31). The poet remembers her brother digging a garden, the 'tap that has dripped all my life' (BD, 32), her brother sitting on an 'upturned paint tin'

light wells over the rim of the stone basin  
and collects itself into the moon.  
Everything is finding its place

By displacing violence, a slow process of memory and objectification or personification preoccupies Baderoon. As a witness, she acknowledges that what is remembered and recorded will haunt her into the future so that the shapes, colours and form of memory will transform her: 'you never come back/the same' ('The Forest,' DB, 30). Her title poem 'The Dream in the Next Body' speaks of a continuity of place residing in the body which lies next to her, even as the comfort and unity of the 'single, warm hollow' gives way to a 'solitude larger than our two bodies' (DB, 33). Loss and memory collide in the poem 'Taking your hand' (DB, 34–35) in which her gaze is caught by the way Picasso, Miro and 'the 15<sup>th</sup> century Persian miniaturist Bizhad' (DB, 34) drew hands to 'still/tell their canted, formal tales today.'(DB, 34) From her musings on how hands can be composed and drawn Baderoon dwells on the absence of touch from a hand which has one truth: 'It has grown to an age when it can hold/a gun' (DB, 34). This sudden, shocking confrontation is a reminder of violence and lost innocence. Violence is usually a more oblique presence in her poetry. Departures, loss, death and indecision can inhabit objects: a quiet house, a door almost open, a chair at an angle, people are arriving, half-leaving, dying, gone ('The art of leaving,' DB, 39).

The poet captures moments of reality in her emotional gaze. In her poem 'On a Bench near the Glasshouse in the Botanical Gardens' (DB, 42–43) there is no sense of place, rather a garden which could be anywhere

where our minds wander following ‘pigeons and birds’ like drifting, distant dots. From a bench, the poet concentrates on firs and a lake and a glasshouse which form part of the scene of a father playing with two children. From this place ‘everything leaves’, shadows fall, birds fly away, flowers become ‘delirious’, they ‘overwhelm the neat hopes of the planners.’ (DB, 42) Baderoon is interested in those parts which drop and disappear or cling to the edges of memory, the uncertainties that fall like the cropped discards of ‘failed photographs’ (‘Mapping,’ DB, 58). It is the failures with their ‘uncertain shifts’ (DB, 58) that provide definition.

Resolutely she observes how icons of her past follow her into the world, the tiler of her childhood appearing again and again in the mosques of her current geographies. In the poem ‘Contemporary Architecture’ (DB, 48–50) the mosques of antiquity, structures where domes should create ‘a space for love’ (49) give way to the political dimension of violence: ‘Where is the centre, /and where the end point /of its space?’ (50), ‘the homeless grief of young men’s mothers’ (49). Baderoon insists that we consider that ‘To the hungry, inside eye, /its [the mosque’s] beauty grants a place in the world’ (49). She draws this place in the world as a sanctuary for closely observed and finely tiled emotions almost imperceptible in the noise of contemporary media.

Her ‘War Triptych: Silence, Glory, Love’ (DB, 59–61) confronts contemporary global imagery of war to reveal memory and our own culpability. In Part II: ‘Father Receives News His Son Died in the Intifada:’ (60)

He felt a hand slip from his hand,  
A small unclasping,  
And for that he refused the solace of glory.

That small unclasping as the child slips out of grasp and away from life grounds the poem in Baderoon’s insistence on emotional integrity. There is no glory in mindless death and the endless reportage of ‘stories of war’ (61).

In stark contrast to the expressive language of Jonker and de Kok, forceful feeling is rare in Baderoon’s poetry. Given the composure with which the poet selects her language, ‘hate’ in the poem ‘Fanon’s Secret’ (HS, 63) is revealing. The use of Fanon’s name in the title of the poem is suggestive of the violence underpinning colonization while the mind of the



colonized struggles for freedom. Baderoon uses the second person as both singular and plural in short, staccato lines:

you hate  
what is held back  
not known to you  
kept, stolen, enchanted

The word 'hate' appears casually though with tension and by implication violence given the pause at the end of the line. Baderoon suggests hate begins with privilege and exploitation. The grape picker as the poem's exploited subject has an inner life which appears enchanted by virtue of being withheld. 'Kept, stolen, enchanted' resonates as the colonizer's loot in addition to the subject's inner strength. No amount of economic dependence can invade her private world in the same way that:

the woman who cleans your house  
all day is in the places you cannot be,  
touches your sheets.

Baderoon implies that the colonizer or oppressor hates what is held back, namely the dispossessed's boundaryless inner self and inner thoughts. The revelation of this power was Fanon's secret.

Baderoon rigorously explores what reconciliation means in practice as her poems consider how individuals bridge long, historical, often legislated personal divisions, to know someone as she would herself. In these two words 'you hate' the reader is exposed to the tug and pull of Baderoon's father's fishing line, of resistance and protest, control and autonomy growing inside the self as a weapon of destruction to mutuality.

A similar violence implodes casually into the poem 'Terminus, 1978' (HS, 64). The terminus of the poem, with its implications of finality, was located opposite the library. The poem is simply structured, conversational, a narrative with little complexity except for specificity of observation and detail. Baderoon remembers how:

we walked through the door on the right  
to the children's section  
stared at the rows of spines,  
chose three books to stamp

into our cards and sat  
by the small wooden tables.

The reader recognizes scenes of ordinary childhood or depictions of libraries in story books. We follow an innocent child's narrative as Baderoon recounts:

one day a boy chased another boy past  
the librarians and the books and caught  
him in the corner where two shelves met.

The reader is still travelling with our imaginary of childhood, the poet's story a generic one. Rather incidentally:

The second boy stabbed the first in the eye  
and ran out of the children's library.

And the poem ends. The reader is no longer in the children's library of our memory, but in a place of unsettlement and violence. We have left the library except in so far as we have borrowed a book or read a poem whose contents recall violence, distress and disquiet in many forms and formats, or so the poet implies all the while in a conversational voice. This voice creates an ambivalent witness testimony within a conventional poetic border.

This is how it was, says Baderoon, I am simply remembering, listing the facts as they were, and as if to reiterate her next poem is entitled 'This is what I'll remember' (HS, 65–66). This tender poem carefully recalls her mother's death, 'the beauty/of sitting in the presence of dying.' Baderoon remembers:

the point where we turned  
and became open with each other  
our memories held close  
despite the fact that the cold had come  
on time (66)

Compare this with de Kok's memories which are fleshed out with grief and etched with anger and emotion contained in irregular stanzas of questions and disbelief as 'Her doctor says'<sup>33</sup>

Ask your mother now, before she's 'gone',  
So you'll know if your bones will crack.

Baderoon's meeting point is simple: engagement and openness create a place and time where solitude and inner dialogue give way to the warmth and clarity of mutuality, recognition of sharing and intimacy, while de Kok assumes the voice of the doctor to articulate her 'secret rage.' Baderoon's secret is either muted and hidden, or banished and undisclosed in the 'cold' which 'had come / on time.'

Baderoon gradually reveals her past through her parents: her father, we learn, was a tailor who 'loved to see/my mother wear the clothes he made for her' (Fit, HS, 15). She describes 'the mirror in the front room' through which 'you can see the whole room' evoking images of a familial history reflecting the past like a panoptic (16) with 'photographs of different generations, /the same shyness, the same eyes'on display (16). Baderoon asks us to see how life was lived, not inscribed in cliché or the boundaries of convention: her father is called 'pa', the man who 'sat at the head of the table / not talking at supper'<sup>34</sup> ('How not to stop,' HS, 20):

Pa drove us past the house he built  
from which his family was removed in '68,  
never looking again in its direction....  
....  
Pa rehearsed how not to stop, not to get out  
And walk to the front door he made

These last two lines convey Pa's sense of determination to hide the pain caused by the intrusion of politics into normal life, specifically the forced removals of 1968 South Africa, for the sake of the children. Marking a boundary around the year 1968 in South Africa, the poet hints at a distinct South African imaginary remote in some ways from the European and American tropes of dissent and repression arising from 1968 protests. Baderoon writes simply 'pa rehearsed how not to stop,' the repetition of

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<sup>33</sup> De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p.53

<sup>34</sup> In South Africa supper was the evening meal, usually called dinner in Australia.

‘not’ recalling restriction and enclosure. Violence<sup>35</sup> intrudes amidst the careful tenderness of tending and growing, of carving ‘a domino set,’ of feeding the pigeons, of living. These particulars become part of a landscape that ‘is passing into language’ (‘Landscape is passing into language’ HS, 22) as places change through time. In this poem ‘Few people remember those other sounds of night/ as frogs and silence,’ rather, Baderoon implies, memory privileges the sounds of the violence of the past. Silences disappear into history and memory, private life, ‘under the knife, the skin,/the mystery of sameness’ (‘I forget to look,’ HS, 26).

Jonker sublimated her sense of maternal loss in the wrenching imagery of her everywhere mothers and children while de Kok uses the structure of her poems to disclose her emotions towards family in ironic and shifting voices. Through the differentiation of people on the basis of colour, through all the horrors that attend to legislated discrimination, Baderoon’s ‘mother looks back, her poise unmarred.’ This poise guided Baderoon with its familiarity and reassurance, her photograph ‘so familiar I forget/to look at her’. Here again it is possible to do a double reading of these lines—how despite the familiarity of daily contact between people, their familiarity precludes understanding or indeed knowing and feeling. The photograph itself has been ‘straightened’, her mother’s collar ‘discreetly’ folded. Her gaze appears as if ‘someone has called her from far away.’ This distance is symbolic of that between ‘black and white’ (the enforced social separations of the past). But we can also read into this long gaze the distance her mother created between her own inner dialogue and her external world. Like Baderoon, de Kok positions herself within objects as she remembers her father:<sup>36</sup> descriptions of his books with ‘grave truths I cannot access’ take up three eight line stanzas and a six line ending as de Kok reads ‘instead his log books’ to be directed ‘into the sky, his earlier, freer life.’ The books are personified as her father; they ‘ordered his hardwon learning / like a neat, pragmatic wife.’ Both poets develop their parents through detail, conversation and observation within tight poetic forms to move beyond memory, in some way towards a personal freedom of understanding and loss.

This distancing, or observing of oneself from afar is a theme running through Baderoon’s poems. She wishes to remember quiet moments: ‘the notes’ Keith Jarrett ‘is not playing’ (DB, 29) the ‘silence before speaking’

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<sup>35</sup> There were frequent forced removals of whole communities during apartheid.

<sup>36</sup> De Kok, *Terrestrial Things*, p.52

(‘Breath,’ HS, 33). Her observations and ruminations are always tinged with sadness as the paraphernalia of life closely worn reveal threads of the self. The poem ‘A Hundred Silences’ (HS, 49–50) is a meditation on her father tending his garden, his weeding ‘a word for being alone.’ A hundred silences frame Baderoon’s memory of her father. The poet’s evocation of a late afternoon silence with its observed distance of a hundred thoughts creates a sense of eternity, that sudden descent into the heart of stillness in which death and the endless cycle of nature overarches all ‘where the distance ends, like a sheet touching a skin’(49). Confronting death, ‘the completeness of loss, of absence without negotiation,’ Baderoon reaches for her lost pen. To write loss assumes a boundaryless freedom in Baderoon’s poems, beyond apartheid, beyond violence.

### Phillippa Yaa de Villiers

Under apartheid the nature of intimate relationships between people was legislated. To begin with, the colour you were classified was subject to scrutiny and legislation. Marriage across colour lines was outlawed by the Immorality Act as was any other form of physical relationship except in the most brutal or subscribed of ways. De Villiers was born to a white Australian mother and a black Ghanaian father (an illegal union in apartheid South Africa); as such, her parents gave her up for adoption to the white Afrikaans physical anthropologist who had classified her white so that she could be legally adopted despite her brown skin. Thus de Villiers grew up with two white Afrikaner parents who denied her skin colour. De Villiers describes her adoption as follows:

In my case they couldn't decide definitively on my race and felt that because my mother was Australian, my father was likely to be an Aborigine. In this case, they could not allow me to be adopted in South Africa because the political dispensation of apartheid believed that culture was genetic and every culture had its special strengths and weaknesses.<sup>37</sup>

Like her compatriots, de Villiers’ trajectory of life under apartheid South Africa was mapped in terms of skin colour and language spoken. She had no choice but to confront the ambiguities of living a dual life as a

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<sup>37</sup> Phillipa Yaa de Villiers. *Poets on Adoption* curated by Eileen R.Tabios (April 2011), <http://poetsonadoption.blogspot.com.au/2011/04/phillippa-yaa-de-villiers.html>, accessed 10th June 2014.

‘coloured’ in a white family, with the added complication of being told about her adoption at the age of twenty. She started writing poetry from early childhood. Like Jonker, de Villiers’ past haunts her adulthood; while there is some similarity to their writing, de Villiers injects humour, sadness, exuberance and irony into her tone and language. De Villiers is also a performance poet, dramatist and script-writer who like Jonker, de Kok and Baderoon, has won awards for her poetry.

Both de Villiers and Baderoon observe mind and body. They write between observing and feeling, between being in and out of skin, creating those in-between places of freedom beyond violence and boundaries of the mind. Baderoon and de Kok often stand outside themselves, or write of themselves in the second person as if observing their pasts from a long distance, almost constructing photographs with words where ‘time is filtered like light’ (Baderoon, ‘Every room has its silence,’ HS, 41). De Villiers embraces her poetry as an adornment that wards off death as she seeks to be as independent as her words so that she can follow them wherever they lead. Silence takes on an uneasy echo of death in de Villiers’ poetry where, unlike Baderoon, unspoken words, words buried or hidden become symbols of oppression. Words ‘woven to nothing on apathy’s loom’<sup>38</sup> (‘A safe house is a place of fear,’ EW, 54) contain ‘the fragile balance of civility.’ The maintenance of facades, exteriors and civility of silence creates ‘a skin of fear’ in the interior world of domesticity which contrasts so dramatically with the chaos and emotion that spills into the exterior public world. In all four poets relationships have soured due to enforcement of some kind and blossomed with freedom, be it of self-discovery, language, giving birth or travel. The body and pleasure become entwined with thought, as:

even if the mind forgets,  
the skin remembers:  
the organs keep a record of their guests  
(de Villiers, ‘The Quiet Conversation,’ EW, 76)

Skin begets skin and so as a physical presence the body is freed from the mind. This disassociation is also a means of banishing violence.

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<sup>38</sup> Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, *The Everyday Wife*, (Athlone: Modjaji Books, 2010). Further citations of this work are given in the text as EW.

Several South African poets<sup>39</sup> have remembered or acted as witness to the Sharpeville shootings in their poetry: de Villier's Sharpeville poem 'Sixty-nine bullets (for the Sharpeville 69),' (EW, 56–58) consists of a list of thoughts, memories, jottings: 'I was on my way to the shop,' begins the 69 sentences for 69 bodies reminding us that:

...death is personal  
 Very personal  
 Each death as unique as birth  
 with its own portents  
 And banalities  
 Who will fetch the baby from the crèche?  
 Who will tell my mother? (58)

De Villiers suggests that the banality of the everyday hides the portent of death. The art and literary historian Didier Maleuvre regards lists as a refusal 'to betray [their] object.'<sup>40</sup> The very objectification of naming or cataloguing prevents a discursive interpretation because the list exists 'before narrative' can arrange and create. Creating an authentic personal statement as witness to state-sanctioned violence appears to demand simplification of language as lists of experience often 'weave in and out of language'<sup>41</sup> to retain their authentic meaning. 'Sixty-nine bullets (for the Sharpeville 69)' carries the gravitas of oral history or testimony but from within the stray thoughts of victims or observers.

In her poetry, de Villiers shelters children as a mother-figure of love keeping them safe from death by inscribing them in words. Her son is her 'favourite poem' ('Origin,' EW, 20) so not surprisingly she explores the meaning of motherhood and birth as symbols of regeneration:

I don't know why  
 My body will just want to make babies  
 And clothe them in the lost sheaths  
 Of families  
 ('The Guest,' EW, 61)

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<sup>39</sup> In addition to Ingrid de Kok, Dennis Brutus, 'Sharpeville', *Poetry and Protest* ed. Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), pp.95–96; Siphos Sepamla, 'I remember Sharpeville,' *Against Forgetting*, pp.728–730 and so on.

<sup>40</sup> Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.166

to replace all the children lost to violence in South Africa, lost in the poems of Jonker and de Kok. In de Villiers's depiction of Johannesburg parks the poet's structure includes line breaks in a stanza reminiscent of Jonker's rhythmic pattern in 'The child shot dead by soldiers in Nyanga':

smashed beer bottles don't give a damn  
about barefoot children. Adults, swollen with disappointment,  
sit sadly in the swings.  
(Jozi Parks, 59)

Children inherit the disappointment, the 'mistakes,' especially if they 'come uninvited' while words stand apart and 'can only witness / the greedy force of life' ('Switching on the light,' EW, 70). Words create the ideal, the 'this-ness of this,' (71) while 'language falters and your / sense is reduced to shrieks of agony' ('Getting to know yourself in Amsterdam museums,' 24). Like Jonker, de Villiers casts a passionate eye on life, her 'womb turns restlessly in its warm belly' ('The Middle Promise,' EW, 46), but death writhes amid the passion, 'mortal wisdom as a final breath, / the gift of living to the gifted dead.' Words as the shelter of the ideal take on their meaning historically: 'Even death will not separate you, for then / your story will continue in the mouths of others' ('Faithful as a shadow,' 45). The gravity of her words is offset by determination to feel and to write life.

De Villiers' memories of fishing and camping are being present *with* her father (unlike Baderoon). Her friend accompanies them: 'She's/Italian, not used to camping or the outdoors' in 'Night-fishing with Daddy'<sup>42</sup>(EW, 18) where 'we turn off the national road, bump-bump/bumping through the veld'(EW, 18). The rhythm of the car is joyful and exuberant, the identity of 'daddy' unquestioned. The poet joins in the fishing, her favourite being 'kurper and carp' and 'listen[s] to the long song of the line / as it flies over the water' (EW, 19), conscious both of her pleasure and her friend who does not join in: 'I am / mortified: she must be hating this' (EW, 10). The poet, 'worm-like,' struggles with pleasure and awareness, until she resigns herself to her fishing prowess and 'surrenders to night' (EW, 10). While Baderoon tentatively allows us into her memory of childhood which she decides to locate firmly in that place where only galjoen and yellow tail could be fished, de Villiers encloses her whole poem and her fishing memories expansively in childhood. South Africa becomes secondary to



the encapsulation of an authentic feeling of euphoria and contemplation, beyond borders of time and place. This poem's rhythmical insistence frees the line of memory while the free-verse structure surrenders to whatever is enclosed within the night of our imagination or dreams.

Confronting the ambiguities of South African violence, de Villiers also departs the boundaries of South Africa writing of the middle passage in an expressive, confronting poem redolent with history: 'Trance' (EW, 77). Here the imagery of 'white cotton-pyjamas' with the signifying stress on cotton coupled with the significance of the colour white on black is startlingly evocative:

a black man stands  
 10,000 miles from his ancestors,  
 in white cotton-pyjamas,  
 ankle-deep in ocean whispers.

Persistent memories of violence wash ashore as 'triumphant / he exhales / another poem' (EW, 77) far from the ship or the ocean. A soothing, rhythmical repetition brings waves of words to lap gently on the shore. De Villiers suggests a resolution to years of slavery, exclusion and bondage, that of the freedom to sing a poem. She uses frequent repetition in the tradition of Jonker and de Kok. Although in free verse, her syntactical structure delivers an offering: a poem, as a surrender to words and the boundarylessness of the imagination:

The waves of the beach sing  
 conquer, surrender  
 conquer, surrender  
 conquer, surrender

Havana becomes that sunken galleon where 'its people' are free beyond boundaries, the treasure of slaves now the treasure of free minds: shoals transform into souls, the alliteration of fish, freed and flotilla emphasizing the journey:

treasure: shoals of quick silver fish,  
 once captured souls, now freed  
 by the wrecking of the imperial flotilla.

Life itself is a ‘shelter,’ its very tentativeness and fragility alert to ‘the next possibility’:

I guess it can’t get better than this  
Because one can never improve on  
Freedom

(de Villiers, ‘The Guest,’ EW, 68)

Ironic freedom is still haunted by ‘demons’ including the unwanted demon-guest of death who can arrest freedom ‘in the bright of the day’ (‘Song of the dead,’ 69). The singing tone of the poem has hymn-like incantations which are reinforced by the juxtaposition of pity with the dead and the living, the precariousness of breath:

Pity the dead, their privacy made public  
By the absence  
Of their breath.  
Pity the living:  
The thin fabric of life just a tear away  
From death.

Ambiguity and gritty realism haunt the poet. Pity the living; the skin imprinted onto paper. Violence is not contained or excluded in de Villiers’ verse, exploding into lines within poems as it does into the life of the everyday child or wife or lover so that even desire becomes ‘used delight / piled up next to the wheelie bin’ (‘Chinatown,’ 14). Both Baderoon and de Villiers explore ‘love’s brief solace.’ For Baderoon this solace is gentle and private, ‘the murmur of my mother and father / in the bedroom down the passage’ (‘Primal scene,’ HS, 19), ‘the way we place hands over faces / close each other’s mouths’ (‘Out of time,’ HS, 44), a ‘chasteness to the meeting /of our two bodies in their coats’ (‘Twin beds,’ HS, 68).

For de Villiers, word becomes circumscribed by bodily reality. Sex is complicated by violence. Generalizing from the personal, de Villiers writes for women who have been violated by sex which is not neat, chaste or intimate but complicated and fraught with ruptures. Two poems confront the fear and horror of rape:

I envy women  
with the clean envelope  
of their pleated sex

unwritten on

...

Safe

(‘Envy,’ EW, 16)

The painful poem ‘Going Down There.’ (EW, 52) is a counterpoint to Jonker’s ‘Pregnant Woman:’

This is a letter scratched out at candlelight:  
I leave it for all those who are also  
confined, painfully pressed, split open.  
Those who hold themselves tightly in their hands  
so that they will not spill over  
and drain away.  
Fear eats hope like night eats day  
leaving only crumbs of stars. Too far away  
to be of any help.

I was raped at six, 11, at 13 at 17 and 19  
I didn’t know I was violated because  
where I came from  
love was forced and  
sometime hurt.  
The frail meat of humankind  
can’t stand extremes. We construct ourselves  
around ourselves, making of our lives  
a shelter.....

Facts are presented blandly again, almost as a list. Images of the many reported scenes of rape through war and violence against women are simply explained as facts of survival and experience, of lost innocence. These facts are as confronting to the reader as they are to the poet painfully writing her poem-letter ‘scratched out at candlelight’ in semi-darkness for those who ‘hold themselves tightly in their hands / so that they will not spill over / and drain away.’ The clichéd image of fear eating hope ‘like night eats day / leaving only crumbs of stars’ is undercut by cynicism, the stars are ‘too far away / to be of any help.’ While Baderon, with her controlled, regular language steady and simple as breathing, watches the water spill over as she seeks to capture the moments beyond the frame, de Villiers takes the spillage and contains it, holding herself ‘tightly in [her]

hands'. The poet becomes simply 'frail meat' unable to stand 'extremes' so that when 'compassion unlocked / the cage of memory'

words  
became light  
showing me  
how to get home

Baderoon's memories come to her like dreams. For de Villiers they are a cage; the poet's task is to

outrun your story as you tell yourself  
another story, making your own story  
by resisting the story you were given  
(‘Faithful as a shadow,’ EW, 44)

De Villiers resists the enclosing of South Africa's violence, choosing rather to honour her life –‘your life is a world / that you honour / by giving it voice’ (EW, 45): to live.

In this paper I have examined how Ingrid Jonker, Ingrid de Kok, Gabeda Baderoon and Phillippa Yaa de Villiers contain, write or witness violence by using poetic language to explore boundaries and freedom in poetry. Their syntactical variation, form, rhythm, choice and location of images write against loss and violence as a way of surviving ‘that place.’<sup>43</sup> I have suggested that a close textual reading creates a poetic immanence to sustain their words with the authenticity these poets desire above all else, to render a truth true to memory and self. Freed to place, witness or contain violence in poetic form or formlessness, there is a deliberate paradox to the boundaries these poets create or discard within their poems to escape censorship, convention and confusion while navigating their own subjectivity.

Putting aside the recurring image of the child as a symbol resonating through anti-apartheid and post-apartheid poetry,<sup>44</sup> I see signs of homage to Jonker in the poems of de Kok, Baderoon and de Villiers in the ways these

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<sup>43</sup> To gain an understanding of debates on this nomenclature see Samantha Vice, “How do I live in this strange place,” *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 41, (2010), pp. 323–342 and subsequent articles on this topic in the *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 30, no 4, (2011) whole issue.

<sup>44</sup> Wilkinson, ‘Re-visioning the Child.’

poets experiment with form, meaning and continuity to contain the subjective, what Jonker observed as spirited recollections of the everyday. Their poems become delicate, detailed layers of observation reminiscent of textured paintings, descriptions hiding or revealing meaning in images, rhythm and narration. Here we see witnesses holding back emotion within rhythmical lines, enclosing death and violence in small frames within formal and informal inventive poetic structures which slowly reveal authentic portraits of unease and reflection. These poems stand *within* form and formlessness *out* of that time, that place, as boundaryless explorations of freedom, notwithstanding writing as witness to state-sanctioned violence and personal loss.

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# Mythic Anglo-Saxonism in John Smith and Pocahontas: *The Generall Historie* and National Narrative

MICHAEL MODARELLI

‘The most common error in writing the history of the Virginia Company,’ writes Frank Wesley Craven in his early yet still definitive history of the company, ‘has been a failure to understand the fundamental character of that corporation,’ thus providing an economic framework for the venture.<sup>1</sup> ‘Whatever else it may have endured,’ Craven continues, ‘it was primarily a business organization with large sums of capital invested by adventurers whose chief interest lay in the returns.’ Ultimately, Craven argues, ‘The true *motif* of the company’s history is economic rather than political.’ This categorization is far too simple, however. Yes, the Virginia Company dealt in monetary investments for the sale and returns of lands not owned by it; naturally, company adventurers investing in overseas ventures expected a return and thus sought financial gain. However, the continued insistence of Richard Hakluyt on the maritime prowess and concerns of the English, bolstered by the burgeoning dynamism of Elizabethan Anglo-Saxonism promoted by other powerful Englishmen, such as Sir Edward Cecil, John Dee, and Sir Francis Walsingham, created an ideology of Saxon power and rightful English conquest that emphatically argued for English rights to Atlantic lands that ultimately persevered and then funneled its way into various splinter groups, whose concerns were, for one reason or another, ultimately equal and very nationalistic. The means were simply different.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This and the following quotations are from *Virginia Company of London, 1606–24* (Williamsburg: Williamsburg 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Corp., 1957); all quotes from 24.

<sup>2</sup> Little is known about the company’s origins and initial mission. It was formed by charter in 1606 by a small group of entrepreneurs who were able to get close to then-legendary Robert Cecil, later earl of Salisbury, who had his own private interest in the New World, and they gained rights to half of the northeastern shore of America. Of the eight founding adventurers and leaders, it should be noted that

This essay explores Captain John Smith's and the Virginia Company's use of primary Anglo-Saxon material for the New World settlement of Jamestown, developing the idea that out of the ideological content in medieval and Anglo-Saxon texts, prominent members of the Virginia Company formulate a new, romantic nation-building ideology specifically designed for the Virginia venture. Was Smith a willing participant in the manipulation of New World propaganda? Perhaps—but there was indeed some kind of collaboration, as I shall later suggest. This collaborative effort for which I ultimately argue, in fact, suggests a larger cast behind the production and dispensation of Smith's larger body of work. Even so, Smith's work, especially the material in *Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624), uncovers further nation building strategies and rightful conquest of North American lands by way of the myth of Anglo-Saxonism, transferred from Elizabethan England to North American shores. In Smith's work, more importantly, these tropes, narrative techniques, and issues of collaboration both ultimately culminate in the infamous Pocahontas story, which best illustrates the strategic representation of the marriage of cultures as fashioned by collaborators of Smith's work, where the powerful Anglo-Saxon myth lurks.

The story of Pocahontas has drawn much critical attention in past years, though the story itself has captured the American imagination for much longer. Robert Tilton dates the interest in Pocahontas from the Revolutionary period, 'when Americans had begun to scan the colonial past in search of figures ... who could be rewarded retroactively for their proto-nationalist sentiments.'<sup>3</sup> Tilton explores the later creation of the myth, where, never far from the American imagination, the Smith-Pocahontas narrative evolved into a quintessentially American story that serves as a foundation for future national tropes, manifesting itself later as

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Hakluyt and Sir Thomas Smith, treasurer, were foremost on the list. Seven months following the company's formation, James I, in an effort both to add political weight to and to supervise the company, appointed a council of knighted men to the company, most of them closely connected with the court, some who even sat on Commons. James then granted to the treasurer and adventurers of the London Company of Virginia a sizable tract of land—800 miles at the widest, stretching from Atlantic to Pacific, and 100 miles out in both oceans (which grew to include the Bermuda Islands in 1612)—for the first colony in the New World on May 23, 1609; *Hening's Statutes at Large Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619* [to 1791], 13 vols. (Philadelphia: William Brown, 1823) 1:58–60.

<sup>3</sup> *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994), 33

the stock Indian representations in the narratives of James Fenimore Cooper. In addition, the myth itself began to assume a specific national value. Pocahontas, as a 'good' and submissive woman, eagerly ready to bow to her superiors, and, madly in love with Rolfe, became the new portrait of America. This cartoonish image spawned literally dozens of romances and other incarnations of the two, each less historical than the previous.<sup>4</sup> Pocahontas and Smith stood as tropes for the native and American—and the values comprised in each. Ultimately, along with Squanto, Pocahontas, who in 1613 was captured, converted to Christianity, and then married Englishman John Rolfe, serves as the most prominent mythic Indian figure from early America. Yet limited scholarly work has been done from a transatlantic perspective, linking of Smith's *Generall Historie* to the development of British imperial narratives as an ideological force in British colonial nation building. This paper intends to fill that gap.

The Pocahontas account, which appears in both *A True Relation of Occurrences and Accidents in Virginia, 1608* (1609) and *Generall Historie* serves as the greatest marker of the British influence on North American territories. As such, it is a carefully-crafted, mythic story through which we can read tensions in the hopes and fears of New World colonization, where we become aware of the possibility of peace *and* conquering, Pocahontas stands as a purely American romance of the New World style, a romance on the American soil, which builds upon the Anglo-Saxon element of the *ides*, the link or the peace-keeping woman between two cultures, for the older national purpose used in Anglo-Saxon times—the symbol of peaceful assimilation. And the figure of Pocahontas, the powerfully symbolic Anglo-Saxon *ides*, or 'peaceweaver,' becomes an important tool for colonial settlement, easing concerns over migration, preventing possible resistance to the New World project, and creating, in turn, an international narrative noted for its peacekeeping claim.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ann Uhry Abrams has made this point, *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 56–60.

<sup>5</sup> The Pocahontas myth becomes a part of American 'cultural capital,' in the Bourdieuan sense, from Smith's time forward. Pierre Bourdieu, in his work, especially *Distinction*, puts forth an understanding of society based on the movement of 'capital' through social spaces as it is accumulated or lost by individuals. In the Bourdieu's work, 'cultural capital' consists of ideas and qualifications that confer to a certain people some respect to power; 'The Forms of Capital,' *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, John Richardson, ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 248.



Smith and the Virginia Company employed a new form of Anglo-Saxonism in early American narratives to legitimate aspects of nation state, especially through narrative techniques and borrowings of myth.<sup>6</sup> Quite simply, Anglo-Saxonism in this case becomes a New World version of history, to borrow from Étienne Balibar's notions of narratives of history and ideology. 'The myth of origins and national community,' writes Balibar, is 'an effective ideological form, in which the imaginary singularity of national formations is constructed daily, by moving back from the present into the past.'<sup>7</sup> As Balibar states, repeated and integrated ideas of national character ultimately play a role in the narrative and, subsequently, genesis, of new nation states. It is thus my goal to analyze how Smith and his collaborators adapted and put to use the historical framework of Anglo-Saxonism in pivotal points of Smith's New World relations, creating a powerfully subtle peacekeeping message that served to justify New World expansion and secure its place as a primary American narrative.

Smith's entrance into the complicated sphere of Elizabethan power and New World ideology was and still remains somewhat of a mystery. Following the debacle of Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh's failed Roanoke experiment, the Gunpowder Plot, and James's ascension, Robert Cecil the younger (now working under James I as Lord Salisbury) was still trying to garner prospects for New World expansion, this time in southern Virginia. Smith, back from three years in Europe as a renegade soldier and adventurer, was signed on to sail on the *Susan Constant* for Virginia, and in May 1607, he and one hundred some other adventurers set up camp on James's river in Virginia. Smith's writings about these events illustrate the tensions that arise in matters of publishing and authorial intent and the place of the New World individual within the larger fabric of the English elite who promoted a dominant New World ideology; his literary errand knight displaced on New World shores operates within this space.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Anglo-Saxonism,' as I shall use it in this paper, is a fairly new term for an old ideology: it was quite likely first coined by King Alfred in the ninth century to distinguish members of the Angles and Saxons from Germanic islanders in Britain and has been only used recently in academic scholarship beginning with Reginald Horsman, who revitalized and reconceptualized the term in his landmark study, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (1981).

<sup>7</sup> 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology,' *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, eds. (London: Verso, 1991), 88.

With the Pocahontas myth, for which he has garnered the most fame, Smith connects directly to the Elizabethan appropriation and manipulation of nation-building myth in text and printing—meaning, Smith was part of a larger justification plot. That Smith became deeply entrenched in England's drive for claims on New World development is a well-known fact: he contributed to what the Virginia Company envisioned as a favorable marketing source for the New World in himself, and he undoubtedly wanted self-promotion. In turn, though, Smith profited nicely in other significant ways. He certainly did not have had the power to disseminate his persona into the national consciousness alone, so his writings, enabled by his involvement in the Company, bolstered the quasi-chivalric Smith image and helped to create the larger than life literary persona for which he is known.

Even then, having read his material, other would-be travelers, including the New England Leyden Separatists, would come to consult him on all matters concerning the New World. With his broad knowledge of American plant, animal, and native life, his touted mapmaking skills, and his adventurous spirit and public persona, Smith was a *cognoscente du jour* of the New World. Later, his works, with added embellishments by Virginia Company members, famed medieval scholar, collector, and Anglo-Saxonist Sir Robert Cotton among them, included for the very purpose of providing a sustainable argument for democratic English rule in the New World, continued this meteoric rise to public fame. Cotton was especially attracted to the strikingly medieval figure of Smith. In Smith, the antiquarian Cotton found the perfect knightly persona to portray in the charge against royal authority, especially James I; in Smith, too, Cotton could emphasize the revival of English liberties, freedoms, and a specifically natural and national originator of the dream of the British *coventus* as described by the Roman Tacitus in his *Germania*, a tract that put forth perhaps one of the first histories of the Anglo-Saxons, where hard and lusty freedom-loving men ruled together, and whose successful adventures with the Powhatans could provide a seamless transference to the British New World. Finally, in Smith, Cotton could work in tandem with the Virginia Company to promote the peaceful promotion of possibilities in the New World concerning migration and settlement.

Smith's first writing from the New World, *True Relation*, opens up the possibilities for deeper exploration into the tensions between author, message, and textual history as it relates to New World Anglo-Saxon ideology. Begun as a letter that was ostensibly penned to a mysterious

friend whose identity remains unknown even to this day, *True Relation* was rushed by Smith to Captain Nelson at Cape Henry at the last minute before Nelson's departure for England in 1608. *True Relation* covers roughly the thirteen-month period of the Jamestown colony from December 1606 to Nelson's return to England in early 1608, but it was not, like the rest of Smith's writings, revised and included in Smith's *Generall Historie*; following four printings in 1608, it went virtually unprinted until the nineteenth century. Because he was still in Virginia, we can be sure that Smith remained undoubtedly divorced from the printing process. What this means is that once aboard Nelson's ship, Smith had no further contact with the missal, which creates a thorny problem of textual transmission between Smith and the Virginia Company. Given this uncertain transatlantic path and sketchy publication history, *True Relation* nevertheless offers a way in for understanding the complex relationship between the Virginia Company and Smith.

Following a very brief introduction, the narrative begins *in medias res* on April 26, 1609. In *True Relation*, Smith as author narrates his adventures overcoming the enemy on the new *terra*, a tactic that would be reversed later in the Pocahontas narrative. But *was* Smith the actual author of *True Relation*? Because of the Virginia Company's involvement in the enterprise, all options must be weighed, especially regarding the gravity of the situation. Certainly, representations of peaceable conquest would have provided the Virginia Company with ample fiduciary and public support. Thus, with the emergence of puissance in the Smith figure as *chevalier* in the New World narrative of *True Relation* also arises the subtle interplay of power tensions between the Virginia Company and Smith. *True Relation* illustrates this disconnect. The space between composition and publishing illuminates an imbalance of agendas. And, since there does exist a gap of historical data between the finished 'product,' or the polished version of *True Relation* that was completed in England, we must turn briefly to London printers and the problem of authorial intent. During the period in which *True Relation* was published, printers played a major role in all authors' works; as has been noted in much scholarship on Elizabethan drama, publication of manuscripts was a collaborative event during the early seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> We must remember, too, that as Smith's *True Relation* was being printed in 1608, Shakespeare's *King Lear* was beginning what would turn out to be a long and tedious history of corrupt

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<sup>8</sup> Especially helpful is Heather A. Hirschfeld study, *Joint Enterprises: Collaborative Drama and the Institutionalization of the English Renaissance Theater* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 1–28.

folios and mysterious Stuart printing practices, leading scholars on the quest for the authorial quarto.

Manuscripts were regularly chopped, rearranged, and otherwise altered without the author's knowledge. Even Smith's *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captain John Smith in Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629* (1630), which started as a short exposé for his friend the narrative-collecting Samuel Purchas, was edited, trimmed, and manipulated, once in Purchas's hands, largely by Purchas himself. Further, with the rise of manuscript production came the growth in political debates formulated in part through the dissemination of various types of manuscripts, and since this period was one of rapid growth in the English antiquarian movement, politics and antiquarianism collided. The earlier official formation of the Stationer's Company in London (1557) brought together lawmakers, scribes, and antiquarians. As political propaganda in the form of Anglo-Saxonism increased, so did publishing. Powerful men like Cotton and Robert Cecil, Lord Burghley collaborated with antiquarians like Matthew Parker and others to solidify connections to the past through records, treatises, and political tracts. Most of these figures worked together for similar ends. As historian Margaret J. Ezell has observed, our ideas of authorship during this period remain obscure in part because 'our notions of what constitutes authorship and how we evaluate a text in this situation are ... linked to venue and textual production.'<sup>9</sup> Printers, too, added to the problem of authorship, as they had favorite patrons and certain agendas they liked to follow; in most cases, power equaled production. Modern criticism has so long been obsessed with the author that we tend to forget at times to position the actual early American English writer in with the editor, scribe, copyist, collaborators, and patrons.

Although *True Relation* marks the entrance of Smith's heroic narrative persona into the New World, one which he would continue to develop throughout his literary career, authorial questions plague the meaning. Smith's autobiography, *True Travels*, further highlights these problems. Most notably, I think, it improves upon the heroic knightly figure and inserts him into a more expansive narrative. In doing so, *True Travels* illuminates the involvement of authorial collaboration that, in all probability, links Smith to a larger manipulation of national narrative for

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<sup>9</sup> *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 17, 20.

ideological purposes, establishing Smith as an archetypal hero like the Welsh King Arthur or the Saxon King Alfred. This was not a random analogy. In fact, to add to the medieval mystique, *True Travels* was first printed in a tall, handsome, and decorative folio, accompanied by various medieval illustrations, including Smith's own alleged coat of arms, which thus provided a certain *persona* for Smith as knight-errant—an important feature of medieval romances. Often deprecated for its patchwork quality, Smith's writing style in *True Travels* contains a number of additional romance qualities, some borrowed but others completely refashioned and new; his work remains clearly indebted to the medieval literature he had favored as a child, as well as the newly revived medieval romance literature of the period.<sup>10</sup> In fact, as Laura Doyle points out, in Smith we witness 'a tapping of available genres (chronicle, anatomy, ethnography) and then a composition of those genres into a loosely coherent narrative.'<sup>11</sup> Doyle's description reflects the breadth of medievalism in Smith's work; his autobiographies, most notably *True Travels*, contain a few admixtures from both early French and English romances. A 'medieval' borrowing offers to the author of history an earlier age wherein it is possible to exist with honor; thus, most medieval historical writers, from Eusebius to Augustine to Bede were purposeful re-creators of the past, trying actively to create a social world and unity rather than just to glorify a passive nostalgia over individual heroics.

A small portion of Smith's *True Travels* first appeared in his friend Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Postumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes* in 1625.

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<sup>10</sup> As a boy, Smith tells us, he possessed a fantastic imagination and held a great love for chivalric romances. Following a period of seclusion in which he stayed alone in the forest, read romances, and heroically slept in his clothes in a small bower and re-fashioned himself, he emerged from the woods longing for adventure. For a complete biographical account of Smith, the standard biographies are Barbour, *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1964) and *Captain John Smith: His Life and Legend*, Bradford Smith, ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1953). In the Elizabethan era, the rise of printing saw the rapid increase in readership of medieval romances, which became the equivalent of the pulp fiction, and both Spenser and Shakespeare had been famously influenced by them; see especially Phoebe Sheavyn's pioneering study, *The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), 188–95 and Helen Cooper, 'M is for Merlin: The Case of the Winchester Manuscript' in *Medieval Heritage: Essays in Honor of Tadahiro Ikegame*, M. Kanno et al. eds. (Tokyo: Yushodo Press, 1997), 93–107.

<sup>11</sup> *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640–1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 99.

Purchas included about ten folio pages of Smith's adventures, which he entitled 'The Travels and Adventures of Captaine John Smith in divers parts of the world, begun about the yeere 1596,' which publication likely attracted a good number of English readers, including members of the Virginia Company and Cotton. Following the success of his stories in *Pilgrimes*, Smith later published these in book form in 1630; *The True Travels* was praised by William Strachey and generally hailed by later readers as an exceptional history of the true international adventurer. Apart from setting Smith up as an errant knight in the New World, *True Travels* contains a number of other medieval features, all transposed onto the New World. The romance tradition has not simply provided a character for Smith—the powerful, even awe-inspiring explorer and self-described 'captain'—it also seems to have offered a basic plot: A noble and fairly young man with no title or lands embarks upon adventures, ending up in the New World, where he will later attempt to fashion a heroic society in the face of oppressive rulers. The hero in stock romances often comes from beginnings that are shrouded in mystery. In Smith, too, a new feature arises in the stock romance—he is quintessentially English, or Anglo-Saxon, and, as an active national actor, he provides a more human presence in the ideological power struggle that plays out on a 'virgin territory' or *terre de pesme aventure*.

Yet these romantic features of *True Travels* further add to the questions of the veracity of Smith's work and why it was important for American nation-building during this time. We must always keep in mind Cotton, famed antiquarian and collector of Anglo-Saxon and medieval manuscripts, whose presence was always felt in Virginia Company dealings. He involved himself with the most important collectors of then-contemporary travelogues, such as Purchas. And Cotton, at least, knew the power of the medieval romance—and he knew exactly *which* features would serve the narrative of the New World well. The first, and perhaps most, important feature of the New World chivalric narrative is the manner in which it is presented—the authorial voice. Although Smith proclaims toward the beginning of *True Travels* that 'because I have ranged and lived amongst those llands, what my authours cannot tell me, I thinke it no great error in helping them to tell it my selfe,' the narrative is replete with accounts by Smith that are largely romanticized, confused and mistaken, and, at times, borrowed from Purchas, his model, who seems to have

plagiarized them himself.<sup>12</sup> Thus, when Smith writes in *True Travels* that he 'cannot make a Monument for my self ... having had so many copartners with me,' he was not simply alluding to the 'partnerships' of Purchas, with whom he first published his material, or Cotton, his later patron, but to the various texts from which he freely borrowed—or were borrowed for him.<sup>13</sup> Smith likely had numerous sources from which to draw. For example, a Smith snippet appearing for the first time in Purchas's *Pilgrimes* had an almost identical description of the Turks as that in William Biddulph's *The Travels of Foure Englishmen* (1612). According to Smith biographer Barbour, even Smith's dealings with the Turks might on some level be attributable to a text by Knolles entitled *Historie of the Turkes* (1136).<sup>14</sup> In fact, Purchas had a great deal of accumulated material either he or Smith could have used to augment Smith's writings.

In the *Generall Historie*, the massive work that relates all of Smith's dealings with the Virginia Company, Powhatan and his people, or other Englishmen, through the chivalric actor, Smith exists primarily as a caricature, an action-driven hero whose medieval escapades often create the very trouble from which he must extricate himself. The narrative also, as has been mentioned, compiles history for an purpose. Whether in Smith's hand or someone else's, it presents the reader with a quick synopsis of all previous Elizabethan ideologies concerning the New World—the narrator recounts the stories of Madoc, Frobisher, Gilbert, and Raleigh, all of which echo necromancer John Dee's fantastic claims that the land, belonging already to England, required a formal, recovery action, which Smith and company immediately provided. Smith also documents the history of the Roanoke expedition, condensing versions found in Hakluyt's *Principle Navigations*. Importantly, he provides Raleigh's supposed relation of 'The great courtesie of a Woman' to the travelers, a beatific vision of mythic homecoming. In this fantastic anecdote, a native woman, the wife of Granganmeo, runs to greet and help the sailors in the water, orders her fellow tribesman to carry them from their boats to the shore, and dries the sailors' clothes, feeds them, and entertains them. This powerful woman then had the bows and arrows of entering tribesmen broken in two when she saw the fear in the Englishmen's eyes. Following this account, Smith traces the remainder of the English expeditions until

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<sup>12</sup> All citations are from *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith* (hereafter *CWJS*), 3 vols, Philip L. Barbour, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) 3:235.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:141–42.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:168–69; see notes 5–6.

1606, when he begins his narrative proper as well as his tenure on New World shores.

Book One of *Generall Historie* quickly situates the reader within the context of rediscovery—but it does so with a subtle hint of ethos. While he opens the book with chivalric visions of past heroes—‘For the stories of Arthur, Malgo, or Brandon, that say a thousand yeares agoe they were in the North America’—Smith immediately distances himself, writing, ‘I know them not.’<sup>15</sup> Smith chooses to begin, as he does in paragraph two, with Madoc: ‘The Chronicle of Wales report, that Madock, sonne to Owen Guineth, Prince of Wales ... arrived in this new Land in the yeare 1170.’<sup>16</sup> Thus can he tie the current history to the mythic Madoc and Richard Hakluyt, Purchas’s mentor, and begin to create a new beginning from this older extended lineage—not via the more ‘fanciful’ notions of Arthur. Smith introduces—or reintroduces—the various explorations, beginning with Madoc, through Gilbert, Raleigh, and Drake. He describes, in brief, the inhabitants, curiously remarking on a matriarchal system of religious belief: ‘For mankinde they say a Woman was made first, which by the working of one of the gods conceived and brought forth children; so they had their beginning.’<sup>17</sup> Following this brief detour, Smith returns to the explorations and concludes Book One with George Waymouth’s 1605 voyage.

So much of the introduction concerns itself with situating the New World project as rightful conquest that Smith’s proper entrance into the *Historie* comes only in Book Two, where he, in a technique clearly borrowed from the Saxon Bede in his descriptions of England in *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, outlines the geography, vegetation, and flora and fauna of Virginia for his readers. Smith’s ethnography, however, leaves something to be desired. He concludes of the natives only that they are ‘inconstant ... craftie ... very ingenious ... all savage[s],’ covetous of gold, beads, and ‘such like trash,’ and, generally, ‘their far greater number is of women and children’; so, Smith claims that although he ‘lost seaven or eight men,’ he ‘yet subjected the salvages to our desired obedience.’<sup>18</sup> This ethnographic section then leads into the history proper. In the Third Book, Smith qualifies why progress in the New World has been so slow up to that point. Here we see the tension that exists between accounts of divine

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:61.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:61–2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:78.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:114–5, 129.



intervention and Smith's historiographical practice that favors a carefully constructed account of an impersonal world wherein man stands at the center and where past notions of national history do not detain the reader; the secular adventures of the individual offer the promise of a new creation of that history. For example, Smith takes credit for winning over the natives, especially in the famous Pocahontas scene, when, should we believe the narrative, his life is saved, yet, following literary fashion, he gives the credit to God: 'But almightie God (by his divine providence) had mollified the hearts of those sterne Barbarians with compassion.'<sup>19</sup> Soon after, however, the silver-tongued Smith convinces the colonists, who were beginning to blame him for their misfortunes and ready to quit the project, that he will save them, saying he 'quickly tooke such order with such Lawyers, that he layed them by the heeles.'<sup>20</sup> Having saved the day, Smith then recounts how the Indians, led by Pocahontas, bring provisions, thus saving the lives of the weary colonists.

As seen in Smith's crude attempt to trace the cosmology of Indians, the power of women remains important in *Generall Historie*. Along with Squanto, Pocahontas, who in 1613 was captured, converted to Christianity and then married Englishman John Rolfe, is the most prominent mythic 'heroine' of Indian captivity lore. Although limited scholarly work has been done in the context of Native American captivity as an ideological force in British colonial nation building, I have found Pauline Turner Strong's work especially informative.<sup>21</sup> In her study, Strong argues that Pocahontas, 'who represents salvation, communion, and colonial legitimacy,' became a legendary figure primarily because she was a tragic hero.<sup>22</sup> Strong I think rightly observes that Pocahontas was a captive long before she was deemed 'savior' of and convert to the English and the symbolic nature of her capture seen as a transnational tragedy. Historically, she has been called the Joan of Arc of America for good reason: the Pocahontas story exhibits the twofold nature of the romance in America, one free but manipulated agent and one liberated from the tyranny of social forces.<sup>23</sup> Smith's 'myth' of capture, Pocahontas's mysterious plation of

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 2:152.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Strong, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Uhry Abrams, in 'The Pocahontas Paradox: Southern Pride, Yankee Voyeurism, Ethnic Identity, or Feminine Heroics,' a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association, Miami, Fla., October 1988.

Powhatan, and her subsequent, implicit role reversal and marriage to John Rolfe all center on the tidy unification of a nation building plot. One social means for English writers to advance notions of peace in early English nation-building activity is the romance myth, which bears great structural similarity to its similar peace-keeping tactics of medieval England. (The birth of the *romans* itself was a period noted for its civil disorder for various reasons, including relaxing of feudal ties, growing pressures within the legal system and economy, and the rise and growth of social mobility.) In the Pocahontas tale there exists a manipulated *mythos*, a reversed medieval romance with Smith at its center, which seeks to reinforce the legitimacy of the New World conquest through literary re-representation of a 'divine gesta,' to borrow from Mircea Éliade, whereby an eternal repetition may be played out in such a way as to celebrate the union of England and America in the metaphorical re-reversing of the myth through the 'marriage' of Indian to English.<sup>24</sup>

The historical events of the capture center essentially on a few adventurers, two of whom had very important ties to the Virginia Company's promotion of nation-building in the most Anglo-Saxon sense—Samuel Argall and Sir Thomas Dale. The basic outline of the kidnapping follows. In 1613, on someone's order—no solid evidence exists as to whose—Argall was charged with capturing Pocahontas allegedly to end the adventurer's 'war' with the Powhatans. A young linguist in the colony named Henry Spelman, having 'acquired' some Indian friends during his two years in the forests, assisted Argall. Publicly, Spelman had been deemed 'lost' or even sold, as some reports ran, one of which was Smith's, which accounted for his whereabouts in the forest those years; in reality, however, he had been planted and was working undercover for the Virginia Company.<sup>25</sup> Following the capture, Argall notified the chief that Pocahontas was being held hostage in order that he might set the captive colonists free, return some stolen munitions, and, in general, cease warring on the colonists. The story goes that months followed without an answer, and, finally, Powhatan succumbed and delivered the goods. But it was too late. The English, by this time, had become fed up, and, mysteriously, Pocahontas was a changed woman, having fallen in love with the English

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<sup>24</sup> *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1957), 96.

<sup>25</sup> This method was nothing new: Smith planted his own undercover 'spy' to learn the language in 1608, leaving the boy Samuel Collier in the care of Warraskoyak chieftain Tackonekintaco; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 207–8.

and especially tobacconist Rolfe. In addition to kidnapping Pocahontas, Argall apparently 'saved' young Spelman in 1610.

Thus did national concerns appear to determine the plot. And Argall and Dale remain important for their ties to the Old World mythology of Elizabethan England, especially to the powerful Cecils and, ultimately, to King James, for their participation continues the spark of North American land interests first conceived of by Dee and Lord Burghley.<sup>26</sup> Argall, whose fame in the history of early America comes from being the actual captor, was a noted thief, an extortionist, a 'shameless' and 'treacherous' man who was, at times, 'despotic' and 'fraudulent.'<sup>27</sup> In 1609, when reports of the

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<sup>27</sup> J.S. Bassett, 'The Relation between the Virginia Planters and the London Merchants,' *American Historical Association Report* (1901), 554; William Wirt Henry, 'The First Legislative Assembly in America,' *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 2 (1893), 155. Argall came from a line of well-connected people. His two-year stint in Virginia has been deemed by historians as nearly ruinous to the colony and was filled with acts of bribery, intimidation, and thievery. Argall was, it would seem, what we might now call a 'soldier of fortune,' a mercenary. He was born into a well-to-do family, and he was related by marriage to Thomas Smith, treasurer of the Virginia Company and active leader in the Company from its inception. Much of the early American scholarship on Jamestown ignores Argall's ancestry, which is important to his connections to the English mission. His grandfather Thomas, a successful bureaucrat, lived on the grounds of the Archbishop at Canterbury and served highly important administrative positions of church and state. As his will, dated August 19, 1583, shows, his father Laurence Argall was on quite friendly terms with Sir Francis Walsingham, among other Elizabethan gentry. In fact, Walsingham was very well-acquainted with the Argall clan; Rowland worked under both Walsingham and Burghley as operations officer in Ireland, with the former even mediating a personal land issue for Rowland. The Argall family had a distant link to Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Though this might seem trivial on the surface, it was not; as Alsop notes, 'the blood tie between the two families might not in itself be significant if it were not easily demonstrable that the Argalls [and other involved families] were all prominent Kentish gentry who formed close relationships from the middle of the sixteenth century'; James D. Alsop, 'Sir Samuel Argall's Family, 1560-1620,' *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 90:4 (1982), 483. Subscribers of the company included prominent descendents of the Argalls' friends and connections, such as Walsingham; further, there were numerous relatives of the Argalls who were shareholders in the Virginia venture. Most importantly, however, was Samuel's first cousin, Sir John Scott, council member on the Virginia Company and brother of Thomas Smith, treasurer, to whom Argall was thereby related. As a side note, Richard (son of Thomas) Argall's widow married one Laurence Washington, from whom George Washington is descended.

emerging anarchy in Jamestown reached the Virginia Company, they had James draw up a second charter, for which Argall was recommended. When De La Warr assumed command of Jamestown, Argall, along with Ralph Hamor, was given a 'special appointment' as an officer in the new government. He became governor from 1617–18, presiding over the colony with Thomas Dale.<sup>28</sup> Dale, who enjoyed some renown during Elizabeth's reign, serving first in the Netherlands under Robert Dudley, first Earl of Leicester, and later in Ireland in the military, was a sometimes patron of Robert Cecil. Dale acknowledged that it was *Cecil* who bade him go to Virginia: he writes, 'Cecil [was] pleased to imbarke me for the plantation in Virginia.'<sup>29</sup> As Dale's biographer Darrett B. Rutman has observed, 'scant as the record is concerning Dale's background ... the friends were powerful indeed.'<sup>30</sup> In late 1609 and early 1610, plans had started to secure Dale's release in order that he might join the Virginia project; De La Warr, in fact,

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<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, John Rolfe favored Argall's position (thus implicating himself, it seems) writing to Sandys in 1620, when charges were still lingering, 'I assure you that you shall find many dishonest and faithless men to Captain Argall, who have received much kindness at his hands and to his face will contradict, and be ashamed of much, which in his absence they have intimated him.' Rolfe worked in concert with Argall: '[I] cannot chose but to revele unto you the sorrow I conceive, to heare of the many accusacons heaped upon Captaine Argall, with whom my reputacon hath bene unjustly joynted'; Rolfe to Sandys, January 1620, in *The Ferrar Papers*, 'Records of the Virginia Company,' vol. 3, Bernard Blackstone, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 247.

<sup>29</sup> Dale to Sir Dudley Carleton, October 18, 1617, in Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890) 2: 870. Following the well-known debacle of Essex at Elizabeth's hands, however, he began to lose favor at court, and, petitioning Cecil for help, Dale attempted to quash charges against him, which then resulted in a warrant for his arrest. Following this, however, Dale somehow rose again, this time to captain, and gained command of an English army in Dutch service. Partly because he was so well-liked by important people, Dale interested the Virginia Company as a leader in New World operations; thus, he entered into its service.

<sup>30</sup> 'The Historian and the Marshal: A Note on the Background of Sir Thomas Dale,' *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 68:3 (1960), 291. Dale's brother-in-law was the infamous William Throckmorton. Prior to 1612, Dale, along with Edward Cecil (Burghley's grandson), Gates, and Strachey created a 'law' to form and colonize (no trace is left). In 1612, Dale, taking around 300 settlers from Jamestown, created Henricus, named after the Prince of Wales. By this time, Cecil had been promoted to general of the fleet by Buckingham, and he worked with Samuel Argall in an expedition to Cadiz against Spain.

had already named him in early 1610 'marshall of the colony' months before he left.<sup>31</sup> Dale sailed in March of that year.

Both of these figures represent the link between Old World money and power. They exemplified the prestige and wanton nationalism of the Cecils and John Dee, whose Welsh ideas—mostly involving property 'rights' to North America via the tenuous link to Madoc's supposed discovery—promoted conquest and development for capital's sake. (Dee strongly promoted a medieval 'right' to England based upon flimsy evidence of Madoc's alleged claim, an argument which Burghley supported.) As such, they symbolize precisely the type of nation building impulse against which Smith was reacting. Dale and Argall provided the link back to Dee. In fact, after he had been in England some years, Smith would reflect on the events in Virginia given what he learned from the Indians, reflections which became the basis for the *Generall Historie*. Smith writes that he despised Argall and all he stood for, partly because following Smith's departure, De la Warr and his new regime, including Argall and Dale, along with William Strachey, secretary and lieutenant governor of Virginia, began a series of cover-ups beginning in 1610 to bolster the Virginia Company's position in the public eye and ostensibly to breath 'new life' into the colony by Gates and suppress waves of negativity brought forward from Smith's tenure as president of Jamestown. Strachey figures in importantly here because the production and transmission of his *True repertory of the wreck and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, July 15, 1610* (published later by Purchas), a response to Smith's writings, was taken to the Virginia Company by Gates himself. The *Historie* remains interesting, however, especially where the Virginia Company is concerned, since Strachey's narrative contains information regarding Pocahontas that Smith's did not, namely that she was married to a tribesman prior to her fabricated 'relationship' with Rolfe, and, more importantly, details of her perceived sexual appeal—he calls Pocahontas a 'well-featured but wanton yonge girle.'<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly, then, Smith's version of events was preferred reading for the general public; Strachey's steamier chronicle was quashed by the Virginia Company, lying dormant until 1849, when it—and

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<sup>31</sup> This was despite the fact that he was again in garrison with the army and still on the payroll of the States-General; *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, 4:126.

<sup>32</sup> William Strachey, *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britannia* (1612), Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund Hakluyt, eds. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953), 72.

nineteenth-century interest in the mythos of the Smith-Pocahontas story—was reborn.<sup>33</sup>

The question of *which* account to use for New World promotion lingered in the minds of Virginia Company adventurers. As Mark Netzloff has shown, the internal problems of the colony during the advancements of charters—especially the period of change from the first to second charter that brought in Argall and Dale—was a period fraught with internal strife and manifold, and often murky, notions of liberty. It was of this period about which both Smith and Strachey wrote, and, to be fair, in Strachey's writings, attempted some form, however slight, of historical truthfulness. Always, however, his publications were repressed; instead, public sources, documents, and ideas were borrowed from the Virginia Company 'official' version of events, *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie in Virginia* (1610). As the company concluded:

Wee have thought it necessary, for the full satisfaction of all, to make it publicly knowne, that, by diligent examination, wee have assuredly found, those Letters and Rumours to have been false and malicious; procured by practice, and suborned to evill purposes: And contrarily disadvised by the testimony, upon Oath, of the chiefe Inhabitants of all the Colony.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> As S.G. Culliford, Strachey's biographer notes, 'Strachey's failure to achieve publication is not surprising [because] not only had he been preceded by John Smith, but the final chapters of the work could never gain approval of the Virginia Company'; 162. Fearing that Strachey's version was not ideologically sound enough, the Virginia Company opted to leave Smith's as the public record: Culliford claims, 'at a time when public enthusiasm for colonization waned [Strachey's work] could never gain the approval of the Virginia Company'; *William Strachey, 1572–1621* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1965), 162. *The historie of travaile* was finally published in 1849. Strachey was also an eye-witness reporter of the 1609 shipwreck on the uninhabited island of Bermuda of the colonial ship *Sea Venture*, which was caught in a hurricane while sailing to Virginia, the same wreck that would provide Shakespeare with material for *The Tempest*; this account was also squelched by members of the Virginia Company until 1625 on account of the bad publicity it would bring.

<sup>34</sup> *A Declaration of the State of the Colonie and Affaires in Virginia With the Names of Adventurors, and Summes adventured in that Action By his Majesties Counseil for Virginia* (London, 1620), 3.

Thus, while both Strachey and Smith portrayed similar events in the New World, it was the latter's that was favored by the Virginia Company of London, gaining English and, later, international, acclaim.

It is also important to remember that Smith was writing during the period immediately following the Indian massacre of 1622. By that time, the Virginia colony was developing well and had a population of around 4,000 colonists; the tobacco growing was becoming lucrative, and Richmond opened up as tobacco farmers and new colonists moved upriver. This left the original Virginians' colony somewhat open and vulnerable, but there had been no attack in eight years, and the English had become complacent. The peace did not last. According to reports, an Indian chief the English called Jack of the Feather killed a white man, and he was subsequently murdered in return. In retaliation, Pamunkey Indians killed 347 people near Berkeley Plantation along the Chesapeake Bay, around ten percent of the total population of Virginia. In *New England Trials*, Smith argues in favor of strategic reason, claiming that 'they did not kill the English because they were Christians, but for their weapons and commodities.' But the English were frightened. Up to this point, New World migration had slowly crept into the national consciousness via plays such as *The Tempest* and *Eastward Ho!* While the drama for earlier English historians, such as Bede and St. Gildas, sixth century British prophet, played out in a shift of power on the *same* island, in this case, the drama of New World history played out on an island stage populated by those who crossed the sea and those who inhabited the island. Following the Indian attack of 1622, the English became particularly alarmed, and questions concerning New World ventures took center stage. In London, furor arose as some began to argue that the English had no right to the New World lands and no ethical cause to injure Indians. The Virginia Company panicked. To quell these fears, Smith wrote, 'But must this be an argument for an English man, or discourage any either in Virginia or New England? No: for I have tried them both.'<sup>35</sup> In Smith, the Virginia Company found the link to New World conquest as a peaceable mission, and in the newly-fabricated Pocahontas narrative, its most powerful tool for national-building mythology.

The story itself provides the most important, and most famous, romantic episode in the colonial American romance genre. Most important for marking the transference to North American soil, the incident is the

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<sup>35</sup> *CWJS* 1:432.

most well-known because it was the work of a master manipulating of a powerful Anglo-Saxon literary technique: the story of the *ides*. In his dedication to Lady Francis in the 1624 printing of the *Generall Historie*, Smith positions the Pocahontas rescue among his other romantic exploits with women: he claims the Turkish Lady Tragabigzanda, 'when I was a slave to the Turkes, did all she could to secure me'; Lady Callamatta, of the Tartars, 'supplied my necessities'; and, 'that blessed Pokahontas, the Great Kings daughter of Virginia, oft saved my life.'<sup>36</sup> Purchas, who had published this part as one of the excerpts in his *Pilgrimes*, mentions almost in passing that Smith had been captured—he writes that Smith 'had fallen into the hands of the Virginians,' in one of two mentions of this episode.<sup>37</sup> Truthfully, Smith spent the better part of two months in captivity before Powhatan apparently decided to have him executed. Curiously, in *True Relation*, there exists no account of the story—Pocahontas *is* mentioned, but only once, and there is no reference to her saving Smith. Thus, the fullest account of the episode comes from the *Generall Historie*:

Having feasted him [Smith] after their best barbarous manner they could, a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could laid hands on him, dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs to beat out his brains, Pocahontas, the king's dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save his from death: whereat the emperor was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper; for they thought him as well of all occupations as themselves. For the king himself will make his own robes, shoes, bows, arrows, pots; plant, hunt, or do anything so well as the rest.<sup>38</sup>

Here, in a reversal of medieval romance roles, adventurer Smith is saved by the teenage Pocahontas, who, cradling his head in her arms, stops the magnanimous chieftain from going through with the execution. Perry Miller calls this 'one of the most charming demonstrations [of] native spontaneity.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:41–2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:314.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:150–51.

<sup>39</sup> *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 5.



However, the omission from *True Relation* adds to the gap between authorial intent and publishing purpose. As Henry Adams famously argued in his early study of Smith, since *True Relation* makes no mention of various exaggerations found in the 1624 edition of the *Generall Historie*, we must be wary of any truthfulness in the story. I am inclined to agree. Although the supposed savagery of the natives is depicted in both accounts, the *Generall Historie* adds other numerous descriptors not present in *True Relation*. For instance, Smith's capture comes after he, facing 200 bloodthirsty savages and using one tied to his own arm as a buckler, was finally taken prisoner, whereafter 'many strange triumphes and conjurations they made among him.'<sup>40</sup> In *True Relation*, no mention of such danger exists. As was previously noted, Smith's 'captivity' is amicable, for, following his capture, he is treated well and even informs Powhatan he must leave as soon as it occurs. And all of the Indians' actions in *True Relation* are extremely cordial and humane; there is none of the peril of the *Generall Historie* account, where death always hangs over Smith's head. Additionally, in *True Relation*, Smith says of Powhatan, 'Hee kindly welcomed me with such good wordes, and great Platters of sundrie Victuals, assuring mee his friendship, and my libertie,' and of his captors in general, 'So fat they fed mee, that I much doubted they intended to have sacrificed mee.'<sup>41</sup> Powhatan, claims Smith, sent him gifts and wanted to meet Smith's father, and Powhatan's tribe would creep near the fort at night, 'every of them calling me by my name, would not sell any thing till I had first received their presents.'<sup>42</sup> Such is Smith's account of his imprisonment; only once does he mention Pocahontas—on Smith's company's return with two Indian hostages and 'with such trifles as contented her.'<sup>43</sup>

What is even more strange than Smith's later addition of Pocahontas's rescue of him is that in that revised account, following Powhatan's decimation of a number of Englishmen, including John Ratcliffe, in a 1609 botched trade attempt, Smith tells us Pocahontas also 'rescued' the young Spelman (odd, indeed, considering that Spelman, in his account, claims Smith *sold* him to the Powhatans): 'Pocahontas the Kings daughter saued a boy called Henry Spilman, that liued many yeeres after, by her meanes,

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<sup>40</sup> *CWJS* 2:146.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:150.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:151.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:95.

amongst the Patawomekes.<sup>44</sup> 'Aided in his escape by Pocahontas,' the account runs, 'Spelman took refuge among the somewhat autonomous Potomacs, ignoring Powhatan's orders to return.'<sup>45</sup> In point of fact, Spelman's inclusion *at all* remains a bit of a mystery. As a scholar and antiquarian, his uncle's weight in the English world was great; there was practically no one above him in matters of historical English law, even Robert Cotton. Cotton would have certainly been interested in Spelman, as he often worked with him and John Selden in matters of English Common Law.<sup>46</sup> In fact, when young Spelman returned to London, he met with Cotton and provided Purchas with material for his *Pilgrimes*, but for reasons unknown, his uncle Henry was eager to ship him back to the New World. In a 1612 letter, the elder Spelman wrote: 'Argall has requested Henry as an aide or companion'; and in a letter to his brother, John Spelman, Henry, who appears somewhat put off by John's silence about young Henry's whereabouts, desires to know when Henry will sail again: 'Mr Hackluyte can provide the information,' writes Spelman, 'or else [John] should approach Lord de la Ware himselfe.'<sup>47</sup> Spelman did return, however, on Argall's ship, in whose charge he was returned by his uncle—he had previously worked under Argall and, before him, De La Warr—and was promoted to captain, serving from that time until his death in the 1623

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:232. Henry Spelman's story is strange. Due to primogeniture issues, young Spelman was disinherited by Sir Henry the elder, presumably his uncle and a famed antiquarian, forced into servitude, eventually signing up for the Virginia venture. Spelman became fluent in native languages and published a tract, *A Relation of Virginea*, an account that serves primarily as an ethnography: he records various habits, dress, and customs and pastimes of the natives, revealing little about himself.

<sup>45</sup> Qtd. in Strong, 63.

<sup>46</sup> All three, it will be remembered, argued that the Normans imposed a yoke of feudalism on the free and democratic Saxons; Selden composed part of the second charter for the Virginia Company. The elder Spelman's chief historical interest was the Church of England and finding antiquarian records to that end. Spelman's *Concilia* is a veritable trove of information documenting the history of English Church practices and procedures, beginning with the Britons, who, Spelman claims, were Christianized soon after Jesus' crucifixion, through the coming of Augustine's mission in 576 to 1066. Importantly, Spelman's corpus took on a rather pro Anglo-Saxon view—he held that the Normans imposed on the true church. Spelman also published an Anglo-Saxon glossary and became involved in drawing up patents for the Council of England, himself being a member, starting in 1620; Catherine Drinker Bowen, 'Historians Courageous,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 101: 3 (1957), 249–254.

<sup>47</sup> *Spelman Correspondence*, Survey Report, no. 345, British Museum, Ms. 34599, f. 29.

massacre, essentially acting as a go-between for the French (Spelman was also fluent in French) and the Indians.

All of this appears to have been shaped around the dealings in Virginia. The Virginia Company needed justification—quickly. The company's great regard for the political instability of concerns arising from migration that manifested itself as the *adventus Americanum*, the providential migration to the New World, demanded immediate attention, especially given public negativity in plays such as *Eastward Ho!*, Jonson's *pièce rosée* which almost celebrated the 'lost colony' of Roanoke and alluded to the integration of whites and Indians. Thus, the Virginia Company needed to shift the focus away from the dangers of the New World and its native inhabitants: young Spelman's being saved by and living peaceably among the Indians was one way. The impressive story of the marriage of Pocahontas was quite another. And it was even more powerful. The notion of producing peace by symbolically focusing upon Indians was nothing new. Since a variety of accounts from the New World were hardly encouraging, often emphasizing disease, pestilence, and Indian attacks, a literary attempt to confront and counteract this and the other negative publicity produced by earlier settlements, such as the Roanoke and Popham colony debacles, had been for years necessary. As early as 1612, the company produced an extensive series of travel literature in order to promote possibilities of success to potential financial backers and adventurers. Often authored in concert with the Council, a number of promotional tracts focused on creating an image of peace through extensive and deceitful propaganda.<sup>48</sup> The company's idea was to transform the threat of the 'barbarous' Indian in the public consciousness to one of possible peaceful assimilation, a marrying of cultures: 'The image of the submissive, attractive, and marriageable aboriginal transformed the stereotype of the 'savage' native, which had the desirable effect of spurring interest and investment in the colony by defusing a major obstacle to settlement.'<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'A Justification for Planting Virginia,' the Virginia Company's own publication, highlights its own awareness of the propagandist mission: 'It was proposed that some forme of writing in way of Justification of our plantation might be conceived, and pass [. . .] into many hands'; *Records of the Virginia Company*, Susan M. Kingsbury, ed. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing House, 1938) 3:1.

<sup>49</sup> David Stymeist, "'Strange Wives': Pocahontas in Early Modern Colonial Advertisement,' *Mosaic* 35 (2002), 110.

As it turned out, the added twist to the Pocahontas story in Smith's *Generall Historie* could add support to the Virginia Company's enterprise with the promise of much more positive propaganda than had originally been imagined. Set in a darkly transitional period of nation building, the implicit marriage of cultures and the conjoining of white and Indian served as a link between the old ways and the new—and *Old World* and *New*. This matrimonial depiction, started in the New World with a Saxon *chevalier* as narrator, creates an entirely providential national narrative. It was, in essence, the beginnings of an American 'bootstrap' ideology. Implicit, too, are the multiple discourses that surround and define these events as they would be represented to later readers: the myth of a free man in a native land, carving out an existence for future generations. Smith became the new and quintessentially American Saxon, and these heirlooms would become part of the mythological heritage bequeathed to later generations out of a largely national and manipulative discursive practice. Thus, the claims to any 'truth' are historically negligible. In fact, the Virginia Company's use of New World discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, and their manipulation of this mythos for the production and control of *all* signifying practices regarding New World cultural narratives produced a false veneer, an image of the possibilities of success, precisely through the language of this mythic marriage material. As Foucault states, 'discourses' are 'tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations'; these 'forced relations' are relations of power, including social institutions or groups who intend to govern social control.<sup>50</sup> The Virginia Company had every intention of positioning Smith, a New World *chevalier*, and England, by association, into the rightful heritage of Arthur and Madoc; the Other was simply different. King Arthur evolved into the New World cavalier, Captain John Smith the Knight, which ennoblement made to acknowledge the growing concern of unknown danger, served also to constitute more fully new structures of the order. A success of the New World *romans* could establish ideological control for England and the Virginia Company. The *romans* served as the primary discourse of colonization. As Stuart Hall puts it, 'it is discourse, not the subjects who speak it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture.' The Virginia Company thus manipulated the narrative to evoke the expressions of a collective memory of the community, that in England and America. The collective memory, in turn, would be very much influenced by any

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<sup>50</sup> *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 101.

emerging national myths, especially in a land where there *were* no historical stories for the English.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, the prominent attention paid to a powerful female figure in the symbolic Pocahontas story made famous by Smith is crucial to American nation building. Recently, David Stymeist has elaborated on the noteworthy cultural symbolism in the Pocahontas narrative:

The promotion of Anglo-Indian intermarriage in Colonial travel literature became a substitute for actual hybridization in the English colonization of the New World and concealed the reality of open hostility. The figure of Pocahontas represented an icon of miscegenation that masked the cultural and genetic endogamy in early modern English colonial enterprises.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the fantasy of intermarriage becomes a significant part of the official advertisement for the settling of Virginia in the period between 1605 and 1622. In the fictive account of her provided by Smith and quite likely amended later by certain collaborators, readers might embrace a sort of New World 'morality' that fused the spiritual, social, and historical worlds of migration. Recall, for example, the true Pocahontas as the newly Christianized 'Rebecca' was whisked away to England in a ceremonial tour with husband Rolfe in 1616.<sup>53</sup> To add further to the ceremonious

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<sup>51</sup> As Bernard Lewis states about collective myth, the most powerful entail 'a conflict, a clash between the group, usually exemplified in representative figure, which is to say, the heroes of the narrative, and external forces' may be human or supernatural. Any especially heroic romance or epic tale remains the most powerful, such as those found in Homeric epics and the like; *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 43.

<sup>52</sup> Stymeist, 112.

<sup>53</sup> One Thomas Spelman, the younger brother of Henry, sailed on *George* on the return trip to London with Pocahontas, along with the young Henry Spelman, who was in the employ of Argall at the time. Though the Rolfes enjoyed fame in England, by the time of 'Rebecca's' arrival, Indians in England were not a new trend—Martin Frobisher had carried one to England in 1576, perhaps the fifth in forty years. There were other Native American converts on this voyage, but little information about them exists. For more, see *Records of the Virginia Company 1*: 485, 496. What seems important to note is Rebecca's royal treatment: compared to two other indigenous women who converted and traveled to England, she was given twenty times the monetary help. The literature on this topic is, in general, somewhat lacking. The best resource to date is Alden T. Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters*:

symbolism of the marriage, several other Powhatans accompanying Rolfe and his bride were Christianized by none other than Reverend Purchas and one of Dale's men (acting as interpreter); two of the women traveling with Pocahontas were duly renamed 'Elizabeth' and 'Mary.'<sup>54</sup> The drama was very much a Company affair. Since all finances were paid by the Virginia Company for this trip, all of the details were worked out by certain Adventurers—at the head of the list was De La Warr. Appropriately enough, the group stayed in London at the aptly named 'Belle Sauvage Inn'; Pocahontas, with James I and Queen Anne, watched Ben Jonson's masque 'The Vision of Delight' in what Stymeist calls 'the crowning moment of this visit to England; the royal approval of Anglo-Indian intermarriage consecrated the Virginia Company's use of Pocahontas as sexual advertisement and proof of their missionary success.'<sup>55</sup> The important depiction of peace, a *myth* of unification read through Anglo-Saxon ideologies, proved far more important than the actual peace, and the later Pocahontas visit to England was, for all intents and purposes, 'more for show than substance'—just as well, since peace did not prevail, and no extreme Anglicanization resulted.<sup>56</sup>

To better understand these events and the power behind the creation of the mythos through which New World development of Anglo-Saxonism occurred, I must briefly return to Smith's dedication in *True Travels*, for this seemingly innocuous nod provides a key into a larger, darker, and more sinister realm of national self-fashioning and nation building. Smith dedicates the volume to 'William, Earle of Pembroke' and 'Sir Robert Cotton, that most learned Treasurer of Antiquitie, having by perusall of my Generall Historie, and others, found that I had likewise undergone diverse other as hard hazards in the other parts of the world, requested me to fix the whole course of my passages in a booke by it selfe, whose noble desire I could not but in part satisfie.'<sup>57</sup> Pembroke was a powerful man, possibly the richest man in England at the time, and was extremely influential in matters of Virginia, being both an adventurer in the Virginia Company and a board member on The Council for New England. Naturally, both Pembroke and Cotton were prominent figures in the Virginia Company; in fact, they both were brought in with Selden who was recruited in 1619 to

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*American Indians in Britain, 1500–1776* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters*, 92–3.

<sup>55</sup> Stymeist, 115.

<sup>56</sup> Vaughan, *Transatlantic Encounters*, 235.

<sup>57</sup> CWJS 3:141.

strengthen the colonization effort. The Company wanted to bolster their mission by creating and codifying a system of laws under the new charter to defend against any resistance that might weaken its overall structure.<sup>58</sup> Smith was in a strange position. Naturally desiring fame, he sought publication for his book; however, he was still operating within the greater power structure of the Virginia Company, and the ensuing interplay between the two drives creates a strange contrapuntal mix of individual and social struggle for some kind of truth.

In his persuasive but not exhaustive study of the Pocahontas story, J. A. Leo Lemay vehemently dismisses all claims of Smith's falsehood. Taking up a more romantic vision of Smith, Lemay argues, 'Cotton would not have asked Smith to write the *True Travels* if he thought Smith was lying.'<sup>59</sup> Compelling as this rationale seems, I disagree, for the very reason that Cotton and others might have lied as well; if so, then Lemay's entire argument collapses. Further, *how* the story was manipulated negates any question of veracity. Lemay seems oddly naïve in this respect, claiming, 'if [Smith] had lied, they would have learned about it'—'it' being the rescue and 'they' being Cotton and other men involved in the eventual transmission of the story.<sup>60</sup> Again, the claim appears to beg the question, since if *they* knew *and were a part of it*, it might very well be true. Yes, they probably would have learned about it, since Cotton was an erudite scholar. For the most part, too, members of the Virginia Company of London were well-educated men. In fact, these were some of the most well-connected men in all of Stuart England, so we can be certain that they would have known about it—if they were not *part* of it.

Cotton, for one, was very much tied to the idea of English liberty and desired to see its full rise again out of the ashes of James's reign in the New

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<sup>58</sup> David Sandler Berkowitz, *John Selden's Formative Years: Politics and Society in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (Washington: Folger Books, 1988), 55.

<sup>59</sup> *Did Pocahontas Save Captain John Smith?* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1992), 56. Lemay's conclusions may be succinctly summed up thus: 'There are eight unmistakable references in Smith's writings to Pocahontas's saving his life [...] if we had only one of these accounts, we would nevertheless have excellent evidence that Pocahontas saved his life [...]'; ergo, all eight of these 'proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Pocahontas rescued him'; 98. Arguing this way, the claim is essentially a *non sequitur*, or, at the very least, Lemay commits a fallacy of circular reasoning. Simply because Smith mentions it eight times, how do we know he is telling the truth? In other words, it really doesn't matter how many times Smith writes it, the question of veracity still exists.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

World. A means of defense against the growing superstructure might be produced in an elaborately created *mythos*, one that involved John Smith, whose chivalric character had drawn Cotton in since he had first read Smith's writings in Purchas. The antiquarian that he was, Cotton could link an heroic figure to the New World project, assist in creating an ideological *mythos* for the public. Indeed, there was no man in England more qualified. And Cotton could link this all in a way that complied with the 'Christian' mission of the adventurers.<sup>61</sup> One important fact that Cotton would have known about Christian Anglo-Saxon verse is that while the domineering tendency favors male heroics, it frequently accommodates occasional but influential female figures in cultural situations. Cotton would also no doubt be familiar with the notion that, differing greatly from the more subdued heroines of later medieval romances, these often Christian female depictions played out in Anglo-Saxon verse at times to intervene in the course of human events with profound influence (as such, for example, the Virgin is very often exalted in Old English poetry).<sup>62</sup> So, too, naturally, is the male Germanic hero an almost god-like character; unflinching in the face of certain doom, the Germanic hero pushes onward.

Having acquired the early Anglo-Saxon texts such as *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *The Wife's Lament*, all of which portray strong female depictions, Cotton would surely see the obvious portrayals: even if we take into account the idea of translation issues and scholarship, *Beowulf* is clearly a warrior prince and *Judith* is the fabled biblical woman savior.<sup>63</sup> Thus, more

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<sup>61</sup> The main end, according to the Virginia Company's polished manifesto, was first 'to preach the Gospel, to recover out of the Armes of the Divil, a number of poore and miserable soules, wrapt up unto death in, almost invincible ignorance'; Thomas West, third Baron De La Warr, Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Walter Cope, and Master Waterson, *A True and Sincere Declaration of the Purpose and Ends of the Plantation Begun in Virginia ...* (London, 1610), in Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States: a narrative of the movement in England*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1890) 2:339–40.

<sup>62</sup> That Cotton was a great collector of manuscripts is no secret; that he was so importantly connected to a wide number of texts needs further clarification. Of Cotton's manuscripts, the Nowell Codex is probably the most famous. Named after Laurence Nowell, the alleged first owner, the text contains both *Beowulf* and *Judith*, the two texts in question. These works in the Nowell Manuscript differ from works in the Junius (Caedmon) Manuscript; the latter contain virtually all Old Testament narratives, such as *Genesis* and *Exodus*, while the former contains, among others, these more fanciful, romantic texts.

<sup>63</sup> The issue of translation is tricky, but there is ample and clear evidence to support the idea that Cotton would have had a fundamental, if not rudimentary, command of



convincingly and equally plausible—perhaps more so, given the plethora of texts, historical and otherwise, in Cotton's possession, and his medieval imagination—is the powerful and symbolic figure of the Anglo-Saxon *ides*, the aristocratic woman or peace-keeping queen, as she was sometimes known. In her compelling look at the Anglo-Saxon *ides*, Jane Chance examines its function in various Anglo-Saxon written material and lore, both Anglo-Saxon and Germanic texts and, later, in Tacitus's *Germania*, where the female *ides* serves as the 'peaceweaver,' or *freoðuwebbe*, or the one who keeps the peace (*friðusibb*). Close-mouthed, loyal, loving, and wise, her chief role was to keep the peace between two tribes through marriage and children.<sup>64</sup>

In its literary setting, the Anglo-Saxon *ides* serves two worlds. Because she is married outside of her tribe, the exogamous role of the *ides* represents a very real, historical concern: she can be viewed as a peace weaver/keeper or, as is often the case, a 'foreign captive.'<sup>65</sup> It is vital that she be 'held' symbolically, for, in either case, her symbolic presence marks the centripetal force upon which the narrative turns. A good example of the early Anglo-Saxon *ides* may be found in the figure of Danish Queen Hildeburh in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*. Married to a Finn, Hildeburh's son becomes a Frisian warrior battling the Danes, of which her brother is a part. The Dane Hengest and Hnæf, Finn's brothers-in-law,

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Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, at least enough to get the story behind *Beowulf*; *Judith*, being a biblical text, would have been much easier. Beowulf is called to the new land (new, at least, for him) to slay the dragon that has infested King Hrothgar's kingdom; in the Anglo-Saxon *Judith*, the heroine saves the town, and the role of the biblical figure is 'of the church triumphant over the demonic forces behind paganism'; Richard J. Schrader, *God's Handiwork: Images of Women in Early Germanic Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 41. Here, the Anglo-Saxon poet condenses the story of *Judith* down to essentially two main protagonists—Judith and Holofernes, Nebuchadnezzar's general—and Judith, now Christianized, prays to the Holy Trinity for strength: 'Ic ðe, frymða god ond frofre gæst, / bearn alwaldan, biddan wylle/ miltse þinre me þearfendre./ ðrynesse ðrym' (translation: 'I pray to you, the Lord of Creation, Heaven's Son and Spirit of Hope, for mercy, Mighty Majesty, in my need'; 83–6). This 'new' Anglo-Saxonized Judith is a bit different than her Hebraic counterpart in that emphasis appears to be on her strong intellect and virginal qualities, and the heroic codes translate, in this case, to the feminine and into a religious context.

<sup>64</sup> *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 1–11.

<sup>65</sup> Janet T. Buck argues this point; 'Pre-Feudal Women,' *Journal of Rutgers University Library* 34 (1971), 48.

battle and she loses all relational connections: Finn dies, so Hildeburh loses her son, brother, and husband. Thus, she weaves the peace pledge but then becomes ironically caught within it: 'she is the central focus of the alliance that results in the death of all those men to whom she is most closely related.'<sup>66</sup> Ultimately having failed as peace weaver for the two groups, then, she is torn between both worlds, and, though her marriage was intended to weave peace, it has failed. The marriage dissolves in violence between the two tribes, and Hildeburh is sent back in disgrace.

In the colonial American version, Pocahontas as *ides* served to prevent this type of dissolution, if even only fictitiously. Smith, or, more probably, an erudite editor or collaborator, cleverly alludes to this saving grace of the *ides* mythology: 'God made Pocahontas the Kings daughter the meanes to deliver me: and thereby taught me to know their trecheries to preserve the rest.'<sup>67</sup> Depicted as a Native American who later 'marries' Englishman Rolfe, this mythological tool would easily pacify the members of the Virginia Company, other adventurers, and, in general, shape English opinion of the enterprise. Pocahontas's exogamy served the same function as the Anglo-Saxon *ides*; the marriage was 'a political maneuver for furthering the alliance between hostile groups' and publically promoting this alliance.<sup>68</sup> In short, the Saxon *mythos* of the *ides*, reinvigorated through the figure of Smith as the heroic Saxon, could unite the nation building *ethnie*. What is most striking about the Pocahontas story is that it represents a tension in the *mythos* of American Anglo-Saxonism that was developing in and around this time, a double-consciousness of or disconnect among the actions and character of a 'John Smith' *author* and Pocahontas *subject*, the *ides* that will 'marry' the two cultures in a deceptively innovative story that actually *reverses* the typical *romans*, ultimately uniting two cultures on the foreign *terra*.

This British New World adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon *ides* narrative also defines Smith's and the Virginia Company's rocky relationship as well as the tensions that exist between the individual and the larger socially conscious structure. But Smith seemed to have remained conflicted about

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<sup>66</sup> Patricia Clare Ingham, 'From Kinship to Kingship: Mourning, Gender, and Anglo-Saxon Community,' *Grief and Gender: 700–1700*, Jennifer C. Vaught and Lynne Dickson Bruckner, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 24.

<sup>67</sup> *CWJS* 1:432.

<sup>68</sup> Janemarie Luecke, "'Wulf and Eadwacer": Hints for Reading from Beowulf and Anthropology,' *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*, Martin Green, ed. (London: Rutherford, 1983), 195.

his allegiances, and, consequently, his 'additions' to the mythic creation seem stilted and awkward. Nevertheless, in the 'improved' description of events in the *Generall Historie*, he underscores how right ethics and Saxon values can deliver the English from the hands of the *divel* in the New World. And in a letter to Queen Anne which Smith was supposed to have written in 1616, he explains that Pocahontas's marriage could be used in favor of justification for conquest: 'Seeing this Kingdome [of England] may rightly have a Kingdome [America] by her means.'<sup>69</sup> (Oddly, however, the 'little booke' Smith claims to have presented to the Queen has been largely called into question: neither is there record of Smith having sent a book to the Queen, nor were his works published by 1616 [except for the brief Purchas portion mentioned above].)<sup>70</sup> Thus, the example of Smith serves a dual function in early American nation building; while he develops a chivalric *mythos* in his corpus by exemplifying the New World acting man, or heroic individual, his historical accounts that shape the New World also reposition the darker ideology carried forward from Elizabeth's reign to disrupt the historical construct of the narratives. That is, the pattern of 'lawful recovery' of lands thought to belong to Madoc first, thus England forever, continues in the Virginia Company's language. After all, in the publicly made reports printed, the company argued for the 'appearance and assurance of Private commodity to the particular undertakers, by recovering and possessing to themselves a fruitfall land, whence they may furnish and provide this Kingdome, which all such necessities.'<sup>71</sup> The tensions we see in the relationship between Smith and the Virginia Company essentially represent as well a larger contest for originary notions of New World myth between emerging economic and political factions and the chivalric values and characteristics of what will come to be seen as the American individual. Taken at face value, Smith's writings represent the possibilities of the *individual* in the New World; in their alteration from private authorship to collaborative emendation, however, Smith's work illustrates this developing freedom and liberty twisted and manipulated by the greater powers of the Virginia Company of London and other members of the English elite, thus providing a curious, and dark, subtext. Within Smith's writings, the Virginia Company could couch certain implicit

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<sup>69</sup> CWJS 2:260.

<sup>70</sup> See Brown, *The Genesis* 2:784.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas West, third Baron De La Warr, Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Walter Cope, and Master Waterson, *A True and Sincere Declaration of the Purpose and Ends of the Plantation Begun in Virginia ...* (London, 1610), in Brown, *Genesis* 1:339–40.

symbolism and depict for the reading public in England a vision of rightful migration and conquest to ensure future control of lands gained; simultaneously, the English figure of Smith was a public way to link and justify the growing nation-building ideology of an emerging American nation and its founding mythology.

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‘Poetry turns all things to loveliness’:  
The Counter-Aesthetics of Disgust in Shelley’s  
*Julian and Maddalo* and Byron’s *Don Juan*

MIMI LU

The Romantic zeitgeist is polarised by the profound yearning for a prelapsarian state of organic unity and the distressed consciousness of its unattainability. In consequence, an aesthetic disgust can be detected in the literature of Romanticism generated by a concurrent mesmerisation and revulsion by the grossly corporeal world that humanity cannot transcend. This disgust, so subtly pervasive that it has been largely overlooked by commentators, is particularly prominent in the works of the ‘second generation’ Romantics, whose faith in the ability of the poetic imagination to extirpate or transmute flawed realities into their envisioned ideals was dampened by their escalating scepticism. Denise Gigante cogently argues that the manifest synaesthetic disgust in *Hyperion*, which Keats began working on in 1818, is ‘symptomatic of the greater philosophical and cultural sickening of the idealist subject of taste.’<sup>1</sup> Frankenstein’s Creature, unleashed upon the cultural imaginary by Mary Shelley in the same year, epitomises the ugly excrescences that threaten to demolish Romanticism’s precariously balanced architectonics of the beautiful and the sublime. This intolerably monstrous hodgepodge of individually beautiful parts allegorises contemporary anxieties about the unbridgeable disparity between a transcendental vision and its humanly imperfect execution. This paper aims to enrich current understandings of Romantic disgust by examining the dynamic dialogue about the sickeningly ugly and the monstrous that is sustained between Percy Shelley’s *Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation* and the first two cantos of Lord Byron’s *Don Juan*. Both pieces of work were composed during 1818–19, a period when the two

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<sup>1</sup> Denise Gigante, ‘The Endgame of Taste: Keats, Sartre, Beckett,’ in *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism*, ed. Timothy Morton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.187.

friends were considerably influenced by each other's poetics and philosophies. *Julian and Maddalo* is suffused with a quintessentially Romantic despair that poetic language ultimately lacks the power to defamiliarise and re-beautify a stagnant and irredeemably defective world. In the comedic universe of *Don Juan*, Byron responds to Shelley's anxieties about the incorrigible entanglement of the ideal and the disgusting by exhibiting the creatively fruitful symbiosis that is fostered by mediating their antithetical aesthetics. My readings of the poems are underwritten by a central contention that paying closer attention to the permutations of aesthetic disgust in Romantic literature can offer new insights into the period's shifting conceptualisations of the role of the imagination and poetic language, which are entrusted with the onerous burdens of realising the idealistic aspirations of aesthetic perfectionism and human perfectibility.

### Romanticising Disgust

Romantic writers inherited eighteenth-century aesthetic theories that defined the disgusting as the ugly excesses of reality that resist articulation, artistic representation and integration into the dualistic taxonomy of the beautiful and the sublime. Edmund Burke notes in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that only the 'pleasing illusions' and 'superadded ideas' of art can 'cover the defects of our naked shivering nature.'<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant's oft-cited contention in *Critique of Judgment* is that, as an extreme form of ugliness and the absolute antithesis of the beautiful, the disgusting object 'alone is incapable of being represented conformably to nature without destroying all aesthetic delight.'<sup>3</sup> Winfried Menninghaus insightfully demonstrates that Kant's aesthetic philosophy is nevertheless constructed upon the triad of the sublime, the beautiful and the disgusting.<sup>4</sup> This triad undergirds much of the literature of the Romantic period during which, as Charles Armstrong reminds us, '[t]he nature of wholeness or

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<sup>2</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), ed. Thomas H. D. Mahoney (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), p.87. Cited by Denise Gigante, 'Facing the Ugly: The Case of *Frankenstein*,' *ELH* 67, no. 2 (2000): 468.

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith, ed. Nicholas Walker (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 141.

<sup>4</sup> Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust, The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 116.

unity is scrutinised with considerable urgency.<sup>5</sup> In their works, Romantic writers aspired to bridge the dichotomous spheres of poetry and philosophy, feeling and thought, the natural and the supernatural, the phenomenal and noumenal, the Fancy and the Imagination. According to Christopher Stokes, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) 'represents the grandest ambitions of Romanticism' because it aims to integrate the beautiful and the sublime into 'one absolute aesthetic category.'<sup>6</sup> In *Biographia*, Coleridge emphasises it is the poetic imagination that holds 'the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect.'<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Stokes astutely notes that even in Coleridge's ambitious manifesto, there is 'a counter-aesthetic based on discontinuity and negativity in the margins.'<sup>8</sup> Encroaching upon every grand Romantic project, disgust is that incontrollable reflux which threatens to overturn the precarious formal unity imposed by 'superadded' aesthetic illusions.

*Frankenstein* encapsulates the Romantic paranoia that language is often utterly inadequate as a veil for humanity's 'naked shivering nature' and the means for ameliorating, let alone beautifying, the ugly realities of its postlapsarian condition. Gigante offers a compelling theory to account for why disgusting objects became such a locus of anxiety for Romantic idealism: 'If the aesthetic can be considered the only mode of transcendence left in a highly rational, empirical age, then the de-aestheticizing ugly comes fraught with all the horror of not just primal but final chaos, of apocalyptic destruction.'<sup>9</sup> Frankenstein's Creature, as Gigante argues, 'symbolizes nothing but the unsymbolized: the repressed ugliness at the heart of an elaborate symbolic network that is threatened the moment he bursts on the scene, exposing to view his radically unscribed existence.'<sup>10</sup> Despite his eloquence, the Monster cannot convey his intrinsic moral goodness and his indisputable humanity to his horror-struck viewers by overcoming their atavistic physiological recoil of revulsion towards his

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Armstrong, *Romantic Organicism: From Idealist Origins to Ambivalent Afterlife* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 13

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Stokes, *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime: From Transcendence to Finitude* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria: Or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. George Watson (London: Everyman's Library, 1991), 176. All subsequent references to this edition are incorporated in the text, with the abbreviation 'BL'.

<sup>8</sup> Stokes, *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Gigante, 'Facing the Ugly,' 579–80.

<sup>10</sup> Gigante, 'Facing the Ugly,' 567.

raw vitality and eliciting their imaginative sympathy. The doppelgangers of Frankenstein's Monster appear in various guises in Romantic literature, as contemporary writers interrogate the phantasmagoric threat of the disgusting. The ineffable, self-imperilling experience of disgust, which can only be communicated via the lame *topos* of inexpressibility, thus represents the supreme anathema of the Romantic imagination and marks the final insurmountable frontier of poetic expression itself.

### Imperfect Transmutations of the Disgusting in *Julian and Maddalo*

Despite the humanism and utopianism of his polemical writings, Percy Shelley's personal correspondence is peppered with disgusted excoriations of the vulgar commoners. At Keswick, Shelley writes, 'tho the face of the country is lovely the *people* are detestable.'<sup>11</sup> He dismisses Irish commoners as 'one mass of animated filth'<sup>12</sup> and excoriated Italians as 'the most degraded disgusting & odious,' 'the deformity & degradation of humanity,' and 'filthy modern inhabitants.'<sup>13</sup> Simon Haines explains that 'For much of his life Shelley saw most human beings as brutish and distasteful creatures of passion unless and until they were transformed in the light of an ideal or a doctrine.'<sup>14</sup> Poetic language, Shelley tries to maintain, has the capacity to ennoble and revivify the sluggish masses. A *Defence of Poetry* echoes Coleridge's faith in imaginative language's harmonising power: Shelley claims that poetry is 'the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of *all things*'<sup>15</sup> and that 'Poetry turns *all things* to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is *most deformed*... it subdues to union under its light yoke *all irreconcilable things*' (*D*, §41, emphasis added). Yet despite Shelley's adamant reiteration that 'all things' can be transformed by the poet's Midas touch, his own works are suffused with doubts about whether poetry's 'light yoke' is capable of subjugating the protean

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<sup>11</sup> *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) Vol. I, 223, original emphasis.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters*, Vol. I, 277.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters*, Vol. II, 67, 60, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Haines, *Shelley's Poetry: The Divided Self* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 57.

<sup>15</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry,' in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), §39, emphasis added. All subsequent references to this essay are incorporated in the text, with the abbreviation '*D*.'



phantasmagorias of what is ‘most deformed.’ The prototypical poet in Shelley’s *Alastor*, like Frankenstein, ‘made [his] bed / In charnels and on coffins’ and fraternised with ‘black death.’<sup>16</sup> However, like the hubristic scientist, the poet fails to emerge from the world’s putrid underbelly with an aesthetically perfect creation that reconciles its sepulchral fragments and organic slime. Again and again, Romantic works depict how a confrontation with the disgust-eliciting reality exacerbates an individual’s incipient existential nausea, sullen solipsism or passive-aggressive antisocialism.

In *Julian and Maddalo*, Shelley self-reflexively modulates through various forms of poetic expression and registers, as he tries to strip away from this reality its ugly ‘film of familiarity’ (*BL*, 169; *D*, §41). Shelley’s idealism is fuelled by the conviction that the world’s inherent beauty is being obscured and distorted by these vulgar coverings, woven from the offcuts of unimaginative language and insipid thoughts. When he recalls the Venetian lagoons during sunset, the older Julian who is writing the poem briefly approximates Shelley’s ideal poet, one of those exceptional ‘hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration’ (*D*, §48). Julian’s lyric, overshadowed by the Maniac’s poetical medley, is reminiscent of Coleridge’s conversational poems in which an initially doubt-stricken speaker is propelled towards a climatic (re)union with his perfect complement, as soliloquy is superseded by colloquy. Coleridge claims that a poeticised sunset, imbued with ‘the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination,’ allows readers to experience vicariously this self-expanding state of organic unity and access the very ‘truth of nature’ (*BL*, 168). Julian’s lyric also exudes a renascent Wordsworthian faith in the spiritual nourishment available through a recollected experience of perfect reciprocity with nature. As Julian apostrophises the remembered Venetian setting sun, he validates his conjecture that an industrious Will can collaborate with the Imagination to make ‘the best of ill.’<sup>17</sup> In this unadulterated mood of child-like wonder, Julian eschews the ‘[d]estructive egoism’<sup>18</sup> of Shelley’s Alastorean Poet, who merely projects his emotions and desires onto his natural surroundings, peremptorily asserting to the

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<sup>16</sup> Percy Shelley, ‘Alastor,’ in *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, (23–5).

<sup>17</sup> Percy Shelley, ‘Julian and Maddalo,’ in *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, (47). All subsequent references to this poem are incorporated in the text, with the abbreviation ‘*JM*.’

<sup>18</sup> Jill Rubenstein, ‘Sound and Silence in Coleridge’s Conversation Poems,’ *English* 21 (1972), 54.

stream ‘Thou imagest my life.’<sup>19</sup> Whereas such projections of the self only achieve an illusory organic unity, Julian experiences a holistic self-transcendence during both his actual experience and mental revisiting of the lagoons:

Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,  
 Over the horizon of the mountains;—Oh,  
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow  
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,  
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!  
 Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers  
 Of cities they encircle!—it was ours  
 To stand on thee, beholding it

(*JM*, 53–60).

Julian’s poetic imagination arrests the sun’s descent indefinitely: *holding* the beautiful scene still, he marvels that it ‘paused ere it should alight’ (*JM*, 53) and later reiterates that ‘the swift sun yet paused in his descent’ (*JM*, 75). His utter artistic control enables him to assert possessory rights over the entire remembered landscape. The tranquil reminiscence, ‘such glee was ours’ (*JM*, 30), crescendos into Julian’s confident proclamation, ‘it was *ours* / To stand on thee’ (*JM*, 59). The vague ‘it’ indicates the all-encompassing nature of Julian’s imaginative annexation, just as the ‘towers’/‘ours’ rhyme implies that Julian’s exultant proprietorial grasp extends to Venice’s civic architecture and rich cultural legacies. A harmonious equilibrium prevails, as sublime nature (‘mountains, seas’) and cultivated nature (‘vineyards’) ‘encircle’ the manmade towers. The friends are arrested in turn by the suspended sun’s nourishing radiance: ‘[a]s those who pause on some delightful way / Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood’ (*JM*, 63–4). The pleonastic ‘delightful way’ and ‘pleasant pilgrimage’ underline the contrast to the Byronic Child Harold’s sombre journey through Venice’s ‘dying Glory.’<sup>20</sup>

But ultimately, Julian cannot sustain the self-assurance of the Coleridgean conversationalist, whose meditations progress smoothly ‘from prediction to projection to prescription.’<sup>21</sup> Just as every representation of

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<sup>19</sup> Shelley, ‘Alastor,’ (505).

<sup>20</sup> Lord Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, in *The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), (iv.6).

<sup>21</sup> Keith G. Thomas, ‘Jane Austen and the Romantic Lyric: *Persuasion* and Coleridge’s Conversation Poems,’ *ELH* 54, no. 4 (1987): 914.

the beautiful ‘bears the traces of its emergence from this phantasmagoric body of disgust,’<sup>22</sup> Julian’s euphoria begins subsiding when he tangentially observes that only ‘half the sky / Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry’ (*JM*, 70–1) and that the night’s pitchy monochrome lies on the other side of the celestial ‘rent’ (*JM*, 74). With no other warning than a typographical dash, ‘And then –’, Julian’s vision begins collapsing into an apocalyptic pandemonium as paradise is lost once again, ‘Dissolved into one lake of fire’ (*JM*, 80–1). The shift into the passive voice—‘were seen’ (*JM*, 81)—sets up a conspicuous contrast to the preceding present participles, ‘beholding’ and ‘looking’ (*JM*, 60, 65), which had seemed to promise the possibility of sustained poetic inspiration. Julian’s panegyric is abruptly terminated by the poem’s first direct speech, Maddalo’s urgent ‘Ere it fade...’ (*JM*, 85), which augments his own consciousness of the transience of the enchantment cast by a poetic vision. Before Julian can articulate his wonder at the beauteous panorama, Maddalo draws his attention to the madhouse, the ‘windowless, deformed and dreary pile’ (*JM*, 101) that ruptures the incandescent spectacle of the Venetian temples and palaces that only ‘*seem* / Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven’ (*JM*, 92, emphasis added). Julian’s imaginative power sags: in a predominantly monosyllabic statement, he flatly reports that his suspended ‘broad sun sunk behind it’ (*JM*, 105). This ‘it’ hollowly echoes the ebullient ‘*it was ours*’: Julian is forced to concede that this monstrous protuberance is also humanity’s inheritance. The chiasmic alliterative pattern ‘b-s-s-b,’ aurally highlighted by the sibilance and assonance, replicates the solar eclipse caused by the gargantuan bulk that perennially stands ‘between us and the sun’ (*JM*, 98). After his gaze is redirected, Julian can no longer see the ‘waves of flame / Around the vaporous sun, from which there came / The inmost purple spirit of light’ (*JM*, 82–4). Instead, he despondently notes that ‘into the purple sea / The orange hues of heaven sunk silently’ (*JM*, 137–8). Rather than a magnificent arrangement of purple and orange into a mesmerising set of concentric circles, the two monochromatic hues become starkly segregated until one simply engulfs the other entirely. According to Gigante,

the ugly...disgusts because it ‘insists.’...[W]hat ‘insists’ is that which ‘stands’ in the way. The ugly is offensively obtrusive in standing between the subject and its representation of the

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<sup>22</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 49.

object. It stands in for itself, as it were, refusing to budge, and thus stripping the subject of imaginative capacity.<sup>23</sup>

The madhouse constitutes what Gigante would call ‘an anti-transparency, an opacity or material abhorrence that leaks through representation to disorder the mind of the subject.’<sup>24</sup> Having existed since time immemorial, encrusted with the ‘uses vile’ of ‘age to age’ (*JM*, 100), it blocks the channels of Julian’s imagination and poetic expression. The striking use of present tense, ‘the madhouse stands’ (*JM*, 214), and the older Julian’s oblique observation that Venice’s ‘aspect’ remains ever ‘the same’ (*JM*, 585), emphasise that this insistently repulsive ‘material abhorrence’ can never be extirpated. Its dehumanised inmates’ non-verbal ‘Moans, shrieks and curses and blaspheming prayers’ (*JM*, 218) counterbalance Julian’s idealistic aphorisms and lyrical paean to the sublime sunset. Julian’s ensuing moroseness prevails until the poem’s conclusion when he reiterates his verdict that there is ‘little of transcendent worth’ (*JM*, 591) in this ‘cold world’ (*JM*, 617).

Julian and Maddalo’s conversation, generally considered as a poeticised rendition of Shelley and Byron’s own lengthy discussions in Venice during the summer of 1818, is even less reconcilable with the ideal mode of Romantic diction, the Coleridgean ‘ontological converse at the world’s margin or lip’<sup>25</sup> sustained by those nightingale-poets who ‘answer and provoke each other’s song.’<sup>26</sup> For this central dialogue, Shelley claims that he ‘employed a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in which people talk with each other whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms.’<sup>27</sup> Shelley tries to differentiate his ‘familiar style’ not only from plebeian vulgarity but also from the type of unoriginal linguistic ‘familiarity’ he believed was ‘the agent of delusion.’<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the academic disquisition remains two-dimensional: Julian recalls that they ‘descanted’ (*JM*, 46) but unlike a ‘descant,’ a variation upon a theme, their rationalistic

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<sup>23</sup> Gigante, ‘Facing The Ugly,’ 577.

<sup>24</sup> Gigante, ‘Facing The Ugly,’ 578.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Larkin, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Promising Losses* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 181.

<sup>26</sup> Coleridge, ‘The Nightingale,’ in *The Complete Poems*, ed. William Keach, (London: Penguin Books, 1997), (58).

<sup>27</sup> *Letters*, Vol. II, 108.

<sup>28</sup> Tony Howe, ‘Shelley and the Development of *Don Juan*,’ *Byron Journal* 35, no. 1 (2007): 29.

language and ideas are rather hackneyed. The metaphysical triumvirates of 'God, freewill and destiny' (*JM*, 42) and 'love, beauty and truth' (*JM*, 174) are mechanically invoked. These abstractions, as Simon Haines notes, 'sit lumpishly in their places, unexplored and uncriticised.'<sup>29</sup> The aphorisms and axioms, such as Maddalo's epigrammatic 'if you can't swim / Beware of Providence' (*JM*, 117–8) and Julian's doggerel truisms, 'it is our will / That thus enchains us to permitted ill' (*JM*, 170–1), similarly lack the power to restore to their lacklustre world its 'sparkle and the dew drops' (*BL*, 49). When Maddalo cynically analogises that the human soul is a 'black and dreary bell' which is 'Hung in a heaven-illuminated tower' (*JM*, 123–24), Julian responds with his counterclaim that Maddalo's infant daughter has eyes that are the 'Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven' and the repositories of 'such deep meaning' (*JM*, 148–9). Julian himself is only half-convinced by his attempted conversion of the infant's expressive eyes into metonyms for the ideal poem that embodies 'the depth and height of the ideal world' (*BL*, 49). He tries to bolster his argument by asseverating that 'This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free' (*JM*, 167) is proof that 'we might be all / We dream of happy, high, majestic' (*JM*, 172–3). However, the two tricolons only highlight the illogic of Julian's analogy: the child is carefree precisely because she has yet to develop an adult's pained consciousness of the unbridgeable schism between dream and reality. Gazing into such celestial 'Twin mirrors' seems to facilitate, as Jeremy Davies posits, 'a revelation of the blind spots that the two of them share.'<sup>30</sup> However, Keith Thomas persuasively notes that '[t]he antistrophic to and fro does not issue into a dialectical synthesis'<sup>31</sup> and instead of a harmonisation of the friends' disparate philosophies, there is only 'something closer to a paradoxical juxtaposition.'<sup>32</sup> The victory of each friend in making his own 'system refutation-tight / As far as words go' (*JM*, 193–4) is pyrrhic. Their carefully perfected systems will be jeopardised by the Maniac's outburst, 'How vain / Are words!' (*JM*, 472–3), and ultimately, their rather redundant argument will be simply 'forgot' (*JM*, 520). Shelley is critically appraising the deficiencies of the abstract, didactic mode of poetic expression modelled by the poem's central conversation, which fails to effect that elusive transformation of 'all things to loveliness.'

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<sup>29</sup> Haines, *Shelley's Poetry*, 133.

<sup>30</sup> Jeremy Davies, 'The Shelleys and the Art of Suffering,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34.2 (2011): 273.

<sup>31</sup> Keith G. Thomas, 'Jane Austen and the Romantic Lyric: *Persuasion* and Coleridge's *Conversation Poems*,' *ELH* 54, no. 4 (1987): 915.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, 'Jane Austen and the Romantic Lyric,' 915.

Whilst Shelley's ideal poem facilitates 'a going out of our own nature' and 'creates for us a being within our being' (*D*, § 13, §42), Julian's and Maddalo's common revelation is that the being within each of our beings is an incoherent Maniac, the half-repulsive, half-mesmerising madman who occupies the poem's dark heart. Like Mary Shelley's Monster, Percy's Maniac leads a 'radically unscripted existence' and resists his viewers' attempts to integrate his unaccountable nature into their supposedly 'refutation-tight' systems. 'Of the Maniac I can give no information,' the poem's Preface warns, and Julian affirms that the Maniac is indecipherable like 'some stubborn art' (*JM*, 571). Commentators concur that the paradigmatic elicitor of disgust is 'the fetid ooze of...life soup.'<sup>33</sup> The Maniac is spattered with 'ooze' and 'brackish spray' (*JM*, 275–77), mired in the same putrid and putrefying organic matter of those pullulating interstices between life and death from which Frankenstein had pilfered the miscellaneous parts of his Creature. The Maniac is thus also a coalescence of those perturbingly nondescript and protean 'irreconcilable things' that the poet must attempt to subject to his 'light yoke.' The Maniac can only be described negatively or euphemistically: Julian notes his 'hue too beautiful for health' (*JM*, 281) and the Maniac's lover's own face becomes distorted by a 'grimace of hate' when she wonders how the Maniac could 'address / *Such features* to love's work' (*JM*, 461–64, emphasis added). The Maniac concedes that her 'taunt' is 'true,' periphrastically explaining '(For indeed nature nor in form nor hue / Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)' (*JM*, 465–6). The imperfectly sutured body parts of Frankenstein's Creature, according to Gigante, fail to 'inspire his viewer with the imaginative power necessary to unite his various anatomical components into the totality of a human being.'<sup>34</sup> The Maniac imagines tearing out his own grosser parts, his reviled 'nerves of manhood by their bleeding root' (*JM*, 425). Yet, masochistically fantasising about such a self-castration only exacerbates the Maniac's abjection: left with only a solitary 'nerve o'er which do creep / The else unfelt oppressions of this earth' (*JM*, 449–50), he is less akin to the polytonal Aeolian harp, the Romantic metonym of the Poet, than to the downtrodden 'instinctive worm' (*JM*, 412).

The Maniac's verse, predominated by his 'Reproaching' tone (*JM*, 289), is irreconcilable with Shelley's ideal poem, which is 'the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds' (*D*, §40). It neither chronicles those 'evanescent visitations of thought and

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<sup>33</sup> William Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 18.

<sup>34</sup> Gigante, 'Facing The Ugly,' 570.

feeling...elevating and delightful beyond all expression' nor 'all that is best and most beautiful in the world' (*D*, §40). The tone of the Maniac's monologue becomes increasingly frenzied as he struggles to strip away the 'film of familiarity'—metonymically present in the poem as the obscuring 'veil' enwrapped around his 'pent mind' (*JM*, 383)—that impedes his ability to apprehend the beauty that allegedly underlies his misshapen surroundings. Julian initially insists that the Maniac's lugubrious 'sweet strains...charm the weight / From madmen's chains' (*JM*, 259–60). He is trying to prove his conjecture that the 'chains...which our spirit bind' are indeed '[b]rITTLE...as straw' (*JM*, 181–2). The Maniac's electrifying words can purportedly galvanise any listener who possesses the faintest 'touch / Of human nature' (*JM*, 518–9). Yet true poetry, as Coleridge posits, should be characterised by its 'untranslatableness in words of the same language without injury to the meaning' (*BL*, 263). Conversely, there is an indelible suggestion in the poem that the enigmatic ramblings of the Maniac are perhaps untranslatable because they are inherently meaningless. The Shelleyan Poet should ensure that the 'co-presence of the whole picture flash'd at once upon the eye,' thus scintillating his reader's soul by spreading a 'spirit of unity' (*BL*, 252; 173–4). The Maniac's disjointed speeches, typographically demarcated by rows of crosses, are more reminiscent of the jumbled 'pieces of a dissected map' or the clumsy stitching of Frankenstein's Creature: they require 'a retrogressive effort of mind to behold it as a whole' (*BL*, 252). The expository frames fail to elucidate them and they hardly constitute 'episodes to that great poem, which all poets...have built up since the beginning of the world' (*D*, §20). Although Julian claims to have reproduced the Maniac's speech verbatim—'I yet remember what he said / Distinctly' (*JM*, 298–99)—he is conscious that readers of his transliteration cannot share his rapturous reaction. The poetry that effuses from this 'Most wretched' specimen is, as Julian eventually concedes, 'lost in grief' and the 'words came each / Unmodulated, cold, expressionless' (*JM*, 290–92). The trinity of adjectives, clumped together using asyndeton, will be echoed in the Maniac's rapid-fire of egotistical complaints about his 'misery, disappointment and mistrust' (*JM*, 314) and 'pain and insult and unrest and terror' (*JM*, 327). His self-pitying grievances are almost as lifeless as Julian's and Maddalo's metaphysical tricolons. In any case, like Coleridge, Shelley is critical of the mode of poetic diction that simulates the spontaneous stream of unfiltered speech. Frederic Burwick contends that Coleridge's conversation poems indicate his understanding that '[i]n order to give meaning to sensation,

there must be industrious thought in the idleness of meditative reception.<sup>35</sup> Shelley also emphasises the active labour of composition: rather than mechanically transcribing and transmitting impressions like the single-nerved Maniac, the poet should radically respond to and transform his phenomenal world.

The Maniac articulates Shelley's inherent anxiety that words are commonly deployed as the implements of mutual torture or self-debasement, thus destabilising Julian's initial dewy-eyed assurance that words are the perfectibilian's instruments of self-betterment, social meliorism, and aesthetic beautification. Instead of transforming 'all things' into objects of aesthetic beauty, the Maniac's own language 'burns the brain / And eats into it...blotting all things fair / And wise and good which time had written there' (*JM*, 479–81). His monomaniacal repetition of the 'many a bare broad word' (*JM*, 432) uttered by his scornful Lady causes his life to become 'like a heavy chain' that 'Lengthens behind with many a link of pain!' (*JM*, 302–03). Her words 'sealedst' and 'cearedst' (*JM*, 432–33) into their minds the nebulous 'suppressed and hideous thought' (*JM*, 429) that had always adumbrated their love. The Lady herself 'would fain forget' the trite blandishments she had once uttered but 'they / Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away' (*JM*, 406–07). Her imprecations are also 'vain' in the sense that they fail to inflict the literal injury she had wished upon the Maniac. He conjectures that this is because 'they were ministered / One after one' (*JM*, 434–35) and advises her to 'Mix them up / Like self-destroying poisons in one cup' in order to 'make one blessing...—death' (*JM*, 435–7). Such an abuse of the power of words is a darkly ironic inversion of Coleridge's ideal poem's beauty, its 'multēity in unity.' The Maniac's own final words in direct speech concede the difficulty of creating such a potent linguistic concoction. He futilely tries to narrate his own death by switching to the present tense: 'quick and dark / The grave is yawning' (*JM*, 505–06) and by claiming that 'the air / Closes upon my accents' (*JM*, 508–09). Instead of the wished-for death, however, the Maniac simply falls into 'A heavy sleep' during which he continues to mutter 'some familiar name' (*JM*, 514–15). Although the Maniac insists,

I do but hide  
Under these words like embers, every spark

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<sup>35</sup> Frederick Burwick, 'Coleridge's Conversation Poems: Thinking the Thinker,' *Romanticism* 14, no. 2 (2008): 179.



Of that which has consumed me  
(*JM*, 503–04),

the incendiary potential of his verse is dubious. Therefore, neither the mad poet, reduced to reiterating ‘some familiar name,’ nor his eavesdroppers, who deploy a ‘certain familiar style of language,’ is capable of ameliorating their common disgustful world through their words.

Julian sagaciously desists foraging for ‘An entrance to the caverns’ of the Maniac’s mind (*JM*, 573), intuiting that only ‘an unconnected man’ (*JM*, 547) has the leisure to dissect a Maniac’s ‘unconnected exclamations’ (*JM*, Preface). Whilst the psychoanalytical exercise could be for Julian’s ‘own good’ (*JM*, 572), just as conversing with the pessimistic Count Maddalo could ‘make me know myself’ (*JM*, 561), Julian renounces such solipsistic ventures. Shelley believed, as Haines reminds us, that the imagination was vital ‘for a fuller creative functioning of the whole self, individual and social, working through its senses and passions, not just its intellect or ‘reason.’<sup>36</sup> The Maniac, chronically afflicted with existential disgust, nurses a crippled imagination and a constitutional inability to experience the more sophisticated cognitive affects of wonder. Whereas the Venice of Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* was precariously suspended between a palace and a prison, Julian discovers during his sojourn that this ‘Paradise of exiles’ contains only a ‘wrecked palace’ *within* a madhouse (*JM*, 224). To linger in Venice is to acquiesce to the shackles of the past and to reiterate worn disputes on ‘a bare strand’ (*JM*, 3) or ‘a narrow space’ (*JM*, 12). Although one could write ‘Unseen, uninterrupted’ (*JM*, 554), Shelley’s paradise comprises of mutually-expanding conversations and his idealistic vision is vaster than the circumscribed sphere of light cast by Julian’s Venetian ‘little brazen lamp’ (*JM*, 553).

Neo-Platonic Love, a Shelleyan synonym for poetry and the imagination, is tellingly characterised in the poem as pathetically feeble. The ‘love-devoted’ Maniac, who claims that he had not only learnt ‘to love / My nature’ (*JM*, 380–2) but also ‘loved even to my overthrow / Her’ (*JM*, 405), is tormented by this facile slippage of love into disgust, which is essentially ‘a state of alarm and emergency, an acute crisis of self-preservation in the face of an unassimilable otherness.’<sup>37</sup> Whereas his ‘moments’ of lonely yearning stretch out like ‘immortality’ (*JM*, 418–19),

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<sup>36</sup> Haines, *Shelley’s Poetry*, 92.

<sup>37</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 1.

the Maniac and his Lady ‘disunite in horror’ after they had only ‘for a moment mingled’ (*JM*, 427–28). Their union occurs at the ‘nerves of manhood’ (*JM*, 425), underscoring the impossibility of segregating the ethereal from the corporeal. Although it is the Lady who articulates her revulsion and the wish that she ‘had ne'er endured / The deep pollution of my loathed embrace’ (*JM*, 421), the Maniac acknowledges that he had always been cognisant of the ‘suppressed and hideous thought / Which flits athwart our musings’ (*JM*, 429). Paradoxically, love becomes the ‘fuel / Of the mind’s hell’ (*JM*, 440–1) and is even antithetical to ‘truth’ (*JM*, 347) because it must assume a ‘mask of falsehood’ (*JM*, 308), one of those Burkean ‘pleasing illusions,’ in order to disguise its gross carnality and self-centredness. Maddalo’s daughter’s pithy summary of the Maniac’s experience of love, ‘They met—they parted’ (*JM*, 608), becomes syntactically inverted in Julian’s insistence that she divulge ‘The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met’ (*JM*, 610, original emphasis). The chiasmic formation, met-parted-parted-met, suggests that the Maniac and his Lady are bound in an interminable cycle of estrangement and reconciliation, mutual revulsion and rekindled yearning. It is a microcosmic enactment of Shelley’s own unresolved angst about the irremediable entanglement of the sublime, self-enlarging experience of love and the antisocial recoil of disgust.

*Julian and Maddalo* does not culminate on the *anagnorisis* or momentous epiphany of the Romantic lyric. During the poem’s final conversation, Julian’s cross-examination of Maddalo’s grown daughter is apathetically clinical. Instead of the revivifying horse ride with ‘a remembered friend’ that opens the poem, ‘Charged with light memories of remembered hours’ (*JM*, 31), the aged Julian is only left with ‘youth’s remembered tears’ (*JM*, 612). Certainly, Julian’s experience of absolute wholeness during the Venetian sunset, when he achieves the Shelleyan ideal of thinking ‘with the passions, from inside a whole self,’<sup>38</sup> is a utopian vision that makes *its* stand against the perennial eyesore of the madhouse and its menagerie of the broken specimens of humanity. But all the same, Shelley remains deeply troubled by these disgusting excrescences which resist integration into the beautifying aesthetics of his verse.

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<sup>38</sup> Haines, *Shelley’s Poetry*, 243.

### The Disgusting Conjunctions of *Don Juan*

Shelley, who considered *Don Juan* the great epic that embodied the spirit of their age, wrote admiringly to his friend, 'You unveil [and] present in its true deformity what is worst in human nature.'<sup>39</sup> Haines claims 'This was a new recognition: that disclosing the horrors of the 'self' could be as much the function of great poetry as imagining ideal beauty.'<sup>40</sup> However, as Christopher Hands reminds us, '*Don Juan* itself spans a range of differently nuanced responses to Shelley's mind.'<sup>41</sup> Boldly mediating between the aesthetics and counter-aesthetics of the Kantian triad as well as wilfully defying Coleridge's prohibition against vacillating between 'anticlimax and hyperclimax' (*BL*, 27), Byron addresses Shelley's anxieties about the contamination of the ideal by the incontrovertibly disgusting. Byron is astutely cognisant that 'art thrives only on the continual generation of differences' and on 'conjunctions of the beautiful and the disgusting.'<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, he strategically deploys aesthetic disgust in the rambunctiously inventive verse of *Don Juan* to dismantle the hegemonic sociocultural, moral, and ideological moulds he perceived were smothering the vitality of the cultural imaginary and thus impeding the Romantic quest for that elusive state of prelapsarian self-completion.

In *Don Juan*, Byron aims to deflect the existential disgust of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* that had created at the poem's heart a 'dreadful abyss'<sup>43</sup> by openly acknowledging 'the cosmos as a fleshly abyss.'<sup>44</sup> Whilst the licentiousness and amorality of the narrator and eponymous hero appeared monstrous to Byron's more prudish contemporaries, they also exposed the depravities that were putrefying beneath their society's deceptively placid surface. One of the central ironies of *Don Juan* is that the classic Lothario figure is a morally unblemished ingénue compared to the hypocrites and deviants that he encounters. Carolyn Korsmeyer contends that aesthetic disgust, by forcing readers to confront discomforting realities they would rather overlook, can be deployed

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<sup>39</sup> *Letters*, Vol. II, 357–8.

<sup>40</sup> Haines, *Shelley's Poetry*, 89.

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Hands, 'Byron's Conversation with Shelley,' *Essays in Criticism* 58.2 (2008): 148.

<sup>42</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 401.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Storey, *The Problem of Poetry in the Romantic Period* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 164.

<sup>44</sup> Charles LaChance, 'Byron's Bad English,' *English* 50, no. 197 (2001):122.

rhetorically as ‘a tool of truth.’<sup>45</sup> The ‘literary gross-out,’ Korsmeyer posits, ‘can be a kind of self-exploration that teases the edges of our tolerance.’<sup>46</sup> The aesthetic strategy of the first canto of *Don Juan* is curiously analogous to that of Marquis de Sade’s libertinage fiction, of which Naomi Stekelenburg notes that

the portrayal of excessive corporeal transgressions that create an aesthetic of disgust serves as an entry point, a source of lubrication ...for dialogue between the characters about questions of morality. After the orgy, no topic is off limits and no idea is too ‘dangerous’.<sup>47</sup>

After all, disgust is not only an atavistic and physiologically hardwired response but also a socially conditioned one. Byron interrogates the validity of social mores and the indoctrinations of conventional morality that tend to ossify hegemonic worldviews and prevent the emergence of more fulfilling paradigms of human interaction.

Throughout his mock-epic, Byron uses humour apotropically against the onset of existential nausea: rather than agonising over metaphysical complexities, he endeavours to laugh off the incorrigible grossness of the human condition. Byron’s verse contains vertiginous plunges from the heights of lyricism to banal and bawdy chatter, as sublimity is rapidly superseded by garrulity. As the narrator will clarify, ‘If I laugh at any mortal thing / ’Tis that I may not weep.’<sup>48</sup> Disgust has an uneasy affiliation with laughter. On one hand, as Menninghaus notes, ‘The sudden discharge of tension achieves in laughter, as in vomiting, an overcoming of disgust, a contact with the ‘object’ that does not lead to lasting contamination or defilement.’<sup>49</sup> Conversely, Linda Ben-Zvi points out that ‘once disgusting images are described... they remain so palpable that they cannot be

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<sup>45</sup> Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

<sup>46</sup> Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust*, 120.

<sup>47</sup> Naomi Stekelenburg, ‘Sade’s Constrained Libertinage: The Problem of Disgust,’ in *The Unacceptable*, ed. John Potts and John Scannell (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 178.

<sup>48</sup> Lord Byron, ‘Don Juan,’ in *The Major Works*, iv.25–6. All subsequent references to this poem are incorporated, with the abbreviation ‘DJ’.

<sup>49</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 10–11.

dispelled into nothing by a laugh or the punchline of a joke.<sup>50</sup> To protect his verse from becoming petrified by the searing palpability of disgusting images and associations, Byron ingeniously deploys the rhetorical trope of aposiopesis. Instead of ‘sublime *unspeakability*,’ the aposiopetic pauses mock the hypocritical reader’s professions of innocence and ‘jokingly encourage the reader to conjure up a variety of *unmentionable* experiences.’<sup>51</sup> These include those ‘unutterable things’ that torment the adolescent Juan as he wanders through the woods in his pitiable state of uncomprehending arousal (*DJ*, i.714). Byron reminds readers of their own postlapsarian knowingness: they cannot escape admitting that they are fully capable of filling in the textual lacunae. For instance, instead of providing a *résumé* of his hero’s ancestral lineage in conformity with the epic tradition, the narrator wryly depicts the hero’s conception via a litany of euphemisms and *double entendres*:

A better cavalier ne’er mounted horse,  
Or, being mounted, e’er got down again,  
Than Jose, who *begot* our hero, who  
*Begot*—but that’s *to come*—Well, to *renew*:  
(*DJ*, i.69–72).

Whilst feigning to bowdlerise his verse, the lexical chain ‘mounted,’ ‘begot’ (both words are repeated with gusto), culminating upon the roughly synonymous and suggestive phrases ‘to come’ and ‘to renew,’ viscerally demarcate the stages of Juan’s literal genesis. The farcical pretence of purifying his text for prurient readers only elongates the salacious episode, which adumbrates the following sardonically hyperbolic descriptions of Donna Inez’s status as a paragon of womanhood, ‘perfect past all parallel’ (*DJ*, i.129). The narrator warns those who wish to extirpate from his verse the ‘grosser parts’ (*DJ*, i.347) by reminding them that the censorship of the ‘nauseous epigrams of Martial’ (*DJ*, i.344) had the counterintuitive effect of ensuring that they still ‘stand forth marshall’d in a handsome troop,’ ‘standing staring altogether’ (*DJ*, i.354, 359). Such disgusting compendiums *insist* on being heard: in fact, paradoxically, they are preserved during the very process of censorship.

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<sup>50</sup> Linda Ben-Zvi, ‘Beckett and Disgust: The Body as ‘Laughing Matter,’’ *Modernism/modernity* 18, no. 4 (2011): 686.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Elfenbein, ‘Byron: Gender and Sexuality’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*, ed. Drummond Bone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 70, emphasis added.

Byron carefully avoids the systematising impulse of the Bildungsroman, which charts the perfection of its protagonist into a rational and self-contained modern citizen after his youthful idiosyncrasies and passions are disciplined by various social institutions and apparatuses. Michael O'Neill contends that Juan encapsulates an 'unWordsworthian haphazardness'<sup>52</sup> and Tom Mole similarly notes that he remains 'non-developmental and contradictory.'<sup>53</sup> Byron's narrator emphasises that Juan is an indescribable 'phenomenon, one knows not what, / And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure' (*DJ*, i.157–8). Whereas Shelley's Julian despairs at the scarcity of marvellous phenomena in his 'cold world,' Byron shows that even a flawed Everyman—'A little curly-headed, good for nothing' (*DJ*, i.193)—is a repository of immeasurable, heart-warming wonder. Florence Vatan argues that 'Disgust is an emotional mode often associated with amorphousness, coalescence, adherence, and self-dissolution.'<sup>54</sup> *Don Juan* insists that inhabiting the protean chaos of a post-idealist world is not a repulsive experience. Nevertheless, Juan does gradually mature after being exiled from the stifling confines of his society: the 'mischief-making monkey' (*DJ*, i.194) prevents the occurrence of 'more mischief' when he becomes the guardian of the 'spirit-room' of his sinking ship, the beleaguered ark of the human race (*DJ*, ii.273–5).

The capricious volatility and adaptability of Byron's hero is replicated not only in the narratorial voice but also in the form of *Don Juan*. Whilst *Childe Harold's* Spenserian stanzas impose formal unity and control through their disciplined triple rhymes and Alexandrine clincher, *Don Juan's* couplets often farcically topple the precarious sobriety of the preceding sestets. Although the narrator initially contracts to deliver 'regularity of...design' (*DJ*, i.51), he expressly reneges this promise by capitalising upon a poetic licence to include 'some irregularity... / In the design' (*DJ*, i.957–8). The 'artful artlessness'<sup>55</sup> of the *ottava rima* ensures that the verse is not propelled forward mechanically, but rather, to recall Coleridge's description of the perfect poem, 'by the pleasureable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself' (*BL*, 173). Mark Storey argues that Byron's 'only object seems to be to stimulate himself

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<sup>52</sup> Michael O'Neill, 'The Fixed and the Fluid: Identity in Byron and Shelley,' *Byron Journal* 36, no. 2 (2008): 111.

<sup>53</sup> Tom Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (Basingstroke and New York: Palgrave, 2007), 137.

<sup>54</sup> Florence Vatan, 'The Lure of Disgust: Musil and Kolnai,' *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 88, no. 1 (2013): 47.

<sup>55</sup> David Ellis, 'Byron's Sense of Humour,' *Romanticism* 17, no. 1 (2011): 111.

and his readers for the moment—to keep both alive, to drive away *ennui*, to substitute a feverish and irritable state of excitement for listless indolence or even calm enjoyment.<sup>56</sup> *Ennui* is the existential nausea that afflicts the over-stimulated individual and it constitutes ‘a special sort of satiated disgust.’<sup>57</sup> ‘Endless variation and foreplay,’ as the eighteenth-century aestheticians established, ‘alone prevents an immanent transformation of the beautiful into a vomitive.’<sup>58</sup> Ironically, Byron’s narrator’s sustained flirtation with subject matter conventionally considered repulsive inoculates his verse from suddenly collapsing, like Julian’s poetic vision, after an unexpected revelation that a disgusting substratum always undergirds the beautiful exterior.

Sharing Shelley’s revulsion of pre-masticated words and hackneyed sentiments, Byron aims to write ‘honest, simple verse’ (*DJ*, Dedication, 130). However, the blithely garrulous narrator’s contention that ‘obscure’ language is ‘not pure’ (*DJ*, i.102) overturns Romantic valorisations of poetry that is unnecessarily opaque or ‘untranslatable.’ The narrator regularly interrupts his story with self-reflexive literary criticism, such as when he parenthetically congratulates himself, ‘(This old song and new simile holds good)’ (*DJ*, Dedication, 9) or when he denigrates certain common similes as ‘trite and stupid’ (*DJ*, i.440). This snide criticism of over-circulated language reaches a comical peak when Juan’s platitudinous vows of eternal constancy to his first lover, Julia, are unceremoniously deflated by the parenthesised descriptions of his literal seasickness. The couplet that begins with Juan’s invocation, ‘Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!’ is bathetically matched with ‘(Here he grew inarticulate with reaching)’ (*DJ*, ii.159–60). The narrator approvingly observes that ‘the sea acted as a strong emetic,’ preventing Juan from becoming ‘more pathetic’ (*DJ*, ii.67–8). ‘Excessive sweetness is a key inducer of satiated disgust and nausea,’<sup>59</sup> as Vatan argues, and during Juan’s voyage out from his stifling society at the start of the second canto, he is purged of his rote-learned lexicon’s saccharine sentiments and ‘arbitrary marks of thought.’ Juan’s tutors, under the superintendence of his dictatorial mother, had collaborated ‘to destroy / His natural spirit’ and ‘not in vain they toil’d’ (*DJ*, i.396–7). The once ‘charming child’ had become preternaturally ‘sage, and still, and steady,’ an alliterative trinity that echoes Byron’s other sympathetic descriptions of the constraints enforced upon humanity’s ‘helpless clay,’

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<sup>56</sup> Storey, *The Problem of Poetry in the Romantic Period*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 120.

<sup>58</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Vatan, ‘The Lure of Disgust,’ 33.

which will ‘keep baking, broiling, burning on’ (*DJ*, i.500), causing its ‘natural spirit’ to become increasingly more ‘cabin’d, cribbb’d, confined.’<sup>60</sup> In short, Juan’s ‘nautical existence’ (*DJ*, ii. 96)—Byron’s version of the ‘radically unscripted’ life—emancipates him from the linguistic artifice that clog ‘this naughty world of ours’ (*DJ*, i.137).

Compared to the boisterous first canto, the mood of the second canto—roughly split between a gruelling cannibalism episode and a bucolic island idyll—is strikingly subdued. The antithetical sequences demonstrate that the quiescent optimism sustaining Byron’s flexuous verse can easily withstand the revelation that human nature’s carnal appetites and its aspirational yearnings are incongruously intertwined. Unlike Julian and Maddalo, Byron’s narrator does not abandon himself to a defeatist cynicism. The narrator endeavours to minimise the revulsion evoked by the mariners’ cannibalism, a paradigmatic disgust-eliciting and tabooed act. The narrator shifts into using the first-person pronoun—‘our intent’ and ‘we never meant’ (*DJ*, ii.252, 254)—to affirm his complete sympathy with the burgeoning desperation of the stranded sailors who, as he reiterates, possessed ‘but one oar’ (*DJ*, ii.381, 482, 551, 557). The paronomasia on ‘or’ sombrely conveys the Scylla and the Charybdis between which humanity must sail, furnished with a fallacious choice between committing repulsive, self-polluting acts of mutual devouring and the equally unpalatable alternative of certain death. Unable to survive their guilt after perpetrating this dehumanising act of self-preservation, Juan’s companions discover belatedly that they had committed ‘a species of self-slaughter’ (*DJ*, ii.815) and the most zealous perpetrators ‘with hyaena-laughter, died despairing’ (*DJ*, ii.632). The narrator is equally chilled by the ‘one universal shriek’ as the majority of sailors perish (*DJ*, ii.417) and the subsequent ‘solitary shriek’ and ‘bubbling cry / Of some strong swimmer in his agony’ (*DJ*, ii.423–4). Nevertheless, Byron’s faith in human resilience in the face of such gruelling adversity is indestructible. Juan, who had abstained from partaking of the sacrificial victim, is saved by the single remaining oar, which floats him from the horrors of the oceanic deep to the bucolic sanctuary of Haidée’s island. The ‘oar’/‘or’ pun thus also encapsulates the irrepressible optimism that suffuses Byron’s capacious verse: there is always another alternative, a possibility for salvation even in a chaotic world presided over by that unfathomable, whimsically malignant, supreme power that ‘delights to torture us’ (*JM*, 320).

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<sup>60</sup> Byron, ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,’ (iv.127).



The Greek maiden Haidée's island—apparently 'without a trace of man' (*DJ*, ii.824)—is a haven isolated from the hyper-aggressive machismo of the external world. Here, Juan will be revived by the maternal ministrations of Haidée and the sequence of present participles describing Haidée's actions—'bending close,' 'chafing,' 'answering,' 'bathing,' and 'lifting him' (*DJ*, ii.897–913)—re-enact Juan's revivification on a syntactical level, counterbalancing the 'Tearing, and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing / ...despairing' of the open sea (*DJ*, ii.631–32). Juan's return to a state of organic unity, an essential prelude to his spiritual renaissance, is conveyed by the maternal dimension of his bond with Haidée. The narrator relates how 'like an infant Juan sweetly slept' (*DJ*, ii.1139), 'Hush'd as the babe upon its mother's breast' (*DJ*, ii.1178) and 'Soft as the callow cygnet in its nest' (*DJ*, ii.1182) as the anxiously vigilant Haidée 'watch'd him like a mother' (*DJ*, ii.1258). The mother's abject body, Julia Kristeva claims, is the disgusting object *par excellence* for every grown child, who is torn between a subconscious yearning for its prenatal wholeness and a simultaneous horror that the desired reunion with the maternal body would entail the utter dissolution of its own selfhood.<sup>61</sup> By using similes—'like an infant,' 'as the babe,' 'like a mother'—Byron emphasises that the prelapsarian wholeness Juan experiences is qualitatively different from such regressive self-annihilating fusions.

Juan and Haidée eventually achieve that elusive state of perfect synchronicity, as language itself becomes redundant and each lover's potentially disgust-eliciting 'unassimilable otherness' is mollified. Juan's rejuvenating sojourn on Haidée's island contradicts Charles LaChance's claim that Byron's 'anti-ideality soils everything but gritty realities of violence, sex and drugs.'<sup>62</sup> As William Miller observes,

Disgust...paints the world in a particular way, a distinctly misanthropic and melancholic way. But disgust is also a necessary partner in the positive: love...would make little sense without disgust being there to overcome.<sup>63</sup>

The classic 'Byronic' posture of misanthropy, melancholy and a disgusted weariness with the world, as popularised by *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, is completely quashed during this section of *Don Juan*. Byron thus responds

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<sup>61</sup> Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

<sup>62</sup> LaChance, 'Bad English,' 119.

<sup>63</sup> Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 18.

to Shelley's struggle to insulate his ideal of organic unity from an antithetical nihilistic vision. As Storey remarks, 'Shelley laments the very union he has worked towards. To be one is, in these terms, to be nothing: far from being complementary, they are identical. To merge thus is to die.'<sup>64</sup> Stokes similarly argues that for Shelley, 'Being may revert to nothingness, as all-ness threatens to absorb everything into a single, undifferentiated, stagnant perception.'<sup>65</sup> The resurgent aesthetic disgust in Shelley's poetry is thus generated by the nightmarish possibility that the pined-for organic perfection actually entails a process of self-annihilation during which the questing subject is divested of his intrinsic heterogeneity and reduced to the repulsive amorphousness of an undifferentiated non-entity. Tony Howe compellingly argues that 'Juan and Haidée seem to begin where Julian and Maddalo end, in a place where words are divisive and thus inadequate. Without pain and pessimism, however, they bypass language and become one.'<sup>66</sup> Juan and Haidée are able to communicate by means of 'nods, and signs, / And smiles, and sparkles of the speaking eye' (*DJ*, ii.1289–90). For Juan, Haidée's foreign tongue is inexplicably enchanting:

And her voice was the warble of a bird,  
 So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear,  
 That finer, simpler music ne'er was heard;  
 The sort of sound we echo with a tear,  
 Without knowing why—  
 (*DJ*, ii.1203–07).

Haidée's prosaic entreaties for Juan to rest and fortify himself with the meal she has prepared for him acquire the sublimity of the nightingale's song. The narrator adds that 'Juan learn'd his alpha beta better / From Haidée's glance than any graven letter' (*DJ*, ii.1303–4). After his maritime misadventures purged him of the cloying phrases of sentimentalism, Juan acquires a new lexicon under Haidée's patient tutelage. Juan outstrips the superficial pedantry of his own mother, whose own Greek is limited to 'the alphabet,' perhaps to its first two letters, alpha beta (*DJ*, i.97–8). Similarly, the illiterate Haidée

read (the only book she could) the lines  
 Of his fair face, and found, by sympathy,

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<sup>64</sup> Storey, *The Problem of Poetry in the Romantic Period*, 105

<sup>65</sup> Stokes, *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime*, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Howe, 'Shelley and the Development of *Don Juan*,' 33.

The answer eloquent, where soul shines  
 And darts in one quick glance a long reply;  
 And thus in every look she saw exprest  
 A world of words, and things at which she guess'd  
 (DJ, ii.1291– 6).

The first part of the quoted sentence is broken into small syntactical units by the parenthesised interpolations and the enjambment, emulating the half-hesitant but reciprocal processes of mutual decoding. Vows between the lovers would be superfluous when the heart of each 'beat *here*' (DJ, ii1616, original emphasis). 'Here,' doubly underscored by the italics and the iambic stress recalls a similarly memorable deictic in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* when the narrator relates how his imagination had once caressed the temperamental ocean into submission, enabling him to experience an absolute oneness with its sublime bulk, 'as I do *here*.'<sup>67</sup> The Byronic 'here' typically celebrates, according to Michael O'Neill, 'the locus of present composition...a virtual space where the authorial self fully encounters itself in and as a process of becoming.'<sup>68</sup> Byron suggests that during these ephemeral, rhapsodic moments of poetic inspiration both poet and reader can experience a redemptive primal wholeness and he intuits that perhaps, 'There woos no home, nor hope, nor life, save what is here.'<sup>69</sup>

Although *Don Juan's* narrator polemically quips that 'perfection is / Insipid in this naughty world of ours' (DJ, i.137–8), claims to be bored by 'peace, and innocence, and bliss' (DJ, i.141), and denigrates Platonic idealism and the neo-Platonism of Shelleyan 'air-balloons' (DJ, i.734), the germination of the second canto's renascent idealism is nevertheless traceable to this irreverent first canto. Although the narrator laments that he himself no longer possesses the 'freshness of the heart' that 'out of all the lovely things we see / Extracts emotions beautiful and new / Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee' (DJ, i.1706–09), he directly appeals to his less world-weary readers and exhorts that it is 'in thy power / To double even the sweetness of a flower' (DJ, i.1710–12). Piqued by Shelley's flagging idealism, Byron demonstrates in his second canto how these 'beautiful and new' feelings, habitually obscured by society's films of familiarity and its masks of falsehood, can be harvested and processed into antidotes for the onset of existential disgust. Byron extends his earlier apian and floral metaphors in his description of how Juan and Haidée

<sup>67</sup> Byron, 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' (iv.184).

<sup>68</sup> O'Neill, 'Identity in Byron and Shelley,' 110.

<sup>69</sup> Byron, 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' (iv.105).

felt allured,  
 As if their souls and lips each other beckon'd,  
 Which, being join'd, like swarming bees they clung—  
 Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung  
 (*DJ*, ii.1493–96).

Juan becomes the antithesis of his mother, ‘An all-in-all-sufficient self-director’ (*DJ*, i.115): he always needs companionship and society in order to feel complete. The laconicism of the narrator’s concluding couplet, ‘a kiss’s strength ... must be reckon’d by its length’ (*DJ*, ii.1487–88) cannot fully deflate the sincere nostalgia underpinning the preceding sestet: with *its* length lending it strength, it overrides the facetious appendage. The polysyndeton and repetition (‘long,’ ‘kiss’) elongate the moment of an unspoiled organic unity that constitutes a self-transcending ‘Enlargement of existence’ (*DJ*, ii.1378). The lovers’ felicity infuses the ambience of the island:

the rounded  
 Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,  
 Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,  
 Circling all nature, hush'd, and dim, and still,  
 With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded  
 On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill  
 Upon the other, and the rosy sky,  
 With one star sparkling through it like an eye  
 (*DJ*, ii.1457–64).

The accumulation of images of a nurturing encirclement (‘rounded,’ ‘bounded,’ ‘circling,’ ‘surrounded’), enhanced by the balanced phrases (‘On one side,’ ‘Upon the other’) and the language that connotes organic unity (‘whole,’ ‘all’), collectively convey the harmonious equilibrium that pervades throughout Byron’s crepuscular Edenic vision. The sky, with its ‘floating glow / Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright’ (*DJ*, ii.1473–4), reflects the sea that is suffused with celestial radiance. The natural world is no longer a monstrous superpower that cannibalises a beleaguered humanity but instead, a prelapsarian ‘Paradise of exiles’ that has no need—yet—of the prisons and madhouses of a decadent civilisation.

## Conclusion

*Julian and Maddalo* and *Don Juan* encapsulate the spirit of an age bewildered after decades of social turbulence, protracted warfare and the seismic aftershocks of the recent Battle of Waterloo, which had been a pivotal ‘moment of life-threatening fragility, the point where dreams of national perfection teeter on the edge of impossibility.’<sup>70</sup> This paper has examined how ‘second generation’ Romantic writers deploy the counter-aesthetics of disgust to interrogate and destabilise the orderly aesthetic binary of the beautiful and the sublime, as they endeavour to articulate and possibly redress contemporary anxieties about the limitations of poetic expression. Shelley’s subliminal self-doubts, arising from his diminished faith in the harmonising power of the Poet’s imagination, occasionally burgeon into more perturbing forms of self-disgust, which overturn even his most exuberant and idealistic affirmations. In *Julian and Maddalo*, Shelley’s attempt to assemble into a holistic composition his poem’s various sections, each characterised by its own idiosyncratic tone and mode of poetic diction, is more reminiscent of Frankenstein’s ill-fated anatomical artistry than Coleridge’s ideal of ‘multëity in unity.’ Whilst Shelley’s heroic couplets provide a sturdy skeletal framework, the suturing together of the disparate parts—Julian’s expository narrative, his homage to the Coleridgean conversation poem, the friends’ academic disquisition, the Maniac’s effusive monologue, and the dispirited epilogue—is hardly beautifully seamless. As Menninghaus remarks, ‘

If the skin-surface’s uninterrupted line is the law of the beautiful body, then the anti-illusional disruption of the textual body of art is the schema of romantic irony.<sup>71</sup>

Through these self-reflexively ironic disjunctures, Shelley foregrounds the disgusting residues that resist the beautifying alchemy of poetic language and the contagious scepticism that can never be fully expunged or etherealised by the poet’s perfectionist imagination. This quintessentially Romantic posture of despair, triggered by a revelation of human imperfectability, is mollified by the comedic vision of *Don Juan*, which revels in the artistic and ideological freedom furnished by ‘anti-illusional disruption.’ Whereas Shelley’s ambitiously visionary poetry falters when he perceives that the Poet is actually a madman who mechanically utters

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<sup>70</sup> Philip Shaw, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 4.

<sup>71</sup> Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 139.

‘unconnected exclamations,’ Byron’s ludic verse, which oscillates between bawdy loquacity and sublime lyricism, is suffused with a Coleridgean conviction that ‘No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.’<sup>72</sup> Paradoxically, Byron’s blunt acknowledgment of the contiguity of the disgusting and the ideal enables him to indefinitely deflect the crippling onset of the existential queasiness that afflicted contemporary poets, including the Shelleys. Yet significantly, Anne Elliot, the heroine of Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, also written in 1818, cannot extract from her cornucopia of memorised poetical quotations a single passage that is purely about ‘the images of youth and hope, and spring, all gone together.’<sup>73</sup> As Shelley’s and Byron’s poems evince, despite the perturbing interlacing of the ugly with the beautiful and the sublime, the autumnal despondency and incipient disgust that undergirds the Romantic work are always counterbalanced by an indestructible faith in the inevitable return of spring.

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<sup>72</sup> Coleridge, ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,’ in *The Complete Poems*, (78).

<sup>73</sup> Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Gillian Beer, (England: Penguin Classics, 1998), 79.