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[The 'stage Indian' in early American theatre culture]

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[Abstract] *The article deals with the early development of the 'stage Indian' as a character in early American drama and theatre. It studies 'stage Indian' characters, which reflect historical theatrical conventions rather than being historically accurate representations. It explores early plays depicting Native Americans as the 'exotic other'. It considers plays involving the myth of the noble savage on the one hand and some parodying of this myth on the other. Finally, it describes various performances involving Native American performers in the United States in the 1890s. These examples show the diversity of the 'stage Indian' as a literary and performative construct.*

[Keywords] *Early American drama; stage conventions; noble savage; Native American performance*

This article looks into several plays and performances produced in the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries which present an image of 'the Indian'. These early plays stand at the beginning of a long, culturally productive process involving various representations of Native Americans in the performing arts. In many ways, they have established modes of representation which are traceable in drama, film, and popular culture in general even today. The article identifies several types of theatre stock character known as the 'stage Indian', which is in fact much more diversified than the commonly presented opposition of a noble savage on the one hand, and a murderous native on the other (Saxon 122). It presents a typology of stage Indian characters based on ideological implications, as one of its perspectives, and explores the level of projected authenticity of 'the other'. In other words, the article questions the image of the stage Indian character that a play or performance promotes and to what degree it presents itself as 'authentic'. The outcome is a study of the construction of stereotypes in various representations of Native Americans in the early period of American drama and theatre, and their development in a diachronic perspective. It enables us to see a rich variety of types of the stereotyped 'stage Indian', traceable back to early days of American drama and performance; most of these types can also be identified in present-day works of art, despite recent attempts to revise these stereotypes.

For the purpose of this article, the 'stage Indian' is understood as a character that embraces traits understood and/or intended as typical of any smaller or larger group of Native Americans within the context of historical social as well as dramatic and/or theatrical conventions. While it may be argued that a process of fictional character construction always involves various stereotypes of class, gender, age group and so on, it is often the case that representations of marginalized groups verge on caricature. This practice was reinforced especially in 19th-century American theatrical culture by the dominance of melodrama, which uses exaggerations of a certain trait as a typical stylistic feature. A stereotyped 'stage Indian' thus becomes an "absolute victim or villain" (Bank 462). Another influence was the popularity of 'Indian shows', which met visitors' stereotypical expectations. These shows reinforced stereotypes of various Native American groups by representing them in an established, conventional way in accordance with expectations regarding their representation, and by presenting this representation as something authentic, which only further contributed to this circularity: a construed representation of a Native American reality is presented as authentic to audiences, thus establishing an image of what is the 'truth' regarding this particular represented practice or individual(s), which is then expected from performances, which cash in on self-promotion as authentic shows. In other words, characters of Native Americans of all sorts, besides emerging in a particular social-political context, also came into existence within a frame of conventions characteristic of a given dramatic genre or performative practice.

This article is limited primarily to drama and performance, which continue in a European tradition of theatre; they are highly conventionalized systems of representation and cultural practices. Furthermore, it only deals with works in English. It is a historical fact that a rich variety of forms of the "Native American performance tradition existed in

North America [...] a long time before European settlement" (Wilmer 5). As with a number of other elements of numerous Native American cultures, many of these performances were appropriated by the white European, English-speaking settlers' cultural institutions of drama and theatre. Various Native American practices were commodified and became a part of contemporary popular entertainment, such as the Lakota Rain Dance (see Wilmer 80–97). Staging practices often employed assorted components of various Native American ritualistic/military equipment such as clothing, masks, or weapons, using them as a mere sign of some abstract 'Indian identity', stripped of their original identities, contexts, and spiritual dimensions.

The 'stage Indian' became a typical feature of American plays, just like other newly emerged stock characters such as the 'stage Yankee' or 'the Frontiersman'. The range of typically American characters grew even wider in the 1880s with the emergence of the Western as a popular genre. Various types of 'stage Indian' continued to be a constant presence in American drama and performance from the Colonial beginnings in the mid-18th century throughout the whole of the 19th century. They were created, transformed and replicated in the course of this lengthy period of time. Some of them ceased to exist; but this is mainly due to developments in the 20th century: its employment of realist modes, the shift away from the paradigm of white-centred audiences, and the growing criticism of ethnocentrism and cultural appropriation.

In order to explore the underlying dynamics of this historical development in the construction of these stock characters and its varieties, the article approaches various construed representations of an array of Native Americans from two perspectives. Firstly, it considers the set of values that the stage Indian promotes. The article identifies these stereotypes and positions characters according to it. This typically involves placing the character either as a positive image (the noble savage) or a negative image (a murderous native). The article shows that these basic types gradually became more complex; this is confirmed by Deloria, who calls this ambivalence a desire "to savor both civilized order and savage freedom at the same time" (3). Secondly, the article considers the level of claimed authenticity. The stage Indian begins as a stereotypical character, a sign of an American environment – a part of the setting, so to speak. Whereas in the earliest plays the stage Indian was a European invention based on prejudices, depictions in the late 19th century were highly realistic, based on an assortment of observable features, as in performances given at the Chicago Exposition in 1893. Yet, despite their realistic components, these performances displayed a fictionalized image, one which was promoted as 'authentic' by the producers as well as performers, and which was expected by the white majority audiences. In Deloria's terms, Native American performers were "playing Indians" for the audience.

In Colonial times, representations of Native Americans appeared in American plays (that is to say, plays with an American topic, such as an American setting) to add a local flavour. They were an 'exotic' feature of dramas situated in the New World. They were fictional constructs that resembled some features of various Native Americans on a superficial level. "In New York in 1767, the 'Natives' in dramas more often resembled

'natives' from other plays – plays written by London playwrights – rather that the hungry, besieged, persecuted, and embattled nations who lived on the American frontier" (Richards 9). The verisimilitude of these characters is very low; this is also emphasized by the fact that only white actors played Indians. Saxon calls these characters "white Indians", because they "laid claim, not to real Indian practices, of course, but to the idea of native custom" (100). They reinforced stereotypical views of Native Americans, which were merely fictional creations of European (and later, Anglo-American) writers.

The Paxton Boys (1764) is the first known drama with a Native American element written in English-speaking America. Tice L. Miller calls it a "play" despite the fact that "it was not performed" (22) – and, given the standards of the time, it was most probably never meant to be performed. For this reason, some authors call it a "political dialogue" rather than a play (Davis 233), and thus its status as "drama" is rather formal. Nevertheless, this dialogical work is, stylistically speaking, a political farce, which is a traditional dramatic genre. Written by an anonymous author, it depicts a historical incident involving Native Americans, yet without giving them a voice. None of the Native American characters has any lines in the play. It "can be seen as a dramatisation of tensions growing in the colonies in response to French, British and Native American activities" (Saxon 97–8). It is one of several written accounts of a massacre in a local Conestoga tribe village in 1763, when an armed militia murdered several Conestoga. In the drama, the eponymous Paxton Boys, now feared vigilantes, are marching towards Philadelphia after the massacre. Native American characters are depicted as heathens, although in reality the Conestoga were Christians. The focus of the play shifts towards "the theme of sectarian antagonism and religious intolerance" (Richardson 13). *The Paxton Boys* is a drama which is the first of a long line of texts involving characters of Native Americans as the 'exotic other', and as a source of exotic localization. Such a presence does not require deep characterization: if a farcical effect was to be produced, an appropriate costume with illustrative props would have sufficed. In case of *The Paxton Boys*, though, any presence of the Native Americans remains purely imaginary, as the play has never been performed.

The process of creating the 'stage Indian', just like any other character type, involves stereotyping. Stereotypes of Native Americans expressed in the plays concerned are both positive and negative. Bank identifies several expressions of a positive stereotype: "the Indian in harmony with peaceful Nature, marked by beauty and refinement, brave if male, nurturing and gentle if female, honorable" (464). This stereotype is a dramatic realization of an idealizing view of natives as 'noble savages', a view which had been a part of the English philosophical and poetic traditions since the 17th century. It may seem a striking irony that these Indian characters are at the same time also "Indian[s] of assimilation" (464); that is to say, they are destined to cease their existence as savages and become assimilated to the white culture. Such is the destiny of Pocahontas in *The Indian Princess* (1808) by James Nelson Barker, which portrays a "bucolic image… Indian as a child of nature and helpmate to the white male" (Saxon 118). Then there is a negative stereotype: "the Indian in harmony with Nature's violence, crude, treacherous, intemperate, untrustworthy if male, debauching and unruly if female" (Bank 464). Bank calls such characters

"Indian[s] of annihilation" (464), destined to be punished by death for their villainy. In Barker's play this stereotype is represented by Miami, Pocahontas' fiancé, before she falls in love with Rolfe. Miami is an untamed, uncivilized Native who ends up committing suicide after his plot to kill the Europeans fails.

Although the story of Pocahontas has its source in historical events in 1607, it was dramatized several times in versions that fitted the tastes and expectations of the intended audiences, rather than truthfully depicting historical events. The earliest Pocahontas drama is Barker's musical play *The Indian Princess*. It consists of "a contrived plot in the style of popular stage entertainments of the time, and a happy ending" (Richards 169). This play began a "vogue for Indian dramas" (Bank 481) in the antebellum United States. Popular plays that followed Barker's drama included *Pocahontas* (1830) by George Washington Parke Custis, and *Po-ca-hon-tas;* or, *The Gentle Savage* (1855) by John Brougham. The former dwells on the myth of the noble savage; the latter is a burlesque parodying earlier representations of Native Americans. In some respects, Brougham's play can be seen as a closing chapter in this particular vogue of Indian dramas: "Brougham's burlesques 'practically succeeded in chasing... gentle Pocahontas from the American stage'" (Miller 130). Nevertheless, the story of Pocahontas became a part of the American popular culture, and Pocahontas plays and films have been produced since then.

The two depictions of Pocahontas in Custis' and Brougham's versions include extreme expressions of the Native American female stereotype. In a sense, they develop stereotypes inherent in Barker's early version: "Native American women were also stereotyped, as either the noble child of nature, the 'Princess', or her brutalised licentious other, the 'squaw'" (Saxon 122). The character of Pocahontas covers a range from an idealized, sexualized "assimilating maiden" (Bank 481) to a negative extreme. Saxon calls this polarized approach of 19th-century American drama to the character the "Pocahontas Perplex" (122).

To see shifts in representations of the 'stage Indian', it is necessary to consider production practices. While early American drama often produced 'ideal' constructions of Native American characters, both in the sense of the absolute victim/villain and following from the idea of such a character, theatrical practice involved a more diversified representation of Native Americans. There were white actors wearing make-up and costumes representing Native Americans (the practice known as 'red-face'), Native American actors, Native American performances in shows presented as daily scenes from life (such as at anthropological exhibitions), and cultural performances (various religious, ritualistic and social practices) transferred to a staged context such as a show. These examples also cover various types of presentation of Indians, from a purely fictional representation of a construed idea of an abstract Native American to an ostensive practice,[1] where a performer does not represent anyone or anything else, but stands for her- or himself.

The following examples present a historical overview and illustrate that individual types of the 'stage Indian' are not merely pure inventions, but are always products of their cultural and artistic context, which is constantly reshaped in a dialogue between creators and their audiences. John Augustus Stone's tragedy *Metamora; or, the Last of the*

Wampanoags (1829) was written and first produced in the midst of the vogue for Indian plays, "which appeared with some frequency in America for the next fifty years [after Barker's *The Indian Princess* (1808)]" (Richards 169–70). Stone wrote the play for a contest announced by Edwin Forrest, the star actor of the time. Forrest was the main actor and the manager of his own theatre company, and he made the greatest profit from the performances. This was the standard mode of operation of the American star system in the period. Forrest was looking for new, specifically American material to include in his repertory, and so he announced the contest in 1828, "offering to pay five hundred dollars… for 'the best tragedy in five acts, of which the hero, or principal character, shall be an aboriginal of this country'" (Miller 60). Both Stone and Forrest turned out very lucky with the play: "A distinguished panel of judges… picked *Metamora* over thirteen other plays, and it became Stone's most popular dramatic work and Forrest's most successful role" (Miller 61).

The play is inspired by events of King Philip's War, "the bloodiest conflict in the history of the colonies, between the Wampanoag tribe and white settlers during 1675 and 1676" (61). Stone was influenced by historical accounts, but he subscribed aesthetically and ideologically to a Romantic concept of the noble savage. This concept fitted with Forrest's idea of character depiction, too: "his [Forrest's] Wampanoag sachem became the template for stage representations of the noble redskin: brave, strong, self-sacrificing, and a child of nature" (61). Forrest, who was a well-built, muscular and expressive type of actor, used his acting technique to produce a grand persona of a remarkable chieftain with an impressive stature, an idealized representation of a Native American. "Forrest's performance was, in short, a passionate one" (Rebhorn 34). His dominant onstage presence was further supported by a costume (including a feathered headband, moccasins and leather stockings), make-up (dark 'red-face') and props (such as a bow and a tomahawk).

Yet Forrest's onstage depiction of Metamora, whom the actor played for the rest of his career (spanning around forty years), was not a purely creative invention. Forrest's choice of acting style was based on "other personal reasons: he had lived with an Indian tribe during his New Orleans days and had great sympathy for their plight" (Miller 60). In other words, although Forrest created the character based on his personal preferences, the requirements of contemporary acting methods and audience expectations, some of the raw material he worked with as an actor (posture, gestures, and timbre) was mimicking an actual performance of a particular Native American chieftain. "Forrest spent a significant amount of time getting to know Push-ma-ta-ha, the young Choctaw chieftain who was both the specific model for Forrest's characterization of Metamora and the figure in whom Forrest witnessed and from whom he appropriated the basic 'language' of the Indian he would represent onstage" (Rebhorn 35). Forrest's "passionate" (Rebhorn 34) performance of a Native American chieftain became a basis for impersonations of similar characters devised as noble savages and Native American chieftains. What may seem like a typical example of cultural appropriation (a white image consisting of appropriated Native American elements), which became a standard of representation in acting, may in fact be seen as Push-ma-ta-ha's self-image. It would be too simplistic to say that the

most important 19th-century Native American role – Forrest's Metamora – was a white invention, which became a template for a performance of this particular stage Indian type. Rather, an actual Native American chieftain was acting through Forrest's impersonation of Metamora, thus imposing his cultural performance onto 19th-century American theatre conventions. It is worth considering how much post-Forrest theatre or film chieftains have drawn on Push-ma-ta-ha's idiosyncrasies, appropriating and adopting them as a conventional style in depicting a character of fictional Native America chieftains.

A stark difference between the image of the Native American chieftain for the stage and the actual situation of Native Americans in the Jacksonian United States can be illustrated using the example of *Metamora*. The actor's advertisement already assumes that his Indian will meet a tragic end: "There seems to be something rather sinister in Forrest's urge to look for tragedy in the dramatization of the 'aboriginal'" (Saxon 119). The character of Metamora was conceived from the beginning as one of annihilation. For Metamora, the choice lies between civilization or death. As a noble savage of nature, he cannot be assimilated, and therefore he must die in order for civilization (albeit the white man's) to flourish – no matter how sentimental the white man can be about the noble savage's uncorrupted ways. In Miller's words, "Metamora also 'owns no master.' He wants to live the way his people have lived for hundreds of years, but the advancement of the white man makes this impossible" (61). Another example of the discrepancy is the historical context of the production: "While Manifest Destiny physically and dramatically eradicated tribes across swathes of this new [American] nation, romanticized, sentimentalized or lampooned stage versions [of stage Indians] proliferated in theatres" (Saxon 119). Despite being shaped by an actual Native American performance, the drama brought to life images of Native Americans which did not correspond to historical reality.

Another example of the difference between an idealized type (as performed by Forrest) and an actual historical figure is a public performance by William Apes (or Apess) of the Pequot tribe, who also took King Philip as a model for his *Eulogy on King Philip*. He read this long speech out publicly alongside *Metamora* at the Odeon in Boston on 8 January 1836. In the *Eulogy*, an alternative view of King Philip (Metamora) is presented. It presents the sachem not as a romanticized Indian of annihilation, but as a possible partner for collaboration with the colonizers – had "God... touch[ed] the pilgrims' heart, and save them from cruelty, as well as the Indians" (Apes 39). The speech gave a very different representation of the same historical figure, such that it promoted "justice and humanity for the remaining few" (Saxon 122), and included moments of cruelty by the colonizers. Furthermore, the performance "challenges beliefs that extinct Indians could never responsibly participate in the community" (122). Undoubtedly, this representation was considered much more realistic by Apes than that found in Stone's drama.

A further instance of the discrepancy regarding *Metamora* concerns the audience. In the 19th century, when the production was performed, representatives of Native American nations often visited theatres as a part of the cultural programmes of their stays in American cities when dealing with U.S. government representatives. For example, "tribal spokespersons were often invited to see theatre performances as a part of their

programs" (Saxon 121). For them, "*Metamora* was not a direct referent to an authentic chieftain; but the context of memorialising a heroic chieftain bore performative similarities to tribal tributes to the dead" (Saxon 122). It is hard to assume that Forrest would have consciously performed a ritual of remembrance for the dead onstage, yet the theatrical practice with its ritualized elements was a reminder of this cultural performative practice.

There were various presences of Native Americans at performative events in the U.S. during the 19th century. Besides Native American audiences, who may have put some pressure on red-face as well as Native performance regarding the verisimilitude levels of their performances, Native Americans found themselves in several kinds of onstage identities. They were actors playing fictional stage Indians, performers reproducing actual historical events, performers re-enacting their own actions from the past, and performers exhibiting their cultural practices.

After the Pocahontas/Metamora vogue faded, new stage Indians began to appear together with the development of the Western. While an Indian character was often a mark of the 'Americanness' of a play, an exotic flavouring for a piece or a playwright's construct promoting positive or negative stereotypes of Native Americans in the 18th and early 19th centuries, the Western brought a new vogue of interest in Indian affairs (as well as many other issues, it must be said). The Wild West Show led by William "Buffalo Bill" Cody between 1883 and 1913 was one of the most popular performative events of the era, reaching a peak of interest at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

To characterize it very briefly, Buffalo Bill's show presented a series of scenes depicting frontiersmen's adventurous lives. The productions involved a lot of acrobatics, horse-riding, shooting on target and action scenes involving dozens of animals and stunts. Many of the performers were Native Americans; for a run during the Columbian Exposition, Buffalo Bill "wanted his Chicago show to be grander than any before, so he hired an additional 12 Lakota, bringing the total number of Native American performers to nearly 200" (Rinehart 420). The show seemed to be presenting an authentic image of life on the Frontier, but besides re-enactments of actual historical events (such as a famous scene titled "Raid on the Deadwood Stagecoach by Native Americans"), it also promoted an image of Native Americans who "lived in tribes, slept in tipis, wore feather bonnets, rode painted ponies, hunted the buffalo, skirmished with the U.S. Cavalry, and spoke in signs" (Moses 1). This seemed to be an authentic representation of Native Americans, as the performers were allegedly demonstrating their personal ways of life and experiences. However, while a large portion of the performance was 'real' due to the action-based nature of the show, it also included many inauthentic features. The audiences were getting what they expected: an idealized image of the frontier, which turned history, traditions and identities into show-business commodities for sale.

Rebhorn discusses at some length another Wild West show, which was performed at the same time as Buffalo Bill's: Gowongo Mohawk's *Wep-Ton-No-Mah, the Indian Mail Carrier*. Rebhorn points out the fact that the two enterprises express a similar aesthetic image of the Wild West, but they handle especially the presentation of gender in opposite

ways. Annie Oakley, the white female star of the Wild West show, acted in very feminine ways (her costumes emphasized her femininity, she blew kisses and waved a handkerchief at the audience), while the Native American performer Mohawk crossdressed as a young Native highwayman and wrestled and fist-fought with her fellow performers. Further, they were both sharpshooters and excellent riders, and these skills were essential for their Wild West characters. Rebhorn points out that

> While both Oakley and Mohawk performed roles that destabilized gender, Oakley rode sidesaddle during her feats of horsemanship to insure her audience understood how essentialized her gender was, how a 'domestic goddess,' in short, was handling that rifle. The crossdressed Mohawk, by contrast, defied these conventions by not merely giving up the feminized sidesaddle but in forgoing any saddle whatsoever. (Rebhorn 8)

Mohawk was defying gender conventions of her time, but she also showed Native American cultural practices, such as riding without a saddle. However, her crossdressed performance drew the attention of the audiences to her body, as she emphasized in dialogue the masculine features of it, while actually showing her female body. By complicating gender representation, the show managed to give an alternative view of Native Americans (and Native American women in particular) and challenged the masculine identity of the frontier, as well as the "equation of women and property" (Rebhorn 10) which was common for many other Wild West plays.

The 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition also offered an ostensive presentation of Native American culture, including social practices and rituals, presented by Native Americans with no overt role-play, but rather in the form of a display. These displays of Native Americans were in sharp contrast to exhibits of the latest technological developments: "Native American exhibits were organized as if to portray an ancient culture no longer in existence" (O'Loughlin 50). There was an 'Indian village' and various exhibits, which involved Native Americans showing their customs and performing various rituals. In the context of these activities, it is often difficult to distinguish between an authentic cultural performance (for example, a prayer) and role-play (for example, mimicry of a religious rite such as a prayer). Sometimes it is impossible to distinguish between them, or the boundary becomes so blurred that it virtually ceases to exist for the performer and/or the audience.

However, one aspect of such performances remains certain: the requirement of having a sense of its authenticity among audiences. In her study subtitled "Native American Representation and Resistance at the World's Columbian Exposition", Rinehart covers a wide range of displays of Native American cultures. Among other topics, she focuses on Antonio Apache, a Native American assistant to the ethnographer and archaeologist F.W. Putnam, and his act of resistance during an "Indian pageant" (403). She describes how Apache bought wigs to cover his short hair in order to look more authentic, and then threw them away after he heard visitors' remarks about his and his companions' savage looks (403). This shows that authenticity is a problematic concept: audiences consider as 'authentic' something that corresponds to their expectations.

All 'authentic' exhibitions and displays are thus performances – they also become theatrical events. Such a view of staged rituals may be seen as a case of "social drama" and critically assessed by an anthropological conception of performance theory (Turner 25). Exhibitions such as the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 served to present Native American cultures as authentic, but in doing so, they also contributed to preserving visitors' numerous stereotypes and expectations. What at first glance seems a clearly authentic performance in fact always includes a certain amount of artifice. Rinehart explains: "The line between self-representation and self-preservation was assuredly blurred at times" (427). Tens of thousands of Native Americans came to Chicago to perform nothing but themselves and to be paid for doing so. In other words, they became actors, and what they performed was an image of a Native American – a version of the 'stage Indian'.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries offer many different types of characters of the Native American in drama and theatre, as well as many other forms of public performance. When a character of a Native American is presented as a type, he or she encompasses numerous properties which are less or more authentic on the one hand, and which correspond to stereotypes of Native Americans that are more positive (idealized) or negative on the other hand. Seeing these 'stage Indians' from this perspective, the history of early American theatre and performance gave birth to a wide spectrum of character types that have often ceased to exist; but at the same time, it produced certain types that have survived till the present.

[Notes]

1 By ostension I mean the practice of "showing" without the use of a symbolic language (such as theatre conventions), as defined, for example, by Umberto Eco (1976): 224–27.

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[The Return of Silent Tongue: Sam Shepard's Feminist, Gothic Western]

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[Abstract] *In his screenplay/film* Silent Tongue *(1992), Sam Shepard appears to synthesize the elements of multiple genres from the modern literary repertoire of his American and European precursors (Poe, O'Neill, Williams, Beckett), including facets of expressionism, magic realism, surrealism, the gothic, science fiction, the absurd, etc. And yet, it also appears that his work does not exactly belong to "any literary or theatrical tradition at all" but emerges from the subversion of "all such traditions" in America (Gilman,* Sam Shepard *xiii), thus paradoxically endorsing an original form of drama that reflects the complexity of his generation in the Vietnam era and after.*

[Keywords] *Western; nightmare; Kiowa; buffalo; frontier; dystopia; tonic; cowboy; rape; revenge*

[1] Introduction

In a diary entry dated January 1892, the Norwegian painter Edward Munch wrote of "an infinite scream passing through nature"[1] when describing his painting *Der Schrei der Natur* (*The Scream of Nature*).[2] If one had to search for a performative version of this theme of modern Western art reflecting an inarticulate cruelty of existence seeking redress, then Sam Shepard's dystopian Western, *Silent Tongue*, set in New Mexico in 1873 (and produced a century afterwards in 1994), would perhaps fulfil that need while also endorsing a feminist, magical realist and modern gothic vision.

Shepard's iconic image on the modern American stage and on celluloid media, as a "primitivist without peer" (Wade 153) and as a visionary who is poised at the edge of American civilization in the Vietnam War era, has accorded to his works a complex *Weltanschauung* and character. His essays, plays and films relate closely with a post-modern energy to the multiple traditions of the absurd, the gothic, the magic realist, the surreal and science-fiction genres. Following his initiation in drama from the sixties onwards, reaching a peak with *Tooth of Crime* (1972), *Buried Child* (1978) and *True West* (1980), Shepard moved into every aspect of the celluloid world of Hollywood – acting, directing, writing screenplays – in collaboration with directors like Michelangelo Antonioni in *Zabriskie Point* (1970), which concluded with the heroine's counter-culture vision of an earth-shattering apocalypse. Richard Gilman (the editor of Shepard's *Seven Plays*) praises the mercilessly bare, Beckettian settings of Antonioni's films, seeing in them the "ennui, extremity, anguish, abandoned searches" (63). He sees the movies as belonging to the highest level, comparable to drama, creating "visual equivalents of our experience" and enjoying "a freedom and an authority that the stage has almost lost" (65). Without abandoning the vital attributes and spirit of theatre, Shepard takes recourse to the medium of film to expand his horizons.

Emma Creedon has observed how Shepard's play *Angel City* (1976), drawing upon the tenets of surrealism, has embodied "normative theatrical semiotics in the language of cinema." (Creedon 79). She contextualizes Shepard's play against Bunuel's and Dali's famous surreal film *Un Chien Andalou* (*The Andalusian Dog*, 1929). Shepard admitted in an interview with Michael Almereyda that Bunuel was one of his favourite film directors. Christopher Bigsby has also pointed out the surreal influence of Garcia Lorca's *El Paseo de Buster Keaton* (1928) on Shepard, comparing it with the latter's essay "The Escapes of Buster Keaton" (1973), which in a surreal vein dissolves the line between the onlooker and the performance, as if inducing an Alice to enter the looking glass: "Then you can take part in narrating an escape" ("Escapes" 87). He thereby dissolves the distinction between the body and the objective space the protagonist occupies while making a bid to escape. This stretches the limits of human action beyond the palpable and the linear: "You notice the body performing more things than a body and sometimes less and for that reason becoming something more than a body. You see the face not worried about the body and the body not worried about the face and then he escapes" (Shepard, "Escapes" 87). It anticipates a visual language that celluloid could execute in terms of meta-

physical or gothic modes, as his film *Silent Tongue* would embody two decades later, in the Nineties. Both Lorca and Shepard have eulogized the powerful cinematic influence of Bunuel's modernist film *Un Chien Andalou*, which combined in surreal terms a narrative with startling images. And yet each of them has devised individual artistic dimensions and voices of their own.

Though Shepard can be contextualized among his American precursors like O'Neill and Williams, he seems to have emerged, as Richard Gilman has observed, "out of no literary or theatrical tradition at all but precisely from the breakdown or absence... of all such traditions in America" ("Introduction", *Seven Plays* xiii). This paper will examine, through Shepard's screenplay *Silent Tongue* (1994), his unique status as the foremost American playwright of his generation who over the years has graduated into the more expansive and flexible dimension of cinematography, thus attesting to the intertextual significance of these two dimensions of creative expression in modern times. In Eric Bentley's observations about the intertextual relationship of the theatre and the cinema, he notes that playwrights ought to "unlearn realism, revive poetic drama or create new styles for the new settings" (51). Shepard intuitively seems to be appropriating such advice in his oeuvre by 'unlearning' realism – not only on the stage, but in the realm of cinema as well.

[2] The Advent of Sam Shepard in the Sixties

For Shepard, being an American media icon has also implied a readiness to incorporate the reality and wonder of the paradigms of diverse civilizations or clans. In a post-modern dimension of aesthetic cognition, his literary attitude often endorses an interweaving of traditions and genres in order to measure reality and the unforeseen prospects of the future. Significantly, he is often included in anthologies of different movements or groups – the Off-Off Broadway Theatre, the 'Underground Theatre', the Open Theatre, and also Hollywood. These factions individually manifest the anomalies of the Vietnam era through "a heightened awareness of the bizarre" and by means of the "underground school of manic monologue", which in the Sixties included figures such as Joseph Chaikin, Lanford Wilson, Jean-Claude van Itallie, Rochelle Owens and Maria Irene Fornes, among others. The new theatre's non-conformist impulse was essentially radical in nature. It sprang, as Robert Schroeder observes, from "a commitment to non-commitment and a determined courting of indeterminacy that comprises quite as revolutionary an anti-doctrine as the post-Renaissance Western mind can conceive" (Schroeder viii). Playwrights like Shepard acquire a modern relevance in the bohemian American context, which tends to refract theatrical and political influences into diverse branches. In his 'Note to the Actors', a preface to his play *Angel City* (1976), he replaces the idea of a "whole character" with the concept of "a fractured whole with bits and pieces of character flying off the central theme" (Hayman 174) – a view that recalls Strindberg's directions, in his Preface to *Miss Julie* (1889), that his "souls" or characters are "conglomerations from various stages of culture, past and present, walking scrapbooks, shreds of human lives" (Strindberg 394).

Shepard's vision, invested in myth, has been "chiefly retrospective," observes Leslie Wade (156). Such a vision in the history of world literature has always made concessions to the continuous focusing and readjustments of historical linearity, of slices of time and sensibility in a post-colonial world. When the purpose of re-assembling the reality of the American past is recalled, the license of 'Reconstruction' becomes presumptuous, yet at the same time creative and replete with energy and mystery. Shepard's emergence as an original playwright and film enthusiast, seeking to enhance the trope of the Western frontier that Frederick Jackson Turner spoke about optimistically in 1897, unleashed a modern American imagery akin to a landscape and an ethos of relentless self-enquiry. He contributes to the genre of the 'Western' – which J. B. Priestley has also related to science fiction such as *The Phantom Empire*, *Deep Range* by Arthur C. Clarke, or *The Haunted Mesa* by Louis L'Amour. His contribution also includes a process of demythologizing the Western genre. With screenplays like *Silent Tongue*, Shepard steps out into another hybrid domain. He features in the expanding league of mythopoeic writers such as Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985) and Suzette Haden Elgin (*Native Tongue*,[3] 1984), who create and vindicate a feminist mythology of their own to highlight the predicament of the universal woman fighting against all odds, those in subjugation, striving toward final independence. Shepard's Native American, female protagonist upholds such a cause through the medium of cinema.

Since the early years of his career in the Sixties, Shepard has revealed his penchant for dramatic narratives exploring the iconography of the archetypal cowboy in fantastical settings and plots bordering on science fiction, gothic romance and the absurd – *Geography of a Horse Dreamer, Voices from the Dead, Transported Man, Kicking a Dead Horse,* and *Sea Sleep.* And he seems to be at the crossroads of influences by James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry David Thoreau, Eugene O'Neill, Samuel Beckett and an emerging American brand of magic realism. He appears to be deeply immersed in the performative reconstruction of mythopoesis. His realism, as William W. Demestes observes, cannot be like O'Neill's, "but his attempts to fathom the depths are prompted by the same ghosts" (Demestes 247). A contingent vocabulary of the Western frontier emerges, finely blending the natural and the metaphysical with authorial impunity. His *Voices from the Dead* (1969) is a gothic narrative monologue in line with Poe's *Ms. Found in a Bottle* (1833)[4] or *A Descent into the Maelstrom* (1841). In it, a rodeo bull-rider describes in the first person his last ride on a bull called "the Twister," who did "just that," as if "he was dancin' on a dime" (Shepard, "Voices" 88). The account concludes with his destruction ("He's got me this time, and he knows it" [89]), including his transportation in a big black Cadillac hearse and his final burial in ground that "tastes like earth" (89). In a science fiction-like monologue in "Voices from the Dead: Transported Man," the hero sets off all the way from New York to China via an electronic, Star Trek-like 'beamer' after being de-atomized, but he reacts adversely to the reality of forfeiting his body's palpable, muscular substance. In this horror of a living death, Shepard lays the seeds of dread, the central, existential imagery of Munch's screaming mortal transposed in *Silent Tongue*, signifying the impotence of an individual to protest in the course of his/her own unprecedented violation: "I searched

for my voice but nothing was there. *I tried to scream and nothing came out. No one was there to hear me or see me. I was absolutely alone*." (91; italics mine). At such points of human violation, gender becomes immaterial. The gender of the figure in Munch's *The Scream*, for instance, eludes classification. The ashen figure projects the lineaments of neither male nor female, but perhaps both.

In the history of the 'Western' film genre, the conflicts between the white man and the Native American have usually been resolved at the expense of the latter. Initially, native characters were hardly attributed any importance in the scheme of social development at the frontier; and even if they were present in the landscape, they would be faceless or invested with cunning and villainy. But since the 1950s, there has been a gradual change in the pattern of priorities. In *Broken Arrow* (1950), the Apache heroine Sonseeahray, daring to look beyond her comfort zone, falls in love with the white hero Jeffords (James Stewart), who, at risk to himself, has taken the initiative to build a bridge between the two races. The notorious Apache chief Chochise is likewise persuaded by Jeffords to reciprocate with his support. Scepticism and opposition prevail on both sides. The couple's romantic bond is based on an instinctive trust, and it leads to marriage and a brief idyllic honeymoon, but this comes at a price. Sonseeahray, the girl, dies in her innocence, caught in a crossfire involving both groups. Yet despite this tragic loss, Jeffords and Cochise stick to their hopes of peace in the land. In Robert Aldrich's *Apache* (1954), a formidable Native American protagonist, Massai (played by Burt Lancaster) is introduced for the first time; and in *The Stalking Moon* (1968), Salvaje is a faceless and dangerous Apache warrior who appears at the end of the film to encounter the hero Sam (Gregory Peck) and face defeat.

Shepard's *Silent Tongue* is perhaps the first modified American 'Western' film to feature a native Kiowa Indian woman, a totally speechless central protagonist, as the title indicates with a note of gothic irony. She is victimized by both her own people and white society, and she is later reunited with the former. Yet Shepard does not seem to be overtly anxious about the larger political conflicts between the two factions. He tackles the conflicts at individual and psychological levels, sustaining a note of skepticism or cyclical absurdity. His attitude is more impressionistic, incorporating both natural and supernatural perspectives. The Kiowa tribe – to which Silent Tongue belongs, is punished by and is later reunited with – reawakens the question of her lost honour, and finally becomes the agency of her offender's retribution. Eamon, her Irish mountebank husband and erstwhile rapist, is punished for his misdeed individually, and he does not necessarily symbolize the white man's sins of the past. His son Reeves returns to the camp. Prescott and Talbot survive their trauma and move on. Having won their prize, the Kiowa – along with the female victim who watches from high astride a horse – seem content about the justice delivered. The play concludes with the passage of a nameless 'Lone Man', in Beckettian style, pushing a wheelbarrow towards the horizon.

Shepard's gothic propensities relate him to precursors such as Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner and Eugene O'Neill. In an early prose piece, "The Curse of Raven's Black Feather" (1973), Shepard fashions an indigenous gothic idiom along the lines of Edgar

Allan Poe that will re-surface in his subsequent works. He uses the latter's favourite symbol of the raven[5] while combining facets of the gothic and science fiction modes, set in the familiar landscape of the American highway and its indispensable technological attribute, the automobile – which metaphorically is seen to parallel the trajectory of a human being's journey from birth to death. The protagonist, driving north to Canada to celebrate his idol Jack Kerouac's death anniversary (and his canonical novel *On the Road*, 1935), closely identifies with the latter. In the vein of science fiction, he has "visions" (Shepard, *Silent Tongue* 47) of an automobile graveyard, in a seemingly post-apocalyptic world featuring innumerable scattered vehicles and rusting machine parts. He is directed to visit such a graveyard in Noir, Louisiana by the supernatural voice of a dead raven his car has crashed into after he stops to pluck one black feather from its body as a decorative piece. Thereby he inadvertently solicits Death to enter his fold and lead him into oblivion. The proverbially cursed hero, he cannot escape his fate in a gothic dimension of unceasing anxiety: "The feather speaks! I'm sure of it. It has a voice. Its own peculiar voice. More like a Myna bird than a Raven. No, more like a 'Nevermore' Edgar Allan Poe Raven voice" (Shepard, "Curse" 48). The voice instructs him to locate a rusty black 1936 Pontiac inside which he has to compose seven feathers together (including the single one he is holding) and then depart on his way. After he does this, he turns the ignition key of the derelict car. It starts with a bark as if reborn. He moves out onto the highway heading directly northwards: "I've been driving for years like that. Just North. Always going North and getting nowhere. Never stopping for gas or food or sleep or friendship. Just driving North" (Shepard 50). His predicament echoes the condition of the denizens of Dante in Purgatory or of the ghost ship the Flying Dutchman – like a phantom Jack Kerouac in the American Western landscape, doomed to wander forever on the road that he cherished as a life's principle.

Shepard's Pulitzer-winning play *Buried Child* (1978) highlights the reality of family alienation as a gothic attribute which in the Nineties would be further developed in his film *Silent Tongue*. In the former, Dodge, the main figure, highlights the total abdication of a paternal role that is replaced by rampant alcoholism and emotional apathy for many years, endorsing a self-destructive emasculation at the centre of the disjointed family. A child born of incest, killed by him and buried in the courtyard long ago, 'emerges' as a corpse at the end of the play in the hands of Tilden, who has dug it up. Dodge anticipates the character of the decadent Eamon McCree from *Silent Tongue,* who is breathless without his constant supply of alcohol and maintains the false bravado of the white man's frontier. The fallen father, a walking ghostly figure returning to reclaim a lost status, is a familiar gothic figure. Shepard's *The Holy Ghostly, Fool for Love, The Late Henry Moss, Buried Child* – all include a fallen father who has gone over the edge, yet persists in his cloying attachments of desire. The inclusion of such a fallen character is "one of Shepard's most important Gothic devices" (Lee 5). Shepard uses Tilden, Dodge's elder son, to "create a gothic sense of mystery and suspense," and the gothic motifs of burial and resurrection make Poe's story of Usher "a useful comparison for *Buried Child*" (Lee 175).

The coordinates of drama and cinema meet throughout Shepard's entire oeuvre, affirming their individual traits of technique and tradition while also sharing a common basis in his mind and experience. This can be seen in the gothic and rhetorical significance of the titles of his play *Buried Child* (1978) and his film *Silent Tongue* (1994). Each title uses an adjective ("buried"/ "silent") with a touch of irony, suggesting the expectation of its opposite condition – the return of a dead child, or the articulation, metaphorically and literally, of a hitherto silenced mode of speech, the 'tongue' that no longer exists. And in each case, the measured rejuvenation is what is expected to take shape through the resources of drama or cinema. Shepard's recourse to the metaphor of an unwarranted or equivocal 'burial' of the living or the dead, and the consequences thereof, can be contextualized in the genesis of Western literature and drama from the Classical Greek times of Homer and Sophocles to that of the modern age of Ibsen, Strindberg and O'Neill.

The notion of the 'buried child' symbolically corresponds with the tragic idea of the premature death of potential youth.[6] In *Buried Child*, the logistics of burial is linked to the guilt and shame of incest and murder, which needs to be faced and exorcised by the main protagonists concerned – Tilden, Dodge, Halie and Vince – in a necessary and parallel acknowledgment of the cyclical decimation and rebirth of the American Dream. In *Silent Tongue*, the death of Awbonnie is caused by giving birth to a stillborn child; neither she nor her deceased child solicit a return to mortality. And even as a ghost, she has to struggle to release herself from her context of temporality. The cathartic question of her liberation is dramatized by Shepard in cinematic terms.

[3] The Plot of the Screenplay *Silent Tongue*

In the plot of *Silent Tongue*, Shepard presents the interweaving of three main groups of characters at the frontier. The first is the dreaded Kiowa Indian tribe, rarely visible in the landscape. One of their women, Silent Tongue, is subjected to misogyny both inside and outside her community. The second group is Eamon McCree's present family, which includes the American Indian woman he raped and subsequently married, their two half-breed daughters Awbonnie and Velada, and his adult son Reeves from Eamon's previous marriage to a white woman. However, Silent Tongue is no longer around with her family; she has chosen to return to her native Kiowa tribe in the hope of exacting revenge and justice. The third group comprises Prescott Roe, a seasoned sixty-year-old cowboy (played by the veteran actor Richard Harris) who attempts to find a new wife for his distraught, recently widowed son, Talbot.

The screenplay/film *Silent Tongue* begins on a warped elegiac note, with the young Talbot Roe unreconciled to the recent demise of his half-breed wife Awbonnie, who died trying to deliver a stillborn child. Orpheus-like,[7] the distraught young man refuses to forfeit her forever. Shepard's plays, in the wake of his antecedents Ibsen, Strindberg and O'Neill, often display the incongruity of unwanted and disposed-of progeny, as well as the consequences of such disposal and alienation. Infanticide features as a significant trait in modern Western drama and in gothic literature. Death has given Awbonnie the

chance to exit from an unhappy and loveless relationship; however, her husband Talbot prevents her liberation by opposing her funeral rites. He guards the corpse against any man, vulture or coyote in a bleak, Beckettian landscape, averse to the idea of her absolute freedom without him. At the frontier where white and coloured interests clash, the plot emerges through the tensions of a complicated and shameful marriage on one side and the improbable prospect of a new marriage on the other, employing the same coordinates of human resources. The action is contextualized in a mythic violation of a native woman bereft of the means of speech, a violation which demands expiation at any cost in the present.

The resulting tension between the living and the dead in *Silent Tongue* is manifested in the appearance of Awbonnie's ghost, asserting her freedom from the untenable bondage to her husband. Talbot's acutely misanthropic mental condition prompts his anxious but resourceful father Prescott to attempt a new marriage proposal with Eamon's remaining daughter, Velada, at a suitable bride-price of three horses and gold, in the hope of his son's timely mental recuperation; the old man believes she would be able to cure the young man's neurotic condition with her vital presence. He therefore rides to Eamon's camp to make the deal, quite aware of the latter's incorrigible, covetous nature. Yet despite the temptation, Eamon is reluctant to go ahead with the idea of relinquishing his second daughter, since she is the main asset in his current medicine show. Every day her stunning equestrian performance attracts the rural folk who are the potential customers for his wonder tonic that is supposed to cure all diseases. Reeves too is angry about forfeiting another sister in the same manner as before, especially as he knows that Awbonnie has "passed" into oblivion. The despairing Prescott has no alternative but to kidnap the girl by force, before returning to his son's bivouac site on the plains. The plot concludes with Velada getting the better of her abductor; she is left free to choose between returning to her stepbrother Reeves, or staying with her new husband Talbot. Strangely enough, her mother Silent Tongue does not intervene in the latest (post-Eamon) configuration. Velada, it is assumed, initiates a new cycle.

Shepard's feminist point of view in this screenplay depicts the bold girl's newfound economic and social independence, which enables her not to succumb to the patriarchy any more. Yet before that happens, an acute exorcism has taken place stretching across decades. At the centre of the plot of *Silent Tongue* is the primal, barbaric act[8] of the double violation of a Native American woman, Silent Tongue, at the hands of patriarchal cruelty, and the consequences thereof within the fragmented frontier reality. A Kiowa tribal chief's punishment for a woman of his clan for lying to him is to cut out her tongue so she is silent forever. This metaphorically signifies the mythic, Philomela-like deprivation of the female voice of its necessary articulation and protest. In the Greek myth, King Tereus, after raping his wife's sister Philomela, proceeds to cut out of the latter's tongue so that she might not divulge his deed. However, the gods change the sisters into birds – a swallow and a nightingale – and Philomela's tragic tale becomes immortalized through song.

Shepard manifests expressionistically (in monochrome) Eamon's deep-rooted guilt through a nightmare-flashback of the rape while she gathers the white bones of slaugh-

tered buffaloes on the prairie. His own little son, Reeves, accompanying him, is forcibly made a witness to the horrid crime in order to toughen him, in a perverse frontier code of masculinity. Metaphorically, the significance of the two 'rapes' are linked together – that of a native woman and that of the buffalo, as a mythic resource of sustenance for the indigenous people; both assaults are selfishly executed by the white man. The buffalo constitutes one of the main images identified with Native American civilization, subject to near extinction by the machinations of buffalo hunters, men like Buffalo Bill Cody, satirized in Arthur Kopit's play *Indians* (1969). The buffalo origin myth[9] is part of the long saga of the emergence of the Native American people. The archetypal buffalo is a part of the frontier myth that modern American drama (in the repertoire of Sam Shepard, Arthur Kopit, or David Mamet[10]) has symbolically foregrounded in its conflicts.

Like many of Shepard's unstable, gothic fathers, Eamon drinks heavily to alleviate his fears; he knows his retribution is near at hand. Psychologically, his gothic nightmare constitutes an act of self-confession, albeit late in the day. Velada's abduction in the present induces her father and stepbrother to go in search of her into the hostile territory of the warriors, where her mother now lives and awaits justice. The play concludes with the dissolution of false hopes of healing, as life comes back in a circle to the original sin of Silent Tongue's rape and her long-pending revenge on the perpetrator of the evil act. In the vast prairie, Eamon is stripped of the white man's vanity and power. And as he is prodded to his bloody death, his actions are accounted for and exorcized universally.

[4] Shepard's Experiments with Form in *Silent Tongue*

Shepard's celluloid gothic Western *Silent Tongue* begins by showing the predicament of Talbot Roe[11] following the recent death of his wife Awbonnie in childbirth. The plot does not reveal the context of his initial knowledge of and conjugal alignment with her. Nor does it bring out his attitude and feelings towards the picaresque career of his father-in-law Eamon McCree, since his own father, Prescott, seems to have been the mediator between the two far-flung families from the start. Eamon's son Reeves is from his first marriage to a white Irish woman, and Reeves does not share his father's decadent bent of mind. But both Eamon's daughters, Awbonnie and Velada, are born to a Native American woman called Silent Tongue, whom Eamon raped long before marrying her in an attempt at redress. He still does not hesitate to show his racist prejudice for white over coloured people when he tells Reeves "Just thank your stars you weren't born a half-breed like yer demon sisters" (164), forgetting his own authorship of that demonism. Eamon's materialistic reluctance to part with the 'asset' of his younger daughter (who draws in the crowds) prompts the desperate Prescott to wait no further and to kidnap her by force. In the same breath he tries to persuade her to submit wilfully to his proposal, with temptations of acquiring several horses, gold, as well as her personal, economic freedom from a repressive and insensitive father. Apologizing for his violent act of coercion, he appeals

to her to assist in healing his mentally infirm son through marriage: "I was wrong to steal you against your will, but you must help me. I have no one else" (169).

The feminist mode of *Silent Tongue* explores the relationship between gender identity, body, and desire. As with the mythic case of Philomela, Silent Tongue's rape does not remain an end in itself, but rather progresses inevitably in its implications through a metamorphosis of suffering, self-realization and poetic justice. Eamon's past violation of Silent Tongue is finally accounted for by his nemesis outside his carnivalesque atmosphere of folk entertainment and charlatan medicinal practice. He responds half--heartedly to the conjugal destinies of his two daughters. Ironically, the unfortunate misalliance in each case establishes the existential ground of Eamon's subsequent 'trial' in strangely dramatic terms. He has committed sins at other people's expense, and he is answerable to them, to society and to nature. The fortuitous link between the cause and the consequence of poetic justice is through the apparently central figure of Silent Tongue, who nevertheless remains absent throughout the entire film.

We do not discover Silent Tongue brooding over her fate or chanting vengefully in a Kiowa village for two decades. Nor is there any objective reference to Eamon's crime by her or her tribe,[12] which is mainly represented vicariously. We do not witness a linear course of accountability between Eamon's crime and the agenda of punishment or revenge that is executed by the Kiowa tribe at the end, when Silent Tongue's unstated demand for retribution moves from the personal to a universal plane. The gap between the two poles of crime and punishment is unique, and it could be perceived in the vein of magic realism or science fiction. It is characterized by the surreal drama of a dead woman's ghost demanding its necessary funeral rites. Between Awbonnie and her mother, the *heroine manqué*[13] Silent Tongue, Shepard demonstrates the itineraries of literal and metaphorical ghosts as feminist tropes demanding identity, voice and visibility in a patriarchal world of fraudulent healing and opportunism. By setting in motion a process of frontier retribution in the context of Eamon's erstwhile decadence and prevailing capitulation, Shepard avails himself of the contemporary American resources of cinema to resolve the evils of a colonizing ethos. Yet it is rare to find in the Western genre a culpable white man being answerable to Native American justice. Historically, Custer and his men did fall to Cheyenne and Sioux fury at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. In John Huston's film *The Unforgiven* (1960), a native Kiowa girl, named Rachel by the white family that has adopted her in childhood, realizes her true heritage and decides to return to her native roots, which are claiming her back. However, generally speaking, starting from John Fenimore Cooper, it has been rare to find the Native American being accorded a degree of equality or superiority in the dimensions of literature and cinema. In *Silent Tongue*, the very question of a hierarchy of racial cultures is difficult to resolve, as they move backward and forward inconsistently. Shepard leaves the question ambiguous.

The drama of unsolicited confrontations in the West between native cultures and foreign settlers often presented a range of American Indian tribes – the Navajo, Chuawaukee, Modoc, Apache, Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, and others – all of whom were displaced from their natural habitat by the white man, the 'blanco'. *Silent Tongue* draws

upon the magic realist interactions of the natural and the supernatural on Earth, with the same ease in the modern age as that which prevails in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, a balance of sorts being sought between the two dimensions. It may be observed that the dominant metaphor of healing emerges ironically in the course of Shepard's dramatic vision in *Silent Tongue*. Using a hyperbolic rhetoric of frontier salesmanship before uneducated rural folk, Eamon promises to 'cure' any temporal malaise with his knowledge of medical science, in the form of an elixir bottled for a dollar each. He poses as a benefactor of the masses who has "miracles to perform" in a diseased world: "The whole prairie is festering for our remedy" (Shepard, *Silent Tongue* 137). He claims to have learnt its secret formula from the mysteries of the Kiowa tribe while he was their prisoner in adolescence. Yet his hedonistic violation of Silent Tongue in his youth makes his current agenda of healing a hypocritical one. He is himself a part of the disease that he claims to cure. On another front, Prescott believes Velada is the only living 'medicine' that will cure his son's impossible condition of psychological attachment to his dead wife. Both these premises and hopeful solutions turn out to be faulty and ineffectual in terms of healing. The very word becomes a misnomer in the vocabulary of the frontier.

McCree's Dr. Eamon Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show evolves as an ironic extension of this legacy of presumptuous healing that is being solicited in a land of disease, failure, and sin. It is an old story of survival at the expense of gullible folk, elevated to grotesque scams such as those of the Duke and Dauphin in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* or the tall tales of Baron Munchausen in Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* magazine. While Twain, through comedy, embodied the grotesque and racist aspects of the colonization of the frontier, Shepard, a century later, underscored its gothic and surreal tensions via cinema. Eamon is a fake messiah and medicine man who profits from pseudo-tribal healing secrets into which he was ostensibly initiated during his kidnapped childhood: "We have tonic to sell," he tells his son, "miracles to perform. The whole prairie is festering for our remedy!" (137). He creates a pseudo-myth of American-Indian tribal knowledge of healing to legitimize his pedigree as a doctor: "I've grown accustomed to the primitive for some time. In fact, I prefer it by now. It's the primitive that feeds my livelihood" (143). This secret potion is euphemistically referred to as a tonic; it has a base content of alcohol, without which Eamon's inordinate thirst cannot be appeased. Their central programme is their vaudeville act of selling the sham tonic through the performance of the whole family and a grotesque band of low, bathetic performers – clowns, a Tap Dancer, a Petrified Man, an Acrobat, etc. – who could well be denizens of a P.T. Barnum circus repertoire of the 1870s.[14] And every morning, the group performance gets underway with the practiced Irish rhetoric of father and son in a histrionic routine of limericks, crude jokes and loud endorsement of their all-purpose, pseudo-magical tonic. However, Velada, Eamon's bi-racial daughter, is an exception. She plays an important visual, performative role, as she mesmerizes the rural audience with her equestrian feats of power, finesse, and speed, fused into a ball of exquisite motion. She performs with a pure innocence, de-contextualized for a while from a history of sin and violence. She embodies an original female power that could counterpoint the exploitative American patriarchy of the

past and the present. Her dangerous riding act complements the rhetoric of the 'magic' tonic that Eamon foists on the dumb folk. Her furious and impersonal (albeit sensual) act is a part of the 'medicinal' content that the people are ready to swallow without questioning. Paradoxically, this enforced potential of 'healing' in Velada is the outcome of the sexual and enforced 'silence' that her mother underwent in her youth when she, a tongue-less woman, was raped on the prairie with the patriarchal assumption that such a woman could never protest, as King Tereus had thought about Philomela after violating her. Velada on her own would also be the untutored feminist force able to turn the tables on the unsuspecting veteran cowboy after being solicited by him to restore his son (Talbot) to life with the grace of her feminine humanism and "some affection" (176). She is caught between the two ends: the white man/father who may barter her without pity for her body, and the spirit in the shape of her sister's ghost that considers her "to be lower than the father who sold us!" (183), as Velada is betraying their mother by her ambitious plans for upward social mobility and even contemplating the option of replacing Awbonnie as Talbot's mate. In a horrifying gothic scene, the ghost grabs Velada by her hair and pulls her tongue; holding a knife over it, the ghost threatens that it will repeat the same punishment as their mother had to bear a generation before – the excising of her tongue – to remind her of her roots and the woman who gave birth to her and paid the heavy price of forfeiting speech forever.

Awbonnie's ghost makes it quite clear that it is Talbot who is obstructing her path of liberation: "It's you that must release me!" (151). However, Prescott, Talbot's father, feels that Talbot is losing his mind and would surely die without help and renewal through the company of a second wife, preferably from the same family stock. Prescott's accelerated plans for familial reconstruction through Velada ("you must replace her. It's his only chance" [170]) are suspect. She realizes, both on her own as well as through her ghostly sister's reprimand, that Prescott's efforts at rebuilding the order of nature are in fact at the expense of nature and the ritualistic funerary norms of the underworld. Those must first be fulfilled before a second marriage can take place.[15] With modern myth-makers like Sam Shepard, Margaret Atwood and Jean Giradoux,[16] we can see an attempt to explore the relationship between mythopoesis, magic realism and "a feminist discourse that is attempting to conceptualize issues of difference" (Melzer 1) in a male-oriented world where women too need to recover their lost identities with honour. Both Atwood and Giradoux lend their authorial voices to wronged and marginalized characters from the patriarchal, epic setting of Homer's *Odyssey*. *The Penelopiad* upholds the charge of injustice inflicted on the hero's wife Penelope's twelve maids (who were unjustly executed by King Odysseus on his return to his kingdom Ithaca after the Trojan War, having allegedly betrayed him to the suitors) and Elpenor (an ordinary sailor on Odysseus's homebound ship, who in a drowsy state, on being summoned to report for duty, walked off a roof and fell to an ignoble death; he wishes not only to retrieve his dignity through proper funeral rites, but also demands a status equivalent to the foremost of epic heroes while moving centripetally from the margins to the centre). Shepard's Awbonnie demands no less in her predicament of bondage, of having her dead body withheld and denied burial by her own husband.

Shepard attempts to show new criteria of gender differences initiated by conscious female protagonists who are contextualized at one discordant point in frontier history.[17] Both Prescott and his son neglect this basic priority with impunity, thus earning the ghost's extreme wrath. This implies an antagonism which is also rooted in the larger universal agenda of a wronged mother, Silent Tongue, avenging her victimization. Velada tells Prescott that Awbonnie's ghost has become an active projection of their long-invisible mother, slowly fulfilling the power of the feminine tongue that had been categorically silenced: "She is my mother's weapon! She is moving on you now with vengeance!" (173). Velada too, as a self-reliant woman with Kiowa blood in her, is not easily subdued. Even after being kidnapped, she escapes and gets the better of the veteran Prescott, whom she leaves stranded as she gallops away with all his horses. This virtual extension of Silent Tongue's agenda of subversive feminist articulation and revenge through her two daughters (without actually having communicated with them in the political or social sphere) indicates the subtle expediting of justice through the ubiquitous levels of modern drama and magic realism.

Ironically, Prescott's immediate assertion of the normalcy of his son's rejuvenation implies the volitional and impersonal consent of a nubile Native American woman. Velada cannot immediately be used for the crucial investment of life that Prescott wants. Her voice, conjoined with the proxy voice of Silent Tongue, must be aligned with a long--delayed affirmation of justice for women dishonoured, before it can be euphemistically used to counter the tantrums of a spoilt son. Awbonnie's candid rejection of her skewed marriage context ("I am not your life!" [150]) thus becomes the projection of a much greater anger, going beyond even Silent Tongue's rape to the violation of universal woman, whose pain might be expressed in an abstract, metaphysical world such as that portrayed symbolically in Edward Munch's painting "The Scream". This link between disparate needs for rejuvenation, brought together in the dialectic of male and female, white and coloured, is achieved through Shepard's acknowledgment of the potential of magic realism or gothic discourse endorsing the path of poetic justice. Prescott is knocked to the ground by Velada's sudden surge of energy. He is left alone without his assets of horses or his bag of gold coins, in a symbolic emasculation of traditional male superiority. But neither of them, young or old, is in a relenting mood. This emerging tension is vital to the momentum of the film, because it marks the anti-climax when Prescott had thought he could bring back with him the solution to his son's malaise. At that very point, the resourcefulness of a young, part-Native woman overcomes that of the seasoned cowboy, something that her own mother could not attain a generation ago. The circumstances and the equations are, of course, different now in the social framework. Shepard directs an empowered feminist reply to the past narrative of male/white hegemony.

Science fiction (SF) often manifests an inner symbiosis of evolutionary forms of life in the terms of visible images – what Patricia Melzer termed "alien constructions" and "hybridity" in her book on feminist science fiction. At times they are physical and metaphysical extensions/projections of each other, and they are thus represented in a hybrid form of mundane reality. This is a phenomenon that is clearly apparent in all

mythologies of the world which exhibit these binary forms of identifiable energy and value – like centaurs, satyrs, mermaids, sirens, minotaurs, humanoid animals and birds speaking in Greek, Latin or Hebrew, mutants, and hypothetical cyborgs – who nurture the paradoxical fate of the mortal and the immortal simultaneously. SF, like all languages, was born from the tensions of cultural hybridity across the physical and metaphysical worlds that human civilization had become acquainted with – and Shepard often mediates such metamorphic changes using an American idiom. In *Silent Tongue*, the incongruous and protracted relationship between the white man and the Native American provides the metaphorical ground – for instance inter-racial marriage – for a redefinition of justice and retribution.

Ostensibly, in Greek classical myth the Titan Prometheus began this trend when, completely unsolicited, he stole the fire of the Gods to illuminate the darkness of human ignorance. He was, perhaps, the first SF auteur, using his divinely unsanctioned fennel stalk as an incendiary pen to write an unprecedented rebel story of creation and scientific progress for the future of mankind. This was a narrative which was starkly different from regular scriptures, because the new discourse implied a democratic era of creative powers that would be anathema to the gods who had monopolized them so far. In *Silent Tongue* we also witness such a gradual reversal taking place, with the agency of metamorphosis reaching the fortuitous abstractions of SF as it emerges from a dystopian nightmare of mythic guilt. In modern drama and literature, we often come across such 'alien constructions', symbolic hybridity or polarity expressed through language and imagery, just as in Renaissance paintings we often see centaurs, satyrs and their symbolic, human counterparts invading civil congregations in order to abduct helpless women on their shoulders for purposes of intimidation, pleasure, or procreation. Sam Shepard, like several other modern American playwrights and poets, achieves the synchronization of hybrid forms visually through images, or poetically through words. These hybrid images can help establish a neutral or uncharted ground or atmosphere conducive to the birth of pristine visual or semantic forms – like the techniques used by Bertolt Brecht to distance (or alienate) the spectator from the subject at hand so as to generate a fresh, untutored insight. Shepard's extensive use of surreal, SF and gothic imagery, and his facility with rock music, are geared to stimulate new dimensions of interpretation.

For instance, we emblematically discover a visual suggestion of the mythic 'centaur' in Prescott Roe, the veteran cowboy, described as "*an absolute extension of his horses*", his eyes possessing "*the kind of inner stillness that comes from dealing with nature and horses and not with human beings*" (127, italics mine). He is also described as the 'Horse Swapper', the one who barters horses for brides for his incorrigibly melancholy son, as an antidote to death (136). Velada's figure as she rides her horse, deftly changing her positions at will, also seems to be graphically conjoined with the outline of her horse. Her torso is perfectly synchronized with the body and limbs of the animal in a complete silhouette which, viewed as a whole, appears like a centaur in ecstatic frenzy mesmerizing the audience with various acrobatic tricks. She is a skilled Native American horse rider whom white colonial culture cannot fully appropriate on its terms at all times. Such a buoyant inde-

pendence is briefly displaced by Prescott's act of kidnapping her. Shepard's description of Prescott condones the graphic, centaur-like amalgamation of man and horse due to his vital affinity with them and the fact that he essentially deals with nature and horses, and "not with human beings" (127).

In contrast to such a visual synthesis of human and animal (horse) in a mythic sense of primal oneness, we see the opposite state of physical and psychological alienation from nature in Eamon's coveting of horses for monetary profit (as he is ready to barter his daughters for horses and gold) and his killing of them for self-protection. He thrives at their expense in every way in order to survive, until in the end the noose of justice circles his own neck. He nonchalantly declares: "We ate his horses outside Omaha" (136). After shooting his own packhorse without a second thought in order to use its carcass to provide protection from Kiowa arrows, he instructs his son Reeves to do the same: "Shoot yer mount and bury yourself!" (186). It is not surprising that Eamon's alienation from nature is reflected in his alienation from horses. In two crucial scenes he is, in a manner of speaking, de-horsed and forced to walk, left alone first by Velada and later by Reeves. He staggers along the dusty trail, under the prodding of the Kiowa warriors' lances and clubs. Shepard's 'human-horse' visual construct becomes an index of the frontier and other motifs of a gothic consciousness. They constitute potent, alien or incongruous forms of organic life that have always existed or are hypothetically anticipated to be born. SF and/or magic realism may dwell on such metamorphic transitions which move up or down the 'evolutionary' ladder. Abandoned by his son Reeves and bereft of his horse and gun in the vast landscape, Eamon is "vulnerable and pathetically alone" (162), dispossessed of his colonizer's identity as his son deliberately abandons him in preference for his bi-racial sister, whom he loves and seeks to "reclaim" (179) from unsanctioned hands.

Shepard does not hesitate to employ the simple and dramatic symbols of the Western genre that inspires him in his quest. The rawhide lariat is one of the popular power symbols of the genre – besides the six-shooter Colt, the Sharp repeater rifle and the Bowie knife. It projects the idea of subjugating and taming the explosive energy of nature in a simple, non-mechanical and absolute way, prior to the advance of the destructive technology of wars that produced guns, explosives and missiles – and later also tanks and bombers. The lariat, in its horizontal trajectory, captures the object of pursuit, but it does not kill – unless it is used vertically as a noose to hang living bodies. The veteran cowboy Prescott Roe is a master of using the lariat, and significantly, he does so around the naturally related bodies of Velada and the horse in one complete composition of outline: "The leather rope slashes around her face and snares her around the waist, also encircling the paint's neck" (153). Both bodies seem to be expressionistically unified into one, under the jurisdiction of the cowboy's rope. In this composite encircling of girl-rider and horse with one single lariat, as if it was one body being caught on an artist's canvas, Shepard reiterates the imagery of the centaur in a gesture that contributes to the atmosphere of science fiction, in which alien bodies are often imaginatively composed of the mixed physical attributes of humans and animals.

Shepard has further recourse to the expressionistic projection of Eamon's guilt through the latter's harrowing nightmare of that memory in a parenthetical 'black and white' sequence[18] while tackling the issue of Velada's abduction in the present. The contrasting monochromatic view signifies the part of his alienated self that is still grappling for moorings. Yet this is not a sin that can be undone through tears, either in or outside time and space – like the virtual bloodstains on Lady Macbeth's hands which even all the perfumes of Arabia cannot wipe clean. Prescott's 'guerilla invasion' of Eamon's camp, and his swift (albeit apologetically conducted) operation, recalls other mythic assaults – the abduction of Persephone by Pluto and that of the Sabine women[19] by the Romans: all justified by the crucial necessity of the continuation of the species, even though the end does not justify the means.[20] Prescott tells the captured girl sitting trussed up on her horse: "I am very sorry about this. I truly am. There was no other way to get it done" (155).

Such an accelerated and arbitrary manner of reaching one's goal implies a heightened sense of history and metabolism in modern or mythic terms. Such acts express the demonic, guilt-ridden extremities of the human impulse that Freud, Jung and gothic literature discovered in the human subconscious. Neither Persephone, Silent Tongue nor Velada would have met their respective husbands on their own impetus, nor would they have decided to stay on as partners without being imposed upon by external conditions of temptation, desire, and inducement such as the indispensable pomegranate in Hades or the gold offered in the wilderness. They are appropriated through violence or gold or by the far-reaching lariat. Nobler forms of persuasion are rare. And they all counterpoint on their own terms and language in human or supernatural or mythic ways. How does she, alienated from her tribe, bring about a critical operation of justice from her historical point of view? Shepard does not care to elaborate on the logistical connection between the act of violation perpetrated on Silent Tongue and the execution of justice on Eamon by the Kiowa warriors. This is where cinematic montage helps to move beyond a linear development of a plot in a dynamic or expressionistic way. The necessity and execution of justice for a primal crime becomes a universal rather than an individual concern, as is seen to happen in Greek tragedy.

The surreal atmosphere created by Shepard through his simultaneous linking of Velada's abduction by Prescott in the present with the brutal rape of her mother by Eamon in the past is conceptualized through Eamon's unexpected nightmare at this turning-point in the drama. Both the living and the spectral seem to be part of the collective unconscious flitting across the inhospitable prairie. The nightmare constitutes an interlude of deep moral anxiety – and the irony is that expiation will finally be achieved at the hands of the 'heathens' Eamon has always despised and spat upon.

Eamon's last walk, under the prodding of spears, may (or may not) be a grotesque parody of Christ's last journey before his crucifixion on Calvary. Eamon (or mankind) becomes the cause of Silent Tongue's unmitigated and soundless scream of agony in the wilderness. He too wakes up from his nightmare, projecting that scream in his wishful justification of his deed, the condescending fact that he married her after all: "I made her my legitimate wife! Don't forget that! Don't ever forget that!" (159). But the irony

is that his Native American wife is no longer around to hear his boast. She has left him forever and is abating the process of his punishment. The word "legitimate" resonates in the air. The corresponding images of past and present screaming mortals – Persephone, Munch's and Shepard's protagonists – are brought together in our minds with a touch of hyperbole, a touch of the violation that awaits the grace of forgiveness.

> Eamon: Remarkable, isn't it? How things come true. I had invented this little fable. This very one I'm now living. Conjured it out of my own imagination. It was my sales pitch. Infallible. It worked every time. It was my very livelihood. (197)

Is this a modern instance of Aristotle's *anagnorises* or self-realization on the part of Eamon at the threshold of death? Is the white colonizer, like Joseph Conrad's Mr. Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, coming to terms with his inordinate greed in the face of hell fire? The sentiments expressed echo those of Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, who acknowledges the consequences of his own presumptuous machinations in society after becoming a part of the ensuing destruction, ultimately a victim of his own experiment.

In *Silent Tongue*, Sam Shepard uses his film script to rediscover the inner tensions of the concept of the Western frontier, the basic idea of civilization at the crossroads. Moreover, women who are pushed to the wall also feature in secret, empowered ways at the centre of the action, the scene of crimes and the operation of *nemesis*. As with Arthur Kopit's play *Indians* (1968), *Silent Tongue*, in a far more sombre fashion, rewrites the text of America's guilt and accountability towards the displacement and decimation of the natives of the land, leading into a future of a stark, intimidating, gothic consciousness.[21] In *Silent Tongue*, Shepard has expressed the terminal guilt of an incorrigible patriarchal society through the timely self-assertions of female protagonists who until then were playing a secondary role.

The severe and unreasonable expectations of Talbot for the return of his deceased wife from the threshold of death recalls the Greek myth of Orpheus in its futile conclusion about a reunion. Yet Shepard's Orpheus moves in a self-centred, hateful way. Here the myth is imbued with a discord that is deeper, less forgivable. Significantly, Talbot carries a shotgun in place of the Orphic lyre or a Spanish guitar; he employs anger, abusive language and bullets to make his presence felt in death's arena, and not the blissful music that turned the heart of Persephone and the whole of Nature to agree upon the return of Eurydice to the upper world. The elements do not fall in love with Talbot in the same way as they did with the mythic hero. The ghost of Awbonnie thus rejects her earthly husband's narcissistic endearment of her body at the expense of her soul, his false profession of love as a mask of colonial male-centric hegemony. Magic realism (or science fiction) may open the doors of the romantic expectation of a continuity of life after death, especially where the limitations of mortality are imposed too quickly and awkwardly. Orpheus and Eurydice, in a mythic context, would almost have achieved a reunion had it not been for the former's impatience. It is that anxiety or alienation between lovers that speculative literature leaves open-ended. In *Silent Tongue,* the misalliance of Awbonnie and Talbot can only be resolved through a violent, feminist-induced and definitive separation of power.

But thankfully, this quest by Talbot and his father Prescott to challenge nature, to dominate their women for personal, egotistic ends, does not succeed. The woman in each case prevails, in life or in death. Awbonnie's ghost tells Talbot that she died in childbirth ("I died giving birth to your child!" [168]) and not for any other exotic reason. She had "never wanted" a child from their union in the first place, as there was no real bonding between them. The colonized subject consciously rejects the hope of a harmonious, procreative history, despite the chance union which, after all, denies a worthy legacy of trust and honour. She has already witnessed the alienating results of a bi-racial marriage in the case of her own parents, whose conjugal record was a misalliance based on shame. She asks for her own 'freedom' at a metaphysical level, which only the likes of him can perhaps expedite by submitting her body to the flames, or by allowing nature to do the necessary through the animals and birds of prey that he has so far kept at bay with his shotgun. Yet he is averse to the idea. He will not let her body out of sight, for he anticipates his absolute emasculation by the sacrifice of an apparently perfect bond which does not exist. His perverse insistence of physically 'preserving' the dead – as in *Buried Child* – constitutes a grotesque parody of the idea of immortality within the literary parameters of the American gothic tradition. It may also signify a tongue-in-cheek parody of the American Dream.

[5] In the Wake of Shepard's Precursors

Shepard's originality does not entirely preclude the influences of several Western precursors. The expressionistic, gothic, absurd and other experimental devices of Western precursors, such as Strindberg, Eugene O'Neill, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, attest to the multiple levels of reality that take shape in the landscape that Shepard traverses. When O'Neill's black protagonist Brutus Jones decides to relinquish his island empire in *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and flee through the dark primeval forest, he comes across the ghosts of his past crimes, which include two instances of murder. Each time the ghosts confront him, he falters and blasts at them with his revolver until a single silver bullet is left... for himself. For a fleeting moment in *Silent Tongue*, the ghost of Awbonnie prompts her living husband to commit suicide with the gun barrel in his mouth: "He pulls the shotgun out of his mouth and with the obvious fear of annihilation, points it at the ghost, emptying both barrels" (169), as she vanishes. The expressionistic attributes of the supernatural, found in the dramas of Strindberg (*Dance of Death*) and O'Neill (*Desire Under the Elms*), move aggressively into Shepard's cinematic dystopia in *Silent Tongue*, to give substance to forgotten causes. In the absence of any living concern for justice in retribution for past violations in the cases of Awbonnie and her late mother, Shepard foregrounds both causes in the film through Prescott's oblique agenda of equanimity for his crazed son. In the conclusion, the woman Silent Tongue is revealed not in a photograph or a narrative or a nightmarish dream, but in person, as the figure of a nemesis who, without a word or a sign, mediates in the terms of magic realism between crime and punishment for a parturient nature.

Ironically, Prescott's pleading for Velada's humanist, feminine care for his son ("All he needs is a voice. A kindness." [176]) undercuts the general subtext of nineteenth--century misogyny and sparks a conflict in her. Prescott realizes he cannot dictate to a woman that she must be kind and gracious, even though he can lasso her into temporary subjugation. This attitude distinguishes the characters of Prescott and Eamon, the two father figures in the script. And it is complemented by the position that Eamon's son Reeves also adopts in anxious support of his two sisters, in a total rejection of his chauvinist father, the "Wizard of the Plains!", whose heritage he condemns: "It shames me to be the son of a pig" (164). To Eamon, his daughter Velada, being half-Kiowa, was "born to suffer!" And in pronouncing all three of his children "Heathen!" (172), he acknowledges his own demonism.

While Prescott is bent on bringing back a new wife for his son at any cost, his mission is rudely interrupted by both the living and the phantom sisters. Velada gets the upper hand over the veteran cowboy when she reacts with a primal, "animal scream" on hearing from him about the death of Awbonnie; she gallops away with his horses, forcing him to walk alone on the vast prairie (161). Her sudden fury, and the strength rooted in her anger, signifies the rebirth of the cornered woman into a new species who can survive at the expense of brutal men. Yet Velada pities Prescott and his predicament, returning to see his pathetic condition. Finally, in full control, she strikes a bargain with him to buy her own freedom from the clutches of her soulless father. Her pragmatic rather than her feminist side gets the better of her. She chooses liberty as an individual who has the upper hand for the while. Her sister's ghost accuses her accordingly of betraying the cause of their mother: "You are lower than the father who sold us" (183). And finally, Silent Tongue appears sitting "astride a black pony, set against the horizon, wrapped up in a buffalo robe," as her "black eyes burn out into the distance" of the landscape (198). She oversees the grim fate of her offender and master Eamon as he is led away by the nameless Kiowa warriors who appear like the *erinyes*, spirits of vengeance who do not fail in their appointed task. Thus, Shepard's brand of feminist/gothic Western, poised on the brink of a new generation of frontier enterprise, operates on multiple levels of affirmation within the genre. The buffalo robe on Silent Tongue's shoulder is symbolic of the honour she has regained through nature, her imposed silence from the past which now takes on a rejuvenated meaning of peace.

As the film script proceeds, the two plots – about the exploitation of women and nature's reaction to that injustice – come closer to each other and ultimately fuse, with Silent Tongue at their centre; the world of innocence and experience strive to reach a balance. In the wake of O'Neill's *oeuvre*, Shepard employs expressionistic devices that correspond with gothic imagery and magic realism. At night, as Prescott approaches Talbot and the female corpse under his overt protection, a lone fire burns next to the tree. The ghost of Awbonnie is seen "running furiously across the prairie with both arms stretched high above her streaming hair" (173), like a discontented banshee. She attacks the old man by using a form of Voodoo – a supernatural practice said to employ spirits of the dead to resolve conflicts – through the body of a wolf, which she stabs with two knives. The act

and pain of the stabbing are transmitted immediately to Prescott's body by the ghost. He writhes in pain on the ground as Velada helps to extract the knives from his back. The camera also closes on the knives, which hurtle through black space "and suddenly vanish" (173). She explains to him that her sister, Awbonnie, has become the vengeful extension of their mother toward an unjust world. Velada is equipped to interpret the demonic images of the shooting knives as expressions of her sister's anger at him for promoting his son at the expense of her salvation: "My sister is sending you her thoughts!" Prescott still undercuts the supernatural connotation, rationalizing, "it was just a pain" and that her sister was "dead" (173). Velada refutes his narrow scepticism:

> Velada: She is my mother's weapon! She's moving on you now with vengeance.
> Prescott: We must get to my son! We got to get to him fast.
> Velada: I cannot move against my sister.
> Prescott: Your sister is dead! She's gone!
> Velada: She is more alive than you. (174)

The choice is between the volatile interests of the natural and the supernatural world orders. Prescott reminds Velada that they have made a bargain about the attempt to heal the broken life of Talbot, and Velada concedes this. However, at the end of the film, after the corpse of Awbonnie has undergone its cherished funeral rites, we do not see Velada next to Talbot, as was planned in the deal. She does not seem to be bound by her obligation to restore a man, her brother-in-law, from the brink of despair. It is only the father and son who walk together towards the horizon on the prairie. The script reveals a larger context of good and evil that Eamon has tried to bury in the self-justifying drama of a marriage. It is a cloistered evil that has resurfaced – like the murdered infant in Shepard's *Buried Child* – and that has to be paid for with his own life. This payment will be brought about as retribution through the agency of the victim's sentient consciousness. Revenge is not only a personal agenda; it is a part of the necessary restoration of nature. In *Silent Tongue*, perhaps, more than in the Western *Dances with Wolves* (1990), the potential of travelling 'back to the future' is dramatically achieved at a deeper and darker level of retribution, with both victim and victimizer mutually defining the basis of evil that needs to be exorcised in a new language of suffering.

[6] Conclusion

Eamon's alienation from the source of his fictitious medicinal knowledge, which he profits from commercially, is symbolized in his estrangement from his wife Silent Tongue, who has left him to return to her people after bearing him two daughters. His spurious practice of Kiowa medicine on the one hand implies an opportunistic gathering of tribal healing secrets meant to fool gullible country folk. However, on the other hand the inception of that study of tribal healing practices was marked by three acts of violence in which he was involved: first, his own childhood kidnapping ("captured at a very young and tender age and taken into the hands of the dreaded Kiowa/Comanche" [138]), during which

time he was "cast into the eye of... a terrible fever"; second, during his youth his rape of Silent Tongue and his continuing condescension toward the Kiowa natives ("I wasn't descended from proud Irish chieftains in order to have my hide stripped away by heathens!" [180]); and third, as he himself admits in a macabre rhetoric of fiction, the fact that he had "stolen" the sacred and "ancient Sagwa Serum" (141) to share with everyone, thus making them party to the violation of knowledge he committed. Shepard shows through his dramatic irony that in the original Western ethos of discovery, liberty and scientific knowledge at grassroots level, the institution of marriage, and the humanism it was supposed to symbolize, have become a lie. The creative evolutionary progress of life has been inverted and subjected to desecration. Both Eamon and Prescott undermine their own professed humanist goals because of their ruthless and self-righteous colonizing instincts of exploitation of nature's resources, without any respect for those resources. Shepard's perspective here, as in many of his earlier plays, is one of scepticism through psychological tumult, combined with an acknowledgment of the absurd.

In *Silent Tongue*, Shepard's gothic, dystopian speculations about the future are ultimately impressionistic, Beckettian portrayals of elemental dispossession in a selfish and cruel world, the condition of "unaccommodated man", the "poor, bare forked animal" of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (III, iv, 109), on a lonely heath but de-contextualized from the grandeur of tragedy and political events. At the conclusion, the nameless, disoriented 'Lone Man' – visually recalling Lucky from *Waiting for Godot* – heads west to find "Land". He pushes a small wooden wheelbarrow across the prairie, having no clear destination in mind but instead "heading determinedly toward oblivion" (167). He could be a lost pioneer, a disenchanted Natty Bumpo or Huckleberry Finn, dispensing with civilization and heading to the horizon. The much-abused horse, a transporter in a colonized land, has vanished. At the conclusion of the play, far from the materialistic world, the lone man, seemingly disconnected from the plot of the film, encounters the exhausted pair of father and son, Prescott and Talbot (202), who do not reply to his simple query "Where to?" as they pass him by, for they too have no particular destination in mind except the one of elemental human survival.

The trajectory of modern American drama may well have found an original footing in O'Neill's imaginative tradition in the 1920s, with the latter's acute consciousness of "the force behind", which he elaborated as "Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it – Mystery certainly."[22] This implied the pursuit of a 'big subject', primarily an epic concern that was inherited from the American Renaissance, from Cooper and Melville and the pages of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as well as from Carl Sandburg's *Chicago.* It involved the overwhelming energy of the spirit of discovery, cultivation, harvesting across the endless vistas of land, but at the ground level of democracy and freedom. The invocation of freedom at grass-roots level accords Shepard the unprecedented paradigm of the new American Indian female protagonist on the path to liberation beyond her Philomela-like predicament of imposed and absolute silence. In the 1920s, Eugene O'Neill had ushered in a new spirit of confrontation with reality in naturalist and tragic terms, in the wake of the chaos and disruption of the First World

War. Four decades later, Sam Shepard repeated this act, relating the contemporary attributes of drama and cinema into a reconfigured, symbiotic discourse in his repertory that sought to confront the alienating shadows of the Vietnam era with the hopes and convictions that moved beyond the forced silencing of tongues of sons and daughters who had been buried in an untimely manner, denied their cherished homecoming.

[Notes]

1 Edward Munch writing about his original inspiration in the painting "The Scream of Nature", 1893. Quoted by Dr. Noelle Paulson in "Munch, the Scream".

2 In 2012, Munch's "The Scream" sold at a Sotheby's auction in London for $120 million.

3 Suzette Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984), set in a future dystopian American society in which women have been stripped of their civil rights; a group of women linguists creates a new language for women as an act of protest.

4 Poe's protagonist describes death in the first person: "Oh, horror upon horror! – the ice opens suddenly to the right, and to the left, and we are whirling dizzily, in immense concentric circles... the ship is quivering—oh God! – and going down!" (Edgar Allan Poe, *Ms. Found in a Bottle*); usf.edu/lit2go/147/the-works-of-edgar-allan-poe/5379/ms-found-in-a-bottle/.

5 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven" (1845). Shepard seems to be referring directly to Poe's poem.

6 Like Marcellus, the heir apparent/nephew of Emperor Augustus Caesar, found in Virgil's The Aeneid; or the unfair and unnatural denial of burial rites to the dead body of Polyneices, the son of Oedipus, at the behest of King Creon, as punishment for betraying his city of Thebes; and the simultaneous and wrongful 'burial' of Antigone in a cave while she is still alive.

7 I elaborate on this imagery later in the essay.

8 As it was in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*.

9 In "How the World was Made: Cheyenne", *American Indian Mythology*, ed. Alice Marriott & Carol K. Rachlin, Mentor, 1968, p. 43. In Cheyenne mythology, the following is noted regarding the original plan of their creator: "At last Maheo thought to his Power, Why, one animal can take the place of all the others put together, and then he made the buffalo" (43).

10 Arthur Kopit, *Indians* (1968); David Mamet, *American Buffalo* (1975).

11 Played by the popular musician-actor River Phoenix in his last role before he died in the same year.

12 In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the Chorus and later Clytemnestra refer to Agamemnon's past act of sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia on the eve of the Trojan War, on the basis of which memory his wife will justify her own act of revenge.

13 Literally, the 'heroine who does not exist'.

14 It's a coincidence that the Barnum and Bailey Circus was founded in 1871, corresponding with the setting of *Silent Tongue* in 1873.

15 We are reminded of one aspect of Greco-Roman epic poems in which the heroes would have to break their journeys to fulfill the funerary obligations of even the most minor characters like Elpenor before proceeding onward to their destinations.

16 Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) and Giradoux's *Elpenor* (1958) foregrounds the power of classical mythopoesis in modern literature. Shepard invests in a mythology of the American frontier.

17 Joanna Russ elaborates on the 'difference' that SF explores, basically "anything that is about conditions of life or existence different from either what typically is, or what typically was. SF is about the possible-but-not-real". "Reflections on Science Fiction", in *Building Feminist Theory* (New York: Longman, 1987, 243).

18 Reminiscent of the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's SF classic film *The Sacrifice* (1986), which switches from technicolor to monochrome, briefly suggesting a sudden sombre interiority in the protagonist Alexander's dystopic vision of the nuclear holocaust geared to exterminate mankind, including his infant son, "Little Man".

19 Nicolas Poussin's painting *The Abduction of the Sabine Women* (1634) depicts the legitimization of female abduction by the Romans in their anxiety for the perpetuation of their race.

20 Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, was forcibly abducted by Pluto to be his consort in Hades, but he had to compromise with her and accept her staying with him for only half of the year.

21 Reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's Mr. Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*.

22 In O'Neill's letter from Bermuda to Arthur Hobson Quinn, dated April 3, 1925, in *Selected Letters of Eugene O'Neill*, ed. Travis Bogard and Jackson R. Bryer. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988, p. 195.

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[Reading Shylock's Dream: A Pathological Miser or an Anxious Dream Interpreter?]

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[Abstract] *This study addresses the presentation and interpretation of Shylock's dream "of money-bags" in Shakespeare's* The Merchant of Venice *(c. 1596–1598) and George Granville's* The Jew of Venice *(1701). The text argues that, although verbally very similar, the two episodes should be considered within their respective dramaturgical traditions (the Elizabethan and the Restoration), as well as within the different genres into which each play falls. While Granville's rendition of the dream episode seems merely to contribute to the stereotypical image of a greedy Jew, Shakespeare's version draws on the conventional employment of dream prophecies in Renaissance tragedies and contributes not only to the unity of the play's plot, but also adds to the complexity and the tragic overtones of his Shylock.*

[Keywords] *William Shakespeare;* The Merchant of Venice*; George Granville; The Jew of Venice; dramatic dream; Elizabethan drama; Restoration drama*

In a rare case of adding to the original plot rather than reducing it, George Granville's 1701 revival of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, re-titled *The Jew of Venice*, presents Antonio, Shylock, Gratiano and Bassanio gathered at Bassanio's house. At the beginning of this light-hearted banquet scene – which in Shakespeare's play only takes place offstage – the characters merrily exchange toasts: "to immortal Friendship" (2.2.1), "to Love, and to Love's Queen; my charming *Portia*" (2.2.15, italics original), and "to the Sex in general; / To Woman; be she black, or brown, or fair" (2.2.23–24). When it is Shylock's turn to propose a toast, however, the titular Jew of the play shows little appreciation of his companions' spiritual values:

> *Shyl*. 'I have a Mistress, that out-shines 'em all –
> 'Commanding yours – and yours tho' the whole Sex:
> 'O may her Charms increase and multiply;
> 'My Money is my Mistress! Here's to
> 'Interest upon Interest.
> (2.2.27–31, inverted commas, indicating Granville's additions to Shakespeare's text, original)

The speech is very much symptomatic of the broader change that Granville's Shylock had undergone since Shakespeare's version of the story. While Shakespeare, it is generally agreed, depicted Shylock not only as a villain, but also as a "credibly complex human being" (Bulman 22) and "a motivated, tragic figure, a person robbed of everything he valued" (Craft 39), Granville's Jewish character is chiefly reduced to a buffoon, who is "sadistic" (Coleman 18), "obscenely greedy" (Calvi 64), and has "lost the individuality with which Shakespeare had imbued him" (Bulman 22). Craft maintains that, by rendering Shylock as a one-dimensional figure to be scorned and mocked by the audience, Granville "exploited the feelings of amused contempt that were directed at the small number of Jews who resided in London in 1701" (44); in a similar vein, Coleman points out that Granville himself held strong anti-Jewish sentiments for political reasons and probably "saw his Shylock as an Askenazim [sic] and vented his hatred on the group by intensifying Shylock's villainy" (33). This overall image of Granville's Jewish protagonist was certainly strengthened by the fact that, on London stages in the first half of the eighteenth century, Shylock was played by low comedians – a tradition that was only broken by the Drury Lane actor Charles Macklin, who in 1741, for the first time since the Interregnum, presented Shylock as a serious dramatic figure, to the great applause of the audience and praise from the critics (see "Macklin, Charles", 7–10).

The depiction of Shylock as a pathological miser who only thinks about his money is, at first sight, not entirely unsanctioned by Shakespeare's text. In the scene immediately preceding the banquet in Granville's play, the audience witnesses Shylock leaving his house and his daughter, expressing his misgivings over his presence at the dinner:

> *Shyl*. I am bid forth to Supper, *Jessica*,
> There are my Keys; but wherefore should I go!

> I am not bid for Love: They flatter me,
> But then I'll go in Hate: To feed upon
> The Prodigal Christian.
> I am right loath to go, there is some ill
> A brewing towards me: I dreamt last Night
> Of Money-bags.
> (2.1.1–8, italics original)

Unlike Shylock's toast at Bassanio's, his mention of a dream about money comes almost verbatim from Shakespeare, where it precedes Jessica's elopement with her Christian lover Lorenzo (one of Antonio's companions) and her theft of her father's money. The function of the dream in Granville's play is clear: to provide yet another example of Shylock's single-mindedness. In this respect, Shylock's aforementioned later reference to his "Mistress, that out-shines 'em all" might be understood as a kind of key to his earlier dream, its interpretation for the audience, as well as an element that adds to the coherence of the dramatic character. In Shakespeare's play, too, the dream contributes to the unity of Shylock's character; given the Elizabethan tradition of the employment of dramatic dreams; however, its meaning there seems to be entirely different.

What is important to note is that, with the change in the nature of Shylock in Granville, the genre of his plot had shifted as well. In 1709, when Nicholas Rowe wrote the first critical account of Shakespeare's life and work, he pointed out that "tho' we have seen the Play Receiv'd and Acted as a Comedy, and the Part of the *Jew* perform'd by an Excellent Comedian, yet I cannot but think it was design'd Tragically by the Author" (xix–xx, italics original). Indeed, while the ending of *The Merchant of Venice*, with Antonio's life saved and multiple weddings taking place, appears to be precisely as one would expect of a play traditionally classified as a comedy, the audience, still with fresh memories of the trial scene from the previous act, cannot help but feel a certain level of uneasiness. Just a few moments earlier, Shylock was humiliated in front of both the Venetian public and the eyes of the theatregoing audience, stripped of all his property, and ultimately forced to convert to Christianity. With a mere caricature to laugh at, this would hardly have any strong emotional impact on the audience; however, with a complex (albeit villainous) character, who, to quote Bernard Grebanier's exquisite volume *The Truth About Shylock*, is "entitled to respect to a degree, a man with his own dignity and perspective" (93), the same situation bears distinctly tragic overtones.

If we accept the premise that Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* contains visible elements of tragedy,[1] the ominous air of Shylock's dream, as originally presented by Shakespeare, becomes clearly visible. What should be noted when comparing Shakespeare's and Granville's plays is the fact that, unlike the Restoration stage, Elizabethan dramaturgy frequently employed dreams and visions as technical devices to foreshadow the development of the plot and generate dramatic suspense. Examples might include Lady Eleanor's dream in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI, Part II*, Lord Stanley's prophecy in his *King Richard III*, Arden's nocturnal warning in the apocryphal *Arden of Faversham*, or Lady More's dream vision, anticipating her husband's downfall, in the anonymous *Sir*

Thomas More (see Drábek). As Bain Tate Stewart argues, the prophetic dream in Elizabethan drama that warns the dreamer against a danger or disaster of some kind is always "reasonably clear to the audience, though it is rejected by the dreamer or by the person to whom the dream refers" (203). Such a dream, Stewart continues, is related to a recurrent theme of early modern English tragedies, i.e. "the sense of the nobility of man and certainty of his fate"; at the same time, it is also a great illustration of the dramatic irony "of man's inability to recognize his fate even if it is, symbolically, revealed to him" (206).

Could Shylock's dream of money bags be such a symbolic warning, which Elizabethan audiences might have understood whereas the character on the stage was too ready to dismiss it and fail to prevent the imminent tragedy? At the end of the sixteenth century, belief in prophetic dreams and dream symbols was still widespread in England. The Elizabethan popularizer of sciences Thomas Hill, in his treatise *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (1559),[2] called significative dreams (that is, dreams providing some special knowledge about the future) *true* ones, asserting that they "foreshewe al matters imminent" and defend the dreamers "from the instant euiles & perils, or [move them] to the attayninge of good things to come" (sig. [A2]^{v}, contraction expanded). Keith Thomas argues that Elizabethans tended to attach much significance to dream omens; as he notes, dream interpretation "was one of the services performed by wizards and astrologers to their clients and there were sundry magical formulae for procuring divinatory dreams" (153). Furthermore, in the second half of the sixteenth century, England witnessed a steady influx of popular dream interpretation manuals appearing in cheap printings, some of which are only known today by their titles.[3] It might be assumed that these manuals circulated among the common readership of the period, including London theatregoers. On top of these, educated elites also had access to both classical and humanistic Latin works on dreams, imported from the Continent.

Scrutiny of some of these dream treatises reveals that the dream of money was indeed a frequent and established topos, and was universally taken as a bad sign. Artemidorus, whose *Oneirocriticon* (second century AD) had circulated in Europe in several languages from 1518 and was first printed in English in 1606 (reaching its twenty-fourth edition by 1740), observes that "to dreame of money and all kinde of coyne is ill" and writes that such a dream signifies "heavinesse and angry words", especially when the money is in the form of gold or silver and in large quantities, since "one cannot employ great heapes, without payne and care" (99–100). The *Somniale Danielis*, the most popular mediaeval dreambook, whose contents would still have been common knowledge in the early modern period, connects seeing money in one's sleep with a lawsuit (*Peccuniam accipere, litem significat*), heaviness, derision or vituperation (*Si uideris plures denarios aut inuenies, parabolas uel irrisiones uel maledictiones significat*), anger (*Denarios tractare significat iracundium*) (Fischer 102), as well as with hatred (*Denarios invenire: oidum significat*) (Martin 87). The popular ninth-century Byzantine dream interpretation manual known as the *Oneirocriticon Achmetis* argues that the dream of money means quarrels, lawsuits and sorrow (*Si viderit quis se inuenisse minuta aeris, inueniet rixas & lites & aerumnas pro ratione minutorum*) (*Achmetis F. Seirim Oneirocritica*, 237). Finally, Gierolamo Cardano, in the

most concise humanistic work on dreams, *Somniorum Synesiorum Libri IIII* (1562), warns that seeing coins in a dream points to a quarrel or lawsuit (*Nummi aerei rixam aut litem ostendunt*) (57). Surprisingly (or perhaps not so surprisingly), all the omens of the dream manuals exactly fit the situations which Shylock will encounter later on in the play, foretelling both the trial scene and Shylock's ultimate fall.

Equally striking is the similarity between the plot of the play and certain interpretations of the dream of gold, which was considered so close to the dream of money by the authors of dreambooks that some of them even interpreted the two topoi together (after all, a Venetian ducat was made of gold, as Shakespeare himself mentions in 2.6.49–50). Artemidorus, on the one hand, admits that "to dreame to have gold is not bad, because of the matter, as every one wil say, but contrariwise it is good as I have knowne by experience" (61); at the same time, however, he also gives an example of when a dream of gold may be dangerous: "Losse of rings to a man, signifies not onely the losse of them that had charge over his goods, as the wife, the tennant & c. but also loss of his goods, landes and possessions" (62). Despite the fact that Shylock dreams of gold in the form of money, not jewellery, the symbol of a lost ring does occur several times in the play: Shylock loses a ring from his late wife when Jessica steals it from him (3.1), and later on, Portia and Nerissa use rings to test their husbands' fidelity (4.2). The dream of gold in Shylock's situation might, therefore, faithfully tell him about "the losse of them that had charge over his goods" – that is, his servant Lancelot, who leaves his household for Bassanio's (2.2), and his daughter, who elopes with Lorenzo (2.6). It might also warn him against the "loss of his goods, landes and possessions", either presaging Jessica's theft of his money when she escapes or the forfeiture of his property by sentence of the court.

It would, of course, be somewhat naïve and simplistic to claim that Shakespeare had intimate knowledge of all the aforementioned dreambooks or that he directly used them when writing his play, but considering the popularity of dreams and dream interpretation in the environment in which *The Merchant of Venice* was originally written and received, the stability of money as a distinct dream topos throughout the centuries (even across cultures), and the dramaturgical conventions of late sixteenth-century English theatre, it might be assumed that Shakespeare intentionally presented Shylock's dream as a dramatic prophecy, hinting at the future development of the story. By doing this, he not only contributed to the unity of the story (the dream foregrounds the theme of money, common to both the main plot and the sub-plot of the play), but also imbued Shylock with a distinctively tragic quality, as the audiences expect his downfall as revealed to them by means of the dream prophecy.

The same cannot, however, be said about attitudes to dreams in post-Restoration England and Europe in general. Indeed, although references to significative dreams kept appearing in seventeenth-century English commonplace books,[4] it seems that their credit did fade quickly from the end of the sixteenth century. As Mary Baine Campbell records, when Dorothy Osborne (1627–1695), in the early 1650s, mentioned dreams in love letters to her future husband, Sir William Temple (1628–1699), she never forgot to dismiss the topic, considering (in Campbell's words) even private correspondence as "too elevated

a genre to include this junk" (27). In a similar vein, Alice Browne has written perceptively about René Descartes (1596–1650) and the famous series of three dreams which he had on the night of 10–11 November 1619. Whereas the youthful Descartes of 1619, going through personal, intellectual and spiritual crises, yearned for revelatory dreams in order to find a direction for his shapeless future, and having finally experienced them, took pains to set them down in writing and interpret them, all his references to dream phenomena from his later life were, as Browne observes, "thoroughly naturalistic, assimilating them to other deceptions of the senses" (259).

It is reasonable to assume that with this cultural shift – along with the loss of popularity of pre-Interregnum tragedies and their dramatic language in general – neither Granville nor the post-Restoration audience would have read Shylock's dream as a foreboding prophecy. A small but significant hint might be found in Shylock's language when mentioning his dream vision to Jessica. While Shakespeare's Shylock explicitly makes a link between his uneasiness to leave the house and his recent dream experience, claiming that "... I am right loath to go, / There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, / *For* I did dream of money-bags to-night" (2.5.16–18, emphasis mine), Granville's Shylock is less explicit about the dream being the reason for his misgivings: "I am right loath to go, there is some ill / A brewing towards me: I dreamt last Night / Of Money-bags" (2.1.6–8). If anything, the Restoration presentation of the dream fits the image of "*a Stock-jobbing Jew*" – as the "Ghost of *Shakespear*" describes Shylock in the Prologue to *The Jew of Venice* (l. 29, italics original) – who is only waiting for his punishment according not to any supernatural power that, in the Renaissance world-view, governed man's destiny, but to the neoclassical rules of poetic justice that dominated late early modern English drama and theatre.

[Notes]

1 It is noteworthy that, while the title page of the 1701 edition of Granville's *The Jew of Venice* announces the play as "a Comedy", the 1600 quarto of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* designates the play more broadly as "The most excellent Historie".

2 The oldest surviving fragment (the title page) is from 1571, and the oldest surviving complete copy is from 1576. For the publication history of *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, see Johnson 342.

3 Anon., *Here Begynneth the Dreames of Daniell* (1556?, STC [2nd ed.] 6235.5); Thomas Hill, *A Most Briefe and Pleasant Treatise of the Interpretation of Sundrie Dreames* (1567, STC [2nd ed.] 13498.5; 1601, STC [2nd ed.] 13499; 1626, STC [2nd ed.] 13499.5); Thomas Hill, *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (1559, lost; 1563, lost; 1567, lost; 1571, STC [2nd ed.] 13497.5; 1576, STC [2nd ed.] 13498); Anon., *Diall of Dreames, Judicially Poynting to the Successe that Folowes Euery Fancie Appearing in Sleepe* (1590, lost); Artemidorus, *The Judgement, or Exposition of Dreames* (1606, STC [2nd ed.] 795).

4 See Hodgkin 104; for a discussion of an early seventeenth-century commonplace book containing a catalogue of dream prognostics, see Masten.

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[The Fantastic and the Feminine Sublime of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*]

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[Abstract] *The study presents a close analysis of the immersive yet disorienting textual space of Lewis Carroll's* Alice's Adventures in Wonderland *in order to explore its sublime aesthetics. As a piece of portal fantasy, the work enables readers to enter into the transcendent sphere of uncontrolled imagination via the adventures of the prophetic Dream Child, eliciting what David Sandner has defined as both a reformulation and an extension of the Romantic sublime: the fantastic sublime. A more favourable attitude towards the elusiveness of meaning in the text lies in Barbara Claire Freeman's feminine sublime, which prefers the excessive and unrepresentable to exclusion and control.*

[Keywords] Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Lewis Carroll; sublime; Romanticism; Romantic sublime; fantasy; imagination; children's literature; feminine sublime; feminist criticism*

[1] Introduction

The aesthetic category of the sublime has never ceased to attract interdisciplinary academic attention regardless of the innumerable judgements passed on its flawed formulation, which have dismissed the concept as overly vague, outdated (Brady 1), or outright impossible (Forsey 385). Despite this intense scrutiny, one may nevertheless detect a relatively neglected area of research: the sublime moment in children's literature. However, it would be misguided to proceed without mentioning Kamila Vránková's studies on the subject, included in the comprehensive monograph *Metamorphoses of the Sublime: From Ballads and Gothic Novels to Contemporary Anglo-American Children's Literature* (2019). Perhaps the realization that one deals with unthinkable phenomena each day in the current pandemic situation will stimulate new approaches to the sublime incident.

This article aims to serve as a kind of Baedeker to Carroll's Wonderland realm of uncontrolled imagination and semiotic disarray, perceived as a potential locus of sublimity. The study's intention is twofold: firstly, it explores *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) as a portal fantasy (Mendlesohn), providing access to an underground world where a release from the constraints of signification becomes attainable. The feasibility of a glance past the conceivable may stir up the Kantian sublime, when "a discontinuity opens between what can be grasped and what is felt to be meaningful" (Weiskel 21). In this context, a re-examination of David Sandner's fantastic sublime is due. Drawing on Thomas Weiskel's text about the Romantic sublime, Sandner introduces a parallel between fantasy and a spiritual rebirth or conversion, embracing the possibility of a beyond which the imagination endeavours to reach with the assistance of a mediator, the Dream-Child (51). However, Weiskel himself adopts a sceptical stance towards Kantian metaphysics and seeks to "deidealize" the notion of sublimity – an idea which will be developed here in further detail with respect to Carroll's classic (28). Secondly, focusing on the work's status as nonsense literature, it is possible to state that Freeman's feminine sublime is likewise applicable here, and indeed perhaps more fitting. Freeman rejects the hostile treatment of excess and otherness, framed as factors hindering sublimity, and advocates a more accepting, unprejudiced attitude towards these qualities.

The first part of this paper surveys the critical history of the sublime and its most prominent theorists. It is followed by an appraisal of Sandner's fantastic sublime and the professed epitome of the Romantic Child. The exploration of the feminine sublime in the third part is followed by an attempt in the fourth part to juxtapose the two designs, concentrating on the recurrent theme of return.

[2] Theories of the Sublime in the Writings of Longinus, Burke and Kant

To comprehend the essence of the sublime, one might want to start the investigation with the etymology of the word. A careful dissection of the Latin word *sublimis* reveals the

parts "sub" and "limen", denoting "up to" and "top piece of a door" respectively (Shaw 1). Consulting an etymological dictionary, one is likely to discover a link between the various definitions of the concept offered by theorists and the 16th-century usage, referring to style or language which is "lofty, exalted" ("Sublime" 469). However arduous a task it may seem to summarize the numerous approaches to sublimity in one statement, Thomas Weiskel has succeeded in elucidating the phenomenon concisely. He contends that the sublime is, at its most basic level, a step across the threshold of the limiting human condition and hence its transcendence, a rising towards the unreachable (3). What immediately becomes apparent is how definitions resort to similar imagery to depict the effects of the sublime: that of elevation, passing through a door, or pulling aside a curtain, just like Alice does in John Tenniel's much-loved illustration. Although obscurity is ostensibly a common denominator of most definitions, there are also other adjectives frequently associated with sublime objects, such as grandiose, majestic, awe-inspiring, and impressive.

The conveniently entitled *On the Sublime* (Latin *Peri Hypsous*) is regarded as the earliest piece of critical writing dealing with the subject; though of uncertain authorship, the work is traditionally ascribed to Longinus, a Greek rhetorician (Shaw 12). The treatise had remained largely overlooked until Nicolas Boileau's 1674 French translation, which is responsible for the considerable influence the text exerted over subsequent theories of the sublime (Doran 29). Significantly, the idea of achieving a state of propinquity to the divine as a result of a rapturous event originates from Longinus's discussion (Doran 40). *Hypsous* emanates from excellence in eloquence, and it is most forcefully evoked by the exhibition of "genuine passion, which bursts out with a kind of 'fine madness' and divine inspiration, and falls on our ears like the voice of god" (Longinus 14–15). The reader or orator of a sublime piece drifts into an ecstatic condition, surpassing the confines of selfhood by the unification with the writer/speaker and the text itself, experiencing awe and amazement (Doran 44). In depicting the occurrence of sublimity as a moment of "fine madness", accompanied by a mood of exaltation and the temporary loss of self, Longinus echoes Philo's view of ecstasy, "the soul's temporary possession by God" (44).

Examples of sublime literature are presented by Longinus in order to give guidance to those who may choose to cultivate their style of expression; additionally, a collection of rhetorical devices is supplied for the same end. However, out of the five sources of the sublime, namely "grandeur of thought", "power of moving the passions", "figures of speech", "graceful expression", and "dignity and elevation of structure", the first two are accredited to natural ability and not to *techné* (Longinus 12–13). Doran highlights the relation between Longinus's reflection on the poetry of Sappho and the terror at the core of Edmund Burke's sublime (74); a turmoil of contradictory emotions is generated as "she freezes, she burns, she raves, she reasons, and all at the same instant" (Longinus 23).

Edmund Burke's chief concern in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) was not with the prowess of the producers of sublime texts so much as with the profound emotional response of their readers/spectators. As Burke famously writes, the sublime may be elicited by "whatever is fitted in any sort to

excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible" (36). A seemingly conflicting statement follows after merely a few pages: "Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime" (47). Indeed, when the terrible and dangerous scene unfolds at a safe distance from the beholder, the most intense feeling of dread is aroused, yet the individual exults in the prospect of "self-preservation" (47). Such apprehension of the sublime incident's mechanics is particularly pertinent to the analysis of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, since nonsense could be viewed as a "flirtation with the limits of sense-making", where a potential disintegration of sense is both terrifying and delightful (Shires 267). The text is coquettish and blissful, yet the shadow of crisis in meaning and identity crouches over unsuspecting readers. In this case, the pleasure may be attributable to the readers' protected position, the outcome of their withdrawal from the disruption that arises.

What the intellect can gain solely from mental impressions and not empirical knowledge is found truly sublime by Burke (Shaw 51). Only conceptually grasped are entities akin to "God, angels, devils, heaven and hell" (Burke 158). Power exceeding ours is sublime owing to its intimidating nature; confronted with the omnipotence of God, we have no choice but to "rejoice with trembling" (Burke 63). Another vital source of the sublime is obscurity, fuelled by the incogitability of darkness and unearthly creatures like ghosts and goblins (54). Additionally, criticism revolving around the sensation of horror issuing from a discerned supernatural presence and nightmarish atmosphere in Gothic fiction is rooted in Burke's foundational text (Mishra 71).

With Immanuel Kant, a change occurred in the theorization of the sublime on two fronts. Firstly, Kant set out to assess the moral implications of the rapturous experience. Secondly, and most importantly, there appears to be a movement from the evaluation of the sublime as an intrinsic quality of the object to its presentation in the mind (Kant 86). Seeking to accommodate the opposing views of rationalist and empirical philosophers in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), Kant specifies how "one can have no *knowledge* of supersensible (noumenal) entities or ideas (God, freedom, immortality), though we can still *think* them in logically suitable ways" (Doran 185). Initially, the faculty of imagination may be compelled to admit defeat as the world above the senses is unfathomable; nevertheless, these entities undergo a negative presentation in the mind, and thus reason triumphs (Kant 104). The supremacy of the faculty of reason causes the imagination to feel unbound and capable of conceiving of infinitude and shapelessness in reasonable terms. Subsequent to the distress brought about by the insufficiency of imagination, there is comfort in the recognition of our aptitude for comprehension via rationality, resulting in a flux of emotions (78). Kant argues that infinity and other concepts which are "great beyond all comparison even with the faculty of mathematical estimation" could inspire the mathematical sublime (86), while the dynamical sublime may be enkindled by startling natural phenomena, reflecting the "might" of nature (90). The unknowable dreamscape of Wonderland and the apparently unlimited fluctuation of meaning may be appropriate illustrations of encounters with the mathematical sublime, as will be postulated in the following parts of this paper.

[3] The Fantastic Sublime

Positioning nineteenth-century children's literature against the backdrop of the lingering Romantic sentiments in that era, Sandner identifies a fantastic sublime awakened by the creative power of language (59). Most salient is fantasy's relative independence from the sensory world, whereas the Romantic sublime requires Nature as a springboard for elevation to the spiritual realm. Fantasy, on the other hand, relies upon the "daring performance of words" forming imaginary spheres (62). It must be mentioned that the pivotal role of imagination and loss of identity are characteristic of both models. Sandner observes how the Romantic Child, the "mighty prophet" in Wordsworth's words ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality" line 114) or the "dream-child" in Carroll's (4), assumes the role of a visionary guide back to childhood innocence and boundless imagination instead of being subject to indoctrination and moralizing (Sandner 8). He describes the way in which "nineteenth-century children's fantasy literature, presided over by the divine child, moves outward on a visionary journey and return, on a quest toward the transcendent and spiritual" (55). Of course, the problematic aspects of the constructed Romantic Child should not go unremarked.

Carroll's novel is undoubtedly imbued by Romantic qualities, "the triumph of the values of imaginative spontaneity, visionary originality, wonder, and emotional self-expression" ("Romanticism" 872). Sandner himself stresses the marked effect that the rediscovery of folklore and cultural tradition had on writing for children in the period, paying special attention to the prominence of fairy tales (5). The primacy of imagination in the epoch is underpinned by a shift, reformulating the Lockean "tabula rasa" attitude to the mind; rather than assigning a passive role to the mind in the process of experiencing the sensible world, Romantic thought champions active involvement and even contribution (Abrams 57). Fancy or imagination is found to be able to illuminate the existence of a "profounder, spiritual reality transcending nature, time, and space", showing a connection between "the individual mind and the mind of the absolute" or the divine mind (Day 58–59). What a sublime work of art can accomplish, according to Schelling, is to lift the curtain between the sensible world and this spiritual domain, allowing for a narrow aperture through which one can glimpse something. To use a rather apt metaphor, the situation bears a resemblance to the opening of a little door, similarly hidden behind a curtain, to find the most enchanting garden on the other side, which ultimately cannot be reached. Schelling continues to explain how "the land of phantasy toward which we aspire gleams through the world of sense only as through a half-transparent mist, only *as meaning does through words*" (qtd. in Shaw 91, emphasis added).

The central part of Sandner's project is the reappraisal of the Romantic sublime vis-à-vis Victorian children's fiction. Words constructing fantastic worlds supplement the natural setting of mountains, riverbanks, gardens, or forests as catalysts for the sublime, retaining the theme of gesturing towards supernatural spheres available exclusively through them (56–57). Sandner considers Weiskel's acclaimed *Romantic Sublime* (1976) a key text for his theory. For Weiskel, the sublime is "the moment when the relation

between the signifier and signified breaks down and is replaced by an indeterminate relationship" (qtd. in Sandner 51), thus enacting the trials of signification themselves (Weiskel 26). The fanciful creatures residing in Wonderland and their bizarre customs surely have a destabilizing effect on Alice and the reader alike; an additional layer to the analysis suggested by this essay is to explore the correlation between the disintegration of meaning in nonsense literature and Weiskel's framework.

One revealing observation may be that Alice's journey down the rabbit hole coincides with three states of the sublime as proposed by Weiskel. During the first phase, the mind merely contemplates the given object, sustaining a neutral relationship with it (26). Initially, Alice is not perplexed by the sight of the White Rabbit, her first encounter with the inexplicability of Wonderland, hence the undisturbed link between signifier and signified:

> There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!' (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural). (Carroll, *Alice's Adventures* 6)

In the second phase, the sublime is blocked due to the ambiguity and instability of meaning, "excess on the plane of either the signifier or the signified" (Weiskel 26). If the signifiers are in excess, the source of the breakdown reveals itself to be that of the Kantian mathematical sublime, outlining imagination's inability to comprehend the object in its totality and so pushing to its limits. The signifiers "overwhelm the possibility of meaning in a massive underdetermination that melts all oppositions or distinctions into a perceptional stream" (26). On the other hand, signifieds may also be superfluous, in which case an inconceivable plenitude and overdetermination transpire, represented by the abyss (27).

It is crucial to note that both types of disruption characterize nonsense literature; Jean-Jacques Lecercle recognizes a semantic gap in nonsense works, where everything is simultaneously "entirely meaningless and infinitely meaningful" (67–68). Wandering through Wonderland, the circumstances that Alice faces become "curiouser and curiouser", and sense gradually surrenders to fancy and whimsy (Carroll 13). Common sense, however, is never totally abandoned. Being self-reflexive, a "discourse about discoursing", nonsense literature subverts the processes constituting sense-making (Stewart 88–89). Linda M. Shires touches on the roles of parody and the numerous misunderstandings Alice experienced with the inhabitants of Wonderland, as these instances precipitate a chasm between signifier and signified. Furthermore, they are seen as reminders of the arbitrariness of rules and language (273). The seemingly illogical etiquette is observed by the guests of the Mad Tea-Party without raising any objections; additionally, a riddle devoid of a solution is just as unsurprising as cards painting roses in a garden. The creatures' complete unawareness of these ludicrous circumstances produces a humorous effect; during one of these misunderstandings, originating from the confusion of the homophonous pairs tail-tale and not-knot, the Mouse announces that it is Alice who

insults him by talking nonsense (Carroll 25). Because of the excess in signification and fluidity of meaning, nonsense here is a negative force, a barrier to sublimity.

Following Lacan, we could ponder whether this second state endangers one's sense of identity as it is constructed through signification, through language (Shires 273). The multiple occasions on which Alice's size changes in the novel grants her more than enough opportunities to entertain this very idea. She is addressed as Mary Ann (Carroll 27), a serpent (42), or mad (52). She is praised for "a clear way you have of putting things" (73), yet she is also called a simpleton (78). No wonder she has trouble identifying herself upon the Caterpillar's request:

> "Who are *you*?" said the Caterpillar.
> [...] "I...I hardly know, sir, just at present... at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then."
> "What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly. "Explain yourself!"
> "I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, sir" said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see". (Carroll 35)

Alice takes the Caterpillar's words literally and attempts identification instead of elaborating on the meaning of her utterance. Her confusion of selfhood and the spoken words implies the abovementioned interconnectedness of the two. Unable to explain her *self*, Alice's identity is under threat, and her exchange with the Caterpillar would have regressed to the opening question infinitely had she not begun to interrogate the Caterpillar on the same matter.

The vanishing of the self is indispensable for the entrée into the world of fantasy in the second phase of the Romantic and fantastic sublime, because it gives rise to "a revelation of sudden remembrance, the dropping of an amnesia, the return of something lost" (Sandner 52). Self-loss engenders reconnection with the metaphysical world and the regaining of a childlike power of imagination. The yearned recapturing of the golden afternoons of youth from which one is alienated as a result of maturation is a sensation prevalent in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality". Wordsworth is nostalgic about childhood as a time when memories of our immortal souls' pre-existence have not yet wholly faded away. The uncontaminated Romantic Child, credited with visionary powers, is the one "On whom those truths do rest / Which we are toiling all our lives to find" (lines 115–116). Experienced adults keep hold of just fragments of the intuitions that children have in their innocence.

The third phase of Weiskel's sublime brings restoration, a reconciliation of mind and nature, a joyous unity of things (Sandner 57). The mind reconstitutes the relation between signifier and signified with the help of reason. Overcoming the anxiety provoked by opacity is consoling and uplifting, as it underscores the individual's mental competence. The novel closes with Alice's dismissal of the Queen of Hearts and her court as "nothing but a pack of cards" and with her return, perhaps as a consequence, to the familiar surroundings of the frame narrative and self-knowledge (Carroll 100). Alice manages to conceptualize what her imagination was unable to present in the form of a "curious

dream", supporting the Kantian perspective on the superiority of rationality. Having established that Alice upholds her claims for explanation and meaning, it will now be worthwhile to reconsider her status as a Romantic Child.

[4] Alice: The Romantic or the Rational Child?

Conventionally, histories of children's literature are written in a way that emphasizes a shift from didactic pieces, informed by Enlightenment rationality, to the liberation of imagination, corresponding to the Romantic disposition. David Rudd, in contrast, warns readers that "such 'grand narratives' about the area's development are only that" (29). Nonetheless, it is easy to recognize in the Carrollian heroine the child reader of these texts and the recipient of education and initiation into society, complying with their principles. In order to find a fixed point of reference amidst the increasingly preposterous sequences of happenings, Alice turns to the poems that she was made to memorize, which preached at children. The air of condescension permeating the original compositions is substituted by disinterested witticisms in light-hearted parodies, hinting at the fact that the intended message did not reach the young audiences in the first place, and that they remembered merely the "hollow" rhymes. The best-known are the parodies of Isaac Watts' "Against Idleness and Mischief" from his *Divine Songs for Children* (1715) and Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them" (Carroll, "Annotated Alice"). An unmistakably Alice-like position is the clutching of hands behind the back, which appears multiple times in the illustrations of both Alice books, most memorably in the portrayal of Alice's meeting with the Cheshire Cat. Goodacre declares that this was the exact body language expected from children who had to demonstrate their knowledge of the material they acquired via rote-learning (qtd. in Carroll, *Annotated Alice*). The Watts parody "How doth the little crocodile…" is recited in a similar position; now the hands are crossed on her lap, "as if she were saying lessons" (Carroll, *Alice's Adventures* 16).

The option of not ageing ever again in Wonderland is alluring as long as it does not entail the continuation of obligatory lessons forever, even the idea of which Alice understandably despises. Trapped in the White Rabbit's house, Alice indulges in these musings, but she monitors and challenges her own implausible thoughts: "'Oh, you foolish Alice!' she answered herself. 'How can you learn lessons in here? Why, there's hardly room for you, and no room at all for any lesson-books!'" (Carroll 29). Alice's struggles with her restriction by such regulations and societal expectations are clearly visible throughout the story, as Shires also points out (272). Running away to pursue the enigmatic White Rabbit with "burning curiosity" is evidently a transgressive act, yet she consistently applies the guidelines and behavioural patterns she was compelled to learn, even in situations when they are plainly unsuitable. At one point, she rebukes herself just like an adult would scold a child for taking some ideas way too far: "Oh dear, what nonsense I'm talking!" (13). Fundamentally, Alice lacks the purely rebellious spirit she is often given credit for, albeit she genuinely is inquisitive and daring.

The episodes of Alice's adventures fail to reinforce the instructions she received from the adults and their moral tales, the unstimulating books "without pictures or conversation" (6); instead, the codes of behaviour and values these works promote are undermined, and her already gained knowledge proves to be useless. Alice wishes to estimate the distance she fell and her precise location relying on the notions of latitude and longitude, and she is anxious to read the label on the bottle to avoid taking poison. She was taught to do so by the "little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts" because "they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them" (Carroll 11). The work is in a dialogic relationship with these "little histories", which spare no effort to lecture children on how to conduct themselves properly. The narrative voice both undercuts and parodies the authoritative tone employed in these texts; for instance, it informs the reader that Alice's knowledge of geographical coordinates is solely superficial, for she only remembers the words and nothing else of their function. The farcicality of Alice's insistence on remaining courteous and ladylike while falling down is accentuated as the readers are addressed thus: "...fancy curtseying as you're falling through the air! Do you think you could manage it?" (8). Moreover, Alice is worried that she will be judged and labelled an "ignorant little girl" if she puts a query to someone concerning her whereabouts, because she believes she should already know the answer. The figure of the Duchess tirelessly looking for morals in everything and finding only irrelevant and nonsensical ones is a mockery of the similar ambitions that adults writing for children may have (72).

Alice's experimentation with participation in eccentric games and conversations signals her increasing willingness to question categories accepted as indubitable; notwithstanding, she chooses to return to the safeguard of reasoning in order to avoid complete semiotic confusion and madness. She strives to utilize generally approved ways of reasoning under unlikely circumstances when they are in fact not welcome. Adherence to familiar conceptual classifications, and ignorance of the idiosyncratic logic at work in Wonderland, prevents her from playing and enjoying nonsense. Therefore, one could contest Sandner's description of the "sweet, unflappable" Alice as the perfect Romantic child (10), a "redeemer" of corrupted adults, the guardian or bearer of "sacred innocence and imagination of childhood" (6). Her reactions, and her oscillation between merriment emerging from meaninglessness and her demand for rules and reason, more closely mirrors the position of readers who are not quite ready for full assimilation into the nonsensical universe of Carroll.

[5] The Feminine Sublime

If excess is evaluated in less antagonistic terms, reason's necessary domination over the sublime object may be disputed. Barbara Claire Freeman states that theorists of the sublime are inclined to think of excess as the "blocking agent": frightening and, most importantly, feminine (22). She proclaims that the feminine sublime's major preoccupation is with reactions to what lies on the boundaries of language (3). Contrary to the

"masculinist sublime that seeks to master, appropriate, or colonize the other", Freeman calls for a feminine sublime which adopts "a position of respect in response to an incalculable otherness" and involves "receptivity and constant attention to that which makes meaning infinitely open and ungovernable" (11). Here, the feminine has mainly to do with a distrust of fixed structures and binary oppositions; more generally, the feminine sublime deals with what cannot be expressed in the sanctioned systems of thought (9–10). Once one can refrain from envisioning the sublime strictly as a manner of transgression, the boundaries themselves will become refutable (26). Reviewing the principal theoretical texts, Freeman arrives at the conclusion that authors use gendered language in their studies, and that they usually equate disorder and proliferation with the feminine by using metaphors traditionally associated with femininity.

One of the facets of *Peri Hypsous* that Freeman foregrounds in her discussion is Longinus' imprecise and reductive interpretation of Sappho's poetry. Rather than painting love by synthesizing its diverse elements and entrapping its intensity in the poem, Sappho desires to be consumed by these passions; in other words, she craves self-loss and does not try to escape the threatening event (19). A popular symbol for the sublime in critical writing is the paralyzing immensity of the sea or ocean, typically deemed to be female (23). Burke, for example, applauds its effectiveness in conjuring up amazement and disquietude because of its endless expansion on the horizon (53–54). An inquiry into Weiskel's influential schema uncovers that he is far from being innocent of the same charges. Weiskel views Kant through the lens of psychoanalysis and dramatizes the way in which the sublime shift from immeasurable to self-assertion with the aid of reason may be analogous to the transition from the pre-Oedipal to the Oedipal, taking the sublime "safely back home to the father" (25). The subjugation of feminine superfluity is hypothesized to be a requisite for the masculine affirmation of identity and the obtaining of culture.

Unlike the Romantic and fantastic sublime that encourages the overpowering of nonsense, Freeman's feminine sublime permits the concurrence of the otherwise incompatible lack of meaning and overabundance of meaning, thus cherishing the polysemic quality of Carroll's text. Excess and nonsense, then, does not block but rather sparks off the feminine sublime, which challenges the expected unification and fortification of the self in Weiskel's third phase. The appreciation of the infinitely playful land of wonders leads to the dissolution of self without any ensuing restoration. The evaporation of identity is seen in this case as a positive eventuality, since it fuses the self and the "other", the excessive. In contrast to the remoteness from the terrible entity as put forward by Burke, the feminine sublime establishes a rapport between the subject and the object. What may inhibit the creation of this attachment is identical to what frustrates an engagement with the absurdity of Wonderland: the devotedness to a rigid system of rules and definite meanings, which children come to regard as the norm, having grown up on moral and cautionary tales.

Alice is, quite literally, nearly drowned by her emotions, something a "great girl" like her is normally not allowed to do (Carroll 13). Although she reproaches herself again, this time she remains unaffected by the internalized adult voice and loses control over her

sentiments. This outpouring or, rather, "overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth, "Preface" 508) facilitates her immersion in the nonsense fantasy world. At first, Alice is convinced that the situation in which she finds herself is nothing but a punishment for her oversensitivity, which she rightly deserves – though in fact, it is her flood of tears that creates the first opportunity for her to interact with the inhabitants of Wonderland. Boundaries are blurred between the self and other as Alice swims in her own tears next to the various animals. Alice's reaction to a fictitious plea coming from above highlights the freeing fluidity of identity that is discernible underground: "Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up; if not, I'll stay down here till I'm somebody else" (Carroll 16).

Getting out of the pool, Alice realizes how naturally she can communicate with the birds and other beasts, "as if she had known them all her life" (20). The Caucus Race seals her bond with the Wonderland residents, in the course of which she decides to play along even though she can appreciate the absurdity of a competition in which everybody wins prizes (22). Whilst Alice's hesitation is maintained until the end of her stay in Wonderland, there are occasions when the two contrasting mindsets, namely the support of reason on grounds of averting the fearful chaos and the readiness to join in the nonsense games, can coexist.

[6] A Common Motif: The Promise of Return

Noteworthy is the shared element of return that both the fantastic and the feminine sublime may bring forth. Embarking on a comparison of the distinct outlooks on the ravishing confrontation with otherness and meaning in profusion, one can ascertain key differences between the two paradigms. Given that the fantastic sublime culminates in a reinstatement of connections, the liberated self's homecoming to the creative power of childhood can only be temporary. It is solely a flash of inspiration, which dies out as reality and logical thought plunges the individual back to the real world. The feminine sublime, by contrast, evades the recovery of such hierarchies, and in doing so enables a sort of return that may motivate a reassessment of how the structures of language and understanding operate. An investigation of the points at issue may also benefit from a brief examination of the status of the prospective readers.

From the breaking apart of a coherent self-image springs an ephemeral reconquering of childhood fancy, as has been discussed above. This stage of the sublime necessitates the unadulterated insight of the child, who is promoted to the rank of the mentor (Sandner 8). After little Alice departs from the riverbank to have tea in a presumably less hectic fashion than she did back in Wonderland, her older sister is slowly captivated by the same "wonderful dream" (Carroll 100). She is overjoyed by this state of sitting "with closed eyes" as she "half believed herself in Wonderland, though she knew she had but to open them again, and all would change to dull reality" (102). Parts of her daydream would fade into the components of the rural, Romantic landscape around her, evoking even Wordsworth's "happy shepherd-boy" ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," line 35):

> …the rattling of teacups would change to tinkling sheep-bells, and the Queen's shrill cries to the voice of the shepherd boy…and the sneeze of the baby, the shriek of the Gryphon, and all other queer noises, would change (she knew) to the confused clamour of the busy farm-yard. (Carroll, *Alice's Adventures* 102)

The sister believes that Alice will retain "the simple and loving heart of her childhood" even as a grown-up; through retelling her adventures to the next generations, she will recall "her own child-life, and the happy summer days" (102).

The anticipated sunny days are clouded by the somewhat controversial depiction of Alice as a Romantic or Dream-Child. Inasmuch as she persists in conforming to conventional modes of thinking, she cannot display the type of organic imagination celebrated by Romanticism. In addition, the inherent problems with constructing childhood from a hierarchically superior position as a time when innate gifts are possessed due to inexperience are unassailable. The justification behind Jacqueline Rose's attestation to the impossibility of children's literature stems from a trope of childhood that adults fabricate "for their own purposes (desires, in fact), as a site of plenitude to conceal the fractures that trouble us all: concerns over a lack of coherent subjectivity, over the instabilities of language and, ultimately, existence itself" (Rudd 30).

The most befitting reader of fantastic literature has been identified as one who is capable of "bringing longing and a shaping spirit of imagination" to the text (Sandner 57). To refer back to a previously employed analogy, only those who are prepared to take the passage and unlock the door that opens into the garden can locate the sublime in the magical tale. Anna Kérchy's ideal reader possesses kindred qualities; she insists that "intellectual pleasure is not all-prevailing, and is likely to be complemented, even predominated by a sheer pleasure of sounds, vocality, a transverbal musicality, or a joy of imagination soaring into unknowns and impossibles" ("Ambiguous Alice" 116). The indefiniteness of meaning is conducive to a multitude of mimetic readings, many of which revolve around the sociohistorical and biographical dimensions of the novel. These interpretations, dependent on reasonable claims about the era of creation and the author, are judged to be inferior to a playful engagement with the text, centred on rhythm and associations. In Kérchy's proposition there may lie a preference for the feminine sublime, indicating a tendency to terminate the perpetual fixation on decoding the narrative and instead simply to relish it. The research carried out by *Contrariwise* scholars, and especially the seminal study *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: The Myth and Reality of Lewis Carroll* (2015) by Karoline Leach, are testimonies to the fact that Dodgson's character may elude biographers just as easily as senses and Snarks manage to escape from being caught throughout his oeuvre.

Kérchy posits that an openness to unbridled play and the mutable practices of signification could instigate an abandonment of the "disciplined, referential/denotative, phallogocentric symbolization fixated on making sense" ("Alice's Eroticized Adventures" 62). Inferred from her premise could be the feminine sublime's potentiality to foster a return to the pre-Symbolic linguistic playfulness of rhymes and unrestrained associations. The welcome release from the Lacanian Symbolic institution of language

achieved by virtue of nonsense empowers the individual to become conscious of the system's arbitrary nature.

Situated at the intersection of deconstructionism and feminist reader-response criticism is the issue of how women readers tackle male-written and male-centred texts. Drawing on the studies of numerous feminist researchers, Jonathan Culler recapitulates the fashion in which women readers are socialized into reading as men: identifying with a male point of view and favouring rationality (58). According to Culler, reading as a woman would incorporate an active criticism of phallogocentrism, "an interest in patriarchal authority, unity of meaning, and certainty of origin" (61). In western epistemologies where the point of reference is unequivocally male, women occupy the subordinate part of hierarchies such as "self/other, presence/absence, law/chaos" (Jones 81). The patriarchal privileging of *logos* or presence makes the absence or disturbance of meaning alarming. Since Carroll's nonsense provides "linguistic/narrative zones of comfort and pleasure beyond the paranoid, restrictive, literal-minded patriarchal discourse" (Kérchy, "Alice's Eroticized Adventures" 70), the novel would harmonize with a feminine mode of reading.

Wonderland is also perceived as a place of "Julia Kristeva's blissful-bodily semiotic register that precedes symbolic language-acquisition and socializing Oedipalization's repressions" (Kérchy 62). The aftermath of Lacan's mirror-stage, the split between self and other, is the admission into the Symbolic order and hence to language and social conventions. The Symbolic is presided over by the Name-of-the-Father, ergo "the patronym, patriarchal law, patrilineal identity, language as our own inscription into patriarchy (qtd. in Furman 71). On the other hand, the pre–Symbolic/semiotic belongs to the feminine, the mother. Reading nonsense poetry and Alice's absurd adventures could yield a recuperation of this setting: "Instinctual sounds and rhythms which resist meaning stand in opposition to the symbolic order, and they unsettle and subvert the expected normative forms of discourse codified by our linguistic practices" (Furman 73). Yet the Symbolic could never be fully escaped; just as sense is essential for making nonsense, rules of grammar, syntax, and phonetics form the basis of the semantic game (Lecercle 34). Kristeva's notion of the semiotic, resting on "infants' pre–oedipal fusion with their mothers, from the polymorphous bodily pleasures and the rhythmic play of mother–infant communication", competes with the Symbolic but can only give way to a partial flight from its oppressive order (Jones 86). The reciprocity between the two arrangements calls to mind the feminine sublime's propensity to attune discordant properties.

[7] Conclusion

The present study has sought to pinpoint the sublime aspects of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and examine its subversive undertones. After an overview of the relevant critical literature, the applicability and the limitations of Sandner's fantastic sublime were discussed with respect to Carroll's classic work. The centrality of the Romantic/Dream-Child to the Romantic and fantastic sublime was scrutinized, and the ills of this

constructed position were identified. By utilizing Thomas Weiskel's breakdown of the sublime occurrence, an effort was made to underline how nonsense literary works' challenge to and even deconstruction of the processes of signification could evoke a sense of menace and wonder.

While the abundance and ambiguity of meaning impede the "masculine" sublime, Barbara Claire Freeman's feminine sublime is more congruous with these intrinsic qualities of nonsense literature. Arguably, Carroll's book offers itself for analysis more readily via Freeman's framework, as the feminine sublime advocates the enhancement rather than the suppression of excess, the flux of signification and selfhood. The sublime dwells in the fantastic and nonsensical province of Wonderland, where the surplus of signifiers and signifieds urges the softening of borders and the marvelling of extremities. Stripped of all expendable protocols, language and identities are destabilized. Sandner's fantastic sublime offers interim freedom from the arrest of the imagination that is typical of adulthood, whereas Freeman's formative feminine sublime enables one to look at otherness in a different light and never to leave Wonderland behind entirely.

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[“*The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it*”: The Concept of *Economy* (*of Nature*) in Thoreau’s *Walden or Life in the Woods*]

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[Abstract] *The present article investigates the notion of economy (of nature) in Thoreau’s* Walden or Life in the Woods *(1854); it introduces the context of coining the concept of economy of nature, presents the challenges of exploring nature in Romantic thought, and finally deals with Thoreau’s concept of “economy” as discussed in the first chapter of his opus magnum. Despite its historical grounding in the Romantic tradition and in the tradition of American Transcendentalism, Thoreau’s idea of “economy” represents a remarkably fresh version of a sustainable lifestyle, combining scientific observation with profound philosophical and poetic insights.*

[Keywords] *Henry David Thoreau; ecocriticism; 19th century American prose; Transcendentalism; economy of nature; ecological consciousness*

[1] Introduction

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) is a pivotal player in 19th-century American writing and thought; however, he is also one of the key figures who helped define our modern ecological consciousness. His early notes and writings reflect the influence of the crucial "naturalists" of the previous century, the Englishman **Gilbert White** (1720–1793) and the Swedish biologist **Carl Linnaeus** (1707–1778), with their focus on the *economy of nature*, which sought to explain both the complexity of different life forms as well as their fundamental inter-relatedness. Nevertheless, Thoreau's genius develops the idea further and combines "economy of nature" with a complex philosophical reflection on human life which respects the multi-layered and delicate structure of being itself.

The present article explores the breadth and depth of the concept of "economy" in Thoreau's "opus magnum" *Walden or Life in the Woods* (1854): it looks at the historical context of late 18th-century "ecological" thought, thematizes the Romantic tradition of the "economy of nature" and discusses the specifics of the Thoreauvian concept. The paper seeks to show Thoreau's remarkably fresh version of a sustainable lifestyle, combining scientific observation with profound poetic insights. In that sense, Thoreau's *Walden* presents a vital challenge to our contemporary ecological consciousness.

[2] Between Enchantment and Usefulness: Key Models of "Economy of Nature" Prior to Thoreau

Thoreau is often presented as a "naturalist" (Worster 75), however, the term itself had undergone a remarkable development by the time it came to prominence in the late 1840s. The two towering figures of "ecological" thought in the 18th century, the English curate **Gilbert White** (1720–1793) and the Swedish biologist **Carl Linnaeus** (1707–1778), studied not just the "realities and facts" of natural life, but especially the organic unity and the complex web of relations that bind various organisms together.

Gilbert White's genius found its ultimate expression in his *Natural History of Selborne* (first published in 1789), a work that may be characterized as a collection of letters and several occasional poems "on the wildlife, seasons, and antiquities of White's parish", written in a style "that reminds one of Izaak Walton or Horace Walpole" (Worster 5). White combines a sense of enchantment with the picturesque place where he lives, presenting a series of "scientific" observations dealing with animal behaviour (especially the behaviour of birds), the relation between the different species and the environment, and the description of the mutually beneficial relations amongst the different species. It is a charming report on the joys of scientific discovery as well as a poetic exploration of the beauties of rural life, characterized by direct contact between human and natural elements.

The concept of the "economy" of nature in White's *Natural History of Selborne* is primarily derived from the theological meaning of "economy", i.e. from the *telos* of nature, which finds its climax in an act of adoration of the work of the Creator:

> Amusive birds!—say where your hid retreat
> When the frost rages and the tempests beat;
> Whence your return, by such nice instinct led,
> When spring, soft season, lifts her bloomy head?
> Such baffled searches mock man's prying pride,
> The God of Nature is your secret guide! (White)

Nevertheless, there is also a different focus that can be discerned in White's observations, namely a clear "economic" interest in the modern sense of the word. For White, the scientific study of biological facts is not a goal in itself; it has to be driven by a different sense of "usefulness". Indeed, such endeavours find their ultimate goal in serving mankind to make the maximum possible profit from their co-existence with the surrounding environment. Thus, in one of the letters "To The Honourable Daines Barrington", dated 2 June 1778, he writes about the need to study vegetation because of the potential economic effect it could have in the future:

> Vegetation is highly worthy of our attention; and in itself is of the utmost consequence to mankind, and productive of many of the greatest comforts and elegancies of life. To plants we owe timber, bread, beer, honey, wine, oil, linen, cotton, etc., what not only strengthens our hearts, and exhilarates our spirits, but what secures from inclemencies of weather and adorns our persons. [...] The productions of vegetation have had a vast influence on the commerce of nations, and have been the great promoters of navigation, as may be seen in the articles of sugar, tea, tobacco, opium, ginseng, betel, paper, etc. As every climate has its peculiar produce, our natural wants bring on a mutual intercourse; so that by means of trade each distant part is supplied with the growth of every latitude. But, without the knowledge of plants and their culture, we must have been content with our hips and haws, without enjoying the delicate fruits of India and the salutiferous drugs of Peru. (White)

Thus, the "economic" nature of Creation cannot be simply exhausted by a theological statement on the goodness of all being (cf. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Gen, 1:31); it is also an invitation to understand its "economic" significance and importance. For White, man is thus not just a vital, sentient part of the "organism of life", but a rational creature called to make the most of the potential advantages of such observations. His concept of "usefulness" is not just the key aspect of all meaningful science or scientific observation: it clearly points to the "economic" and utilitarian bias of much Enlightenment moral philosophy:[1]

> Instead of examining the minute distinctions of every various species of each obscure genus, the botanist should endeavour to make himself acquainted with those that are

> useful. You shall see a man readily ascertain every herb of the field, yet hardly know wheat from barley, or at least one sort of wheat or barley from another. (White)

Overall, White's work manifests a duality typical of much 18th-century "naturalism", i.e. the double meaning of pastoralism, referring both to the early pagan "vitalism" (relating the "magic" and "enchantment" of nature to the rites of the various pagan mystery cults[2]) and the Christian concept of the Good Shepherd who guards the flock against the wolves (Matthew 18:12–14 or Luke 15:3–7).[3] In the Christian concept, nature bears the divine image; however, this image is "inanimate", unlike the "animate" soul of humans called to communion with a personal God.[4] The "economic" aspect thus understands nature as being "*for* humans", or being shepherded by human beings so that it can yield as much profit as possible.

Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) developed the idea of the economy of nature more in the direction of traditional taxonomy, i.e. in classifying the different species and relating them to one another. The evolution of his monumental twelve-volume opus magnum *Systema Naturae* (1735–1768), in which Linnaeus puts forth his acclaimed taxonomic system of classifying various species, was accompanied by numerous other works which sought to give a philosophical gravity to his undertaking. Interestingly, one of these works bears the title *Oeconomy of Nature* (the original Latin title was *Specimen academicum de Oeconomia Naturae*). Essentially, it is a work of natural theology; however, it focuses more on the interdependence of the various species, the "inner" logic of nature as displayed in the reconciliation and peace that God intended in creating nature the way He did. Man's place in the scheme follows the theological concept of *imago Dei*: man emulates the role of the Creator in observing, understanding, and utilizing nature's produce. "Economy of nature" thus pre-supposes making sense of the inner workings of nature, which allows humans to enjoy the fruits prepared for them by the Creator Himself. Indeed, "by the oeconomy of nature we understand the all-wise disposition of the Creator in relation to natural thing, by which they are fitted to produce general ends, and reciprocal uses" (cf. Worster 37–38).[5]

In that sense, nature's inner logic is decipherable only as long as we take into account its remarkably inscribed and prescribed *economy*: the law of being is thus the law of the "house" of being (cf. the etymological meaning of the Greek *οἶκος*). For Linnaeus, everything that exists, including the very process of nature, is *economic*, marked by its end "product", i.e. a human being who observes, classifies, and makes use of it:

> All these treasures of nature, so artfully contrived, so wonderfully propagated, so providentially supported throughout her three kingdoms, seem intended by the Creator for the sake of man. Every thing may be subservient to his use; if not immediately, yet mediately, not so to that of other animals. By the help of reason man tames the fiercest animals, pursues and catches the swiftest, nay he is able to reach even those, which lye hidden in the bottom of the sea. (Cf. Worster 36)

The emergence of Romantic ecology marks the end of the balanced, rational "economy" of nature as typified in the works of both White and Linnaeus. Nature ceases to be just

a reflection of the rational divine mind, but is rather a mysterious, wild and "untamed" organism which seems to paint a different picture of what is "natural" for both man and "nature" itself. However, the discontinuity of the paradigm by no means excludes important overlaps and inspirations. In fact, the Thoreauvian genius represents an autonomous synthesis of extensive learning based on earlier and contemporary authors (especially Alexander von Humboldt[6] and Charles Darwin) and Thoreau's own unique insights into the creative and thus truly *poetic* force of Nature.

[3] *Nature is as well adapted to our weakness as to our strength*: Living in Nature as Re--Creation

Thoreau's "naturalism" grew out of classical and 18th-century sources (especially the so-called arcadian tradition, with its symbiosis of the natural and human); however, his vision of nature and life "in accordance with nature" is new and original, especially when compared with similar "projects" in the early Romantic period. His decision to leave the company of men and build a cabin near the Walden Pond finds its obvious counterpart in Wordsworth's ideal *topos* of the Lake District. However, Walden Pond and the Lake District represent two different visions of the cohabitation of the natural and human elements: Thoreau looks for an "untamed", wild nature, where the sheer "civilized" human existence seems to be in desperate need of fundamental justification:

> The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage at least, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt, as it were, in a tent in this world, and was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain tops. But lo! men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a housekeeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven. We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of *agri*-culture. We have built for this world a family mansion, and for the next a family tomb. The best works of art are the expression of man's struggle to free himself from this condition, but the effect of our art is merely to make this low state comfortable and that higher state to be forgotten. (Thoreau, *Walden* 989)

For Thoreau, civilization ruins the sense of the original state of humanity, whose *nomos* is to be taken from studying nature and from the various "natural" processes observable within it. Distancing oneself from civilization creates a space of freedom which allows one to reflect on the realities of the society of the day: in fact, the core arrogance of the contemporary human race is to impose its own *nomos* on things that seem to have had their own, truly *economic* and *economical* "laws". In other words, they are profoundly interrelated with the rest of the living framework from which they have been taken; this

makes it clear that what seems necessary for most people manifests itself in nature as merely an unnecessary luxury. The very fact that the initial chapter of Walden is called "Economy" thus seems to suggest that its mission is to argumentatively extend the sense of *oikos* to the inanimate world, whose "usefulness" is not just driven by theological economy[7] but instead points to the profound consciousness of the universal "gift of Life":

> Our manners have been corrupted by communication with the saints. Our hymn-books resound with a melodious cursing of God and enduring him forever. One would say that even the prophets and redeemers had rather consoled the fears than confirmed the hopes of man. There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God. All health and success does me good, however far off and withdrawn it may appear; all disease and failure helps to make me sad and does me evil, however much sympathy it may have with me or I with it. If, then, we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our own brows, and take up a little life into our pores. Do not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavor to become one of the worthies of the world. (Thoreau, *Walden* 1011)

For Thoreau, "Nature" is not just a place to observe the universally valid rules of life; it is a self-sufficient and self-perpetuating system, "well adapted to our weakness as to our strength" (Thoreau, *Walden* 974). In an attempt to explain why he set out on such an adventurous experiment, he simply writes that he was too involved and ultimately too dependent on cultural forms: "I determined to go into business at once, and not wait to acquire the usual capital, using such slender means as I had already got. My purpose in going to Walden Pond was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles; to be hindered from accomplishing which for want of a little common sense, a little enterprise and business talent, appeared not so sad as foolish" (Thoreau, *Walden* 979). In fact, this economic intention is contextualized by numerous references to the philosophical arguments of the past, but also to the paradoxical discovery Thoreau relates to the Indian ways of arranging the necessities of their lives: the more profound attachment they have to the environment (i.e. making their abodes from materials available around them), the deeper is their sense of distance from the solely material substances of life. Indian frugality communicates the simple truth of the passing value of an individual human life:

> Consider first how slight a shelter is absolutely necessary. I have seen Penobscot Indians, in this town, living in tents of thin cotton cloth, while the snow was nearly a foot deep around them, and I thought that they would be glad to have it deeper to keep out the wind. […] Gookin, who was superintendent of the Indians subject to the Massachusetts Colony, writing in 1674, says, "The best of their houses are covered very neatly, tight and warm, with barks of trees, slipped from their bodies at those seasons when the sap is up, and made into great flakes, with pressure of weighty timber, when they are green… The meaner sort are covered with mats which they make of a kind of bulrush, and are also indifferently tight and warm, but not so good as the former… […]" He

> adds, that they were commonly carpeted and lined within with well-wrought embroidered mats, and were furnished with various utensils. The Indians had advanced so far as to regulate the effect of the wind by a mat suspended over the hole in the roof and moved by a string. Such a lodge was in the first instance constructed in a day or two at most, and taken down and put up in a few hours; and every family owned one, or its apartment in one. (Thoreau, *Walden* 984)

In fact, Thoreau's aspiration is nothing short of a truly philosophical ambition: his retreat to the Walden Pond can be understood as a withdrawal into the depth of uncertainty in order to restore and recreate a new sense of *economy*: in other words, once he withdraws from the comfortable yet challenging world of day-to-day worries, he is able to experience the pure and simple enjoyment of life. He thus pleads for an authentic and full-blooded human life *in* nature: "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live" (Thoreau, *Walden* 976).

[4] *What Are the Necessities of Life?*: Pleading for an Authentic and Full-Blooded Human Life in Nature

As we have seen, the core element of Thoreau's economic thought in relation to nature is a moral indignation at the arrogance of humanity living their lives besides the self--perpetuating and infinitely greater world of nature (or the entire universe). The initial chapter of his *Walden* is also a very powerful polemic with the so-called "necessities of life" in the "civilized" world. In his typically practical manner, Thoreau lists all the tools, commodities and materials he used to build his thoroughly unconventional existence near the Walden Pond. He identifies the most important needs one has: "Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel" (Thoreau, *Walden* 975), however, the satisfaction of these needs differs. In fact, our ability to rethink the indispensable necessities of life gives a sense of freshness, a new start and a new re-creation.

Thoreau's discussion of the problem of clothing concentrates on the problem of focus in one's life: clothing in modern civilization represents a fleeting "fashion" and a silly effort to add an extra dimension to one's personality which is not just mendacious, but also redundant and an obstacle to one's integral development:

> As for Clothing, to come at once to the practical part of the question, perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty, and a regard for the opinions of men, in procuring it, than by a true utility. Let him who has work to do recollect that the object of clothing is, first, to retain the vital heat, and secondly, in this state of society, to cover nakedness, and he may judge how much of any necessary or important work may be accomplished without adding to his wardrobe. Kings and queens who wear a suit but once, though made by some tailor or dressmaker to their majesties, cannot know the comfort of wearing a suit that fits. They are no better than wooden horses to hang the clean clothes on.

> Every day our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer's character, until we hesitate to lay them aside, without such delay and medical appliances and some such solemnity even as our bodies. No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes; yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience. (Thoreau, *Walden* 980)

The same essentially applies also to a sound "Shelter": one does not need a great house to live a decent and dignified human life. One needs a "shelter", but a simple one suffices: "However, if one designs to construct a dwelling house, it behooves him to exercise a little Yankee shrewdness, lest after all he find himself in a workhouse, a labyrinth without a clue, a museum, an almshouse, a prison, or a splendid mausoleum instead." (Thoreau, *Walden* 984). The unnatural and unnecessary need to possess too much, in fact, is one of the reasons why so many people fail to secure "a shelter": paradoxically, the despised Indian "savages" teach us a lesson of how to be sheltered from the vagaries of weather and yet maintain a sense of "economic" freedom. The Indians recognize their fundamental dependency on nature, but they do not owe anybody anything, because Nature has taught them to secure the necessities of life: "But how happens it that he who is said to enjoy these things is so commonly a poor civilized man, while the savage, who has them not, is rich as a savage?" (Thoreau, *Walden* 985). This implicitly undermines the evaluative element present in the very word "savage": Thoreau thus seems to suggest that "savagery" is in fact the act of inability to calculate the cost in claiming more than what befits a decent person.

The "economic" experience Thoreau undertook in building his existence with minimum initial "pecuniary" input leads to numerous discoveries about the real necessities of life. After all, "the student who wishes for a shelter can obtain one for a lifetime at an expense not greater than the rent which he now pays annually" (Thoreau, *Walden* 995). The experience of luxury mars our sense of reality: "Kings and queens who wear a suit but once, though made by some tailor or dressmaker to their majesties, cannot know the comfort of wearing a suit that fits" (Thoreau, *Walden* 980). Indeed, the monetary value of paid tuition is not worth the effort: "Tuition, for instance, is an important item in the term bill, while for the far more valuable education which he gets by associating with the most cultivated of his contemporaries no charge is made" (Thoreau, *Walden* 996). And the economical reason for artificial transport, i.e. shortening the time spent on the road, proves economically inefficient once the overall cost is taken into account:

> One says to me, "I wonder that you do not lay up money; you love to travel; you might take the cars and go to Fitchburg to-day and see the country." But I am wiser than that. I have learned that the swiftest traveller is he that goes afoot. I say to my friend, Suppose we try who will get there first. The distance is thirty miles; the fare ninety cents. That is almost a day's wages. I remember when wages were sixty cents a day for laborers on this very road. Well, I start now on foot, and get there before night; I have travelled at that rate by the week together. You will in the meanwhile have earned your fare, and arrive there some time to-morrow, or possibly this evening, if you are lucky

> enough to get a job in season. Instead of going to Fitchburg, you will be working here the greater part of the day. And so, if the railroad reached round the world, I think that I should keep ahead of you; and as for seeing the country and getting experience of that kind, I should have to cut your acquaintance altogether. (Thoreau, *Walden* 997)

The core element in the "economy" of Thoreau's sojourn in "nature" is a sense of life whose cost is impossible to estimate or to calculate; the "give-and-take" fundament of any sound economy seems to disregard the cost and the vulnerability of life itself: "the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it" (Thoreau, *Walden* 985). This life obviously needs to respect the value of life beyond the confines of merely human endeavours: while the economic logic (i.e. the give-and-take principle) stands, the standard economy of Thoreau's America does not. The reform of the "global" economic consciousness is to do with the simplicity of *being one*, both in a qualitative as well as a quantitative sense: i.e. being at-one-with Nature, but also *just* one of the many forms of life the universe has to offer.

[5] Economy of the Universe: Being-at-One with the Universe in the Transcendentalist Context

Thoreau's economy and ethic of simplicity finds its climax in the poetic vision of binding the fragmented and commodified realities of life. In one of his earlier works, Thoreau makes an ironic reference to A. Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733): "the proper study of mankind is man." The universe is greater than the essentially petty "philanthropic" interest he attacks in *Walden*: "The poet says the proper study of mankind is man. I say, study to forget all that; take wider views of the universe. […] The universe is larger than enough for man's abode" (Thoreau, *The Writings of Thoreau* 381). This universalist "economy" is not just implicit at the beginning of his *Walden.* In one of the numerous remarks in his journals, Thoreau makes an immediate reference to the Linnaean concept of the "economy of nature" and extends it into the "economy of the universe". This holistic vision was based on the Transcendentalist tradition of viewing the universe as being permeated by "Oversoul":

> Using intuition, rather than reason and science, humans could transcend physical appearances and perceive "the currents of the Universal Being" binding the world together. Thoreau expressed the resulting perception: "The earth I tread on is not a dead, inert mass; it is a body, has a spirit, is organic and fluid to the influence of its spirit. (Nash 36–37)

This holistic view is a *locus communis* in Transcendentalist philosophy. However, in some respects, it may be argued that there are some differences between Thoreau and his philosophical teacher and friend **R. W. Emerson** (1803–1882) as regards the fundamental "usefulness" of Nature and its readiness to accept human dominance. Emerson's view in

Nature (1836) seems to follow the line of the Christian idea of understanding the role of nature as being subservient to the need of the "self-conscious" human species: "Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve. It receives the dominion of man as meekly as the ass on which the Saviour rode. It offers all its kingdoms to man as the raw material which he may mould into what is useful. Man is never weary of working it up" (Emerson 195). Thoreau, however, rejects the implication based on this view, i.e. the Baconian notion of progress (cf. Worster 106). Thoreau the moralist wishes a thorough immersion in the practical spirituality of everyday life, in that he proves his deep-rootedness in the moral landscape of American Puritanism of the seventeenth century. After all, his frugality "brought his private economy close to nature's economy" (Worster 105): he integrates the human element into the "economy" of the universe that strives to be one with itself. Being responsible is thus essentially identical with being *economic(al)*: being fully conscious of one's moral responsibility is to wish not just the salvation of individual soul(s), but the communion with the entire "Oversoul" radiating the wonderful richness of "Life" that is never spent.

[6] Conclusion

The concept of "economy of nature" represents an important grounding for the emergence of "ecology" in the 1860s. In the work of Henry David Thoreau, the concept of "economy" includes both the consciousness of the profound dependency of humanity on the resources of the earth (or more concretely, the place where one resides) and the arrogance with which humanity perverts the natural order or imposes its own traditions on the wonderful variety of nature and the universe.

For Thoreau, the idea of economy combines the notion of being (just) a part of a wider whole as well as being economic*al* in dealing with resources. Being at one with nature reinforces a sense of belonging as well as a profound consciousness of the giftedness of one's own existence, whose deepest expression can be found in poetic articulation.

This sense of responsibility, passion for minute observation of natural processes and gift for articulating the poetic "economy of nature (or the universe)" makes the reading of *Walden* an urgent must-read for a 21st-century audience.

[Notes]

1 Obviously, "economics" in the 18th century was seen as a branch of moral philosophy, since it fundamentally deals with the problem of good and evil, or with the best possible distribution of various goods in society. The rise of utilitarianism around the middle of the 18th century (cf. Francis Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* (published posthumously in 1755, and especially the work of Jeremy Bentham, cf. An Introduction to the *Principles of Morals and Legislation*) had a major impact on forming the basis of modern economic thought (cf. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, 1776). Further contexts can be explored e.g. in A. Roncaglia's *Brief History of Economic Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 39–90.

2 Cf. Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*. Engl. transl. by W. R. Trask. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978., pp. 264–291.

3 The concept is further discussed in Worster (pp. 26ff).

4 Lynn White, Jr. sees the foundational element of our ecological crisis in Christianity's indifference to inanimate objects: "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects." White, Lynn Jr. *Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996, p. 10.

5 Worster points out that the system itself is basically static and mechanistic: "Essentially, "The Oeconomy of Nature" presents a thoroughly static portrait of the geo-biological interactions in nature. All movement takes place in a single confined sphere, planetary in scope. Like the classical Greek naturalists, Linnaeus allows only one kind of change in the natural economic system, a cyclical pattern that keeps returning to its point of departure. At the very foundation of the natural order is the hydrological cycle, the perpetual circulation of water from the "exhalations" of seas and rivers into the form of rainfall and snow and thence to the sea once more. According to Linnaeus, this model is repeated throughout nature; it is the template or paradigm from which all environmental phenomena take their form; the round of the seasons, the birth and aging of a man, the course of a day, the formation and wearing away of the very rocks" (Worster 34).

6 See e.g. the comprehensive study of Humboldt's contributions to the development of ecological thought in Andrea Wolf's acclaimed monograph *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2015, especially Chapters 19 to 23).

7 All there is, is *for men*: this is aptly exemplified in the "salvation economy" of the divine descent to earth in the Christian theological tradition.

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[From Property-Owning Democracy to Generation Rent? Analysing Theresa May's Housing Rhetoric from the Perspective of the Discourse Historical Approach]

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[Abstract] *Since the 1920s, British Conservatives pursued the concept of property-owning democracy, with home ownership viewed as a guarantor of social stability and personal autonomy. However, recent increases in housing costs have made the "British Dream" of home-ownership more elusive than ever, with renting becoming a lifelong prospect for large swathes of people. Using the Discourse Historical Approach, a method falling within Critical Discourse Analysis, the article analyzes the 2019 housing speech by Prime Minister Theresa May to ascertain whether the changing situation has been reflected in the Conservatives' housing rhetoric, traditionally driven by a property-owning ethos. Examining May's argumentation and language use, it concludes that May's proclaimed commitment to renewed council house construction represents both a long--overdue acknowledgement of the housing affordability crisis and a pre--election strategy to win Labour voters.*

[Keywords] *Discourse Historical Approach; DHA; Critical Discourse Analysis; CDA; council housing; Theresa May; property-owning democracy*

[1] Introduction

The concept of property-owning democracy has long represented a key policy of the British Conservative Party and one of its vote-winning strategies. The importance of home ownership to British people cannot be overstated; while elsewhere in Europe people are happy to rent their homes without feeling socially inferior for doing so (Flint, 2021), being a homeowner in Britain amounts to a symbolic confirmation of an individual's stake in society. Throughout the twentieth century, the Conservative Party skillfully used the home ownership dream to both attract voters and ensure their compliance with the status quo. The myth that a home-owning society was more stable, content and civically--minded was perpetuated in a plethora of speeches by Conservative politicians such as Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan or Margaret Thatcher, the assumption being that the share of owner-occupied homes in Britain's housing stock would continue to grow steadily (Sandbrook, 2019, p. 230).

Developments at the start of the twenty-first century, however, made a dent in the home-owning hopes of Britons. Rising prices of property and the general cost of living, as well as other social and economic factors (see Tihelková, 2016, p. 194), have resulted in a marked decrease in home ownership, the rate of which currently stands at 65 per cent as compared to 73 per cent in 2000. Increasingly, private renting is becoming a long-term prospect for income groups that would previously have become homeowners.[1]

The present paper aims to inquire whether/how the recent decline in housing affordability is reflected in the political discourse of the Conservatives, the party that has been in power in Britain for the past 12 years. More specifically, it seeks to ascertain whether any major adjustments to the traditional home ownership-oriented rhetoric of the Conservatives have been made vis-à-vis the current housing crisis and what argumentation is used to justify any such adjustments. This inquiry is conducted by means of an analysis of a speech delivered by Theresa May to the Housing 2019 conference in Manchester (Inside Housing, 2019). The speech was selected since it is wholly devoted to the issue of housing and encapsulates the party's housing policy over May's entire premiership. The speech is analyzed from the perspective of the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), a method falling within the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The choice of the DHA was motivated by the need for historical context to assess the content and argumentation strategies present in Theresa May's speech. The analytical procedure used in the paper is informed by the approach applied by Ruth Wodak in her research of political rhetoric. In particular, the model presented in Wodak's analysis of David Cameron's Bloomberg speech on the European Union has been broadly followed (see Wodak, 2016).

[2] Property-owning democracy: historical context

The well-documented preoccupation of the British with the property market may give a false impression of Britain's long history of private home ownership, yet only 10 per

cent of British houses before World War One were actually owner-occupied (Hunt, 2004). Both middle- and working-class households lived predominantly in rented properties, either for convenience or due to a lack of means. The end of the war, however, marked a significant shift. Faced with the risk of radical Socialism spreading in the economically volatile post-war era, politicians sought ways to stabilize the society. While Lloyd George's Liberals as well as the Labour Party preferred to deal with the housing situation through the construction of council housing, the Conservatives embraced the idea of boosting private property ownership as a way to secure the consent of the public with the status quo, with property-owning democracy becoming the underlying concept.

Formulated by the Scottish MP Noel Skelton (who also coined the term), the idea of property-owning democracy was based on the argument that while the advance of mass democracy extended political and educational rights to the public, it failed to extend their economic rights, a situation that threatened to radicalize the society. To remedy the disparity, Skelton envisaged a programme of redistributive measures to steer workers away from any radical political alternatives. Although Skelton's programme was not adopted in its entirety, his claim that property ownership gave people a stake in society and should be encouraged by government measures became an integral part of future Conservative policies (Ron, 2008).

Under the Conservative administrations of the 1930s, Britain saw a major boom in the construction of homes for owner-occupation. The Conservatives, seconded by advertisers, sought to market home ownership as a ticket to a life of respectability and civic decency, with emphasis placed on the safety and high quality of life in owner-occupied enclaves. It was in this period when home ownership became the ultimate indicator of social mobility.

In the years following the Second World War, it was the council housing sector that grew in scale and importance under the visionary plans of Labour Minister Aneurin Bevan, who dreamed of the state becoming the dominant provider of homes. The construction of large council estates offering low-density housing of a high standard became one of the pillars of the post-war Welfare State. Parallel to that, however, the vision of property-owning democracy was rekindled by a number of Conservative leaders, most notably Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan. Addressing the 1946 Conservative Party conference, the former made a distinction between the socialist model "where everyone must rely on the State for his job, his roof, his livelihood" and the Conservative proposition "that the ownership of property is not a crime or a sin, but a reward, a right and a responsibility that must be shared as equitably as possible among all our citizens" (Ball, 1998, p. 104). Although council housing continued to be built under post-war Conservative cabinets, it gradually came to be seen as last-resort housing for those who "could aspire to no better" (Boughton, 2018, p. 58), the assumption being that aspirational workers, whether middle class or skilled working-class, would eventually become homeowners.

The idea of property-owning democracy enjoyed its heyday under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, who significantly extended private home ownership by selling off council homes to tenants at discount prices, a policy known as Right to Buy, launched in

1980. Thatcher saw private ownership as the bedrock of a free society. In her view, owner occupation of homes fostered independence, respectability and a sense of civic pride, while council housing was conducive to passive dependence on the state. In her speech to the National Housebuilding Council, Thatcher famously equated home ownership with freedom and full participation in society:

> Wherever we can we shall extend the opportunity for personal ownership and the self-respect that goes with it. [...] Three hundred and seventy thousand families have now bought their own homes from councils, new towns and housing associations. [...] Half a million more people will now live and grow up as freeholders with a real stake in the country and with something to pass on to their children. There is no prouder word in our history than "freeholder". (Sandbrook, 2019, p. 236)

Having created a new propertied class of aspirational workers, Right to Buy was a vote-winner, with Thatcher touting it as the largest transfer of assets from the state to the people. It undoubtedly gave swathes of people the opportunity to own assets which provided them with long-term security and which they could pass on to their children. On the other hand, it reduced the housing stock available to councils to house people unable to buy their home or afford private rent. Far from laying the foundations of long-term property-owning democracy, Right to Buy was a give-away to one generation of buyers, leaving future generations empty-handed and increasingly dependent on the highly volatile private rental market.

[3] Discourse-Historical Approach

Pioneered by the Vienna-based scholars Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl and further developed at research institutions in Lancaster, Loughborough, Bern, Örebro and elsewhere, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) forms a subset of the broad field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The purpose of CDA research, according to Teun van Dijk, is to examine the ways in which social power, dominance, abuse, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by written and spoken text in the social and political context (van Dijk, 2003, p. 352). Norman Fairclough, one of CDA's founding fathers, defines the discipline as a multidisciplinary approach to discourse which views language as "a form of social practice" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 4). Going beyond the mere study of the linguistic properties of texts, CDA seeks to reveal the ideologies working through discourse and show how they are related to the broader social order. Far from being detached from the issues uncovered, the critical discourse analyst, as argued by Michael Meyer, takes the side of the underprivileged and seeks to reveal the linguistic means used by the privileged to stabilize or even increase social inequalities (Meyer, 2001, p. 30).

Similar to CDA, the DHA is preoccupied with uncovering ideology embedded in discourse, defined as "(often) one-sided perspective or world view composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes and evaluations, which is shared by members of a specific social group" (Reisigl and Wodak, 2017, p. 88). The ap-

proach seeks to integrate the knowledge of the historical context of discourses and may also attempt to trace diachronic changes in various discourse types. Like CDA, the DHA does not involve the use of a single, specific method; it applies any methods that help it fulfil its objectives. The DHA regards discourse analysis not only as a method of language analysis but as a multi-dimensional project that integrates methodologies and research practices from the fields of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, rhetoric, sociology, history and others. The works of Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stephen Toulmin, Jürgen Habermas or Reinhart Koselleck are some of the major theoretical points of reference for DHA inquiry (Reisigl, 2018, 48).

The DHA was first applied in a research study of anti-Semitic stereotypes emerging in public discourses of the presidential campaign of Kurt Waldheim in Austria in 1986. Four distinct features of the approach took form during the project: its interdisciplinarity and historical focus, teamwork, triangulation of data and methods, and the ambition to apply the findings in practice (Reisigl, 2017, p. 45). Since then, the topic areas investigated by the DHA have included, among others, overt and covert forms of racism in political discourses in the parliaments of some EU member states, mainly in relation to migration and asylum-seeking, communication within the organizations of the EU, discourses of employment and unemployment in EU committees, and the construction of European identities in the speeches of British, French and German politicians, such as David Cameron's Bloomberg speech on the EU, etc. (see Wodak, 2018).

Unlike Fairclough and other CDA researchers, whose analysis is based on functional linguistics, Ruth Wodak and the analysts working within the DHA framework focus on textual analysis, argumentation theory and rhetoric. Their triangulatory approach is based on the concept of "context", which takes four levels into account:

- the immediate linguistic context
- the intertextual/ interdiscursive relationships between texts/discourses
- the extralinguistic social and institutional context
- the broader socio-political and historical context of the discourse (Reisigl and Wodak, 2018, 93).

From the methodological point of view, the DHA is anchored in a qualitative approach (comprising a wide range of qualitative methods applied as required, including focus groups, ethnographic research, conversational or multimodal analysis, etc.). Contrary to the widespread use of corpus-oriented approaches in CDA, the DHA treats quantitative description of material as background information, placing main emphasis on in-depth analysis of texts. According to the DHA, in-depth text analysis can only be achieved by a consistently applied interdisciplinary approach.[2]

[4] Analysis of Theresa May's speech

[4.1] Macro-topics

The speech analyzed below was delivered at the Housing 2019 conference and exhibition in Manchester on 26 June 2019, only weeks before May's resignation as Prime Minister. It was conceived of as a defence of the departing administration's record on housing as well as an outline of future housing policies. These, May argues, should include new regulations to ensure affordable homes of good quality as part of an "ongoing housing revolution" (PM's Speech on Housing, 2019). Within the confines of the revolution, the government should newly prioritize the housing needs of renters instead of solely supporting homeowners.

Listed below is the sequence of macro-topics in Theresa May's speech:

- **May's intention** to resign as Prime Minister
- **Identification of housing** as one of the key themes of her ending premiership
- **Listing the achievements** of her Cabinet in the field of housing
- **Implementation of structural changes** to the housing sector introduced by the Cabinet
- **Acknowledging the role** of property ownership
- **Introducing the new priority** of policymaking on behalf of renters
  - *Announcing a plan to build more council homes*
  - *Giving greater protection and empowerment to renters*
  - *Ensuring new quality standards for rental homes*
  - *Commitment to safe and affordable homes for everyone*

Surprisingly for a Conservative leader, in her speech May calls for more council homes to be built, describing social housing as "a victim of the single-minded drive for home-ownership". She also insists that building large numbers of new homes is only one part of the solution; the other involves the quality of such homes:

> A hundred years after the introduction of Britain's first council houses, I want to see not just homes that people have to live in but homes they want to live in, homes they can be proud to live in. And that drive for greater quality, for higher standards, should extend right across the housing industry. For too long we have allowed ourselves to think there must be a trade-off between quality and quantity, that raising one means reducing the other. It is simply not true. I do not accept that, in 2019, we can only have sufficient and affordable housing by compromising on standards, safety, aesthetics, and space.

To put things into context, the post-war Conservative strategy for building council homes was to construct mass manufactured high-density buildings from cheaper material built to lower standards. This housebuilding strategy replaced the low-density cottage-type homes with spacious rooms and gardens favoured by the post-war Labour housing visionary Aneurin Bevan (Hanley, 2012, p. 79). This was partly due to the need to

build in greater quantity and at a faster rate, but in addition to that, the reduction of the quality of council homes reflected the changing view of their role: instead of being envisioned as solid homes for aspirational manual and clerical workers, they came to be seen as last-resort housing for those too poor to consider buying their own home. May's call for a higher structural and aesthetic standard of the new council homes suggests her recognition of the fact that broader sections of society, not only low-income groups, will prospectively be cut off from home ownership and dependent on rental housing. The assumption that only the poor will rent is no longer valid.

[4.2] Argumentative structure

The Prime Minister begins her speech by recalling her appearance at the same venue three years earlier, an event blighted by her speaking difficulties due to coughing as well as an interruption by a protester waving a P45 form (a document a person fills out in the UK on the occasion of leaving his/her job). She attempts to put a humorous spin on the memory, reassuring her audience that her staff backstage are waiting with some cough sweets should she need them. In addition, she announces she will be stepping down as Prime Minister in a few weeks' time, making any protest actions urging her to leave somewhat overdue.

With her departure looming, she clearly seeks to deliver a legacy speech; one which will, given that she is speaking at a housing event, highlight her achievements in the housing sphere. Her objective is to present herself as someone who, working closely with her Cabinet and the housing sector, has succeeded in turning Britain's dire housing crisis around, leaving her successor with an upward trend:

> Here in Greater Manchester the number of extra homes being created has risen by more than 12 per cent. In Nottingham, by 43 per cent. In Birmingham, by an enormous 80 per cent. The notable exception is London – where housing policy is in the hands of the Mayor, and the number of new homes being created has actually fallen by a staggering 20 per cent.

The inclusion of London as an exception is deliberate, as its Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is a Labour politician; therefore, a contrast is made between the successful Tory councils and the allegedly underachieving Labour ones.

Thereafter, the Prime Minister goes on to pledge a million affordable homes within less than five years, specifying who these homes will primarily be intended for: "young families, for hardworking professionals, for downsizing retirees." Such a selection of beneficiaries reflects the traditional stereotype of the "deserving" section of the population (Tihelková 2015, p. 125), which has been an integral part of Conservative rhetoric for much of the party's existence. Those who are aspirational, hardworking, or who have made their contribution to society before retiring, are deemed eligible for inclusion in the planned housing project. By implication, those not falling into the category (traditionally, the "undeserving" frame has been applied to working-age individuals not in paid

employment, i.e. dependent on welfare relief) are not among the intended target group. May clearly seeks to present her housing scheme as a project for those who are upwardly mobile or, on the other hand, for those who have completed their successful career paths. The people who are in fact in the greatest need of affordable housing (i.e. socially vulnerable individuals with complex issues, whether related to physical or mental health or low socio-economic status) are not mentioned. Such a concept harks back to the early days of council housing at the turn of the twentieth century, when the newly built rental complexes, such as the Boundary Estate in Poplar or Old Oak in Hammersmith, were primarily intended for (and affordable to) the more prosperous segments of the working class, i.e. skilled workers, or, indeed, white-collar workers (Boughton, 2018, p. 21).[3]

The inclusion of "hardworking professionals" among the group needing affordable housing amounts to an admission that relatively affluent individuals are struggling in the overheated housing market. Here, May makes a stark break with the previous Conservative housing narrative by the admission that home ownership may no longer be a viable prospect for millions of Britons. While dedicating a short part of her speech to her government's continued commitment to property-owning democracy, making references to Noel Skelton and Harold Macmillan (though interestingly not to Margaret Thatcher, the policy's staunchest advocate), she focuses the remainder of her speech on the issue of rental housing. Using the topos of necessity, she stresses the importance of government support for renters amidst the withering away of the chances for home ownership:

> We recognise there are people for whom home ownership will never be a realistic aim. That there are others for whom renting is an unavoidable reality at one time or another. And that some people simply choose to rent, especially if it allows them to live in an area they would otherwise struggle to afford. Being able to choose to rent a decent home in the place that suits you best is a vital part of a healthy housing system, one we see in every major developed economy. Across England, more than 18 million people from every walk of life woke up this morning in a rental property. And no government should ignore the needs of so many of its citizens. So yes, I want to see as many people as possible enjoying all the benefits of home ownership. But that should not stop us working to improve renting too – and this government has taken real action to do just that.

Such rhetoric represents a novelty in the Conservative attitude to housing. Margaret Thatcher extolled private home ownership as a sign of a developed, free and well-ordered society. Similarly, David Cameron, May's predecessor, supported the ongoing sell-off of public housing into private hands (Watt, 2012). May, on the other hand, newly sees a functioning rental system as an indicator of an advanced economy. She no longer equates home ownership with liberty, civic virtue and personal independence, appearing well-aware of the reduced prospects of homeownership among those who would be potential buyers in Thatcher's era.

Just as striking as the complete omission of Thatcher in her speech (despite her mention of other Conservative prime ministers) is May's reference to Christopher Addison, the Liberal author of the 1919 Addison Act, which enabled a mass-scale construction

of council houses after the First World War. By bringing Addison into the debate, May demonstrates her embrace of a housing concept running parallel to that of property--owning democracy: the construction of council housing as one of the pillars of Britain's welfare state. Unlike Thatcher, for whom council housing ran against her values of self-reliance and aspiration, May presents it as a solution to the provision of safe, affordable housing. By doing so, she clearly steps onto the territory of the Labour Party, which has spent years calling from the opposition benches on the Conservatives to invest in public housing. Led by Jeremy Corbyn, Labour promised in its 2017 election manifesto to "launch a new era of council house building" and build "100,000 new genuinely affordable homes" each year (Kentish, 2017), a pledge to which May's proposed policy bears an unmistakable resemblance. Similarly, the removal of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap, a step May took to enable councils to borrow more money for housebuilding, had been on the Labour agenda since 2014 (Jameson, 2014). It can, therefore, be assumed that an attempt to capture the Labour vote is one of the motives informing May's housing strategy.

Pledging to build council homes that are both affordable and of high-quality, May uses the topos of history in referring to the 2016 tragedy of Grenfell Tower, a fire at a high--rise tower block in the London borough of Kensington, which saw 71 people killed and dozens of others injured. The low-quality flammable cladding on the building, occupied mostly by low-income households (many of them ethnic minority families), was symptomatic of the second-rate position of council housing, which had been transformed from a universal provider to a last-resort sector for the society's neediest. In her speech, May expresses outrage at the neglect of housing standards and sympathy for the victims of Grenfell, promising to build higher quality houses in the future. However, it is somewhat ironic that, in the wake of the 2016 tragedy, she actually refused to meet the survivors of the fire (unlike her rival Jeremy Corbyn), being too apprehensive about facing the anger of those who had suffered decades of inadequate housing. According to Peter Apps of *Inside Housing*, the moment when she fled to her car without pausing to speak to the gathered community "became an icon of the gap between the political class and the victims in the chaotic days after the disaster" (Apps, 2012). In addition, her response to the emergency situation faced by Grenfell survivors was marked by delay and inaction, with a number of families still housed in hotels or temporary accommodation two years later.

[4.3] Use of language

Theresa May's speaking style reflects her effort to project an image of a practical, task--oriented politician, with a set of workable policies[4] at hand:

> So we are bringing to an end the practice of so-called "no-fault" evictions, repealing section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act. A consultation on the changes will be published shortly, with a view to introducing legislation later this year. For tenants in England's four million social homes we have scrapped the so-called "pay to stay" policy and confirmed

that this government will not pursue plans to abolish lifetime tenancies for new council tenants. We have retained supported housing in the welfare system – listening to those who know best about how to protect our most vulnerable citizens.

Her desire to come across as a hands-on problem solver also manifests in her choice of modal verbs, particularly in her decisive preference for deontic (28 instances) over epistemic (12 instances) modality. According to Greenbaum, deontic meanings "refer to some kind of human control over the situation," while epistemic meanings "refer to some kind of judgment of the truth-value of the proposition" (Greenbaum, 1996, 260). May's discourse is largely free of assumptions or hypothesizing; she is not concerned with possibilities but with getting things done:

[1] But that *should not stop* us working to improve renting too – and this government has taken real action to do just that.

[2] I have always been clear that this green paper *must not be* simply an intellectual exercise highlighting the nature of the problem. It *must be* the practical first step in actually fixing it.

[3] So today *I can announce* that the next stage in the process, our action plan and timetable for implementing wide-ranging reforms of social housing, will be published in September.

As far as the use of pronouns is concerned, *we* and *I* dominate in May's speech. *We* occurs more frequently (45 times) and is used to refer to the following:

- May's Conservative cabinet; she uses the pronoun to refer to its past, present or future attitudes, plans and actions (36 instances):

[4] *We* recognise there are people for whom home ownership will never be a realistic aim. So *we* are bringing to an end the practice of so-called "no--fault" evictions.

- British people in general (9 instances):

[5] It is the political world's focus on the grand gesture rather than incremental change that is partly responsible for the crisis *we* are dealing with today.

Occurring 29 times, the pronoun *I* is used when May speaks on a more personal note and refers to her individual actions or attitudes:

[6] Because of course, in a few weeks from now *I* will be stepping down as Prime Minister.

[7] *I* do not accept that, in 2019, we can only have sufficient and affordable housing by compromising on standards, safety, aesthetics, and space.

In addition, the pronoun *they* (occurring 14 times) is used to refer to a variety of agents, most often tenants or people seeking affordable housing, who are referred to in a sympathetic tone:

[8] Across the country, people complained of living in substandard or unsuitable housing – and said *they* felt ignored and disrespected by their often remote and unaccountable landlords.

[9] I want to see not just homes that people have to live in but homes *they* want to live in, homes *they* can be proud to live in.

There is an absence of *they* in the sense of a political or social opponent. Besides a brief comment on the Labour's inability to build more homes in London and a pledge not to repeat the housing mistakes of her own party, May's speech is relatively devoid of criticism or adversarial discourse. This, among other reasons, may have to do with the fact that she is a departing Prime Minister seeking to end her term on a positive note.

In her choice of vocabulary, the Prime Minister consciously feeds into her public image of a steadfast, reassuring person, a safe pair of hands, working with her team in a gradual but steady manner towards her goals:

[10] It must be the *practical first step* in actually *fixing* it.

[11] And everyone in this country can look ahead to a future in which each of us has *a safe, affordable place to call home.*

[12] Because *hand in hand, step by step and piece by piece,* the government and the sector have begun to turn around the crisis in British housing.

And while Thatcher often used keywords such as *freedom, choice* or *pride* when referring to home ownership, May, on the other hand, works with the concept of *fairness* when laying out her vision for new rental homes:

[13] *It is simply not fair.* So we are bringing to an end the practice of so-called "no-fault" evictions, repealing section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act.

[14] We promised *a better deal* for renters, we have started to deliver *a better deal* for renters.

[15] As a mandatory regulation, space standards would become universal and unavoidable. That would mean *an end to the postcode lottery* for buyers and tenants.

It would be tempting to interpret May's appeals to fairness as another example of her appropriation of traditional Labour policies; after all, "Future Fair for All" was the title of Labour's 2010 election manifesto. Nevertheless, references to fairness can also be found in Conservative rhetoric[5]; the concept is certainly not Labour's speciality. As argued by Rogers (2014), however, both parties typically appeal to a sense of fairness when addressing economically struggling voters.[6] When Thatcher was extolling the virtues of home ownership, she was speaking to the upwardly mobile segments of British society; to individuals whose prospects of improving their material situation by acquiring property were realistic at the time. They were members of either the middle class or the skilled working class on course to embourgeoisement by the acquisition of property through the Right to Buy scheme. By 2019, such a prospect had become more difficult to sustain as ever greater swathes of the population struggled to gain access to housing. In reflection

of the changed circumstances, May pledges to assuage some of the adverse effects of the housing crisis instead of encouraging unrealistic visions of mass home ownership with its concomitant personal benefits.

Finally, though they are not numerous, some metaphors are used by the Prime Minister to illustrate her points. Negative metaphors are largely used to denote the non-productive policies of the past or the non-existence of instant solutions (16), (17), whereas positive metaphors highlight May's proclaimed competence as a housing policymaker (18):

[16] The lack of universal standards encourages *a race to the bottom.*
[17] There is *no single silver bullet*. No *button to press or lever to pull* that can magically make millions of homes appear overnight.
[18] That is why we are... giving more than half a million households *a step up the housing ladder*.

To summarize, May's choice of language reflects her ambition to reassure her audience of both her understanding of the plight of renters and her government's competence in policymaking on their behalf. Moreover, her frequent references to concepts such as fairness, affordability and housing regulation suggests that she is making a clear appeal to Labour voters (currently the largest voter group among Britain's renters[7]) in addition to addressing her own electoral base.

[5] Rhetoric versus reality

Despite May's best efforts to deliver her speech on an optimistic note emphasizing her Cabinet's ability to deal with the housing crisis, her actual housing legacy remains mixed. Her expressions of sympathy with Grenfell victims are at odds with the lack of decisive action to rehouse its tenants in the wake of the tragedy. The government's approach to construction safety in other places has also been slow: hundreds of tower blocks remain clad with flammable material that could lead to a repetition of the Grenfell tragedy. In addition, as May was leaving office, the numbers of new social rented homes being built remained at a historic low – only 6,436 in a year, the second-lowest number on record, as compared to 300,000 council homes a year delivered by Harold Macmillan, the post-war Conservative Prime Minister who is celebrated as a role model in May's speech (Gimson, 2013).

On the other hand, even subjects considerably to the left of May's political position tend to agree that in spite of her failure to deliver the number of new homes needed, her major contribution to housing policy was the rescue of the concept of socially rented housing from the oblivion to which it was consigned by David Cameron's cabinet. Her decision to remove the cap on borrowing to build council homes is considered as particularly significant. As argued by housing expert George Apps (2019):

> For the six years since the Spending Review in 2010, no public money had been committed for new social rent for the first time since World War II. Theresa May turned this

> around. Her conference speech in 2017 is remembered as a car crash when she was laid low by a cough, but that obscured the fact that she announced grant funding for new, genuine social rented homes for the first time this decade. A year later, she trumped that, dropping the cap on council house borrowing in its entirety in what is undoubtedly the most decisive and significant housing policy move during her three years in charge and may yet herald a renaissance in council housebuilding.

Therefore, in spite of the lack of tangible results regarding the construction of new rental homes, it can safely be argued that in terms of the housing visions of Conservative Prime Ministers of the past 30 years, May's has been the most radical and in touch with Britons' need for affordable housing, potentially providing a strategy blueprint for her political successors.

[6] Conclusion

Studied against the backdrop of earlier Conservative housing policies overwhelmingly centred on private home ownership, an inquiry made possible by involving historical context as part of the DHA approach, Theresa May's 2019 housing speech reveals a distinct shift of focus involving her commitment to improving the situation of Britain's renters. In her rhetoric, rental housing, especially council housing, traditionally perceived by the Conservatives as the sector catering to the society's less successful members, becomes reframed as a vital component of an advanced economy. The equation of home ownership with a stake in society and personal independence is dropped; instead, high-quality rental homes are presented as a respectable housing choice. May's plans for building affordable rental housing closely resemble the pledges of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party, suggesting a possibility of May's purposeful appropriation of Labour policies to win over the votes of metropolitan renters, generally more predisposed to vote Labour (tellingly, the speech was delivered a few months before the general election of 2019). On the other hand, the Conservative U-turn on housing performed by May is just as likely to be motivated by the realistic assessment of the housing trends in the current socio-economic situation, which makes the idea of the property-owning democracy increasingly untenable.

Though May's change of tack on housing managed to garner approval from numerous housing organizations and media outlets (such as Shelter or Inside Housing), it is generally held that the implementation of her plans was significantly hampered by the Brexit process as well as the short duration of her office (Apps, 2019). Therefore, it may be further necessary to examine the discourse of her successor Boris Johnson and compare it with his actual housing record to see whether May's housing U-turn was a real start of a new course or a temporary detour in the incessant Conservative chase for the property-owning democracy myth.

[Notes]

1 After adjusting for inflation, average house prices in England have increased by 173 % since 1997, while adults' real incomes have increased by only 19 %. Consequently, the share of 25- to 34-year-olds owning their own home fell from 55 % to 35 % between 1997 and 2017. For more information see https://ifs.org.uk/publications/13471.
2 For more information on the principles and practice of the DHA, see Reisigl and Wodak, 2009.
3 The poorest slum dwellers were expected to move to the homes vacated by the more aspirational workers who became tenants in the new-built estates, a process known as "filtering up".
4 For more information on the implementation of this measure in favour of renters, see: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-end-to-unfair-evictions. Accessed August 15, 2021.
5 The Conservative use of the word "fairness", however, often tends to carry strong moral overtones, referring in fact to the elimination of welfare abuse by the undeserving poor. This is not the case of May's use of the concept.
6 Martin Rogers, All parties stand for 'fairness', but what voters perceive to be 'fair' is up for grabs.
7 In 2019, 46% of private renters and 45% of social renters voted for Labour (against only 31% and 33% for the Conservatives); see https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk-politics/2021/05/how-tory-dominance-built-home-ownership.

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[book reviews]

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Kryštof Kozák [*České probuzení z amerického snu. Proč a jak se v České republice zabývat Spojenými státy*], Praha: Karolinum, 2019

Kniha na otázku položenou v názvu nahlíží z několika úhlů. V první části, která zabírá přibližně dvě třetiny rozsahu knihy, se čtenáři seznámí s řadou historických i nedávných událostí či milníků českoamerických vztahů, jež nějakým způsobem rezonují v české kolektivní paměti. Ta přitom „hraje ve vnímání Spojených států důležitou roli, neboť vytváří určitý normativní filtr" (30) vnímání Spojených států jako takových i našich vzájemných vztahů. Druhá část pak sestává se série případových studií různých oblastí americké společnosti či politické kultury, které „jsou pro naše zkoumání Spojených států určující a mají potenciál být inspirativní" (31). Výsledkem je publikace, která přináší soubor neuralgických bodů kontaktu mezi námi a Spojenými státy, představuje nám historii a vývoj populárního i odborného zájmu o americká témata a především pak problematizuje jak převážně laudatorní tak plošně odsudečné vnímání Spojených států v českém kontextu.

Byť se z výše uvedeného může zdát, že publikace spadá do rámce kulturních studií, není tomu jednoznačně tak. Většina tradičních anglistických a amerikanistických pracovišť v České republice (především katedry anglistiky a amerikanistiky na filozofických fakultách univerzit Karlovy, Masarykovy a Palackého, jakož i další, včetně domovského ústavu tohoto časopisu KAA FF OU) i odborná společnost Česká a slovenská asociace amerikanistů (CSAA) rozvíjejí amerikanistiku v tradici „cultural studies", jak je známe od šedesátých let minulého století v podobě, již popisuje např. Brantlinger (1990). Tedy především jako multidisciplinární studium kultury v širokém slova smyslu v tradici založené Williamsem, Hallem a dalšími.

Naproti tomu Kozákova publikace vychází spíše z tradice amerických studií, jak je pěstují především americké univerzity, tedy jako studium Spojených států z pohledu politologie, mezinárodních vztahů a historiografie. Největší přínos publikace spatřuji v tom, že kulturologicky zaměřeným amerikanistům představuje pohled na Spojené státy z hlediska sociálně vědních disciplín. Tyto dva přístupy se v českém kontextu protínají spíše výjimečně, jak dokazuje také vlastní Kozákův výběr témat či okruhů.

Na úvod je čtenář seznámen s poměrně zjevným faktem, že obraz Spojených států v českém veřejném i odborném diskursu je černobílý. Podle Kozáka je i za obdivuhodnými jevy „dobré vidět i reálné koncepční problémy a rozpory" (28) a naopak. Cílem je vyvolání koncepční debaty o kladech i záporech mnoha prvků americké společnosti (institucí, politiky a společenských jevů).

První dvě kapitoly nazvané Role paměti v česko-amerických vztazích a Připomínání Ameriky osvoboditelky: tanky v Plzni versus beatnický básník identifikují několik událostí či kauz, které lze považovat za iniciační body recepce Spojených států u nás. Kozák výběrem témat, metodologií i obsahem zkoumaného českého materiálu (např. ohlasy ve zpravodajství)

zachycuje proměnu vnímání těchto událostí i pestrost jejich interpretace v závislosti na dobovém kontextu a ideologických rámcích.

Věnuje se obnově vztahů po roce 1989, oslavám osvobození Plzně po druhé světové válce, vstupu České republiky do NATO i ozvěnám návštěvy krále beatniků Allena Ginsberga v roce 1965. Kapitoly slouží jako upomínka, že žádný společenský či kulturní jev, ba ani jeho vnímání či chápání, není prostý kontextu, byť některé analyticky působící přístupy se mohou snažit vyvolat takový dojem – například tím, že jistou událost vykládají v souladu s právě dominantním diskursem. To platí jak pro marxleninský výklad z dob komunistické diktatury tak pro jednostranně proamerické (liberální) interpretace v devadesátých letech.

Třetí kapitola je přehledem diplomových prací na amerikanistické téma, které byly napsány na KAS IMS FSV UK v letech 2006–2016. Jde o „234 bakalářských, 132 diplomových, 13 rigorózních a 23 disertačních prací“ (89). Všechny práce jsou rozděleny do kategorií podle témat. Tak se ukazuje, která témata mezi studenty katedry ve kterých letech rezonovala tak, že se jim rozhodli věnovat výzkumně. Jednotlivé oblasti potvrzují politologickou orientaci publikace. Jde o mezinárodní bezpečnost, vliv ve světě (tedy uplatňování zahraniční politiky USA), téma migrace a imigrační politiky, „alternativní vesmír“ v americké politice, historický kontext současných problémů, globální ekonomika a právní systém. Několik prací se zabývalo Mexikem. Kanadou se samostatně nezabývala žádná práce. Tato kapitola je především informativní a nabízí shrnutí jednotlivých prací. Jednotlivá témata a jejich kategorie jasně odráží oddělenost politologicky a kulturologicky pojímaného studia Spojených států.

Druhá část knihy identifikuje deset oblastí, ve kterých nás Spojené státy inspirují, od mýtu o zemi neomezených možností přes koncepty jako svoboda a nezávislost a peripetie amerického politického systému až po ekonomický systém. V ní se naplno projeví Kozákův kritický přístup, kdy ke všem těmto oblastem přistupuje se zdravou zdrženlivostí a hledá v nich pozitivní i negativní aspekty. Zabývá se historickým a ideologickým pozadí jednotlivých jevů a přemítá nad jejich kompatibilitou s českými reáliemi. Je to právě rozdíl mezi východisky, historickou zkušeností i současnou demografickou, politickou, kulturní a sociální realitou, který je podle Kozáka třeba zkoumat hlouběji, neboť jen tak je možné do budoucna rozvíjet kvalitní a kritické (tedy na vzájemném důkladném porozumění postavené) transatlantické vztahy.

Závěrem ještě poznámku ke Kozákově místy provokativnímu stylu. Kozák cíleně překračuje pomyslné limity akademického odborného diskursu a čtenáře konfrontuje výrazy jako „Co z toho?“ (16) nebo „federálové [...] strkají nos do věcí“ (138). Také grafická úprava obálky vyjadřuje šok, když pod jménem autora a názvem knihy vidíme tučný rudý nápis „WOW!“ (s vykřičníkem) vyvedený v ukřičené kontrastní grafice komiksového typu na pozadí žluté bubliny se špičatým okrajem evokujícím výbuch. Těmito prostředky Kozák ukazuje na častý nešvar českého vztahu ke Spojeným státům, který se kniha pokouší analyzovat a zvrátit: plytké a zkratkovité, jednostranné vnímání.

Tomáš Kačer
Masaryk University, Brno

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