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FOREWORD

Kick's Editorial Board

> Every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life,
> every quality of his mind, is written large in his works.
> – Virginia Wolf

It is with great excitement and immense pride that we present you Fifth issue of student's journal *Kick*, a journal of students of English at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. Within these pages lies a vivid tapestry of creativity, intellect, and the unyielding curiosity that defines this issue. This journal is more than a collection of words and ideas, it is a celebration of bravery. Each piece reflects the unique voice of its author, a confirmation of their courage in putting thoughts to paper. In an age where the noise of conformity often drowns out individual expression, our authors remind us of the importance of staying true to oneself.

The fifth issue of *Kick* collected students' works from a wide range of English language and literature, as its topic was open-ended. Apart from paper works, this issue collected creative writing as well and now the issue is richer for four expressive poems. We extend our gratitude to the reviewers of this journal for their effort, dedication and invaluable feedback. Their thoughtful suggestions enriched this issue by strengthening the quality and depth of the works presented. Furthermore, there are illustrations before each work depicting the inspiration and originality behind every student's paper. These illustrations enhance the quality and complexity of this issue's published works.

Our dear readers, we hope you will treasure this collection as a celebration of what we all are capable of when we dare to think and create. The emphasis of this journal is on creativity, but also on the connection and unity between an author and Editorial Board. As *Kick*'s Editorial Board we invite you to honour the originality that lies within each of these works.

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Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus - Responsibility and Alienation

Abstract

This paper investigates one of the most iconic novels in literature, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, published in 1818. The novel belongs to the genre of Gothic fiction and is epistolary in form. The main topic of research poses the question whether Frankenstein's Monster is evil or not. The paper claims that the Monster is not evil but only the victim of his creator and the society that conditioned it to be such. The paper deals with the creator's failed responsibility to nurture and take care of its creation, and the fact that the Monster is alienated from society based on its appearance, not deeds or behaviour. The importance of understanding these two is crucial even though the novel tackles and deals with many other difficult questions that expand beyond this paper. Simply put, the society struggles to be consistent in judging the individual which consequently leads to prejudice and alienation, whereby violation of responsibility is attributed to the victim (individual) and not the one who is actually responsible (society). In the end, the paper proposes the need to reconsider the role of society in an individual's life.

Keywords: Mary Shelley, Romanticism, Victor Frankenstein, The Monster, responsibility, alienation

Introduction

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is one of many Romantic and Gothic novels marked by horror, tragedy, and sublime environments. The Romantic period is known for the dominance of poetry and various themes connected to exotic nature, rebellion, individualism, history, mysticism, and even occultism. It was highly influenced by

certain historical events in Europe, such as the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. According to Beiser, turbulent times gave rise to the motif of *weltschmerz* or *world-pain*, a pessimistic worldview during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (1). In brief, the Romantic period counters the previous one, the Enlightenment, its proponents believing that humans are not as rational as they seem to be and taking their dark side in consideration, which is different from the "false optimists" of the previous age, who believed in progress. This research paper aims to show how Frankenstein's Monster is not the real villain in the novel but rather the victim of his creator and society. The thesis will be explained through the creator's responsibility and Monster's alienation by answering two questions: does the creator have the right to abandon the "child" based on the novel's specific circumstances? Is it just to expel the individual from a society based on their appearance, that is, the other people's impression of them?

General

The story begins with Captain Robert Walton exploring the Arctic Ocean, one of the remotest parts of the globe. He catches sight of a man trapped by a brash ice. The man who is trapped is Victor Frankenstein, the main character of the story. Frankenstein gets acquainted with the crew, sick and exhausted by his pursuit of a monster that, as he claims, he created. Walton wants to know more so Frankenstein begins to recount the story of his misery to show Walton how curiosity led him to destruction. Thus begins the frame narrative of *Frankenstein*. The novel is written in epistolary form, framed by the narratives of Victor Frankenstein and his unnamed monster. The narratives serve as two opposing points of view. Frankenstein recounts his life from his childhood in Geneva to the creation of the Monster and the eventual pursuit of the Creature into distant places on Earth. Victor's side of the story manifests his tragedy and despair, the inability to deal with the consequences of his actions. Shelley wrote the novel in a way that makes Frankenstein a kind of a tragic

hero, a modern Prometheus whose fatal flaw is the abandonment of his Creature who behaves and thinks like humans but is extremely ugly. That ugliness leaves Frankenstein horrified and in utter shock, he flees the laboratory. This will kick off the chain of events that will lead Frankenstein to his destruction. This is why the story is so appealing and has been the subject of much research as well as of many adaptations.

Responsibility

The first step in Victor Frankenstein's self-destruction is his decision to engage in a scientific experiment without fully understanding the responsibility that comes with initiating such an act (Zohoor). Victor should be the one and only wrongdoer since he has given life and then disappeared. The only point of his experiment was to manifest his discovery of the secret of life: "I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (Shelley 45). Thus, Victor would become a hero, a proper heir of Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus, that is, an established scientist who reached the summit of his ambition. Instead, the fairy tale about infusing life into the inanimate falls apart because it is obvious that the initiator is unaware of possible consequences. The responsibility for this can only be attributed to the already established being, and that is Victor, not the Monster. The established being is the one who has some experience, and the ability to think, create, and destroy. Yet, Frankenstein denies the one whom he fashioned and called "beautiful" (Shelley 45). Those who are more intelligent should use that innate trait to look after those who do not possess the same abilities. Hence, intelligence requires responsibility and should equal reason – a way of using that ability. For instance, Robert Walton is also ambitious and intelligent, and he understands his spectre of power as the captain of the ship. He cares for everyone

on the ship even though the crew members are able to care for themselves. As a proper captain, he is responsible for everyone. Walton shows his commitment to the crew at the end when he abandons his ambition of reaching the country of eternal light because continuing the voyage was too dangerous. In brief, Walton uses his ability of reason to make the right choice and potentially save lives, whereas Victor endangers them with his cowardice and prejudice. Furthermore, he transfers the responsibility to the concept of chance, blaming spirits for his fate; "Frankenstein retrospectively transfers responsibility for the disasters he helps to propagate onto poetic abstractions such as 'Chance' or an 'Angel of Destruction'" (Hustis 849). Thus, he refuses to accept his responsibility, justifying his fleeing. Victor, who is observing his supposed child all the time, suddenly gets fuelled by horror only because of its savage appearance. The reason why he flees is that his creation is terrifying, leaving the creature on its own to deal with nature, and barbaric civilization.

Alienation

The Monster's appearance leaves the everlasting negative impression on the people who come into contact with him, leading it to anxious feelings, misery, and alienation. Although they do not know the Monster as a person, people refuse to give him a chance to prove himself good due to his looks. Since Frankenstein left it on its own, the Monster experienced a developmental phase similar to the evolution of the first people. It became accustomed to light, discovered fire, learned how to preserve food, and found shelter. In addition to that, the Monster is biologically human since he is made of human parts. The final phase of development was the Monster's ability to love, pointing to his proper development: "The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me: when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathised in their joys" (Shelley 87). However, as Malchow suggests, a gigantic stature of the Monster is enough to stimulate abhorrence and disgust, as in William's example (90-13). Consequently, the impression of the

Monster in the eyes of others alienates it even further, as if he has done something evil and wrong. If met with prejudice, an individual should have the right to seek another chance since prejudice does not correspond with the principles of reason and experience. Because of that, the Creature seeks a second chance: "You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being" (Shelley 111). The second chance is the counterpart, a female with the same characteristics and "defects." Having someone who is like him as a companion would fulfil the creature's basic human needs of love and empathy, because that is what the Monster is: a physically defected human, not a demon. Frankenstein relents and promises to do so but the promise crumbles into pieces after he speculates on the possible consequences. At this point, the hurt and offended Monster becomes evil and kills Victor's loved ones. William, Henry, and Elizabeth, all victims of the Monster, suffered the same tragic fate due to the Monster's desire for revenge against the expulsion, rejection, and abhorrence he had endured. The novel points to an age-old defect: the human tendency to care only about the result instead of its cause. If not for that, the Monster would not have transformed into the alienated mass murderer he became. The whole bloodshed would be prevented. The Monster was conditioned to become a murderer: "The crux of the Monster's defense of his actions is that while he was basically good to begin with the hostility of other people, and particularly of his creator, forced him to become evil; their rejection of him wrought a severe and hideous change in his nature" (Schug 5). Of course, the mentioned murders cannot be justified in any way, but one should acknowledge Victor's complicity in them.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Frankenstein's creation, the Monster, is a victim of both his creator and the society according to the two key arguments – the creator's responsibility and the alienation caused by prejudice against his physical appearance. Frankenstein should have claimed

responsibility for his creation, as Robert Walton acts responsibly towards his crew, and society should have given a chance to someone who seems to be physically imperfect. Therefore, the answer to the two posed questions is negative: the creator should not abandon his child and society should not discriminate against people based on their appearance.

In popular culture, Frankenstein is a monster who fights with others like him: Godzilla, the Mummy, and so on. In the novel, Frankenstein is an ambitious and curious student of chemistry who creates a sapient creature from noble principle of giving life. In reality, Frankenstein, a man and a scientist, is a monster, an anti-hero who failed to give his creation a second chance, soul, morals, and proper life, leaving it dirty, alone, and neglected – a proper outcast on the margins. Therefore, he is equally the villain just like the one who actually commits the crime. In the end, Shelley's novel is unique in Romantic literature because it explores themes like the origin of life, evil, and the responsibility of an individual in the society, which is why *Frankenstein* influenced many future works and authors.

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Samuel Pepys: A Life of London's Famous Diarist

Abstract

This paper's main aim is to recount Samuel Pepys' life. Pepys was born in 1633, the era of constant struggle between the King and the Parliament. Political events affected his life, but later on, he also took an active part in them. Understanding geopolitical and social circumstances of seventeenth century England helps contextualise Pepys' life. He produced a valuable account of the events that marked the period of English history known as the Restoration, which makes him important for English history. Two major accounts, the plague and the Great Fire both struck London in the 1660s. The diary gives accounts of crucial events that marked the beginning of the Restoration, the twisting nature of English politics, and the social life of Londoners. The paper will give the historical context of the century and recount Pepys' life from birth to the Great Fire of London. It will be based on one primary source and a few secondary sources, Pepys' diary, and Claire Tomalin's monography. It is divided into eight sections in which one part of Pepys' life is presented. The first part is his birth and upbringing which reflects a part of social life at the time. In the same part, the paper will deal with the turbulent times in which Pepys lived along with his education showing another social sphere of life in England at the time. Later, in the fourth section, the paper will deal with the brief interruption of Puritan governing after which Pepys will begin to write his diary. Section five gives general information about Pepys' diary and briefly explains the phenomenon of Restoration. The last two sections show Pepys as a witness of the plague and the direct participant in putting out the Great Fire. The conclusion gives the verdict of Pepys' life and his diary's importance for English history and society.

Key words: Samuel Pepys, turbulent times, Commonwealth, The Restoration, Diary, the Great Fire

Introduction

One of the most prominent Englishmen who lived in the seventeenth century is definitely Samuel Pepys. He was not a soldier or a general but a diarist who gave important accounts of his time. He was active during the Stuart era of English history, with the interruption of the brief Commonwealth episode. Pepys was known for his influence in the Royal Navy and the English Parliament. The aim of this paper is to recount certain parts of Pepys' life and, through them, gain insight into the society of the seventeenth century. The upbringing of children, education, and turbulent political and social circumstances are one of the key topics to explore. The center of the paper is Pepys' diary, which was rediscovered in 1819. In the diary, Pepys recounted two major events in 1660s that shaped the future of England: the plague epidemic and the Great Fire. Both events served as a wake-up call for England's way of dealing with internal and external affairs. Mentioned topics are connected to Pepys himself. In some, he participated, in others he was just a witness, one of the few to put it on paper. Thus, Pepys' life is a valuable source for familiarising oneself with the seventeenth century England and Stuart monarchy. To understand the spirit of the time, the first step is to consider the historical context that shaped and defined England in the seventeenth century. In the end, the plague and the Great Fire serve as the climax of his account and as the primary source for the Restoration era.

The Early Stuarts and Circumstances in the Late Sixteenth Century

In the late sixteenth century, the Tudor era came to an end. With Tudors like Henry VIII and Elizabeth at the helm, England was considered a new potential superpower in Europe, manouvering between the ambitious Habsburg family, growing Dutch resistance against Spain, new religious ideologies, and other currents that struck Europe at the time. Also, that period was known for its rapid colonization of the New World, which sparked many thinkers to imagine the new land as an escape from religious extremism and prosecution

powered by the flawed Catholic Church. These two processes will pave the way for new waves of immigration to the New World. Acquiring new land means the state economy is destined to flourish with resources in profusion. Thus, the rat race has begun and new conflicts commenced. One major battle happened in 1588 when the relatively new, revamped British navy destroyed the powerful Spanish Armada with Sir Francis Drake at the helm. In a geopolitical sense, this is probably the peak of Elizabeth's reign. In a religious sense, this battle was the major clash between Catholics and Protestants, and this distinction is the most important one to understand the spirit of the time. Elizabeth I became very popular, and the long-reigning monarch of England. When she died in 1603, the line of succession brought James VI of Scotland to the throne as James I of England. James was a tolerant king, an intellectual who wrote many books and because of that, he was remembered as a patron of arts and literature of his time. Yet along with the throne, King James inherited the national debt caused by wars with Spain and Irish rebels, and an animosity that will define English history in the seventeenth century: the enmity between Roman Catholics and English Protestants (Hutton 331). Thus, James had an impossible mission of conciliating both sides. The consequence of his desire to make and maintain peace was his tolerance at the beginning of his reign. His belief in diplomacy brought peace between England and Spain, which was an agreement the Elizabethan reign never saw. After that, the optimistic spirit grew, although not for long. Attempts to defuse the fiery situation ended in James appeasing one side while leaving Catholics marginalized many times. This caused Catholic extremists to overthrow King James and end the Protestant hegemony in the country. The event is today known as the Gunpowder Plot, which took place in 1605. This, however, was a failed assasination. The "explosive welcome" never happened because Guy Fawkes and Robert Catesby had blown their cover. Unfortunately for James, the major consequence was the eruption of anti-Catholic hysteria in the country. The persecution began and many fled to the New World, precisely to the newly established Jamestown (Jenkins, Kratka povijest Engleske 124-125).

Animosity prolonged when James' son, Charles, married Henriette Marie, a daughter of French king Louis XIII. As Charles became Charles I (1625 – 1649), the new king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the people were furious that their king had married a Catholic (Jenkins, Kratka povijest Engleske 127-128). Many of the monarch's political moves at the time were supposedly made in light of religious antagonism between two parties. The assumption is that by marrying a Catholic counterpart Charles wanted to appease the struggling Catholic current in England. As expected, this action only created hatred for the newly crowned king. He was most known for what the English historiography calls The Personal Rule. This period, starting from 1629 and ending in 1640, was caused by the constant antagonism between Charles and The Parliament. Frequently imposing taxes and his conservative beliefs on the Scottish Church hurled Britain into a civil war. Charles I never gave up on his plans to beat the Parliament and assert his divine right to rule over England. He tried to arrest certain members but the whole Parliament turned their backs on him, and the defeat was inevitable. Charles I was executed in 1649 (Jenkins, Kratka povijest Engleske 129-131).

The Birth and Upbringing of Samuel Pepys, The Turbulent Times, and His Education

The Civil War shook Britain. The King was dead, and the Commonwealth, or the Protectorate, was established. In these turbulent, hostile times, the fifth child of eleven was born and soon became the only survivor among his siblings. Samuel Pepys was born in 1633 in London, just off Fleet Street in Salisbury Court. His father, John Pepys, ran a tailoring business. His mother worked as a washmaid in another household before marriage. She had eleven children in fourteen years the majority of her children died and never experienced adulthood. The important factor in a child's upbringing back then were musical instruments: viol, violin, lute, virginals, flageolet, and others – they made the parents more devoted to their children. Music was an essential part of family life in seventeenth-century

London (Tomalin 52-59). As reported, some families could afford tutors for their children. The tutor in Pepys family was John Evelyn, who coached John Pepys' eldest son from the age of two. The state launched manuals for parents recommending them how to teach their children before they start school. One parent should have played with their child and read children's stories to give them a sense of storytelling. However, Pepys' parents probably never read any of the manuals. For children, there were books of manners, which taught them how to set the table, how not to break the glasses, how to cut bread, and how to wash hands. These books of manners taught children about elementary behaviour in a household (Tomalin 61-63). The late 1630s saw the string of tragedies occur in the Pepys family. His closest brother John fell ill and died. Later, the second John was born but Samuel never liked him like the former. Still, Pepys felt a strong love and sense of duty to his brothers and sisters. Soon, his two sisters followed John to the grave and Samuel was left only with Tom, Paulina, and John, the second one. Samuel's life was also threatened by different kinds of disease. His childhood memories contain echoes of constant pain due to the stones accumulated in his kidneys. It was hard to live through the pain-racked youth. Yet, the constant pain made him resilient and stronger, and that would be reflected in the hard times to come. His mother suffered from kidney stones as well. Miraculously, Pepys recovered and organised a celebration marking that day. It turned into a holiday, which shows how significant this event was for Samuel Pepys (Tomalin 64). Other than that, Pepys began forming his first emotional relationships which filled his childhood with bright moments. Pepys' early life coincides with the turbulent times above. The political situation in London was tumultuous. Repeated riots, sailors angry due to the imposed naval tax, and growing anti-Catholic hysteria fuelled the thirst for violence. A scrupulous observer would say that people were assembling to watch live executions of figures detested (Tomalin 73). All of this unrest was caused decades ago, with incompetent compromises and constant reversals of faith under the Tudor family. Additionally, King Charles I acted as a king whose intention was to rule alone. Many

protestant sects and subgroups emerged. One of them, the Puritans, became allies of those who opposed the stubborn king. Together, they condemned the King and his fellow royals for being harsh on the poor. The Puritans were active even in Fleet Street, Pepys' birthplace. Pepys witnessed many religious unrests and protests against Baptist bishops who welcomed women as preachers. Pepys was nine years old when Charles I happened to pursue and arrest five MPs for opposing him. To show their dissatisfaction, masses of tradesmen and seamen mobbed the king, successfully delaying him. The King was frightened. Soon, he left London with his family and would not appear until his execution in 1649. The five MPs became heroes. They made a triumphant journey on the Thames from the City of Westminster escorted by a flotilla of beribboned boats, packed with cheering Londoners. This event in English history represents a moment when the Crown lost much of its authority, due to the people following the rule of the Parliament instead. Another major event was the execution of two Catholic priests in front of an angry crowd. In March, the Parliament raised its own army. War was inevitable (Tomalin 75-77). The major cause was the disagreement between the king, who wanted full control, and the Parliament who sought to impose limitations on him. The war divided the whole country in every aspect: religious, educational, political, and judicial. Within the following seven years, the King would be dead and Parliament would take full control. These events had a profound effect on Pepys as he took part in digging trenches with his brother Tom in London (Tomalin 78-79). While not an active participant in these historical events, Pepys was still largely influenced by the policital situation. During his first decade, Pepys earned the resilience that would help him later in life, during two of the most destructive events in English history, the plague and the fire. Though turbulent, his life was already full of joy, but the political situation was full of uncertainty.

Despite these turbulent times, Pepys' education could not wait so he embarked on a journey to Huntingdon to attend the Tree Grammar School. The world outside London's gates was dark and mysterious. There was an easy chance to get lost in liminal spaces like

English forests without any light. Samuel was about to visit his uncle Robert, who was employed as an agent on the Hinchingbrooke estate and lived a mile from his big house in the village of Brampton. Uncle Robert served in the local militia as Captain Pepys. He was recruited by Edward Montagu, a cousin of Samuel Pepys, and loyal to the new revolutionary aspirations. Samuel spent a lot of time in Hinchinbrooke House and Brampton. Usually, he would come uninvited to Montagu's lunchtime which shows his close bond with him and his family. As said, Pepys attended Huntingdon School. It was a grammar school with an all-day-long teaching program. From seven in the morning until five in the afternoon, the children were fixed to their chairs. They had two hours for lunch and a walk which usually took place in the middle of the day. Pepys' school had a great reputation among people. The main reason was its headmaster Thomas Beard, who had sent his best pupils to Cambridge. For example, one of them was Oliver Cromwell, a man who led the English Commonwealth for ten years. The chief subject at school was Latin. Children were taught intensively so that they could memorise and speak Latin as fluently as they spoke English. Their main task was to translate original classical texts into English and then back to Latin as precisely as possible. It often happened that the children forgot how to speak English, as they were punished if they failed to speak Latin fluently. Instead of studying Chaucer, they studied Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, and other classical authors. Samuel possessed the skill to speak Latin very comfortably, which helped prevent confusion with English. Apart from Latin, children also learned Greek and basic Hebrew. By the time Pepys arrived at Huntingdon School, Thomas Beard resigned, and his successor, Henry Cooke, was a very indifferent man. After that, Pepys went to St Paul's School in London. It is unknown how long he attended the Huntingdon School (Tomalin 84-89). In St Paul's School children were divided by achievement and abilities, not age. In 1650, at the age of seventeen, he was making spectacular progress. Days would start with Latin prayers and one chapter from the Bible. He had to undertake oral examinations and compose in Latin on his own. Apart from the Bible study, his education followed the way of the Ancient

Romans, which turned him into a good orator. When he came back home to his parents, he was the most educated member of the family (Tomalin 99-101). Through his education, Pepys discovered a love and interest for books and antiquarianism.

In 1651, Pepys went to Cambridge to continue his education. He was eighteen years old, short, dark, with protruding eyes and fleshy cheeks. He went there as a sizar, a student whose education is paid for by the college. Since women were forbidden to go to college, Cambridge was an all-men community. Bedrooms and living rooms were shared but rooms for work were separated. The day started at six, followed by breakfast and then classes throughout morning. College rules are believed to have been strict in Cambridge at the time. Young men were not allowed to wander around Cambridge and to enter taverns. Boys were forbidden to play cards or dice, or to have irreligious books in their rooms. They were not allowed to attend dances, boxing matches, and cock-fights. Fluent Latin, Greek, and Hebrew was expected from them. In general, the university was highly influenced by Puritanism. Pepys himself suffered the consequences for breaking the rules, such as when he was reprimanded for drunkenness. Moreover, his interest in women also got him in trouble. He did not enjoy the gender segregation in Cambridge. He exhibited interest in Betty Archer and her sister Mary, as well, and, significantly, Elizabeth Anysworth. She taught Pepys a very lewd song called "Full Forty Times Over". His tendencies for women sometimes manifested in lustful behaviour. Pepys wrote a novel or romance called *Love a Cheate*. This manuscript was destroyed but Pepys refers to it in his diary:

> "This evening, being in a humour of making all things even and clear in the world, I tore some old papers; among others, a romance which (under the title of "Love and Cheate") I begun ten years ago at Cambridge; and at this time reading it over tonight I liked it very well, and wondered a little at myself at my vein at that time when I wrote it, doubting that I cannot do so well now if I would try." (Pepys 1200)

His literary projects resulted in an important part of his later work: the code. He liked to play with anagrams, words, and names of young women he admired. Sometimes, his code would be exposed and the ladies would reject him. These playful riddles were the beginning of Pepys' shorthand. This period's shorthand finds its origins in Thomas Shelton publishing his *Short Writing* in 1626. There was a craze for it and many boys and girls used it to take notes faster. The system is based on appointing a symbol to each consonant and double consonant, while the vowels are indicated by the positioning of the following consonant or by a dot in one of the places. Pupils had to memorise three hundred symbols (Tomalin 121-127).

A Brief Commonwealth Episode

As has been mentioned, in the time of Commonwealth and Cromwell's rule, every sphere of life took a Puritan form. Protestantism became stronger and many other subgroups entered the stage, such as Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Quakers. Cromwell, having such power, invited the Jewish population back to London and the reason for that was purely economical. Not only were classical studies banished and replaced by religious ones, but Cromwell also banned the celebration of Christmas, church music, and theatrical performances. John Evelyn, a diarist, was arrested for celebrating Christmas but was soon released. Many falsely perceive the Commonwealth as a cultural desert. However, Cromwell patronised London's first opera performed in English, and with female singers, called *The Siege of Rhodes*. In 1653, London's first coffee house was opened (Jenkins, A Short History of London: The Creation of a World Capital 66-67). This shows how the Commonwealth did not have a one-sided tendency but rather, there was an interest for entertainment and various forms of leisure.

Pepys' student days, coinciding with the Commonwealth period, were marked with adolescent activities, drinking, music making, and reading. However, a darker aspect of those days was his struggle with kidney stones, which were soon removed. He was receiving informa-

tion of political events from his great-uncle Talbot Pepys, who had been an MP in Cambridge and was quite influential, having control over civil and criminal jurisdiction (Tomalin 131-132). Soon, Pepys began working as a clerk for his cousin Edward Montagu. Montagu was an ambassador to Spain and Portugal. Pepys' main task was to handle issues with domestic servants and keep Montagu informed while he was absent. Montagu trusted Pepys and gave him a different position – he became an MP for Edinburgh, which allowed him to show his oratory skills learned in Cambridge (Tomalin 136-137).

The Diary and The Restoration

Pepys' diary came into being at the beginning of 1660. In the meantime, after Pepys' kidney stone surgery, Oliver Cromwell died and his son took over. However, he was unable to rule as effectively as his father, meaning the last days of the Commonwealth were near. The Parliament decided to invite back the king, Charles II, whose father was publicly executed eleven years ago. Charles, who had been exiled to The United Provinces (Holland), accepted the invite and England reversed its decision from the past decade. The new king was an extrovert, liberal, and ready to cooperate. Theatres were reopened, as were race courses, and brothels. For example, Theatre Royal was opened in Drury Lane. Because of his unusual and liberal behaviour, Charles II was named "the happy king". He was a patron of arts and science. During his reign, The Royal Society was established, featuring popular faces like Isaac Newton, Robert Hooke, Robert Boyle, and Christopher Wren. Charles II drew his inspiration from his cousin Louis XIV, who gave him exile during the Interregnum. Bodies of the people who were connected to the execution of his father were excavated and hanged, and the same was done with the people who were still alive (Jenkins, Kratka povijest Engleske 143-144). Charles was a determined, firm, but also a controversial monarch – an ideal type of man to lead the country after the transitional period.

Pepys began his diary by describing the political situation in the country, the frustrated MPs and the unpredictable nature of En-

gland's political climate. He described the circumstances during the Restoration period. England sought to be reborn and forget its dictatorial past. He himself survived the surgery which meant life was now a lot easier. The new era for both Pepys and the country was testified by his diary, written in shorthand code. The reason for the shorthand was probably his intention to hide the explicit content and names of his romantic interests. He recorded daily habits, diet, fashion, and, in general, the whole social life of seventeenth-century Londoners. Pepys achieves literary mastery by presenting his thoughts and actions (Bryant). Needless to say, it is unclear if Pepys was entirely honest in every detail, but he even records his own involvement in accepting a bribe as an official. The intention is not clear, but it may be that he wanted future generations to read the diary and set an example of how not to behave, sacrificing his reputation in doing so. By being honest enough to show his own wrongdoings, there is a slightly higher chance that the readers will trust what he wrote, at least in majority of cases. Many would not be frank about their major downsides, but he was. For example, one of his weaknesses was jealousy of his wife's potential suitors (Bryant). Pepys' diary also shows his curiosity – he was interested in almost everything. Consequently, he recorded everything. He wrote an estimated 1.3 million words. He has written in many languages, hidden by shorthand, English, French, Italian, and Spanish (Greenblatt 2133). Pepys resembles something of a journalist since his diary is an actual report of events, that is, not only his life but the life of London as the city. Besides the political situation, Pepys recorded two major events in the history of the seventeenth-century London, the plague and the fire. The horrors of both came right one after another. Hence, the impact on people was huge. As mentioned before, Pepys was very hard-bitten when it came to showing negative emotions. This trait will perfectly appear in these horrible times. Having a tough mind, he survived both events. Pepys kept his diary from 1660 to 1669. He was forced to end it because his eyesight deteriorated (Greenblatt 2133).

In the next section, both major events will be described as they are the main points of Pepys' diary. Others will be omitted for the

sake of clarity, precision, and the fact that the majority of the diary contains detailed descriptions of persons Pepys has met during that period. Naming and putting them all into this recount would prolong it beyond expected borders.

The Plague

The pestilence probably started in the spring of 1665. The year is clear but the date is not yet identified. One of the first allusions to the plague happened in 1664. Many entries mention that the plague struck Amsterdam, decimating the Dutch population. Specifically, Pepys mentions a Dutch merchant ship of 400 tons whose crew was killed by the plague (Pepys 1410). On 24 May, Pepys records rumours that the plague is in London and spreading among people. The public discussed the remedies for the plague (Pepys 1569). On 7 June, the plague spread enough to spark a concern. As a consequence, medical measures were taken. Pepys described one of them: "I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and "Lord have mercy upon us" writ there; which was a sad sight to me, being the first of the kind that, to my remembrance, I ever saw" (Pepys 1579). Red crosses were there to mark who was infected by the plague and who was healthy. The infected ones ended up in the quarantine (Bowyer). The next day, Pepys said to his wife Elizabeth that she should be cautious while walking outside because of the plague (Pepys 1580). After two more days, the plague was in the City, a central part of London (Pepys 1583). Despite the growing concerns and danger caused by the plague, Pepys continues with his normal daily activities, but with extra caution. A few days later (15 June) Pepys recorded the first account of lives taken by the plague: "The towne grows very sickly, and people to be afeard of it; there dying this last week of the plague 112, from 43 the week before, whereof but [one] in Fanchurch-streete, and one in Broad-streete, by the Treasurer's office" (Pepys 1587). As reported on 17 June, first symptoms of the plague were a general feeling of illness, like a fever, and a sort of blindness. Pepys' stagecoach complained that he cannot

see properly. Also, he was barely standing on his legs. The next day, he caught a fever, and a hickup which were very bad symptoms back then (Pepys 1589). Three days later, Pepys attended a dinner with his fellow Navy officers (Pepys was a naval administrator at the time) hearing the news of new victims at Westminster (Pepys 1591). They celebrated their victory over the Dutch in the war that had begun four months ago. Since the direct cause of this plague is unknown, there is room for theories. One could be that the Dutch merchants brought the plague with their polluted cargo into British harbours to weaken their economy and state as a whole. That would make their victory in war against the British much easier. The second one, a more realistic one, is that the hygiene was poor at the time, and medicine not yet revolutionized. The third potential reason is the explanation given by London's inhabitants who believed the plague was caused by the bad air quality (Bowyer). The real reason will never be clear. As the plague spread, the Parliament started the process of evacuation (Pepys 1591). On 26 June the plague appeared to be unstoppable – infected houses were being sealed, and the healthy people inside were condemned to death by remaining with their infected relatives (Pepys 1597). The quarantine measure did nothing to actually stop the plague. It was spreading rapidly and by August tons of people were being buried on the same day. Streets of London became mass graves, with piles of bodies lying on the filthy pavements of the infected city. The streets were empty, without a single inhabitant in sight. Those from the higher classes fled to the countryside. The King, for example, left for Salisbury with his loved ones. However, the poor were left to fend for themselves (Bowyer). In October, the plague was at its peak:

> "Thence I walked to the Tower; but, Lord! How empty the streets are and melancholy, so many poor sick people in the streets full of sores; and so many sad stories overheard as I walk, everybody talking of this dead, and that man sick, and so many in this place, and so many in that. And they tell me that, in Westminster, there is never a physician and but one

> apothecary left, all being dead; but that there are great hopes of a great decrease this week: God send it!" (Pepys)

In one week, the plague killed over ten thousand people. In autumn, nobody could stop the plague, but the people tried to fight it by setting bonfires in the streets, believing fire had a purifying effect on the quality of air. They were superstitious and wrong. The plague psychologically affected everyone, even Pepys, who is described as hard-bitten. He took to drinking as the number of the infected grew. As the time passed, Pepys got used to this way of life and continued meeting with his business partners or friends who were healthy. When the winter came, the number of cases dwindled. Hope came back to London and people were returning to their homes. Soon, King Charles II came back to London signalling the plague was not as dangerous as before. Life and ordinary habits of the dwellers resumed (Bowyer). Nonetheless, the misery for London had only just begun. The plague never fully disappeared; in fact, it is believed to have been eradicated by another event, the Great Fire.

The Great Fire of London

In 1666, the plague weakened. Pepys felt a great relief and happiness because of it. On Lords Day or Sunday, 2 September, he woke up and was called by his maid Jane who told him she saw a great fire in the City. He rose about seven and saw the fire spreading. Jane told him that she had heard that around three hundred houses had been burned down. That motivated Pepys to dress up and go outside (Greenblatt 2134). He walked to the Tower, one of the best viewpoints in the City, to observe the mighty fire:

> "I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge; which, among other people, did trouble me for poor little Michell and our Sarah on the bridge. So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it begun this morning in the King's baker's' house in

Pudding-lane, and that it hath burned St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish-street already." (Pepys 2007)

Pepys recounts that many were trying to preserve their goods, fleeing into boats to save their lives. Even birds like pigeons struggled to stay calm: "And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their wings, and fell down" (Pepys 2007). Pepys went to the King's closet chapel, along with many others. He was a person who gave detailed description of what he had seen. The King and the Duke of York listened to Pepys' descriptions and were frightened by the situation. The King came up with an idea. The only way to stop the fire was by pulling down the houses, stopping it from further spreading. Thence, King Charles II commanded Pepys to go to the Lord Mayor of London and command him to pull down every single house. The majority of the houses were pulled down and churches were used to store goods. Yet, the idea did not work at first because the fire was spreading with the help of the strong wind. The situation was dire, so Pepys also moved his goods to his cellar. Along with his money, he stored chief paper accounts, tallies, and bags of gold. Two days later, the fire was still ravaging the city of London. When Pepys was at Woolwich he saw the whole City on fire. At Woolwich, he saw the gates shut, which filled him with fear. There were rumours of the French plot since there was no logical explanation of what caused the fire. In the end, it was not a plot, but merely a coincidence caused by a man's actions (Greenblatt 2135-2138). The fire was brought under control by 5 September. There were many consequences. London was devastated and needed to be rebuilt. King Charles ordered Christopher Wren to reconstruct the whole city. Houses were built out of stone, while wood was forbidden. The seventeenth-century London was built from scratch. Moreover, the early fire brigades were formed (The Great Fire of London).

Pepys survived through two great hardships, yet he remained happy in these dark times. In 1673, he was elected MP for Castle Rising in Norfolk. He experienced a great rise in power, which made

him a target of prosecution. In 1679, he was charged with treason and suspected of cooperating with the French. Despite this, he became the King's Secretary of the affairs of the Admiralty under King Charles and remained in office under James II. After the Glorious Revolution, he resigned. He died in Clapham in 1703 (Trueman).

Conclusion

Overall, Samuel Pepys is shown as a hard-working, resilient, and intelligent man who was a part of the English microcosm during the seventeenth century. He held on through the hard, turbulent times of the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and the relative prosperity of the Restoration era. Although he was not a general like Cromwell, who helped establish the Commonwealth along with the Parliament, Pepys was important enough to enrich his country's history by recording an account of the two notable events that changed the English way of dealing with affairs of the state: the plague and the Great Fire. In both events, he survived either through luck or his intelligent actions. He is an example of how to behave appropriately within a well-ordered state. Also, throughout his life, which was thoroughly examined by various historians and sources, the elements of England's social life are visible, alongside education and political difficulties that struck England in the seventeenth century, of which he was one of the witnesses. Samuel Pepys marked the Stuart era and enriched it with his honest, credible, and vivid descriptions. His diary shows the roots of Restoration and political turmoil in England but above all, the reader or observer can see how resilient Pepys' nation was. In the end, he is an important diarist and a witness to major events in seventeenth-century England.

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Analysis of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in Regard to Elizabethan Theatre Performance

Abstract

This paper will analyze Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the light of the fact that his plays were works written for the stage. It will touch upon the question of why *Macbeth* is hard to stage. Moreover, it will comment on the elements of Elizabethan theatre, such as set and costume design. Consequently, it will link those to the issue of realism in theater. Special attention will be devoted to the role the audience plays in a theatre and how acting influences the interpretation of a play. Finally, the paper will tackle the questions of why Shakespeare exposes the means of dramatic illusion and what the point of theatre is. The aim will be to progressively discover the answer to the question why it is important to talk about Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as well as his other plays, in the context of Elizabethan theatre performance.

Key words: *Macbeth*, Elizabethan theatre, realism in theatre, audience, dramatic illusion

Introduction

Macbeth is considered one of Shakespeare's hardest plays to stage to this day. This is why, in this paper, I will explore the reasons behind it and compare the possibilities of the text itself with the possibilities of theatre production. Moreover, I will take into account elements of Elizabethan theatre and draw a parallel between the lack of certain elements, such as set and costume design, and their importance to the audience. Consequently, I will talk about the issues of dramatic illusion and realism in theatre. Finally, I will discuss Shakespeare's exposure of dramatic illusion and the notion of theatre as a repre-

sentation of reality. Ultimately, conclusions made about Macbeth can be applied to other Shakespeare's plays, thus illuminating the importance of analyzing his works in regard to Elizabethan theatre performance.

The Problem of Staging *Macbeth*

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is one of the most famous playwrights of all time. Before he became a playwright, he also worked as an actor, as evident from his name appearing in various actors' lists (Ludowyk 3-4, 6). Robert Greene, another famous playwright and pamphleteer at the time, made a reference to Shakespeare as "a player who had made success of writing plays" (Ludowyk 6). Having acquired acting experience, Shakespeare had the unique perspective of knowing how the theatre works. As Ludowyk explains: "The plays he wrote would therefore bear the marks of the kind of stage performance for which they were destined. To forget this, or to refuse to consider it, is to risk misunderstanding the play" (23). He goes on to explain that as a reader of Shakespeare, one must always have in mind that his works were meant to be performed on a stage. This is why McGuinness sees Shakespeare's plays as practical demonstrations of his knowledge of how a piece of theatre works (2).

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's best-known tragedies, having first been published in the Folio of 1623, and it is thought to have been first performed in 1606 (Peck and Coyle 62). The play has five acts and tells the story of Macbeth – a Scottish general who receives the prophecy that he will become king. With the help of his wife, Lady Macbeth, he murders the King of Scotland, Duncan, and makes himself king. Out of paranoia, he kills other people as well, among them being Banquo and Macduff's whole family. However, Duncan's son Malcolm escapes the slaughter and, with Macduff's help, overthrows and kills Macbeth. *Macbeth* is considered one of Shakespeare's bloodiest plays and one of the most difficult plays to stage to this day.

The biggest problem with staging *Macbeth* is the dichotomy between the possibilities of a theatre production and the possibilities of the text itself. Ludowyk sums up this problem: "Stage performance, as always lessens various difficulties, making what is doubtful to the reader clear and self-evident to the spectator" (222). This can be seen in act II, scene i of the play: "Is this a dagger which I see before me" (*Macbeth* II.i.31). When reading the play, it is clear that Macbeth sees a dagger no one else sees. However, when staging a play, the director has to make a choice: is Macbeth really holding a dagger or not. The audience members also have to "pick a side" – they either see the dagger with Macbeth, or they do not. The same problem with illusion is present in act III, scene iv when Banquo's ghost appears and no one else on stage can see what Macbeth sees (Foran 20), as well as multiple times later throughout the play. This is what makes *Macbeth* so hard to stage, and why *Macbeth* is rarely successfully staged at all. Correspondingly, this is also why Shakespeare's plays should always be analyzed in the context of theatre performance.

Realism in Elizabethan Theatre

One should always consider the fact that Elizabethan theatre is much different from today's theatre in terms of the realism of the setting. This inevitably affects the audience and the play itself. Thus, it's important to present a brief overview of the playhouse and the stage, which differ from contemporary ones. Mangan describes the typical Elizabethan playhouse as "a large building comprising a three-tier polygonal or circular auditorium, with a raised performance platform thrusting a long way out into a flat yard where the 'groundlings' in the audience would stand on three sides of the stage" (81). This description notes the stratified seating present in Elizabethan playhouses, which the Globe Theatre simulates to this day. Aside from the pit from where "groundlings" would watch the play, the auditorium also split into the gallery, occupied by educated members of the middle class, and the balcony, reserved for nobles and royalty (Williamson 71). Nevertheless, everything was constructed so that

everyone in the audience could have a good view of the stage. Below the main stage, there was a small, confined place from which people or voices could appear on stage or vanish. This place was called the cellarage or basement. Ludowyk claims that it must have been used in *Macbeth* for the disappearance of the cauldron at the end of act IV, scene i, as well as for the vanishing of the Weird Sisters in act I, scene iii (32). However, when it comes to the Elizabethan stage, scholars cannot agree on the details. Hence, no one can confidently claim to know what Elizabethan theatres actually looked like.

One of the rare things that scholars do agree on is that the stage was broad, open and very flexible. This meant that it was not intended to represent a specific place or scenery, but rather that the stage could be "any place at all or one place at one time, and immediately after some other place at some other time" (Ludowyk 34). Thus, only small details would indicate places and not lavish set designs like today. According to Ludowyk, the way locality was indicated was not important to Elizabethan spectators (34). This allowed Shakespeare to create such dynamic plays with fast changes between scenes.

It is interesting to see that the lack of importance given to locality is present in *Macbeth* very early on. To illustrate, the play opens with the Weird Sisters talking about meeting again in an unspecified place:

FIRST WITCH. When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
SECOND WITCH. When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.
THIRD WITCH. That will be ere the set of sun.
FIRST WITCH. Where the place?
SECOND WITCH. Upon the heath. (I.i.1-7)

There is no indication of where the scene is set besides that there is thunder, lightning and heath. This provides a sense of other world-

liness to the audience. Time and place are not indicated in the scene because they are irrelevant. Furthermore, Shakespeare only mentions time and place when he needs them. For example, scene ii begins with King Duncan entering. With that, the audience knows that the action is taking place in the royal palace. Again, in Elizabethan theatre, there is no need for set design to indicate that – the presence of a king per se is enough.

The presence of the king is further emphasized through his costume. Thomas Platter, a Swiss traveler who was in the Globe to see a play in 1599, describes costume design in Shakespeare's plays: "The actors are most expensively and elaborately costumed" (qtd. in Gurr 213-214). Since set design was meager, having elaborate costumes helped create at least some sort of dramatic illusion. However, the point of those costumes was not historical accuracy. The clothes used in Shakespeare's time were contemporary, that is, Elizabethan clothes (Ludowyk 40). They were mostly used to indicate the social status of a character and nothing more. Besides, they were extravagant by the standards of that time, but no match for today's costumes. This is because the Elizabethan audience did not look for the kind of realism theatergoers are used to nowadays.

The same concept is mirrored in Shakespeare's way of representing time and place in his plays. He moves away from Aristotle's unities of place and time because there is no need for them – he does not have to make the drama credible. Johnson argues:

> Whether Shakespeare knew the unities and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide, and useless to inquire. . . . As nothing is essential to the fable, but unity of action, and as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions, and, by circumscribing the extent of the drama, lessen its variety, I cannot think it much to be lamented, that they were not known by him, or not observed; . . . Such violations of rules merely positive become the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare . . . . (40)

Shakespeare did not make it easy for his audience to imagine things, especially places. After all, none of Shakespeare's plays take place in the England of his own time (Ludowyk 15): *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set in ancient Athens, *Titus Andronicus* in Christian Rome, *Hamlet* in medieval Denmark, *Othello* in 16th century Venice, and *The Tempest* on an altogether fictional island. There are no explicit references to contemporary events and people. In *Macbeth*, there are a few allusions to King James I, but nothing more. All of this sometimes makes it hard for the audience to imagine a world that they have never heard of, much less seen. Yet this fits in with Shakespeare's goals: adapting and creating places that everyone could imagine as they wished. To him, it did not matter whether people imagined the places realistically or not. His Illyria in *Twelfth Night* is nothing like the historical Illyria. In the play, it is some sort of romantic, remote, exotic place – just like Shakespeare's Verona or Shakespeare's Venice or Shakespeare's Vienna. It does not matter whether these places are realistically represented because this is not the point of theatre. After all, a play is a play – it is not real, and it does not have to realistically represent any kind of reality.

The way in which places are affirmed in Shakespeare's plays is completely based on words. They are affirmed, if and when necessary, by the characters on the stage (Sewel 208). The places are mentioned in the dialogue or implied in the action. This can be seen overtly in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* when Viola asks: "What country, friends, is this?" (I.ii.1), and the captain answers: "This is Illyria, lady" (I.ii.2). In *Macbeth,* the allusion to place is more subtle, for Scotland is first mentioned in act I, scene ii: "[…] Mark, King of Scotland, mark:" (I.ii.28). The word "Scotland" is only a postmodifier and falls into the background as the captain's speech progresses. Only later is it more explicit when Macduff cries: "O Scotland, Scotland!" (IV.iii.100).

Acting and Audience

So far, language and words have proved to be the cornerstone of Shakespeare's plays. They are sometimes the only means of dramatic

illusion that he uses. However, acting gives the performance its final form. In *Macbeth*, this is obvious in the banquet scene of act III, scene iv:

ROSS. What sights, my lord?

LADY MACBETH. I pray you, speak not. He grows worse and worse.

Question enrages him: at once, good night.

Stand not upon the order of your going,

But go at once.

LENNOX. Good night, and better health

Attend his Majesty.

LADY MACBETH. A kind good night to all.

[they leave]

MACBETH. It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood.

Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak.

Augurs and understood relations have

By maggot pies and choughs and rooks brought forth

The secret'st man of blood . . . . What is the night?

LADY MACBETH. Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

MACBETH. How say'st thou that Macduff denies his person At our great bidding?

LADY MACBETH. Did you send to him, sir?

MACBETH. I hear it by the way; but I will send. (III.iv.116-130)

This example shows that Shakespeare left many choices up to the director and the actors. There are no stage directions, and each production of the play has the chance to interpret the dynamic on its own. For example, Brown believes that the two lines of verse suggest that with the characters leaving comes a held silence so that the spectacle can dawn upon the audience (173). The actors have the spectators' attention and suspense. With each passing second, the audience

is waiting for the next word or the next move. What happens next is up to the director. Brown suggests that Macbeth is silent (173). The actor could choose to stand or sit, or he has already fallen some distance from the table and thrones after the appearance of Banquo's ghost earlier in the scene. Lady Macbeth could move first – she could turn to her husband, move away from him, sit, or move to watch where the last guest has gone. Her movement, or the lack thereof, decides what will happen next. However, it is important to highlight that her movement will not make a change in terms of the plot, for the plot is already set, but rather that Lady Macbeth's movements might set the tone for the way in which the dynamic between the characters will be perceived by the audience throughout the course of the play.

When later in the scene Macbeth asks "What is the night?" (III.iv.126) and "How say'st thou that Macduff denies his person / At our great bidding?" (III.iv.128), depending on the previous choice the director and actors made, the question can go in multiple directions: it could be an attempt to ask for help, it could be a response to Lady Macbeth's advances, it could be attempted casualness, and so on. Everything depends on the choices made previously. Yet, as it was already mentioned before, the choices made in this scene will only represent the director's interpretation of the scene and the dynamic that the production decided to capture. Shakespeare made no stage directions and thus left the production free reign. The only thing that is important in the scene is to capture the change in the atmosphere; nothing else. Shakespeare leaves everything up to interpretation because he is not interested in some deeper meaning – he leaves that up to the production, and moves on with the plot.

All of this leads to the conclusion that in Elizabethan theatre a lot was left up to the audience's imagination. As Coleridge puts it: "The stage in Shakespeare's time was a naked room with a blanket for a curtain; but he made it a field for monarchs" (qtd. in Sewel 205). The properties were meager, and the set design minimal, but Shakespeare used the limitations of Elizabethan theatre to his advantage. Notably,

he exposed the means of dramatic illusion to the audience in order to directly interact with them. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare breaks the fourth wall multiple times and thus makes the audience a part of the play.

One example of that can be found at the beginning of the play when Banquo describes the Weird Sisters: "you should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so." (I.iii.45-47). In the description, it is obvious that Shakespeare comments on Elizabethan theatre. Namely, at the time, it was typical for boys to play female parts (there were no female actors). Instead of fretting over unrealism, Shakespeare points it out and makes the best of what he has by fitting it to his own needs.

Similarly, Shakespeare addresses the audience directly at the end of the play: "We will perform in measure, time, and place. / So thanks to all at once and to each one," (V.viii.73-74). The end effect is blurring the lines between fiction and reality while at the same time being aware of it. Coleridge compares the state to dreaming: "audience voluntarily suspend the comparative powers of their minds in order to make themselves receptive to the imitation on stage" (qtd. in Jackson 19). As Johnson explains: "the spectators are always in their senses and know, from the first act to the last that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players" (38). At the same time, the audience is neither fully convinced of the reality of the actions being represented on stage nor is it fully aware that the actions are unreal. It is neither and both at the same time.

Consequently, the point of theatre is not in the imitation of reality, but rather in the representation of it. Coleridge explains: "If we want to witness mere pain, we can visit the hospitals: if we seek the exhibition of mere pleasure, we can find it in ball-rooms. It is the representation of it, not the reality, that we require, the imitation, and not the thing itself" (qtd. in Jackson 18).

Conclusion

To summarize, in Shakespeare's time, the set design was minimal, properties were scant, and costumes anachronistic, which led to language being the main element of dramatic illusion. Sometimes, as is the case in *Macbeth*, this makes certain scenes hard to stage. However, the Elizabethan audience was willing to suspend their disbelief and did not insist on realism since it was aware that theatre is only the representation of a reality, but not real per se. This connection with the audience is also the reason behind Shakespeare pointing out the means of dramatic illusion throughout the play. After all, a play represents reality, but it is not real – just like René Magritte's 1929 painting *The Treachery of Images* says: "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe). Magritte's painting shows a pipe; but an image, a representation of a pipe, not the real thing – it is not a pipe. By exposing dramatic illusion, Shakespeare makes the same point; it is only that Shakespeare's painting is not in colors but in words. Ultimately, this is why it is important to analyze Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as well as his other plays, in the context of Elizabethan theatre performance

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The Carnival Was Ringing Loudly Now: Bakhtin's Carnivalesque in the Decemberists' album Castaways and Cutouts

Abstract

This paper explores the intricate relationship between the Decemberists, a Portland-based indie folk band, and the concept of the carnivalesque as coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, along with related terms as articulated by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Through an analysis of the band's debut album *Castaways and Cutouts*, the paper argues that the Decemberists not only share aesthetic qualities with the concept of the Carnival but also embody the quintessential traits of the carnivalesque in both the instrumental and lyrical aspects of their music. The paper examines the band's lyrical and musical style, which draws from historical events, folklore, and myth, and positions their work within the framework of Bakhtin's concepts of the carnivalesque, grotesque realism, and the culture of popular laughter. By focusing on the voices of marginal characters and the inversion of traditional hierarchies, the Decemberists' music is shown to reflect the chaotic spirit of the Carnival, where societal norms of conduct are suspended in an act of decrowning and subverting the conventional. The study ultimately highlights how the Decemberists utilize these literary and philosophical concepts to create a distinctive musical identity which not only expresses the aforementioned concepts in a musical form but also turns them on their heads.

Keywords: The Decemberists, Bakhtin, The carnivalesque, music, popular laughter, grotesque realism, societal margins

The Decemberists and the Carnival

The Decemberists are a Portland-based indie folk band which has acquired a cult status amongst the more avid seekers of hidden gems of the music world. It is quite a strenuous task attempting to describe the intricacies of the uniqueness and eccentricity the Decemberists possess, but a good place to start is their idiosyncratic lyrical flair. From their start in 2000, the Decemberists' catalogue has been filled with musical retellings of old historical affairs, ancient folk tales, and folklore-inspired original stories with the band's lead singer Colin Meloy serving as *The Wise Old Sage* and a conduit between the tales and the listener. Meloy's lyrics are akin to a literary treasure trove, drawing heavily from classic literature, historical events, and a wide array of mythologies. This literary sensibility sets the Decemberists apart in the indie folk scene, as their songs often read like short stories or narrative poems, rich with vivid imagery and complex characters. As *Pitchfork* describes their debut album *Castaways and Cutouts*, "The Decemberists' is a land of ghosts and petticoats, 'crooked French-Canadians' gut-shot while running gin, bedwetters and gentlemen suitors, abandoned wastrels and pickpockets. It's also a realm of bizarre historical dreamscapes and snazzy wordplay" (Carr). Another *Pitchfork* article goes as far as to describe the band's lyrics as "Pulitzer-aspirant" ("The Top 100 Albums of 2000-04").

In addition to their lyrical peculiarities, the Decemberists are known for their eclectic musical style that is exceptionally congruous with the lyrics themselves. Aside from being categorized under the label of indie folk, their music has an exceedingly baroque and vintage quality. Their instrumentation often includes unconventional instruments like the accordion, zither, hurdy-gurdy, and bouzouki, giving their music a mystical, folksy streak. Hurdy-gurdy is one example that is specifically interesting to highlight since it is a zither-like instrument, which is a family of instruments that is "extremely important in traditional [European] music" (Grame 2), inspiring instruments such as the lyre, tamburitza, banjo, gusli, lute, and even the harpsichord. Historically, the instruments themselves have been

intertwined with mythology and folklore, such as "the Finnish kantele (zither), [which is] said to have been invented by the mythical culture hero, Wainamoinen, who made it from the bones of a giant fish and who alone could play" (Grame 1). The band's old-timey, as well as timeless, quality was not lost on the critics, who noted that "Hammond organ and subtle theremin flesh out the mix, each adding an anachronistic spin on the otherwise quaint jangle of strings and guitars hearkening to some dusty, distant past" (Carr).

Their unique and vintage musical expression, along with Meloy's frequent use of archaic words and phrases, further perpetuates their image of modern-day troubadours. The Decemberists are known for their narrative-driven lyrics, which often tell complex stories of love, epic tales, and historical themes, similar to how troubadours would craft elaborate lyrical stories of courtly love. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "A troubadour was . . . one who invented new poems, finding new verse for his elaborate love lyrics" ("Troubadour"). *Encyclopaedia Britannica* goes on to say that, "[The troubadours] display a certain consistency of style yet are far more varied than was once suspected" ("Troubadour"). This enthralling combination of variation and consistency is more than applicable to the Decemberists' musical expression, which, while remaining on the folk-inspired storytelling trail, includes a panoply of lyrical and musical directions. Conjointly, the northern French counterparts of the troubadours, the trouvères, were renowned for their epic poetry and are best known for creating the medieval form of poetry known as the *chanson de geste* (song of heroic deeds):

> The earlier chansons are heroic in spirit and theme. They focus on great battles or feuds. . . . After the 13th century, elements of romance and courtly love came to be introduced, and the austere early poems were supplemented by *enfances* (youthful exploits) of the heroes and fictitious adventures of their ancestors and descendants. ("Chanson de Geste")

All the described phases and iterations of the trouvères' *chanson de geste* can be distinctly seen in different phases of the Decemberists' musical expression. Heroism and adventure are not lacking, especially in their earlier albums – in songs such as "Mariner's Revenge Song," the tale of two mariners who get trapped inside the belly of a whale, or "The Legionnaire's Lament," which will be further explored later in the paper. Elements of romance and courtly love are ubiquitous throughout their oeuvre, but a relevant example is "O Valencia!," a song from their 2006 album *The Crane Wife*, straightforwardly described by the online music encyclopaedia *Genius* as having "a plot not unlike that of Romeo and Juliet: Guy loves girl, girl loves guy, but their families are feuding, and alas, the girl dies" ("The Decemberists – O Valencia!").

This epithetizing of the Decemberists with the troubadour poetical tradition is something that has been numerously utilized by critics. *Pitchfork* prefaces their review of the Decemberists' 2024 album *As It Ever Was, So It Will Be Again* by saying, "On their first new album in six years, the folk troubadours balance out-of-time balladry with a mature sensibility that's attuned to melancholy and mortality in the present" (Deusner). Correspondingly, the UK-based music webzine *Drowned in Sound* describes them as, "bookish troubadours, roguish seafarers and intrepid storytellers weaving folk and indie pop together with engrossing narrative clarity" (Chigley). *Back to Rockville*, The Kansas City Star's musical blog, takes a more detailed approach, noting that, "Lyrically, they visit other eras and historical periods, evoking the times of minstrels and troubadours and employing antiquated language, like 'picaresque', 'infanta' and characters like the Barrow Boy and the Chimbley Sweep" (Finn).

The aforementioned comparison to troubadours notwithstanding, the Decemberists are more similar to minstrels. According to Anastasi, "In medieval times, a minstrel was a versatile performer who entertained audiences with music, storytelling, and poetry. They were often considered to be an itinerant class of entertainers, traveling from town to town to perform for a living". The difference

between the troubadours and minstrels is further elucidated by the fact that "unlike minstrels, troubadours were usually aristocrats or courtiers" (Anastasi). Troubadour songs "were performed for the nobility rather than the general public," and minstrels were "known to perform at fairs and festivals" (Anastasi). In this regard, minstrels symbolize a clear paradigm shift and the creation of a popular culture that is separate from the one monopolized by the nobility. In a way, they were an expression of the Dionysian aspect of human nature, described by Coolidge as "that of drunkenness . . . an art of enchantment, of self-forgetfulness, of ecstatic revelry; it celebrates a breaking of bonds and forms, a limitless and exuberant vitality" (7), which, alongside the more measured Apollonian aspect, forms the central dichotomy of human nature according to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, most notably his work *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche). The terms allude to the Greek gods Dionysus and Apollo, gods of hedonism and wisdom respectively, which is a deliberate reference to the fact that this idea of hedonistic drunkenness, as well as the embracing of the human body, was a celebrated aspect of the human condition in pagan European traditions before being abated by Christianity and its insistence on piety, virtue and temperance. In one of their chapters on paganism, the Harvard University website notes, "Many people have been drawn to Paganism because it affirms the sacredness of their bodies, their sexuality, and their gender expression" ("Sacred Bodies"). G. K. Chesterton, an English author, philosopher and notable Christian apologist, echoes the sentiment from a critical perspective, claiming that, "The pagan set out, with admirable sense, to enjoy himself. By the end of his civilization, he had discovered that a man cannot enjoy himself and continue to enjoy anything else" (Chesterton 88).

Despite this, seldom is this Dionysian frenzy more conspicuous than in the pre-Lenten festive season of Shrovetide, better known as the Carnival. In contrast to the period of great pious mourning it precedes, the Carnival is a period of mass parades, hedonism, earthly pleasures, and folly, where the participants would put on masks and indulge in carnal desires. The carnival takes its origin to Anthesteria,

the ancient Greek celebration of Dionysus. In some respects, the Carnival is an example of a heterotopia as coined by Michel Foucault and described as "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault and Miskowiec 3). The Carnival, in particular, could be described as a heterotopia of deviation, "those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are place" (Foucault and Miskowiec 4), albeit one in which the whole of society participates, not just the deviants on its margins.

The aesthetics and the exuberant expression present in the Carnival have been a literary mode in a plethora of literary sources, thus priming the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin to coin the term carnivalesque to codify and further elucidate that phenomenon. In describing the essence of the Carnival, Bakhtin notes:

> This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 33)

The subsiding of hierarchy, freedom from the established norms, and forms of decent behaviour, or simply "the joyful relativity of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position" (Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky* 124), are all characteristics of the Carnival, which Bakhtin affixes to the label of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin clarifies these somewhat vague references to a distinct phenomenon by outlining key characteristics of the carnivalesque:

> The carnivalistic act of crowning/decrowning is, of course, permeated with carnival categories (with the logic of the carnival world): free and familiar contact (this is very clearly manifest

> in decrowning), carnivalistic mesalliances (slave-king), profanation (playing with the symbols of higher authority), and so on. (Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky* 125)

Even still, the term carnivalesque remains vague and not fully explainable to someone who is not fully aware of the aesthetics of the Carnival. In this sense, a superior signifier of the carnivalesque is perhaps a painting such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* (fig. 1) or Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (fig. 2), the latter of which, among its paraphernalia of distinct characters, even contains an enlarged aforementioned hurdy-gurdy. Both of these paintings contain a variety of chaotic characters of various backgrounds indulging and engaging in mischief with a vivid undertone of the grotesque and profane. During carnival, people engage in festivities that mock authority, celebrate bodily functions, and revel in the grotesque. It is a time when the high is brought low, and the low is elevated, creating a space for free expression and equality or, more precisely, "a gay and free expression of 'our second nature' in which gay folly was opposed to 'piousness and fear of God'" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 260).

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin introduced quite a few noteworthy terms alongside the carnivalesque, terms which undoubtedly have their own sovereignty but are still inseparable from the carnivalesque. Those terms are grotesque realism, decrowning, and the culture of popular laughter, each of which will be subsequently explained. This paper will argue that the Decemberists not only share an aesthetic quality with and allude to the Carnival but also that the quintessential traits of the carnivalesque are present in their catalogue, especially their debut album *Castaways and Cutouts*.

The Voice of the Marginal

As Bakhtin points out numerous times in his elucidations on the Carnival, a deliberate lulling of the traditional hierarchical structures

is its defining feature (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 75). This state of affairs is perpetuated not only by the general populace but also by the power structure and the people on top of the traditional hierarchical order, which is being relativised in the Carnival. In some European countries, such as Croatia or the Netherlands, the mayor of a city hands over the keys to the city to the Carnival Master, Prince Carnival, or the Clown. In medieval times, the keys to the city referred to the real keys of the walled city gates, while today the gesture is purely symbolic. The message is obvious: the mayor symbolically relinquishes his official authority, indicating a temporary suspension of the usual social order. This reflects the traditional spirit of the Carnival, which is about turning the world upside down, where norms are challenged and the community indulges in a period of freedom and fun, prioritizing chaos over order and giving the people the ability to live out the life of a stranger by wearing masks and breaking social constraints. By allowing a temporary reversal of roles, those in authority can strengthen their connection with the community. This shows that they are part of the same social fabric and can engage in the same traditions and cultural practices as everyone else, which helps to humanize authority figures and builds trust and camaraderie between leaders and citizens. Giving the keys of the city to the Clown also symbolizes granting a voice to the unheard and marginal elements of society:

> Carnival travesties: it crowns and uncrowns, inverts rank and exchanges roles, makes sense from nonsense and nonsense of sense. Its logic is 'the logic of the turnabout,' of 'the inside-out.' It is the systematic parody of systems and points to the arbitrariness of all norms and rules. (Morson 12)

This spirit of abdicating traditional hierarchical structures and giving a voice to the marginal is very much reflected throughout *Castaways and Cutouts*, as even the name itself suggests. Most of the songs on the album are either autobiographical accounts narrated by a variety of vibrant characters, realistic and fantastical alike, or more heterodiegetic narrations about these characters. The charac-

ters in question are exceedingly diverse in their roles and dispositions, but they are mostly ordinary people on the margins of polite society, often with tragic stories to tell. The album's open track, "Leslie Anne Levine," speaks of a girl born in a ditch who passes away there along with her mother only hours after being born: "My name is Leslie Anne Levine / My mother birthed me down a dry ravine / My mother birthed me far too soon / Born at nine and dead at noon" ("Leslie Anne Levine," verses 1-4). However, this is not the end for our protagonist, whose spirit still roams fifteen years after her death: "Fifteen years gone now / I still wander this parapet / And shake my rattle bone / Fifteen years gone now / I still cling to the petticoat / Of the girl who died with me" ("Leslie Anne Levine," verses 5-10). This, in a way, puts this song in the framework of magical realism, defined as "matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction" ("Magical Realism").

Interestingly enough, some authors such as David K. Danow in his book *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque* make a striking connection between the carnivalesque and magical realism, especially regarding the portrayal of death, with Danow claiming: "In magical realism, death figures in the carnivalesque sense that Bakhtin perceives in popular-festive imagery; it allows for (re)birth and new life" (Danow 40). Thus, as Danow suggests, magical realism depicts death in a manner that resonates with Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, viewing death not merely as an end but also as a beginning. It is a part of a cyclical process that allows for renewal, transformation, and the possibility of new life. Lent, the period that directly follows the Carnival, derives its name from the Old English word lǽncte, meaning "lengthening" or, less literally, springtime, which commonly symbolizes rebirth and a new life. Bakhtin himself comments on this theme of rebirth and renewal, and its connection to popular-festive imagery:

> All popular-festive images were made to serve this new historical awareness, from common masquerades and mystifications (whose role in Renaissance literature is immense, especially in

> Cervantes) to more complex carnival forms. This was a mobilization of all the century-old celebrations: the gay farewell to winter, to Lent, to the old year, to death; and the gay welcome to spring, to Shrovetide, to the slaughtering of cattle, to weddings, and to the new year. In a word, it was the mustering of all the long-matured images of change and renewal, of growth and abundance. (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 122)

This connection between magical realism and the carnivalesque seems congruent with the example of Leslie Anne Levine, who challenges the traditional view of death, continuing to live on as a spirit in the realm between the physical and the spiritual.

The listeners learn some more background information on Leslie Anne Levine and her mother in the subsequent verses: "Fifteen years gone now / I still wail from these catacombs / And curse my mother's name / Fifteen years gone now / Still a wastrel mesallied / Has brought this fate on me" ("Leslie Anne Levine," verses 15-20). When applying some definitional clarifications to the verses, a tale of two people who decide to disregard societal expectations of inter-hierarchical relationships becomes patent. The phrase wastrel messallied – wastrel meaning a good-for-nothing person and mesallied denoting a person married to a person thought to be unsuitable or of a lower social position – makes manifest the relations between the aforementioned characters. Leslie Anne Levine's mother, an upper-class woman, married a man of a lower class, presumably to the dismay of her parents. This is a safe assumption to make on account of the setting, which is hinted at being Victorian England where interclass marriage was looked down upon: "Lost and lodged inside a flue / Back in 1842" ("Leslie Anne Levine," verses 13-14). This undoubtedly solidifies the position of both characters being truly marginal in the context of the society they were brought up in.

"Leslie Anne Levine" is far from being the only song that gives a voice to the more marginal and gritty elements of society. In the song "Odalisque," which was a term to designate a female slave in a

Turkish harem, the listeners are introduced to an odalisque who tries to end her life, presumably after years of abuse from her master(s): "They've come to find you, Odalisque / As the light dies horribly / On a fire escape you walk / All rare and resolved to drop" ("Odalisque," verses 1-4). In another song, "The Legionnaire's Lament," the protagonist is a homesick and helpless soldier of the French Foreign Legion during the conquest of Algeria from 1830 to 1847. There is nothing that differentiates this particular soldier from any other he shares a position with. Every soldier is just as replaceable and, therefore, marginal as the other. There is no reason this soldier in particular was chosen to tell his tale, which makes his predicament that much more tragic. The song starts with an almost cheery melody that seems almost incongruent with the sombre lyrics: "I'm a legionnaire / Camel in disrepair / Hoping for a frigid air / To come passing by / I am on reprieve / Lacking my joie de vivre / Missing my gay Paris / In this desert dry" ("The Legionnaire's Lament," verses 1-8). The subsequent verses continue to solidify the idea that the nameless soldier is fully replaceable and essentially sent to his death by his nameless higher-ups, the fact he himself seems aware of: "And I wrote my girl / Told her I would not return / I'm terribly taken a turn / For the worse now I fear" ("The Legionnaire's Lament," verses 9-12). In normal circumstances, this soldier's account would never be shared. Thus, the decrowned – here represented by a regular soldier – is crowned anew, and his voice is amplified for the duration of the song. Here we see the carnivalesque elements of "crowning/decrowning" and "free and familiar contact" (Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky* 125) which blur the line between the mainstream and the marginal and invert expectations.

The album's last track, "California One/Youth and Beauty Brigade," is perhaps the clearest articulation of the band's wish to give the listeners a glimpse into the world of the marginal: "We're calling all bed wetters and ambulance chasers / Poor picker-pockets, bring 'em in / Come join the youth and beauty brigade / We're lining up the light-loafered / And the bored bench warmers / Castaways and cutouts, fill it up / Come join the youth and beauty brigade / Nothing will stand in our way" ("California One/Youth and Beauty Brigade,"

verses 26-33). This is a direct invitation to all the proclaimed castaways and cutouts, the people on the margins of the context they find themselves in, to join the unmistakably carnivalesque and Dionysian festivity, where everyone is concomitantly under a mask and where masks are obsolete altogether. It is hardly a coincidence that the album takes its name from a phrase used in this track, which serves as an anthem for the outcasts and forgotten figures explored throughout the album. "Castaways and cutouts," simply put, refers to people stranded and abandoned, discarded, overlooked, and reduced to mere shapes without depth.

Grotesque Realism

Besides the inverting of hierarchical structures, a key aspect that defines the very essence of the carnivalesque is that of hedonism and indulgence; behaviours that are usually highly looked down upon and regulated by societal norms become permissible behind the Carnival's masks. The chaos and depravity present in the Carnival are strictly in opposition to the Lenten period, which it precedes, a period commemorating the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring Satan's temptation. One could say that, from a religious perspective, the Carnival represents a temporary capitulation to those very temptations. Bakhtin coined the term grotesque realism to describe the aesthetic of this hedonistic leitmotif of the Carnival, often referred to as the grotesque body. According to Bakhtin, "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (*Rabelais* 19-20).

Much like the carnivalesque inverting of the established hierarchy present, grotesque realism aims to invert the sacred Christian idea of the spiritual being superior to the physical by degrading humans to mere corruptible flesh. The Christian view of the body as a mere vessel for the soul which will be subject to God's judgement is made obsolete. The grotesque nature of the carnival is reflected in

the excessive consumption of food and drink, highlighting the body's indulgence. The mouth, as the gateway to the body, becomes a focal point, emphasizing the acts of eating, drinking, and the overindulgence that follows, such as burping. All these activities underscore the mouth's central role in this feast of excess. By using the literary trope of grotesque realism, the author deliberately pursues to accentuate human degradation.

As Bakhtin notes on the intent of grotesque realism, "Not only parody in its narrow sense but all the other forms of grotesque realism degrade, bring down to earth, turn their subject into flesh" (*Rabelais* 20). This purposeful degradation is, contrary to possible intuitive interpretations of its meaning, not considered as a condemnation but is rather devoid of any negative connotations whatsoever. In the Medieval Grotesque Carnival, the gap is bridged between the sacred and the profane. As Lübker points out, "Spirit does not come from above, but from the belly, buttocks and genitals, and there is, expressed in this manner, a mockery of the predominant Christian notion of truth and meaning" (1). This concept, much like the one of the carnivalesque, has a sort of a populist streak. Bakhtin claims:

> In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people . . . the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time an all-people's character. (*Rabelais* 19)

All things considered, the trope of grotesque realism is closely intertwined with the overarching idea of the carnivalesque. As Lübker notes, grotesque realism connects the concepts of the earthly and the spiritual, the sacred and the profane, permanently agglutinating the two, therefore relativising truth itself. Bakhtin further explicates this, claiming that grotesque realism rejects the societal stigma around certain bodily shapes, forms, and acts alike, and presents them as "deeply positive" and "universal" (*Rabelais* 19). This is often achieved

by presenting the human body in a degraded form, overly accentuating certain body parts and describing bodies performing unusual or societally unacceptable acts. Much like in the case of the aesthetics of the Carnival, the motif of the grotesque body is most vividly expressed through visual media. One of the more relevant examples of this is Gustave Doré's *Gargantua's Meal* (fig. 3), which he created as one of the illustrations for Rabelais' pentalogy *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

Instances of grotesque realism can be seen in some of the songs included in *Castaways and Cutouts*, the aforementioned song "Odalisque" being the most obvious example. The portrayal of the grotesque body is imbued throughout the lyrics. This is mostly used as a tool to characterize Odalisque, a Turkish sex slave who is abused at the hands of her masters as a mere puppet and to objectify her in an attempt to display her helplessness. In the second stanza, this precise point is clearly illustrated: "And when they find you, Odalisque / They will rend you, terribly / Stitch from stitch 'til all / Your linen limbs will fall" ("Odalisque," verses 5-8). The manner in which the verses are formulated shows clear intent to evoke an image of a puppet or a doll rather than that of a person. Not only is Odalisque's value reduced from the spiritual to that of mere flesh and blood, which is often the aim of grotesque realism, but she is also even further reduced to fibres of flax that bind the fragile faux limbs of a doll together. A doll has no autonomy and no ability to resist the more powerful forces which control its body, so the symbolism here is patent. If degradation and, as Bakhtin accentuates, "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract" (*Rabelais* 19) and its transfer to the bodily and profane are central notions of grotesque realism, this is taken to its logical, provocative extreme in "Odalisque." Subsequent verses further describe bodies and their intermingling in a grotesque manner: "Lay your belly under mine / Naked under me, under me / Such a filthy dimming shine / The way you kick and scream, kick and scream" ("Odalisque," verses 26-29).

Similar depictions are presented in "A Cautionary Song." Here, the listeners follow the story of a single mother who sneaks out of her house at night and sells her body to sailors in the harbour. The grotesque elements of the song are present in vivid descriptions of graphic sexual intercourse and are further exemplified by the taboo nature of the act itself. The body is not sacred but is a vessel to earn money to feed oneself. In addition, due to the abundant use of archaic terms and phrases and a structure that reflects a more classical style of writing that distances the narrative from contemporary language, there is a strong sense of defamiliarisation that the listener is struck with. Descriptions of crass, distressing sexual violence are contrasted with an elevated writing style, much like what British author Anthony Burgess achieved by contrasting extreme violence perpetrated by the droogs, a gang of violent teens, with their use of the made-up Nadsat slang in his novella *A Clockwork Orange*. This literary technique is present in the following verses: "And they row her out to packets / Where the sailors' sorry racket calls for maidenhead / And she's scarce above the gunwales / When her clothes fall to a bundle and she's laid in bed / On the upper deck / And so she goes from ship to ship / Her ankles clasped, her arms so rudely pinioned / 'Till at last she's satisfied / The lot of the marina's teeming minions / In their opinions" ("A Cautionary Song," verses 16-25). Even though much of the album's lyrics are written in a similar fashion, this archaic, more classical lyrical expression reaches its extreme in "A Cautionary Song," thus the defamiliarisation effect is hardly coincidental. This song in particular opens the door to another key aspect of the intersection between the carnivalesque inversion of hierarchies and the Decemberists' emphasis on the marginal. A simple mistake in interpreting this emphasis on the marginal, whether it is specific people, actions, or general concepts, would be to assume that it is equivalent to the celebration of the marginal. Yet, the Decemberists do no such thing; instead, they give the listener a glimpse into the world that exists on the margins, both in its righteousness and its depravity. There are numerous examples of this, but the sexual deviancy of the sailors who express themselves at night is a strong one.

In the album's signature track, "Here I Dreamt I Was an Architect," the line between the sacred and the profane is made thin and the two concepts are intertwined together through vivid poetic imagery. In the first stanza, the listeners are introduced to a soldier, presumably a German soldier, who "marched the streets of Birkenau" ("Here I Dreamt I Was an Architect," verse 2). Desolate and glum imagery triggered by this introduction is in a striking juxtaposition to the imagery of fanfare that accompanies it: "And I recall in spring / The perfume that the air would bring / To the indolent town / Where the barkers call the moon down / The carnival was ringing loudly now" ("Here I Dreamt I Was an Architect," verses 3-7). The juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane and their unification, which is typical of grotesque realism, is presented peculiar way in this song. Instead of the typical juxtaposition of religious and grotesque imagery commonly employed to convey this message, this song contrasts the grim imagery of concentration camps and war, evoking a reaction in listeners akin to that produced by classic grotesque depictions, with pleasant olfactory imagery and the comforting symbolism of a carnival.

The Culture of Popular Laughter

Another interesting connection "A Cautionary Song" in particular has to the carnivalesque is through the culture of popular laughter, as coined by Bakhtin. Along with grotesque realism, the culture of popular laughter is a term inseparable from the carnivalesque. Bakhtin's culture of popular laughter refers to the collective and communal nature of humour, satire, and festivity in medieval and early modern societies, particularly as expressed in folk traditions, carnivals, and public spectacles. According to Bakhtin, this culture of laughter was characterised by its ability to subvert and challenge official norms, hierarchies, and serious, solemn forms of culture. Despite its truly tragic and sorrowful subject matter, dealing with themes of exploitation, sexual violence, and the burdens a mother endures to provide for her child, there are subtle elements of irony and humour

in "A Cautionary Song" that might escape the listener at first glance. *Genius* refers to the song as "an extended 'your mama' joke" ("The Decemberists – A Cautionary Song"), a description which proves to be at least partially justified. Following the description of the gruesome endeavours the mother goes through to feed her child, Meloy seemingly addresses the listener and proclaims: "So be kind to your mother / Though she may seem an awful bother / And the next time she tries to feed you collard greens / Remember what she does when you're asleep" ("A Cautionary Song," verses 31-34). As mentioned before, the carnivalesque often involves the mixing of the sacred and the profane, the high and the low. In this song, the ordinary act of a mother providing for her child is intertwined with the horrific reality of what she endures to do so. The mundane, in this case feeding a child, is juxtaposed with the grotesque, in this case, her exploitation, blurring the line between what is considered normal and what is deeply unsettling. The song's vivid descriptions of the mother's body being exploited, such as "her ankles clasped, her arms so rudely pinioned" ("A Cautionary Song," verse 22), reflect Bakhtin's notion of grotesque realism in which the body is portrayed in a raw, exaggerated, and often degrading manner. Along with the classic elements of grotesque realism, here we also see the act of the un-privatization of one's body. Bakhtin clarifies the previously described elements:

> The bodily lower stratum of grotesque realism still fulfilled its unifying, degrading, uncrowning, and simultaneously regenerating functions. However divided, atomized, individualized were the 'private' bodies, Renaissance realism did not cut off the umbilical cord which tied them to the fruitful womb of earth. Bodies could not be considered for themselves; they represented a material bodily whole and therefore transgressed the limits of their isolation. The private and the universal were still blended in a contradictory unity. (*Rabelais* 23)

This focus on the physicality of the mother's suffering ties into the grotesque imagery often found in the culture of popular laughter. Even though, at first glance, the vast majority of the December-

ists' discography is filled with songs of rather melancholic, forlorn, and bittersweet substance, in an interview for *CBS morning*, Colin Meloy notes that "humour is an important part of the music that [he] write[s]" ("The Decemberists' Lead Singer Talks New Album and Upcoming World Tour" 1:37). He goes on to add that "there is a way to make something deadly serious . . . and yet is also really funny" ("The Decemberists' Lead Singer Talks New Album and Upcoming World Tour" 1:44). In other words, the merging of the dichotomies – the central element of grotesque realism, which attempts to blend the sacred with the profane – is a reoccurring element in the work of the Decemberists. As in both grotesque realism and the culture of popular laughter, the Decemberists' simultaneous use of seriousness and humour creates an effect of defamiliarization, and even revulsion, which, in turn, questions the established forms of musical expression and interpretation.

Conclusion

Upon inspection, the application of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque to the Decemberists' album *Castaways and Cutouts* becomes patent, revealing how the band's aesthetics in combination with the implicit lyrical and instrumental techniques reflect the quintessential elements of the Carnival as described and codified by Bakhtin. By analysing the album's integration of concepts such as grotesque realism, the culture of popular laughter, and the chaotic carnivalesque rejection of traditional hierarchies, it becomes evident to a compelling degree how the Decemberists engage with Bakhtin's ideas. The band's use of historical themes, magical realism and defamiliarising language, alongside its eclectic character-based storytelling, serves as a medium for inverting expectations in a classic carnivalesque manner. This inversion is particularly evident in how the album portrays diverse figures who are on the margins of their respective societies or whose voices are not dominant in their particular contexts. However, this is not executed in a sappy or overly pathetic way, with the album noting both the righteousness and the

depravity of the marginal aspects of society. The incorporation of grotesque realism, where the absurd and the macabre intermingle with everyday life, further emphasizes the album's alignment with Bakhtin's theories. This blending of the grotesque with the mundane opens a new unexplored heterotopic space. The Decemberists' use of humour, combined with their elaborate storytelling, pushes the boundaries of traditional expression which is exceedingly congruent with the chaotic and grotesque spirit of the Carnival.

Alongside their use of Bakhtinian elements, an unavoidable appeal of the Decemberists is their compelling ability to combine them with an overarching aesthetic of modern-day troubadours, creating an idiosyncrasy of exceedingly compatible components. This aesthetic has been often noted by critics, making a significant contribution to discussions about the ability of modern music to replicate the visual, musical, and lyrical specificities of bygone musical forms. Ultimately, *Castaways and Cutouts* exemplifies how the carnivalesque can be effectively applied to contemporary music. By leveraging Bakhtin's framework, this analysis highlights how the album engages with themes such as the subversion of the conventional, amplification of the traditionally unamplified, and the carnivalesque rebirth. The Decemberists' work offers a thought-provoking example of how musical narratives can intersect with literary modes and techniques, affirming the enduring relevance of Bakhtin's theories in understanding modern artistic expressions.

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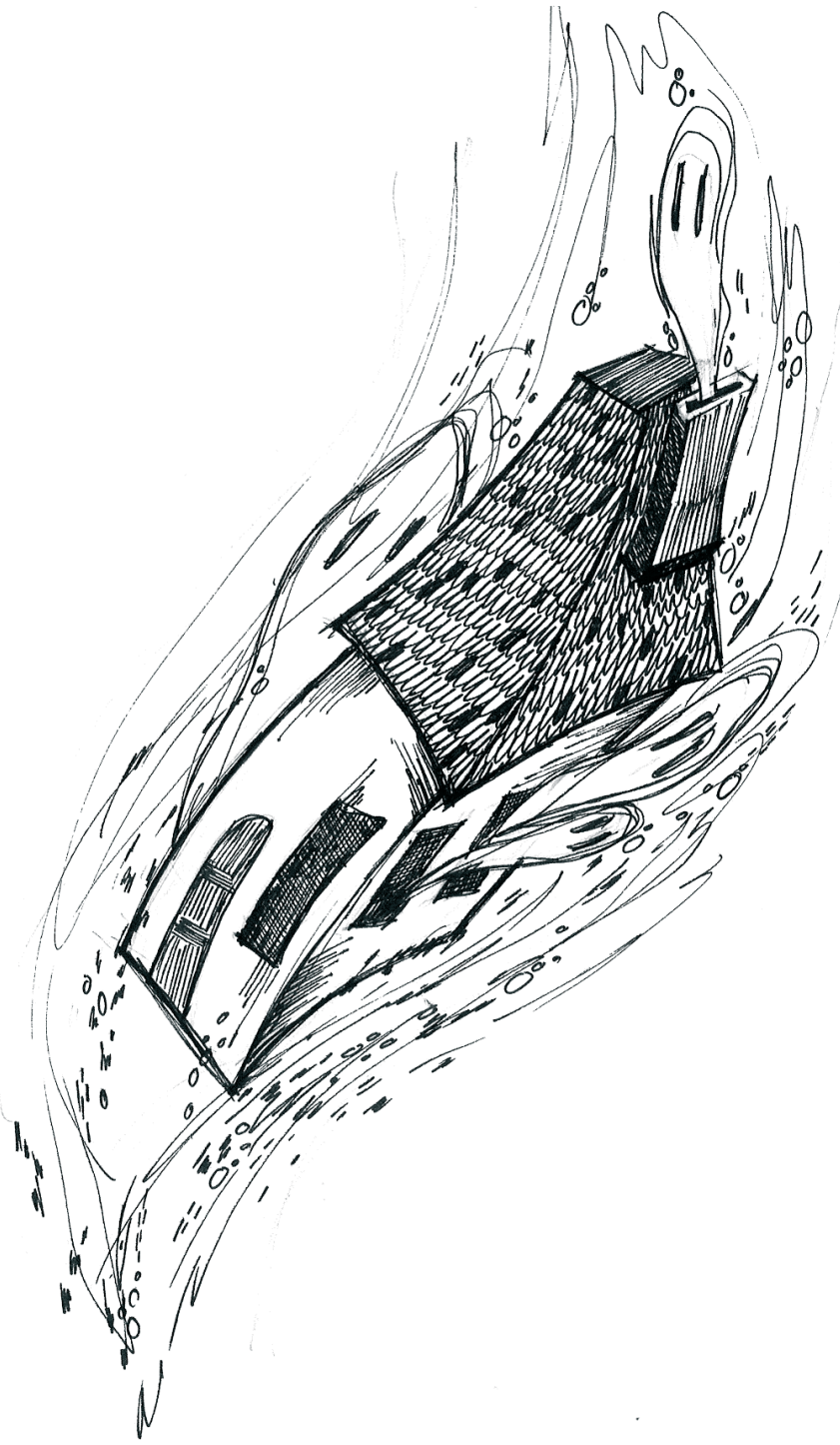
Appendices

Figure 1: *The Fight between Carnival* and Lent by Pieter Bruegel

Figure 2: *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch

Figure 3: *Gargantua's Meal* by Gustave Doré



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Virginia Woolf's Unhaunted House: "A Haunted House" and Genre Experimentation

Abstract

Virginia Woolf, the British modernist writer admired for her use of the stream of consciousness, published a short story called "A Haunted House" in 1921. The story focuses on two couples – one living and one ghostly. The presence of ghosts and their importance characterizes this work as a ghost story, but Woolf does not have an entirely conventional approach. The typical conventions of the genre do not oppose her inclination to experiment. This is mainly a result of her own artistic expression and the literary period she wrote in. By comparing and thoroughly analyzing elements of both Poe's and Woolf's ghost stories, this paper will show that, despite Woolf's usage of ghosts and the paranormal, "A Haunted House" subverts the conventions of the genre.

Key words: Woolf, ghost story, haunted house, genre experimentation, modernism

Introduction

One has to be familiar with the conventions of the ghost story and its origins before recognizing the difference in Woolf's approach to the genre. Ghost stories whose purpose is "to make readers feel pleasurably afraid – are of relatively recent origin" (Herbert 181). However, ghosts appear in every literary period, so it can be said that "ghost story appears better adapted to the climate of formalist or psychoanalytic, rather than historical, readings" (Smajic 1107). Gothic literature is, however, most reminiscent of haunted places,

depictions of ghosts and the uncanny atmosphere. "In a way, Gothic literature conjoins the expected mundane environment and protagonists with the unexpected and disturbing outcome" (Botting qt. in Romić 1). Even though the ghost story has various recognizable elements, atmosphere and setting prove to be its focal points. "Usually, the estranged and uncanny setting evokes a primary change of emotions in the characters, whereas other elements, such as curses, dark secrets, sublime scenery, and supernatural entities shape the action of the story and compel an intense and tragic resolution" (Hogle qtd. in Romić 1). As Smith claims, the European Romantic movement "Sturm und Drang" produced the predecessors of Gothic fiction in Europe. These predecessors contributed to the establishment of the main features of the genre and they heavily influenced the prominent American authors, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, and others (Smith qtd. in Romić).

Ghosts are not exclusive to ghost stories for they appear in other genres as well, for instance tragedy (Hamlet's father), but ghost stories are centered around the following main plot line: "the dead intrude upon the living" (Herbert 181). Ghost stories faced the increase of popularity in the nineteenth century and the appearance of first anthologies at the beginning of the twentieth century proves their literary significance. Daniel Defoe's "The Apparition of Mrs Veal" is considered to be the first modern ghost story (Fleischhack and Schenkel 11). It is argued that they rose in popularity, because they "challenged the prevailing forces of secularism and science" (Birch 3140). Ghosts and other paranormal phenomena seem to be unreachable to science, which makes them even scarier and showcases science's inability to empirically measure every phenomenon. "Instead the psychical ghost revived the fictional roots of the ghost story itself. What may have limited the psychical ghost's potential as a scientific subject was what made it successful as a story" (Delgado 249). Even Carl Gustav Jung, the prominent Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist, could not unravel the reasons and interpretations behind ghosts, despite witnessing their presence:

> I myself cannot brag about any original research in this field, but declare without hesitation that I was able to witness enough of these phenomena to be wholly convinced that they are real. However, I cannot explain them, and hence cannot decide on any of the usual interpretations. (Jung qtd. in Richter 67)

Additionally, Woolf said that the increase in production of ghost stories "testifies to the fact that our sense of our own ghostliness has much quickened" (Delgado and Beer 236). This is in line with the modern tendencies to explain and depict the increasing alienation among humans. The fact that "the 20th century was prolific in ghost stories" (Birch 3143) supports Woolf's claim. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the British Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was conducting "investigations of the unseen world" (Delgado 236). Furthermore, Woolf believes that modern hauntings should be read in relation to the mysteriousness and incomprehensibility of the psyche (Young and Bailey 35). It can be said that Woolf does not put terror in the forefront of the ghost story, but rather its possibility to offer a deeper insight into the complex human mind. The following text tries to show how Woolf depicts time, place, ghosts and their nature in relation to the genre's conventions.

Redefining Time and Place

Time and place, especially the latter, have an important role in ghost stories. Woolf chooses what one would call a conventional haunting place – a house which used to be a home of a now deceased couple: "Ghost sightings frequently occur in the betwixt spaces of the home: doorways, windows, even stairwells" (Kröger and Anderson 6). However, she personifies the house by giving it a voice. This voice is surprisingly a comforting one for it repeats the words: "safe, safe, safe," (Woolf 16) to the ghostly couple and it also mentions the buried treasure. The haunted house is certainly the most dominant literary trope of Gothic literature. "The origin of the fear of haunted places, especially houses, rises because of one's primal feeling of comfort and security behind the walls of his/her home" (Romić 22). Unlike normal

houses, haunted ones can showcase unusual abilities or tendencies, often resembling human beings. Just like ghosts, haunted houses can have human characteristics, but they are never devoid of paranormal activity. "The duality of a haunted house – being a character and setting simultaneously, arises in literature as a signalization of one's state of mind that replicates the deteriorating and frightening conditions of the house" (Romić 23). This decay is often contagious and spreads to every living being that enters a haunted house. The characters' inner downfall, either moral or mental, is thus projected onto the house which is, just like the mind and the soul, susceptible to atrophy:

> The most noticeable thing about it seemed to be its great age. None of the walls had fallen, yet the stones appeared to be in a condition of advanced decay. Perhaps the careful eye would have discovered the beginning of a break in the front of the building, a crack making its way from the top down the wall until it became lost in the dark waters of the lake. (Poe 23).

Edgar Allan Poe, often regarded as the father of the detective story, also used ghosts and haunting images to portray inner turmoil and the complexities of the psyche. The block quote, coming from Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher", depicts cracks which foreshadow the fall of the house of Usher, of Roderick's total descent into madness. Crow believes Poe's idea of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is to portray a "ruined plantation house of the declining, or decadent, southern aristocracy" (Romić 388). Nevertheless, it showcases a prime example of a haunted house. The short story follows a young man who decides to visit his friend Roderick Usher after receiving a letter. In Poe's short story the psychological decay is apparent and, as Hill claims, the House infects everyone with madness (qtd. in Romić 48). The young man immediately sees and feels the rotting atmosphere around the house:

> There was a coldness, a sickening of the heart, in which I could discover nothing to lighten the weight I felt. What was it, I asked myself, what was it that was so fearful, so frightening in my view of the House of Usher? (Poe 22)

Unlike Woolf, who gives a voice to the house, Poe's treatment of the house is gloomier and more stereotypical. His poem "The Haunted Palace", which is mentioned in the short story "The Fall of the House of Usher", is ghostly and, just like Woolf's short story, deeply concerned with the internal world. The first stanza is occupied by the description of Thought, or rather its physical manifestation in the form of a radiant palace. The palace is decorated with various grandiose banners, but Poe proceeds: "This – all this – was in the olden / time long ago" (Poe lines 11-12). The penultimate stanza is contrasted with the bright description of the palace: "But evil things, in robes of sorrow / Assailed the monarch's high estate" (Poe lines 33-34). Monarch's once glorious high estate is subject to decay when it is faced with affliction. Brightness and glory that filled the palace are "but a dim-remembered story / Of the old time entombed" (Poe lines 39-40).

Woolf also handles time in a haunting manner, for the ghosts always seem to be one step ahead of the narrator who desperately wants to catch them but never does. It is important to note that "the disruptions in space and time in the ghost-story format exceed the usual conventions of an episode as an isolated moment" (Young and Bailey 34). The usage of such literary devices should not be surprising for high Modernists, such as Woolf, deal with personal and textual inwardness (Matek 98). It is apparent that Woolf distorts the notions of time and place to add to the story's dynamic and mysteriousness. She certainly experiments with the notions of time and space, but they are simultaneously the most conventional out of all four elements discussed in the paper. Unlike Woolf, Poe is not concerned with time distortion, but he does also use time to evoke anxiety and dread in Roderick. He is afraid of inevitable future events that relentlessly haunt his mind and soul:

> I fear what will happen in the future, not for what happens, but for the result of what happens. I have, indeed, no fear of pain, but only fear of its result — of terror! I feel that the time will soon arrive when I must lose my life, and my mind, and my soul, together, in some last battle with that horrible enemy: fear! (Poe 25).

It can be said that trauma and Gothic literature are intertwined because "both are characterized by disruption and excess" (Nadal 179) that simultaneously evoke terror and fascination. In the poem "The Haunted Palace" there is also a clear distinction between the decaying present and the glorious past. Indeed, ghost stories often use time as a catalyst for dread and mental or spiritual deterioration. However, Woolf deals with time disruptions which add to the story's mysteriousness, but do not evoke images of horror and dread.

Physicality of Ghosts

The presence of the ghostly couple seems to be felt, but it is not sensory: "Not than one could ever see them" (Woolf 14). They leave only traces of their movements: "if they moved in the drawing room, the apple only turned its yellow side" (Woolf 14). By removing visible traces of their presence, Woolf creates an uncanny atmosphere. This is not a strange occurrence in ghost stories, for it creates room for additional mystery. However, Woolf completely removes their physical form, that is, their physicality is not described or even mentioned, which is unusual if ghosts really exist within the story. To add, the narrator only sees reflections and shadows, "which is not equal to seeing the actual ghost" (Dilaver 1387). As Dilaver noticed, the narrator undoubtedly relies on the two most important senses – visual and auditory stimuli (1386). Since the narrator wishes to see the ghostly couple, but never manages to do so, the emphasis is on their whispers, murmurs and other sounds signaling their movements. It is important to point out that literary ghosts as portrayed in conventional ghost stories, whether good or bad, directly confront humans who then describe their appearance. This element is absent in "A Haunted House", which further complicates its genre classification. For this reason, some believe that the ghosts in "A Haunted House" do not have a physical presence, which makes them a product of the narrator's psyche. This belief is in line with Woolf's literary philosophy, but it is not possible to determine whether the whole story is based on allegory or not. It could be a dream, a vision, a metaphor, or an

actual manifestation of one's thoughts and feelings. This ambiguity is especially present in the end when the ghosts find the sleeping couple. The narrator seems to be aware of their presence despite sleeping: "Stooping, holding their silver lamp above us, long they look and deeply. Long they pause" (Woolf 30). Shortly after this, the woman wakes up because "stooping, their light lifts the lids upon my eyes" (Woolf 32) and cries: "Oh, is this your buried treasure? The light in the heart" (Woolf 32-33). When the woman exclaims that, the story ends and the reader is left wondering whether she saw the ghostly couple or not. Woolf most likely wanted to make the story ambiguous, somewhere between a dream, vision, and reality. Additionally, readers should not forget that "A Haunted House" uses first person narration which cannot be considered objective. Poe, however, is again stereotypically gothic because the story ends with Lady Madeline, Roderick's sister, coming out of her grave, covered in blood. Even though Madeline and Roderick seem to be humans, the way Poe describes their physicality and behavior is reminiscent of ghosts: "He appeared not like a human being, but like a spirit that had come back from beyond the grave" (Poe 26).

Furthermore, Lady Madeline does not even utter a word throughout the whole story and her interaction with both Roderick and the narrator is minimal: "While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so she was called) passed slowly through a distant part of the room, and without seeing that I was there, went on" (Poe 27). Even in his poem titled "The Haunted Palace" the physicality of ghostly figures is confirmed by other characters. The third stanza introduces both humans and dancing spirits: "Wanderers in that happy valley, / Through two luminous windows, saw / Spirits moving musically / To a lute's well-tunèd law" (Poe lines 17-20). Unlike the characters in Woolf's story, humans in Poe's works witnessed the physicality of the ghosts.

The Nature of Ghosts

When it comes to Woolf's portrayal of the nature of ghosts in "A Haunted House", one can say that it is unconventional. Friendly

ghosts do exist in literature, but they are of course rarer than their unfriendly counterparts. What separates Woolf's friendly ghosts from others is that they do not bother the living directly. It can be said that there is a lack of interaction between the couples. At first glance their lives do not seem to be closely connected, but the reader finds out that the ghostly couple is looking for a buried treasure. This treasure is something they both cherish and desperately want to find. At the end of the story the ghostly couple enters the living couple's room and murmurs: "Here we left our treasure-" (Woolf 19). The reader then realizes that their treasure is of a loving nature – the treasure is the living couple's love for each other. They seek this treasure because "death was between us; coming to the woman first, hundreds of years ago" (Woolf 16) and then the man "left it, left her, went North, went East, saw the stars turned in the Southern sky" (Woolf 16). The current love of the living couple seems to be a reflection of what the ghostly couple once had. They consider the living couple's love a rebirth of their own past relationship – they found each other again in a new shape and form. As Dilaver claims:

> Although the physical presence of ghosts in Woolf's A Haunted House is questionable, my understanding of the story is that the ghostly couple here was used as a metaphorical representation of the real couple's alter ego. Ghosts in the story display the message that love is the only thing important, and only when we find it, we can feel complete. (Dilaver 1387)

Consequently, one can notice that Woolf shifts the ghostly narrative into more of a romantic and metaphorical one. In Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher" there is also a pair, siblings whose lives are interconnected. Unlike Woolf's ghostly couple, the siblings in Poe's short story are not searching for a new form of life but are rather searched by death. Poe's treatment of ghostly siblings shows their inseparability in life and death, which further strengthens the story's supernatural atmosphere. In that sense, Poe portrays ghosts as gloomy and almost neurotic beings, which is exactly what Woolf manages to

avoid. Usually the ghosts want to restore the lost order, which often happens in fictional texts:

> Husbands return to wives, sons return to mothers, and soldiers return to their homeland. Ultimately, these apparitions of the deceased, along with their physical bodies, are not abandoned, nor do they remain, in spirit, abroad. Although the veridical hallucination refuses to explain itself, the narratives that such visitations inspire nevertheless reveal an inclination on the part of their authors to entertain fantasies that restore some logic to life. (Delgado 243-244)

The kind nature of ghosts in Woolf's "A Haunted House" is certainly the least stereotypical aspect of her ghost story. Surprisingly, the ghostly couple is concerned with finding love, connection and accepting loss. In that sense, Woolf uses the ghostly narrative to discuss universal human emotions and needs. The ghosts are not merely there to disrupt the everyday human life and spread fear, they are rather an uncomfortable and unreachable representation of our internal dwellings, a path toward facing our own shadows.

Conclusion

In "A Haunted House" Woolf centers the story around ghosts but removes their physicality and direct interaction between the living and the dead. These elements are essential to the prototypical modern idea of the ghost story. Furthermore, Woolf chooses to make the ghosts friendly and not as haunting as the title of the story suggests. Moreover, the ghostly couple searches for love they once had, calling it a buried treasure. Woolf puts ghosts in the forefront of the story but then proceeds to make love and reexperiencing the past as their ultimate goal. These ghosts do not seem to haunt the living - they are rather haunted by their own past and separation. Unlike Poe, Woolf subverts the conventions of the genre while retaining ghostliness. Hence, this paper shows that Woolf's "A Haunted House" is an experimental take on the genre of the ghost story.

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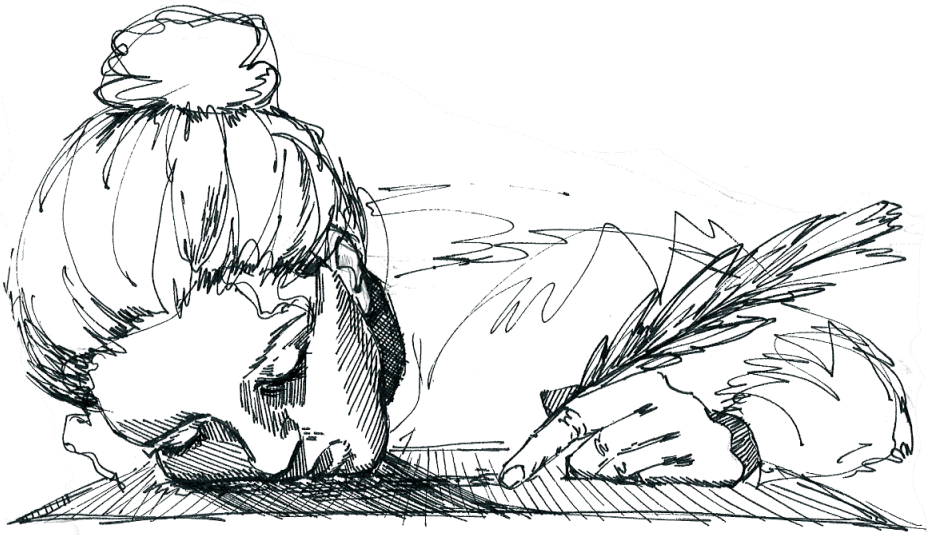

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Class, Gender, and Artistic Ambition: A Comparative Analysis of Female Bildung in *Little Women* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

Abstract

This paper examines the portrayal of the becoming of the female artist in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith. Both of these novels are Künstlerromane (or more so Künstlerinromane) insofar as they trace the journeys of two young girls becoming women, who are also aspiring to become professional artists – namely, writers. While the stories of Jo March and Frances Nolan certainly share some similarities, it is also important to trace the perhaps crucial differences, one of which is, first and foremost, their class position. Jo March, from the genteel poverty of the March family, navigates her artistic ambitions within the confines of limited resources, but also societal expectations. In contrast, Frances Nolan, growing up in the tenements of Brooklyn, grapples with the harsh realities of working-class poverty and its material impact on her artistic pursuits. The paper aims to delineate the way the becoming of the female artist is conceptualized in both novels, to consider the ways class and gender influence this becoming, and to analyze how the role of the artist falls within the framework of female Bildung or development.

Keywords: *Little Women, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,* class, gender, Künstlerroman

The *Künstlerroman* or the "artist's novel" is usually defined as a kind of *Bildungsroman* "that deals with the youth and development of an individual who becomes—or is on the threshold of becoming—a painter, musician, or poet", with the addition that, unlike many

Bildungsromane, "where the hero often dreams of becoming a great artist but settles for being a mere useful citizen, the *Künstlerroman* usually ends on a note of arrogant rejection of the commonplace life" (Britannica). But what happens when we encounter a *Künstlerinroman*? Can the female artist reject everyday domesticity with equal ease? This paper aims to examine the journey of the female artist in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith. Both of these novels are *Künstlerinromane* insofar as they trace the lives of two young girls – *Little Women*'s Jo March and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*'s Frances Nolan – who have to navigate womanhood while also aspiring to become professional writers. The expectations arising from their gender and class circumstances impinge on their creative desires and limit the horizon of their artistic ability. While Jo isn't the only March sister with artistic inclinations, she is the one who has trouble conforming her identity to gendered expectations. Both Jo and Francie struggle with meeting the emotional demands of their environment, which thus leads to the central point of their *Bildung* – acquiring the proper feminine feelings and desires. Furthermore, their art must fall within the bounds of proper subject matters and taste, and it is here that their class position becomes pertinent. What is perhaps the most interesting aspect of these characters (and of the entire story, given that both are the heroines of their respective novels) is precisely the tension between their development as an artist and as a woman, and the resolutions of this tension offered by the two novels in question.

The first challenge placed before both Francie and Jo as they try to establish themselves as artists are the boundaries of 'good' taste. As Pierre Bourdieu writes, "to the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods" (that is, the hierarchy of 'high' and 'low' art, and the distinctions between 'masterpieces' and 'rubbish') "corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers", which thus "predisposes tastes to function as markers of 'class'" (1-2). Bourdieu explains that:

> Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the

> distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. (6)

The Nolans are a poor working-class family, and the Marches "[inhabit] an ambiguous class position", having once been well-off but now dealing with their "economic fall" (Foote 69). Therefore, in the eyes of the public, Jo and Francie must prove their artistic merit by either appropriating or adopting the 'correct' upper-class taste in spite of their economic standing. Jo, on the one hand, must reaffirm her good breeding and prove the point Marmee makes when Meg spends time with the Moffat family – "that money is not intrinsically important because class – or rather classiness, as we now understand that term – is a personal quality" (Foote 73).

The Marches are, despite their poverty, a distinguished family and in fact, as their wealthy friends and relatives show, they seemingly occupy "a social position that is strikingly incommensurate with their economic position" (Foote 69). This naturalized sense of inherently belonging to the upper class is how Jo is set up to, later on, abandon her goal of writing commercially successful literature, opting instead for 'high' art brimming with morals (Alcott 281). Part of the March girls' upbringing involved being exposed to the literary canon – being familiar with the works of Milton, Bacon, and Shakespeare (91). Similarly, Francie Nolan had been brought up on two classics as well – her brother Neeley and she had to read a page from both Shakespeare and the Bible each night before bed (Smith 51), as per the rules set up by her maternal grandmother, who saw this as a path to social mobility of her grandchildren (82-84). This is precisely why Jo and Francie can, at least initially, be narratively positioned as future writers – they know what good literature is. Bourdieu writes that:

> Even in the classroom, the dominant definition of the legitimate way of appropriating culture and works of art favours those who have had early access to legitimate culture, in a cultured household, outside of scholastic disciplines, since even

> within the educational system it devalues scholarly knowledge and interpretation as 'scholastic' or even 'pedantic' in favour of direct experience and simple delight. (2)

However, being exposed to the right texts is not enough. What the artist chooses as his subject also must correspond to the proper tastes. Jo and Francie both take on 'low themes' in their writing, and have to be 'brought back onto the right path'. In the infamous scene with her teacher, Miss Garnder, Francie is not only shamed for writing about the scenes and people from her own life because she depicts poverty and drinking ("vices" which Miss Garnder considers to be too undignified and ugly to write about), but also loses out on an opportunity to show her work; her play for graduation is replaced by her school colleague Beatrice Williams' idea (Smith 321-24). Importantly, Francie is not allowed to feel hurt or angry because of her teacher's words, as Miss Garnder scolds her for speaking up: "I'm surprised! A well-behaved girl like you. What would your mother say if she knew you had been impertinent to your teacher?" (324). Jo March, in her efforts to not only establish herself as a professional writer, but also crucially to provide more means for her family, starts writing stories that sell – "thrilling tales" that "[harrow] up the souls of the readers" per the request of her publisher (Alcott 275). However, her lack of experience, which "had given her but few glimpses of the tragic world which underlies society", leaves her "eager to find material for stories" by searching newspapers for "accidents, incidents, and crimes" and "[introducing] herself to folly, sin, and misery" (275). Thus, Jo begins to "desecrate some of the womanliest attributes of a woman's character" – exposing her sweet, innocent female nature to the horrors of modern society (275). It is clear from scenes like this to what degree Francie and Jo's gender, as well as class, informs the desirable, proper behavior that is expected of them – their successful socialization as women entails the adoption of respectable interests and practices.

Crucially, the girls must learn to let go of two 'masculine' traits that they, at least to a certain degree, share – anger and ambition. Francie, while not as outwardly reactive and impulsive as Jo, still has

to learn to turn her frustrations into "hardness", just like her mother (96). Instead of sentimentality and gentleness, Katie wants to teach her daughter toughness and self-reliance. As part of their survival, Francie and her mother must repress a lot of feelings, and not let them bubble up to the surface, but rather internally deal away with them, however temporary. Jo, on the other hand, quite infamously struggles with anger – symbolically presented as her meeting Apollyon. In the episode where Amy destroys her manuscript and Jo almost loses her sister in an accident because of her anger, Marmee reveals to Jo that she, too, had struggled with anger, but had learned over time how to "control" it (Alcott 68). This is the lesson Jo must learn on her moral pilgrimage as she becomes a 'little woman' – the lesson of selfless forgiveness even in the face of injustice or great pain. Moreover, letting go of their ambition is placed as the final challenge for both heroines. Francie must accept that her brother is going to school instead of her, despite the fact that he is also a year younger and wants to work (Smith 384-85); she learns to put providing for her family before personal goals. Jo, who throughout the novel speaks of wanting great adventures, of being "tired of care and confinement" and "[longing] for change" (Alcott 168), eventually ends up exactly where she did not want to be for so much of the novel – in a marriage.

Both stories frame marriage as the final reward of successful female socialization. This is, however, not necessarily surprising, because, as Hoffman Baruch points out, "unlike the male *bildungsroman*, the feminine *bildungs* takes place in or on the periphery of marriage"; in fact, "that is its most striking characteristic" (335). Marriage is narratively reaffirmed as the only way for a woman to achieve happiness and contentment; for example, at the end of the novel, once she is married and has children, Jo states that she is "far happier than [she] deserves", adding that she has "nothing to complain of" and that she has "never [been] so jolly in [her] life" (Alcott 380). Katie Nolan and the rest of her family, even though her hard work is what sustains them throughout the novel (even when Johnny is alive), are by the end, 'saved' and brought out of poverty through her marriage to Sergeant McShane, and this arrangement also pays

for Francie's college education (Smith 469). However, perhaps even more importantly, Francie and Jo must marry as part of their intellectual becoming and self-actualization. Here we might turn again to Hoffman Baruch, who points out that "whereas a traditional sign of manhood lies in the hero's ability to give up guides, the test of womanhood has resided in the heroine's ability to find a mentor" (338). Francie is to marry Ben Blake, a boy she befriended in a bookstore when she was taking summer college courses. Ben, an incredibly ambitious, hard-working and driven high school senior, not only helps her pass her French exams, but also "[helps] her plan her next summer's courses and, obligingly enough, [tries] to plan out the rest of her life for her" (Smith 433). He even eventually chooses a college for her and asks her to wait five years to marry him, to which Francie agrees. Ben is the intellectual authority in Francie's life, but not her senior – he is the authority that can follow her for the remainder of her life. Jo March, despite her clear disinterest in marriage, eventually marries Professor Bhaer, a German professor she meets while living in the city. He is the one who 'leads' Jo out of vice by reminding her of the lessons in respectability she had been taught in childhood, urging her to stop writing sensationalist fiction. As Murphy notes, Professor Bhaer, who is much older than Jo, infantilizes her as he decides to guide her out of 'trouble' (Murphy 583) – he is "moved to help her with an impulse as quick and natural as that which would prompt him to put out his hand to save a baby from a puddle" (Alcott 279). He "quietly" observes her to see if she will "[stand] the test" and is finally "satisfied" when he confirms that she has given up writing (282). Jo's idealization of Professor Bhaer is also obvious; in the scene where he argues with the young intellectuals, she feels that he speaks with the "eloquence of truth", and as he does so, she feels that "she "[has] solid ground under her feet", and that "the world got right again" (278). Finally, it is important to note that both Jo's marriage to Professor Bhaer and Francie's relationship with Ben Blake are not passionate. In fact, they are narratively positioned in opposition to sexual love – for Jo, it's contrasted with her potentially marrying Laurie, her closest friend and companion, and for Francie, her short-

lived but passionate affair with Lee Rhynor. Murphy points out that "when Jo does finally marry, she turns to the elderly and impoverished scholar, Professor Bhaer, and she does so not in passion, but in need, companionability, and loss" (578). Similarly, Francie's feelings towards Ben are clear when she thinks: "Good old Ben! Decent, honorable, and brilliant. (…) Yes, Ben was wonderful. She was proud to have him for a friend" (Smith 479). Crucially, she says this after her episode with Lee, and after she agrees to wait for Ben to settle in his life before they marry. For both Francie and Jo, marriage is a seemingly loveless affair, a compromise in the place of another, sexual love.

Thus, both Jo and Francie are eventually pushed back into the domestic sphere, but the ways in which this happens are interesting. On the one hand, Jo has been supported and even celebrated for her artistic endeavors at home. For example, the March family shows great respect for Jo's creative process, what she calls "fall[ing] into a vortex" – when she is writing, the rest of the family "[keep] their distance", carefully observing her states and behaving accordingly, allowing her to fully immerse herself in the creative process during her writing periods (Alcott 211). They encourage her work by watching the plays she puts on, or by performing in them (22-25); when he finds out that she has submitted two stories to the local newspaper, Laurie applauds her, immediately pronouncing her a future "celebrated American authoress" because her "stories are works of Shakespeare compared to half the rubbish that is published every day" (124), and when she gets published for the first time, her mother and sisters are "proud", "delighted", and compliment her work greatly (127-28). Even when Amy destroys her manuscript in an act of revenge, the family shows great empathy for Jo's grief (64). Therefore, Murphy states that while "the novel consistently devalues Jo's public voice" by undervaluing the early manuscripts she wants to publish, "her private writing, especially when it contains self-correction and criticism, is permitted" (581). In that sense, the home has already proven to be a place for artistic validation for Jo, even if a modest one. Thus, when she gives up sensationalist writing (and with it, the public attention and success her work could garner), there is already a familiar alternative for Jo to

seek contentment. She has been primed to accept the compliments and enjoyment of her family and friends as more than enough, and to let go of the dream of achieving wider artistic success. As Langland points out (albeit to argue that Jo achieves her autonomy within the home), "family" is what "gives scope to Jo's development" (124). Part of her successful female socialization is the acceptance of the domestic sphere as the sufficient space for self-actualization. This is confirmed by the narrator when they state that Jo "enjoyed [family life] heartily and found the applause of her boys more satisfying than any praise of the world, for now she told no stories except to her flock of enthusiastic believers and admirers" (Alcott 377). While this also means that she must accept having less financial means, by the end of the book Jo sees this as the only right choice – pursuing "honest" work (free from debased, sensationalist market demands) even if "morals [don't] sell" (Alcott 281). Francie, on the other hand, gives up her writing precisely in order to procure more means for her family. While her mother is pregnant with Laurie, Francie is struggling with her faith, even going as far as to renounce God during one conversation with Neeley. As Katie is nearing her due date, but still working to keep food on the table, Francie plummets into an existential crisis; terrified that her lack of faith might lead to her mother's premature or sudden death, she makes a promise to God that she will "give [Him] [her] writing" if He doesn't "let mama die" (Smith 329). While it's certainly true that Francie is here also struggling with religious guilt, one could argue that even more important for her making this promise, or, more precisely, this sacrifice, is the material conditions of her family. The despair she feels at that moment shows the culmination of her family's day-to-day struggle for survival, especially now that her father is gone. Francie tries to turn things for them around the only way she knows how – by letting go of her one 'selfish' pleasure and goal, focusing instead on helping her family. As Francie goes on to work and provide, she leaves home and even Brooklyn at one point, but her focus remains in the domestic, familial sphere. Therefore, while Jo must, for the moment, give up writing in order to return to her 'intended' class position, Francie abandons writing because of the limitations of her class. However, the fact that they are

abandoning their artistic impulses at all is deeply intertwined with their gender. They become women when they give up on seeking *Bildung* in similar ways to their traditional *Bildungsromane* male counterparts – instead of moving out into the world, their development is internal and domestic.

However, both novels end quite ambiguously when it comes to Jo and Francie's journeys as artists. Jo is still writing even after she's married, even if she does so for a smaller audience; she also asserts her agency by becoming a teacher in her own school, and an equal to her husband. She even says that she "[hasn't] given up the hope that [she] may write a good book yet" but that she "can wait" (379). Francie, while not returning to writing at the end of the novel, does think that she might "try again some day" (Smith 489). An optimistic reading of these open endings is certainly possible, but the frustrating nature of Jo and Francie's positions remains the strongest point of both novels.

In this paper, I have tried to analyze the journeys of female artists in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, focusing on the interplay between class, gender, and artistic ambition. Through a comparative study of Jo March and Francie Nolan, I have highlighted how their gender and class backgrounds shape and constrain their creative aspirations and the development of their artistic identities. By examining the boundaries of 'good' taste and the impact of class on their artistic expressions, I have demonstrated how Jo and Francie are pressured to conform to upper-class standards despite their economic limitations. Furthermore, the expectations of proper feminine behavior, including the suppression of anger and ambition, further complicate their journeys, as both characters must relinquish these traits to achieve the socially prescribed ideal of womanhood, which is closely tied to their eventual embrace of domestic roles and marriage. The portrayals of Jo and Francie's journeys highlight the persistent tension between personal ambition and societal expectations in female Bildungsromane, suggesting that the resolution is still to be fully achieved.

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A Poet

* * *

There has been a poet once
who cannot exist in this world twice.

One, who all human senses incited
and opened eyes of those who were by one's whisper guided.

One, who looked like any
in spite of eyes so emerald not seen by many.

One who made sweet taste only with words
without effort, nevertheless.

Was one thinking about savoury pastry from the street stand
was one thinking about stream of smell from mother's kitchen
Who would know?

A paper rutted from the pencil,
a pencil oval from the writing.
There is no paper nor pencil now.

There has been a poet writer once
who died and cannot exist in this world twice.

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A Broken Piece

* * *

I've been looking at my tire,
while driving half asleep.
I've been thinking about the clock,
while being in a dream.

I lied that I loved,
and loved the lie when he said he loved.
I wanted to think big,
while drinking poison.
I started to love again,
while being hurt.

I've been looking at my tire,
while white and black turned into grey.
I've still been thinking,
while turning the wheel.
I've been hit,
white flash came unforeseen.

I lied that I loved,
and loved the flash of a broken piece.

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Immortal soul

* * *

Immortal soul, your glow is cold
Hidden, in these walls all gray from mold
Don't cry my little child
He is here,
Dancing in the halls all graced with stone

For what you've seen
For what you've been
Sing it
For my vivid dream to begin

My immortal soul
Your hands are cold
Don't just leave me
With these words I wrote for you

My immortal soul
On your leave please lock the door
In hands of another
You will die once more

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All Things Made

* * *

From the time of ancient ruins
And all the mighty gods
One was the dread of all beings
The one who learned to talk

From the ashes he rose
Back to them he is destined to go
Leaving behind nothing but havoc
For dust and ruins are doomed for all

And the earth did weep
Heavy were the cries:
All the laws unwritten he will ban
The one who calls himself a man

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From its inception, students' journal *Kick* had one simple purpose, to create space for students of English and broader studies to publish both their academic and creative writing in English. Students wholeheartedly accepted this opportunity and, as a result, *Kick* has already published four issues containing students' research papers, poems, short stories, and reviews. In 2019 *Kick* published its first two printed issues. It continued with its activities in 2020, now as a double-blind reviewed journal and a part of the English Student's Association "Glotta". The fourth issue sees the light of day after a lengthy hiatus and it demonstrates the students' originality. In 2024, despite numerous difficulties, the fifth issue is published and is ready to present student's originality, creativity, and insight. At last, for all questions Editorial Board answers via email: kick.ffos2@gmail.com.