University of Bucharest Review

Literary and Cultural Studies Series

Volume 13, Number 2, 2023

HUMOUR AND PATHOS IN LITERATURE AND THE ARTS (II)

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

2024

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series
Volume 13, Number 2, 2023

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Published by Bucharest University Press & Department of English of Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures from University of Bucharest

ISSN Tipar: 2069-8658 **ISSN Online: 2734-5963**

DTP & Cover
Mariana Ionică

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

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E-mail: editura.unibuc@gmail.com
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Article

R. K. Narayan's (Post-)Colonial Perspective: Malgudi in Its Humour

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Abstract: R. K. Narayan (1906-2001) is considered one of the founding fathers of Indian writing in English, along with Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and G.V. Desani, and is best known for creating the imaginary town of Malgudi. Another important feature of his fiction is what both critics and readers call a gentle or light-hearted humour. Humour has often been used to both subvert and survive various forms of political oppression (see Ștefănescu, Tripathi and Chettri). In Narayan, Malgudi, the centre of the action, is both a colonial and a post-colonial town, created and recreated over years and even decades. Since Malgudi can be considered a metonymy of India (see Mukherjee), Narayan's use of humour as a subversive device, together with his skilful examination of the cultural and colonial context, can be perceived as a poignant criticism of the British colonial system and what it entailed, specifically the suppression of what constitutes 'Indianness', the Indian way of life and cultural values. On the other hand, the light-hearted and subversive irony allows Narayan to offer a more profound insight into the human nature as such, while juxtaposing a colonial and post-colonial context.
Keywords*: bathos; humour; irony; Malgudi; post-colonial reading; R.K. Narayan.*

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.1
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

Indian writing in English started to be firmly established in the 1930s with the key figures of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and, according to Salman Rushdie, also G.V. Desani. In a writing career that spanned over sixty years R. K. Narayan, whose full name was Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami (1906-2001), authored fifteen novels, six collections of short stories, non-fiction works, renderings of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and other works. A number of his fictional works were adapted into films, plays and a national TV series. Three of his first four novels, *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The English Teacher* (1945) reflect certain aspects of the writer's life. As for writing in English, for Indians, in Raja Rao's words, the "telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (vii). The latter is more than evident in R. K. Narayan's writing.

The first thing that comes to mind in relation to this task is what Narayan is best known for – the creation of an imaginary South Indian town that he called Malgudi. According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, Malgudi represents "the quintessential Indianness" (*The Anxiety of Indianness* 170) and she even argues that, as such, the town has "a metonymic relation with India as a whole" (170-4). It represents the 'Indianness,' "by which is meant a good-humoured inertia and a casual tolerance which almost any reader in the country is expected to recognize as familiar" (Mukherjee 170, 171).

Furthermore, if an Indian were to name two terms associated with Narayan's fiction, the second, after the town of Malgudi, would be humour. The four principal substances, "liquids" or "fluids," *humours*, that the ancient Greeks believed flowed through the body and constituted the defining characteristics of a personality, reflect the no less ancient Indian theory of Ayurveda (Vedic period, second century BC), where the three *dashas* – variously translated as *humours*: *kapha*, *pitta* and *vata* play an analogous role (Kakar and Kakar 113).

Humour as we understand it is firmly rooted in the Indian Hindu tradition. As Koenraad Elst observes, "numerous puns and other forms of language humour [...] formed an intrinsic part of the teaching of Sanskrit grammar and literature" and in mythology "mild humour as well as satire are often employed" (*Humour in Hinduism* 35). Vedic hymns, though cherished, "were uninhibited in highlighting the human side of the gods they worship," while making fun of the gods along with "jocular variations on the god's characters" (36), whose marriages, loves, physical contacts and all that goes with them are described with a "bawdy explicitness", are a commonplace in the Hindu mythology (Elst 35, 36).

In the interpretations of myths, worship and ridicule generally go together. (Elst 37) For example, the elephant-headed god Ganesha is already depicted as comical in his iconography – his round belly is the result of his sweet tooth. His riding vehicle is a rat. A highly important figure, though, he is venerated as the

remover of obstacles. Sarcastic representations can be found in fables, in which animals and their behaviour and actions represent human weaknesses, for example in the *Jataka Tales* or the *Panchatantra*. And satirical treatment is even reserved for priests and ascetics in the Hindu theatre. (Elst 41) Finally, while looking at the Buddhist position, which emphasises renunciation and escape from this life that is full of suffering, Elst contrasts it with the "original Hindu outlook, shared by the mass of Hindus, uneducated in philosophy, [which] is actually quite enthusiastic about life" (*Humour in Hinduism* 50).

Apparently, it can be argued, Narayan builds on this tradition. His humour is more often than not related to the common man, the everyman, and as such juxtaposes absurdities, incongruities or scepticism of everyday life with the hesitations and questionings of the self, which is on the way to or undergoing the process of personality growth, the (re-)construction of the inner person, the character of the person, even identity. While the impact of such a process on the protagonists is considerable, they are still presented as somehow detached from a seriously uncritical evaluation of the self. Nevertheless, as Narayan's view is overall "quite enthusiastic about life" (Elst 50), it is always imbued with sympathy and empathy.

The following quote from *Mr Sampath* may serve as a representative example of Narayan's technique:

> In 1938, when the papers were full of anticipation of a world war, [Srinivas] wrote: "*The Banner* [magazine] has nothing special to note about any war, past or future. It is only concerned with the war that is always going on – between man's inside and outside. Till the forces are equalized the struggle will always go on." […] There was a touch of comicality in that bombast. It struck him as an odd mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous. (*Sampath* 6; 7)

The juxtaposition of the serious on the one hand and of what can be considered irrelevant, negligible or absurd, on the other, produces the comic and even the ironic in this context.

Mr Sampath provides another pertinent example of the above. In it, a representation of the spirit of 'Indianness' and India – omnipresent in Narayan's fiction – goes hand in hand with traditional Indian wisdom related to mythology and cosmological-philosophical concepts (represented, for example, by the imagery of *maya* or the duality of co-operating opposites, which will be pointed to below). Here it is characterised by a reference to the Upanishads, the sacred late Vedic and post-Vedic Sanskrit scriptures, which are juxtaposed with the protagonist Srinivas' seemingly endless ruminations and reasoning, creating a gentle comic effect:

> He had tried to summarize, in terms of modern living, some of the messages he had imbibed from the Upanishads on the conduct of life, a restatement of subjective value in relation to a social outlook. […] a voice went on asking: 'Life

> and the world and all this is passing – why bother about anything? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother?' […] Awaiting the right sentence for his philosophy, he had spent several hours already; he must complete the article by the evening if he was to avoid serious dislocation in the press. (Narayan, *Sampath* 30; 31)

The personal development of the protagonist of *The Guide* serves as a distinctive illustration of a mixture of the tragic and the ironic. Raju, who began his life as a dishonest tourist guide and whose fraudulent and corrupt ways landed him in prison, ends up being unwillingly and accidentally worshipped as a *sadhu*, a spiritual guide by the inhabitants of a nearby village, who begin to provide him with food and seek his advice. Not wanting to disappoint them, he confesses his past and decides to fast, following the villagers' belief that this will bring the rain and save them from famine. The irony here is not just that, after a life of a selfish deceit, Raju is for the first time willing to do something selflessly for the others, which for him means risking his own life. The irony finally becomes a caricature of tragedy when the fast of a *saint* calling for rain becomes a show with crowds of people gathered on the spot, press reporters and filming, while Raju finally collapses in the mud (Narayan, *The Guide*).

There is another aspect: a number of scholars have noted and analysed the undeniable role of humour as a means of subversion and survival. For example, Bogdan Ştefănescu, in discussing resistance to communist dictatorship, in a cultural context familiar to some of us, mentions political jokes and satire as a means – if not immediately successful – of subversion, then of survival (*The Joke Is on You* 20-24). What may seem paradoxical, and here Ştefănescu quotes the Romanian author and civic activist Ionel Alexe, is that "[t]his language was not only tolerated, it was discretely encouraged by communist authorities" (Alexe 2013 qtd. by Ştefănescu 22). In relation to Narayan's writing as within the Indian cultural context that interests us in this paper, Tripathi and Chettri argue that "[Narayan] maintains the equilibrium between tacit criticism of the colonial system and the projection of Indianness, and thereby successfully builds a counter narrative against the British hegemony [while] humour is used 'both as a rhetoric device and as an outlook'" (152; see also Ridanpaa 712 qtd. in Tripathi and Chettri 152).

While it is true that Narayan's work is replete with criticism of the colonial rule and his anti-colonial stance is clearly expressed e.g. in his essays "English in India" (*A Story-teller's World*) and "When India Was a Colony" (*A Writer's Nightmare*), it is not Narayan's habit to make overt anti-colonial statements in his fiction, not even in *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), the novel that deals directly with the Independence movement. Consistently, this novel, too, is written in Narayan's typical gentle comic style.

In this sense, Narayan's first novels can serve as an appropriate example of a sometimes humorous critique of colonial education. Three of the first four

novels, *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The English Teacher* (1945), whose main characters can be seen as a single person at different developmental stages of life, echo events in the writer's life.

All three were written during the British Raj and in each the main protagonists, the boy Swami, the young man Chandran and the slightly older young man Krishnan, are involved in some kind of resistance to forces that inhibit the healthy development of their respective personalities as well as the fulfilment of a life based on the satisfaction of emotional, mental, intellectual and spiritual needs. Some of these are directly related to a significant factor that Swami, Chandran and Krishnan, each a kind of 'incarnation' of one person, have in common – the Albert Mission College, where Swami and Chandran are students and where Krishnan is a teacher of English.

While Narayan does not present Swaminathan as a paragon of good behaviour or a particularly bright pupil, his portrayal of the boy's rebellion against the colonial teacher is both bitter and brilliantly comic:

> The teacher bit his moustache and fired a second question, "What do you know about the Indian climate?" – "It is hot in summer and cold in winter." – "Stand up on the bench!" roared the teacher. And Swaminathan stood up without a protest. He was glad that he was given this supposedly degrading punishment instead of the cane. [… He] paid no attention to the rest of the lessons. His mind began to wander. Standing on the bench, he stood well over the whole class. He could see so many heads, and he classified them according to the caps: there were four red caps, twenty-five Gandhi caps, ten fur caps, and so on." (*Swami* 15)

The pink-faced headmaster of Chandran's college, named Brown, calls for "order" while, significantly, giving "an important lesson" on Greek drama in *The Bachelor of Arts* (3). Ironically, Chandran is supposed to develop the idea of "historians to be slaughtered first" in a class discussion, and since Narayan lets the boy develop the topic first in his thoughts, the irony of this can arguably be considered as coming quite close to bathos: "After about two hours of wandering he returned home, having thought of only one argument for killing historians first, namely, that they might not be there to misrepresent the facts when scientists, poets, and statesmen were being killed in their turn. It appeared to him a very brilliant argument. He could see before him a whole house rocking with laughter" (*Bachelor* 2).

Finally, while Krishnan, the protagonist of *The English Teacher* (1945), ironically refers to the headmaster of his college as "my good chief Brown", he finds irritating the emphasis the headmaster places on the "purity of the English language," the unacceptability of dropping a '*u*' in *honour*, or otherwise "dotting the *i*'s and crossing the *t*'s" (2–4). The irony of using the name Brown for an

Englishman in a position of power over the Indian teachers and students is obvious.

Perhaps the most striking example of a humorous critical treatment of the power structures that reflect colonialism can be found in Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), in which the protagonist Nataraj plies his trade as a printer in the second half of the 1950s, and in which Narayan brings the interaction of contradictory forces, already noticeable in his earlier work, to the utmost.

To this end, he draws on the Hindu concept of the duality of the contradictory yet cooperating forces and, as will be shown below, the Hindu myth of Bhasmasura.

Nataraj the printer, his personality and behaviour and the *inner* space of his press represent the traditional Indian values and even the *sacred*. There is an *outer* space that is open to visitors and customers, which is typically separated from the *inner* space by a blue curtain. The inner space, where the actual printing takes place, is reserved for Nataraj's staff, among whom is Sastri, "an orthodox-minded Sanskrit semi-scholar" (Narayan, *Man-Eater* 72), a printer educated in the sacred Hindu texts, the very core of Indian Hindu tradition, and, in fact a kind of guru to Nataraj. No one else is allowed to enter these inner rooms, and even "[n]o one tried to peer through [the curtain]" (Narayan, *Man-Eater* 8).

Narayan is here ironizing the brutal intrusion of an antagonistic force alien to Malgudi, represented by a person called Vasu who has "violated the sacred traditions of my press" (*Man-Eater* 15). The description of this figure is an escalation of frightening features, leading to a kind of abrupt, surprising anticlimax: he is described as a "huge man" with a "bull-neck and hammer-fist" that gave a "hard grip," a person who "came forward, practically tearing aside the curtain", with "a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a shock of unkempt hair, like a black halo. – My first impulse was to cry out, 'Whoever you may be, why don't you brush your hair?'" (Narayan, *Man-Eater* 15). What may seem at first glance to be an insignificant detail here actually deserves a closer look: Narayan emphasises the situation when he ironizes it by having the protagonist focus on a trivial detail of a frightening appearance. By juxtaposing the gradations of the powerful and the frightening on the one hand and the bizarrely farcical, a trivial detail on which the protagonist focuses, on the other, Narayan deliberately creates bathos, which produces a comic effect, and even irony. Narayan's emphasis on this situation foreshadows what will follow: Vasu, while wielding power over Nataraj and his neighbours, will, in fact, colonise their idyllic life and bring it to the point of destruction before being eliminated himself in the most comical of circumstances.

The novel is a skilful illustration of Narayan's art of rewriting myths. In the myth of Bhasmasura, the demon is granted the boon of turning everyone he

touches into ashes, and in his quest for power he is said to become dangerous to the whole world. A similar pattern can be dismantled when it comes to the destruction of Vasu, who is further characterised as a taxidermist, endowed with an enormous strength and a representative of purely pragmatic capitalist values, a man-eater, and who "makes the place all around him an object of knowledge in order to be able to become a master of the situation," thus reflecting a typical coloniser's frame of mind. (Volná 64; see also Foucault; Chrisman and Williams 7–9 qtd. in Volná 64) He is revealed as a representation of the mythical demon Bhasmasura, who ultimately destroys himself because of his vanity, while being deceived by Mohini the "Enchantress," "the supreme celestial nymph," an avatar of the god Vishnu. (Doniger 277)

Fakrul Alam aptly observes that "[i]n his use of Indian myths and legends Narayan is ironic in the postcolonial manner and not a traditionalist by any means" (19). Thus, in *The Man-Eater* the writer ironizes the destruction of Vasu, a representative of colonial ways, who, analogous to his mythical counterpart, becomes dangerous to the world of Malgudi, its inhabitants and values to the point of annihilation. This is symbolised by his attempted destruction of a sacred elephant. In the novel's conclusion Narayan again employs bathos: the elaborate and protracted gradation of the pompous preparation of the religious procession, together with Nataraj's repeated feverish efforts to prevent the killing results in Vasu's death – as he waits with his gun at the window for Kumar the elephant to lead the procession ready to shoot him, he uses all his enormous strength to kill two mosquitoes sitting on his forehead, thus killing himself. The ironic device of the bombastic, powerful, impressive and frightening being ridiculed by the small, trivial or insignificant here resolves a crisis that bears the hallmarks of a colonial situation, Narayan's tool becoming here a "universal irony informing the entire action as total seriocomic vision of the fate of man" (Surendiran and Jayapriya 1115).

If "[r]eading Narayan's early novels postcolonially [...] takes us," Fakrul Alam holds, "to stories of Indians living under colonial rule moulded by it in some instances, resisting it in others" (31), then the first three novels, which each depict respectively a pupil, a student and a teacher in a colonial educational institution, "constitute," while abounding in humorous situations and irony, "something of a bildungsroman of a colonial upbringing where we witness consistently ambivalent responses to induction into the colonized's culture" (13). Thus, for example, Krishnan the English teacher is not sure whether he should make his name in Tamil or English. A similar pattern can be discovered in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*: while the novel can be read as a metaphor for the violent and destructive aspects of the colonial influence, Nataraj the printer finds himself in the end taking on some of the characteristics of Vasu. Interestingly, this

apparent ambiguity can be interpreted in terms of the Hindu concept of duality and the cooperation of opposites.

If, "in *The Man Eater of Malgudi*," as Alam suggests, "Narayan's intentions are [...] much more complex than they may appear to be and his tone polyphonic" (26), this is even more evident in "Lawley Road" (1956), a short story that takes a humorous look at the grandiose patriotism of the immediate post-independence period. The story illustrates well how Narayan employs the comic in order to "explore postcolonial responsibility and record disappointments in *building up the nation" while "providing nuanced views of societies emerging from colonial rule to postcoloniality" (Alam 31, 32).*

The humour in this text lies in the sequence of unreasonably exaggerated, absurd or unusual situations, people's actions and reactions, while at the same time human frailties and failures are depicted. First, the Talkative Man, Narayan's narrator, portrays the post-Independence frenzy and the related actions that materialise in the apparent need to nationalise the names of streets and parks, which wreaks havoc in Malgudi:

> *Mahatma Gandhi Road was the most sought-after name. Eight different ward councillors were after it. There were six others who wanted to call the roads in front of their houses Nehru Road or Netaji Subash Bose Road […] I believe, the Council just went mad. It decided to give the same name to four different streets. […] The town became unrecognizable […] people were not able to say where they lived or direct others there. The town became a wilderness with all its landmarks gone. – The Chairman was gratified with his inspired work – but not for long. He became restless again and looked for fresh fields of action. ("Lawley Road" 100)*

If, as Alam claims, one of Narayan's themes is "coming to terms with independence and contemplating the legacy of Gandhi in a free country" (31), then in writing "Lawley Road" he does not resist the temptation, in this respect, to combine "irony with the revelation of human psychology" (Parvati and Priya 95). The straightforward parody continues when an attempt is made to remove a statue of Sir Frederick Lawley, considered by the Malgudi Municipality to be "the worst tyrant imaginable: the true picture – with breeches and wig and white waistcoat and that hard, determined look" (Narayan, "Lawley Road" 101). But it is not easy to make a twenty-foot figure fall from a pedestal of molten lead: "They realized that Britain, when she was here, had attempted to raise herself on no mean foundation" (Narayan, "Lawley Road" 101). "A series of ironic complications enhance the comic effect," in Parvati and Priya's words (93), and when after a painful struggle the statue is finally toppled and taken to the Talkative Man's house as a discarded object, the historical record reveals that "[w]e had all been misled about Sir F. All the present history pertained to a different Lawley of the time of Warren Hastings. This Frederick Lawley (of the

statue) was a military governor who had settled down here after the Mutiny. He cleared the jungles and almost built the town of Malgudi" (Narayan, "Lawley Road" 103). This is followed by a detailed list of his good deeds for Malgudi and indeed the whole of India for which he was responsible, and he died trying to save the lives of the villagers in a flood.

As if this irony weren't enough, the Municipality Chairman is treated in a thoroughly satirical manner at the end, when he is advised to use his corrupt money to buy the Talkative Man's house with the lying statue and turn it into a national monument:

We arrived at a figure. He was very happy when he saw in the papers a few days later: "The Chairman of Malgudi Municipality has been able to buy back as a present for the nation the statue of Sir Frederick Lawley. He proposed to install it in a newly acquired property which is shortly to be converted into a park. The Municipal Council have resolved that Kabir Lane shall be changed to Lawley Road" (Narayan, "Lawley Road" 105).

A postcolonial reading of Narayan cannot apply a totalising framework. It would only reduce the complexity of his fiction without taking into account the apparent paradoxes and pluralities of the text. Narayan's ironic devices do not serve the purely nationalist readings because there is never a return to purely Indian values (Ashcroft et al. 109-115). As Alam observes, "Narayan is a writer whose strength, specifically, is providing nuanced views of societies emerging from colonial rule to postcoloniality" (32) and his "great theme, then, is not resistance to change but the inevitability and the problematics of change in a modernizing India" (16). Thus, the ironies in Narayan, rather than working exclusively "to the benefit of the Indian verities" (Ashcroft et al. 111) reflect the "Indians pursuing alternative models of nation-building" (Alam 31), and Narayan is true in his vision while "reflecting the way English rule had pervaded the life of the colonized, who, even as they struggle against it politically, had willingly or unwillingly accepted many aspects of the colonizer's culture" (Alam 12).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Citation: Volná, Ludmila. "R. K. Narayan's (Post-)Colonial Perspective: Malgudi in Its Humour." *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 13(1), 2023: 5-14. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.1.1

Article

Who has the Last Word? The Dead and their Lively Humour in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*

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Abstract: All the characters in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's novel are dead people, but they continue to speak as if they were still alive, and have not realized they are actually dead. Another paradox may be that although all of them are dead, none is really interested in death or its metaphysics. They go on with their earthly interests and spites, abusing and offending one another, spilling out secrets and shouting out loud. Speaking is the only thing they can still do while dead, and they take advantage of it: it is often quite difficult for the reader to understand whose voice it is in the general uproar. Gradually, voices become identifiable and attributable to characters: the reader learns to recognize them by the bad language they use, by certain quirks or by the expression of individual snobbery, pretence and hatred. By taking dead people as his characters, and faithfully recording their imagined speeches, Ó Cadhain re-imagines and refashions satire as a specific Irish genre. The speaking dead stand for the Gaelic rural communities whose language the political activist Ó Cadhain's taught and promoted as the real repository of the idea of an Irish independent nation. The particular dialogic form of the novel, though seemingly experimental and difficult to comprehend, represents Ó Cadhain's effort to establish democracy (lacking in the real post-independence Irish state), through the multiplicity of voice polyphony implies, at least at literary level.
***Keywords**: Irish literature; Gaelic revival; dialogue; polyphony; realism; satire*.

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.2
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

Cré na Cille (in the English translation of Liam Con Mac Iomaire and Tim Robbinson *Graveyard Clay* and *The Dirty Dust* in Alan Titley's translation[1]) was Irish writer Máirtín Ó Cadhain's first and most celebrated novel. Although it had won the Oireachtas (Irish legislature) literary prize in 1947, it was rejected by the state publishing house on account that it was too Joycean[2] and only published in 1949 by an independent one. The novel was chosen by UNESCO as a masterpiece to be translated into other European languages. Its author was the first Irish-language writer to be elected into the Royal Irish Academy.

A monument of the Irish language and an enduring testimony to its humour and vitality, *Créna Cille* was born both from Ó Cadhain's familiarity with the spoken language and its rhythms (his parents, as well some of his relatives were traditional story-tellers) and from his lifelong commitment to the preservation of his mother tongue. Ó Cadhain became a teacher in Galway, and later a writer, academic, cultural commentator and political and language activist, collecting folk tales and old Irish songs. Together with his brother Seomsah, he contributed an extensive collection of linguistic material from the living speech of his native Connemara to the *English-Irish Dictionary* (Dublin, 1959). Having been appointed lecturer in Irish at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1956 he also brought out a textbook for students, *The Consonants of Irish* (*Ceirnínína Gaeltacht*, published in 1961), which revolutionised traditional teaching.

In 1969, in a speech he gave in front of Cumann Merriman, an Irish cultural organisation, he emphasized that "The most valuable literary instrument I got from my people was the spoken language, the natural earthy pungent speech, which sometimes starts dancing and sometimes weeping, in spite of me" (qtd. in Mac Com Iomaire vii). This acknowledgement of the importance of the legacy of idiomatic Gaelic speech should be taken as a formulation of his peculiar *ars poetica*, for, as it has been widely noted by his translators and critics, the main character in the novel is talk.

Insofar as every human character in *Graveyard Clay* is dead, the time of the action is Eternity/For Ever and the place is The Graveyard[3], one may safely conclude that speech is the main character of the novel. The authorial indications at the beginning (Time, Place and range of interludes) point to the marked orality and theatricality of the 'plot'. The ten interludes may be regarded, according to Joan Trodden Keefe[4], as "ten plays revolving around the same theme" (368). In

[1] Both translations appeared in the Margellos World Republic of Letters at Yale University.
[2] 'Too Joycean' meant that it contained foul language unfit for publishing.
[3] Although "Eternity" and "The Graveyard" are given as authorial directions, the chronotope of the novel can be easily identified from the discussions of the graveyard inhabitants: the cemetery is located in Cois Fharraige in south Connemara (the author's birthplace) and the conversation takes place during WWII, or the Emergency period, as it was called in Ireland.
[4] Joan Trodden Keefe, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on Ó Cadhain's novel, also provided the first translation of *Créna Cille.* Her translation, however, was only available for consultation at the

fact, there is no plot in the usual sense of the word. By making speech the main character in the novel, the author gave up not only the linear narrative, but the idea of narrative itself. As the participants in the recorded conversation are all dead, there can be no story in the traditional meaning, no exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. The conversational narrative unfolds in an eternal present, a post-resolution chronotope where nothing can be done or achieved any longer. Alan Titley, one of the translators, tries to provide a historical explanation for the prominence of speech in Ó Cadhain's novel:

> […] the locus of the novel is a graveyard somewhere in Connemara in the west of Ireland in the early 1940s. In that Connemara of the thirties and the forties there was no radio, except in the priest's and the teacher's houses; there was no cinema and few shops, and television had ever been heard of. The only culture was talk. There were songs and music and some dancing, but talk was the centrepiece of creativity. This novel attempts to capture the talk and the never-ending gabble and gossip of which the community was made. It might be said that all human communities before the onset of common literacy were simply made of talk. (8)

The formal and genre-specific difference between a play and a novel made up of dramatic dialogues is that, whether in the play each line is assigned to a specific character, in Ó Cadhain dramatic novel this is simply not the case. The interludes consist of interlaced speech lines, belonging to different characters, whose names are not spelled out for the reader, though many of them call their interlocutors by their names. Reflecting on this particularity, Keefe notes that without the traditional guide a play offers to who does the speaking, "the reader has trouble at first identifying the bewildering number of characters" (368). Keefe takes this apparent lack to be part and parcel of the epistemology of the particular story-world and a cue for its reading:

> The idiosyncratic lack of the usual signposting is not just a wayward contrariness. The intention of the author is to attempt to define each of his dramatis personae by means of highly individual discourse. Only by their speech patterns can we come to recognize the characters and try to piece together what is true or hearsay. (368)

Indeed, its experimental form can drive the reader to the conclusion that what is needed is only an increased awareness on his/her part, coupled with a trained and discerning ear for the repetitions, pet words and cliches that can betray the speakers. Yet it is often impossible to identify the speaker of each line. Moreover, reading the novel with the intention of solving the puzzle of the

university library and has not been published.

characters and putting together the jigsaw of truth and hearsay would be purely an intellectual task, so demanding that one would have to relinquish any other hermeneutic effort. One should also not forget Ó Cadhain's love for the spoken word, his emotional investment in it, in its 'dancing' movements or its 'weeping' as well as his acerbic social criticism.

Another salient point is that the talk which is the main character in the novel is mostly small talk, or as Tiltey puts it:

> All these dead voices in the unquiet grave are concerned only with the immediate quotidian–the stolen seaweed, who is marrying whom, a donkey's trespass, what somebody's will contains, how the publican robbed them–although there are distant echoes of national politics and even of the Second World War. But all human life is here; and if you were to transfer yourself to any part of the world even today and to listen to the clatter of local voices, it would be not that much different from what you will encounter in *The Dirty Dust* (9).

Leaving aside the reductionism and essentialism of the last part of the argument (which may have been prompted by the translator's attempt to give wider focus to a masterpiece in one of the so-called 'small languages' of Europe), the small talk of the characters may point to something larger: Ó Cadhain's political involvement, namely his lifelong commitment to republican and socialist politics (Ó hÉigeartaigh 28). Conversely, Cathasaig claims that Ó Cadhain's socialism was actually left radicalism (18). In the mid-1920s he became a sympathizer and volunteer for the Irish Republican Army, and in 1932 he was already enlisted in the IRA. Arrested in 1939 under the Offences against the State Act, Ó Cadhain was interned for almost five years, without trial, in a prison for political dissidents, which, on account of its harsh conditions, he called "Ireland's Siberia" (qtd. in Ó hÉigeartaigh 29).

As an important part of the Irish nationalist movement had been the Gaelic Revival, Ó Cadhain's interest in gathering folk tales[5] and collecting old Irish songs points to his strong attachment to the idea of language as a symbol/repository of the nation. Language policies such as de-anglicisation had figured prominently on the agenda of many Irish societies seeking to promote vernacular Gaelic.

As Keefe remarks, Ó Cadhain belonged to one of those small rural communities with a good knowledge of Irish and a strong cultural heritage (otherwise poor and mostly illiterate) which had come to be regarded as a national resource for the building up of the country following the Gaelic Revival

[5] Though other Anglo-Irish writers like W.B. Yeats had shown a considerable interest in the folk and fairy tales of their country, W. J. McCormack notes that Ó Cadhain's interest went beyond a purely intellectual or ideological one, as he manifested "an instinctive sympathy for the awe in which folklore was once held in rural communities" (35).

movement (364). For Ó Cadhain, preservation of the language must have been synonymous with independence, self-government and an authentic national identity. No wonder that what figured prominently in every aspect of his work, be it creative or educational, was the very language which stood at the centre of the imagined (and desired) nation.

If Ó Cadhain's love for his mother tongue aligns his nationalist vision with that of the first generation of Irish nationalists who attempted to resurrect traditional culture (Éire naGaeilge – the Ireland of the Irish language), what separates him from them is his attitude to religion, Catholicism being one of the pillars on which the independent Irish government relied on in order to define national identity. Ó Cadhain's distrust of religion[6] may be perceived in the very texture of the novel, in the way any religious notion of an afterlife is completely rejected, and the spiritual is mostly absent from the dead's endless gossip and back-biting.

A testimony to the orality of the language which he wanted to record and preserve is the apparent musical structure of each interlude, through which courses the metaphor of moulding, its phases correlating with those of the decomposition of the bodies into clay:

> Churchyard Clay is scored like a musical composition written for spoken voices. Each of the ten 'interludes' with its variations is placed in a progression which in turn is named to indicate the cyclical nature of the evolution of the human body to clay. At the same time, the progression of the clay is closely allied to the work of a potter who works in the same medium. At first the raw material is *The Black Clay*. Then comes the *Layering*, *Combing*, *Grinding*, *Bone-manuring*, *Infiltration*, *Shaping*, *Hardening*, *Polishing*, and the final result – *The Bright Clay* (Keefe 369).

The breaking down of bodies into clay and the progressive shaping of the same clay into a distinct artifact made for human use are metaphors of destruction and creation which run parallel in the novel: they allude to the making and un-making of tradition and community, the things which Ó Cadhain strove to preserve both through language and his political activism. The score and multitude of (often unrelated) voices can be regarded either as cacophony, symphony, or polyphony in the Bakhtinian sense, as a plurality of independent voices, merging into "a

[6] He was also highly distrustful of Church representatives, and not only on account of his leftist inclination, but also on personal grounds. As Liam Mac Con Iomaire notes, "[i]n 1936 his membership of the proscribed Irish Republican Army led to his dismissal from Carnmore National School in East Galway by his clerical manager, Canon Patrick J. Moran, and the then bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh, Dr. Thomas O'Doherty" (ix), while Ó Cathasaigh relates that while training as a teacher on a scholarship provided by the Church, he "joined the Society of St Vincent de Paul, a Catholic relief organization, but when he was sent to poor Catholics accepting charity from Protestants or missing mass for lack of decent clothes to wear, his sympathies were all on their side, and he did not have the heart to remind them of their religious duties" (18).

combination of fully valid consciousnesses, together with their worlds" (21). This polyphony "of battling and internally divided voices" (Bakhtin 250), which speak, are heard, are denied or acknowledged, creates a dialogic and democratic space, which is placed in parentheses and made problematic by the fact that this space is in fact, a graveyard: an ironic reflection of the lack of democracy in the Irish Free State.

Apart from trying to recreate the natural rhythm of oral speech, Ó Cadhain's interest also lay in a realistic portrayal of the mental makeup of the speakers of Gaelic, the poor inhabitants of a dry and barren land. The harsh humour of the dead's chatter under the ground is meant as a resistance strategy to the traditional way Irishmen were depicted in English literature as well as a critical reflection on the model for an emergent Irish identity offered by the Blasket Island[7] autobiographies, a model which attempted to be "morally superior to the debased values of modern popular culture emanating from urban industrial England" (de Paor 10) and thus presented the Gaeltacht communities in an idyllic light. In *Utopia, Anti-utopia, Nostalgia and Ó Cadhain,* Dhiarmada contends that:

> In the late nineteenth century, the revival and restoration of the Irish language itself became an important part of the Utopian project of cultural nationalism and can be read as a form of nostalgia, "a desire to go home" to a remembered pre-colonial past where the deracinated colonial subjects could locate themselves again in their own home/language. (54)

This view of language as a site of memory and national utopia prompted the nostalgic articulation of the Gaeltacht as a "living repository of the ancestral language" (54) in the Blasket autobiographies.

By trying to document the everyday routines of the Gaeltacht communities in order to hold them up as utopian models for the articulation of a post-independence Irish national identity, the Blasket autobiographers had looked at them from the outside. Instead, what Ó Cadhain set out to do was to look at them from the inside, trying to depict them in the vein of psychological realism which he had learned from reading the works of Russian authors Fyodor Dostoevsky and Maxim Gorky while interned in Camp Curragh.

One of the realistic means of depicting both the rural inhabitants of his native Connemara and their colourful use of the vernacular is through humour. In this respect, one of the very first things that the reader notices in Ó Cadhain's writing, which facilitates the reading of an otherwise 'difficult'[8] author is his

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[7] Among the Blasket Islands writers were P. Sayers, Muiris ÓSuilleabhain and T. ÓCriomhthain.

[8] On account of his excellent command of rural idiomatic Gaelic speech, Ó Cadhain had been long perceived as difficult author to read and to translate. Mac Con Iomaire notes that "[i]n the early reviews by T. O Floinn, D. Corkery, and D. Greene in 1950 we are told that the author has excelled in the crafting of his medium, that this medium is heavily indebted to the speech of his native Conamara

humour. Breandan ÓhEithir stated that "*Créna Cille* is a great comic work and by far and away the funniest in modern Irish. Apart from Evelyn Waugh and Jaroslav Hašek no author makes me laugh as heartily and as regularly as Mairtin Ó Cadhain in *Créna Cille*" (75). Writing about the long shadow cast by his writing on the Gaelic language writers, contemporary Irish novelist Darach Ó Scolai echoes ÓhEithir's claim, confessing that everything he can remember from the first reading of the book was that the author's sense of humour had more than surprised him (34). In revealing the inconsistencies between one's inner world/worldview and the material reality which refuses definition and conscription, humour proves to be integral to the human being-in-the-world. It is through humour that Ó Cadhain manages to sketch the characters, their narrow mindset and petty jealousies, to provide important historical background to the community he describes, to deliver social comment and critique, and even to poke fun at his own condition as author. Yet it was Ó Cadhain's humour, his hilarious use of the idiomatic foul language that also arouse controversy once it was published[9].

The language Ó Cadhain's characters use is definitely at odds with that of the Gaelic communities described by the first Gaeltacht writers like Seamas ÓGrianna (Maire), who, according to Dhiarmada, "indulged in an overly sentimental and idealised view of Gaeltacht life" (54). Caitriona Phaidin, newly buried, is a sharp-tongued woman modelled, according to Keefe, on the mythical Irish character of the Hag of Beara[10] (369). The novel begins with her monologue:

> I wonder am I buried in the Pound Plot or the Fifteen-Shilling Plot? Or did the devil possess them to dump me in the Half-Guinea Plot, after all my warnings? The morning of the day I died I called Padraig up from the kitchen: "I beseech you, Padraig, my child," I said. "Bury me in the Pound Plot. In the Pound Plot. Some of us are buried in the Half-Guinea Plot, but even so..." I told them to get the best

Gaeltacht, and that, while this is a criterion of excellence in itself, the text is difficult" (xxiii). One should not forget that his first published translations in English appeared almost fifty years after the author's death and almost seventy years after the novel's publication in Gaelic.

[9] Controversy seems to have been Ó Cadhain's middle name. In an article written for the writer's 100 commemoration, Le Declan notes that "Ó Cadhain was a man of contradictions – born into a poor family in An Cnocán Glas a century ago but ending his days as a resident of Dublin's southside; a passionate advocate for Irish who nonetheless made savage criticisms of Gaeltacht summer schools in a column called 'Irish Colleges: Big Business'; an erstwhile IRA man who became a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin" (16).

[10] According to Hull, the Hag of Beare (Cailleach Bheare in Gaelic) or the Old Woman of Dingle is a mythological pagan goddess, present in the folklore of Ireland and Western Scotland, belonging to a "large class of Hags or Cailleacha, who are builders of dolmens and hills, and guardians of wells and mountains, and who are connected with old age and winter" (254), similar in some ways with the Romanian Baba Dochia. The Hag of Beare is the subject of an Irish medieval poem (*The Lament of the Hag of Beare*, 10th–11th C), is mentioned in a 12th C satire (*The Vision of Mac Conglinne*) and appears in many Scottish and Irish legends as a wise or a witch-woman.

> coffin in Tadhg's. It's a good oak coffin anyway... I have the scapular mantle on. And the winding-sheet. I had them left ready myself ... There's a spot on this sheet. It's like a daub of soot. No it's not. A fingermark! My son's wife for certain. It's like her sloppiness. If Nell saw it! I suppose she was there. She wouldn't have been, by God, if I could have helped it. […] The crucifix is on my breast, the one I bought at the mission... But where's the black crucifix Tomaisin's wife got blessed for me at Knock Shrine the last time Tomaisin had to be tied? I told them to put that one on me too. It's much better looking than this one. The Saviour on this one is crooked since Padraig's children dropped it. The Saviour on the black one is gorgeous. But what's the matter with me? I'm as forgetful as ever! There it is under my head. It's a pity they didn't put that one on my breast... (3–4)

Her first concerns after death have nothing to do with salvation. Religion is there, of course, but only in its material form: the scapulars, the winding sheet and the dilemma of the two crucifixes. Like in any small, isolated communities where people know one another closely and good and evil are never really forgotten or forgiven, she strives for higher status even post-mortem. Good quality and cleanliness, these are the virtues of every respectable housewife. As a mother and mother-in-law, she demands respect from those whom she raised, as well as from their consorts. In a parody of class divisions, the organization of the graveyard mirrors the three estates: the Pound, the Fifteen Shilling and the Half-Guinea plots. There is an ongoing class struggle among the corpses in the graveyard, revitalized by each incoming deceased person.

Caitriona's monologue goes on for quite a while, touching on all her relatives and neighbours, especially her sisters Nell (whom she has been bearing a grudge since she married the man Caitriona loved) and Baba (like many Irish, an emigrant in the US), proferring insults at whoever dared not to mourned her properly ("Nell crying and not a tear on her cheek, the pussface!") or happened to have climbed even an inch further on the social ladder (6). Because she bears a grudge against Nora Sheainin (Filthy-Feet)'s daughter, she starts slandering her mother in front of the Big Master:

> Take care that you pay no heed to her, Master dear. If you knew her as well as I do you'd sing dumb to her. I've spent the last sixteen years bickering with her daughter and herself. You're poorly employed, Master, squandering your time on Noirin Filthy-Feet. She never had a single day's schooling, Master, and she'd be more familiar with the track of a flea than her ABC... (16)

Nora Sheainin, the object of Caitriona's malice, is no innocent character either. Though illiterate, she thinks very highly of herself, for in the course of the conversations with the Big Master she acquired what she regards as 'culture': "She gave me a bad name with the Big Master, Caitriona Phaidin. I wouldn't mind but I never did anything to deserve it. You well know, Muraed, I never interfere in anybody's business, being always busy with culture. And I have a

fine flashy cross over me too. *Smashing,* as the Big Master says" (21).

Nora Sheainin's notion of culture boils down to inflated words peppered with quotations that she learned from the Master[11], and her description of herself shows her to be nothing more than a cultured wannabe:

> *Honest,* Muraed, I have forgotten everything concerning Caitriona's affairs on the plain above us. Culture, Muraed. It elevates the mind to the lofty peaks and opens the fairy palaces in which is stored the protoplasm of colour and sound, as Nibs says in *Sunset Tresses.* One loses all interest in the paltry trivia of doleful life. A glorious disorder has filled my mind for some time now, brought on by an avalanche of culture... (23)

The parody of culture which the character of Nora Sheainin offers can be regarded as Ó Cadhain's commentary on the cultural policy of the post-colonial, post-independence Irish state, which was essentially duplicitary towards the very people it tended to idealize. As Dhiarmada contends,

> the State's neglect of the Gaeltacht regions which led to economic stagnation and a higher-than-average level of emigration made both Ó Cadhain and his contemporary, the Aran poet Mairtin ÓDireain, internal migrants in a country where State ideology paid lip service to the Irish language, idealised the Gaeltacht as a nostalgic Utopia – the true repository of national identity – while allowing the living Gaeltacht to be denuded of its youth and vitality through emigration (55).

The figure of the bard, sage or storyteller, as a representative of traditionally recited Irish poetry/epic is also present in the graveyard. From time to time, the dialogue is interrupted and fragments of popular verse are inserted: they are the work of Coili, reflecting humorously on the foibles and the squabbles of his dead neighbours. The folk tradition of reciting poetry and narratives is compared and contrasted with the modern profession of being a writer. In the character of the writer, Ó Cadhain's own experience becomes the target of satire. After sending the manuscript of the novel *An Gum,* the official publishing house for whom he had been working as a translator, Ó Cadhain found out that it had been rejected on account of his controversial use of popular idiom: "If you intend to take up writing, Coili, remember that it is taboo for An Gum to publish anything that a daughter would hide from her father" (19). The writer's long diatribe and patronising tone towards Coili, however, earn him no favour with the graveyard people, who seem to prefer the storyteller's "hackneyed beginning" of "Long, long ago there were three men" to the intricate philosophy of how to write a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. From the writer's confession, the

[11] She also calls one of her graveyard interlocutors, Dottie, "my fellow-navigator on the boundless sea of culture" (23).

reader is given to understand that it might have been this futile effort who led him to an early death: "Look at the way I would have ended *The Re-Setting Sun,* which I was working on when I dropped dead with a spasm of writer's cramp" (20).

Besides religion and culture, another topic for discussion among the corpses in the graveyard are politics, booze and football (the matches between Kerry and Galway, two football teams still in existence and still playing against one another). Discussion means, in this context, arguing. The two characters who fight over who was right, Arthur Griffith or Eamon de Valera – the Griffith supporter having stabbed the de Valera supporter (an IRA member) in the back, in a reverse mimicry of the Irish Civil War – paradoxically draw on the similarities between the two leaders:

- Hold on now till I read you the Declaration issued by Eamon de Valera to the people of Ireland: "People of Ireland..."
- Hold on yourself till I read you the Declaration issued by Arthur Griffith to the people of Ireland: "People of Ireland..." (40)

Their mentality, in spite of the different party they support, is the same: they rely on their leaders to give them a sense of personal value and direction, thus proving that there was no true democracy in Ireland at that time:

- There was a representative from Eamon de Valera at my funeral and the tricolour on my coffin...
- There was a telegram from Arthur Griffith at my funeral and shots were fired over my grave... (166)

At some point elections are going to be held among the inhabitants of the graves, and each of the three estates (the Pound, the Fifteen Shilling and the Half-Guinea plots) have to elect their own candidate for the general election. This is when a long and heated argument breaks out among the corpses, with those in the Fifteen Shilling plot angry at the Pound Party and its main representatives, Siuan the Shopkeeper and Peadar the Publican. Past wrongs come to the surface, and under everybody's fire, Peadar the Pub retaliates by disclosing to his "Fellow Corpses" that Nora Sheainin, "the joint candidate" of the Fifteen Shillings was a "drunkard". His speech makes a perfect example of political discourse, in which the *argumentum ad hominem* is both denied and used to attack the candidate of the opposing party:

> I am going to divulge information that is not very complimentary to Nora Sheainin [...] Nora Sheainin was a friend of mine. Although I oppose her politically, that doesn't mean that I couldn't respect her and be on cordial terms with her. For that reason, I hate to talk about this matter. I find it painful. I find it repugnant. I find it distasteful. But it was yourselves, the Fifteen-Shilling crowd, who started this incivility. [...] You are very proud of your joint candidate. She could hold her head

> up in any company for decency, honesty and virtue, if what you people are saying is true. But Nora Sheainin was a drunkard. (88)

Peadar's accusation, though regarded as inaccurate by Nora Sheainin, triggers a side reaction on Nora's part, which can give insight into the social meanings of drink among the Gaelic communities. Nora is more inflamed that she had been accused of drinking porter (and not whiskey) than she is of having been unjustly accused:

> Did you hear what Peadar the Pub said about me: that I used to drink four or five pints of porter every day above ground. *Honest!* Porter! If he'd said whiskey, even. But porter! The most uncultured drink of all. Ugh!...Of course you don't believe that I drank porter, Dotie! It's a lie! Filthy, black, uncultured porter. It's a lie, Dotie! What else. *Honest Engine...* (91)

The only foreigner in the graveyard is a French pilot whose airplane had been shot down, who, understandably, does not comprehend a word of Irish. His efforts at making others speak French or trying to pick up Gaelic from a textbook give rise to hilarious misunderstandings:

- "Zee dog is sinking." *Le chien pense, n'est-ce pas?* "Zee dog is sinking." *Mais non!* "Zee dog is sinking."
- How would a dog be sinking, you numskull? Maybe he was thinking, or drinking, or even stinking. But it wasn't sinking. Sinking! The devil a dog I ever saw sinking (137).

In the end, sick and tired of making the Frenchman pronounce correctly, his teacher concludes, with the typical Irish satirical wit: "If it's sinking let it sink. The devil a thing we can do about it, or about whoever put it in the book either. Maybe it went drinking, and then it started sinking on account of the hangover and the empty pockets..." (137).

It is this sense of profound irony and sarcasm, which can be traced as far back as Jonathan Swift's work, which lends the novel its unmistakable Irish flavour. Whether it is everyday matters, a stolen animal or a plot of land, politics, religion, history, culture or just booze, the dialogues reveal not only character, but a language's sense of place and direction. Humour creates the premises for de-stabilizing the Free State national narrative, which relied on idealized stereotypes of native Irish speakers (Ó Conchubhair 212-5). Though seemingly experimental in form, *Graveyard Clay* fits perfectly Bakhtin's definition of the novel as a polyphonic space. Yet apart from the lively humour, the fact that the Gaeltacht community is a graveyard leads us to believe that Ó Cadhain's hopes for a long-term revival of Gaelic were not very high. It is this rather pessimistic view which determined the preservation of his native idiomatic speech in *Graveyard Clay*.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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https://doi.org/10.2307/25515704

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Citation: Doncu, Roxana Elena. Who has the Last Word? The Dead and their Lively Humour in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Créna Cille*. *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series*13(2), 2023: 15–27. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.2

Article

Humour as Survival Strategy in Walter *Scott's Waverley*, *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*

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Abstract: Humour will be shown to be present in a selection of novels by Walter Scott, as a strategy to temper hot spirits on the brink of violence and pre-empt conflict in the fictional societies. Despite the contagious effect spreading to the reader himself, this type of humour relies on paralogical hints, language inadequacy or language gaps, which the fictional audience as well as the reader has to fill in. In the process of solving the linguistic inaccuracies, the audience (both fictional and the reader) is forced to notice the deliberate violation of communication and look for meaning elsewhere. The distance between expected and discovered meaning is so great that a bout of laughter is the result, and fictional tensions are depleted of power. It is my claim that the humorous effect constantly brings the intuitive paralogic collapse of a logic which previously fostered conflict by coagulating opposing factions around powerful feelings and pathos.
Keywords: *humorous distance; paralogic intuition; incongruity; pathos; language gaps; survival strategy.*

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.3
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

The present study will look at three novels, *Waverley, Rob Roy, Redgauntlet*, which evince the same 'narrative disease'. The 'disease' mentioned is the diagnosis advanced by the first reviews of the Waverley novels. Critics accused the author of lack of a deeper perspective, lack of pathos, too much humour. The mildest of these reviews states:

> Such is the outline of a work which, if it seldom melts us to tears by its pathos, or astonishes us by its sublimity, will be long the favourite of every reader to whom the beauties of nature, the peculiarities of general life and provincial manners, and the development of human character, are objects of sympathy or curiosity. It will please the man of taste and of feeling, but will not be likely to obtain an extensive popularity among the readers of circulating libraries. It abounds too little with non- sense, affectation, and romance, to be acceptable to the masters and misses who command a market for the annual productions of the Minerva press. (*The Scourge* 298)

There is also a thematic link, as these works deal with Jacobite uprisings. Humour proves often to be of paramount importance, delighting the reader, disarming emotional pathos in the fictional participants and in the reader as well, and activating a different kind of pathos.

The interplay between humour and pathos and their reliance on non-rational elements continue to baffle the academic world. Is humour entirely a self-defence mechanism? Humour seems to be part of the human evolution, but it seems that "no literary theorist currently prominent in the humanities has developed a scientifically defensible view of comedy that considers laughter as an evolved phenomenon. Henri Bergson, it is true, approaches laughter as an adaptive behaviour, but his philosophical commitment to 'creative evolution' gives his ideas a pseudoscientific cast, or at least a decidedly un Darwinian one" (Storey 75). In this study, humour is definitely a means of communicating meaning.

The ensuing analysis will focus on humour in *Waverley*, *Redgauntlet* and *Rob Roy*, where it appears as one of the remedies proposed for insufficiently considered fictional decisions which are driven by some irrational elements and feelings. The abandonment of logic, usually shown in the laughter caused by unexpected incongruities, offers relief and a depletion of former pathetic feelings. But humour is not always associated with laughter.

In what follows, I will rely on Bakhtin's theory which deals with humour and laughter, as well as with pathos. He operates with two distinct forms of pathos, poetic or authentic pathos and novelistic/prosaic pathos (Caryl and Morson 355). In the case of the authentic pathos, Bakhtin argues that "[a] discourse of pathos is fully sufficient to itself and to its object. Indeed, the speaker completely immerses himself in such a discourse, there is no distance, there are no reservations. A discourse of pathos has the appearance of directly intentional discourse..." (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 394). But this is not always the case. He says that

"[a] discourse of pathos may also be conditional, and may even be doubled, like double-voiced discourse. In the novel it is precisely as double voiced that pathos almost inevitably occurs" (394). The difference lies primarily in the fact that this form of pathos becomes one among others. It no longer has scope over the entire world. "When it appears in the second stylistic line, the language of the first line loses its privilege. It becomes just another language of heteroglossia to be set into dialogue with others. The discourse of chivalric romances, of baroque novels, and of sentimental narratives no longer represents the world, but is represented as part of it" (Caryl and Morson 356-7). This is the case in the novels mentioned above. There is a repeating pattern in these writings, the pathetic discourse attempts to take over, sharply polarize and mobilize via pathetic feelings. Then, we get a constant subversion at the narrative level via multiple humorous incidents which prevent the empathetic siding of the reader with any of the factions. In the fictional society, an accumulation of pathetic feelings (in Bakhtin's acceptation of the term) is usually rendered flat and depleted of tension via witty humorous interventions which rely on the infringement of one of Grice's maxims of conversation, suspension of the pathetic logic and collapse into an overall laughter/humour which creates the "pathos of unity", one which relies on wit and humour, rather than feelings.

> While destroying the official conception of his time and of contemporary events, Rabelais did not seek, of course, to submit them to a scholarly analysis. He did not speak in the conceptual language but in the tongue of popular comic images. While breaking up false seriousness, false historic pathos, he prepared the soil for a new seriousness and for a new historic pathos. (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 439)

While this is in sync with Bakhtin's view of laughter as a relief mechanism, the element of incongruity is also decisively present, as we will see in the fictional situations analysed. In every situation a conversational maxim is deliberately flaunted in order to force a reconsideration in which the incongruity becomes the centre, rendering the situation humorous.

This pushes humour beyond the boundary of reason, but not beyond meaning, as meaning with Bakhtin is not restricted to speech. Utterances can be entirely devoid of meaning unless they are a rejoinder in a dialogue (Bakhtin, *Speech* 145). Bakhtinian humour introduces another "pathos of unity", but not via irrational feelings. Rather, a paralogic meaning comes into being via suspension of the rules of conversation (usually Grice's maxims are tampered with) and gaps in conversation. To look into this phenomenon, I appealed marginally to linguistic theories on humour based on pragmatics.

The first passage which features this disintegration of the fictional pathetic discourse is taken from *Waverley*. The Pretender's troops, none of the most united, experience an internal misunderstanding in which the feelings of the

contenders escalate into tensions ready to burst in open conflict. Here the Prince, although portrayed as a historical failure in political matters, comes to solve the problem by deliberately violating the maxim of quality (Thomas 72) and offering a misleading lie. The contrast between stated meaning and the contradicting reality provides comic relief to the readers and the fictional characters who were on the brink of a dangerous conflict.

> To promote or restore concord among his followers was indispensable. Accordingly, he took his measures.
> "Monsieur de Beaujeu!"
> "Monseigneur!" said a very handsome French cavalry officer who was in attendance.
> "Ayez la bonté d'aligner ces montagnards-là, ainsi que la cavalerie, s'il vous plait, et de les remettre a la marche. Vous parlez si bien l'Anglois, cela ne vous donneroit pas beaucoup de peine" (Scott, *Waverley* 504).

This is the false statement, little suspected as such by the fictional French officer. The reader is thus forced to laugh when he spots the incongruity. While reading about de Beaujeu's endeavours to bring the troops in formation, we are constantly laughing at the linguistic inadequacies and failures occasioned by the initial false statement of the Prince.

> "Messieurs les sauvages Ecossais–dat is, gentilmans savages, have the goodness d'arranger vous."
> The clan, comprehending the order more from the gesture than the words, and seeing the Prince himself present, hastened to dress their ranks.
> "Ah! ver well! dat is fort bien!" said the Comte de Beaujeu. "Gentilmans sauvages! mais, très bien. Eh bien! Qu'est ce que vous appelez visage, Monsieur?" (to a lounging trooper who stood by him). "Ah, oui! face. Je vous remercie, Monsieur. Gentilshommes, have de goodness to make de face to de right par file, dat is, by files. Marsh! Mais, très bien; encore, Messieurs; il faut vous mettre à la marche. Marchez donc, au nom de Dieu, parce que j'ai oublié le mot Anglais; mais vous êtes des braves gens, et me comprenez très bien."
> The Count next hastened to put the cavalry in motion. "Gentilmans cavalry, you must fall in. Ah! par ma foi, I did not say fall off!
> "Eh bien, Messieurs, wheel to de right. Ah! dat is it! Eh, Monsieur de Bradwardine, ayez la bonté de vous mettre à la tête de votre régiment, car, par Dieu, je n'en puis plus!" (Scott, *Waverley* 504–5)

Language failure, unfortunate code mixing here and there, failure to pronounce some affricates, as well as the masterful appellation "gentilmans savages" betray the inability of the French officer to deal with the task: "have de goodness to make de face to de right par file, dat is, by files. Marsh!" (Scott, *Waverley* 505) The fictional society is thus relieved in laughter from the seriousness and anger of the initial accumulation of pathos.

We as readers are easily dissuaded from taking seriously any pathetic discourse, be it Fergus McIvor's, Waverley's or the one of the unfortunate Prince for that matter. Communication is temporarily suspended, logic and reason are superseded by paralogic hints at the great discrepancy between statement and reality and the reader could barely suppress laughter at the Comte's ill-qualified efforts to execute the order. The pathos surrounding Prince Charlie's quasi-romantic enterprise is dispelled from the minds of the readers. To conclude the analysis of this episode I offer Bakhtin's own words in *Dialogic Imagination*: "The naivete of a simpleton who does not understand pathos (or who understands it in a distorted way, wrong side out), is counterposed to a false pathos, which together with gay deception has the effect of 'making strange' any pretensions to lofty reality a discourse of pathos might have. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 402)

The second example I chose stems from *Rob Roy* and deals with the angry political factions hosted at the Black Bear in Darlington and a witty intervention which defused political pathos and installed general unity. The historical backdrop features the first Jacobite uprising and the narrator offers a description of the scene in which the supporters of king George and those of the Stuart line seem to be filled with pathos, in Bakhtin's acceptation of the term.

> Every alehouse resounded with the brawls of contending politicians, and as mine host's politics were of that liberal description which quarrelled with no good customer, his hebdomadal visitants were often divided in their opinion as irreconcilably as if he had feasted the Common Council…
> Dire was the screaming--deep the oaths! Each party appealed to Mr. Campbell, anxious, it seemed, to elicit his approbation.
> "You are a Scotchman, sir; a gentleman of your country must stand up for hereditary right," cried one party.
> "You are a Presbyterian," assumed the other class of disputants; "you cannot be a friend to arbitrary power" (Scott, *Rob Roy* 41).

Campbell, Rob Roy, McGregor flout the maxim of manner (Thomas 71), giving a rather long reply without actually choosing any side. The surprise consists primarily in the reduction of the problem to one common denominator; teasing with the fact that both monarchs are equally unable to help or offer a solution in the case of a 'very important' problem, pertaining to "carnival grammar" (Lachmann 152). After putting both kings on a par, he ironically validates the pathos of both groups, but the surprise comes with the reduction of their lofty ideas to a very prosaic and pragmatic matter, in a way similar to Bakhtin's subversion and allusion to the "lower bodily stratum", Campbell's thirst for brandy.

> I havena much dubitation that King George weel deserves the predilection of his friends; and if he can haud the grip he has gotten, why, doubtless, he may made the gauger, here, a commissioner of the revenue, and confer on our friend, Mr. Quitam, the preferment of solicitor-general; and he may also grant some good deed or reward to this honest gentleman who is sitting upon his portmanteau, which he prefers to a chair: And, questionless, King James is also a grateful person, and when he gets his hand in play, he may, if he be so minded, make this reverend gentleman archprelate of Canterbury, and Dr. Mixit chief physician to his household, and commit his royal beard to the care of my friend Latherum. But as I doubt mickle whether any of the competing sovereigns would give Rob Campbell a tass of aquavitae, if he lacked it, I give my vote and interest to Jonathan Brown, our landlord, to be the King and Prince of Skinkers, conditionally that he fetches us another bottle as good as the last. (Scott, *Rob Roy* 41–2)

The proposed monarch is the humorous solution uniting everyone in the pub and providing comic relief to the reader as well. "This sally was received with general applause, in which the landlord cordially joined; and when he had given orders for fulfilling the condition on which his preferment was to depend" (*Rob Roy* 42).

Redgauntlet deals with a third and almost entirely fictional Jacobite uprising. The abundance of humorous passages is so great, that the entire novel seems to be a deliberate collection of ironic subversions. From the witty exchange of letters to the comic surprise of Alan Fairford when he discovered that the lady he was helping to dismount was a rather "solid weight," i.e. his friend Darsie brought by Redgauntlet to the meeting in a lady's dress, the novel leaves little room for pathetic discourse to properly deploy and win adherents.

The participants in the fictional third Jacobite uprising, betrayed by Cristal Nixon, Hugh Redgauntlet's henchman, are surprised by General Campbell, who entered their place of meeting and managed to pre-empt violence via humorous encroachments upon the maxims of quality and manner. Here the opposition pathos-humour plays a central role. The adherents to the Stuart line maintain their pathos and heroism, and try to show their unshakable resolution.

> He had passed through their guards, if in the confusion they now maintained any, without stop or question, and now stood, almost unarmed, among armed men, who nevertheless, gazed on him as on the angel of destruction.
> 'You look coldly on me, gentlemen,' he said. 'Sir Richard Glendale–my Lord ---, we were not always such strangers. Ha, Pate-in-Peril, how is it with you? and you, too, Ingoldsby--I must not call you by any other name--why do you receive an old friend so coldly? But you guess my errand.'
> 'And are prepared for it, general,' said Redgauntlet; 'we are not men to be penned up like sheep for the slaughter.'
> 'Pshaw! you take it too seriously--let me speak but one word with you.'

> 'No words can shake our purpose,' said Redgauntlet, were your whole command, as I suppose is the case, drawn round the house.' (Scott, *Redgauntlet* 247–8)

The General's attempts to divert them from their pathos-filled discourse and their drive for heroic action were at first seemingly useless. After the group's resolution to fight to death in their honourable cause, the endeavour was crowned with the Pretender's offer of self, his supreme sacrifice for the sake of his adherents. "Hear ME, sir,' said the Wanderer, stepping forward; 'I suppose I am the mark you aim at--I surrender myself willingly, to save these gentlemen's danger--let this at least avail in their favour.' (Scott, *Redgauntlet* 248). Group cohesion was at its peak, the adherents rallied around the Wanderer, apparently nothing could bend their resolution. "An exclamation of 'Never, never!' broke from the little body of partisans, who threw themselves round the unfortunate prince, and would have seized or struck down Campbell, had it not been that he remained with his arms folded, and a look, rather indicating impatience because they would not hear him, than the least apprehension of violence at their hand" (Scott, *Redgauntlet* 248).

But after the Prince offered to give his life for the sake of his adherents and the climax of this pathos-filled proposition, everything is brushed aside with an entirely different solution. The general flaunts the maxim of quality (Thomas 67) several times, suggesting an outlet. "At length he obtained a moment's silence. 'I do not,' he said, 'know this gentleman' -- (making a profound bow to the unfortunate prince) -- 'I do not wish to know him; it is a knowledge which would suit neither of us" (Scott, *Redgauntlet* 248). There is a clear discrepancy between the statement and the gesture which shows the initial statement to have been a lie and gives the hearers the cue to interpret differently Campbell's following affirmations, using a different set of maxims and conversation principles, different from the general norm. "Then a humour-cooperative principle (CP) is introduced which can accommodate the original CP, but can also allow violations of the CP as long as they are eventually redeemed. . . Other CPs seem to exist, as well as a 'meta-CP' which regulates violations to the CP." (Attardo 286). General Campbell seems to display stupidity and inability to grasp their pathos.

> Come, do not be fools, gentlemen; there was perhaps no great harm meant or intended by your gathering together in this obscure corner, for a bear-bait or a cock-fight, or whatever other amusement you may have intended, but it was a little imprudent, considering how you stand with government, and it has occasioned some anxiety. Exaggerated accounts of your purpose have been laid before government by the information of a traitor in your own counsels; and I was sent down post to take the command of a sufficient number of troops, in case these calumnies should be found to have any real foundation. I have come

> here, of course, sufficiently supported both with cavalry and infantry, to do whatever might be necessary; but my commands are--and I am sure they agree with my inclination--to make no arrests, nay, to make no further inquiries of any kind, if this good assembly will consider their own interest so far as to give up their immediate purpose, and return quietly home to their own houses. (Scott, *Redgauntlet* 248–9)

The listeners as well as the readers can decode the implied meaning behind the seeming inability to understand pathetic discourse, they are invited to activate the meta-CP (cooperative principle). This serves the purpose of the Bakhtinian parodic subversion in dialogue:

> Stupidity (incomprehension) in the novels always polemical: it interacts dialogically with an intelligence (a lofty pseudo-intelligence) with which it polemicizes and whose mask it tears away. Stupidity, like gay deception and other novelistic categories, is a dialogic category, one that follows from the specific dialogism of novelistic discourse. For this reason, stupidity in the novel is always implicated in the language, in the word, at its heart always lies a polemical failure to understand... someone else's pathos charged lie that has appropriated the world and aspires to conceptualize it, a failure to understand generally accepted, canonized, inveterately false languages with their lofty labels for things and events" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 403).

Campbell is the one who cannot grasp the exalted pathos of the Jacobite plotters and their defence. With Bakhtin, pathos is connected with enthusiasm, and the pathetic discourse implies the word which intends to install itself as the ultimate word, without the possibility of other rejoinders. Through his seeming inability to understand and his impatience at their not being able to listen to his rejoinder, Campbell attacks the seriousness of the enterprise. By reminding them that this is one view among others, he diminishes their pathos and conveniently minimizes the pathos of government forces. The scene is playful, humorous, yet without laughter, although the rest of the novel is studded with comic moments when laughter rules supreme. This is a form of "that higher humour which skilfully blends the ludicrous and the pathetic, so that it is hardly possible to separate between smiles and tears" (Lynch 170). The moment the revolutionary pathos is represented and it becomes another line in the dialogue, the Pretender's party remains with the conclusion that a change is not necessary, the 'play of bear-baiting', the 'amusement' is played out and there is no point in pursuing further a dangerous agenda. They choose the outlet suggested by Campbell's reinterpretation of their intentions and go home.

Bakhtin's own words might best conclude the analysis of this last episode from *Redgauntlet*:

> The inadmissibility of mono-tony (of serious monotony). The culture of multi-tony. The sphere of serious tone. Irony as a form of silence. Irony (and laughter) as means for transcending a situation, rising above it. Only dogmatic and authoritarian cultures are one-sidedly serious. Violence does not know laughter. Analysis of a serious face (fear or threat). Analysis of a laughing face. The place of pathos. The pathetic element transformed into the maudlin. The sense of anonymous threat in the tone of an announcer who is transmitting important communications. Seriousness burdens us with hopeless situations. But laughter lifts us above them and delivers us from them. Laughter does not encumber man, it liberates him. (Bakhtin, *Speech* 134)

In the analysed episodes we have noticed the way in which humour resorts to interruptions in the normal flow of communication, to language gaps and violations of the cooperative principles of conversation, spotted in our analysis through the violation or flouting of Grice's maxims of conversation.

In line with Bakhtin's theory, pathos, as represented in the novels under analysis, is linked with one view of the world which attempts to become the final, last view, wishing to preclude other rejoinders in the dialogue. Humour offers a parodic view of "philosophical, moral, scholarly, rhetorical, poetic and in particular the pathos-charged forms of discourse (in Rabelais, pathos almost always is equivalent to lie)" (Dentith 204). Groups actuated by such powerful pathos tend to come into conflict, and tensions in the fictional societies threaten to explode. Laughter, humour, introduced by means of seemingly irrational, stupid mistakes come to dispel these tensions and preclude violent discharges thereof. However, the seeming gaps and mistakes in communication always bear a higher meaning, as Bakhtin theorized in his *Notes from 1970*, sometimes coming with a paralogic intuition which introduces laughter at the unexpected incongruities revealed. Broken utterances and language failures are actually rejoinders given to the "authoritarian" word, and as such they bear meaning. Bakhtin's view is confirmed by recent linguistic theories concerning humour, as these identify an overarching meta-cooperative principle, which is activated by the intuition of the interlocutor, who then switches from the regular rules of conversation to a different set of rules, dictated by humour.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Citation: Vîjea, Cristian. Humour as Survival Strategy in Walter Scott's *Waverley*, *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*. *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 13(2), 2023: 27–36. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.3

Article

Humour and Knowledge in Katherine Mansfield's "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"

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Abstract: In recent times, Bollywood comedies have evidenced a shift in their attitude and perspective towards body image. In earlier comedies, people of different physical appearances were stigmatized. That approach has changed of late and as a result, these movies now serve as powerful catalysts for positive change in society. This article offers an overview of the transformative role played by Bollywood comedy films in contributing to body positivity and promoting self-acceptance. Through an analysis of a selection of films such as *Bala* (2019), *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* (2015), and *Gippi* (2013), this study explores how these movies influence individuals' perceptions, destigmatize identity, challenge stereotypes, and advocate for self-acceptance. This study also emphasizes the role of humour as a central element to engage audiences in sensitive discussions surrounding body image. In a nutshell, this research highlights the profound impact of comedy films on individuals and how these films reshape societal perceptions from body shaming to body acceptance.
***Keywords**: body positivity; self-acceptance; Bollywood; comedic satire; comedy films.*

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.4
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

Comedy films have historically served as influential vehicles for conveying societal correctness, righteousness, and bringing morality into the social area because of their extensive reach among audiences and unparalleled impact on individuals. With a broader viewership in comparison to other forms of texts, comedy films play a significant role in advocating correctness in society and bringing social change. Throughout the history of Indian cinema, these comedic cinematic texts have functioned as significant components that have adapted to mirror social, political, economic, and cultural transformations in the nation. Films based on different socio-cultural issues have exerted a profound influence on individuals by providing guidance on acceptable behaviour, norms, and values. This article explores the often-overlooked role of comedy films, particularly in the context of fostering body positivity in India, with a focus on selected Bollywood films such as *Bala* (2019), *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* (2015), *Gippi* (2013) and other such narratives. These cinematic texts not only entertain, but also advocate for the destigmatization of body image issues and promote self-acceptance.

In India, films which are comic in nature possess an innate cultural relevance that differentiates them from other genres. Most of them incorporate humour, wit, and satire that resonate with the complex dynamics of Indian society. India's affluent social and cultural diversity, traditions, and customs furnish ample opportunities for comedians and filmmakers to direct and produce visual narratives that depict the lives and experiences of individuals from different places. For instance, *Chennai Express* (2013) and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* (2007) incorporate regional humour and highlight the cultural and linguistic diversity within India. One of the significant contributions of Indian comedy films is their aptness and expertise in addressing burning social issues. Filmmakers and their narratives tackle complex issues, for instance, gender inequality, corruption, poverty, religious conservatism and other such subjects and showcase them in a light-hearted and humorous manner**.** This kind of approach seeks the attention of the audience by making them laugh while simultaneously making them ponder over these issues.

Bollywood has always been very vocal about social change. Apart from producing films for entertainment purposes, the industry has produced several movies which critique, question and comment on existing maladaptive practices and helped in removing them and bringing change in society. There is a list of movies that critique different aspects of society such as the education system, identity rights movement, issues of farmers and other such issues while using humour. These films employ humour as a powerful tool to initiate discussions and challenge deeply ingrained stereotypes and prejudices. By portraying societal issues in a comedic light, they encourage viewers to rethink their attitudes and beliefs and make it easier for people to engage with and internalize the message conveyed by the films.

Humour serves as the best tool for satirizing someone or making comments on some authority for two reasons. The first is humour's benign and non-injurious impact on one's ego, while the second is this genre's ability to simplify intricate concepts for broader comprehension, bridging intellectual disparities. Koestler (1994) writes about humour as an innovative device convenient in comprehending complex and contrasting social realities. It is considered as a "weapon of the weak" (Hart 16) and "allows for normative conventions to be challenged, questioned, and momentarily suspended so that alternative modalities may be entertained" (Longo 117). Because of its high intensity and social relevance, several Indian comedy film directors and producers have applied it in their films in order to draw the attention of the audience. The journey of comedy movies in Bollywood, as Mishra writes, has a lineage dating back to the black-and-white era, marked by slapstick humour and witty wordplay. Legendary actors like Raj Kapoor, Johnny Walker, and Mehmood, known for their impeccable comic timing, laid the foundation for the genre with films such as *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (1958) and *Padosan* (1968).

As stated above, Bollywood comedy films have always been one of the major catalysts of social change. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, Indian cinema witnessed a wave of comedy films that satirically critiqued the oppressive feudal system, offering a form of social commentary through humour. However, in the post-millennial era, marked by the emergence of identity and rights movements, the film industry also understood the sentiment and underwent substantial changes. Filmmakers began to produce movies that not only entertained but also advocated for the rights of marginalized groups and promoted inclusivity within society. One illustrative example is *Munna Bhai MBBS* directed by Rajkumar Hirani, released in the year 2003. This film, apart from an entertainment film, attempts to dismantle the procedure of medical practice. Munna, the protagonist of the film has no medical degree, but transforms people around him with his *Jadoo ki jhappi* (magical hug). He advocates for a more empathetic sense of treatment driven by common sense to cure patients at the hospital.

Another impactful film is *3 Idiots* (2009), also directed by Rajkumar Hirani. This film, while using humour and wit as tools of satire, left a huge impact on the education system in India. It is even suggested that the film played a role in the recent reorganization of the education system, emphasizing a more holistic and less rigid approach to learning. As Mecchi writes, the film "may have even played a role in the recent reorganization of the Indian education system, designed to reduce tedium and allow children to grow in multiple fields of study, rather than those that conform to a narrow idea of success". The third in the row is *Khatta Mitha* (2010). The film, directed by Priyadarshan, is a political satire comedy film which also highlights and exposes the corrupt bureaucracy and

social administration. Another one is the satirical black comedy film *Peeply Live* (2010), directed by Anusha Rizvi. Rajeev Masand, an Indian film critic and journalist, proclaims that this film is "a scathing satire on the country's apathy towards the rural class, and specifically towards farmers, *Peepli Live* employs a comic tone to tell a serious story". Next in a row is again Rajkumar Hirani's directed film *PK* (2014). It is a science fiction satirical comedy film which condemns, disapproves and deprecates religious conservatism. Like *3 Idiots*, the film "observes the system, questions it, asks you to look at the many ludicrous things that inform it, and eventually brings about a minor revolution" (Fadnavis). Another prominent film in the queue is *Subh Mangal Jyada Saavdhan* (2020), a romantic comedy film directed by Hitesh Kewalya. The film "is an important film that talks about an important subject conveyed in the simplest manner" which depicts the conflict "between conservatism and freedom, between tradition and modernity" and shakes the mindset of people regarding the gay community (Kukreja; Chatterjee). Similarly, *Badhai Do*, a 2022 Indian social comedy-drama film, also shows a mirror to society by highlighting the issues of the gay and lesbian community.

These are only a few comedy films from Bollywood that strive to foster an inclusive society; the list of such movies is very long. Thus, it can be substantiated that the Bollywood industry has been able to produce several social satires in the disguise of comedy films. And they serve as powerful social satires, using humour as a vehicle for commentary. However, in the context of body shaming, there has been a noticeable shift in the industry's approach. Recent films have transitioned from mocking and ridiculing individuals with different physical appearances to promoting body positivity. Thus, this paper is an exploration of body positivity and destigmatization of people with different physical appearances in select Indian comedy films such as *Bala, Dum Laga Ke Haisha, Gippi* and other such narratives. It delves into these visual narratives to analyse their cultural relevance and ability to highlight social issues and courage to challenge taboos. The paper underscores how these films contribute to dismantling the hegemony of certain body types by promoting self-acceptance, inclusivity, and binding individuals.

Destigmatization of baldness and colour-shaming in *Bala*

Bala (2019), directed by Amar Kaushik, delves into the issue of premature balding, a condition which is often stigmatized in Indian society. Balmukund Shukla (Bala in the movie), portrayed by Ayushmann Khurrana, is suffering from premature hair loss. The film, using humour, navigates Bala's journey from a

stigmatized identity to self-acceptance. Apart from this, the film also underlines the issue of colour-shaming through the representation of Latika Trivedi (Bhumi Pednekar). Erving Goffman in his seminal book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963) declares stigma a "discrediting attribute" which is not an essential quality of people rather; it is socially constructed and manufactured (3). For Goffman, "person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances" (5). In addition, Sayce defines stigma as "contrary to a norm of a social unit" where a "norm" is defined as a "shared belief that a person ought to behave in a certain way at a certain time" (341). Similarly, in the movie, Bala and Latika are considered as stigmatized individuals who do not conform to the set standard of beauty ideals. Bala's baldness and Latika's dark skin become discrediting attributes which affect both of them socially and psychologically. However, as the film progresses, Bala realizes his narrow notions of beauty and finally accepts himself.

He uses self-deprecating humour as a tool, several times in the movie by commenting on himself and his baldness and accepting his true self. Making self-deprecating humour normalizes the notion of laughing at your so-called imperfection by questioning the prevalent belief that baldness should be a source of shame. The contrast between the so-called beauty standards and Bala's reality contributes to creating humour for the audience and satire on society. The film also incorporates some comic sequences that parody the hair restoration industries, their treatment and products which promise to re-grow hair within a short period. These scenes use comedy to shed light on the various ways people undertake to combat baldness. For instance, in one of the scenes, Bala uses an ox's sperm and cow dung on his head to make his hair grow rapidly. Likewise, there are several witty dialogues and humorous one-liners that provide a constant source of laughter but at the same time, these scenes remind the audiences that humour can be a very powerful medium for dealing with sensitive issues like baldness. In a nutshell, Bala, while using self-deprecating humour, highlighting the absurdities of beauty ideals, parodying the hair industry, and incorporating wit and humour destigmatizes baldness and challenges the culturally constructed beauty ideals. He also emphasizes the necessity of self-acceptance and self-realization in society.

Similarly, Latika destigmatizes the issue of colour-shaming by applying humour, sarcasm, and wit in a very subtle yet effective way. She, while using humour and wit, interacts and responds to certain situations and individuals and challenges the notion of beauty standards and promotes the importance of self-acceptance. She often employs sarcasm and wit to riposte to situations and people when they make her feel ashamed of her skin colour. She also satirizes society's obsession with fair skin and comments on the absurdity of evaluating and

assessing someone's worth based on skin colour. Latika's belief in herself and positive confidence along with her humorous remarks challenges the prevalent notion that one's skin colour is not a weakness. She neglects the comments directed towards her, does not take shaming seriously, and accepts her comfort in her own skin tone. Her engagements with people around her emphasize and underline the significance of self-acceptance and self-confidence. In the film, Latika homogenizes diversity and stands against the norms of ideal beauty prevalent in Indian cinema. In short, her witty and confident responses create an inclusive atmosphere where humour is employed to challenge societal norms and make the viewer aware to accept and embrace diversity and celebrate individuality irrespective of different physical appearances.

Challenging the stereotype related to fatness in *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* and *Gippi*

The film *Dum Laga Ke Haisha,* directed by Sharat Katariya, is about love, acceptance, and societal pressures, particularly in terms of fatness. Featuring Ayushmann Khurrana, Bhumi Pednekar and Sanjay Mishra, it investigates exceptions from conforming to a socially constructed body image by resorting to witty humour and genuine emotions. It depicts the story of Prem, an unwilling, unenthusiastic and reluctant groom who marries Sandhya, an overweight girl. Later, the story follows several misunderstandings between Prem and Sandhya that result in Sandhya's humiliation, ultimately finding love and acceptance. Her transformational journey from a prejudiced and socially marginalized identity to social acceptance, coupled with her satirical take on societal norms highlights the absurdity of criticising and evaluating people completely based on their external appearances. The mentally and psychologically strong portrayal of Sandhya's character dictates the importance of looking beyond the physical appearance and accepting the distinctiveness, peculiarity and individuality of people.

The film employs humour and comedy to challenge stereotypes related to fatness in society. It uses humorous situations, complex characters, physical comedy, and self-deprecating humour to deconstruct the wrong notions about fatness. The wedding mishaps between Prem and Sandhya, several misunderstandings between the newlywed couple, the first few nights of their marriage, and Sandhya's interaction within Prem's family particularly with his overbearing aunt create humorous situations in the film apart from deconstructing the notions of marriage, gender, and body image. Similarly, the portrayal of characters, like Prem, Sandhya, Chandra Prakash Tiwari and most importantly, Prem's family members also contribute to creating laughter in the form of social satire. In addition, Sandhya's dance in the songs, her active participation in the

Dum Lagao competition, and her help in winning that contest challenge the stereotype that fat individuals are not physically active or have any talent. Moreover, in one of the scenes, while interacting with Prem's aunt, she deconstructs and dismantles the binary between weight and health. The prevalent notion regarding weight and health is that *thinner is healthier* (emphasis mine) but affirms and proves that overweight individuals can also become healthy. In short, the narrative *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* breaks the beauty norm by reflecting on the significance of accepting diversity and valuing individuals irrespective of their body weight. Humour employed in the movie serves as a tool to subvert the stereotypical representation of fatness in India.

Moreover, the film *Gippi* employs comedy and humour as important tools in its depiction of social change. Directed by Sonam Nair, *Gippi* is a coming-of-age film that focuses on the life of a teenage girl Gippi, played by Riya Vij. She is an overweight girl who experiences problems because of her body weight and societal pressure. She faces trouble in her school, among her friends, and even in terms of relationships. The movie portrays Gippi in direct contrast with Shamira. On the one hand, Gippi is an overweight, playful, and cheerful girl; on the other, Shamira is seemingly very pretty, popular, and perfect in body image. However, using humour, the film emphasizes on self-discovery and celebrates self-acceptance, friendship and the transformational odyssey to explore one's identity during teenage years.

It critiques the stereotypical representation of overweight teenage girls in Indian cinema. The titular character, Gippi, instead of conforming to the culturally constructed notions of beauty, accepts herself by challenging those notions. She seems a relatable character who overcomes her imperfection as a teenager. Gippi's contest with body image and self-confidence is depicted with humour, making her struggle more relatable to the viewers who have experienced similar problems. Her participation in the school election, contesting with Shamira, and finally winning that election subverts the typical prejudices and notions about an overweight girl. Her participation also underlines gender equality. The film demonstrates the power of comedy in society while conveying messages of social change along with entertaining its viewers.

Apart from the above-discussed films, a plethora of Bollywood productions have contributed significantly to the discourse on body positivity in terms of different physical appearances. The examples can be *Ujda Chaman* (2019), *Gone Kesh* (2019), *Raksha Bandha* (2022), *Rocky Aur Rani kii Prem Kahani* (2023), *Ardh* (2022), *Photograph* (2019), *Saroj ka Rishta* (2022), *Fanney Khan* (2018) and several others. *Ujda Chaman* and *Gone Kesh* delve into the destigmatization of baldness and the promotion of self-acceptance. These films challenge prevalent beauty norms by featuring protagonists who accept their baldness, thereby appealing to the audience to reconsider and re-evaluate the so-called standard beauty and embrace their individuality and

uniqueness. *Rocky Aur Rani kii Prem Kahani*, *Saroj Ka Rishta*, and *Fanney Khan* embark on the deconstruction of stereotypical representations of overweight individuals in Indian cinema. Through humour and poignant storytelling, these cinematic narratives humanize characters who do not conform to the culturally constructed body image, challenging prevalent prejudices and fostering an all-inclusive society. *Photograph* deals with the notion of beauty through a unique lens, stressing the inner values of people beyond physical appearances. The film's message is to appreciate the intrinsic qualities and to transcend from the judgments or comments based on looks. Furthermore, *Ardh* satirizes the beauty norms of society that equate success with height. The film depicts the absurdity of such expectations and encourages viewers to reconsider the importance of physical appearances in determining one's worth. In addition, *Raksha Bandhan* simultaneously comments on colourism, fatness, and the dowry system in Indian society. Through its narrative and humour, the film presents a platform to examine deeply ingrained issues, encouraging the audience to confront and question societal prejudices. Most of these films strategically employ humour and social satire to subvert the conventional way of approaching and understanding people with different physical appearances. By employing relatable characters and compelling narratives, these films prompt viewers to redefine their perceptions, foster inclusivity, and cultivate self-confidence. These cinematic texts exemplify the transformative power of cinema in reshaping societal attitudes and prompting a more inclusive and diverse society.

Comedies promoting self-acceptance

Self-acceptance is a situation or condition in which individuals fully accept themselves regardless of their body form. It emerges from an objective assessment of individuals' strengths and weaknesses within a specific context. Ryff articulated that self-acceptance entails maintaining a positive self-perception and recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses without experiencing shame or guilt. Camp et al. and Crowne & Stephens argue that self-acceptance is the complete embrace of one's entire self, encompassing all facets of identity, without internal conflict or the need for external validation. Thus, it can be substantiated that self-acceptance encompasses the impartial assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses while wholeheartedly embracing both facets. This capacity empowers individuals to confront challenging circumstances with a rational perspective, rather than being impeded by unfavourable situations.

Characters from the films mentioned above promote self-acceptance in different ways. Bala, the titular character of the film *Bala* and the protagonist of the film, after experiencing discrimination and societal pressure, realizes his

self-worth and accepts himself wholeheartedly. He promotes body positivity and self-acceptance while uttering several powerful statements in the film. For instance:

> "You cannot change this ideology, but you can change the colour of your skin. But why change it? Why change it? Why change ourselves? We won't change" (*Bala* 00:16:07).
> "Whether you accept me or not, but I have accepted the way I am (*Bala* 00:06:36).
> "If you love yourself, the world will love you" (*Bala* 00:05:52).

Similarly, Sandhya from *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* never feels inferior, despite the others' deprecatory attitude. Throughout the movie, people around her, her husband Prem, her mother, and her brother make fun of her, comment on her body size, and pressurize her to conform to the ideal beauty. As Adler writes,

> Everyone (...) has a feeling of inferiority. But the feeling of inferiority is not a disease; it is rather a stimulant to healthy, normal striving and development. It becomes a pathological condition only when the sense of inadequacy overwhelms the individual and, far from stimulating them to useful activity, makes them depressed and incapable of development (96–97).

In the case of Sandhya, the feeling of inadequacy is imposed on her. She never accepts herself as inferior; rather it is the society that endeavours to make her inferior for not conforming to the established norms of beauty. However, she is portrayed as a courageous, confident, and strong character who does not hesitate to even slap her husband when he insults her in front of his friends. She angrily says, "[w]hy should I stay quiet? I slapped him hard. Now he'll not dare to speak to a woman like that" (*Dum Laga Ke Haisha* 00:55:19-00:55:25).

Moreover, characters from other movies like, Gippi from *Gippi,* Chaman from *Ujda Chaman*, Gayatri from *Rocky Aur Rani kii Prem Kahani,* Enakshi from *Gone Kesh*, without experiencing shame or guilt or inferiority, promote body positivity and the need for self-acceptance. In the beginning, they all consider themselves inadequate, worthless, subservient and lesser in comparison to their counterparts. In the end, they all realize their self-worth and gain confidence. In short, these comedy films address body positivity and foster self-acceptance through portraying relatable characters, using humour as a tool of entertainment and social satire. They also help in dismantling stereotypes, celebrating imperfections, encouraging discussions and promoting inclusivity.

Conclusion

In recent times, comedy films in India have emerged as tools for promoting body positivity and self-acceptance by employing humour, humorous dialogues, relatable characters, and compelling and powerful narratives. These cinematic

narratives challenge body shaming, culturally constructed notions of ideal beauty, societal prejudices, and the hegemony of the so-called perfect body. Films like *Bala, Dum Laga Ke Haisha, Gippi* and other such cinematic works engage with viewers, make them aware, and provide an alternate positive viewpoint to look at people with different physical appearances. These narratives promote the notion that true beauty is not on the outside, rather it lies in qualities that make people unique and accepting of their selves. In a society where outer appearance is valued and glorified, these films become catalysts of change, inspiring individuals to love and accept themselves regardless of their body forms.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Citation: Mishra, Kishan Kumar. Bollywood Comedy Films as Catalysts for Body Positivity and Self-Acceptance.*University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series*13(2), 2023: 37–47, https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.4

Article

Features of the Ironic Detective in Daniel Pennac's novel *The Scapegoat*

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Abstract: Ironic detective is a relatively new genre in literature. Its development dates back to the middle of the twentieth century and continues up to the present days. The final crystallization of the genre is taking place in our time. The works of Polish author Joanna Chmielewska became one of the first examples of ironic detective stories. However, the French literature of the twentieth century also has notable representatives of the genre. The present article examines the peculiarities of the irony functioning in the detective genre, in the context of the work of the popular modern French writer Daniel Pennac. We distinguish irony as a means of comic and as a principle of work organization, which is inherent in the genre of ironic detective. Consideration of the ironic detective is impossible without a brief analysis of the detective development stages as a whole, therefore, the article also deals with the genesis of the detective genre from the classic to the French novel-noir. The emphasis will rest on the peculiarities of the ironic detective's development. Using D. Pennac's novel *The Scapegoat* as an example (the French edition is called *Au bonheur des ogres*, originally published in 1985), the features of the genre, alongside their manifestations at the content and formal level are illustrated. The article focuses on the fact that naturalistic details, scenes of cruelty, evil and chaos, caused by the consequences of the Second World War, are weakened due to ironic characteristics, stereotypes, as well as the very attitudes of the author and the narrator towards the surrounding world. The research proves that the analysed genre is an artistic form of a panoramic view of the society of the 80s with its false ideals and its consumerism.
Keywords: *irony; detective story; Pennac; noir; postmodernism.*

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.5
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

Postmodernist literature quite actively uses comic means when creating a text. This especially applies to irony, because, from the point of view of postmodernist aesthetics, it is not only a technique, but also a kind of artistic principle. Back in 1969, C. Glicksberg rightly noted that "[t]wentieth-century literature is in many ways committed, for better or worse, to the ironic mode" (Glicksberg 3).

One of the bright signs of postmodernist discourse is its focus on a kind of genre transgression, when the genre matrix is destroyed by borrowing elements from other structures. That is what happened to the detective narrative. Controversial in nature, at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, it demonstrated considerable genre flexibility and enriched itself with such subgenres as the fantastic or mystical detective (locked room mystery), women's detective, hardboiled detective, police procedural, etc. Often, such genre types do not even have an established definition, because they are in the process of formation. The ironic detective is among them. The functioning of the detective discourse under the influence of irony becomes a powerful factor in the formation of the postmodernist perception of tradition, a new view of the world via comic means.

What is irony, given that not only is it able to influence the style, but also become a defining principle for the ironic detective genre? This complex concept is allotted more than one simple definition in a specialized dictionary, instead a whole slice of history is offered, where changes in the understanding of the concept over the centuries are presented. The only thing clearly indicated in the dictionary is the main sign of irony: antiphrasis ("the use of a word in a sense opposite to its proper meaning") (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 44).

We find a similar understanding of it in the *Literary Encyclopaedia*, where this phenomenon is called a trope or, more rarely, a stylistic figure, and also the Greek origin of the word eirônеia is noted: feigned ignorance. Irony itself is defined as "a subtle mockery, hidden with the help of a respectful different language, a denial under the guise of agreement, a mocking assessment of a valued object, phenomenon" (Kovaliv 436). Consequently, a common feature is that the explicit and implicit components of irony come into conflict, in other words, we say one thing and understand something completely different. So, in order to understand an ironic text, it is necessary to have a certain erudition, to understand the context and to be familiar with the cultural field of the author, otherwise irony as a technique will not work.

However, the concepts of trope or technique do not fully cover the whole meaning of irony, because in addition to a purely philological meaning, it is also an aesthetic category, which is defined as "a sceptical, mocking attitude in the form of serious appreciation or praise, which proves the superiority of the author over the object of ridicule, internal liberation from his power" (Kovaliv 437).

This means that an ironic text will always challenge the reader, firstly, whether he/she will decode the meaning of irony, and secondly, whether he/she will be able to stand on the same level with the author, who in a work where irony is the organizing principle, usually acts as a demiurge.

Such a game with the reader-recipient is absolutely consistent with the aesthetics of postmodernism. We can add an open and changing genre matrix to the detective story as a type of mass literature aimed at dialogue with the reader and oriented towards him/her. The detective genre and its author have an additional intention, because they challenge the mental abilities of the reader in the ability to solve the mystery, which is the main goal of the work. Thus, irony strengthens the nature of the detective to such an extent that in the second half of the twentieth century a separate genre of the ironic detective developed.

How does irony manifest itself in a detective story and how does an ironic detective story differ from a detective story using irony as a stylistic device, because, as Muecke rightly notes, "There are innumerable instances of irony in fiction that are not especially characteristic of any fictional genre" (Muecke 85). We want to illustrate the search for answers to these questions by analysing the work by the French writer Daniel Pennac *The Scapegoat* (*Au bonheur des ogres*, originally published in 1985), which is the aim of our investigation.

The Scapegoat is part of the cycle *The Malaussène Saga*, which was published by Les Éditions Gallimard in a series of noir novels and consists, in addition to the mentioned novel, of the works of *La Fee Carabine* (1987), *The fairy Gunmother* (1997), *La Petite Marchande de Prose* (1989), *Write to Kill*(1999), *Monsieur Malaussène* (1995), *Monsieur Malaussène au théâtre* (1996), *Des chrétiens et des maures* (1996), *Aux fruits de la passion* (1997), *Passion Fruit* (2001), *Le Cas Malaussène 1: Ils m'ont menti* (2017), *Le Cas Malaussène 2: Terminus Malaussène* (2023). All these novels are skilfully created in the detective-humour genre.

Daniel Pennac's works have been translated into thirty languages. In Ukraine, Inesa Yermolenko addressed his prose using the methods of linguistic and linguopoetic analysis. Among foreign researchers, Pierre Michel, Pierre Verdaguer, Yves Ruther, and Marie France-Roir were interested in certain aspects of the French writer's work. Therefore, the lack of a comprehensive literary analysis of Pennac's work in general and the novel *The Scapegoat* in particular, in the context of the ironic detective genre, taking into account the multifaceted nature of irony at the level of the cannibals' image and other artistic images, problematic, and symbolism, determines the relevance of the topic of our research.

Imitating the aesthetics of the naturalistic novel of the end of the nineteenth century, Pennac refers to the tragic events of the Second World War with its fascist ideology, cruelty, unscrupulousness, and, as a result, numerous sects of fanatics.

In the novel *The Scapegoat*, the writer depicted the echoes and consequences of the war horrors, which continue to haunt us half a century later. Daniel Pennac tries to reduce the degree of catastrophism, proving that modern detective narrative is impossible without irony. Irony provides a view from the position of freedom and objectivity, but at the same time it can be not only maliciously mocking, but also lyrical, with a sad smile. Daniel Pennac's detective novels are characterized by an innocent mockery, a humorous treatment of cruelty scenes, and an ironic worldview.

The detective became quite popular in the 20-30s of the twentieth century, called the Golden Age of Detective Fiction in British literature. At this time, the first literary explorations devoted to this genre appeared (H.K. Chesterton, D. Sayers, R. Knox, etc.). In 1941, Howard Haycraft's work Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of The Detective Story was published, where the author directly states that the detective's function is to entertain the reader, although the genre has its own rules: "It only for what It; Is a frankly non-serious, entertainment form of literature which, nevertheless, possesses its own rules and standards" (Haycraft xi-xii).

As a genre of popular literature, the detective story really has an adventurous character that is often far from real life, the plot keeps the reader in tension, exploiting the technique of suspense. The first known examples of the genre, which are traditionally attributed to E. Poe and A. Conan-Doyle, are at a first glance far from humorous, instead, elements of the Gothic come to the fore here. However, it is paradoxical that the first parodies appeared on Conan Doyle's hero, Holmes (M. Leblanc Arséne Lupin vs. Sherlock Holmes, 1908, prose by Kurt Mattul and Mathias Blank, the 1900s, Henry Lyon Oldie Sherlock Holmes vs. the Martians 2014, etc.). And no matter how hard the author tried to "kill" his hero, he not only "survived", but also became almost more popular than the author himself and has not lost ground for the second century.

So, the detective turned out to be quite a productive genre, where the means of the comic, in particular irony, could be successfully implemented. B. Shaw's observation is correct: "Narratives that make use of the carnivalesque, satire, parody, and the like are subversive in their intent for they instruct as much as they entertain. Thus, crime with comedy becomes a recognized subgenre in criminal literature". (Shaw 14).

In 1929, Ronald Knox, a member of the Detective Club, which still unites English detectives, published *Ten Rules for Detective Fiction or Decalogue*. In the spirit of the biblical 10 commandments, the author prescribes 10 rules of a real detective, which writers actually immediately began to violate. Some of these rules are frankly ironic, including "No Chinaman must figure in the story" (Knox xi–xiv). It was the Golden Age of detectives that gave birth to the first samples of the genre, where humorous pathos made itself known. In particular, among the pioneers B. Shaw names E. C. Bentley and his work *Trent's Last Case* (1913)

and based on the words of Symons notes that "success of *Trent's Last Case* is due to its being perceived by readers as 'light entertainment'" (Shaw 41).

Indeed, it is precisely in the 20s and 30s that there is a tendency to create not so much intellectual detectives like Holmes (although Conan-Doyle's character also resorts to jokes), but so-called fallible detectives, which at first glance cause surprise and laughter. After Bentley with his strange Philip Trent, it is worth mentioning at least the famous A. Christie's Hercule Poirot, who more than once misled criminals and became a reason for irony due to his non-standard appearance and obsession with "grey cells". This fallible detective tradition found its continuation in the work by Daniel Pennac. Although his Benjamin Malossen – the main character of the entire saga – is not a detective by profession and vocation, he is forced to investigate the case because he himself becomes a suspect and the object of a hunt for criminals. The hero-victim, the subjective character of the works (the hero-narrator, through the prism of whose vision the events are depicted), naturalistic, sexually explicit details, coarse vocabulary, the gloomy image of the city, which fills the work with a sense of the inevitability of the catastrophe, the hopelessness of the hero's position, doom – all these features indicate the traditions of French noir.

The French noir novel positions itself as protest literature: continuing the traditions of the naturalistic novel, it demonstrates the world crisis and the changes caused by it. The pessimistic view of man in the novels of the "black series" is caused by the consequences of the Second World War, the echoes and painful wounds of which continue to make themselves present throughout the twentieth century: the sharp growth of minorities, the rapid development of cities that widen the gap between social classes, the development of banditry, etc. associated with prohibition, the atmosphere of anxiety caused by the economic crisis and the turbulent political climate between the two wars. For a person, war becomes a kind of trigger, and the feeling of disgust is a feature of the noir novel. In this context, Daniel Pennac's opinion that individual happiness should bring social benefits, otherwise society is just a predatory dream, seems to be correct.

Benjamin, together with his younger brothers (Jeremy and Kid) and sisters (Luna, Clara and Teresa), as well as the dog Julius, lives in Paris in the poor criminal district of Belleville. Their mother devotes all her time to her personal life, as a result of which she has a new child, whose main educator is Benjamin. He himself works in a large shopping centre in the position of a kind of scapegoat. By the way, the inspiration for writing the first work of the Malossen saga was an essay by the philosopher René Girard, which appeared at that time, *Le Boucémissaire*, literally – "scapegoat". The original French title of the work is *Au bonheur des ogres*, but the English translation of the publication was published in 1998 under the name *The Scapegoat*, which is literally translated. Thus, the ironic subtext makes itself felt at the level of the title, hinting at the main character as a loser.

Benjamin's responsibilities include taking the blame for defective or broken merchandise. According to the legend invented by the director of the store, he seems to work in the control department, and when dissatisfied customers appear, the director shifts all the blame to the failed employee, promising to fine him and fire him. Ben's tears and apologies move the customers and they withdraw their lawsuit, agreeing to replace the product. However, on the eve of Christmas and during the next few months, unknown people arrange five explosions in the store and each time Benjamin is at the scene of the crime, which is why the police consider him the main suspect. In order to justify himself, the hero is forced to conduct his own investigation in parallel with the police.

The story is told on behalf of Benjamin, so the reader perceives all the events described through the prism of his worldview. One can feel the ironic attitude of the hero towards himself, others and the surrounding world as a whole. For example, the episode when he loses his hearing for a short time after the explosion reveals his optimistic nature: "I always thought that I would make a good deaf person, but a bad blind one. Take the world out of my ears, and I love it. Cover my eyes and I die. But all good things come to an end and the world is making its way into my eardrums again" (Pennac 49). Ben is no less ironic about his position as a scapegoat: "It is clear in the child's eyes that the slaughter of defenceless squirrels for the sake of fur is the work of my hands" (Pennac 10).

The ironic detective genre allows us to combine the elements of a classic, "serious" detective and an ironic context. Therefore, violent murders, deaths and frauds are evaluated as evil, but the power of their emotional impact is weakened due to ironic characteristics, stereotypes, and the narrator's attitude to the surrounding world. For example, Benjamin's reaction to the case when a coffin was mistakenly brought to his house: "Just like that last week, three porters with strained faces carried a white wooden coffin into the corridor for Julius and me. The palest of the three said: – This is for you. Julius quickly retreated under the bed, and I, head cocked, portholes darkened, apologetically pointed to my pajamas and said: Come in fifty years, I'm not quite ready yet" (Pennac 23).

Here it is worth talking about the author's irony, where the main character is exposed to a kind of author's mockery, but this is only at first glance. Author's irony in general is a rather complex phenomenon, because it requires more context and appears at different levels of the work. Throughout the novel, it is often noticeable that the author does not ironize his character, but the readers, misleading them with a similar characterization of a loser when they first meet him.

Pennac's ironic style provides an opportunity to explore and expose the absurdity of consumer society. Irony can be a determinant of a work in absurdism, it constitutes an independent mode of art. From the very first pages of the novel, Benjamin Malossen is depicted as a young man from the technical control department, on whose shoulders the absurdly important responsibility for the

quality of all goods of a large shopping centre lies. Such work, according to Ben, is "complete fiction". The hero becomes part of the system of consumption, but his whole inner self rebels against this deception: "The pay is too high for what I do, but too little for how sick it makes me" (Pennac 25). The world system needs such Benjamins not as sincere and responsible citizens, but as a means of deception and manipulation of other people.

Irony in the novel plays the role of an artistic study of the European society of the late 80s, the society of falsehood and total consumption. Even, it would seem the most terrible actions can be presented with the help of humour – so strong and pervasive is the irony. It performs a therapeutic function, because cannibalism, which is the basis of the crime in the novel, is difficult to imagine, and not something to describe. Therefore, irony becomes a means of expression and exposure. As C. Glicksberg rightly remarked: "By resorting to the face-saving device of irony, he can contemplate the image of the universal absurd without being defeated by it. Irony enables him to picture life as comedy or farce or chaos and seems to justify his speaking out at all instead of relapsing into nirvanic silence" (Glicksberg 4).

The epicentre of the system is a large supermarket – the Store. In this temple of commerce, in 1942, during the German occupation, six paedophiles, representatives of the "Chapel 111" sect, committed bloody orgies: infanticide, cannibalism, as evidenced by old photographs found after the explosions. They were guided by the rejection of moral codes and ideological guidelines, confidence in permissiveness, worship of the mysticism of the Moment and the belief that everything is possible: "Add to this a harsh criticism of materialism, which makes a person preoccupied and cautious – the buying and selling of things, which reveal a vile hope for a better future. Let's forget about tomorrow! Let this moment live!" (Pennac 221). Here it is worth saying that the Second World War changed the mode of artistic life and demonstrated the reverse side of human development – chaos and death. However, it is also impossible to remain silent about this experience, because a person must "live" it creatively in order to never repeat it. Artists began to look for new ways of writing, among which irony took an important place, but not in the usual "pre-war" form. New realities demanded new approaches, thus black irony, black humour arise, which become the leading tool of postmodernism.

The explosions in the store bring back the past and expose the satanic activities of the old men. Next to the victim of the third explosion, the friend and colleague Ben Theo found a black-and-white photograph, "very black," in which Professor Leonard was "bare from the feet to the sharp top of his skull, his eyes burning, his mouth twisted into a demonic grimace" (Pennac 125). In this form, he stands over the body of his victim – a dead child. The photography acts as a tool of self-affirmation. The cannibals turned cannibalism and lust into a ritual,

capturing it in photographs: "... a naked man, muscles tensed, flashed like lightning (flashes of light in drops of sweat, I think). On something that looks like a table, a white mass of a child..." (Pennac 126). The photo allows you to record the prostrate, forbidden, and predatory things. In this way, according to the French researcher Marie-France Roir, the author plays on two levels – realistic and symbolic: "... he separates the peaceful symbol from reality and the sign from the signified in order to give an idea of the anti-historical truth: there is no other father or a grandfather, except for the mythical one, that is, a man-eater" (Rouart 212).

Daniel Pennac uses a mythological code in the novel, giving the myth of man-eaters new cultural meanings. After the Second World War, the image of a man-eater interested many Western European writers. For example, the Swiss Jacques Schesse in the work *Man-eater. A Novel About a Lost Life* (1973) reinterprets this image in an autobiographical context, touching on the problem of father-son relations. In the novel *The King of the Forest* (1970), M. Tournier used a Germanic myth about a man-eater who stole children from their families and took them to the forest. His hero, Abel Tiffoz, is an allegory of cannibalism: he kidnaps children in order to raise them and subject them to the will and ideas of German fascism. The unconcealed allusion of M. Tournier's novel to the 'Hitler Youth' is also connected with Pennac's cannibals. He picks up on Abel Tiffouje's fascination with the child's body, drawing an analogy between love and devouring.

Following the canon of the mythological image of the man-eater, Pennac created not just murderers, but serial maniacs who, at first, allegedly guided by the idea of saving children, lured them into the store with toys, killed and arranged ritual devouring. All this was accompanied by photographing the victims and their killers. The photo becomes a form of cannibalism, a kind of model of consumerism, a material carrier of the "Chapel 111" sect. As a part of the myth, it reflects the surrounding world of the man-eater, mythologically outlines all the phenomena of life that are significant for him, maintaining a relatively stable field of mythological meanings around each object that is important to him. Thus, the photo not only captures, but also mythologizes what is photographed.

The favourite picture of Kid, Ben's younger brother, is Francisco Goya's painting *Saturn Devouring His Children*, and he himself draws man-eating Santa Clauses: "He has cherry lips. He has a white beard. He has a nice smile. Children's legs stick out from the corners of his lips" (Pennac 7). The Greco-Roman myth of Kronos-Saturn, the father god who devours his own children, is connected with the folklore image of cannibals. The Titans appear as mythic figures of collective violence, modernized as Christmas cannibals, who support the Store's vaults and participate in the killing of the infant Dionysus. Based on this, Pennac depicts an ambivalent image of the father: according to the legend, Kronos devours all his children except for Zeus, who was saved by the Curetes, but it is Zeus who resurrects the son of Dionysus, who was killed by the Titans.

Thus, Benjamin in the novel is the image of a surrogate father who fights death, violence and confronts cannibals. Marie-Franz Rouar's opinion about Pennac's desire "to force his contemporaries to recognize the permanence of transgressive violence hidden under secular, degraded, masked garbage" (Rouart 216) seems to be quite correct.

Many elements in the novel are in antinomic or complementary relationships. As a result, in an ironic context, peculiar pairs are created that are opposed or complementary. For example, Professor Leonardo is photographed naked, on the other hand, Theo likes photo sessions in exquisite and elegant suits. The motif of doubleness is also connected with the image of the dog Julius (whose epileptic seizures are the embodiment of sweet madness) and its double in the photo of Doctor Leonardo. Old man-eaters believe in the magic of numbers just as Teresa calculates their birth dates to predict the day of their death. By the way, the image of Teresa is close to the mythological image of the seer Cassandra, whom no one believed either. The "doubleness" of the image is also revealed in the way of narration – from the first person (the main narration in the novel is conducted on behalf of Benjamin Malossen) and from the third, when Ben tells the story of the explosions investigation in the store to his siblings.

If we talk about the ironic stream in the detective story, then it is worth distinguishing the elements of irony in the work and irony as a principle of text construction. Of course, not every detective where the author resorts to elements of humour and satire, in particular at the level of vocabulary, tropes, descriptions, and artistic details, becomes ironic by definition. An ironic detective must violate the most important rule of the genre – to parody the very essence, the procedure of conducting an investigation, the peculiar stamps of a detective work. This largely concerns the main protagonist – the detective. "Critical work on the genre has overwhelmingly concentrated on the detective story, defined by the adoption of the investigator as protagonist," *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* notes. It is clear that the author in this case expects that the reader is familiar with the basic rules of constructing a detective story, because irony will be successful and obvious only in the case when its subject and object, and in the case of literature also the recipient of the work, is in the same cultural and intellectual field. That is why intertext is an important means of creation for an ironic detective. Often, precedent phenomena are presented in the title of the work, setting the reader to a certain mood from the very beginning, as we can see in the studied work.

The author introduces the name Benjamin Malossen into the title of the saga, which includes an ironic play on words. Benjamin is translated as younger brother or "happy son." This name is related to the story of the Old Testament about the youngest son of the biblical patriarch Jacob Benjamin. From the very beginning, the name suggests his small stature, so it is difficult to take him

seriously. It also contains double semantics: infinite youth or immaturity of spirit. Thus, Pennac finds a contradiction in his name, since his name is Benjamin, although he is the elder brother, and the surname: Malossen is literally translated from French as mal-au-saint, that is, the evil saint. In the novel, the hero is generous; his ironic and humorous view of the world is a defence mechanism against a hostile environment. According to Marie-Franz Rouar, Benjamin "simultaneously embodies the everyday sins of a secularized society and the innocent, even Christ-like victim of the Judeo-Christian myth" (Rouart 219). The researcher rightly notes that he "returns to our contemporaries the image of a world where innocence, even relative, becomes fate" (Rouart 220). The last, sixth old man from the "Chapel 111" sect helps Ben to fully understand and accept the role of the scapegoat: "... the eradication of absolute evil had to take place in the eyes of its opposite, the personification of solid good, the scapegoat, a symbol of persecuted innocence [...] the destruction of the demons was to take place in the presence of the Holy One" (Pennac 197).

Ben acts as the righteous hero who takes the guilt of humanity upon himself. Ben's self-irony emphasizes his purity and sincerity. Therefore, the publishing house of Queen Zabo offers him, after his dismissal from the shopping centre, twice the salary of any offered to him. In the end of the novel, Ben, sacrificing his conscience, yielding to his principles, giving up his dreams, for the sake of his family, agrees to the offer to remain a salesman, but not in a big store, but in a publishing house.

The emergence and formation of the ironic detective also have an impact on the gender processes taking place in literature during the last decades. Thus, S. Filonenko emphasizes that "[t]he introduction of a melodramatic line to the plot caused the appearance of "feminine," "cozy," "ironic" detectives, "pink and black" opuses – criminal melodramas, romantic suspense" (Filonenko 9). And indeed, the image stereotype of the investigator is formed in such a way that a person of the male gender is immediately imagined, because the first samples of the genre were created when society would hardly have allowed a woman to this profession. However, already in the novels by Agatha Christie, Miss Marple appears – a character who could be hardly imagined in the role of a detective: a lonely elderly woman. However, the middle of the twentieth century is a time of active women's movement, emancipation processes; therefore, social changes gradually affect the literary process as well. Such experiments enriched the detective genre system and contributed to the emergence of its ironic variety. Over time, the transformation of the classic intellectual investigator into a strange marginal is more and more common in the texts, setting a certain fashion in the system of this genre, and gender experiments lead to the appearance of a female detective. It is this which is most often classified as ironic.

Irony makes it possible to look at the world from the other, postmodernist perspective, where usually there are the laws of traditions rejection, carnivalization

and parody. C. Glicksberg notes that "twentieth-century literature is in many ways committed, for better or worse, to the ironic mode. Though the modern writer inherits a cultural as well as artistic tradition, he is often in opposition to it or at least to that part of it which assumes the existence of a meaningful world" (Glicksberg 3). In addition, mass literature, to which the detective belongs, is also mostly entertaining, although this is not its only function. Thus, the author, building a detective story, transforms the genre even at the level of language. Ironic detective involves many concepts of everyday life, reduced vocabulary, precedent texts, because as a genre of mass literature, they are aimed primarily at the mass reader. And the latter gets additional pleasure from "recognizing" the sense of the author's irony in the work, starting from individual dialogues, to ironizing the genre structure of the detective story as a whole. Although certain peculiarities of perception are also possible here. Frankly, the understanding or misunderstanding of irony in the work is a kind of marker of "one's own and another's," not privy to the essence of ironization. So, irony here can become a way of classifying characters.

The roots of the ironic detective genre go back to the 10-20s of the 20th century, in particular the work of the aforementioned Bentley. However, the ironic detective story crystallized as a genre variety in the work by the Polish writer Joanna Chmielewska. She is best known for her works *The Wedge* (1964), *The Forefathers' Wells* (1973), *All in Red* (1977), in which the protagonist is often a female detective, witty and resourceful, who destroys the laws of criminal investigations. Gradually, the ironic detective developed so much, that it became a successful project of publishing houses and today occupies a prominent place in the system of popular literature. In the future and to this day, the ironic detective story is a popular genre of popular literature, and many works have been adapted into films. *The Scapegoat* by Pennac also has a film version: *Au bonheur des ogres*, the 2013 French comedy film directed by Nicolas Bary.

Conclusions

Therefore, the appearance of the ironic detective, where the laws of the genre are transformed under the influence of external factors, became a logical continuation of the detective development. The post-war reality required new forms of understanding and experiencing events, and irony proved hugely helpful for authors. The traditional detective matrix is transformed under the influence of irony to such an extent, that a separate detective genre is born – the ironic detective. It destroys virtually all ten rules of a real detective proposed by R. Knox. The detective turns from a conceptual intellectual into a strange and, at first glance, not very intelligent and confused loser. But it is he who has the right to solve the crime. Daniel Pennac depicts such a detective in his novels. The ironic subtext of the author is revealed in the constant appeal to literary works

and mythology, the traditions' inversion of realism and naturalism in the works by Emile Zola. Even the fabulous image of man-eaters, which illustrates the horrors of history, suggests to Pennac that the ugliest monsters are always equivalent to childishness (in the store, little old man-eaters play in the toy department). Irony in the novel *Everything for Cannibals* is expressed in various forms: the author's irony, the self-irony of the heroes, the opposition of incompatible concepts (childhood/death, decency/deception), irony as exposure and as insight. Thus, irony becomes a characteristic feature of Pennac's individual style and determines the genre specificity of his detective works.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Citation: Aleksandrova, Hanna and Tabakova, Hanna.Features of the ironic detective in Daniel Pennac's novel *The Scapegoat*.*University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 13 (2), 2023: 49-59. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.5

Article

"Laughing in the Face of Patriarchy": The Role of Gendered Humor in Mafalda by Quino

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Abstract: Comics for children have a unique ability to entertain and educate young readers. Often dismissed as comical or unserious, comics are actually an important form of literature that can have a profound impact on children's beliefs and values. This article will examine various approaches to feminist humor in the context of cultural studies in *Mafalda*, a popular Argentine comic strip that ran from 1964 to 1973, created by cartoonist Quino. The comic features a precocious and socially aware six-year-old girl named Mafalda, who frequently comments on politics, philosophy, and social issues, criticizing societal norms and structures. She constantly grapples with and questions the societal, political, and moral landscapes of her time, making astute observations that prompt readers to reflect on the complex world she is navigating. Beyond the humor and light-hearted exchanges, *Mafalda* emerges as a significant cultural text. It seamlessly intertwines entertainment with critical reflection, offering its audience not just a moment of leisurely reading but also compelling them to reckon with the profound questions and critiques articulated by its young protagonist. The use of humor in *Mafalda* not only serves as a form of critique but also empowers young girls and challenges the dominant gender narratives, because the comic employs gendered humor as a means of challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This article explores the role of humor in *Mafalda*, specifically in relation to gender and how it challenges gender norms and expectations, ultimately offering a new perspective on gender and power dynamics in comics and beyond.
Keywords: *Mafalda; Quino; Argentina; comic strips; humor; feminism.*

EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN BUCUREȘTI
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY PRESS

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.6
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

Introduction

In 1964, in the throes of a tumultuous global and Argentinian historical period, the world was introduced to *Mafalda*, the brainchild of the esteemed cartoonist Quino. The comic strip's resonance with readers was immediate and far-reaching, swiftly transcending local boundaries to touch international audiences. Mafalda's astute commentaries on the state of the world, alongside her inquiries into democracy, freedom, and societal norms, mirrored the era's collective consciousness, wherein a generation steeped in chaos sought answers.

The context and setting of Mafalda are paramount to grasping its multifaceted nuances. Published at a time when Argentina was ensnared in political turmoil, the comic strip echoed these real-world upheavals in the dialogues between Mafalda and her family and her friends. Despite their youthful ages, the characters grapple with hefty topics such as warfare, poverty, and political unrest, effectively mirroring the societal climate of the time. Beyond Mafalda, a cast of supporting characters like her mother, father, brother, Felipe, Manolito, Susanita and Libertad each contribute their unique perspectives, adding layers of depth and dialogue to the comic's narrative. Representing a spectrum of views, they enable the exploration of various societal and personal themes from diverse angles, enriching the comic's thematic terrain.

Mafalda herself stands as the comic's central figure, a six-year-old girl residing in a middle-class family in Buenos Aires. Her character, imbued with a depth of concern for humanity and peace, consistently reflects on the intricate nature of relationships, society, and global issues. Her exploration transforms the comic strip from mere entertainment to a potent platform for social critique and discussion, underscoring its enduring relevance. This blend of childlike innocence with profound wisdom renders her observations both endearing and evocative, resonating with readers of all ages.

Mafalda in context: the cultural and historical tapestry of the 1960s and 1970s Argentina

Mafalda emerged in the 1960s, running from 1964 to 1973, reflecting the voice of an era marked by societal transformation and a desire for equality and rights. The 1960s and 1970s were pivotal decades in global history, echoed in Argentina's shifting political and cultural landscape. Within this dynamic backdrop, Mafalda was born, intertwining her story with the historical and cultural intricacies of the era.

The turbulent political context of Argentina in the 1960s was characterized by successive governmental changes and a heightened quest for civil liberties.

The country witnessed the forced resignation of President Arturo Frondizi in 1962, a brief interlude under José María Guido, and the election of Arturo Illia in 1963. However, political stability remained elusive, culminating in a military coup in 1966 that deposed Illia, setting a precedent for military intervention in political affairs (see Romero).

Amidst the political turmoil, Argentina, like many other nations, was undergoing significant societal shifts. The feminist movement gained traction, signaling a collective quest for gender equality. The establishment of the Argentine Feminist Union in 1970 and the inception of the Feminist Liberation Movement in 1972 marked the era's expanding feminist consciousness (see Trebisacce).

In tandem with the global tide of change, women's access to higher education in Argentina burgeoned, fueled by the educational opportunities created during the Perón administration. This educational surge enabled a wider societal dialogue, contributing to the expanding pool of politically active women, reflecting a transformation in societal roles and expectations (see Barrancos; see Vasallo).

Mafalda, in Quino's adept hands, became a conduit for exploring these multifaceted themes of civil rights, gender equality, and political unrest. Despite the looming shadow of censorship, Mafalda's narrative deftly mirrored the societal and global dialogues of the time, offering a humorous yet incisive perspective on the contemporary world (see Lindstrom; see Rommens).

The global civil rights movement and the broader fight for equality resonated within Argentina's borders. The media's burgeoning role, significantly influencing societal perspectives, acted as a catalyst, amplifying international events and perspectives within the Argentine societal context (see Mangano).

Mafalda's character, embroiled in these diverse, intertwined narratives, symbolizes the era's collective consciousness. Her observations, questions, and interactions reflect the societal conversations, global movements, and the ongoing quest for equality and rights, offering a unique window into the complexities of the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina.

Quino's masterful integration of contemporary concerns, global discussions, and themes of equality and rights within Mafalda's storylines endowed her character with timeless relevance, resonating across generations. Mafalda's dialogues and interactions offer insights into the political and societal ethos of the era, mirroring the societal changes, debates, and the global dialogue for rights and equality.

Beyond political and societal shifts, the era also witnessed dynamic cultural expressions. Despite the constraints and censorship, creative avenues flourished, offering platforms for societal commentary and reflection (De Maio & Rodriguez 83). Mafalda stands as an emblem of this cultural vibrancy, navigating the era's complexities with humor, insight, and resilience.

Feminist humor

Feminist humor, dating back centuries, has been a vital tool in highlighting and deconstructing the societal, political, and cultural limitations imposed upon women, seamlessly fusing satire, wit, and critical insight. From the writing of Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century to the comedic performances of contemporary figures, humor has played an instrumental role in feminist thought and activism, providing a platform for raising awareness, questioning norms, and advocating for gender equality.

The eighteenth-century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft leveraged humor in her critical examination of society's treatment of women. In her seminal work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft employed humor to bring attention to the stark gender inequalities of her time, brilliantly intertwining satire and critical insight to subvert patriarchal norms and highlight the intellectual potential and rights of women. Her work laid a foundation for the use of humor in feminist discourse, setting a precedent for future generations of women activists and thinkers to engage humor as a means of social and political critique (András 18).

Audrey Bilger's examination in *Laughing Feminism* delves into Wollstonecraft's utilization of humor, further expanding on the notion of humor as a mode of feminist expression and critique. Bilger's insights delve into the contrast between the empowering humor Wollstonecraft employed, which sought to ridicule and undermine misogynist perspectives, and the complacent, conforming humor often expected from women in patriarchal societies.

In the twentieth century, Hélène Cixous emerged with her theory of écriture féminine, advancing the conversation around feminist humor by interweaving it with the idea of a unique, women-centered language and writing style. Cixous's work, notably in "The Laugh of the Medusa," highlighted humor as a powerful form of expression for women, allowing them to articulate their experiences, critique societal structures, and advocate for their rights beyond the limitations of patriarchal language and expression. Her theoretical framework bolstered the role of humor as a significant element in feminist discourse, further solidifying its place within the broader feminist movement.

The suffragette movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries amplified the use of feminist humor, with prominent figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (1881-1922) employing it to generate awareness and support for women's rights. Their use of humorous slogans, cartoons, and speeches helped to make the movement more accessible and engaging, reaching a wider audience and fostering a sense of solidarity and community among women activists.

As the world transitioned into the interwar period, figures like Dorothy Parker emerged, wielding humor as a weapon to spotlight and critique the pervasive gender inequalities of their time. Parker's work, laden with wit, satire, and incisive commentary, resonated with the sentiments of Wollstonecraft and aligned with the emerging theories of Cixous, underscoring the ongoing relevance and power of humor in the feminist movement.

The mid-twentieth century marked another pivotal era for feminist humor, aligning with the second wave of feminism and the rise of comedians like Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers. Their breakthrough into the male-dominated world of comedy mirrored the broader feminist struggle, as they used their platforms to deliver humor infused with feminist perspectives, offering not just laughter but enlightenment, empowerment, and critique of the societal structures that continued to limit women's rights and freedoms.

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen the continued evolution and impact of feminist humor, with figures such as Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, and Mindy Kaling pioneering new paths in comedy and entertainment. Their work, spanning television, film, and literature, brings forth a multifaceted exploration of gender, society, and feminism, contributing to the ongoing dialogue and movement toward gender equality.

Methodology: analyzing gendered humor in *Mafalda*

The analysis of gendered humor in the comic series *Mafalda*, volumes 1–12, is underpinned by an engagement with feminist theories of humor. In delving into the series, it is crucial to apply these theoretical frameworks to discern the nuanced ways in which humor confronts and navigates gender issues. The corpus of the first twelve volumes of *Mafalda* will offer a comprehensive canvas upon which to explore the dimensions of gendered humor embedded within the narratives and character interactions.

The analytical process is initiated by a textual analysis of selected strips from the corpus, wherein specific attention is given to language, visual elements, and comedic devices that highlight or intersect with gender themes. This analysis is not isolated but is intertwined with a rigorous application of feminist theories on humor, which serve as lenses to provide depth and insight into the understanding of the comic strips.

One such crucial feminist theoretical perspective applied is that of Audrey Bilger, who explored the concept of "laughing feminism." According to Bilger, humor can be a medium for feminist thought, serving as a tool for critique and the subversion of patriarchal norms (see Bilger). This theory guides the

exploration of how *Mafalda* employs humor to both subtly and overtly challenge traditional gender expectations and norms.

The contextual analysis is infused with the insights of Hélène Cixous, a feminist theorist who associated women's laughter with liberation and freedom of expression (see Cixous). This perspective aids in examining how "Mafalda" uses female characters and their engagement with humor as a form of expression, autonomy, and resistance against patriarchal constraints.

In addition to these theoretical frameworks, the methodology embraces an intersectional approach, informed by Kimberlé Crenshaw's work, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive exploration of gender and humor in *Mafalda* (see Crenshaw). This intersectional lens allows for an examination of how gender intersects with other identities and issues within the comic strips, providing a multi-dimensional view of humor's role in portraying and challenging gender dynamics.

Alongside these feminist theories, the historical and socio-political context of Argentina during the 1960s and 1970s is woven into the analysis, offering additional layers of understanding regarding the external influences on the comic series' use of gendered humor.

Analysis of the selected volumes

Taking a closer look at the comic strips, Mafalda, the main character, frequently embodies a form of feminist humor that challenges the status quo. Her character is imbued with a wisdom and perspective that far exceeds her young age, and she often uses humor to voice concerns about societal issues, including gender inequality. The character of Mafalda resonates with Bilger's "laughing feminism," as her humorous remarks and observations serve as a critique of patriarchal structures, revealing the absurdities and injustices of gender norms and expectations.

The comic strips frequently utilize everyday situations to humorously expose and critique the entrenched gender norms and expectations, providing a platform for questioning and challenging these societal constructs. The humor serves not just as a source of entertainment, but as a powerful tool for social critique and change, reflecting the potential of humor to contribute to the feminist discourse and movement. It's noteworthy to emphasize the comprehensive way Quino managed to intersect humor and gender critique, weaving them seamlessly into the fabric of the comic strips.

For instance, Mafalda's resistance to societal expectations of femininity and her continuous questioning stance reflects the burgeoning feminist

movements of the era. Her character uses humor as a form of resistance, turning seemingly ordinary conversations into profound critiques of societal expectations and norms related to gender. Her playful yet pointed questions serve to unsettle the adults around her, causing them to confront the often-unexamined gendered aspects of everyday life. For example, Mafalda masterfully employs irony to further its critique of gender norms by asking her mother if "*the ability to excel or fail in life inherited*?" (Fig. 1). In that comic strip, her mother is shown doing the housework. Mafalda's innocent question is laden with a profound critique. The visual depiction of her mother engaged in domestic chores while Mafalda questions the inheritability of life success or failure subtly underscores the limited opportunities available to women and the societal expectations for them to conform to domestic roles. This strip uses both textual and visual elements to highlight the constraints placed on women, and the societal expectations that perpetuate gender inequality. The humor in this scenario stems from the innocence of Mafalda's question juxtaposed against the serious implications of her inquiry. The irony lies in the child's curiosity clashing with the adult world's unspoken and accepted norms about gender roles and expectations. Mafalda's question humorously and subtly brings to the forefront the issue of gender inequality in opportunities and expectations, illustrating the ingrained societal structures that perpetuate these disparities. Here, the comic strip utilizes humor as a vehicle to question and confront gender norms, resonating with Wollstonecraft's critique of misogynistic laughter by utilizing humor to expose and ridicule gender stereotypes rather than perpetuate them. Moreover, Regina Barreca's assertion that humor serves as a catalyst for social change finds a strong resonance with Mafalda's thematic expressions (see Barreca). Quino's portrayal of Mafalda is a clear depiction of a character who employs humor as a tool for confronting and criticizing the societal environment around her, reminiscent of Barreca's emphasis on women's humor as a form of resistance to societal expectations and limitations.

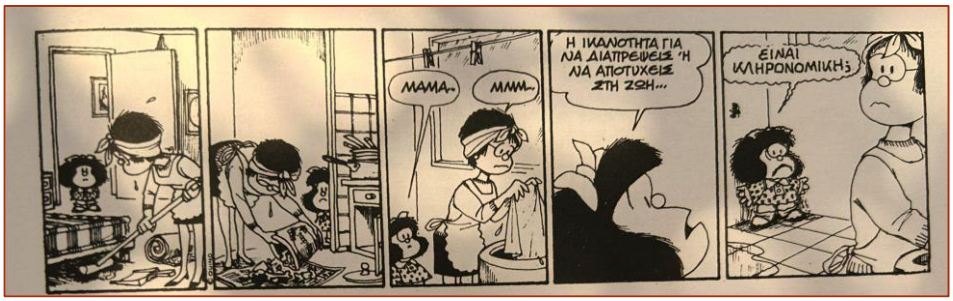

Figura 1

Mafalda: Mom
Mom: Mmm…
Mafalda: Mom, is the ability to excel or fail in life inherited?

Various strips depict everyday scenarios where gender roles and expectations are humorously brought to the forefront, allowing for an exploration of the pervasive and often subtle ways in which gender norms permeate daily life. Through these everyday situations, Mafalda humorously highlights the absurdities and inconsistencies of societal gender expectations, allowing readers to engage with these critical issues in a relatable and accessible manner. Moreover, an additional enriching layer of the gendered humor analysis in "Mafalda" is observed in the visual elements of the comic strips. The visual cues, such as the characters' expressions, gestures, and positioning, augment the textual narrative, enhancing the delivery and impact of the humor. For example, in Mafalda's monologue, expressing her eagerness for education as a pathway to avoid becoming an "oppressed and insignificant woman like" her mother, is reinforced by her earnest facial expressions (Fig.2.). This visual portrayal amplifies the humor and heightens the impact of her words, providing a potent visual and textual juxtaposition that underlines the critique of gender expectations and societal roles. Mafalda's expressiveness in the strip enhances the humorous critique of gender norms. Her sincere and direct comments, paired with a determined face, underscore the importance she places on education as a tool for female empowerment and liberation from societal expectations and limitations. This visual depiction reinforces the critical message of the strip, highlighting the significance of education in altering gender dynamics and offering a pathway for women's independence and autonomy. Furthermore, the situational humor in the given strip effectively underscores Mafalda's challenge to patriarchal norms. Her straightforward discussion about her future, layered with humor, brings to light the grim realities of societal expectations for women and their often-limited roles. The humor here not only provides a light-hearted and accessible medium for readers to engage with these critical issues but also serves as an essential tool for Mafalda to voice her critique and aspiration for a different future for women, utilizing humor as a catalyst for societal reflection and change in gender perceptions and roles.

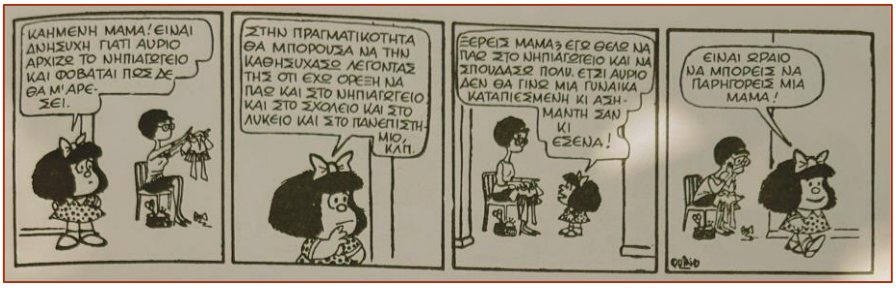

Figura 2

Mafalda: Poor Mama! She's worried because I'm starting Kindergarten tomorrow and she's afraid I won't like it!

Mafalda: In fact, I could reassure her by telling her that I am eager to go to kindergarten and school and high school and university, etc.

Mafalda: You know, Mom? I want to go to kindergarten and study a lot. That way tomorrow I won't be an oppressed and insignificant woman like you!

Mafalda: It's nice to be able to comfort a mom.

Taking the analysis, a step further, it is essential to acknowledge the comic strip's illustration style and its contribution to the gender narrative. The minimalist and expressive drawing style in *Mafalda* allows the readers to focus on the characters' dialogues and interactions, thereby emphasizing the gendered messages embedded within the text and character dynamics. Quino's choice of visual representation plays a significant role in communicating the comic's themes, amplifying the impact of the gendered humor and making the content more accessible and relatable to a wide range of readers.

Moving to the characters' conversations, we could argue that often reveal a profound disconnect between societal expectations for gender roles and the characters' desires and identities. This ironic disconnect is highlighted through humorous exchanges, wherein the characters express unconventional desires and perspectives that clash with societal expectations, thereby using irony and humor to lay bare the absurdity and limitations of rigid gender roles. Quino's employment of a child's perspective in *Mafalda* allows for a unique and refreshing examination of gender issues. The child characters, unencumbered by societal conditioning and expectations, offer raw and honest insights into gender dynamics, unearthing the often-subtle ways in which societal gender expectations are ingrained and perpetuated. The innocence and honesty of the child characters,

coupled with their humorous observations and questions, serve to amplify the critique of gender norms, making the comic strips both engaging and thought-provoking. Quino also utilizes the diversity of characters to explore a wide spectrum of perspectives and experiences related to gender. Each character brings a unique viewpoint, allowing for a multi-dimensional and holistic exploration of gender dynamics. This diversity of perspectives enhances the depth of the gender critique, enabling a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the multifaceted issues related to gender norms, roles, and expectations.

In comic strips, the character Susanita, Mafalda's friend, represents the traditional female stereotype, obsessed with marriage and domestic life. However, Mafalda, with her sharp wit and critical perspective, often counters Susanita's remarks with humorous comments or facial expressions that expose the limitations and problems of such a narrow viewpoint (Fig. 3). Susanita's character, while seemingly perpetuating gender stereotypes, is used as a foil to Mafalda's progressive views, highlighting through humorous contrast the need for a shift in societal expectations and attitudes towards women. In the realm of comic strips, the lively interaction between Susanita and Mafalda echoes elements of Hélène Cixous's écriture féminine and Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional theory. Both characters starkly delineate two divergent paths within the debate surrounding gender roles and expectations. Susanita's alignment with traditional female stereotypes, her fixation on marriage, and domesticity may be seen as a representation of a singular, limited perspective on womanhood, a notion critiqued by intersectional feminism.

Crenshaw's theory highlights the importance of acknowledging and addressing the multiple facets of identity, including gender, race, and class, in understanding and combating systems of oppression. In contrast, Susanita's character, being confined within traditional roles, lacks this intersectional perspective, portraying a restricted and narrow vision of women's roles and aspirations. Mafalda, however, embodies elements akin to Cixous's concept of écriture féminine or women's writing. Cixous advocates for a new language, a mode of expression that breaks from patriarchal structures, allowing women to articulate their experiences and desires freely. Mafalda's witty and critical remarks utilize humor as a form of this new language, subverting societal expectations and offering a fresh perspective on women's roles and rights. Her humorous, yet poignant questions and observations work to dismantle traditional gender roles, revealing the limitations and confines they impose on women. The feminist humor theory that emphasizes the function of humor to challenge and disrupt societal norms is manifested vividly in these narratives (see Walker).

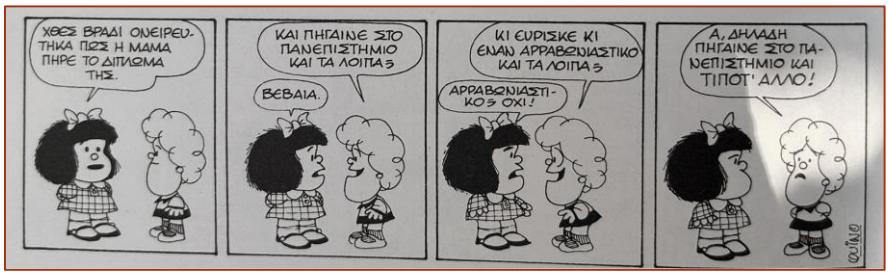

Figura 3

Mafalda: Last night, I dreamed that my mother had a degree.
Susanita: And she was going to University and etc.?
Mafalda: Sure
Susanita: And she found a fiancé and etc.?
Mafalda: A fiancé? No!
Susanita: Ah, so she was going to University and nothing else!

Quino's characters come from different backgrounds, embodying various aspects of society, and presenting a mosaic of perspectives that intersect with gender. For instance, the character of Libertad, introduced later in the series, is a personification of the revolutionary ideas of the time. Her interactions with Mafalda bring forth humorous yet insightful commentaries on gender within the broader context of political and social ideologies. The intersection of gender with political beliefs in Libertad's character offers a multi-dimensional analysis, revealing the complexity of navigating gender roles and expectations amidst diverse and often conflicting societal contexts.

The comic series *Mafalda* also tactically employs the characters of Felipe and Manolito to further explore the theme of gendered humor. These male characters, with their own idiosyncrasies and perspectives, add a different dimension to the discourse on gender within the comic strips, further enhancing the exploration of societal expectations and norms. Felipe, the dreamer, and Manolito, the capitalistically minded character, both interact with Mafalda and the other characters in ways that humorously highlight and challenge societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. Their characters, while providing comic relief, serve as a mirror to reflect the deeply entrenched gender norms within society, contributing to the ongoing dialogue on gender roles within the comic series. For instance, Felipe's interactions with Mafalda often highlight the contrast between societal expectations for boys and girls. Felipe's escapades and

daydreams, often seen as typical boyish behavior, are humorously juxtaposed with Mafalda's more critical and socially aware perspective. This contrast serves to critique and question traditional gender roles, underlining the need for a broader understanding of gender that transcends societal stereotypes. Manolito, on the other hand, embodies the entrepreneurial spirit, obsessed with money and business. His character is a satirical representation of capitalist values and masculinity (Fig. 4). His interactions with Mafalda and Susanita often bring to light the gendered aspects of capitalism and societal expectations, further emphasizing the need for a shift in perspective regarding gender roles and expectations. The comic strips often utilize a humor style accentuating irony and absurdity, subtly illustrating feminist concerns.

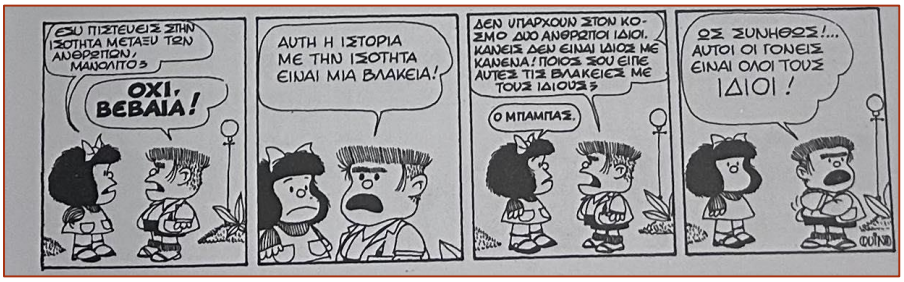

Figura 4

Mafalda: Do you believe in human equality, Manolito?
Manolito: Of course not!
Manolito: This equality thing is a dumb thing!
Manolito: No two people in the world are the same. No one is the same as anyone else! Who told you that nonsense about them being the same?
Mafalda: My father.
Manolito: As usual! These parents are all the same.

This approach is remarkably in sync with the work of humor scholars who emphasize the role of irony in feminist humor (see Barreca). For instance, Mafalda often uses sarcasm when interacting with male characters, highlighting the absurdities in their assertions or beliefs about gender and in general the humanity. This not only challenges the perspectives of the male characters but also subtly invites the readers to rethink their own assumptions. Joanne Gilbert's arguments concerning humor as a terrain of resistance are mirrored in the "Mafalda" strips as well. The comic series effectively utilizes the subversive potential of humor to undermine patriarchal norms and expectations, aligning with Gilbert's theoretical framework (see Gilbert). The strips leverage the

innocence and curiosity of young characters to offer humorous yet sharp critiques of gender constructs.

The exploration of humor's interaction with other forms of identity and societal issues in *Mafalda* aligns with Cixous's idea of women's laughter as a form of liberation. Her laughter and wit become acts of defiance, echoing Cixous's association of women's laughter with freedom and autonomy. The historical and societal context in which *Mafalda* was created and is set, further enriches the analysis. Quino's commentary on the political turmoil and societal shifts in Argentina is intricately woven into the narratives, and this backdrop influences the portrayal and exploration of gendered humor within the series. The societal transformations and the rise of women's activism during this period are reflected in the characters' dialogues and scenarios, highlighting the intersection of gender with the broader societal and political dynamics. For example, in one strip, Mafalda is shown questioning gender roles and expectations. The humor employed in this strip serves as a mechanism to probe deep societal questions, reflecting the societal tumult.

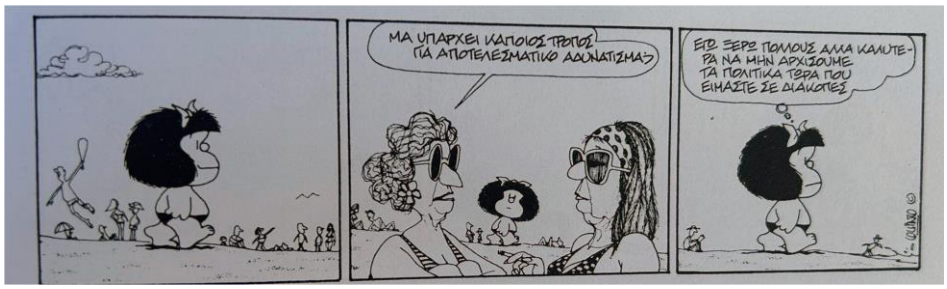

Figura 5

Woman: Is there any effective way to lose weight?
Mafalda: I know a lot of ways, but I'd rather not get into politics right now.

An analysis of *Mafalda* would be incomplete without acknowledging the impact and reception of the comic strip. The comic's enduring popularity underscores its relevance and importance in discussions related to gender equality, demonstrating the potential of creative mediums like comic strips to contribute meaningfully to societal dialogue and change.

Conclusions

As a conclusion after the exploration of gendered humor in *Mafalda*, it's imperative to underline the comic strip's instrumental role in enhancing the understanding and critique of established gender roles and stereotypes. Mafalda laughs in the face of patriarchy, utilizing a subtle humor imbued with irony and unexpected insights to challenge societal gender norms. The broad-reaching implications of this study go beyond the comic domain, enriching contemporary dialogues on gender and humor. It exemplifies the comic strips' influential role in mirroring and propelling societal transformation. By revealing and breaking down ingrained gender norms, *Mafalda* serves not merely as a source of amusement but as a catalyst for critical gender role reflection. In the present global milieu, where the dismantling of patriarchal systems is paramount, insights from *Mafalda* are profoundly relevant. The comic strip stands timeless, reflecting the significant potential of humor as a force for impactful reflection, critique, and societal change regarding gender norms. In the quest for a more egalitarian world, let the laughter of Mafalda echo as a reminder of the transformative power of humor intertwined with insight and reflection.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Citation: Papailia, Artemis. "Laughing in the Face of Patriarchy": The Role of Gendered Humor in *Mafalda* by Quino. *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 13(2), 2023: 60-72. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.6

Article

Pathos as Narrative Glue: Marnie the Novel, Film, and Opera

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Abstract: This article looks at several ways in which personal trauma is the source of *pathos* in the etymological sense of suffering and affliction, engendering social failure in Winston Graham's novel *Marnie*. Likewise, the study strives to demonstrate that both the literary original and its cinematic and operatic remediations are sparked into emotional cohesion by the narrative glue of pathos. From the perspective of both psychoanalysis and adaptation studies, this article reaches the conclusion that the open ending of the three versions also involves the reader/spectator in the process of narration – as Aristotle discovered in anticipation of Jauss's reception theory – and thus leaves it to them to decide whether healing from *pathos* can ever be reached by the protagonist
***Keywords*:** *adaptation; remediation; transmediation; trauma; Marnie; pathos; Winston Graham.*

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.7
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

Introduction

Written in the first year of one of the most tumultuous decades in history and one of the most prolific in modern British literature, Winston Graham's novel *Marnie* responded to the many needs of its contemporaneous readership, whetted by the advent of the Sexual Revolution, the aftermath of the Second World War, the horrors of Vietnam War reports, the popularisation of crime fiction, the ever-growing interest in psychoanalysis, as well as the rise of beatnik and Flower Power philosophies.

Since pathos is the red thread that connects the ideas of this article, a psychological perspective is unavoidable, not in the already traditional meaning of Freudian or Jungian approach, but in that of probing the sources that lead to this emotional element in its original, ancient sense – that of suffering – especially in light of Galen's views. But focusing on two transmediations of the original novel, this article relies mainly on an adaptation studies approach in its second part. It sets out to demonstrate that all three media – literary text, cinematographic film, and opera – build the appeal of their narrative on the agelong tradition of pathos in its kaleidoscopic and polysemantic meaning, analysed both in its etymological sense[1], and in its narratological one that harks back to Aristotelian theory.

The term *pathos* has extremely old linguistic origins, being derived from the Proto-Indo-European *phtós*, participle of *peh* ('to hurt'). If the word used in English today is a neologism borrowed directly from Greek in the modern age (the 1660s), vernacular European languages developed it from the deponent verb *patior, patiri*[2] in Latin, which means to suffer or endure. Etymologically, it led to the notion of *passion* – both as excruciating pain[3] and ecstatic pleasure. In its modern and international meaning, pathos has come to mean 'quality that arouses pity or sorrow'. It is thus indissolubly connected to the notion of trauma, another ancient Greek term that meant wound or damage.

The field of trauma studies in literary criticism is a fairly new one, as it rapidly soared in the mid-1990s. Early scholarship (mainly Cathy Caruth and Kali Tal) based their theories on the idea of trauma as an unrepresentable event, which is, in Michelle Balaev's terms, "a psychoanalytic poststructural approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language. This Lacanian approach

[1] For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to use italics for *pathos* when referring to its etymological meaning of pain, suffering or disease, and without italics when the term denotes the rhetorical feature.

[2] This has led to the formation of verbs used in everyday discourse in many Indo-European languages: *pâtir* in French, *patitĭ* in Proto-Slavic, *a pătimi* in Romanian, as well as a number of nouns such as fiend in English, and many others.

[3] E.g. the passion of Christ; in time, certain languages have differentiated the two terms semantically. For instance, in Romanian, the neologism *pasiune* is now used only as 'great love'. But the much older word *patimă* means both suffering and pleasure.

crafts a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience" (*Literary Trauma Theory* 1).

Such an approach is, in fact, highly applicable to Winston Graham's novel *Marnie* and the string of remediations that it has engendered. Even if trauma studies are a recent critical and theoretical endeavour, in literature, suppressed trauma as a source of *pathos*, including both personal and social failure, is as old as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. In this play, the protagonist needs to engage in a process of retrospective detection combined with introspection in order to reconstruct a carefully concealed puzzle. Variations on the same theme have accompanied the process of dealing with trauma in literature for the twenty-six centuries that have elapsed since.

Marnie, the novel

Marnie is an autodiegetic[4] novel written in 1961 whose action takes place sometime after 1956, probably between 1958[5] and 1960. The protagonist Margaret Elmer, nicknamed Marnie, is born in 1937 – part of the Silent Generation.[6] Generally characterised by a conviction that it was unwise to speak out, this generation was conservative, traditionalist, conventional and hard-working:

> The most startling fact about the younger generation is its silence. With some rare exceptions, youth is nowhere near the rostrum. By comparison with the Flaming Youth of their fathers & mothers, today's younger generation is a still, small flame. It does not issue manifestoes, make speeches or carry posters. They Are Grave and Fatalistic. Their Morals Are Confused. They Expect Disappointment. ("People" 1–7)

[4] Tony Lee Moral's view that this I-as-protagonist perspective is "almost anonymous" is quite interesting: "[Graham] found that the first person was almost anonymous, in the sense that the character never seemed to reveal anything particular about him- or herself to the reader. It occurred to Graham what a great idea it would be if Marnie had a quirk, but she didn't reveal to the reader what that quirk was. Through her behaviour it would become obvious to the reader that she was slightly odd. In Marnie's case her unusual behaviour was her frigidity and stealing, which had its genesis from her upbringing" (173).

[5] There is a reference to a very popular film, *Santa Clara*, and to the fact that the cinema that shows it has cashed in the greatest profits since 1956. Although it is not certain whether this is the film that Graham refers to, *The Star of Santa Clara* (German: *Der Stern von Santa Clara*) is a 1958 West German musical comedy film directed by Werner Jacobs.

[6] The demographic cohort formed of people born from 1928 to 1945 in the Western World – a less numerous wave due to the apprehensive atmosphere before the war and the hardships during the conflagration.

Marnie is a true representative of her generation. Quiet and keeping up appearances of perfect conventionality, she uses her hard work and her taciturnity to build a career of successful and prosperous small-time criminal. Her deeply set and long-suppressed trauma is closely connected to the reality of the Second World War and the mentality of the 30s and 40s in Britain. The whole narrative warp of this suspense novel is built around the title-character's endeavour to discover her formative trauma (psychological wound and damage) and the behaviour that reflects this trauma and becomes her *pathos* in the original sense – of both suffering and disease.

The novel starts by portraying Marnie as she is at the age of around twenty-two – a beautiful and clever young lady who works as a book-keeper and uses both her intelligence and her looks to deceive her employers, steal from them and proceed unimpeded elsewhere by assuming new fake identities. In Galen's[7] view[8], "A *pathos*[9] of the soul is a state or event whereby one of the two non-rational (aloga) parts of the soul, the desiderative or the spirited overrides the judgement of the rational part, leading the person to inappropriate action – action, typically, which manifests an excessive or uncontrolled level of greed, lust or anger" (Singer, "Galen's Pathological Soul" 384). Marnie's psychological *patho*logy surfaces as apparent greed – an obsessive-compulsive need to rob men as retribution for their having robbed her – a subconscious impression that she has because of her repressed memories. There is another excess in her case – not of lust, but of its opposite. The disgust instilled in her by men's sexuality as a child is translated as frigidity in her adult self.

In Stoic philosophy, *pathos* came to refer to a 'complaint of the soul': "succumbing to a *pathos* is an internal (soul) event which consists in the wrong response to presentations external to it (…), an error of reason" (Singer, *Psychological Writings* 209). This is yet another take on *pathos* that can be applied to the protagonist of the novel, as the 'self-inflicted' treatment that she devises for her trauma – larceny, impersonation, false identity, disguise, pretence, deceit, seduction, and flight from the scene of the crime – result in self-destruction as a consequence of faulty reasoning – a mistake that stems from her ignorance of the real root of her impulses.

As the action progresses, Marnie's new employer, Mark Rutland, falls in love with her. In the novel, he is also the victim of *pathos*, his pain having been

[7] Galenos (129–*c.* 216), Greek physician, writer, and philosopher who exerted a great influence on medical theory and practice in Europe until the seventeenth century.
[8] In *Affections and Errors of the Soul* and *The Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, especially books Four and Five.
[9] Cicero suggested that the Latin word *morbus* corresponded to it, while Hippocrates used the term as illness or impairment (in Singer, "Galen's Pathological Soul", 383, note 3).

caused by the loss of his twenty-six-year-old wife[10], as well as that of his brother Tim, who has been killed in the Second World War[11]. This bereavement leaves him with his own feeling of inadequacy and, possibly, impostor-syndrome. In Marnie he probably recognises a kindred spirit, damaged and maladjusted. Mark realises she has stolen from him too, replaces the money out of his own pocket and manages to find her after she has run away. He uses his knowledge of her theft to blackmail her into marrying him and he proposes "marriage in the least conventionally romantic proposal scene in the history of cinema (if not of the human race)" (Rothman 354). From this moment on she is tied to him, her real name is used in the marriage registry, and her childhood nickname is used by her so-called new family and friends.

Marnie is not consciously aware of any trauma, but she acutely feels *queer*, as she keeps saying throughout the novel. Before her marriage, the visible effects of her unknown trauma, which render her socially inadequate and even dangerous, are her incapacity to form bonds of affection with any fellow human beings and her pathological need to lead a double life. After her marriage, other pathological streaks become apparent, namely her frigidity and her repulsion at any form of male touch, as well as her violent rejection of the idea of conceiving children in full Baby Boom[12]. Her suppressed trauma is enhanced by a new one – Mark's spousal rape[13] during their honeymoon, which she provokes by infuriating him and saying that she has lied and never loved him. Hours later he apologises and asserts that "no man really wants it that way" (Graham 173), but in her the '*patho*gen' has operated – she is filled with hatred, nausea, and the certainty of the futility of her life, which will make her try to commit suicide by drowning: "Marnie will be locked (…) on the cruise ship on an enforced honeymoon, held captive by a combination of blackmail and good intentions. The honeymoon bedroom will become a site of terror for the wife" (Jacobowitz 462).

All these forms of estrangement from mankind channel Marnie's natural affection towards a horse, Forio[14], who will be the recipient of all the warmth that she has to give and who is characterised by the fact that he cannot speak, thus making language unnecessary. This is relevant as, according to Barry Stampfl,

[10] A "brainy" archaeologist (Graham 64) who died of a disease – "Kidneys or something odd" (30).
[11] The loss of her first-born also leaves Mrs. Rutland, Mark's mother, permanently scarred emotionally, and she will never find her younger son to be enough to fill the void left by her bereavement.
[12] Baby Boomers were the generation of people born between 1946 and 1964 during the demographic explosion that followed the restrictions of the Second World War.
[13] Historically, spousal/marital rape was not seen as such. Marital sex was seen as the husband's conjugal right by law. The wife's refusal was considered to be her unreasonable dereliction of duty. Mark, however, does not embrace this position. His deviation is brought about by human fallibility, by injured feelings, not by macho presumption.
[14] If we pursue the same etymological outlook, Forio would mean "carrier", derived from Greek, so he would metaphorically be the purpose that keeps Marnie going.

"in our own modern / postmodern era, the trope of the unspeakable has attained particular prominence within trauma studies. (…) [and] the alleged unrepresentability of the traumatic event was widely accepted as a starting point of discussion, and has continued to be regarded as an intellectually respectable position even by those who disagreed with it" (*Parsing the Unspeakable* 15). In the other etymological acceptation of *pathos* – namely in its Epicurean perception as voluptuous pleasure –, riding this horse is the only passion that Marnie has. Mark will use her organic need of Forio to blackmail her into seeing a psychologist, Dr Romano, about her frigidity issues.

Ancient Greeks perceived *pathos* as a disease of the soul – *psukhē*, the term for vital spirit or soul, traditionally associated with affections and emotions. Later, in the modern age, the same term – psyche – came to be identified with the mind, the brain, the organ responsible for thoughts and reason, as well as sensations and emotional responses. In the antiquity, it was the soul that was considered to contain both rational and non-rational functions. Certain (medical) philosophers located it in the brain and were aware that the soul could also suffer from various ailments – *pathē psychēs*. Galen considered that "the rational soul, understood as the soul's leading-faculty, the hēgemonikon[15], is subject to a whole range of illnesses or impairments–impairments which arise from physical conditions of the brain, or affecting the brain; and these impairments, too, may be referred to as (…) pathē of the rational part of the soul" (Singer, "Galen's Pathological Soul 385). This is the kind of *pathos*, of suffering, that the psychiatrist tries to heal in his patient Marnie.

Perceiving marriage as a trap and a prison, she decides to run away again and to steal from Mark once more. But her husband's love has operated certain irreversible changes in her and she feels incapable of robbing his safe. She thus flees to Plymouth to confess all the truth to her mother, Edith Elmer – the one human being that she adores.

On getting there she finds out that her mother has just died. Before the funeral, she looks for pictures of herself and her father to put into her mother's coffin – an unexpected sentimental gesture from an apparently cold person. Looking for the photos, she stumbles upon a newspaper clipping that reveals to her the sordid identity of her mother as well as the source of her own perpetual feeling of "queerness", unleashing all the suppressed memories of her infancy. Her father had gone to war and her mother had felt lonelier than ever before, and had consequently taken to sleeping with soldiers only to be caught in the act by her husband and then divorced. Subsequently she had become pregnant out of wedlock and denied her pregnancy throughout the nine months, thus evincing serious *pathē psychēs* of her own, this severe bout of anosognosia revealing other older underlying conditions. She had finally given birth to a baby boy, strangled

[15] Equivalent to Plato's *logistikon*, or reasoning faculty.

him, wrapped him in a newspaper and slipped him under Marnie's bed – the psychological trauma that had marked her so strongly as to block her memory of it, thus leaving the core of her identity vacant and forcing her to explain her feeling of inadequacy without allowing her to access its terrifying reason. Edith's brother Stephen reveals to Marnie that his sister had herself been the victim of a dictatorial father who had forbidden all sexual manifestation in his obviously oversexed daughter, forcing her to lead a double life, which introduces heredity as a possible reason for Marnie's psychological lability.

All this triggers in Marnie desperate thoughts on insanity, received behaviour and inescapability. Retrieved memory allows Marnie to remember soldiers tapping on the window and her associating this noise with her removal from her mother's warm bed to the ever-cold bed of the guest room – a child of the Silent Generation, raised to be seen, but not heard. Her psychiatrist, Dr Roman, asks her at some point if she is really cold, which strikes him as improbable. Psychologically, this sensation is relevant, as Galen believed that both fear and loss of memory were caused by coldness (Singer, "Galen's Pathological Soul" 390, 392–3). Hence Marnie's frigidity both in its sexual, sensorial, and etymological meanings.

The dead child explains the protagonist's unconscious horror at the idea of having her own offspring, and the theme of the deranged mother who strangles her illegitimate baby and becomes deranged now sheds light on Graham's choice of the title character's name, Margaret – that of Goethe's protagonist in *Faust*,[16] who undergoes the same fate. Margaret means daisy and, as Elizabeth Silverthorne writes, "In the language of flowers the daisy can mean both deceit and innocence" (39). Marnie reflects both these symbolic connotations, being a serial swindler, but also absolved of guilt in retrospect, as she appears to act out of compulsion caused by distress, not due to an innate criminal bent.

Furthermore, "In Norse mythology, daisies are associated with the love goddess Freya. In this context, the daisy symbolizes motherhood, childbirth, sensuality, and fertility. For the ancient Celts, the spiritual meaning of a daisy comes from the belief that when a child dies, the gods will sprinkle their grave with daisies to comfort the grieving parents" (Karlsen 16). The subliminal association with dead babies is thus organic. The first origin-story of this flower, also Celtic – found in the poems of Ossian – is the tale of Malvina who mourned her dead child. She is consoled by the Maidens of King Morven, who tell her he has been turned into a daisy that "looked like an infant playing in the field; and it became, therefore, the very symbol of the innocence of a newborn baby" (Kell 16).

The permanent uncertainty around Marnie's capacity to love can also be associated with the well-known petal-plucking game played on daisies – "she loves me, she loves me not." Moreover, daisies are composite flowers – they

[16] The protagonist's German name is Margarethe, or its diminutive Gretchen.

actually consist of many flowers combined into one –, which is a potent symbol for the character's multiple life of ever-changing identities. Nevertheless, an influence that seems more probable for Graham is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which Ophelia offers Gertrude a daisy in her delirium and also dies by drowning adorned with daisy garlands, a context in which the flower is associated both with (Gertrude's) duplicity and with (Ophelia's) psychic *pathos* triggered by trauma.

The nickname Marnie preserves the initial part of the name Margaret which, in English, suggests the verb *to mar*, as the effects of her trauma are destructive both to herself and to society. Of course, the syllable also has the subliminal effect of being the same as in Mark, thus hinting at the fact that, eventually, the spouses are soulmates. Edith's double life – a diurnal existence of obsessive respectability, responsibility, and elegance, and a nocturnal life of debauchery – are reflected in her daughter's recurrent assumption of new names that should keep her true identity hidden, not only to social authorities, but also to herself. Not accidentally, Graham says she assumes a new name every nine months (*Marnie* 390), as these new masks are baby surrogates.

A sign of Marnie's eventual transformation is also connected to children and motherhood – the passage in which she encounters a crying child (Bobby) whose mother has recently died. She holds him, comforts him and returns him to his mourning father and siblings. The fragment is a *mise en abyme* of the main story, as the father confesses his attempt to conceal the trauma of the dead mother from his children: "Bobby (…) knew. Tried to keep it from 'em, but they all knew" (Graham 373). This is also a rite of passage for Marnie, who, on the one hand, realises that she is part of mankind – "I thought, there's only one loneliness, and that's the loneliness of all the world" (372) – and, on the other side, she starts to evince the signs of female love and selflessness: "that's right, be a mother for a change. (…) If he'd asked me I'd have stayed" (372-3). Putting her *pathos* aside temporarily in order to comfort that of the bereaved child who is her mirror proves to be therapeutic and is the first step she takes towards healing.

As psychology claims that remembering and understanding your trauma are the first steps towards healing, Marnie progressively feels the need to see Mark, tell him what she has uncovered, and attempt to start afresh. The modern use of the term pathos pertains to the domain of rhetoric. Harking back to Aristotle's theory, it refers to an appeal to emotion from the listener. "Persuasion comes about either through the character (*êthos*) of the speaker, the emotional state (*pathos*) of the hearer, or the argument (*logos*) itself. (…) Aristotle (…) says in a different context that a speech consists of three things: the speaker, the subject that is treated in the speech, and the listener to whom the speech is addressed (*Rhet.* I.3, 1358a37ff)" (Rapp n. p.). In this tripartite conception he is – by two millennia and a half – the precursor of Jauss's reception theory. Aristotle realised how important the interlocutor's emotional state always is in verbal communication and understood that human beings often resort to pathos in trying

to win their 'audience' over, supplanting the method of *logos*, that is, appealing to emotion instead of proper reasoning: "[There is persuasion] through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile. … Persuasion occurs through the arguments [*logoi*] when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case" (Aristotle I.2.5-6). Quite often, pathos is used rhetorically in an appeal to emotion or *argumentum ad passions* – a fallacy characterized by the manipulation of the recipients' emotions in order to win an argument by triggering their sympathy, often using the victim's stance. Interestingly, Marnie does not use that. When she is indeed the victim's victim – unmasked by the man that she had robbed – she prefers to remain silent or rebuke Mark in spiteful anger. She resorts to emotion only when she starts opening up and looks for empathy. In fact, what she tries to reach through her whole process of inner search and self-analysis is a state of *apatheia* – without suffering or passion, a state of mind that the Stoics associated with the sages and saw as not disturbed by any emotions – a sort of equanimity, of psychological stability devoid of pain or mental imbalance.

At the end of the novel, under the pretence of taking her home, Mark's malevolent and womanising cousin, Terry Holbrook, betrays her and hands her over to two former employers from whom she has stolen, who will in their turn hand her over to the police. Having reached a stage in her evolution in which she no longer wants to flee or pretend to be someone else, she complies in order to become worthy of self-esteem and of Mark's love. She realises that stealing is nothing but an elaborate process of lying, and lies are what she has resented most in her life, as her family's concealing the truth from her is what had triggered her psychological defence mechanism of memory suppression. Her confession will bring about her liberation and redemption through truth. The final image of the sacrificial lamb is no doubt inspired by an earlier female protagonist victim of multiple trauma and pathos – Hardy's Tess Durbeyfield.

If certain passages in the book seem overly analysed, the traumatic details ring true, and that is because, as Tony Lee Moral reveals in his book *Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie*, Graham inspired his novel from real-life incidents and conceived the character of Marnie from a combination of two women he knew. The first one was his youngest child's nanny: "She seemed alright except that she was constantly taking baths, about three a day usually, and she was in constant communication with her mother. On one occasion, I found a letter from her mother warning her about the evils of men and that she must never consider having any connection with them at all. (…) She sublimated her interests in horses and spent all her spare time riding" (Graham qtd. in Moral 158[17]). The second inspiring real-life person was a war evacuee, a mother of three whose husband was

[17] The numbers indicated next to the quotations do not correspond to pages, but to 'Kindle Locations'.

at sea, and about whom Moral sarcastically asserts that "she decided that doing her part for the country was offering herself to any soldier that happened to take a fancy to her" (158). It is clear that the impression she made on the novelist informed his pencilling of Edith's character: "She looked the absolute epitome of perfect behaviour. (...) Apparently, if the soldier wanted and knew about her, he'd come to the window and tap. She had her youngest child with her in bed, and she'd take the child out and put him in a cold bedroom next door. Then she'd open the window and let the soldier in" (Graham qtd. in Moral 163). The details of this part of the story are very clearly borrowed from this woman's history. The idea of theft was also derived from it and coupled with another contemporaneous event: "The incident had further repercussions. After the war, the youngest child began to steal. [Graham] derived the idea for Marnie stealing from this real-life event, together with an article he had read in the Sunday Express newspaper about a girl who kept stealing from her employers and reappeared in various guises" (Moral 168). Thus, the *pathē psyches* of human beings who lived in the Britain of the 1950s were moulded so as to lend a true-to-life quality of the *pathos* of a literary character intended to reflect the catastrophic effects of a previous age, that of World War II.

***Marnie*, the film**

Marnie had three literary adaptations – into a theatre play by Sean O'Connor in 2001, and into two radio plays – by John Kirkmorris in 1975 and by Shaun McKenna in 2011. The present study will not analyse these works.

What rendered *Marnie* famous was its screen version, as it became

> Hitchcock's last great woman-centered film (…). *Marnie* is a film that evolves from a classical realist tradition, but its greatness is attributable to the manner in which it creatively redefines the conventions from which it draws. *Marnie*'s sources are the woman's film and its gothic variant. Hitchcock described the film as a character study and a psychological mystery. (…) The melodramatic variant of the gothic [is] a genre concerned with 'the horror of the normal' (Britton 41) that allows a cultural space for the critique of the Cinderella myth." (Jacobowitz 462)

It was the suppressed trauma, the murder, the two suicide attempts, the killing of the horse, the theme of the double life, the mystery and suspense, the puzzle structure and – above all – the rape that attracted the great director Alfred Hitchcock to adapt Graham's novel into a film in 1964 – the first remediation it was to undergo, in Bolter and Grusin's acceptation of the term: "the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms" (273). Charles Suhor's concept of transmediation is also completely apposite in this case – a term through which

he denotes the process of taking meanings from one sign system and moving them into another (250).[18]

According to Dennis Simanaitis, Alfred Hitchcock bid anonymously for the book's film rights to keep the price down. Once a deal was made, at twice the initial bid, Graham admitted he would have ceded the rights for free just for the honour of having his novel directed by Hitchcock.

The latter asserted: "One might call *Marnie* a sex mystery – if one used such words" (qtd. in Simanaitis). The makeup of the plot had all the ingredients that appealed to the great English director who had already become famous for his Hollywood films – especially *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds* (1963). The central character was especially appealing to a creator of crime movies that had a very peculiar view of criminals. Truffaut's assertion has by now become something of a bromide: "The more successful the villain, the more successful the picture" (19). However, in his superb study, Thomas Leitch offers a much more nuanced interpretation of Hitchcock's conception: "he never makes a criminal the hero of a film without recasting that criminal, from Alice White in *Blackmail* (1929) to Marnie Edgar in *Marnie* (1964), as a victim" (*Crime* 16). This ambivalence is circumscribed within the larger frame of the crime film in general: "The master criminal is immoral but glamorous, the maverick police officer is breaking the law in order to catch the criminals, the victim is helpless to take any action except capturing or killing the criminal[19]. (…) Crime films are about the continual breakdown and reestablishment of the borders among criminals, crime solvers, and victims. This paradox is at the heart of all crime films" (15).

Marnie the film continues the novel's way of basing its structure on pathos, both in its psychological themes and in its specifically cinematic narrative strategies – appealing to the emotional reaction of the audience through camera angles, editing[20], sound track and, especially, acting techniques: "Hitchcock was a master of the frame, and every nuance of his image is vital, no aspect decorative. In Hollywood, he was one of relatively few filmmakers who cared, and knew, about special effects, and his sense of camera position is cunning and impeccable" (Pomerance 238).

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[18] This concept is *not* to be confused with transmediality, a term coined by Henry Jenkins – "A transmedia story [that] unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (95) – in which there is no process of adaptation, but of addition or multiplication, and in which it is not relevant which the original version is.

[19] Here, the initial victim of abuse – Marnie – does turn detective, but in order to investigate the root and reason of her own criminality, which is a truly original and captivating stance.

[20] "The economic use of bursts of nontraditional, sensational editing in the midst of a more conventional narrative pacing based on the principles of classic continuity was displayed in the final film that Tomasini completed before his death, *Marnie* (…). The veteran editor again exploited short shots effectively because of his willingness to juxtapose them into sequences that also contained relatively long takes and to use them judiciously (Monaco 96).

The screen adaptation moves the action from England to Philadelphia, which operates a change of mentality, as well as of atmosphere, for, as Linda Hutcheon remarks,

> *Where* is as important a question to ask about adaptation (…) as *when*. Adapting from one culture to another is nothing new… Often, a change of language is involved; almost always, there is a change of place or time period. Almost always, there is an accompanying shift in the political valence from the adapted text to the "transculturated" adaptation. Context conditions meaning, in short. (*Theory* 145)

Regarding the psychological thread of *pathos*, the whole traumatic warp in Graham's novel was not enough for Hitchcock. He added a little girl to the *dramatis personae* – Jessie, the mother's neighbour, who will traumatise Marnie even more by the sting of jealousy and by making her feel unloved and neglected by her own mother. Mark's former sister-in-law Lil[21] is another additional character. She clearly aims to have Mark all to herself and it is she who invites Strutt, an employer from whom Marnie has stolen, thus exposing her.

A very significant difference is that Mark hires Marnie *knowing* that she is a thief and being intrigued by her character, which emphasises both his propensity for taking risks in the novel, and his stance as predator, since he sets out to capture his 'victim' and entrap her.

The script also changes several names in the literary original. If the transformation from Elmer to Edgar[22] is unfathomable, that from Edith to Bernice[23] has its significance. Edith is a very relevant name. Certain sources[24] ascribe this name to Lot's wife in the Old Testament. She turns into a pillar of salt after looking back at Sodom, which betrays her secret longing for its sinful way of life. Bernice, however, is also a Biblical name from the New Testament, referring to Berenice of Cilicia[25], a Jewish client queen from the first century AD who was known for her tumultuous love life and incest with her brother. Both given names are thus redolent of the religious criticism of sinful female morals, meant to trigger a subliminal response in the reader/spectator.

In the film, the effects of Marnie's suppressed trauma are expanded, as she suffers from bad dreams and a terrifying phobia of the colour red:

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[21] It is difficult to believe that the choice of name was accidental and that Jay Presson Allen – the screenwriter – did not make an ironic hint at this character's namesake in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In Part II – "A Game of Chess" – Lil, whose husband "got demobbed", is threatened by her friend that he will be seduced by another woman. In the film, it is Lil who is the would-be seductress of Mark, who has decided to leave the Navy.

[22] Marnie's surname.

[23] The name of Marnie's mother.

[24] A number of midrash exegetes between 400 and 1200 AD.

[25] Racine and Corneille dedicated plays to her.

> It's not in Marnie's image that her psyche is fully reflected; her illness [*pathos*] is signaled by her disturbed vision. Again, red is the color of intense affect, and warning chords provide recurrent aural accompaniment to Marnie's reaction to it. Red is the color of affect, but it is also the color of blood, the substance for which the red color in this film so obviously substitutes. The code would seem to be a simple one, the associations the film provides readily decipherable. Interestingly, however, Marnie "sees red" only metaphorically: while something red is the object of her look, it's *her* image that's suffused with that color in virtually each instance. In some sense, the red film frame disturbs the spectator's vision, transferring the character's symptom to us. Like a wash over realist images, it cloaks representation in pure color. (Peucker 214, italics mine)

Thus, physical and psychological suffering is conveyed through visual, auditory, and kinetic images and techniques that are more direct in triggering an emotional reaction in the audience than any screenplay cues. *Marnie* was made only four years after *Psycho*, which was groundbreaking in the domain of the cinema of sensation whose tradition *Marnie* continues:

> The new cinema of sensation pioneered in this film [*Psycho*] grew up separate from the cinema of sentiment that had constituted the aesthetic core of classic Hollywood from the late 1920s through the 1950s. The new aesthetic of sensation was defined by a speeded-up pacing, the sweep of color production that all but eliminated black-and-white features from Hollywood production, and an increased reliance on graphic visual and sound effects. (…) The aesthetics of this cinema of sensation moved away from the dialogue-based cinema that had dominated Hollywood production from the end of the 1920s into the 1960s. Perceptibly, visual and audio sensation began to coexist with—and even displace—the narrative and dramatic demands of dialogue and scripting as the primary elements upon which the viewer's attention was focused in a feature film. (Monaco 2)

Such visual strategies tied to the viewer's emotional perception determined Robin Wood to say, in *The Trouble with Marnie*, that this film harks back to the expressionist trend of the early twentieth century, which no longer tried to imitate reality, but to suggest it by laying the emphasis on the artists' – or the characters' – inner turmoil and conflicts through visual distortions and hyper-expressivity in performance:

> [Hitchcock] worked in German studios at first, in the silent period. Very early on when he started making films, he saw Fritz Lang's German silent films; he was enormously influenced by that, and *Marnie* is basically an expressionist film in many ways. Things like scarlet suffusions over the screen, back-projection and backdrops, artificial-looking thunderstorms – these are expressionist devices and one has to accept them. If one doesn't accept them then one doesn't understand and can't possibly like Hitchcock.

If Wood considers that this strategy anchors *Marnie* in the artistic tradition of the past, Restivo contends – on the contrary – that it announces the great cultural shift that the sixties were to operate:

> This device [the colour red], then, could be said to announce the properly postmodern. (…) Hollywood cinema also develops and augments Hitchcock's vocabulary of unreliable narration, to which the aesthetics of suspense is wedded. This deployment of unreliably communicative narration to foster suspense is exploited and amplified by the psychological thriller and horror genres, in which the narration flaunts its control of the spectator's access to the whereabouts of the villain or the monster. (581)

Thus, this visual effect functions as a bridge between the aesthetic conventions of the past and the innovative style of the future at the level of narrative technique suffused with pathos.

However, the expressionist filiation of the film is a plausible explanation for a significant change operated in the film: if in the novel a neighbour puts Forio down after his fatal accident, in the film it is Marnie herself who shoots him, which deepens the trauma of her loss and her mental *pathos*, also intensifying the pathetic build-up of the narrative that feeds on the audience's empathic response:

> *Marnie* demands a distinctive kind of viewer participation; it asks one, on the whole, to empathize with Marnie (she defies identification, as she is presented in puzzle pieces) in a manner that is at once visceral and detached. Identification with Mark is thwarted by his partial perspective (he doesn't, as Mrs. Edgar points out, "know the whole story") and by moments of self-serving domination (the proposal, the "rape") that keep him at a distance. (Jacobowitz 463)

But perhaps there is no scene meant to ensure the spectator's sympathy for the victim-criminal more than that of the much-debated rape:[26] "Such are the paradoxes of feminist criticism that many feminists (myself included) believe the rape was dramatically necessary because (per Richard Allen) it creates more sympathy for Marnie and makes for a stronger indictment of patriarchy as well. Out with compassionate sensitive men! In with the rapists, fetishists, and sadists among them!" (Modleski 177) The rape was the kernel of the film – the scene in the novel that had actually made Hitchcock crave the rights to adapt it for the screen. He was so obsessed with it that he fired screenwriter Evan Hunter[27], who had strongly objected to the scene: "Hitch held up his hands the way directors do when they're framing a shot. Palms out, fingers together, thumbs extended and touching to form a perfect square. Moving his hands toward my face, like a

[26] Neither critics nor fans agree on weather Mark is guilty of marital rape or not. His indicters and defenders form fairly equal groups.
[27] Author of *The Birds.*

camera coming in for a close shot, he said, 'Evan, when he sticks it in her, I want that camera right on her *face*'" (Hunter 35). And, indeed, this is how he finally filmed the scene, which creates cinematic narrative pathos and triggers the audience's empathy through identification, all the while complying with the tradition of the "male gaze" that Laura Mulvey theorized in her seminal study that labels the camera as voyeuristic and fetishist when filming women: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed (…) so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motiff [sic!] of erotic spectacle" (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* 837).

Mark is not injured and hospitalised after his riding accident, so he can surprise Marnie when she tries to steal from him again. All this leads to the fact that it will be *his* initiative to take Marnie to confront her mother. The main difference from the novel is the ending, as Bernice, the mother, does not die. The violent confrontation triggers Marnie's childhood memories and the truth comes out. There is no dead child. Bernice is a former prostitute and once she thought that one of her johns was trying to molest Marnie sexually, when in fact he was trying to comfort her when she was scared during a storm. Bernice had come to her rescue, but Marnie had killed him with a fire poker in self-defence. The pool of blood that had resulted accounts for her phobia of red. Her association between storms and violence is what makes her fear them even as an adult, while her equating sex with both prostitution, abandonment, and murder reveals the source of her frigidity. From a psychoanalytical perspective, "The repressed memory that reappears in Marnie's haunting dreams, the murder of the sailor, reveals metaphorically the way her experience of the oedipal moment defines her: she defends the mother and herself from the male who intrudes, separates the daughter from the mother, and thus threatens them both. Marnie actively protects the mother, usurping the phallus and eradicating the need for the father" (Jacobowitz 460).

This descent into the nether regions of the human psyche in order to retrieve a suppressed memory and the return to the surface in order to initiate the process of healing from the *pathos* is also expressed visually and kinetically in the film:

> The strong causal connection of past sins or mistakes to present woes is emphasized by descents to regions evocative of Hades. The importance of ascents in uncovering or confronting the sickness originating in the past and of love in curing it connects Hitchcock's romantic movies with mythic, religious, and folkloric forebears. Indeed, descents or threatened falls toward demonic regions and contrasting ascents to love and illumination remain characteristic of Hitchcockian romance. Mark discovers Marnie in the pool below him when she

> attempts suicide. Later, he drags her up the steps into her mother's home where, sitting on another flight of stairs, she recovers the memory that promises to return her to health. (Brill 103)

At the end, Mark assures his wife he will stand by her, and Marnie declares that she does not want to go to prison, but would rather stay with him – in a pathetic, if candidly insulting, vein. The ending is, therefore, more definite and conclusive, and therefore less modern than that of the novel. Unlike the novel, the sense of closely knit union and alliance between the two spouses allows for the prospect of love in Marnie's healed self: "Improbable circumstances and social mismatching infuse the love at the center of Hitchcock's romances with traces of the miraculous" (Brill 101).

Even if the suppressed personal trauma is still the cause of the protagonist's social inadequacy, the ending is less dramatic and more optimistic, while the constant *pas de deux* of the two stars, Tippi Hedren[28] and Sean Connery, makes for a more sentimental and cinematic approach. Today it strikes us as decidedly amusing that one of the many reasons for the film's unfavourable reception was the casting of "relative newcomers" Hedren and Connery in roles that "cry for the talents of Grace Kelly and Cary Grant" (Archer 19). In his comprehensive book, Tony Lee Moral meticulously analyses and debunks the criticism with which the film met: "During its initial release, *Marnie* was a commercial as well as a critical failure. Early reviewers criticized Hitchcock's use of a highly expressive mise-en-scene, painted backdrops, conspicuous rear projection, stylized acting, and red suffusions of the screen. These devices alienated audiences and critics alike, in what amounts to a constant assault on the boundaries of cinematic realism" (27–9). Instead, Moral sees this film as "the culmination of Hitchcock's concept of 'pure cinema[29]'" (*Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie* 53–4) and highlights "multivocality in the *Marnie* text, a product of the larger cultural and political forces that shape it. I will show how author Winston Graham[30] and screenwriter Jay Presson Allen were major contributors" (*Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie* 45–6).

As William Rothman asserts, "Today, *Marnie* has become a touchstone. I find Robin Wood's judgment to be only slightly hyperbolic when he says, 'If you don't like *Marnie*, you don't really like Hitchcock. I would go further than that and say if you don't love Marnie, you don't really love cinema.'" (352) Most

[28] Who had starred in *The Birds.*

[29] The French term coined by Henri Chomette to define the avant-garde film that emerged in Paris in the 1920s and 30s and focused on the pure elements of film such as form, motion, visual composition and rhythm, rather than the narration of events.

[30] The idea that the author of the original novel is a major contributor to the text of the film adaptation is also highly amusing from the perspective of adaptation studies nowadays and shows the influence of transmedia studies.

films decrease in fame and appeal as time goes by and they become old-fashioned and obsolete. Hitchcock's *Marnie* has strangely undergone the opposite journey, from public opprobrium to the enthusiastic acclaim of both critics and fandom. The reason for this unique evolution lies in the revolutionary strategies that the director applied when making the film.

> *Marnie* is not a return, however, to Hitchcock's earlier practice of using the camera to declare that he is the all-powerful God who holds sway over the world of the film. It is Hitchcock's own humanity, as well as that of the characters in the film, that shines through. But this means that he must acknowledge, at least rhetorically, that there are limits to his power, that the camera has its own appetites, and awesome powers that no merely human author can claim for his or her own. (Rothman 352)

The most recent and striking remediation of Graham's novel was into an opera by composer Nico Muhly, with a libretto by Nicholas Wright, in an English National Opera production at the London Coliseum in 2017[31]. Muhly is the youngest composer ever to have been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and the co-production with this opera company had its US premiere in 2018,[32] after which the two Marnies – Tippi Hedren and Isobel Leonard – met… at the Met. It is the Live in HD transmission from the Met that rendered the opera famous throughout the world – a means of cultural dissemination that has already made the object of a chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures* written by Pauline Greenhill. In Brianna Wells' opinion, "the HD series creates in its *audiences* a sense of doubling, of intellectual uncertainty, and strange recurrence within an experience of immediacy, and a sense of the familiar made alien: in other words, a sense of the uncanny" (573) – a state of mind that clearly agrees with mystery plot of *Marnie.*

***Marnie*, the opera**

Interestingly, the genesis of the opera stemmed from the film, as it was stage director Michael Mayer, long fascinated with Hitchcock's classic, who suggested the topic first to Muhly and then to Wright. However, the libretto is based largely on the novel, even if departing from it at times. Thus, there is a constant dialogue between the three versions, for, as Linda Hutcheon remarks, "adaptation as adaptation is unavoidably a kind of intertextuality if the receiver is acquainted with the adapted text" (*Theory* 21). The original literary source

[31] With Marnie sung by Sasha Cooke.
[32] Starring Isabel Leonard in the title role.

comes as a surprise to most opera familiars, accustomed to famous texts whose authority is given both by their acknowledged canonical value and by their wide popularity: "Adaptation is 'the lifeblood of opera' (Blake 187) and has been so since that art form's inception in Italy in the late sixteenth century: the tried and tested, not the new and original, is the norm in this expensive art form. With this long history, opera can arguably lay claim to being the Ur-adaptive art" (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 305). Graham's novel was and still is rather little known, even if its author is famous for his Poldark series; therefore, the appeal of the remediation was provided precisely by Hitchcock's previous transmediation, and the boldness of tackling such a non-canonical work can only be accounted for by its historical context: "Through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in both Europe and the Americas, the range of operatically adapted narrative materials broadened immensely. Canonical works in traditional literary genres (epics, novels, short stories, plays, poems) continued to be used. (…) Other art forms also provided stories. Not surprisingly, even popular films were remediated into operas[33]" (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 307). This fresh source of inspiration allows cinema aficionados to relish the recognition of a Hitchcock classic, refined literature connoisseurs to enjoy the departures of the adaptation from the original, while also allowing new-comers to taste the opera as it is, without any ulterior comparisons and associations: "The operatic performance becomes a kind of palimpsest, with these doubled layers of what is recalled and what is being experienced at that moment creating both intellectual and aesthetic pleasure" (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 307).

The main distinctions in the libretto are that Mark and Terry are brothers rather than cousins, and their mother has therefore not undergone the trauma of losing her eldest son, as in the novel. She is authoritarian and far more involved in the Halcyon[34] Printing firm, controlling and bullying her sons and being a typical mother-in-law to Marnie, whereas in the literary original she is kind and thoughtful. In act II she shocks Mark by revealing it is she who has been planning a takeover of the family firm. Thus, not surprisingly, the 'mummy issues' are also extended to the two male principals.

Mark catches Marnie in the act of stealing from him rather than later on. But the greatest weight-shift of the libretto is the character of Marnie's *nameless* mother, who is disparaging and quite hostile to Marnie, unlike the novel, in which the daughter asserts she is the apple of her mother's eye, and unlike the film, in which Bernice loves especially the memory of her daughter as a child, later transferring her feelings to her little neighbour Jessie. In an opera scene between the mother and her old friend Lucy, the former expresses her distrust of Marnie

[33] Such as Thomas Adès' 2016 opera *The Exterminating Angel* based on the 1962 eponymous film by Luis Buñuel.

[34] A both suggestive and ironic name, since the noun Halcyon refers to a period of time in the past that was idyllically happy and peaceful.

and says she believes her daughter to have killed her baby-brother as a child. Unlike the novel and film, in the opera Marnie has a session with Dr Romano in which she retrieves the childhood memory of a thunderstorm, a soldier, her mother, and her dead baby-brother. From then on, she will believe herself to be a murderess. The scene is powerful and memorable in its pathos-imbued atmosphere, illustrating the fact that

> Psychoanalysis reached its zenith in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The 1950s and 1960s saw for virtually the first time the application of psychoanalysis for persons previously considered inaccessible to psychoanalytic treatment due to the nature of their problems. Freud originally believed psychotic patients to be poor candidates for analytic treatment. As psychoanalysis gained power and influence, its scope broadened to schizophrenia, "manic depression," and other serious psychiatric conditions. Psychoanalysis was soon being applied to nonpsychiatric problems, as well-such as effects of war, racism, and other social ills. (Ruffalo n. p.)

Only the scene of the mother's funeral will loosen the suspense – for the audience as well as the protagonist – as Lucy tells Marnie by her mother's grave that it had been the deceased who had killed the baby, not her. The ending is open, just as that of the novel. Surprisingly, both Mark and Terry come with the police, and the audience is left to understand that Mark considers expiation and retribution to be indispensable in the process of healing his wife's *pathos*. He promises to stand by her side and hopes she will come back to him after prison, but Marnie cannot make this promise. She remains an ever-elusive mystery, concluding the opera by repeating three times "I'm free." This answer may be equally inspired by her operatic predecessor – Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* (a transmediation of Goethe's poem) – who finds liberation in jail, where she remains by choice, refusing to follow Mephisto, the spirit of evil.

In Muhly's opera, the remediation must be performed with the means germane to music, which convey characterisation and dramatism through sound as well, not only through text and image:

> though some things are lost, others are not – and there are even gains in the move from telling to showing in an opera libretto though some things are lost, others are not – and there are even gains in the move from telling to showing in an opera libretto. [S]ince the libretto is written to be adapted to music, its version of the narrative knowingly creates the room for the addition of the emotional impact of such musical features as orchestral color or vocal expressivity. (Hutcheon & Hutcheon 310).

What becomes obvious from the very first chords of the opera is precisely the musical pathos of the score – a kind of 'excruciating' quality of the score that

transpires both at the level of melody and of harmony in the most direct of arts that addresses the affect without resorting to the mediation of reason. If we are to look at the medium of music from a historical perspective, it can be well associated both with femininity and with mental derangement:

> Such an understanding harkens back to longstanding Western suspicions of music that conflate its supposed abstract and non-referential nature and lack of fixed meanings with fears of (feminine) disorder, and emotional and sexual excess. Both Plato and Aristotle warned of music's moral ambiguity, while classical Greek literature thematized the ambivalent power of music vested in the female voice, on the one hand celebrating its beauty and capacity to immortalize heroics deeds, and on the other, warning of its seductive charms and magical power to lure men to their destruction, as manifest in the songs of the Sirens and Circe in the Odyssey. Music's sensuous sounds were said to give it the capacity to "penetrate the ear and so 'ravish' the mind." (Vernon 48)

Certain psychological valences of the orchestral score were consciously conceived by the composer, who writes: "What immediately became clear as both a solution and a challenge was that each of the principal characters needed to be **'**twinned**'** with an orchestral instrument. With very few exceptions, nobody actually tells the truth to one another in the show, and the twin instruments can help reinforce the chamber music-like tugging between various deceits and agendas" (Muhly qtd. in Park n. p.). The "twinning" that he conceives is also a musical rendition of the narrative theme of the double, and we must not forget that Graham's novel has quite a musical conception in itself, being based on a warp of leitmotifs – sex, lies, mirrors, freedom, money, risk, duality.

The libretto juggles with a juxtaposition of action and internal monologues that Wright calls 'links,' and which give the audience a glimpse into Marnie**'**s private thoughts and feelings. "You get this duality of someone who is completely present, and yet is untouchable," director Mayer says (qtd. in Par n. p.) Muhly thinks of Marnie as dual from many points of view and confesses that his former Julliard's classmate, mezzosoprano Isobel Leonard, was his first choice because she is "able to do **'**come hither**'** and **'**go thither**'** at the same time" (qtd. in Park n. p.)

Marnie's alter egos are expressed both musically and visually through actual incarnations:

> four "Shadow Marnies" (referred to playfully by the creative team as the Marnettes), an all-female barbershop quartet that sings in an early-music style with little vibrato. Conveying a sense of fracture, Muhly describes the desired effect "as if her inner monologue is actually a warped recording of the Tallis Scholars singing a single chord from an obscure Tudor motet." Often surrounding Marnie on stage, they represent "not just her anxieties but the cruel release of her coping

> mechanisms" – never more so than in the pivotal Act II scene on the analyst's couch, when she relives her childhood distress (Park n. p.).

This unforgettable scene illustrates Linda and Michael Hutcheon's assertion about the ensembles that allow the score to expound multiple thoughts at the same time, in this case not Marnie's multiple personalities, but multiple layers of awareness and of dissimulation. Her psychological evolution towards the end is also reflected both musically and visually. The Met's dramaturg remarks that "As the opera progresses, the intervals Marnie sings become tighter. By the time she gets to the end, she's singing more tonally and lyrically, reflecting her dawning realization of her emotions. (...) She begins to realize that she must reject the false selves she's created and embrace whatever fragmentary authentic self she can access if she is to live any kind of real, complete life" (Paul Cremo qtd. in Park n. p.)

Psychoanalytically, music has been long associated with femininity and the relation between mother and child:

> Rosolato argues for the acoustic origin of the subject's emergence into selfhood, beginning before birth with the sounds perceived in the "sonorous envelope" of the mother's womb (…) – "the first model of auditory pleasure" and the basis for all subsequent musical experience (…). This positioning of music as feminine has allowed feminist thinkers such as Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous to embrace the supposed irrationalism and emotionality of music as a source of subversive power. (Vernon 48)

Illustrating this agelong perception of music well, Muhly's *Marnie* creates a new and fresh way to portray the title character as both vulnerable and empowered, inscribing the aural universe of this modern opera in the tradition of the genre while also innovating with rhythm and orchestration.

Conclusion

This article has looked at several ways in which personal trauma is the source of *pathos* in the etymological sense of suffering and affliction, engendering social failure in Winston Graham's novel *Marnie*. Likewise, the study has striven to demonstrate that both the literary original and its cinematic and operatic remediations are sparked into emotional cohesion by the narrative glue of pathos. From the perspective of both psychoanalysis and adaptation studies, this article has reached the conclusion that the open ending of the three versions also involves the reader/spectator in the process of narration – as

Aristotle discovered in anticipation of Jauss's reception theory – and thus leaves it to them to decide whether healing from *pathos* can ever be reached by the protagonist.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Citation: Bottez, Alina. Pathos as Narrative Glue: *Marnie* the Novel, Film, and Opera. *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 13 (2), 2023: 73–95. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.7

Article

The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humour in Contemporary Transcultural Migration Narratives: Melatu Uche Okorie's "This Hostel Life", and Fadia Faqir's "Under the Cypress Tree"

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Abstract: The voice of the immigrant in Western societies is being heard in the first person in contemporary literature. Therefore, the experience of emigration is no longer or, at least, not necessarily told from the privileged perspective of the white man or woman. And the short story is being a recurrent favourite genre for sharing with readers the diverse causes that force a man or a woman to abandon his/her native land, as well as the conflicts that emerge in the countries of reception. Collections such as *The Things I Would Tell You* (2017) by Sabrina Mahfouz, or *This Hostel Life* (2018) by Melatu Uche Okorie, among many others, are offering interesting examples of transcultural renderings of the experience of migration. The purpose of the present contribution is to focus on the use of irony and humour as ethically committed strategies for deploying the possibilities as well as the limits of conviviality in contemporary societies. I study the representative examples of two stories, Melatu Uche Okorie's "This Hostel Life" (included in the homonymous collection by the author), and Fadia Faqir's "Under the Cypress Tree", published in Mahfouz's collective volume. These two stories are aesthetically brilliant instances of the ethical potential of humour when offering a transcultural view of contemporary migrations that overcomes the limitations of traditional multicultural and intercultural treatments of the topic.
Keywords: *migrations; transculturalism; humour; ethics; aesthetics; British Muslim women writers; gender studies; identity; Melatu Uche Okorie; Fadia Faqir*.

University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.8
https://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro/ ISSN 2069–8658 (Print) | 2734–5963 (Online)
Volume 13 | Issue 2 | 2023 |

I have been dealing with the representation of migrations in contemporary literature for some time, particularly in the American and European contexts. My interest is not only literary but also sociopolitic. This time I put the emphasis on the case of Ireland and England. As I will try to evince, the case of Ireland and of the Irish is paradigmatic in many senses due to its long history of emigration and its more recent past as an allegedly multicultural society, especially since the 1990s and the beginning of economic affluence. Nevertheless, as I propose to briefly illustrate here, the history of Ireland and its migrations was and still is, like it is the case of most countries, not exempt from complexity and even controversies.

Before referring directly to the case of Nigerian writer Melatu Uche Okorie, it is worth revising the contribution to the topic by James Joyce. As it is well known, Joyce was an emigrant himself, or to be more precise, an exiled from his own country who lived in many different cities such as Rome, Trieste, Zürich or Paris. He managed to survive in some of these foreign cities and even to succeed both socially and professionally in others. Despite his irrefutable ability to adapt himself to other countries, he never forgot his native country, which he evoked once and again in all of his works. He also dealt with the issue of emigration in most of his literary production. Thus, in *Dubliners*, and specifically in the short story "A Little Cloud", we see an apparently successful returned emigrant, as well as Dublin men and women who, despite their adverse professional or personal circumstances, are paralysed and unable to abandon home, family and land. Besides, Stephen Dedalus decides at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to abandon an Irish land which suffocates the young man's artistic aspirations, but we encounter him back in Dublin in *Ulysses* without having been able to fulfil his expectations abroad.

In Joyce's poor and paralysed Ireland, immigration was a rara avis. Therefore, we do not find many cases of immigrants or allusions to immigration. Nevertheless, on occasion of the publication of "The Dead", Joyce referred to the alleged Irish hospitality. Notwithstanding, he might be referring to hospitality among the Irish because in *Ulysses* we see how Mr Deasy laughs at the fact that the Irish never persecuted the Jews since the country never let them in. Yet, the character most clearly considered as an outsider, even a foreigner, in Joyce's fiction is certainly Leopold Bloom; and it is precisely on account of being considered a Jew due to his father's ancestry, that he is ridiculed and despised.[1]

Things have changed a lot in Ireland since Joyce's times, and after successive waves of emigration, from the 1990s onwards, and especially during the years of economic welfare which ended in 2008, the Green Eire became the recipient of many immigrants. Many Irish writers recorded the changes in the

[1] The fact that it is Molly Bloom and not her husband the real Jew in *Ulysses*, because of her mother's Sephardi ancestry, is not even considered by the Dubliners, who seem to ignore the matrilineal transmission of Jewishness.

social landscape of the island. Margarita Estévez Saá has written on the topic in "Immigration in Celtic Tiger and post-Celtic Tiger novels", and she has studied the contribution to the topic by authors such as Elizabeth Wassell, Mary Rose O'Callaghan, Eilís Ní Dhuibhne, Chris Binchy, Peter Cunningham or Hugo Hamilton. It seems to me particularly interesting that these writers were as sensible as to denounce in their works the bouts of racism that they detected in Ireland, even during the years in which economic conditions were favourable, and despite the fact that, as they illustrated in their works, immigrants occupied the worst jobs that the Irish discarded. Notwithstanding, these were the voices of Irish men and women speaking for the immigrants. In fact, Hugo Hamilton's novel *Hand in the Fire* (2010) is one of the first cases of an immigrant dealing openly and crudely with the issue of immigration in Ireland.

More recently, and it is the case that occupies us today, we find immigrant writers overtly denouncing Irish policies on immigration. One representative voice is that of Nigerian-born writer living in Ireland Melatu Uche Okorie. She came to England with her baby daughter in 2006, and she had to spend eight and a half years living in the direct provision system established in Ireland before being granted official refugee status. She holds a M. Phil. in Creative Writing from Trinity College, Dublin, and has been working on a PhD in Trinity, focused on creative writing centres.

She has published several short stories, many of which she began to write during the years spent in direct provision, and she is at present working on a novel. Melatu Uche Okorie is particularly concerned with contemporary migrations, and her stories deal with the circumstances of emigrants in their countries of origin, as well as with the hardships they have to endure in the countries of adoption.

Okorie is a transcultural writer in the sense of the term expressed by Arianna Dagnino, that is, "imaginative writers who, by choice or because of life circumstances, experience cultural dislocation, follow transnational life patterns, cultivate bilingual or plurilingual proficiency, physically immerse themselves in multiple cultures, geographies, or territories, expose themselves to diversity, and nurture plural, flexible identities" (1). And, as we are going to see, Okorie projects a transcultural view of contemporary migrations that tries to account for the full complexity of current culturally diverse societies.

One of her most representative and brilliant tales is "This Hostel Life", published by Skein Press in a homonymous collection which appeared in 2018. The collection, preceded by an "Author's note", includes three stories ("This Hostel Life", "Under the Awning", and "The Egg Broke") as well as a sort of postscript by Liam Thornton (an assistant professor in the School of Law, at the University College Dublin) entitled "Ireland: Asylum Seekers and Refugees". Let us briefly refer to the contents of the book before focusing on the literary and social interest of the story entitled "This Hostel Life".

In the "Author's note", the writer refers to the years she spent in direct provision in Ireland and she succinctly describes the "almost tyrannical conditions" in which they lived. She mentions that the reason that brought her to Ireland from her native Nigeria "is all in my stories. I find it easier to talk about myself that way. I'm not a natural sharer" (ix). She also explains that it was during those years as an asylum seeker that she began to write the stories and that she calls "the Asylum Series" (xiii). This preface is followed by three stories. The first one, "This Hostel Life", describes the experience of asylum seekers under direct provision from the point of view of a Congolese woman. The second one, "Under the Awning", is a story within a story, and it illustrates racism in Ireland from the perspective of an African immigrant taking part in a creative writing workshop. The third one, "The Egg Broke" is set in a rural Nigerian village, and tells of Ogechi, a happily married woman living with her husband's family, and the tragedy that unfolds when she discovers she is carrying twins due to an ancient superstition in the old Igbo tradition that led to twins being killed at birth. The story's open ending does not clarify whether the woman will finally abandon her country so as to save her twins' life, but it certainly shows one of the multiple reasons which could prompt a Nigerian to seek asylum elsewhere. As for "This Hostel Life" and "Under the Awning", both can be read as two stories that respectively address the failure of multicultural and intercultural policies in the western world, illustrated here in the case of Ireland. Therefore, *This Hostel Life* includes renderings of women's adverse circumstances in Ireland both as confined and segregated asylum seekers, as well as once they become Irish citizens of an alleged multicultural country; and the writer has also included the case of a woman compelled to abandon her native land.

Finally, Liam Thornton offers in his essay "Ireland: Asylum Seekers and Refugees" a detailed explanation about what he calls "issues that so far too long have been swept under the carpet" (61). He is referring to the question of immigration in Ireland. Thornton begins his contribution recalling Irish history of emigration, and introduces the current debate within Irish society about "who belongs" and "what is home". He then passes on to address the issue of who is entitled to refugee status, the difficulties of defining a refugee, and of discerning people's "real risk" and "serious harm" in their countries of origin so as to grant them subsidiary protection.

He wonders whether, for instance, being subject to poverty and/or a wholly inadequate health care system might constitute serious harm. These are difficult decisions that belong to the realm of political and legal discussions; and both the International Protection Office and the International Protection Appeals Tribunal are in charge of recognising protection claims. Thronton does not eschew the complexity of the problem; but he emphasises, first, the low recognition rate of protection claims in Ireland, and, second, the excessive amount of time that asylum seekers have to wait meanwhile their applications are processed.

It is in the meantime that asylum seekers are entitled to direct provision, and Thornton explains the history of direct provision since it was established in Ireland in 1998, and the meagre improvements which have taken place in all these years. He also mentions how even though different political parties opposed the system and considered it as a form of human degradation, all of them maintained it once they were in power. Direct provision, as we are informed, provides accommodation and food for asylum seekers, a weekly payment of 21.60 Euro per adult and per child, and a medical card. Until 2018 they were not allowed to work, and at present they can seek a job if the position pays over 30,000 Euros per annum, provided that they or their employers pay €1,000 for a 12-month work permit and that they have a Passport to apply for the work permit. As we can imagine, most of the asylum seekers do not meet these strict conditions. Thornton concludes referring to direct provision centres as systems "of enforced dependency and institutionalisation" (76) which can be certainly considered as Magdalene laundries of contemporary Ireland. Thornton's is the voice of the academic and of the activist of human rights, but *This Hostel Life* also includes a fictional rendering of direct provision from the point of view of the asylum seeker, and resorting to that special form of humour and irony that so often arises from suffering and pathos; the suffering and pathos of the asylum seeker.

Melatu Uche Okorie's story "This Hostel Life" begins, as we are informed, on a Monday at 10:26 a.m., and concludes at 12:01 p.m. It is a brief span of time, briefer than Joyce's *Ulysses,* and as we are going to see, as it was the case in Joyce's novel, nothing relevant happens. The story is told from the point of view of a Congolese married woman with two daughters who is at present under direct provision in Ireland; and her narrative begins when she and other asylum seekers gather with their buggies so as to collect provisions and toiletries for the week:

> In my last hostel, dey give you provision any day, but it's gonna be one month since you collect last. So, if you get toilet paper today, it's gonna be one month before you get another. Dat is why me I happy when dey give me every week for her, but now, me I don feel happy again. Dis direct provision business is all the same, you see, because even if you collect provision for every week or you collect for every month, it is still somebody dat is give you the provision. Nothing is better than when you decide something for yourself. (3)

The narrator, whose name we discover is Beverléé, is 44 years old, and she speaks in patois based on Nigerian pidgin English. As the author has explained in a recent contribution to the *Irish Times,* significantly entitled "We as migrants are used to being spoken for, yet these are our experiences":

> Nigerian pidgin English was used in the hostel I was in. I realised that I needed to create a language for the main character as standard English didn't suit her. It wasn't authentic. Then, I started to listen and pay attention to the way non-

> Nigerians spoke pidgin, and I noticed that sometimes there were bits of Americanisms and Irish swear words thrown in – wanna, gonna, f'ing and even grand. I mixed these together and structured a form of pidgin English for the main character. (*The Irish Times* n.pg.)

Ngozi, the narrator's best friend, as well as Mercy, Mama Bomboy, Mummy Dayo, and Franca, all of them collect their tickets and wait for the security man to give them their tickets. It is Mummy Dayo who summarises the lives of these women: "From laundry to collect provision, from check laundry to see GP, from see GP to collect food, from collect food to check laundry […] Up and down, up and down from morning till evening" (4), but this is what happens on Mondays since, as the narrator says, "nothing to do, for all the other days" (6). We get only brief glimpses, mere sketches of the different protagonists, what contributes to convey the idea of their secondary subaltern status as citizens of the world. What the reader discovers is a melting pot of characters briefly and humorously sketched – in what can be certainly considered, in Joycean terms, as a style of scrupulous meanness (Joyce, *Letters II* 134).

The tone of the narrator is neither merely, nor simply of complaint. In fact, it is highly ironic and even humorous. Thus, she reproduces suspicious attitudes among the women immigrants (some of them fear that single or separated women could be interested in their husbands), they comment on the pernicious effects of watching television (their main pastime since they cannot work), and they mock the ignorance of some of them in relation to topics such as fertility. No community or social group is idealised or stereotyped, to the extent that the narrator certainly laments Irish racism but also rejects behaviours from Congolese, Nigerian and Eastern European people:

> People tell me before, when I first come this hostel: 'Be careful of Nigerias; do not make Friends with Nigerias; Nigerias like to make trouble and fight too much; […] I go close to my own people, and make friends with only Congolese people and go only Congolese party. But now, me I know no is good complete and no one can do you bad like your own people. (6)

> 'Congo? Dey crazy pass Nigeria o! We Nigerias, na only mouth we get, but Congo fit take knife fight you.'
> 'Eastern Europeans de mall be fake *oyinbo*.'
> 'Irish people too dey cold. Whisper, whisper, all the time.'
> […]
> She even warn me for women from Franca kind of country, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa… (8)

Stereotypes are also avoided by the inclusion of some immigrants like Mama Bomboy, who speaks correct English and is able to appropriately define

words such as 'Fertility', or to explain that February sometimes has 29 days; and all of them, with the exception of the narrator, lament that many people do not know about Gandhi or even Shakespeare. Their conversation and their waiting is interrupted when there is a discussion between Ngozi and the manager because of a jar of honey. The manager puts an end to the argument by closing the windows from which the provisions were being dispensed, and the women decide to disperse disappointed and ill-humoured:

> 12:01 p.m
> Small small, all the people have start to go as dey see the manager is not gonna change her mind and open the office to give provision.
> […]
> Now me I can see new people have start to line up outside the dining room for lunch. (22)

The story ends with the beginning of a new waiting. This time the asylum seekers will have to wait for lunch. The fragmented structure appropriately illustrates the condition of the immigrants; and the allusions to time and the hour of the day contribute to render, even in a humorous way, the tediousness of their endless waiting.

The reader does not see the asylum seekers interacting with the Irish, who mainly ignore them, although we also detect problems of communication among the immigrants. Okorie is very careful in avoiding clear cut distinctions between victims and culprits, so that the conflict that ended the dispense of provisions was provoked by Ngozi's ill temper, as well as by the Irish manager's unfair attitude.

"This Hostel Life" is, therefore, a transcultural short story which, in John McLeod's terms, pays particular attention to the aesthetic formulation in literature of silence, tension, dissonance, conflict, misunderstanding and communication failure in contemporary multiethnic and culturally diverse societies (5); and it does so even by resorting to humour. The story illustrates how far we are from Leopold's Bloom vindication of a nation as "people living in the same place" "or also living in different places" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 317). Melatu Uche Okori does not privilege cultural difference as multiculturalism tends to do, neither does she naïvely emphasise intercultural commonality; but rather deploys a transcultural stance which pays attention to the full complexity of contemporary diverse societies.

Leopold Bloom is speaking about identity and nationhood, but also about the misconception and misrepresentation of people like him, considered as foreigners by prejudiced nationalists like the Citizen. Sabrina Mahfouz has also considered identity and lamented misrepresentation in the Introduction to the volume she edited with the title *The Things I Would Tell You: British Muslim Women Write*, published in 2017 by Saqi Books.

> I felt upset and angered by the misrepresentations I encountered constantly and I felt grateful when a clear-eyed truth was spoken about us. And then again, who was 'us'? (7)

These are, precisely, the words quoted by Sabrina Mahfouz in the Introduction. The passage is taken from one of the texts included in the book, significantly entitled "Mezzaterra" (98), by Ahdaf Soueif. The book contains poems, autobiographical and dramatic pieces, essays and short stories written by British Muslim Women of different age, status, and provenance. The settings also vary, so that some of the texts refer to British Muslim women living in the West, whereas others deploy their experience in Eastern places. The contributors include well-known authors as well as emerging new voices; and, as Sabrina Mahfouz explains in the Introduction, all have "both a British and a Muslim background or association, regardless of their birthplace, citizenship status or religiosity" (8). With regards to their religious condition, it is stated that "some are passionately secular; and others relate to Islam purely in terms of a cultural tradition that they have inherited" (9).

These types of volumes, focused on specific communities, in this case British Muslim women, have their positive as well as negative or, at least, reductive dimension. On the one hand, they serve to allow their voices being heard, but at the same time they can be considered as another illustration or product of reductive multicultural policy and its isolationist dangers. That is, a determined social group vindicates its culture, traditions, and heritage in relation to other groups.

If we focus on the double ascription that the title features, British and Muslim, it could be also interpreted as a representation of intercultural contacts, in so far as the contributors emphasise their double association, and try to establish a dialogue between their two backgrounds. Notwithstanding, what we discover when we read the volume is that the authors are not projecting a simplistic defence of their multicultural condition, neither are they offering instances of naïvely intercultural communication. By means of their stories, dramatic pieces, poems and short stories, the authors in this collection are addressing the full complexity and even difficulty of contemporary sociocultural encounters that should not be reduced to or even related to nation-states, but that must be addressed within the communities of those involved, and that consider parameters such as age, religion, culture and, of course, gender.

These are transcultural authors (with multiple affiliations – at least British and Muslim) deploying transcultural exchanges and situations as far as they have learnt to accept, expose and even laugh at the possibilities as well as limits of contemporary social contacts. And the effect of collections such as the present one is precisely to teach us, by means of humour and subtle irony, how to accept, cope with and learn to live in the confusion, uncertainty and even prejudice provoked by diversity.

Another interesting dimension of these type of collections is the possibility they offer of going beyond literary genre boundaries, what we could call the "transgenre" projection of a volume that allows the reader to witness how a similar topic is addressed in different forms, styles and tone, and even to assess if one format is more or less satisfactory or successful. In this sense, the short story tends to be, comparatively speaking, particularly powerful, since poetry is sometimes too intimate and indirect, the essay too subjective and less imaginative, and the dramatic pieces included always lack the performative dimension that make them so appealing on stage. The same printing house, Saqi Books had published also in 2017 a previous and different collection, *Don't Panic, I'm Islamic*, whose comic appeal and potential should be taken into account as well when dealing with such a timely and delicate topic.

Let us focus now on "Under the Cypress Tree", the short story by Fadia Faqir set on British soil and included in the volume entitled *The Things I Would Tell You*. The story, rather than featuring multicultural societies either in Eastern or in Western settings, or projecting naïvely successful intercultural dialogues or encounters, it rather illustrates again the complexity of conviviality in contemporary societies, and how the difficulties of coexistence become evident in London.

Fadia Faqir is a Jordanian-British writer and journalist, who lectures in English Literature at Durham University. She is a short story writer as well as author of four novels: *Nisanit*, *Pillars of Salt*, *My Name is Salma*, and *Willow Trees Don't W*eep. She has also edited a book of autobiographical essays by Arab women writers, entitled *In the House of Silence*.

Her story, "Under the Cypress Tree", opens the collection entitled *The Things I Would Tell You*, and it is a very powerful and rich narrative that brilliantly exposes contemporary transcultural encounters with a a humorous and ironic tone that demands out attention. It tells the story of Doris, an old woman living alone in her flat, and her Bedouin neighbour Timam, in a Western city that, towards the end of the story, the reader deduces is London.

The first time in which Doris sees her neighbour is on a misty morning and through a window that symbolically represents the old woman's encounter with the other in the form of a Bedouin woman:

> A veil, fixed with a band, covered her head and the collar of her padded jacket. The hem of her sharwal visible under her loose-fitting robe, her shoes flat. She shook the dust of her saddle bag, gathered her fardels and looked up. When Doris saw her weather-beaten skin, kohled-eyes and tattooed chin she held her breath and steeped back away from the window. (15)

Doris's moving away from the window symbolizes her reluctant attitude towards this strange woman whose appearance she finds so shocking. And the narrative immediately focuses on the old woman's remembrances of her

childhood years in Brighton, where her father worked as a collier. The tale is interspersed with Doris's recurrent memories of her youthful years during the Second World War, her parents, her dog Caddy, her love affair with a young man who died, and her traumatic pregnancy out of wedlock, that caused the break with her parents.

These recollections contribute to the characterization of the old woman, at the same time that they portray her as an aging protagonist, too focused on an irretrievable past that she is constantly evoking meanwhile she cannot remember where she has just put her glasses. This very British woman is being constantly visited by her mysterious Bedouin neighbour, who recurrently offers her help in the form of milk, a beautifully embroidered scarf, looking for the old woman's lost glasses, going to the bakery for a custard tart, or even accompanying her to the cemetery to visit Doris's mother's tomb. Their meetings illustrate, in my opinion, contemporary transcultural encounters and exchanges, many of them humorous and funny, in the sense that they do not deploy idealistic intercultural communication, nor do they impose multicultural difference.

For instance, Doris cannot fail to notice Timam's poor English, her shocking colours, strange odours, and even the weird noises she makes with her mouth (the Bedouin woman is constantly eating cardamom). It is through the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch) through which the body receives information, and that the distance between both characters is emphasized on many occasions by means of humour. Doris observes Timam's tattooed and weather-beaten skin, and notices her neighbour's "smell of dung and incense" (16). Sometimes she even fails to understand her, and wonders "If only her English was better" (21). And they have also different tastes when drinking tea and other beverages: "It was bitter as barberry" (18).

Despite these details that separate them and that deploy the inevitable shortcomings of their encounters, they carry on, progressively assuming these little failures that prevent a completely successful exchange between the two women, and that the narrative emphasizes, many times with humour as a descriptive and narrative strategy. Finally, Timam offers Doris the possibility of accompanying her to visit the tomb of her mother that the old woman so much desired. It is on occasion of their visit to the cemetery that the reader deduces that the setting of the story is London, since when looking for the familial tomb, Doris sees Alexander Hurley's grave.

The old woman informs Timam that he was a very popular comedian, the author of the famous British dance "The Lambeth Walk" (18), and the reader can check that the crypt is at the Tower Hamlets Cemetery in East End London. This cultural reference that Doris explains to Timam should be added to others, such as Christmas traditions, old-fashioned English custard tarts, their different way of drinking tea (Doris takes it bitter meanwhile Timam prefers it sweet), Timam's

beliefs in the sounds of birds, or even their different way of taking care of the old, and their diverse rituals when facing death.

At the end of the story, Doris dies in Timam's arms. The distance that separates them has not been overcome (the old woman on the verge of death thinks "Alone, in a dingy flat, besieged by foreigners. 'Oh!'" 28). And their last exchange of words reinforces again their problems of communication. Thus, Doris's last words are not understood by Timam:

> A few minutes before she died, she whispered something Timam could not understand. 'Tell John I'll meet him at the King Alfred. I'll take Caddy with me. My ma was still missing. Keep the photos, plate and letter!" (28)

> Neither does Doris understand Timam's farewell:
> Timam held her. 'Don't tired yourself! Everything fine. Just breathe easy! We meet again!'
> 'Meet again?' Doris opened her eyes. A summer sky covered with hazy clouds.
> 'Yes. Other end'. She clicked her tongue. (29)

> A final note is included in the story. And it explains what follows:
> *Note: Timam is an Arabic name. It and its derivatives mean completion of a cycle, ending and finishing a task.* (29)

The ending, apart from humorous, is somehow ambivalent and mysterious, since the reader is not sure about what kind of beverage Timam gave to Doris, if it was intended to ease her death pains, or if it was to accelerate it. The final note adds more uncertainties to a narrative that is not focused on clearing things, or on earnestly explaining Timam and her traditions or Doris's past. The reader has been encouraged to meet and accept both women in the same terms in which they have encountered each other, in the middle of silences, doubts, inconsistencies, mysteries and also misunderstandings, when not prejudices; all of them exposed many times from an ironic and even humorous point of view.

As a conclusion we can state that both "Under the Cypress Tree" and "This Hostel Life" are good instances of the combination of success and failure in contemporary transcultural encounters, of how they take place in the most ordinary and quotidian circumstances, and how they involve people at a transnational level as well as within the members of a single community.

We began this analysis with Ahdaf Soueif's wondering "who was 'us'?" And these two stories have exemplified the transcultural diversity involved in this 'us', and the difficulties as well as the urgency of representing it; an 'us' that includes Bedouin Timam and aging Doris in England, as well as Beverléé in Ireland.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work is part of the research project "NEMICATID: Aesthetics, Ethics and Strategics of the New Migratory Cartographies and Transcultural Identities in Twenty-First-Century Literture(s) in English (2007-2019)" (PID2019-109582GB-100), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, and the European Regional Development Fund (MCI/AEI/FEDER, UE).

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Citation: Estévez-Saá, J.M. The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humour in Contemporary Transcultural Migration Narratives: Melatu Uche Okorie's "This Hostel Life", and Fadia Faqir's "Under the Cypress Tree". *University of Bucharest Review. Literary and Cultural Studies Series* 13 (2), 2023: 96-107. https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.13.2.8

Format: (B5) 17,7 x 25 cm
Font: *Times New Roman* (Size 11/9)

Tiparul s-a executat sub cda. 4761 / 2021
la Tipografia Universității din București