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Men and Masculinity in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*

INTRODUCTION: THE IDEOLOGY OF MASCULINITY

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels state that the "ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (67). While the quotation does not directly discuss men and masculinities, the logic espoused here can be applied to the discussion of masculinity, since masculinity can be understood as an ideology, in the sense of "[t]he way men live out their roles in class society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole" (Eagleton 8). In other words, masculinity is an ideology that prescribes the appropriate and inappropriate modes of behaviour, aesthetics, ways of thinking, occupations, familial roles, and sexual roles in a given period and class society. It serves to "acculturate" (Beynon 2) men into the dominant socioeconomic system and thus place them in the appropriate position demanded by the dominant material relations. It appears at the intersection of biological maleness and the social position of a group of men, which leads to the proliferation of different modes of masculinity, based on class, race, ethnicity, and even subculture. However, all these masculinities develop within and in relation to the dominant class system and the ideology of the ruling class. They are thus always dependent on them, never appear autonomously, and usually carry some or all of the core values of the masculinity of the dominant class, which in today's Western culture is the capitalist class. This implies the existence of "hegemonic masculinity" (Beynon 3) and "subordinate variations" (Beynon 16) of masculinity. However, the boundary between the

two is often porous, precisely because subordinate masculinities do not exist without the hegemonic one and often echo it, even if the men who subscribe to those masculinities do not belong to the class from which hegemonic masculinity originates. For example, physical size and strength, resilience, self-reliance, fortitude, and emotional reservedness, are prized among both hegemonic and subordinate groups.

However, even though "[m]ass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life" (Connell 45), masculinity always proves to be an ideological construct upon closer inspection, a "fantasy about what men should be like, a chimerical construction to help people order and make sense of their lives" (Beynon 2). Furthermore, MacInnes similarly writes that "[g]ender, together with the terms of masculinity and femininity, is an ideology people use in modern societies to imagine the existence of differences between men and women on the basis of their sex where, in fact, there is none" (MacInnes 1). Consequently, the relationship between sex and gender can be seen as comparable to the relationship between base and superstructure in Marxist theory. In this comparison, sex is the base, as a set of characteristics based on material reality, while gender is the superstructure, as an ideological expression of sex. This base and superstructure create a "sex/gender system" (Rubin 159), which privileges not just men over women, but certain men over other men. Of course, the privileged group of men are capitalist men as opposed to the underprivileged working-class men, but it should not be forgotten that race and ethnicity

play a crucial role when the distribution of privilege is concerned. While capitalism has, at least to a certain extent, opened oppressive positions to both men and women from minority groups, the vast majority of capitalists and CEOs are white men; therefore, the masculinity of white male capitalists becomes the hegemonic form of masculinity.

It can be argued that hegemonic masculinity has always been tied to entrepreneurialism and the fierce competitiveness that comes with it. However, from the middle of the 20th century onwards, and especially after the rules of Thatcher and Reagan, the business aspect of masculinity has become increasingly emphasised. The economic background of hegemonic masculinity was laid bare and the acquisition of capital openly became the driving force behind it. Additionally, neoliberal economics and ideology firmly emphasised self-reliance, entrepreneurialism, and competition, which influenced masculinity. The process of constructing an aggressively competitive business masculinity was intensified in the twenty-first century, particularly after 2010, when social media became the main means of communication and allowed for the advent of the role of social media influencer. Some of these influencers took up masculinity as their main topic and became its defining ideologues, propagating a "traditional" masculinity that emphasises dominance over others, aggression, competitiveness, dominance over women in the domestic sphere, and of course, entrepreneurialism and paramount accumulation of capital. This attracted wide male audiences from different classes and different races and ethnicities, who identified with this masculine script in lieu of a more progressive one.

Similar scripts have been offered by film and TV for decades now, which means that for a relatively long time now, the number of "masculinities on offer" (Beynon 16), has declined and the fantasy of what a man should be like has become narrower.

In addition to the proliferation of images of bourgeois masculinity, traditional working-class masculinity, based on the pride of one's physical labour, has largely disappeared, which often forces (young) working-class men to align with the masculinity of their class oppressors. The reason for this lies not only in the spread of the ideology of bourgeois masculinity, but also in the restructuring of the production process in the West. Western countries have largely shifted towards a service-based economy and moved most of their heavy industry to the Third World, which has destroyed traditional patterns of identification for working-class men. Many were left unemployed and unable to provide for their families, stripped of the pride of physical strength and heavy skilled labour, and for many, the only available jobs are "low-skilled" jobs or white-collar jobs, neither of which relies on bodily strength, which was long a central tenet of working-class masculinity. This has created a deep crisis in which many men feel left behind and are disillusioned, which further drives them to identify with masculinities that are ultimately harmful to them. Thus, the ideal man in the 21st century has become a wealthy businessman, whose status is marked by expensive cars, yachts, designer clothes, luxurious homes, the ability to attract and seduce multiple attractive women, and by great

mobility, as his movement is not restricted by his low socioeconomic status or by belonging to a subordinate social group.

This masculine fantasy is not restricted only to the West. Late capitalism and information technologies have connected the world under a more or less unified market, which allows not just a free passage of goods, but also of ideologies, which naturally includes gender norms. It can be said that the role of the West and colonialism is often exaggerated when it comes to the development of gender norms in colonised countries, as Non-Western societies are also male-dominated and based on the subjugation of women, albeit, perhaps, in slightly different forms. However, globalisation and the sped-up spread of information and ideas have played a crucial role in homogenising gender norms across the globe. There are, of course, local flavours to both gender norms everywhere, but gender scripts across the world have become rather similar, particularly when it comes to the hegemonic forms. Connell describes "transnational business masculinity", which "has replaced older local models of bourgeois masculinity, which were more embedded in local organizations and conservative cultures" (Connel 263). This variant may be seen as the truly dominant variant of masculinity in the late capitalist world, as it is marked by "increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation) and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for the purposes of image-making)" (Beynon 22), which allows one to truly thrive in a world focused on the acquisition of capital.

Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004) is set in the context of late capitalism with its insistence on transnational business masculinity and at least theoretically possible free movement across borders. The novel's protagonist, Arjun Mehta, is a young programmer from India, who, seduced by the American Dream, goes to America to get rich, but finds out that America in real life is much different from what he expected. He has to navigate a world that is set against him based on his country of origin and the poverty in which he finds himself after moving to America. He also needs to find a place in the male hierarchy, as he tries to live up to the standards of masculinity which he adopts from Bollywood films. Most criticism on *Transmission* deals with Arjun's marginalised position as an Indian immigrant, but very little has been said about masculinity and its influence on Arjun and other characters in the novel, even though it strongly thematises men and masculinity. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to shed some light on the presentation of masculinity in this novel. This analysis will focus on the relationships between the characters, which represent relationships between different types of masculinities, and point towards a hierarchy between men, while satirising this same hierarchy. On the one hand, the novel presents Arjun, who is described as belonging to a subordinate masculinity, and can even be seen as emasculated, but eventually manages to escape the rigid hierarchy, while on the other hand, the novel also presents privileged men like Guy Swift, Rajiv Rana, and Yves Ballard, who all typify transnational business masculinity in some ways, but are also

presented as ultimately insecure and at the mercy of the capitalist system they owe their power to.

THE IDEOLOGY OF MASCULINITY AND *TRANSMISSION*

The opening scene of the novel immediately describes Arjun as unimposing and emasculated, and he is consistently compared to the more powerful men around him, who wield a kind of masculine authority, which is based on economic authority and class-based power. The novel creates an acute awareness of Arjun's subordinated position as the 'excluded other' (Tüzün 1031) on multiple levels; not only is he from a developing country which serves as a source of cheap labour for foreign companies, he is also unemployed and completely lacks confidence, which puts him low in the class hierarchy, as well as in the masculinity hierarchy. He is described as "a skinny flagpole of a boy, hunching himself up to lose a few conspicuous inches before making his entrance", and "feeling himself as small as he would ever get, he clutched his folder of diplomas to his chest" (Kunzru 6), lacking any signifiers of traditionally masculine confidence and authority, particularly those of modern business masculinity. He is compared to the paragon of such masculinity, Sunny Srinivasan, whose confident and dominant presence as well as the abundance of signifiers of wealth and status make Arjun marvel at him and motivate him to move to America, aspiring to attain the same status. He is described as follows:

> On the far side, legs ostentatiously crossed, lounged a man who appeared to be less a human being than a communications medium, a channel for the transmission of consumer lifestyle messages. From his gelled hair to his lightly burnished penny loafers, every particular of his appearance carried a set of aspirational associations, some explicit (the

branding on his tennis shirt, his belt buckle, the side arms of the UV sun goggles perched on his head), some implicit (the heft of his Swiss watch, the *Swissness* of that watch) and some no more than hints, wafts of mediated yearning written in the scent of his scruffing lotion, the warp and weft of his khaki slacks. (Kunzru 8)

Sunny is not just a channel for the transmission of lifestyle messages, he is the poster boy for a specific lifestyle, namely, the one of a successful male professional, who can afford to adorn himself with such signifiers of wealth and project soft power onto those beneath him, such as Arjun. His entire appearance is carefully crafted to impress and entice other men to follow his example and attain the power and status that come with his brand of transnational business masculinity. The masculinity he projects can indeed be seen as transnational, as his success is tied to working for an international company, and his authority signifiers are not local, but rather Western and thus universal, recognisable globally, due to the predominance of Western cultural norms in global business. On the other hand, Sunny's flashy appearance also underlines the notion that "contemporary society is based on illusions, values created by messages and their responses, which are unstable, fleeting, and often change" (King 141), since Arjun ultimately finds himself cheated and destitute in America.

However, Sunny is far from the only medium for masculine images that Arjun encounters before moving to America. His family, and in particular his father, are a major source of masculine anxiety for him. He is constantly reproached by his father for daydreaming, lacking focus, and a seeming inability to scale the social ladder and attain a position of success, wealth, and authority, as befits a man. His father belongs to the

managerial class, and his financial success, embodied by the luxury apartment they live in, is a key component of his masculine identity. Mr Mehta's vision of success is not tied strictly to India, rather, his ambitions are global, as he is proud of his flat not just because it is a product of his business success, but also because it "stood for The World" (Kunzru 15), which indicates a desire for transnational success. This is further compounded by his envy of his pretentious brother-in-law, who is a successful businessman with a son employed at a Boston company, and who never stops emphasising his superiority over the Mehtas, while "his own fool of a boy never seemed to be able to keep his head out of film magazines" (17). The pressure from his father can be seen as an additional reason for Arjun's choosing a career in America, as he, at least implicitly, wishes to live up to the demands of his father's overbearing, authoritarian, business masculinity.

The masculinity of such business endeavours is further emphasised by the family's initial indifference to their daughter Priti's getting a good job at a prominent call centre; "they were only going bananas over him because he was a boy" (Kunzru 17). Ironically, their mother seems to be the main preserver of male domination both in business and in the household, as she insists on Priti marrying as soon as possible and becoming a housewife. Mr Mehta agrees initially, but his business acumen takes over once he understands how well Priti is going to be paid, and he "start[s] to incorporate the notion of a call centre into his image of himself as a modern man" (Kunzru 24). However, even though Mr Mehta agrees to break out of the mould of a traditional, patriarchal family,

business success is still seen as a predominantly masculine, male privilege, as Arjun is seen as someone who might potentially become a successful capitalist, while Priti is staying in India to become a call centre operator for an Australian company. Arjun is going to conquer a foreign market, while Priti is being conquered by a foreign market.

However, perhaps the biggest influence on Arjun's thinking is what Beynon calls 'mediated masculinity', which is "the way in which popular media representations (in film, television and pop music in particular) provide highly crafted, alluring and accessible role models for boys and young men" (64). Arjun is described as a great devotee of Bollywood, "one of the hordes who queued for tickets during *N2L2*'s first weekend of release, grossing it ten crore rupees and making it one of the biggest openers in Indian cinema history". Moreover, in the film's protagonist, he "found a role model even more potent than the great Amitabh Bachchan, whose gangly form had dominated his teenage years" (Kunzru 34). In a nutshell, the film with which Arjun identifies so strongly focuses on a male protagonist, Dilip, who falls in love with Aparna, a woman who is simultaneously a religious traditionalist and an internationally successful businesswoman. Dilip, on the other hand, is, similarly to Arjun, lost in his daydreams and has to leave that behind and become a successful businessman to earn Aparna's love. The film projects a very straightforward view of transnational business masculinity and equates economic status with romantic love, and interpersonal relationships with monetary relationships, which may make love seem unattainable for working-class men, particularly those from minority ethnicities and

with immigrant status, like Arjun. Arjun seemingly deeply identifies with the film, especially with its protagonist's masculine arc, and strives to emulate it in real life, naïvely unaware of the ideological purpose of the film and the disjunction between it and what really awaits him in America.

Arjun's characterisation calls for comparison with his more successful compatriot, Rajiv Rana, the actor who portrays the successfully masculine protagonist of *N2L2* with whom Arjun identifies so much. Arjun's experience is typical for a non-white man in America, even more so because of his immigrant and economic status. Lazur and Majors describe this experience thus:

> Measuring himself against the standard that dictates the male gender role for the dominant culture yet denies equal access to the opportunities that sustain that standard evokes in the man of color frustrations, unexpressed emotions, and a drive for survival. Whether African-American, Latino, American-Indian, or Asian-American, he feels oppressed and at a disadvantage because his skin color, physical characteristics, and family heritage are not of the dominant culture. (Lazur and Majors, 340)

This state is poignantly embodied by Arjun when he is first described after moving to America, as "[a] figure, a walking man, trudging along the margin of a wide California highway", while "[a]nyone on foot in suburban California is one of four things: poor, foreign, mentally ill or jogging" (Kunzru 38). His body language and lack of a mode of transportation clearly signal his destitute position and a complete lack of the masculine power and success he aimed for. Rajiv Rana's presentation is completely different. Rajiv's public persona is deliberately hypermasculine; his first appearance teems with deliberately hyperbolic masculine confidence, as he dons a leather jacket, tight white T-

shirt, aviator glasses, and drives a "Ferrari Testarossa [which] throbbed like an engorged metal penis, its bright red paintwork glinting unironically in the sunlight" (Kunzru 170). The car is an almost comedic phallic symbol which showcases the unity of masculine authority, sexual prowess, and economic success, which are in stark opposition to Arjun's abject position in society. It can be said that Rajiv successfully employs what Majors and Billson term 'cool pose', which is "a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control" (Majors and Billson 4). Majors and Billson discuss cool pose as an inherent part of specifically African-American masculinity, which entails a special emphasis on appearing "cool", but it can be argued that similar posing is part of masculinity in general, as it always relies on men adopting certain behaviours and styles that project confidence and authority. The concept of cool pose is perhaps even more applicable to non-white men such as Rajiv, who, despite being extremely successful, are still the racial other from a Western viewpoint, and need to work harder than white, Western men to attain and maintain a strong, masculine persona and societal position. Rajiv's cool pose seems to work, as he does not look or feel out of place in Scotland, where he is working on a film. He attracts the attention of the women around him and seemingly effortlessly engages in a sexual relationship with Gabriella, Guy Swift's girlfriend, who is immediately fascinated by him.

However, the novel subverts Rajiv's successful display of hegemonic masculinity.

His cool pose in public is directly linked to his portrayals of hypermasculine action heroes

in films:

> If you are famous for your calm under pressure (when being attacked by a gang of lathi-wielding thugs, for example, or hanging from your fingernails beneath a collapsing suspension bridge), it may be important for your public persona to mirror your on-screen one. The emotional vocabulary of the action hero is limited. No tantrums. No weeping. (Kunzru 203)

Rajiv's action hero roles and his personal life merge as he performs the same 'male

gender script' (Beynon 80) both in films and his real life, while not allowing a genuine

version of himself to come to the surface. By depicting Rajiv's display of hegemonic

masculinity as a mere role he fills, and not a genuine expression of his innate self, Kunzru

subverts not just Rajiv's display of masculinity, but hegemonic masculinity in general,

showing it to be just as make-believe as any other cinematic performance. The narrative

further subverts Rajiv's strong, masculine image by revealing that he is effectively owned

by notorious criminal Baby Aziz and his criminal organisation, who "were renting him out

to the highest bidder like any other asset, a car, or a woman" (Kunzru 208). Baby Aziz

wields real power, unlike Rajiv, and also unlike him, he does not have to create an

elaborate display of masculine authority; he is not even physically present in India, he

projects his power from afar, which further emphasises that he is higher up the ladder

than Rajiv.

Another male character that should be compared to Arjun is Guy Swift, a seemingly very successful owner of a marketing agency, who, on the surface, embodies transnational business masculinity, as he works with a multitude of international clients, owns a luxury flat, runs a successful business, commands respect, and is seemingly successful with women. As Brock states, "[t]he contrasts between Guy and Arjun are expressed most strikingly just a few pages into the novel, as Arjun, following a successful interview for a job in the United States, rides a crowded, hot bus" (387). That is when Guy is first introduced, travelling on an aeroplane, "rather more comfortably than Arjun, who was squashed against the damp shoulder of a man in a polyester shirt" (Kunzru 12). This bodily-spatial metaphor perfectly sums up their positions on the social ladder. Guy's wealth allows him to quickly and easily transcend borders and avoid mixing with the less successful, who are seen as unpleasant and dirty. On the other hand, the non-white, working-class Arjun enjoys no comfort and is confined in a tight, enclosed space with myriad others, while travelling in a much more inconvenient and slow way, which not only limits his physical mobility, but also reflects his poor social mobility. Successful masculinity entails great mobility, and despite his daydreams and naïve misconceptions about America, Arjun is left out of this special group of men.

However, much like with Rajiv, Guy's masculinity is also subverted by the narrative. He actually has financial problems, despite the veneer of business success, and he is afraid to share the fact with his girlfriend because "Gabriella could sense neediness and did not

tolerate it very well" (Kunzru 71). Their relationship is merely an appearance; while they

are together, he is able to project the sexual prowess necessary for a successful display of

hegemonic masculinity, but in reality, their relationship is rapidly deteriorating, as she

mostly feels disdain for him, and he masturbates to the thought of "a fantasy partner who

was like Gaby but kinder, less abrasive" (Kunzru 134). Gabriella ultimately cheats on him,

which signifies a breakdown in his supposed masculine authority and confidence and

emphasises the hollowness of their relationship. A perhaps bigger blow to his masculine

persona comes from Yves, who comes to assert authority over Guy. As a representative of

the investment company which financed Guy's business venture, he is also a

representative of transnational business masculinity, and, unlike Guy, seems to be

genuinely successful. He behaves with the authority expected of successful men, and

affirms his position by inviting Guy to sit in his own company, and to further emphasise

the point, makes him sit on a beanbag, in a show of force. This, naturally, makes Guy feel

uneasy, as his lack of respect and authority is revealed, and in an attempt to save face and

retain some control over his bodily position and body language, "he dragged the bulky

leatherette sack to a place where he could at least lean his back against the pinball

machine. In this position his eyeline was almost level with Yves's own" (Kunzru 123). This

way, he is literally below Yves, who has clearly positioned himself as the superior man.

Guy's display of successful business masculinity is subverted as a mere performance which

hides an insecure man at the mercy of a stronger masculine authority based on financial

power. This further alludes to the fact this kind of masculinity is contingent on economic upturns and the unstable global market. Eventually, even Yves's dominant persona is shown to be precarious and unstable, as it depends on the success of the company he works for, which is revealed to also be in trouble, and needs Guy to succeed to stay afloat.

The same economic downturn that endangers both Guy and Yves also endangers Arjun's already perilous position at his company. Still holding on to his naïve conception of the American Dream, he creates a novel computer virus after getting sacked in hopes that his ability to destroy the virus will convince his boss to let him keep his job. Unfortunately for him, his boss takes the credit for his ideas and proceeds to ignore him, which allows the virus to spiral out of control for some time, dealing a massive blow to the economy. This kind of behaviour is typical for Arjun's workplace. Even though the men at the company are not stereotypically masculine – in fact, they are stereotypical computer nerds – the office is a rigidly hierarchised space, and also rather strictly 'homosocial' (Sedgwick 1), particularly for white, non-immigrant men. Arjun is thus almost completely excluded from the social structure of the office – he is allowed to do his job and keep to himself (much like everybody else in the office), but he is largely ignored by everybody, especially his boss Darryl, and his opinions are casually disregarded, even when he is arguably the most competent man to solve the problem, as in the case of the *Leela* virus. Thus, the casual racism exhibited by the managerial layer of the company helps the virus

spread and wreak havoc on the economic system, which might point towards capitalism's

self-destructive tendencies and the possibility of its collapsing unto itself.

In addition, the virus itself can be said to mirror the nature of capitalism; it strives

to constantly spread, continually consuming everything in its vicinity to power its spread,

and constantly morphing to adapt to new circumstances, while never changing its

fundamental essence. The virus also evokes and stands for different anxieties produced

by capitalism in the twenty-first century, particularly "reactionary Western fears of mass

transnational migration, multiculturalism, and in the wake of 9/11, international

terrorism" (Brock 381). The fear of foreign terrorism, fuelled by paranoid xenophobia in

the wake of 9/11, is particularly prevalent in the discourse about the *Leela* virus, as it is

explained as "some kind of Muslim fundamentalist attack" (Kunzru 139). Thus, Arjun, an

exploited and naïve working-class man, unwittingly becomes a terrorist, even though his

supposed terrorism comes from a yearning to become perceived as a successful and

productive member of American society and to fit into it. This further emphasises the idea

that Western capitalist society will produce its own downfall, but it also suggests that,

despite the cosmopolitan discourse of openness, acceptance, and diversity, the West still

remains largely closed to those who come to it seeking a better life. This point is further

emphasised by Guy's pitch to the Pan-European Border Authority (PEBA), which describes

Europe as "[a] continent that wants people, but only the best. An exclusive continent. An

upscale continent" (Kunzru 257), and focuses on rebranding European border police and

strict border policy in general. In other words, the cosmopolitan mobility that Guy and Yves enjoy is a privilege of powerful, wealthy men, and it is something that they seek to preserve for themselves, instead of extending that privilege to other social strata.

Arjun's choice of naming the virus after the fictional Bollywood actress Leela Zahir and using a clip of her dancing is also quite poignant. As a devoted fan, he is complicit in her (sexual) objectification, and his virus is complicit in the proliferation of images of Leela which only capture the Bollywood version of her, as a "*femme fatale* who, by resorting to an allusive smile, causes pain and loss among her lovers" (Monaco 359), just like the virus causes pain and loss to its victims. This creates a certain connection between the virus and a fear of female sexuality, particularly non-white female sexuality. Even though Leela is seen as sexually desirable, her appeal seems to simultaneously make her a threat, as her image is equated to wholesale economic destruction. Arjun's use of her image also emphasises the notion that "Leela is subject to the play of global forces and desires over which she has little agency" (Childs and Green 87). More importantly, it highlights the distinction between the on-screen Leela, with her protean nature, which adapts to different roles, just like the virus adapts to different circumstances, and the real person behind the *femme fatale* roles. As Childs and Green state: "The virtual invisibility of the 'real' Leela, whose subjectivity is all but subsumed beneath the endlessly mutable sign of celebrity, is suggestive of both the instability and the multiplicity of identity in a contemporary culture dominated by the biopolitical technologies of the mass media" (87).

In this regard, she is similar to Rajiv Rana, since for both of them, acting out gender scripts on-screen seeps into their real lives, making performance almost indistinguishable from real life, and obfuscating their real desires and goals.

Unlike Rajiv, the real Leela resents her celebrity life and seeks to escape it, to the dissatisfaction of her mother, who has been pushing her towards a Bollywood career. She sabotages the shooting of the film in Scotland by claiming that she is ill and eventually disappears. Arjun himself also miraculously disappears from America, after being hounded as a terrorist for some time and living in desperation. The two are allegedly united, as neither has been caught, but "[t]here are sightings of Arjun Mehta and Leela Zahir around the world, sometimes alone, sometimes in company (…) They are sometimes seen kissing or holding hands" (Kunzru 397). The interpretation that they have formed a relationship in the end thematically agrees with the rest of the novel. It can be argued that Arjun is rewarded for breaking away from the masculine gender script. Even though he initially strives to live up to the standards of transnational business masculinity and the masculinity mediated in cinema, he eventually abandons that pursuit, turns away from it, and meets Leela, who has successfully broken away from the clutches of Bollywood and her mother, and both are thus able to live as their genuine selves. Influenced by Bollywood films, Arjun thinks that "the point of being a hero is to get the girl" (Kunzru 109-110), but, in the end, he gets the girl precisely by not being a hero, which is in stark contrast to typical expectations from successfully masculine men. Of course, a more pessimistic reading is

also possible; since their relationship is a rumour, it can be argued that both simply disappear and blend in, without ever meeting each other, and without ever achieving genuine, fulfilling lives, but such a reading would imply that the novel suggests the impossibility of breaking away from gender scripts and the misery of precarious, poorly-paid labour on Arjun's part, and the misery of living a cinematic simulacrum on Leela's part. Additionally, it can be said that even the optimistic reading has problematic elements in it. Arjun and Leela can be said to recreate a very typical, monogamous, sexual relationship, which indicates that there has not been a complete and total break with all the values of traditional gender norms. However, even if that is taken as true, it still stands that they are both rewarded for breaking the mould and have forged new lives outside the constraints imposed on them by social norms.

CONCLUSION

Beynon writes that crisis is "constitutive of masculinity itself" (76), in the sense that masculinity, much like femininity, is in a constant flux, ever-changing, and contingent on changes in the mode of production, namely capitalism and its ideological needs. *Transmission* encapsulates different responses to the gender politics of twenty-first century capitalism, particularly those gender politics that are tied to international business, while at the same time satirising the hegemonic masculinity of today, namely the transnational business masculinity of the modern capitalist class. The example of Arjun Mehta provides an insight into the workings of this ideology on a man from a Third World

country, who is seduced by the ideology, but is faced with the fact that a masculine life of luxury and professional authority is fiction for most, and particularly for men from underprivileged backgrounds, such as himself, who are limited by a lack of resources, mobility, and marginalised based on their race. On the other hand, the characters of Guy Swift, Yves Ballard, and Rajiv Rana, provide a viewpoint from the privileged class. They are all, on the surface, perfect examples of masculine confidence, success, and authority, and portray the masculine gender role perfectly. However, their hypermasculine personas are quickly subverted and shown to be mirages which hide insecurity, dependence on others, anxiety, and sexual dissatisfaction, which are in stark contrast to their outward presentation. Thus, the novel stresses the precarious and impermanent nature of hegemonic masculinity. *Transmission* shows that hegemonic masculinity depends on the taciturnity of the capitalist market, and is contingent on economic upturns, which means that one can easily lose his position of masculine authority and fail to perform the masculine gender script, thus emphasising the porousness and permanent crisis of this ideology.

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02

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Escape from Innsmouth and *The Shadow over Innsmouth* – The Role of The Reader and Player in Postmodern Multimedial Narratives

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In 2011 Fantasy Flight Games published an entirely cooperative tabletop game based on the works of H. P. Lovecraft. *Mansions of Madness*, the board game, got a reedition in 2016 and, since then, the four original scenarios of the game have been expanded to include eighteen more. This paper focuses on the *Escape from Innsmouth* scenario and its relationship with Lovecraft's novella *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1931). More precisely, this paper centres on the postmodern nature of *Mansions of Madness*, with a particular interest in the relationship between the role of the reader and that of the player. With this in view, this discussion starts by introducing some fundamental aspects of postmodernism relevant to this relationship, moving to the question of genre regarding both the game and Lovecraft's novella. As will be argued, an exposition of the intertextual essence of the game's scenario leads to the final underlining of the fundamentally postmodern phenomenon of the expansion of the passive reader's role to that of an active player. Due to the game being a mixture of a videogame and board game in a addition to being heavily narrative this hybrid genre is in this paper referred to as a multimedial work. Following a close reading of how the *Escape from Innsmouth* scenario in *Mansions of Madness* relates to Lovecraft's *The Shadow over Innsmouth* on an intertextual level, it is the aim of this paper to show these ever-present postmodern characteristics as a connective tissue between Lovecraft's fiction and contemporary multimedia narratives such as the interactive scenarios of *Mansions of Madness*.

The multifaceted nature of postmodernism has long made it a difficult phenomenon to define, resulting in a large body of works of a theoretical nature by

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numerous scholars such as Linda Hutcheon, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre-Félix Guattari, Fredric Jameson and others, whose insights are fundamental to disentangling postmodern phenomena. In order to introduce this theoretical apparatus, this paper has its starting point in Ihab Hassan's table of schematic differences between modernism and postmodernism (Hassan 34), an issue of great interest for Hassan who expands on it in the second chapter of his collection of essays, *The Postmodern Turn* (Hassan 25-46). Among his list of different characteristics of postmodernism, Hassan includes ones such as play, process/performance/happening, text/intertext and indeterminacy, which are respectively contraposed to the modernist characteristics of purpose, art object/finished work, genre/boundary and determinacy.

Starting with the concept of indeterminacy, Hassan's table leads us to the interrogative nature of postmodernism. As argued by Simon Malpas, "Postmodern fiction (…) raises questions about the very status of reality and the world" (24). This questioning nature of postmodernism is central to Linda Hutcheon too, who argues that "the postmodern is, if it is anything, a problematizing force in our culture today: it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the natural" (Hutcheon xi). This view is shared not only by critics such as Hutcheon who locate postmodernism as a reaction and phenomenon which followed modernism, but also by critics who see postmodernism as being unbound from time-frames, or rather, as a stylistic phenomenon, such as Jean-François Lyotard, who argues that in postmodernism "all that has been received (…) must be suspected" (Lyotard 79). This

paper aims to adopt Lyotard's approach to postmodernism inasmuch as "thought of as a style rather than a period" (Malpas 28) in emphasizing the postmodern aspects of Lovecraft's story *The Shadow over Innsmouth*.

The next of Hassan's characteristics of postmodernism is the nexus of text/intertext. The concept of intertextuality is closely related to poststructuralism and the works of critics such as Julia Kristeva, who introduced the term of intertextuality, and Roland Barthes. In fact, Barthes focused on the fundamentally intertextual nature of texts in many of his works, claiming that "any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognisable forms" (Barthes, "Theory of the text" 39). Already in his essay "The Death of The Author", Barthes claims that "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 146). Barthes' point of view results in a purely theoretical dealing with this "intertextuality in which any text is apprehended, since it is itself the intertext of another text, [that] cannot be identified with some *origin* of the text" (Barthes, "From Work to Text" 60). Nonetheless, from this notion of implicit intertextuality, postmodern critics such as Graham Allen have moved to the notion of hypertextuality, a term developed by Gérard Genette in his *Palimpsest* (Allen 107). In fact, Genette defined hypertextuality as "any relationship uniting a text B (hypertext) to an earlier text A (hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette 5), or rather "any text derived from a previous text" (Genette 7). Moreover, Genette stresses that hypertextuality "is obviously to some degree a universal feature of literarity: there is no literary work that does not evoke (to some extent and

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according to how it is read) some other literary work, and in that sense all works are hypertextual" (Genette 9). Within Genette's framework Allen too turns to hypertexts and hypotexts. The hypotext in the case of this paper is Lovecraft's story *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, or rather, the "text which can be definitely located as a major source of signification for a text" (Allen 107), more precisely, for the hypertext, which is, in this particular case, represented by *Escape from Innsmouth*. In her study of intertextuality, with a specific interest in historiographical metafiction Hutcheon sees intertextuality as postmodernism's "attempt to combat what has come to be seen as modernism's potential for hermetic, elitist, isolationism that separated art from the world, literature from history" (Hutcheon 140). In other words, if one combines all these perspectives on intertextuality it might be defined in Allen's term as follows: "intertextuality reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader's own presuppositions, [and] lacking in clear and defined boundaries" (Allen 209).

This leads us to Hassan's remaining characteristics of postmodernism that have previously been singled out along intertextuality and indeterminacy, mainly those of play and process/performance/happening, characteristics tightly connected to the roles of the reader and, in the case of games, the role of the player, as they reflect the changeable nature of the texts' possible interpretations, the fact of a text not being a finished and completed work by itself, and underline the importance of both readers and players in the production of meaning throughout the processes of reading and playing. As maintained by Barthes, "the reader is the space on which all the quotations

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that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost: a text's unity lies

not in its origin but in its destination" (Barthes 148). The importance of the reader has

gained great success as can be read from Bran Nicol's claim that "narrative is really a

two-way process of construction by which the writer assembles events into a particular

order, and so does the reader" (Nicol 26). The reader often takes the role of producing

the plural readings of a text which is in itself open to different interpretations and no

reader is the same, resulting in Hassan's individuation of play as one of

postmodernism's characteristics. Chance encounters between a text and readers of

different backgrounds, from age, nationality and sexuality to literary preferences and

imaginative capabilities, result in myriad readings of the text. In fact, as described by

David Harvey, "the cultural producer merely creates raw material (fragments and

elements), leaving it open to consumers to recombine those elements in any way they

wish" (Harvey 51). In this way, both authors and readers "participate in the production

of significations and meanings" (Harvey 51), backing Hassan's and Genette's focus on

process/performance/happening.

The plot of *The Shadow over Innsmouth* deals with an antiquarian's arrival to

the infamous port town of Innsmouth in New England, a town that cannot be found on

the map, but that people from surrounding towns have much to say about. The

protagonist, having heard theories of a big epidemic and supernatural occurrences

connected to the town, arrives to Innsmouth in a bus, checks his luggage in the only

hotel in town, and proceeds to investigate the town on foot (Lovecraft 880). After

talking to a grocery store boy, non-local just like him, and the local drunkard, Zadok

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Allen, the protagonist finds out that the only business in town is the Marsh Refining Company, all the inhabitants work with fish and many are part of the local cult, the Esoteric Order of Dagon (Lovecraft 882). Rumor has it that the Marsh family deals with alien creatures from under the sea, who give them unlimited fish and jewellery in return for mating with the local people. The descendants progressively change from human to some kind of alien fish-frogs through their lives, which they "end" by going to sea and gaining eternal life in their new alien form. The protagonist ends up trapped in Innsmouth and pursued by the locals to finally faint while hiding and spying the alien creatures which have come to haunt him from the sea. The story ends by the protagonist finding out that he himself is of partly alien lineage and destined to the same ending.

The plot of *Escape from Innsmouth*, the *Mansions of Madness* scenario, intertextually parallels Lovecraft's hypotext in much detail, with some differences in service of the game's mechanics. The scenario starts by telling the investigators that they have stepped off the bus into Innsmouth, where everywhere they go they feel watched and followed by the locals. The investigators find out they have come to Innsmouth "on behest of professor Harris, a mutual friend who asked you to gather information on the lineage of the Marsh family". After half a day, the investigators want to leave, but they find out there is no way to leave Innsmouth as busses have stopped running, much as in Lovecraft's story. The investigators rent a hotel and find themselves in a cramped room, which is how the scenario's prologue ends.

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In the game, someone tries breaking into their hotel room, which is exactly what happened to the protagonist of Lovecraft's story, giving way to his final escape from the town. What is new in the game is that the players get to interact with a radio, through which they hear the captain of a boat who is waiting for an Agent Craven, a non-player character who is to play the get-out-of-Innsmouth-free card. Although not existent in Lovecraft's story, Agent Craven is the one who gives you the possibility of getting out of Innsmouth via said boat. The investigators are supposed to collect all relevant clues, light a lantern on the dock and ring the fog bell when they are ready to be picked up. Along with Agent Craven, there is another non-player character, namely the drunkard, Zadok, who has a key to the tower with the fog bell. As the story progresses, the game gets harder and monsters and mobs of locals start pursuing the investigators who are supposed to solve puzzles and collect information on the Marsh family in order to win the game.

The epilogue of the game depends on the playthrough's outcome. If the players lose, the mob sabotage all of their ways of exit from Innsmouth and catch them, while the game informs the players that they "are dragged through the streets toward your gruesome fate". If the players win, they do so by embarking on a small fishing boat, with evidence on the Marsh family stacked away safely and the narrator informs them that "stepping onto dry land, you finally begin to hope you have left the nightmare of the accursed town behind once and for all".

In order to individuate these postmodern characteristics in Lovecraft's story and the intertextual implications relating to the *Escape from Innsmouth* scenario and

connect them to the theoretical apparatus introduced in the earlier paragraphs, a few words need to be dedicated to the question of genre regarding both the hypotext and the hypertext. As clarified by Eric Carl Link, Lovecraft's writing belongs to the category of tales of supernatural horror, or rather, weird tales, which are "a direct descendant of the gothic tradition." (xii) In fact, according to Mark Fisher, "Lovecraft practically invented the weird tale, developing a formula which can be differentiated from both fantasy and horror fiction" (49). While Link underlines that weird tales "serve as reminders that our knowledge of the world is incomplete" (xiii), Fisher locates the specificity of weird tales in "the way in which it opens up an egress between this world and others" (65). As Fisher explicates, Lovecraft's fiction often focuses on a sense of "wrongness" which results from this egress – "a weird entity or object is so strange that it makes us feel that it should not exist, or at least it should not exist there" (Fisher 15). On the other hand, scholars such as Kálmán Matolcsy claim that "the Lovecraftian text, most significantly, deals with the modes and results of acquiring knowledge and the problems encountered during the process," (Matolcsy, 16) placing *The Shadow over Innsmouth* in the general category of Lovecraft's "tales about a general inquiry" (Matolcsy 169). Whether a supernatural/weird or general inquiry tale, *The Shadow over Innsmouth* and Lovecraft's writings in general have been most famously known under the name of "cosmic horror." According to Thomas Hull, "Lovecraft was primarily interested in creating an appropriate mood to inspire in the reader a sense of cosmic horror: that hopes, dreams and philosophies of humankind are inconsequential to the larger universe" (10). In a way, this sense of insignificance of

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humankind is combined with Lovecraft's penchant for writing tales which focus on a pursuit of knowledge such as *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, forming what Lovecraft expresses in one of his most cited quotes as "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature* 21).

The notion of the weird tale leads us to what is fundamentally postmodern in Lovecraft's story and writing in general. In fact, Lovecraft's tales seem to be fundamentally written as to challenge the stability of realism, Western epistemology and grand narratives, since "it is the irruption into this world of something from outside which is the marker of the weird" (Fisher 20). In other words, Lovecraft's tales are dependent on a postmodern relation, "an exchange, a confrontation and (…) a conflict between this world and others" (Fisher 19) to function as weird tales. The origin of his horror stems from Lovecraft's questioning of our knowledge of the world surrounding us, or rather, the same fundamental interrogative nature that postmodernism adopts in general. It is indeed this challenge of the weird tale which translates into the instability of the world which makes Lovecraft's writing postmodern. Lovecraft wages "a war on totality" (Lyotard 82) in his tales such as *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, "by treating really existing phenomenon as if they had the same ontological status as his own inventions" (Fisher 24). This postmodern charge of Lovecraft's texts, according to Timothy H. Evans, expands further than the mere general setting of Lovecraft's fiction. Evans claims that a great part of Lovecraft's stories progress with a mixed plethora of invented and actual folklore, buildings, historical events, volumes of occult lore,

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scholarly sources etc. (Evans 123), underlining a presence of intertextuality in Lovecraft's fiction. According to Evans, "this postmodern fusion of the real and the virtual leaves most readers not knowing where real ends and virtual begins" (123), the term virtual referring to literary works presenting possible worlds that are not mimetic. This contributes to the sense of horror that lies in that which is unknown and the Lovecraftian consensus that "when faced with horror, we must accept that reality is at least partly unknowable, otherwise horror would not exist" (Peak 165). In fact, Lovecraft's writing plays with what Sigmund Freud defined as the uncanny, which "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (Freud 123). Freud states that "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124) moreover stressing that "an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred" (150). Hence, it seems that both indeterminacy and with it the interrogative nature of postmodernism, as well as intertextuality, make up inherent elements of Lovecraft's writing, in line with Lyotard's notion of postmodernism being a condition to be individuated in cultural production regardless of the period to which it pertains.

As for *Mansions of Madness,* the question of genre seems a bit more complicated to define as it is in itself a multimedial work, meaning that it is a work which combines narrative, board games and videogames, being a tabletop game for which an application is required and is overtly based on Lovecraft's fiction. In its *Learn to Play* physical booklet, the game is defined as "a cooperative game of investigation and horror inspired by the writings of H. P. Lovecraft" in which "the investigators'

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ultimate goal is to explore the scenario's map and piece together the evidence and clues required to solve the mystery". Yet, the game is no typical cooperative tabletop strategic game, simply relying on the players working together while playing a board game in order to strategize and win against the game's mechanics, as it requires the players to download an application that is to guide them through the scenarios. The *Escape from Innsmouth* scenario is one of the four scenarios that make up the original game. As a mixture between a board game and videogame, and as a game with clearly narrative intentions and overt intertextual references such as quotes from Lovecraft's novella, the setting and, to an extend, the basic storyline, as well as the appropriation of characters such as Zadok, the question of genre of *Mansion of Madness* can be approached from various perspectives. The study "Understanding and Evaluating Cooperative Games" establishes a number of different categories of cooperative games, mainly focusing on videogames. Nevertheless, three of these categories correspond to an extent with the game mechanics of *Mansions of Madness*. The first is the category of "complementary cooperative game design pattern," which "implies that players play different character roles to complement each other's' activities within the game" (El-Nasr et al. 3). This is true for *Mansions of Madness* inasmuch as players choose their own investigators according to their different statistics and abilities, and with that decide what approach to the game they want to adopt in a given playthrough. As an example, a player could decide to play as William Yorick, a gravedigger whose special ability is that he gains a Clue token whenever a monster is defeated, while another player might decide to play as Minh Thi Phan, a secretary whose ability is to

reroll a die while resolving a test once per round. Moreover, the investigators' abilities include strength, agility, observation, lore, influence and will, all of which can range on a scale from one to four and are different for each investigator, giving players certain advantages and disadvantages in the varied encounters they stumble upon throughout the game.

The second category is that of "shared goals cooperative design pattern," which refers to a game type that is "used to force players to work together (…) where a group of players are given a single quest with a shared goal" (El-Nasr et al. 3). This design corresponds entirely to the structure of *Mansions of Madness* as all investigators share the same goal throughout the whole scenario, with the exception of a player gaining an *Insane Condition*, a card they are forbidden to reveal to fellow investigators, which can make alterations to the game's outcome. In the case that more investigators gain an *Insane Condition* card, *Mansions of Madness* can correspond to the third category of "synergies between goals cooperative design pattern," which "forces players to cooperate together through synchronized goals" (El-Nasr et al. 3). As an example, a player could gain the Narcissism *Insane Condition* which states that "at the end of the game, you win if you have 6 or more Items. Otherwise, you lose the game", while another player might get the Arcane Aspirations *Insane Conditions* instructing that "at the start of your turn, if you have a Spell and you are in a space with exactly 1 other investigator, you immediately win the game and the game ends. If the game ends for any other reason, you lose the game". The players cannot win unless both these *Insane Conditions* are met, a factor that makes the players cooperate in new ways as one is

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prohibited from sharing their *Insane Condition* with the group. Maybe the safest choice in terms of genre would be the category of "self-involving interactive fictions," introduced by Jon Robson and Aaron Meskin as a category which involves "all video-game fictions" (173) but includes also a number of "non-videogame fictions" (173). This category encompasses both the element of interaction, which is present between the players as well as between the group and the game, the element of fiction, which is fundamental to the game's plot and theme, and, in the end, the fact of self-involvement, as players take up the parts of investigators and have to adept to their character's abilities and goals.

It is precisely the notion of interactivity that brings the game a step closer to the postmodern aspect of *Mansions of Madness*. Although mostly reserved to videogames, notions such as interactivity, immersion and participation are essential to the board game's relationship to Hassan's postmodern characteristics of play and process/performance/happening, especially in regards to role of the player in construing the story. According to Bryan Alexander, "one key aspect of game-based storytelling is the immersion of a player in the story's environment" (92). In *Mansions of Madness* this is made true by a mixture of non-interactive interventions on part of the game including a narrative introduction into the scenario, as well as another such interlude at the end of each storyline which depends on the outcome of that specific gameplay. Playing with multiple endings and multiple scenarios is another clear indication of this game's direct connection to postmodern aesthetics. Along with these longer narrative pieces of storytelling, mainly the prologue and the epilogue, the

application intervenes and guides the investigators through the scenario by different smaller narrative instances such as descriptions of locations, monsters, interactions with non-player characters, combat and effects on the investigators. Through these narrative aspects of the game, *Mansions of Madness* employs second-person storytelling, that is, stories which "narrate the conditions of your actions" (Alexander 99).

It is exactly this second-person storytelling that paves the way to the more conspicuously postmodern elements of such games as well as the nature of multimedial works such as videogames and, in this case, boardgames in which the player is lured into the game as a protagonist. Although highly variable, the *Mansions of Madness* scenarios have an ideal reader, or rather ideal player in mind, as each story has a given itinerary meant to be followed. The players are introduced to their mission at the beginning of the scenario and, as is stated in the *Rules* booklet, "if the investigators take too long to complete the investigation, the scenario's objective might change or become more difficult to accomplish". Here lies the basic rule of interactivity and immersion specific to videogames, which is, according Berry Atkins, that the "text we read watches us over time, it presents the illusion of knowing us as we come to know it, of reading us as we read it" (146). In other words, we "engage in a joint act of cooperative narration that blurs the boundary between text and author" (Atkins 147), resulting exactly in realisations of Hassan's ideas of process/performance/happening and play. In line with postmodern indeterminacy and open-endedness, Atkins claims that "no other player or reader reads or writes the

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same text. It is unique. It is an original. Every one of us is an author, every one of us is

artist" (Atkins 153).

Throughout Lovecraft's story a feeling of uncanniness and claustrophobia

prevails, as the protagonist seems to be constantly watched by the locals, and,

according to Onni Mustonen, "the physical description of the city (…) emphasizes the

obscuring nature of the architecture" (137). Moreover, Mustonen claims that "by

limiting the narrator's and reader's point of view, both are left to wonder what they

cannot see, and if that which they cannot see poses a threat to the character" (138).

This is paralleled in the game by the gradual revealing of new game tiles, which expand

the scenario's map and possibilities of interaction, discovering with them new clues,

monsters and routes of action. It is exactly through this "coincidence of view"

(Mustonen 143) that the players take part and expand the relationship between the

protagonist and the reader in Lovecraft's novella. Moreover, as explained by

Alexander, "a gap between our desire and that of the character opens and closes,

forming a sort of dialogue across psychological states" (100), a phenomenon maybe

even more conspicuous in cooperative boardgames where real-life playthroughs result

in passionate and lively reactions from the players in real-time gaming when given

investigators are, for an example, in peril or die. Although the reader of the story

cannot change how the story unfolds, their individual reading coincides with the

protagonist's point of view and the specific reading which springs from the contact of

the text with individuals of different backgrounds as readers. In a way, as explained by

Mustonen, "both the reader and the player use the mechanics at their disposal to

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explore the diegetic worlds via action" (145). Whether the players decide to open the door to their room is of their own volition, just like the decisions regarding conversations with characters such as Zadok. The prologue and the epilogue(s) are the same for each playthrough. Some may choose to kill all monsters that appear throughout the game, some to evade them, resulting in different storylines and in a plurality of possible meanings and versions of *Escape from Innsmouth*.

As proffered by Mustonen "we take, interpret and send signals as a part of the system, be it literature or games, and by playing we can also explore our own role in the meaning-creating system" (146). In the case of *Mansions of Madness*, it is as if the player takes a step into and becomes part of a larger conglomerate work consisting of the player-investigator and reader-protagonist continuities, or rather the active role of the reader being expanded to the active role of the player construing the particular storyline within the game. In a way, narrative games such as these show how "games, like novels, belong to a system of intertextuality and remediation that characterizes all media environments" (Hayot 181), a case which is maybe even more evident in overt hypotext-hypertext relationships, as is the case with Lovecraft's novellas and the different *Mansions of Madness* scenarios of which *Escape from Innsmouth* is only one. Such narratives invite us to shape them through our actions, and to let through "the very plurality of meaning: an irreducible (and not just acceptable) plurality" (Barthes, "From Work to Text" 59). Moreover, intertextuality "continually refers to the impossibility of singularity, unity, and thus of unquestionable authority" (Allen 209), and the inherent postmodern nature of Lovecraft's *The Shadow over Innsmouth* with

its fragmented and ruptured egresses between worlds and ontological planes is reflected in games such as *Mansions of Madness*. Viewing this hypertextual relationship with all the aforementioned postmodernist characteristics in mind renders even more immersive and interactive the plural interpretations and readings of Lovecraft's stories, resulting in an ever-more privileged position and role of the reader/player in their contact with narratives, the development of creative imagination and alternative pathways, and constant questioning of the world that surrounds them.

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03

Taha Al-Sarhan

Subjectivity and Cosmic Ambiguity in H.P. Lovecraft's "The Nameless City"

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INTRODUCTION

"That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange aeons, even death may die."

-*The Necronimicon*, H.P. Lovecraft

In 1971, Monty Python produced the sketch "The Funniest Joke in the World" as part of the television show *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The sketch is centered around a joke of such tremendous hilarity that everybody who reads or hears it immediately succumbs to laughter-induced death. Ernest Scribbler, a British joke manufacturer portrayed by Michael Palin, writes a joke on a sheet of paper and then dies from uncontrollable laughter. Upon reading it, Eric Idle's mother succumbs to immediate laughter, followed by the first officers present at the incident. Ultimately, the humor is harnessed, transformed into a weapon, and utilized against Germany during World War II. To an extent, that joke becomes something that is 'ineffable' which can serve as a potent instrument in art, as the absence of a precise explanation can result in a more profound and individualized connection with the audience. Because of this, the ineffable can transcend straightforward explication and can only be apprehended by delineating its influence or the absence it creates in comprehension. This concept is exemplified in works of H.P. Lovecraft's, specifically "The Nameless City." The short story, written in January 1921 and initially published in the November 1921 edition of *The Wolverine*, captures the essence of the ineffable, much like Monty Python's sketch, by leaving much to the imagination and evoking a sense of the unknown.

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The plot of the story is set in the arid regions of the Middle East. Enthusiasts of Lovecraft's works have proposed Yemen as a possible setting, but the atmosphere and setup of the narrative seem to align more closely with a reference to Egypt's ancient context. Lovecraft states "[t]his great-grandmother of the eldest pyramid; and a viewless aura repelled me and bade me retreat from antique and sinister secrets that no man should see, and no man else had ever dared to see" (Lovecraft, "The Nameless City", 92) The story's nameless protagonist journeys through the desert in pursuit of a location that is incredibly old, to the extent that its name has been lost to history and is not even mentioned in mythology. Upon noticing a resounding clang emanating from the depths of the earth, the narrator proceeds to examine enigmatic engravings and remnants until the arrival of darkness. On the following day, the narrator comes upon a cliff that is filled with buildings that have low ceilings and are unsuitable for human habitation. As the narrator responds to his anxious camel, he stumbles onto a comparatively larger temple adorned with altars, painted murals, and a little staircase leading downwards. Upon his descent, his torch extinguishes, and he proceeds by crawling on all fours until he reaches a corridor adorned with diminutive wooden coffins housing peculiar reptiles, which are arranged along the walls.

The narrator observes a substantial influx of illumination emanating from an unidentified origin. Upon crawling to it in a bent state, this person observes a huge brass door leading to a downward passage into a hazy gateway. Subsequently, he perceives audible wailing emanating from the coffin passage, accompanied by a forceful gust of wind that exerts a downward pressure on him. Despite the unfavorable

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circumstances, he manages to resist and observes the presence of reptiles that possess

a body like a combination of a crocodile and a seal: "To convey any idea of these

monstrosities is impossible." (Lovecraft, "The Nameless City," 95) These beings he sees

have a peculiar head that does not resemble any of the species he knows of as this

species is characterized by a prominent forehead, horns, the absence of a nose, and a

jaw like that of an alligator. These creatures are seen crawling behind the illuminated

gateway. The wind subsides as the last gusts gradually diminish, until finally the door

abruptly shuts behind the narrator, plunging him into darkness where he will forever

stay.

Lovecraft writes in the introduction to his seminal work "Supernatural Horror

in Literature" that "[t]he oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the

oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." (Lovecraft, "Supernatural in

Horror," 5) Lovecraft's recognition of the unknown as the most powerful origin of fear

is especially captivating. It is consistent with ideas concerning the dread of uncertainty

and the unknown, which propose that people experience profound unease in

situations where the absence of predictability jeopardizes their feeling of control and

security. Lovecraft's focus on the unknown as a cause of fear has significant

ramifications for the examination of aesthetics in horror literature. It implies that the

success of horror relies on its capacity to manipulate the boundaries of human

understanding and perception, to generate a feeling of intense fear that is both old

and inherent to human nature. Building on this, Graham Harman offers a philosophical

framework to explore how Lovecraft's literature expresses this tension between

human perception and the inaccessibility of reality. Harman explains that "[n]o reality can be immediately translated into representations of any sort. Reality itself is weird because reality itself is incommensurable with any attempt to represent or measure it [….] When it comes to grasping reality, illusion and innuendo are the best we can do" (Harman 46). This insight reinforces the idea that Lovecraft's horror does not just depict the unknown—it emphasizes the *inability* to fully represent it. By presenting the limits of language and perception, Lovecraft forces readers to confront the fact that much of reality remains elusive, further heightening the horror. This concept has been thoroughly examined and elaborated on by several researchers and critics like Noel Carroll who writes in *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, despite our awareness that these monsters do not exist

> Our responses are supposed to converge (but not exactly duplicate) those of the characters; like the characters we assess the monster as a horrifying sort of being (though unlike the characters, we do not believe in its existence). This mirroring-effect, moreover, is a key feature of the horror genre. (16)

Horror becomes both captivating and repellent in Lovecraft's works. The experience of dread is deeply personal, influenced by an individual's psychological state, history, and existential outlook. The fears that one individual harbors, whether it is darkness, the expanse of space, or the depths of the ocean, might serve as a subject of intrigue for someone else. Carroll further elaborates "[t]hreat is compounded with revulsion, nausea, and disgust. And this corresponds as well with the tendency in horror novels and stories to describe monsters in terms of and to associate them with filth, decay, deterioration, slime and so on." (Carroll, 22) This variation in responses to the unknown highlights the complexity of human emotions and the subjective nature of fear.

Lovecraft masterfully leverages this, as seen in "The Nameless City," where the protagonist's shifting psychological states reflect the interplay between subjective reality and objective truth. Through such an analysis, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of Lovecraft's narrative techniques and their impact on readers' interpretations of cosmic horror.

THE ANCIENT ABYSS

Sean Elliot Martin writes in "Lovecraft, Absurdity, and the Modernist Grotesque" on Absurdity in Lovecraftian literature. He defines that that lies at the very center of Lovecraft's universe. "Absurdity is consistently defined in terms of that which is counter to reason, a definition that takes on new significance when applied to modernist grotesque literature." (Martin, 83) The exploration of subjective reality and psychological states in "The Nameless City" aligns with Martin's recognition of absurdity in Lovecraft's literature. The absurdity in Lovecraft's plots, especially in stories such as "The Nameless City," frequently revolves around the protagonist's mental disintegration when they confront the unfathomable or the grotesquely nonsensical. This strategy not only confronts the protagonist's perception of what is real, but also immerses the reader in an intensely personal encounter with dread. The personal encounter happens when the narrator sees the hybrid nature of the beings who lived in the ancient city, "[w]ith body lines suggesting sometimes the crocodile, sometimes the seal, but more often nothing of which either the naturalist or the paleontologist ever heard." (Lovecraft, "The Nameless City," 95) Lovecraft's description in this instance evokes an existential dread that arises from the incapacity

to incorporate the experience into any established scientific or rational structure. The

creatures epitomize a manifestation of hideous absurdity, underscoring the notion that

reality may encompass elements that surpass human understanding. The hybrid

nature of these beings connects with Carroll's idea of horror monsters: "Within the

context of the horror narrative, the monsters are identified as impure and unclean.

They are putrid or moldering things, or they hail from oozing places, or they are made

of dead or rotting flesh" (Carroll, 23) Harman also adds to this notion posited by Carroll:

> What we are left with at the end of this process is not the adumbrations, which are
> merely accidental qualities of sensual objects. Instead, what we end up with are the
> truly pivotal qualities of the thing. But these qualities are not themselves sensual, since
> no specific appearance of the flag at any moment can ever fully live up to them.
> (Harman, 30)

Harman's, Carroll's, and Lovecraft's descriptions of the monsters all aim to question

the limits of human comprehension and perception. Lovecraft's creatures possess not

just physical repulsiveness but also cognitive dissonance, as they defy established

biological and evolutionary paradigms. Carroll's portrayal of monsters as

manifestations of decay and depravity highlights their opposition to human norms and

sensibilities, intensifying the narrative's exploration of the mysterious and

incomprehensible through the usage of partial descriptions.

Furthermore, this encounter has an enormous effect on the narrator's

psychological state, which corresponds to the investigation of subjective experiences

and psychological reactions to the unknown. The narrator's terror and destabilized

view of reality are attributed to his inability to comprehend or analyze what he

observes, a recurring topic in Lovecraft's literature. The destabilization of human

centrality within the plot is connected to the inherent flaw in the human subjective experience because it removes the understanding of the norm and the objective 'truth' per human perspective and instead presents another truth that is incomprehensible to humanity. Such destabilization is reflected in the narrator's reaction to the constant changes in the gusts of wind: "My fear again waned low, since a natural phenomenon tends to dispel broodings over the unknown." (Lovecraft, "The Nameless City," 98), but then again, his conclusions and perceptions are blown away by the sudden intense wind:

> I think I screamed frantically near the last—I was almost mad—but if I did so my cries were lost in the hell-born babel of the howling wind-wraiths. I tried to crawl against the murderous invisible torrent, but I could not even hold my own as I was pushed slowly and inexorably toward the unknown world. (Lovecraft, "The Nameless City," 98)

The "howling wind-wraiths" and "hell-born babel" attribute malicious and supernatural characteristics to the natural forces. The portrayal of the environment as an adversary characterized by terror and deterioration aligns effectively with Carroll's concept of horror elements as "impure and unclean," highlighting the horror genre's utilization of location and ambience to elicit fear. Lovecraft uses first-person narration to enhance the sense of immediacy and intensity of the event. This strategy enables readers to directly experience the narrator's fear and confusion, so intensifying the emotional effect of the story. Martin highlights this disruption of human subjectivity "In effect, all human beliefs are based upon nothing more than shared delusions. Therefore, blind adherence to these constructs (religious, academic, scientific) considering the principle of subjectivity that undermines them is counter to logic. It is absurd." (Martin, 84) The detailed portrayal of battling against an imperceptible entity

brilliantly exploits the apprehension of the unmanageable and the invisible, crucial components in evoking tension and dread in horror literature.

The linguistic play in the title of the story "Nameless City" on the ineffability of the name itself that cannot be expressed by the English language is a masterful technique because it creates a linguistic black hole that is unexplainable, but seen through how its surrounding environment reacts to it, and in this case, reactions of the reader and the narrator. Such a technique can be understood as a method of description but rather of 'circumscription.' The word, according to the Cambridge dictionary means "the act of limiting something." Lovecraft used circumscription not only to delineate the boundaries of his characters' knowledge but also to provoke the reader's comprehension mirrors a key feature of what Harman describes as Lovecraft's 'Weird Realism.' Harman suggests that "This is the stylistic world of H.P. Lovecraft, a world in which (1) real objects are locked in impossible tension with the crippled descriptive powers of language, and (2) visible objects display unbearable seismic torsion with their own qualities." (Harman, 27) Harman highlights this 'impossible tension' that arises when real objects, such as Lovecraft's mysterious city, resist being fully captured by language, further heightening the narrative's sense of cosmic ambiguity.

The technique entails delineating something through negation or by elucidating its impact on the environment and characters, rather than employing direct description. This enables Lovecraft to construct a strong feeling of discomfort and inquisitiveness. The reader is compelled to actively immerse themselves in the story, striving to

complete the gaps intentionally left by the narrative. Donald R. Burleson comments on this technique, stating that "[i]t is as if one alluded to "that to which one may not, even here, allude or used 'No-Name' as a name." (51) By focusing on the inexplicable, Lovecraft invites both the narrator and the reader to grapple with the unnamable forces at work in the narrative, creating an interactive and unsettling experience. The reader is further immersed in the narrative by engaging in the indescribable aspects, intensifying the intimate and profound feelings of fear and curiosity. It establishes an interactive relationship between the reader and the story, where the reader is not merely a passive recipient but an engaged participant in the quest to comprehend the unfamiliar.

James Goho, one of the most prominent Lovecraftian scholars, analyzes Lovecraft's usage of linguistic devices to build up the dread and the ambiguity of his 'unnamable' or 'unsayable.' Goho characterizes Lovecraft's 'unsayable' into four categories,

1. The use of stated silences to evoke the proximity of the unknown.

2. Apophasis, that is, defining things in terms of what they are not, rather than what they are. This is a traditional method of reaching beyond language into ineffability. It signals the inability of language to convey an experience.

3. The use of fragmented language, excessive language, or narrative discontinuity to allude to what cannot be directly represented.

4. The creation of neologisms to stand for that which is outside our current language capacity. (Goho, 117)

These four narrative and linguistic techniques are present within "The Nameless City." The first one, stated silence, the narrator often pauses to reflect on what cannot be fully described or understood about the ruins and their carvings: "Rich,

vivid, and daringly fantastic designs and pictures formed a continuous scheme of mural painting whose lines and colors were beyond description" (Lovecraft, 95), and "The antiquity of the spot was unwholesome, and I longed to encounter some sign or device to prove that the city was indeed fashioned by mankind" (Lovecraft, 92). The second, Apophasis, can be observed by the narrator noting that the race which had lived in city is unlike any known creatures, emphasizing their non-conformity to familiar biological or evolutionary categories: "Mental associations are curious, and I shrank from the idea that except for the poor primitive man torn to pieces in the last painting, mine was the only human form amidst the many relics and symbols of primordial life" (Lovecraft, 97). The third, Narrative Discontinuity, is characterized by sudden changes in mood and environment These encompass abrupt shifts from providing historical background to experiencing intense emotional fear, "[t]he world I knew and faced by another world of eerie light and mist, could match the lethal dread I felt at the abysmal antiquity of the scene and its soul" (97). Lastly, Neologisms, which are newly coined terms by the author. The usage of the 'nameless city' is one because it itself acts as a neologism in the context of its usage, indicating a depth and variety of the unknown that is beyond normal articulation, which in turn creates a linguistic paradox masterfully created by Lovecraft to describe the city.

The paradox of this linguistic device highlights the inherent destabilization of human subjectivity. However, we must first examine one of the most famous lines in the entire Cthulhu mythos and that is the Mad Poet couplet. In "The Nameless City,"

the narrator twice quotes the fictional Arabic poet Abdul AlHazred in the opening of the short story "That is not dead which can eternal lie / And with strange aeons even death may die" (Lovecraft 92, 98). Lovecraft's suggestion that "even death may die" offers a conundrum that questions the absolute nature of death and the boundaries of human comprehension. From a conventional human perspective, death is considered the ultimate cessation. However, in Lovecraft's cosmic horror, even this ultimate cessation can eventually end. This notion is a deep contemplation on the essence of being and non-being, straining the limits of philosophical terror. Burleson remarks on the destabilization of this polarity:

> Clearly, then, there can be no settled configuration of privilege in any life/death bipolarity in the text. Lovecraft's Arab poet has said that "That is not dead which can eternal lie," and in lie we may read a punning hint of intrinsic self-subversion. The implied refusal of "death" to be "itself" will characterize the textual city as well. (Burleson, 53)

The remark emphasizes Lovecraft's primary motif of cosmic apathy. The universe adheres to laws and experiences events that are unconcerned with human conflicts and notions. This phrase encapsulates the unsettling realization that human rules and even our most fundamental ideas, such as death, may lack importance or permanence when considered in the context of the vastness of the universe. The vastness is also exemplified in the 'city' aspect of 'The Nameless City' from a noun that signifies something solid, established and concrete, it becomes something that is vast, uncertain and interchangeable: "Remote in the desert of Araby lies the nameless city, crumbling and inarticulate, its low walls nearly hidden by the sands of uncounted ages" (Lovecraft, 92). Burleson further contends that this is done purposely to highlight that human perception, even at the linguistic level, is destabilized and shaken:

> Curiously, city, usually connoting solidity, edifice, establishment, here heralds the opposites of these notions: the city is change, uncertainty, instability...But here the city, as citedness, occasions the breaking out of confining or defining boundaries, suggests the transcending of contexts, and partakes of the dynamics of change: citation, transmuted reappearance in ever-new contexts, protraction of discourse. (Burleson, 54)

Burleson argues that Lovecraft challenges this notion by portraying the city not as a fixed structure, but as a symbol of constant change and uncertainty. This perspective is consistent with Lovecraft's overarching thematic emphasis on the cosmic and the incomprehensible, wherein human creations (such as cities) are rendered insignificant and transitory in comparison to the ancient and apathetic world. The act of surpassing restrictive limits is a fundamental element of the terror found in Lovecraft's literary works, where anxiety frequently arises from what exists outside of familiar and secure borders. This encompasses not just the geographical and tangible limitations, but also the constraints of human understanding and the norms of the story structure itself. The psychological effect of coming into a city that challenges conventional ideas of stability and permanence can also be interpreted as a test of cognitive frameworks. Humans utilize schemas or cognitive frameworks to comprehend and manage the environment; a city that represents instability violates these schemas, resulting in cognitive dissonance. Lovecraft's storytelling compels both characters and readers to encounter environments that are not just physically unfamiliar but also philosophically, and profoundly disturbing. The city serving as a representation of transformation and unpredictability can also serve as a manifestation of internal psychological conditions which can be observed by the narrator's own increasing madness at the conditions he is put through,

> Only the grim brooding desert gods know what really took place—what indescribable struggles and scrambles in the dark I endured or what Abaddon guided me back to life, where I must always remember and shiver in the night-wind till oblivion—or worse—claims me. Monstrous, unnatural, colossal, was the thing—too far beyond all the ideas of man to be believed except in the silent damnable small hours when one cannot sleep. (Lovecraft, "The Nameless City" 98)

The reference to being led back by "what Abaddon" (a biblical word linked to destruction and the depths of hell) intensifies the feeling of fear and uncertain danger. Fear encompasses not only tangible dangers, but also significant obstacles that challenge the fundamental principles and comprehension of the narrator's worldview.

THE *OBJECTIVE* FEAR

In connection with the narrative and linguistic techniques that Lovecraft employs in his works, he also emphasizes in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" the ability of everyday phrases to evoke intense dread when said "[b]y words whose innocence we scarcely doubt till the cracked tension of the speaker's hollow voice bids us fear their nameless implications" (Lovecraft, "Supernatural in Horror", 37) This refers to the psychological phenomenon "The Uncanny," which involves encountering something that is both familiar and sufficiently different to cause unease. Sigmund Freud writes "[i]t undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense" (Freud, 219). The city is called "Nameless," a common word that has been redefined to express something inherently mysterious and unsettling. The seeming contradiction of assigning a name to something that is considered impossible to name encapsulates the fundamental nature of the

uncanny, in which the familiar is transformed into something very disturbing. Freud

further adds "[f]or this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something

familiar and old established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process

of repression." (241) The psychological tension stems from the contrast between

the anticipated harmlessness of the words and the terror provoked by the speaker's

manner of speaking, implying concealed, more sinister realities. This induces

psychological unease since it exploits the innate human inclination to pursue

consistency and security in communication and social engagement.

Moreover, the escalating insanity that the unnamed narrator undergoes

because of the city is intricately linked to the uncanny and unsettling. According to

Freud: "The uncanny effect of epilepsy and of madness has the same origin" (Freud,

243). This correlation can be observed in several occurrences throughout the story.

As an illustration, the narrator expresses his terror by stating: "Suddenly there came

another burst of that acute fear which had intermittently seized me ever since I first

saw the terrible valley and the nameless city under a cold moon," (Lovecraft, 98).

This intense terror is a result of the uncanny and unexpected characteristics of the

city, which is causing his increasing state of craziness. In addition, the narrator's

mind becomes exceedingly alert and imaginative due to the city's atmosphere "The

malignancy of the blast awakened incredible fancies" (98). This implies that the

urban surroundings actively manipulate his perspective, intensifying the feeling of

the uncanny. The narrator's impending plunge into insanity is apparent when he

recalls: "I think I screamed frantically near the last—I was almost mad" (98). This

moment highlights the severe psychological influence that the city exerts on him,
driving him to the verge of madness. The narrator's incessant repetition of, "I fell to
babbling over and over that unexplainable couplet of the mad Arab Alhazred, who
dreamed of the nameless city" (98), underscores the disruptive impact of the city's
influence on his logical thinking, compelling him to fixate on paradoxical and
unfathomable scraps of knowledge. The uncanny elements in "The Nameless City"
are not limited to the frightening surroundings, but also extend to the narrative's
tone and the ramifications of the protagonist's discoveries. The protagonist's
exploration of the city parallels a journey into the unconscious, revealing concerns
that are both intimately personal and widely relatable, reflecting Freud's concept of
the eerie as intrinsically linked to suppressed emotions and thoughts.

One more example of the uncanny can be observed in the multiplicity of
images with which the narrator tries to convey the shape of the race that lived in
the city: "To nothing can such things be well compared—in one flash I thought of
comparisons as varied as the cat, the bulldog, the mythic Satyr, and the human
being (Lovecraft, 95). It is purposely done to be liminal and on the edge of
description as it snaps the reader's mind from image to image that would disorient
them, as they are not fully meant to visualize it but just try to grasp it. Freud
highlights this constant shift in images:

> "This is that an uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction
> between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto
> regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full
> functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes, and so on" (Freud, 244).

The inability to precisely categorize the creatures or reconcile their attributes with known beings generates a sense of apprehension. This is like Freud's concept in which the boundary between reality and imagination becomes unclear, intensifying the eerie impact. This disorientation is a clear expression of the uncanny - the experience of coming upon something that is both familiar and unfamiliar, known, and unknown. Building upon Freud's theories, the inability to completely visualize the creatures, but only to grasp at them, demonstrates a phenomenon in which symbols or incomplete images acquire more importance than the actual entity. Within the context of Lovecraft's narrative, brief analogies acquire a more emotional and cognitive resonance than a direct depiction could accomplish. This exploits the inherent human dread of the unfamiliar, where that which is invisible or not completely comprehensible frequently becomes more horrifying.

CONCLUSION

"Look away! . . . Go back! . . . Do not see! . . . Do not see! . . . The vengeance of the infinite abysses . . . That cursed, that damnable pit . . . Merciful gods of earth, *I am falling into the sky!*"

- "The Nameless City," H.P. Lovecraft

H.P. Lovecraft's "The Nameless City" is a significant piece of literature that effectively displays the deep psychological effects of the horror genre. Lovecraft achieves this by skillfully employing narrative and linguistic tactics that create a feeling of weirdness and mystery, as explained by Sigmund Freud. This essay has examined many aspects of Lovecraft's storytelling techniques, with a particular emphasis on how he skillfully manipulates language and narrative structures to explore topics related to the

enigmatic, the incomprehensible, and the indescribable. By conducting a thorough analysis, numerous significant discoveries arise, offering a more profound comprehension of Lovecraft's methodology and its wider ramifications for the investigation of horror literature. The analysis also emphasizes the correlation between Lovecraft's approaches and Freud's idea of the uncanny, namely how ordinary components can evoke intense unease and fear when they are rendered foreign or placed in new settings. The dynamic interaction between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the apparent and the hidden is fundamental to the lasting impact of Lovecraft's literature.

In essence, Lovecraft's "The Nameless City" resists any clear, definitive interpretation. The exploration of subjectivity and cosmic horror within the text leads us not to answers, but to a confrontation with the unknowable. Rather than resolving the fears or uncertainties of the narrative, Lovecraft invites us to dwell in the very space where conclusions remain elusive mirroring the protagonist's final fate. Thus, the story encapsulates the human struggle against the incomprehensible, leaving the reader with more questions than answers, which is perhaps its most potent conclusion.

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04

Tijana Šuković

*Expanding the Lexicon via
Analogy and Schema:
A Constructionist Approach to
Analyzing Proper Names with
Suffixes as Novel Lexemes in
English*

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INTRODUCTION

Most research on word-formation in English centers on the discussion of how new words enter the lexicon. In early generative approaches to word-formation as in Lee (1960), the focus of language study was on syntactic transformational rules, whereas the lexicon was viewed as a special component placed outside the grammar. This resulted in creating a grammar-lexicon division also known as the rule-list fallacy (Langacker 1987). In contrast, Aronoff put a greater focus on the study of the lexicon when he provided a detailed account of rules for expanding the lexicon of English in his monograph *Word Formation in Generative Grammar* (1976). Similarly to transformational rules in syntax, there are rules which operate in the production of new words i.e. Word Formation Rules (WFRs). WFRs are always applied to a word which is a member of a major lexical category such as a noun, a verb or an adjective; for example, the rule for creating negative adjectives with the prefix *un-* is represented as $[X]_{Adj} \rightarrow [un\#[X]_{Adj}]_{Adj}$ (Aronoff 1976, 63). Rules are input-oriented in the sense of applying a regular rule to one established word (i.e. a lexical base takes a particular affix), and they never include the creation of 'less regular' cases. Conversely, these less regular cases with 'atypical' bases (such as proper names) can be explained as instances of output-oriented abstractions called schemas, because schemas do not only specify bases and affixes, but also serve as blueprints for creating new lexemes. This holistic approach to word-formation was proposed by Booij in *Construction Morphology* (2010)[1].

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Proper names as potential formal bases are rarely considered in word-formation. Indeed, Lehmann and Moravcsik state that *mountainless* is a possible derivative of the common noun *mountain* whereas **alpless* is perceived as an impossible word (2000, 747). A few exceptions to this point of view are found in semantically-oriented accounts as in Marchand (1969) or more recent corpus-based studies such as Bauer et al. (2013). However, these approaches lack a formal representation of proper names in word-formation, which would illustrate the exact mechanisms for expanding the lexicon of English.

This paper presents a constructionist approach to analyzing proper names with suffixes as novel lexemes in English[2]. The organization of the paper is as follows. In section 2, the theoretical explanations of schema, analogy and second-order schema are provided. In section 3, the research methodology is explained and the analysis of novel lexemes with proper names and three different suffixes *-ness*, *-hood* and *-oid* is carried out. The last section of the paper discusses the findings of this research and summarizes the key points in the concluding paragraph.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: CONSTRUCTION MORPHOLOGY

In Construction Morphology, the lexicon is regarded as a hierarchical structure which excludes either/or word-formation (i.e. rules or analogy) owing to its different levels of abstraction – it assumes both "analogical word-formation, based on an individual model word, and word-formation based on abstract schemas" (Booij 2010, 89). It contains lexical

items of a rich internal structure which can be related to one another on account of regularity or variation (Masini 2019). Speakers normally add novel lexemes to the lexicon by generalizing over existing lexemes, and sometimes they even "stretch the limits of what a constructional schema typically allows" in the production of new words (Hilpert 2014, 76). The three key mechanisms in the production of novel lexemes (schema, analogy, and second-order schema) are illustrated in the following sections.

Schema

An abstract schema expresses a generalization about the form and meaning of a morphological construction in the mind of a speaker (Booij 2010, 2). The speaker is able to abstract away all the linguistic information from existing words and coin new words by replacing the variable *x*:

(1) $< [[x]_{Ni} \, hood]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow [\text{Quality of SEM}_i]_j >$

This schema is instantiated by nouns such as *sainthood* and *motherhood*, and it produces new derived words licensed by the morphological construction $[N\text{-}hood]_N$ (Booij and Audring 2017, 278). The schema provides the linguistic information about the form-meaning correspondence which is indicated by the use of an arrow $\leftrightarrow$. The left part of the schema specifies the form, and the right part specifies the meaning of each morphological output which is licensed by the schema in (1). The nominal base and its

meaning (SEM) carry the same index *i*, and the meaning of the whole construction is indexed as *j*. According to Booij, a word as a pairing of form and meaning is a linguistic unit, and for that reason only words have lexical indexes, whereas affixes do not have any (2010, 28). Affixes do not carry meaning on their own[3], but they evoke particular meanings following the operation of unification i.e. by replacing the variable *x* (Booij 2010, 2). Generally speaking, schemas have a dual function: on the one hand, they motivate existing words of one type (such as *sainthood* and *motherhood*) by showing their form-meaning correspondence; on the other hand, they produce new words (Booij and Audring 2017, 278). The latter function differentiates schema as a productive mechanism from analogy as a non-productive (or creative) mechanism in word-formation.

Analogy

The notion of analogy was described in Generative Grammar in the sense of analogic change, "the kind that actually changes the set of grammatical rules" (Chomsky 1964, 22). Given that generative linguists were more concerned with transformational rules, it was much later that analogy was studied as a mechanism in word-formation. Analogy as "a synchronic morphological force" is associated with rule-creating creativity which takes place after the speaker's inspection of existing words which may result in the incidental actuation of existing derivational patterns, but in different configurations (van Marle 1990, 267). The reinterpretation of existing rules may give rise to ad hoc formations that can even be phonologically adapted so as to "sound good" (van Marle 1990, 272).

Within the theoretical framework of Generative Grammar, Bauer (1983) discusses the phenomenon of analogy in word-formation, and defines an analogical formation as "a new formation clearly modeled on one already existing lexeme, and not giving rise to a productive series" (96). Analogical formations are regular to the extent that "their meaning can readily be discerned on the basis of the individual forms which obviously have served as their model" (Plag 2003, 37). This is achieved through a proportional relation between the model word and its corresponding item as in *a:b* :: *c:d* e.g. *eye*:*eyewitness* :: *ear*:*earwitness*. In principle, analogy is necessarily paradigmatic in nature since it describes a substitution relationship between the words of the same category (e.g. *earwitness* and *eyewitness* are nouns); in contrast, rules which are typically syntagmatic illustrate the linear relationship between the words with the same base (e.g. *sleep – sleepless – sleeplessness*). It seems that whenever a syntagmatic approach fails to explain a particular morphological structure or phenomenon, an analysis in terms of paradigmatic structure or analogy is proposed (Bauer et al. 2013, 518). As a result, analogy and rules are seen as strict alternatives in generative accounts.

Matiello (2017) studies analogical formations in depth and proposes the following account of analogy: an analogical formation (target) is explicitly modeled on an established word stored in the speaker's lexicon (model) on the basis of certain similar features which the two words or phrases share (9). There is at least one striking feature (be it phonological, morphotactic or semantic) which creates a direct link between the model

and the target. The ideal starting point for detecting an analogical formation is identifying its source word which serves as the model, and then the proportional relation which activates the target. The model and the target are highly conditioned by the context, i.e. they have to co-occur in the same discourse – it is also far more usual for the model to occur first so that new words are more anaphoric of the preceding text than cataphoric of the following one (Mattielo 2017, 14).

Like Matiello, Booij (2010) states that in the case of analogical word-formation it is essential that a speaker can pinpoint to an individual existing model and that they understand the meaning of the target depending on the model (90). However, model words may also be used to create new patterns via abstraction. To put it more precisely, the emergence of a general schema is also possible after a while due to the "repeated analogical extensions" of an established form (Hilpert 2013, 471). This kind of analogical extension is also known as a second-order schema in Construction Morphology.

Second-order schema

A second-order schema is a structural reinterpretation of analogy i.e. it is an abstract and productive pattern despite being created on a single model word. For instance, the word *Watergate* served as the model for all subsequent words ending in -*gate* which refer to a political scandal (Booij 2010, 90):

(2) $< [[x]_{Ni} [gate]_N]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow [\text{political scandal pertaining to SEM}_i]_j >$

Apart from the words ending in *-gate* (such as *Clintongate* or *Irangate*), many other novel lexemes (such as the ones ending in *-burger*, *-holic*, *-tainment*, and *-zine*) have also gone through the structural reinterpretation of their model words (Booij 2010, 90). With an increase of new words, the model word is not necessarily the only word that prompts novel lexemes; however, the model word still serves as the source word and its purpose is to strengthen the second-order schema and turn it into a productive pattern. As Tuggy (2015) points out, analogy and schema are not to be seen as strict alternatives and "the two types may be often simultaneously active" (100).

The emergence of second-order schema is also possible with those lexemes in which the formal base *x* has no lexical entry of its own and it does not exist as an independent word in English (Booij 2010, pp. 29-31). The most typical example of this kind of second-order schema is illustrated by various sets of derived words ending in the suffixes *-ism* and *-ist* e.g. *altruism/altruist*, *bolshevism/bolshevist*, *pacifism/pacifist* etc. Since most of these words are based on borrowed words from other languages, there is no single precise word that actually functions as the base. In addition, there is a semantic interdependency between the words with the same base i.e. the meaning of one member is interpreted thanks to the existence of the other member in the given *-ism/-ist* set. Thus, the formal representation of the *-ism/-ist* paradigmatic relationship is indicated by the use of the symbol ≈ (Booij and Masini 2015, 50):

(3) $< [x\text{-}ism]_{Ni} \leftrightarrow SEM_i > \approx < [x\text{-}ist]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow [\text{person with property Y related to } SEM_i]_j >$

The second-order schema in (3) may also use an existing lexeme as its base, be it a member of a major lexical category in English such as the adjective *social* e.g. *socialism/socialist*, or a proper name such as *Marx* e.g. *Marxism/Marxist*. This also supports the idea that analogy may gradually develop into a regular and productive schema as an abstract pattern. When a pattern is highly productive and creates many novel lexemes, it is more difficult to determine one specific word which functions as the model word. In fact, only when there is a precise model, the mechanism of word-formation is unquestionably analogy, and then, we may discuss analogy in terms of "clear cases" (Booij 2014, 206).

PROPER NAMES WITH SUFFIXES: METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The research tool used in this research is *The Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) which contains more than one billion words of text, or more precisely over 25 million words for each year over a period of almost thirty years (from 1990 until 2019). It is equally divided in eight genres: spoken (SPOK), fiction (FIC), popular magazines (MAG), newspapers (NEWS) and academic journals (ACAD), TV and movie subtitles (TV/MOV), blogs (BLOG) and web pages (WEB). Its diversity of genres together with its sample size

makes COCA an effective tool in studying word-formation mechanisms for expanding the lexicon of English.

A closer look into the COCA's search settings shows that seventeen suffixes can be added to proper names[4]. In this paper, the lexemes with proper names as formal bases and the suffixes *-ness*, *-hood* and *-oid* are analyzed with the aim of illustrating schema, analogy and second-order schema[5]. As this study takes a qualitative approach to corpus analysis, twenty-three lexemes are singled out to reflect native speaker intuitions and natural usage, which is favored in the study of constructions as form-meaning pairings in word-formation (Bybee 2013).

Schema: novel lexemes with proper names and the suffix *-ness*

The suffix *-ness* is added to adjectives by default e.g. *happy – happiness*; nevertheless, it may be attached to other kinds of bases and still produce semantically possible outputs such as *thingness*, *as-suchness*, *off-beatness*, *up-to-the minuteness*, *us-ness* etc. (Adams 2001, 32). In fact, it may be attached to almost any category except for the verb category, which makes this suffix "a sort of default way of forming abstract nouns from non-verbal categories in contemporary English" (Bauer et al. 2013, 246). It is involved in the production of new lexemes which are highly compositional and predictable in meaning, e.g. the word *redness* denotes the quality of being red in color.

The novel lexemes consisting of proper names as formal bases and the suffix *-ness* denote a particular abstract quality as well. The abstract quality is not accidently selected

by speakers, but rather intentionally, as it embodies the very essence of the notion denoted by the base (i.e. a person, a place, an object or a period of time). These lexemes are fully understood in contexts:

(4)

a. In a way, Twitter lets us behind the curtain, and he did it in an authentic and enjoyable way. You didn't feel like he was grandstanding or putting on an act like others. He had a *Michigan-ness* about his Tweets. He kept it real. (NEWS: The Detroit News, 2019)

b. As at every step in the development of Diet Coke, which, incidentally, was and still is marketed with a lowercase d on the label to indicate "that its dietary qualities were secondary to its *Coke-ness*," the concept of the product was carefully calculated by the company. (MAG: American Heritage, 2006)

c. But there was this quiet day for which to be grateful. Blake wished he could find comfort in its *Sunday-ness*, but he could not. (FIC: Cain at Gettysburg, 2012)

d. The band is touring for its Here and Now album, which, like their other records, celebrates rowdiness and lust and a general uncorking of appetites. Halfway through the set things appear to be reaching maximum *Nickelbackness*. (WEB, Genius: The Nickelback Story – Businessweek, 2012)

e. And that's one reason we like to believe in genius. It gives us an excuse for being lazy. If these guys were able to do what they did only because of some magic *Shakespeareness* or

Einsteinness, then it's not our fault if we can't do something as good. (WEB, What You'll Wish You'd Known, 2012)

The five contextualized examples show that there is no single existing lexeme which serves as the model for the novel lexemes in (4). All the lexemes consisting of a proper name as the formal base and the suffix *-ness* share the same form-meaning correspondence with the established words ending in *-ness* such as *happiness*, *sleepiness*, *rudeness* etc. Thus, it may be proposed that they are all created schematically following a regular abstract pattern:

(5) $< [[x]_{ProperName_i} \, ness]_{Nj} \longleftrightarrow [Quality \ of \ SEM_i]_j >$

Analogy: novel lexemes with proper names and the suffixes *-ness* and *-hood*

Some novel lexemes consisting of proper names and the suffix *-ness* are the outputs of analogy when they are modeled on the lexicalized expression *Your Highness*:

(6)

a. # COMES NOW WORD THAT MR. DONALD Trump is getting into the golf course business in a big way, with the imminent opening of his new Trump International Club in the Palm Beaches. To the prospect of *His Donaldness* being in golf, the true believer must have but one reaction: # Oh. My. God. # But fear not. (MAG: Forbes, 1998)

b. Q What kind of market can Barry Bonds expect? A The last time *His Barryness* hit the market, he received exactly zero offers to leave San Francisco. (MAG: Sporting News, 2006)

c. I think we may have got it all wrong, here is an exclusive interview with *His Charlieness* on impending climate catastrophe. (BLOG, BREAKING: The 'secret' list of the BBC 28 is now public – let's call it, 2012)

d. Things just get more sublimely ridiculous from here. If you ever needed to make a case for how invaluable *Her Kateness* is to saving this show's bacon circa 2019, this is exhibit A. DF # 5. (MAG: Rolling Stone, 2019)

e. And you must be Baby. Oh. Food. Yes, I prepared this spread for you, Miss Baby. Please help yourself... More, please. That took me all day to make. Please. I would love to make you more. So, *Your Baby-ness*, how does this evaluation work? (TV/MOV: Star vs. the Forces of Evil, Baby/Running with Scissors, 2017)

Even though the model *Your Highness* is not used in the immediate context, all the target words with proper names and the suffix *-ness* in (6) are preceded by a possessive adjective, which serves as the starting point for establishing the proportional relation and connection with the model, i.e. *Your Highness* :: Possessive Adjective + [ProperName-*ness*]$_N$. The analogical link is based on the semantic meaning of the model, but the target words are used in a derogatory tone. There is a sense of irony or the speaker's disapproval in all examples.

The exact link between an established word and a novel lexeme is not always straightforward, and it may vary with the lexemes of the same form. The following novel lexemes ending in -*hood* can be linked to existing lexemes in three different ways:

(7)

a. We're a brotherhood. A brotherhood of Santas. A *Santahood*, if you will. (TV/MOV: Deadbeat, The Ghost of Christmas Presents, 2015)

b. *Obamahood*, steals from the responsible, gives to the irresponsible. (BLOG, Bank Watch: Bank of America reports $15.8 billion in homeowner relief, 2012)

c. Christian didn't revel in his *Brando-hood*, friends and neighbors say. "I've known him eight years, and up until four years ago I didn't even know he was Marlon Brando's son," says Tommy Bina, co-owner of the Canyon Country Store, 15 minutes from the Brando compound. (NEWS: USA Today, 1990)

The novel lexemes *Santahood* (7a) may be categorized as an analogical formation given that there is an anaphoric model (i.e. *brotherhood of Santas*) which serves as the starting point for creating the proportional relation N:[N-*hood*]$_N$ :: ProperName:[ProperName-*hood*]$_N$. Thanks to our extra-linguistic knowledge about a legendary outlaw who stole from the rich in order to help the poor, we may identify a link between *Obamahood* (7b) and the model which is not used in the immediate context, i.e. *Robin Hood*. *Obamahood* may be considered as an instance of creative analogy involving

the model *Robin Hood* and the schema in (1) following the proportional relation *Robin Hood* :: [ProperName-*hood*]$_N$. Finally, due to a lack of the model in the immediate context, *Brandohood* (7b) is most likely an output of the schema in (1) – the novel lexeme may be formally represented as a [ProperName-*hood*]$_N$ morphological construction denoting a certain kind of quality, and it has the same form-meaning correspondence as other established words ending in *-hood* e.g. *childhood, adulthood, motherhood, sainthood* etc.

Second-order schema: novel lexemes with proper names and the suffix *-oid*

The suffix *-oid* is of Greek origin and most English complex words ending in *-oid* have a scientific tone to them (Bauer et al. 2013, 313). This feature can be traced to astronomical terms coined in the 18th and 19th century – the first recorded astronomical term ending in *-oid* is believed to be *asteroid* probably after the Greek word *asteroeidḗs*[6] meaning *star-like*, *starry* from *aster-*, *astḗr* "star, the plant Aster amellus, starfish" + *-oeidēs* "resembling, having a specified form". In COCA's scientific journals and texts, the suffix *-oid* is attested with the proper names denoting astronomical objects; accordingly, the novel lexemes denote or describe a similar object such as *Plutoid*, *Saturnoid* and *Uranoid*[7]. With proper names that denote individuals, the novel lexemes ending in *-oid* are qualifying adjectives meaning 'similar to/resembling' a particular person, either in their style (8a) or behavior (8b):

(8)

a. Here it is the coarser, *Picassoid* drawings that stand out: for example, the untitled charcoal and pastel that brings together a disembodied and distorted profile from Picasso with the faucets from the artist's bathtub. (NEWS: New York Times, 1990)

b. On the surface his approach is scientific and slightly *Dawkins-oid*: in Cracked he briskly locates the source of addiction in "a tiny region of the brain called the nucleus accumbens," and suggests that the emotional dissociation of the trauma victim is "an evolutionary remnant of the risky strategy of feigning death." (MAG: Atlantic Monthly, 2009)

When the suffix *-oid* is added to the names of public figures or celebrities, the novel lexemes may sometimes convey strongly negative or mocking connotations:

(9)

a. The *Clintonoid* damage control continues. Trent Lott ushered two more Clinton judges through confirmation, thwarting an attempt by Oklahoma senator Jim Inhofe to block the nominations. (MAG: National Review, 2000)

b. We should deport all those brainless metrosexual *Obamanoid* idiots, who have NO concept of American History, to the lawn outside of the Hague. (BLOG, Obama Supporters Call for Secessionists to Be Deported, 2012)

c. Last summer Helsinki Watch reported more than 60 political trials in the first half of 1989 as Kafka's intense embryonic vision merged uncannily with the bizarre and deadly

machinations of *Stalinoid* sludge that suffocated the nation. (FIC: Massachusetts Review, 1990)

d. "U Smile" is a gorgeous *Jacksonoid* pianopumper, with Bieber suffering chivalric agonies – "Tour lips, my biggest weakness / Shouldn't have let you know / I'm always gonna do what they say" – as his voice bears the melody aloft on a cluster of vowel sounds plump as Renaissance putti. (MAG: Atlantic Monthly, 2011)

The lexemes with proper names and the suffix *-oid* in (9) are used to indicate an existence of a particular 'absurd' notion similar to the original one. They might be analogically modeled on the word *android* in its science fiction use, i.e. *a mobile robot usually with a human form*. The sci-fi meaning of *android* is probably borrowed from Late Greek *androeidḗs* "in the form of a man, like a man," from Greek *andr-*, *anḗr* "man, husband, human" + *-oeidēs*[8]. The idea of 'android' resemblance to a particular public figure (i.e. Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, Joseph Stalin, and Michael Jackson) is communicated via negative associations which are evoked by expressions such as *damage control* (9a), *brainless* […] *idiots* (9b), *bizarre and deadly machinations* (9c), *suffering chivalric agonies* (9d). In this sense, the above lexemes describe individuals who lack reasoning (9a-c) or emotions (9d) like robots.

After looking into the examples in (8) and (9), it appears that there is a pragmatic difference between the two samples. This can be connected with the established words *asteroid* and *android* as possible model words. Nevertheless, there is the same

conventional form-meaning correspondence in all novel words, which suggests a regular abstract pattern i.e. a shared second-order schema. Without specifying pragmatic differences, the most general representation of the second-order schema creating novel lexemes with proper names and the suffix *-oid* is as follows:

(10) $< [[x]_{\text{ProperName}_i} \, oid]_{Aj} \leftrightarrow [\text{Similar to/Resembling SEM}_i]_j >$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study presented above shows that novel lexemes with proper names and the suffixes *-ness*, *-hood* and *-oid* may be created via schema, analogy, and second-order schema as word-formation mechanisms for expanding the lexicon of English. Schemas operate at an abstract level following a regular and productive pattern as in the case of forming abstract nouns by adding the suffix *-ness* to proper names. Structurally, these words correspond to existing lexemes with adjectives as formal bases (such as *happiness*, *sleepiness* etc.), and semantically, they are fully understood in different contexts thanks to the available information in a productive schema. In analogical formations with proper names and the suffixes *-ness* and *-hood*, model words are rarely used in the immediate context; it is more likely that they are strongly implied since we can guess the exact source words by applying our extra-linguistic knowledge (e.g. *Your Highness* and *Robin Hood*). Schema and analogy are simultaneously active as a second-order schema in creating the

lexemes with proper names and the suffix *-oid*; we can link these lexemes to established words of Greek origin (e.g. *asteroid* and *android*), and yet associate them with a conventional form-meaning correspondence as if having been created by a regular abstract pattern.

These findings show that speakers rely on their knowledge of language in the production of new words – they are able to abstract away the linguistic information from existing lexemes and apply the "rules" of schema and analogy (and second-order schema) with atypical bases such as proper names. Novel lexemes are successfully interpreted thanks to our extra-linguistic knowledge related to proper names as formal bases or the model words. Thus, the creation of new words is a combined effect of the speaker's access to the hierarchical lexicon comprising the linguistic information about schema and analogy, and their application of this linguistic knowledge together with the extra-linguistic knowledge they possess.

END NOTES

[1] The theoretical framework of Construction Morphology follows the basic tenets of Construction Grammar (Masini): language is part of a speaker's mental or cognitive system and its units are constructions as form-meaning pairings which capture generalizations about the speaker's knowledge of language. Constructions are more closely defined as "learned pairings of form with semantic and discourse function, including morphemes or words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general phrasal patterns" (Goldberg 2003, 5), and they are investigated at all levels of grammar (including word-formation).

[2] This paper is based in part on the author's ongoing doctoral research *Proper Nouns as Word-formation Components in English* (University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology).

[3] Booij rules out morphemes as constructions (as opposed to Goldberg) and emphasizes that "their meaning contribution is only accessible through the meaning of the morphological contribution of which they form a part" (2010, 15).

[4] Three groups of suffixes are found with proper names: verb-forming *-ize* and *-ify*, noun-forming *-(i)ana, -dom, -ese, -hood, -ness, -ism, -ist, -ite* and *-ship*, and adjective-forming *-esque, -free, -ish, -less, -like* and *-oid*. The words consisting of proper names as formal bases and these suffixes are studied in the author's doctoral research.

[5] The total number of extracted lexemes with proper names as formal bases is 149; there are 132 lexemes ending in *-ness*, 4 lexemes ending in *-hood*, and 13 lexemes ending in *-oid*. Both hyphenated and non-hyphenated forms are attested in COCA. Hyphenation depends on text writers or transcribers, and consequently doublets are often found. Nevertheless, the most frequent lexemes are non-hyphenated. This may be due to the fact that only the non-hyphenated forms are established words and dictionary entries (e.g. *Marxism*).

[6] (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/asteroid)

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[7] These lexemes may be used either as nouns or adjectives e.g. *the archetypical Plutoid* or *Uranoid characteristics*.

[8] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/android

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05

Andi Febriana Tamrin

How Young Adult Fiction Authors Are Changing Classic Fiction

INTRODUCTION

Young adult writers and fanfic authors have been reimagining classic narratives with bold storytelling, cultural investigations, and inclusive representations that speak to contemporary audiences. This work examines the development of undisclosed narratives and how they relate to George Landow's (6) reader-writer dynamics, especially in terms of fanfiction. Readers participate in the texts of fanfiction, adding to or changing the plots as it suits them. Landow's concept of the historical merging of reader and writer roles in the era of electronic writing is demonstrated by fanfiction which is regarded as a form of participatory culture. *Fanfictionists* use popular media texts as foundations for creating their own stories, thus revealing a kind of collaborative and interactive storytelling (Reißmann et al. 16). This interactivity blurs distinctions between authors and readers, allowing fans to actively participate in an authorized storyline. Therefore, they are capable of manipulating plots, reimagining characters or even inventing supplementary episodes based on their own fancies (Reißmann et al. 16).

The ability of young adult fiction authors and fanfiction writers to modify conventional stories demonstrates the interactive relationship between the writer and reader, as described by Landow. In the digital age, global authors and fanfiction writers have transformed traditional narratives by embracing participatory culture. They engage in collaborative storytelling and incorporate diverse representation, enabling

readers to actively participate and provide feedback in the creation and discussion of their stories.

How, then, do these *fanfictionists* work? Veerley Van Steenhyse gave a very good example of this in her writing, entitled *Wordplay, mindplay: Fan fiction and Postclassical Narratology* (2014). She illustrated this with Naguabo's "The Mother of All Marriage Proposal" (2013). This short fanfiction employs quotation from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to provide a juxtaposition between the events in the narrative and those in the original text, namely during Mr. Darcy's initial proposal. This contrast introduces an additional layer to what is openly articulated in the fanfiction narrative. The fiction addresses a significant gap in the narrative universe of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.* In Austen's novel, Elizabeth Bennet rejects Mr. Darcy's marriage proposal, accusing him of, among other faults, failing in gentlemanly conduct and arrogance. In Naguabo's fiction, it is stated that Mr. Darcy began to internalize Elizabeth's admonitions during a nightmare shortly after her rejection. In this scenario, the dreadful Caroline Bingley proposed marriage to him, as he witnessed Elizabeth kissing Mr. Wickham, his nemesis. Upon awakening and reflecting on his dream, he recognizes the validity of Elizabeth's reminders (Van Steenhuyse).

Readers-writers can employ a variety of source-texts as valuable resources. Throughout the history of storytelling, authors have consistently derived inspiration from pre-existing literature, folklore, and historical events. Stories are derived from historical accounts transmitted by ancestors, as well as comic books, manga, and

popular fiction legends. These stories transcend the limits of reading and writing, allowing us to delve into these worlds in a transformational manner. Participants in fanfiction communities, previously mentioned as readers-writers, employ similar techniques to delve into fictional realms and collaboratively craft these diverse narratives of longing alongside the original text.

The act of writing driven by desire, using a particular source-text, is not inherently a novel creative process. However, it has gained more visibility due to the increased availability of source-texts and unauthorized or related adaptations of these texts. According to theorist John Fiske, reader-writers perceive texts solely as an object to be utilized, enjoyed, and then discarded. He asserts that the enjoyment comes from both the ability and the act of creating significance from available resources, as well as the feeling that these significances belong to us rather than to others (Fiske 99-101).

Essentially, the desire that the reader-writer experiences involves utilizing their dreams and aspirations, and projecting them onto the source-text and into the apparent gaps of the text. Desire motivates the reader-writer to produce texts that satisfy their needs, in a manner that the source-texts do not. Contemporary authors of young adult fiction have been shaped by the convenient availability of artistic works, repositories of fan-created stories, online forum discussions, and the dissemination of their own works, which have all contributed to the development of their writing style and advancement in their careers. The pre-career writing and exploration of creative

sources have significantly influenced their writing methods and creative processes in their repertoires.

The methods employed by reader-writers to contribute to young adult fiction can be categorized as adaptation techniques, which can be referred to as "fanfiction methods or approaches". These have gained popularity within fanfiction forums, where reader-writers first encountered them (Sidebottom 52). The methods mentioned are oppositional gazing, alternate universes, crossovers and mashups. The methods and their examples will be explained later in this writing.

FANFICTION METHODS AS ADAPTATION

Linda Hutcheon, an expert in literary adaptation theory, is not directly related to fanfiction. However, she does write about the nature of fanfiction and it is controversy in her book. According to her, plagiarism refers to unacknowledged borrowing; therefore, fanfiction methods are not considered legitimate forms of appropriation. She asserts that there is a distinction between desiring a story to never conclude and desiring to recount the same story in other ways repeatedly (Hutcheon 9). However, this assertation that fanfiction methods are solely a means of continuance is a mistaken idea. Despite her assertions, fanfiction methods have the ability to both extend and reiterate a story: this is the nature of fanfiction which is called "transformative"[1]. In addition, fanfiction methods are able to transfer the storyline to a different realm inhabited by well-known fictional places or people. They can eliminate undesirable scenes or even alter the outcome by rewriting the

conclusion. The potential is boundless. Fanfiction methods encompass techniques that serve as a means of adapting existing works.

The creative process works in a manner similar to folklore, establishing a close connection between the story and its audience. When the story is retold, it inevitably adapts to the perspective and interpretation of the new storyteller. The original narrative adapts and conforms to the new framework of its universe, tailored to the storyteller's preferences, and thereafter conveyed to a different audience. This is a spontaneous and customary manner of storytelling that has historically been associated with spoke narratives and folk tales, but is now seen as a novel approach in the modern era of writing.

Historically-inspired works may have characters or plot elements derived from historical events. However, without knowledge of the specific historical context it references, it remains just a narrative. The success and comprehension of a narrative might greatly depend on a knowledgeable audience, who can employ numerous methods of adaptation. Having familiarity with the original text enhances the reading experience and comprehension of related secondary texts. However, it is essential for secondary texts to be produced in a manner that appeals to both new and knowledgeable audiences, ensuring that they can both appreciate the narrative.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION AND FANFICTION

Fanfiction has long been a part of literary culture, although it has not received the same level of recognition. It emerges in the early 1900s, originating from writing

communities and science fiction magazines. Initially, it remained relatively unknown, but with the advent of the digital age, it has gained momentum and become a very powerful force (Ford and Deja 37). In initial examination, fanfiction and the young adult fiction (YA) genre may not appear to be tightly intertwined. One is perceived as operating beyond the confines of conventional publishing, occupying this position outside concepts like intellectual property ownership and copyright. Meanwhile, the other has emerged as a rapidly expanding and powerful force in the publishing sector. Upon closer examination, the commonalities between the two genres become apparent. Both styles have a distinct ability to provide commentary on contemporary society, frequently addressing sensitive subjects such as racism, poverty, gender identity, sexuality, mental health, bullying, sexual assault, and religion (Reaves 25).

Fanfiction may delve into these topics in order to rectify, elaborate on, or simply revamp an original narrative or character, often enhancing the fictional universe to align more closely with contemporary social dynamics through alterations in races or genders, or by incorporating elements that mirror the concerns frequently addressed by readers and fans. Although these additions may not be published, they provide fans with the opportunity to selectively retain the elements of a tale that they want, while removing those they disagree with. For instance, fans of *Harry Potter* have made efforts to make Harry and Malfoy lovers instead of enemies. Therefore, it can be assumed that fans have authority over their own portrayal, utilizing a cherished

narrative realm as the foundation for narratives and personas that more accurately mirror their own identities.

Young adult fiction caters to its readers in a similar manner, closely connected to the desires and requirements of its adolescent audience. Similar to fanfiction, young adult literature fulfills certain requirements. So, what constitutes a requirement in creating fanfiction? A profound emotional connection to the underlying material is essential. Fans frequently acquire a profound attachment to characters and narratives, motivating them to investigate alternate narratives or character arcs that align with their personal experiences or aspirations. Vinney and Dill-Schackleford (2018) assert that fanfiction writers often explore the emotional dimensions of their preferred characters, frequently offering resolutions or narratives absent from the original texts (1).

The concept of the young adult emerged in the twentieth century, having been historically unrecognized before that time. The existence of fanfiction is dependent on the existence of fans, just as the existence of young adult literature is dependent on the young adults. The genre originated from a necessity for writing targeted towards young adults that incorporates the perspective of young people, a convergence of point-of-view, narrative, and relatability to the real world.

OPPOSITIONAL GAZE

The concept of the oppositional gaze was established by Bell Hooks, a well-known feminist novelist and cultural critic. This term refers to the act of resistance by

minority individuals against dominant standards and stereotypes. The concept of the oppositional gaze refers to the act of women of color looking back in a manner that questions the conventional way of perceiving and being perceived in relation to race, gender, and representation. Hooks argues that individuals who are marginalized, including Black women, can gain power and free themselves by adopting a critical perspective that challenges oppressive conventions and stereotypes (Sales and Muniz 101).

The apotheosis of the oppositional gaze can be found in fanfiction stories that subvert established roles, challenge the status quo or disregard its norms, and poke fun at popular ideologies. A prominent example is gender role reversals in BTS (Korean Boyband) fanfiction. Fanfiction depicting male members of BTS in nurturing or vulnerable ways subverts the conventional masculine paradigm prevalent in mainstream media. This facilitates a more nuanced discussion about masculinity and emotional expression, offering a counter-narrative to strict gender norms. The authors of fanfiction utilize their imagination to retell tales, characters, and relationships in ways that subvert prejudices, actively promote diversity, and offer people options by changing the plotlines of the stories. By participating in a form of counter-public, fans of oppositional gaze fanfiction have the chance to oppose and critique the prevailing ideas not only of the original media text but also of society at large.

An essential point supporting the presence of an oppositional gaze in fanfiction is its examination of gender and sexuality. Fanfiction has the ability to challenge and

subvert societal norms about gender, sexuality, and relationships by portraying characters that deviate from heteronormative and cisnormative standards. These fanfictions aim to question the prevailing narratives that uphold traditional and limited gender and sexual roles. They achieve this by providing diverse and inclusive portrayals of sex and gender that depart from the commonly accepted norms found in mainstream discourses. Alternatively, one could employ a technique that incorporates negative narrative from the primary sources, engaging with them through methods such as reinterpretation or continuation via fanfiction.

Meagan Spooner's *Sherwood* is an example of a piece with an oppositional gaze. The story retells Robin Hood after the death of Robin of Locksley when Lady Marian takes over as the new protagonist. In this novel, Marian mourns her beloved while grappling with societal norms and inequity; to save her people she dresses up like Robin Hood himself:

> Masquerading as Robin… the idea was mad – madder than Will and his ghosts. Marian steadied her fingers and tucked the edge of Robin's cloak out of sight. Madness, then, she thought with a grin. And then, missing the feel of wool on her fingertips, she thought, Robin would love it. (185)

The literary style is emotionally compelling, engrossing readers in Marian's challenges and victories through evocative descriptions and plausible outcomes for her deeds. *Sherwood* explores themes of loss, identity, and social justice while putting a distinctive spin on the Robin Hood legend by concentrating on Lady Marian. Well-developed characters with depth of emotion and flashbacks, such as Marian, Guy of Gisborne, and

Robin, are included in the book. Strong emotions are evoked in readers by the writing style, creating a strong bond between them and the characters and the narrative.

ALTERNATE UNIVERSE

The discussion of Alternate Universe (AU) must start from the term "canon," as it forms the fundamental basis of AU. In fandom circles, the term "canon" refers to information that is conveyed to viewers through original content, such as a television show (Schott, 21-25). There are two categories of information that are not considered part of the official canon: the fanon and the uncanonical. The uncanonical refers to any content that is not considered part of the official canon. The definition of uncanonical varies depending on the writer and the specific tale. Bronwen Thomas stated that fanon refers to uncanonical material that has been widely recognized as canon within a certain fanbase. The information in question might differ across different segments of the fandom and typically pertains to minor details.

These elements are widely accepted and embraced by fans. When used in fanfiction, they indicate the writer's skill and familiarity with the community (Thomas 2). The writer demonstrates a deep understanding of the fandom by utilizing material that is exclusive to a certain subset of fans and treating it as if it were officially canonical. Due to this technique, fanon occupies a unique position between canon and non-canon, being seen as canon by the fanbase but not by the official canon-holders.

AU fanfiction is a platform where fans can creatively adapt tales and other preferences in various creative forms. These stories often deviate from the original

source materials, allowing writers to explore different settings, characters, or plotlines.

By incorporating themes such as superhuman abilities, alternate historical events, or

fantastical realms, fanfiction writers have the opportunity to bring these aspects into

their interpretations of canonical stories. As an illustration of this kind of fanfiction set

in AUs, well-liked fanfiction often involves taking characters from the present day and

placing them in the past, for instance, having modern characters experience life in the

Victorian era. In this category of AU fanfiction, writers have free rein to imagine how

characters would act under different social norms, technologies, or settings, thus

giving the readers a new but recognizable perspective on their traits.

Fitzwilliam Darcy Rock Star is a story written by Heather Lynn Rigaud which

takes pride in presenting one-of-a-kind adaptations of Jane Austen's famous character

Fitzwilliam Darcy. In this story line, Darcy is moved from Regency era England to

present day America where he becomes a musician and a member of a band:

> Fitzwilliam Darcy (thoughtful): "I hope the band will continue to expand our style and our talents. For me, it is all about the music. That is why I'm here. My job is to make music, and the rest of it – the fans and the videos and the money – they're nice but they are not what matters.
> Ten years from now I want us to be able to look back and be proud of our work and not say, 'Oh, that was just a phase or a trend.' I want our work to have lasting value. That is what I am trying to do." (41).

It offers a distinctive perspective on the present music industry as observed within this

fanfiction alternate universe. Unlike the majority of adaptations set in the Regency

time, this version has the protagonist grappling with popularity, relationships, and

personal growth via self-exploration, all while experiencing his wildest dreams on stage.

Authors like Rigaud applied alternate universes within fanfiction to creatively transform existing texts by examining them in ways that deviate from the original intentions of their writers. These modifications frequently result in the emergence of new perspectives or innovative creations that adopt well-known characters and storylines. Rigaud presents a breaking away from conventional hierarchical dynamics between authors and readers by providing a highly interactive approach. In this approach, fans actively participate in writing about Darcy, treating him as if he were a superstar, similar to contemporary rock stars. The updated setting provides a captivating interpretation that offers fresh perspectives on the classic narrative, allowing people to rediscover their appreciation for it.

The purpose of alternate universes in fanfiction, like the ones utilized by Rigaud, is to artistically blend and rework pre-established narratives based on Landow's theory of hypertexts, which merges conventional printed material with parts of cybertext. This implies that fans are expected to not only passively consume the content that has been delivered to them, but also actively engage with it by interpreting and expanding upon the narrative structure. They provide opportunities for the creation of transformative works that allow individuals to explore different timelines or dimensions connected to the stories, while preserving the fundamental aspects of the original narrative. Consequently, she grants her readers the authority to

alter some aspects of the storyline, enabling them to introduce their own modifications and deviations as needed. Heather Lynn Rigaud's *Fitzwilliam Darcy Rock Star* shows that fanfiction has the ability to modify characters and narratives, allowing them to be reimagined in different settings.

CROSSOVERS

The crossover fanfiction genre is the mix up of two or more fictional realms, franchises or narratives through interconnecting characters. This category of fanfiction often brings together individuals from different realities that would never meet, cooperate or fight in any other situation apart from their own stories. What crossovers do is incorporate elements from various sources, showing us things we have never seen before with the people and places we are already familiar with. It helps us to imagine beyond what one canon can offer because there are infinite canons.

Obviously, crossover fanfiction means writing a story including characters from different tales; for instance, having Sherlock Holmes teaming up with Dracula to solve some mystery. By using subjects such as these, authors can explore how famous characters relate to each other when they come from universes apart, as well creating new types of stories that will captivate readers' minds by mixing fear, suspense and detective genres together. Another example could be a crossover fanfiction work that combines characters from other popular fictional universes, such as Harry Potter and Star Wars, in a grand adventure that spans both the realm of sorcery and the cosmos. The crossover genre combines aspects of science fiction and fantasy, offering viewers

and readers a unique and captivating tale that brings together two ordinary yet remarkable imaginative realms.

There are many fanfiction stories written by young writers on sites such as AO3 and fanfiction.net about crossovers that have not been published legally. Some of these writings combine several canons, for example, Grovehove's *The Battle of Jericho* (series) combines three fandoms, namely Teen Wolf/MCU/The Sentinel. This fanfiction was chosen as an example due to its high rating and recommendations from several readers. Although this story is written based on a series rather than a classic story, this fanfiction is a good example of the crossover subgenre. The plot of this story follows the Sheriff of Beacon Hills being summoned to the Spirit Plain by a troubled Sentinel. Since the death of his loving wife, he has largely neglected his Guide talents. The individual adamantly rejects the notion that the peculiar gentleman who has his shirt wrapped around his head and emits a radiant blue light from his chest is indeed the appointed guardian that is meant for him. The individual in question is Tony Stark, who is the abducted and assumed deceased Chief Executive Officer of the most technologically advanced armaments corporation globally. Below is a fragment of the story taken from the first series, *The Walls of Jericho*:

> It didn't take the Sheriff long to understand where he was. Stiles didn't just get his smarts from his Mom, in fact when it came to leaps of logical intuition then the kid definitely took after his old man. He hadn't been elected Sheriff because he looked pretty in that damn uniform. (No one looked pretty in that damn uniform. If he had the budget they would all have been wearing leathers years ago. But he couldn't convince the Mayor of that!) As County Sheriff, he had the best clear up and reduced crime rates for the last twenty years (Opalescentgold 3).

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> Stark? Stark? For a second the Sheriff was stunned into immobility. He knew that face, everyone on the blasted planet knew that face. Stark, Tony Stark, Anthony Edward Stark, lost months ago after that clusterfuck in Afghanistan. If nothing else, this unexpected trip to the Spirit Plain meant he would be able to aid this poor bastard. John stubbornly refused to think about any other implications of why he was the one dragged into the situation. That Tony Stark could be his … No, Nope, so not going there, at all. Ever (Opalescentgold 3).

The first paragraph shows the character named Stiles, who is a character from the *Teen Wolf* fandom. Stiles is one of the main characters from the series who was introduced in the fanfiction story *The Walls of the Jericho,* along with Tony Stark (the second paragraph). Stark himself is the pillar character of the Iron Man and The Avengers film series. The two examples depict the characteristics of crossover fanfiction, which mixes more than one fandom into the same story.

MASHUPS

Mashup stories offer a creative means of combining elements from multiple narratives to create a new and unique story. In the realm of music, a mashup refers to a composition that seamlessly combines fragments from two or more songs into a single, uninterrupted work. However, mashup encompasses a wider range of creative expressions beyond music, including literature, visual arts, and more. Mashup stories are a widely embraced notion in the realm of storytelling, wherein characters, places, or even plotlines from distinct works are amalgamated to create a narrative that is both unique and captivating. The act of creating remixes and reimagining pre-existing content can allow authors to produce narratives that might otherwise be out of reach, as well as challenge conventional storytelling devices.

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Peter Clines' work, *The Eerie Adventures of The Lycanthrope Robinson Crusoe,* is an adaptation of Daniel Defoe's renowned narrative. The inclusion of a lycanthrope or werewolf in Robinson Crusoe's story leads to a blending of terror and adventure, occurring after he becomes stranded on a deserted island while in pursuit of treasure. Clines explorers themes of isolation, persistence, and obscurity by incorporating a supernatural element into a specific setting.

Reimagining classic literary works such as Robinson Crusoe requires developing mashup stories, which are narratives that mix or transform current stories to make something completely new and different. Writers like Clines offer readers another way to see the old tale so that it could be investigated anew from outside its usual approach (approaches that scholars usually apply, such as postcolonial, conversion-narrative, economics and so on). Cline goes deep into thoughts about change, duality, and human beings' basic instincts through turning the story of Robinson Crusoe into a werewolf story:

> I was born on the last day of the full moon in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, tho' not of that country, my father being a foreigner who had fled the Prince-Archbishopric of Bremen and settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson and from whom I was called Robinson Kreisszahn. By the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay we call ourselves, and write, our name Crusoe (Defoe et al. 8).

The paragraph above is the opening paragraph of the story *The Eerie Adventures of The Lycanthrope Robinson Crusoe*. It states that the name of main character in this story is

Robinson Kreisszahn, which later became Crusoe due to word changes. Compared to canon, the name of the main character is similar. However, the most distinguishing difference will be shown later in the next paragraph:

> The moon rose and the mantle of the beast came upon me. When this happens, my flesh is burned with unseen fire and great aches and pains fill my limbs and jaw. The world is as if seen thru a lens darken'd with smoke, and heard as if a heavy woolen blanket wrapt round my head. Yet always I have no more freedom than a helpless passenger on a storm-wrack'd ship with a mad captain, and that captain is the beast. I could see the wise men as they discust my change and the beast before them, but their words were but noise, and to my intoxicated mind they look'd like good, succulent meat does to a starv'd man. I could remember they did feed the beast a young lamb, but also prickt its flesh and pluckt its fur and sketch'd it for their scrolls (Defoe et al. 18).

The quote shows that Robinson Crusoe has another form ,which is Lycan or a kind of werewolf that changes during the full moon. When he changes, he usually loses his mind and does not recognize himself or the people around him. Lycans also have the same nature as animals, which is to hunt animals and eat them.

This shows the mashup techniques in the writing of this story. This can be seen in the new attributes given to Robinson's character. The attribute in question is another form of Robinson besides human, namely Lycan. Although the novel does not abandon the theme of adventure, it successfully shows the "renewal" of the main character by transforming him into Lycan. Thus, the author successfully combines new elements to create new genres and works with unique stories.

When genres are merged together, not only does it increase interest and suspense in the plot, but it also offers an opportunity for exploring the interface

between classic literature and present-day storytelling approaches. *The Eerie Adventures of the Lycanthrope Robinson Crusoe* thus reveals what mashup techniques can do to rejuvenate familiar stories by mixing them with unusual genres or concepts.

CONCLUSION

Fanfiction technique refers to the systematic approaches employed by reader-writers while modifying and reinterpreting pre-existing literary works. These approaches are frequently employed in the creation of young adult fiction due to their experimental nature. The young adult novel genre challenges traditional conventions and pushes the boundaries in terms of genres, adaptations and inventiveness, hence surpassing conventional requirements for adaptation. Therefore, fanfiction techniques such as oppositional gazing, alternate universes, crossovers and mashups can be employed individually or in conjunction with other creative methods to generate distinctive storylines. Such narratives enable authors to customize their stories by adopting fresh tales within a specified framework. Young adult fiction promotes innovation, leading to the emergence of novel approaches in literature across several genres.

The genre of young adult novels has always been able to grab readers' attention and defy conventions in literature as well as genre rules. There is no way around this; we simply have to explore narratives through familiar settings or characters. As readers these narratives have become thoroughly embedded into our minds and they have influenced us more deeply than even we know ourselves. Every reader reconstructs

their own text-image inside their head despite the fact that there are underlying texts available for understanding them as their authors intended. It is the interaction between the reader and the text, rather than the intrinsic qualities of the text itself or the author, that establishes a personal dialogue between the two parties. Hence it is not uncommon for readers to get ideas from books they read together with their own experiences so that this desire can feed back into their own stories.

END NOTES

[1] Tushnet (2014) contends that fan works merit protection under fair use due to their tendency to critique or comment on the original works, so conforming to the transformative use criterion (21).

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06

Nika Keserović

"The genius of deep crime": Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin and the Production of Information

It is commonly stated that in the three stories that feature C. Auguste Dupin—"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter" – Edgar Allan Poe invented the detective story. These stories are collectively referred to as the tales of ratiocination, as their narrative primarily focuses on methodical analysis or logical reasoning as a tool for elucidating mysterious or puzzling events. While Poe's three ratiocination stories (and detective fiction in general) have been the topic of many a paper, it is nevertheless clear that they possess an undercurrent of social facts and processes which still demand attention. The aim of this paper will be first to explore the social context in which the character of Monsieur Dupin was brought into literary existence, and then to discuss the way in which the capitalist mode of production took control over him by the end of the ratiocination cycle.

Before moving on to Poe's tales of ratiocination, some of the conditions that surround the beginnings of detective fiction should be considered; namely, a new idea of political governing that appeared in the 18th century—liberalism—and the oversaturation and commodification of information. Both are deeply interconnected. As a political philosophy, liberalism became a central concept in the Age of Enlightenment, critiquing the existing monarchies across Europe, putting an emphasis on the notions of individual rights, liberty, and equality, as well as market freedom. Of course, it was also the conceptual basis for the American Revolution and the United States' subsequent declaration of independence from the British Crown. For Michel

Foucault, at the time of its appearance, liberalism signaled a change in the principle of governing, a modification of the already existing concept of *raison d'État* (fr. national interest) (22). While governing in accordance with *raison d'État* simply meant "arranging things so that the state becomes sturdy and permanent, so that it becomes wealthy, and so that it becomes strong in the face of everything that may destroy it" (4), liberalism signified "a sort of intensification or internal refinement of *raison d'État*" (28) by turning to the market as a site of truth for guidance in governing (30). It was the start of perceiving market principles as natural (31) and for the government, it meant the beginning of "working with interests," in fact, dealing with "a complex interplay between individual and collective interests, between social utility and economic profit, between the equilibrium of the market and the regime of public authorities, between basic rights and the independence of the governed" (44). For Foucault, working with interests means that a liberal government is "forced to determine the precise extent to which and up to what point individual interest, that is to say, individual interests insofar as they are different and possibly opposed to each other, constitute a danger for the interest of all" (65). Thus, we see that liberalism spurred a new principle of calculation of justice and individual liberties. In that sense, "liberalism is not acceptance of freedom" because "freedom is something which is constantly produced" (65). Of course, what is produced alongside it is its dialectical complement—a "system of constraints" which limits individual action by evoking the idea of security, and the way liberalism arbitrates between the two is "by reference to

the notion of danger" (65-6). Danger functions as the border of the perceived limitlessness of personal freedom—it is the reason to stop, to turn away, to hide. It can therefore be utilized as a mechanism of restriction, a way for the liberal government to order and discipline the otherwise unrelenting conflict of wills. Foucault states that:

> An entire education and culture of danger appears in the nineteenth century which is very different from those great apocalyptic threats of plague, death, and war which fed the political and cosmological imagination of the Middle Ages, and even of the seventeenth century. The horsemen of the Apocalypse disappear and in their place everyday dangers appear, emerge, and spread everywhere, perpetually being brought to life, reactualized, and circulated by what could be called the political culture of danger in the nineteenth century. […] For example, […] the appearance of detective fiction and journalistic interest in crime around the middle of the nineteenth century; […] everywhere you see this stimulation of the fear of danger which is, as it were, the condition, the internal psychological and cultural correlative of liberalism. There is no liberalism without a culture of danger. (66)

The notion of danger became a political necessity and permeated all aspects of life. This can also be seen in people's rising suspicion in their fellow men and a concurrent idea of man's inherent baseness and corrupt nature. This was only exacerbated as the urban population grew. As cities expanded in both size and number, and many countries went through a bourgeois revolution, masses appeared. Man found himself submerged in a vast sea of others whose interests and intentions varied from and even conflicted with his own. The city thus frequently represented a place of ambiguity and anxiety, if not of outright violence. This hectic reality left man feeling disoriented and lost, so it is no wonder that its perceived dangers and repercussions were explored in the fiction of the time.

Poe does exactly that in his 1840 tale "The Man of the Crowd," whose autodiegetic narrator is trying to make sense of a puzzling stranger he spots in the crowd. As the tale immediately preceding "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Man of the Crowd" stands as a transitional work between the Gothic tales of the late 1830s and the tales of ratiocination of the early 1840s (Kennedy 187). In some ways, the narrator in "The Man of the Crowd" is a precursor to C. Auguste Dupin; he turns to his analytical faculty to get to the bottom of the mystery of the strange man. Having recovered from an illness, the narrator of the tale finds himself "in one of those happy moods" when "the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its everyday condition" (Poe, "The Man of the Crowd" 33); he feels "a calm but inquisitive interest in every thing" (34). In such a mood, he turns to people-watching and has a strong belief in his analytical prowess—he focuses on details intently, and is convinced that he is able to "frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years" in each face despite the volume of the crowd (37). However, his thorough but peaceful observing of the crowd is interrupted by the sight of a man who appears to be 'unreadable'; he leaves the narrator with simultaneous impressions of "vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense—of supreme despair" (38). Furthermore, his intentions are unclear—the narrator catches "a glimpse both of a diamond and of a dagger" under his clothes (38). This, however, leads to nowhere; after following him for hours, the narrator finally realizes that the stranger

simply "refuses to be alone"—he has no intentions beyond staying among people, only following the flux of the crowd (41). This does not come as a relief to the narrator, but rather utterly terrifies him. He proclaims the stranger to be "the type and the genius of deep crime" (41), perhaps meaning that he is a man who has been emptied out, who cannot find any solace in solitude and is ultimately lacking in personhood—the concept of the crowd incarnate. Even though the man does nothing 'wrong', the narrator is left feeling uneasy at the thought of a man with an impenetrable (and perhaps even non-existent) interior who he cannot 'decipher' and 'sort' the way he did other people. Similarly, Whalen notes how "'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' conjures up an unreal urban space where anything seems possible" and how the narrator in "The Mystery of Marie Roget" refers to the great frequency of crimes in large cities (230). Insofar as the feeling of general confusion and distrust permeates the modern society, "The Man of the Crowd" captures the social conditions present in the consequent tales of ratiocination.

However, the confusion and distrust do not only arise because of urban masses, but also because of a change in the production and dissemination of information. The Western world of the late 18th century underwent the Industrial Revolution, which brought on mass production and infrastructural development (among other things), and in the 19th century it also saw great scientific progress. Both of these things meant new possibilities for the expansion, organization and circulation of knowledge. This went hand in hand with the mass print culture of the time. In the United States, popular

journalism catering to the large working and middle classes "was at once a cause and consequence of the Industrial Revolution" (Gross 319). While "in the Old World, heavy taxes on newspapers restricted their circulation to an economic elite," in the States "news was potentially accessible to all" as "the press enjoyed special privileges under the fostering arm of government" (317). There was a desire to make information available to everyone, partly because of the values purported by the Enlightenment, but also because of profit, financial as well as political. Gross states that "the federal government that came into being with the Constitution in 1789 set about promoting a greater sense of nationality" and that "newspapers were central to that goal" (317). Moreover, Whalen argues that to some people of the time "writing and especially printing appeared as symptoms of a signifying environment in which the individual had forever lost the capacity to grasp the totality of knowledge" due to the sheer volume of it (237). As the idea of wisdom arising from deep contemplation seemingly became obsolete, the concept of the intellectual had to change in order to adapt to these new conditions. Whalen states that "wherever science and the systematic accumulation of knowledge had abetted a bourgeois revolution, the intellectual ceased to be a repository of wisdom and became instead a storehouse of information", or at least aimed to become one (233). This historical conjuncture of liberal governing (and its reliance on the notion of danger), the appearance of urban masses, and the change in the production of knowledge frames the construction of the character of C. Auguste Dupin, the detective genius of Poe's tales of ratiocination.

First, Dupin is a polymath (Whalen 242). In "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" the narrator is astonished by "the vast extent of his reading" (121) and his ability to follow links in other people's trains of thought, as if he can read their minds (124); in "The Mystery of Marie Roget" he shows his understanding of physics and chemistry in order to disprove the hasty conclusions about Marie Roget's death made by newspapers (219). More importantly however, Dupin possesses a great analytical power, which is in some ways evocative of the genius of the British Romantics or, more precisely, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's idea of the secondary Imagination as opposed to the Fancy in regard to man's creative capacities. While the Fancy "must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association" and "has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites," the secondary Imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" (Coleridge 167). In other words, while Fancy is the creative faculty that combines ideas by associating them to one another, the secondary Imagination is in a sense capable of creating syntheses, that is, new ideas. In "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," Poe explains that:

> The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, […] has been so frequently seen in those whose intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy […] Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater, indeed, than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the truly imaginative never otherwise than analytic. (132)

Therefore, it is not simply that Dupin's mind is replete with various kinds of knowledge, but that he navigates the superabundance of information in the world with ease. In

fact, the analyst appears to exhibit "a degree of acumen" which to ordinary people seems "preternatural" and whose conclusions have the "air of intuition" (Poe, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" 118). Dupin's boasts that "most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms" and that he could gain "intimate knowledge" of other people's thoughts and intentions (Poe, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" 123) are very similar to the one made by the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd." The narrator there, however, fails to 'read' the strange man primarily because "he cannot maintain a critical detachment," but rather "falls under the influence of vague sensations" and abandons "his observation post to plunge into the chaos of the streets," symbolically leaving behind "a detached, analytical perspective for a more visceral involvement in the world of human striving" unlike Dupin, who "calmly withholds judgment until the evidence has been weighed" (Kennedy 188-89). Perhaps to further illustrate Dupin's intellectual power, Poe does not write the tales of ratiocination from his point of view, even though he is the central character; as Dupin's mind remains concealed by the narrative, his genius is put on a pedestal. Whalen states that "the narrator plays a mediating role between common intelligence—whether of the police or of the public—and the extreme brilliance of Dupin," which in turn "fosters a structural identification between reader and narrator, who are both presumably subordinate to Dupin in everything except wonder" (230). Dupin stands in opposition to the ordinary intelligence of the local authorities, and it is only his superior acumen which can solve the mysterious crimes. Shulman, who refers to the analytical power as

poetic power because of its ties to imagination, says that what the tales of ratiocination do is show Dupin's superiority over the inspector, "put the authority figure in the power of the poet" and "affirm that power at the expense of practical men of affair" (255). While the "thorough, diligent, practical" police Prefect, Monsieur G, "works hard, methodically, and dully" (Shulman 255), Dupin holds that "there is such a thing as being too profound"; in his view, "truth is not always in a well" and is in fact "invariably superficial" (Poe, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" 133). For Dupin, what is important is to grasp reality as broadly as possible, a not to focus on its delicate details. Whalen states that the ratiocination tales show "Poe's growing premonition of a world where all truth would be transferred from the metaphysical depths to the material surfaces of culture" (226). At a time when most people struggled to obtain the correct information, both because of its overproduction as well as sensationalist reporting, in Dupin, Poe created a character who possessed the right skills to make sense of it all, as "the necessary knowledge" became "that of what to observe" (Poe, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" 120). Dupin's duty thus becomes to "make sense out of a conflicting mass of information and thereby lead the city out of confusion and impending chaos" (Whalen 229); he unveils the mystery of the gruesome murder of Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, disproves theories posed by sensationalist journalists about Marie Roget's death, and stops a minister from being able to blackmail the queen.

However, by the end of the ratiocination cycle, Dupin not only remains able to process information, but also "transform it into productive capital" (Whalen 234). While in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" Dupin is not yet a professional detective—he does not provide his analytical skills in exchange for money—in "The Mystery of Marie Roget" he already "refuses to work without a contract," and in "The Purloined Letter," his biggest immediate incentive to help Monsieur G is the money being offered by the Prefect (Whalen 241). Whalen explains that "while Dupin solved his first mystery to amuse himself and (secondarily) to exonerate an innocent man", in the remaining two stories he "works as a paid consultant to the police"; his genius thus becomes "a marketable commodity" (231). Therefore, Dupin's guiding principle is no longer simply bringing truth to light, but revealing only particular truths to particular people (paying customers). From the beginning of the ratiocination cycle, Dupin has personal motives for solving the mysteries: the egoistic pleasure he derives from defeating his rivals (the Prefect and the speculating newspaper reporters in "Marie Roget")"; a favor he owes to Le Bon, the bank clerk wrongfully accused of the murder of Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye; his wish to exact personal revenge on Minister D— and his political bias which makes him work in the queen's favor (Thoms 137). However, this fact itself doesn't prevent him from making that knowledge public, *selling it* does. Furthermore, Thoms states that:

> Dupin, who assumes an oppressive power in trespassing upon the private lives of others and in explaining the community to itself, is not the criminal's opposite but a tainted figure who is entangled in the very world he seeks to explicate. [...] The tales seem to construct Dupin as an unbiased observer,

whose objectivity is guaranteed by his apparent aloofness from the social world in which crime occurs. (136)

While he and the narrator retreat from society during the period of time between the murders of the Rue Morgue and Marie Roget's death, Dupin is far from disconnected from society; his ambiguous past, which includes both a past favor from a bank clerk and a preexisting relationship with a minister, shows otherwise. Thoms also argues that "we should examine the act of investigation itself" as the question of what is not being considered arises (137). While he does successfully solve the grisly murders of the Rue Morgue, Dupin "overlooks the money-making motive of the sailor" whose plan is to sell the orangutan that committed the murders; thus "the killings become merely an unlucky interlude within a successful financial venture that remains unquestioned" (Thoms 138). The question of ethics in regard to the sailor's actions (taking the animal out of its natural habitat for monetary gain) appears to be of no interest for Dupin. In "The Mystery of Marie Roget," Dupin disapproves of the press's unfounded inferences about the case, but does not solve it, perhaps willfully ignoring the very real possibility that Marie Roget died in a secret abortion attempt, as was the likely explanation of the death of Mary Rogers, whom Poe's story is based on (Thoms 140). Reducing these situations to a mere question of "Who did it?" stifles any comprehensive critique of the status quo. In that sense, Dupin seems to be protecting the established political order and the dominant production of knowledge, even when he intellectually challenges the authorities. In some ways, Dupin becomes "the genius of deep crime" (Poe, "The Man of the Crowd" 41), whose intentions remain obscure to the people, but

is nevertheless involved in the preservation of 'deep' social structures, which organize the distribution of political power and strengthen institutional authority. While his main motivation in the beginning might have been an analyst's predictable love of enigmas and mysteries, by the end Dupin embraces his role as provider (and depriver) of public knowledge. This becomes perhaps the most clear in "The Purloined Letter," when Dupin's financial incentive aligns with the political goal of those in charge. Dupin acknowledges that the incriminating letter provides the Minister with power over the queen only as long as it is not 'employed'; once it was made public, he would not have anything to hold over her head. In other words, if it became "common knowledge," the information "would lose its special utility, namely the political power it confers on its possessor" (Whalen 246). But the contents of the letter are never revealed, even after Dupin gets a hold of it. The question whether the letter should be made public is never posed, and Dupin never sees it as a public issue—the political drama is dealt with behind closed doors to protect "the honor" of the "exalted personage" (Poe, "The Purloined Letter" 339). The limits of knowledge come under the control the market and Dupin simply gives over the information to "the highest bidder" (Whalen 246). As the world becomes subsumed in the logic of interests, the Enlightenment ideal of knowledge as a universal right simply disintegrates.

The aim of this paper was to consider how the character of C. Auguste Dupin, despite being created in response to the modern crisis of overproduction of information, became implicated in it. Instead of using his analytical skills for the benefit

of the people, he turned them into a commodity and virtually placed them into the hands of the powers that be. His analytical power stayed within (in Whalen's terms) the realm of surfaces, and in doing so it enabled the structure that created the potential dangers in the first place. The man who was once capable of helping the urban masses by weeding out useless information and leading out of the chaos of modernity moved on to become the one financially profiting from the culture of danger, and eventually even endorsing it as the power of the market took over.

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