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PANEROTICISM

EDITED BY BEN AMBLER, ANA DOSEN AND KRISTINA KOCAN SALAMON

PanEroticism

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PanEroticism

Edited by

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and Kristina Kocan Salamon

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Introduction

Ben Ambler, Ana Dosen and Kristina Kocan Salamon

In September, Oxford's picturesque streets are tranquil and quiet, completely different from the bustling atmosphere of the academic year. It warmly welcomed and immediately charmed the delegates of the *8th Global Conference: The Erotic*, held at the somewhat enigmatic Mansfield College from 17-19 September 2013. The conference brought together a diversity of scholars, artists, and thinkers all having at least one thing in common, engaging thoughtfully with the erotic. Although there were fewer than forty participants, the conference was indeed extremely intriguing, not to mention the intimate atmosphere that was therefore created and one could easily get in touch with most of the delegates, who all had something mind-boggling to share. They presented their papers and hence discussed so many various topics concerning the erotic in many different contexts: eros in literature, eros in culture, eros in the arts, etc. The range of discussions varied from the folkloric eroticism in the musical genre of Raï to the erotic in photography and art to paradigms of hermaphroditism in (erotic) literature. At first glance, it may seem that the notion of the erotic embraces opposing entities from subtle to overt, from gaze to consummation, from the romantic to pornography. On closer inspection and according to the chapters of this eBook, however, one could claim that these aspects which appear dialectically opposite are in truth tightly intertwined and often cannot be separated. Moreover, it may even be that the erotic depends on these very oppositions for its unique meaning. It is often difficult to discuss dichotomies of the erotic but rather a polyphony of the erotic, one that the chapters in this collection reflect.

For something to be *erotic*, we all agreed, does not merely mean that it is sexual, nor that it is simply romantic. Nor, necessarily, may the erotic be defined as a combination of the two. The modern concept of *Eros*, from the ancient Greek, ἔρως, perhaps always contains a certain *je ne sais quoi*– one that is, importantly, relative.

The Erotic resists definitive determination, as if it withstands the shackles of language and deliberately insists on polysemy. By multiplying meanings, holding on to those ancient and inventing new ones, *eros* echoes the ultimate freedom from an unambiguous uniformity. This seductive polyphony of implications becomes perhaps the only certainty when one engages in exploring the erotic. Somehow the term erotic manages to escape and go beyond the very limit that each definition implies. For this particular reason, this eBook on the erotic cannot be very different from this polyphonic characteristic of the term itself. It offers a collection of voices and different approaches without trying to give a correct answer to *what* the erotic is but *where*, *when* and *in which way* it is or was present.

When considering Eros, Roland Barthes argues that as demonstrated in the *Symposium* the Greeks had a system, a doctrine, while 'we' today are alone in our languages with no possibility to offer a definitive answer.

> The eccentricity of the conversation derives from the fact that this conversation is systematic: what the guests try to produce are not proved remarks, accounts of experiences, but a doctrine: for each of them, Eros is a system. Today, however, there is no system of love: and the several systems which surround the contemporary lover offer him no room (except for an extremely devaluated place): turn as he will toward one or another of the received languages, none answers him, except in order to turn him away from what he loves.[1]

In spite of our 'philosophical solitude' in this eBook, our various ways of theorizing on the *ars erotica* reveal numerous segments of the world full of desire, pleasure, obscenity, taboo and transgression. The following chapters deal with questions of erotic identities as well as the formation of identities through the erotic. Here, we highlight the risk of marking identity (individual but also collective and national) only through erotic categories. Such a threat always appears when distinguishing categories of erotic which then form one's identity. Then, those rigid erotic classifications imprisoned in the identity digress from *eros* and become the cause for granting privilege to certain groups. Instead, we oppose fixed segmentation and celebrate the abundance of fluid erotic meanings.

Representative in this volume is the utterly unstable, always contextual nature of the erotic, and its location *between* object and audience. *Eros* is, more than simply *in the eye of the beholder*, relative to the moment we perceive it. As many of the following chapters illuminate, it is not just the object of desire itself that may engender feelings of *eros* in us, but the very space in which it is perceived, our apprehension of its place in a continuum of time among that before and that to come and even the very senses that translate the object to us, all of which may cause our erotic attraction for the object. Indeed, these manifold components themselves may be pregnant with erotic potential, as a location, an odour, a sound, a taste can themselves be erotic, immaculate of any base object of desire. Any definition of *erotic*, thus, is necessarily relative and contingent, personal and ephemeral. There is no one without the other: the erotic potential of any particular iota in space and time is relational between the perceiver and the perceived, dependent on its surroundings, the senses that convey it – the essence that originates in that instant and then is just as immediately obliterated. In this way *eros* is, dare we say, queer, in that it may have no normalcy, no stability, no true

consistency; it is always relative, never sure, forever ebbing and throbbing, contracting and swelling.

The chapters in this volume are organised as best possible according to their shared affinities among these various aspects. The chapter's of the section, *Decrypting the Erotic*, (re)read the erotic in expressions of culture actual and representational. Kristina Kocan Salamon's 'Decoding Desire in Contemporary Erotic Poetry: From Love to Pornography' examines the countervailing discourses of desire in a selection of poetry, critically locating an essence of desire and liberation at the heart of poetics pornographic, romantic – erotic. Natalia Kaloh Vid, in her chapter, 'A Comrade or a Mistress?: Translations of Robert Burns's Erotic Poetry in the Soviet Union,' reads Burns's original poetry against those translations of his most famous Russian interpreter, Samuil Marshak, uncovering a reflection of Soviet-state censorship mandates, evident in the desexualised female *comrade* and de-eroticised language to which readers Marshak's Burns were introduced. In 'Mithuna: The Erotic Symbol of Divine Biunity with Reference to the Imagery of Shiva and Shakti in Indian Art,' Soumya Manjunath Chavan presents a study of the symbolic essences and iconographic representations of god(esses) Shakti and Shiva, in their role as primal male and female, cogenitors of the universe. Mariko Konishi's 'Codependence as a Symbiosis: Focusing on Sexual Relationships' closes the first section by complicating prevailing understandings of codependence, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism; Konishi illuminates the symbiotic substrata whereby super/subordinate erotic dynamics operating on emotional and physical levels may countervail each other.

The second part of the volume *Tongues of Sensuality* is centred around the theme of the unspeakable within erotic expression. Both Josep Martí and Sabrina Zerar illustrate this in addressing music, whereas Philip Stoilov achieves this with regard to language. Stoilov's chapter, 'Discursive Transgression and Waste of Meaning in Georges Bataille's *The Story of the Eye*,' focuses on an inability to articulate the comprehensible as well as breaking the limitations of language within the context of the erotic. The second chapter, Martí's'The Erotic Capital Onstage' differentiates between representation and expression of erotic capital in music, giving certain emphasis to erotic voices. Martí states that the employment of erotic capital onstage does not merely lead to sexual arousal but reinforces feelings that reach beyond that, even beyond music itself. Zerar, in her chapter, 'Of Folkloric Eroticism in the Algerian Raï,' addresses the issue of the erotic aspect of Raï as an expression of struggle against Islamic repression of sexuality and for the affirmation of individual freedom.

In third section, *The Allure of the Offbeat*, we encourage you to discover the erotic at the sites of the less obvious, uncommon and even unwelcoming practices. This section pressures the reader to step beyond the safe and straightforward and find erotic encounters outside the realm of control. Doreen Bauschke's '"Growing Intimate with Monsters": Mary Shelley's Dark Desires in Shelley Jackson's

Patchwork Girl' opens up a discussion on *jouissance* in the hypertext and hybridity of the 'sexual-textual desires' of those who engage in both writing and reading. In 'The Erotic, Ethics and Philosophy: Fantasy and the Other in *Frisk*,' Matthew James Bowes-Graham thoroughly examines the relation between fantasy and ethics by employing the *field of the extreme*, while exposing a triad of protagonist's perversion, obsession and compulsion in *Frisk*. Ana Dosen, in her chapter, 'Rediscovering National Identity through the Erotic: Incestual and Orgiastic in Imamura and Miike,' uses a comparative approach taking into consideration two creative Japanese filmmakers in order to convey the surpassing of the national and multicultural through erotic obscenity in Japan. Michael Handrick's chapter, 'Lost and Found: An Exploration of the Functioning of Hermaphroditism within Erotic Discourse,' ends this section with a perspective that adds one more aspect in a male-female writing dichotomy and which stands in strong discord with already established and essentialised classifications.

In contrast, section four – *Topographies of Desire* – explores the voyage of the erotic through both space and time where its incarnations surface in different physical environments and historical moments. In addition, this section prompts the unveiling of sensuality and sexuality of what has been looked at, as well as the pleasure of the act of looking itself. David Hammerbeck's 'Habitus and the Erotic in Last Tango in Paris and Cleansed' is a study on the works of Bertolucci and Kane which positions the erotic in the space outside of social judgments. Dena Gilby investigates both past and present politics of ideal body representation in her chapter, 'Sexing the Past: Venus, the Erotic and History as a Lens for Inter-cultural and Inter-historical Interaction.' Adam Flamma's 'Sexuality as a Temporary Identity of Female Characters in Video Games' considers the change in gender roles in video games and further examines the shifting of female characters from object to subject. In 'The Obliterated Image: Fetishism and the Erotic in Relation to the Gaze in Photographic Practice,' Fagner Bibiano, through his own artistic practices, deals with the erotic that emerges between the image and the gaze in the context of deliberating on a 'repressing act of censorship.'

In the last part of the volume, we have grouped three chapters focusing on women and their eroticism in world literature: *Arousing Female Voices across Cultures*. Works of world literature tend to engage in a double conversation, with their original culture and with the limitless contexts of the world. Melania Terrazas Gallego offers a detailed insight into three women's stories from three different social and cultural backgrounds, and their attitude towards sexuality. In 'Exploring the Erotic in Asian, African-American and Irish Women's Writing: The Rhetoric of Satire,' Terrazas Gallego demonstrates how the rhetoric of satire helps these women writers employ the erotic within spaces that are more than simply neutral settings. Aina Martí's 'Seductive Music in the Novel of Adultery: Erotic Melodies in The Kreutzer Sonata and The Awakening' explores how women heroines are erotically seduced by music which serves as asexually liberating tool. The medium

of music stirs them and makes them feel sensual, even erotic, which eventually leads to adultery. Shellida Fernanda Da Collina Viegas approaches the problem of female positionality in pre-industrial England vis à vis gender-related issues. Her chapter, 'The Extraordinary and Unresolved History of the Lives of Roxana and Moll Flanders,' exhibits the areas of gender-coded conventions that define certain spaces for the heroines, which most likely differ from the spaces of heroes.

These chapters, in sum, represent the journey of critique undertaken in Oxford in September of 2013. Throughout the conference, we returned again and again to the question, just what does it mean for something to be *erotic*? Even by the final evening, after several of us had wended our way through different alleys to find ourselves, together, at the infamous Turf, we had still not settled upon an answer. We had explored diverse lanes of critical inquiry – many at play here in this volume – yet in attempting to trod and chart the erotic's manifold corners and planes, bodies and members, surfaces and firmaments, we all happened to the same place of wonder, totality, uncertainty and, dare we say, arousal. As your own critical valences carry you through the pages of this compilation, we invite you to reflect upon the implications herein for the erotic in your research and writing, your practice and play. What, in other words, arouses you?

Notes

[1] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse Fragments* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 211.

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Barthes, Roland. *A Lover's Discourse Fragments*. London: Penguin Books, 1990.

Part I

Decrypting the Erotic

Decoding Desire in Contemporary Erotic Poetry: From Love to Pornography

Kristina Kocan Salamon

Abstract
This chapter is the result of a workshop, *The Erotic in Poetry: From Love to Pornography,* which took place in September 2013 at the *8th Global Conference: The Erotic* in Oxford. Being a poet myself, I have researched this field extensively, both on a scholarly level as well as creatively as an author. In this intensive workshop, participants explored the ways in which poems can accommodate the erotic, moving from subtle expression of erotic love through blunt eroticism to pornographic features in erotic poetry. Eroticism and/or sex can be part of erotic poetry in different ways: through direct portrayal, with the use of sexual words, with the use of metaphors, or through the display of love language. Such poetry engages in lust and craving as well as repulsion and disgust, connection and disconnection, the found and the lost. During the workshop, participants were encouraged to examine numerous examples of contemporary erotic poetry, an activity which helped them to sharpen their critical thinking about what makes an erotic poem. It further raised the question of desire being at the centre of erotic poetry. This chapter, however, focuses on five poems that were discussed during the workshop: 'The Platonic Blow' by W. H. Auden, 'Desire' by Stephen Dobyns, 'Desire' by Gail Mazur, 'A Fine, a Private Place' by Diane Ackerman, and 'Coffee and Sweet Rolls' by Ruth Stone. Moreover, it attempts to portray how the concept of desire is conveyed in contemporary erotic poetry.

Key Words: Desire, eroticism, poetry, erotic poetry, love, sex, pornography.

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Desire may often denote lust but it is by no means limited to this meaning. The meaning of the term is as broad as the Sanskrit word *kama*, embracing not only the idea of sexual pleasure and/or fulfilment but also longing, craving and passion as well as enjoyment of life. The nature of desire seems to be the purest form of intuition, the fundamental motivation in our lives. Moreover, as Sigmund Freud asserted, the essence of what shapes human personality lies in the sexual drive of a person, and it seems this notion has become a dictum in today's society. When considering erotic desire, however, there is often still an inevitable dual, even contradictory stance accompanying the phenomenon. On the one hand, one can witness a celebration of desire; on the other hand, there is still some condemnation of it. The contradictory ways of presenting this same impulse can also be found in poetry. Poets have been investigating the erotic from all possible perspectives using all literary devices and forms available. They have used many different ways

to voice erotic energy and to fuse together erotic imagery and artistic views. Some critics argue that the focal point of the erotic is longing and desire and that an erotic poem must stimulate and stir the reader. David Lehman, a poet and the editor of *The Best American Poetry Series*, agrees with the literary purists that 'the heart of the erotic lies not in fulfillment but in desire.'[1] Yet, in the anthology *The Best American Erotic Poems*, he definitely left room for the perverse, fervent passion, all forms of fetish, even pornography. As a poet, I would also strive for a looser clarification allowing not only desire and lust but a whole spectrum of erotic life, from subtle, erotic love expressions to blunt eroticism to hard pornographic features in erotic poetry.

This chapter arose from a workshop *The Erotic in Poetry: From Love to Pornography* that took place in September 2013 at the *8th Global Conference: The Erotic* in Oxford. The workshop proposed to explore in what ways the concept of desire could be conveyed in contemporary erotic poetry. When conducting the workshop, I first chose an introductory poem as a lead-in to a more detailed discussion about erotic desire in poetry. To show that sometimes there is a thin line between erotica and pornography, and that an erotic poem can contain pornographic features, I read the poem 'The Platonic Blow'[2] by W. H. Auden. The participants of the workshop were given the chance to simply listen to the poem and to contemplate the title. Auden never publicly admitted authorship, but did so among friends and, according to Edward Mendelson, in an interview.[3] Furthermore, the poem has been published and anthologised on several occasions, even included in *The Cambridge Companion to W.H. Auden*[4] in 2005 as well as in the recent book *W. H. Auden in Context.*[5] During the workshop, the issue of authorship was not of great importance since I asked the participants to ignore authorship, not only of this poem but also of those that followed. They were given the texts without the names of the authors, since I am convinced that often readers are prone to evaluate the quality of a poem based on the author. After I read the poem, a short, yet heated discussion on the theme and the title followed. Afterwards, the participants of the workshop were divided into small groups, and each group was given an erotic poem and a task. They were invited to examine some poetic features in order to decode the notion of desire in contemporary erotic poems.

At the core of the debate were eight poems: 'Lust' by Yusef Komunyakaa, 'A Fine, a Private Place' by Diane Ackerman, 'Desire' by Stephen Dobyns, 'Desire' by Gail Mazur, 'Desire' by Molly Peacock, 'Preface' by Terrance Hayes, 'Coffee and Sweet Rolls' by Ruth Stone, and 'Cuore. Amore. Dolore.' by the present author. All nine poems have one thing in common: they have much to say about the human experience of erotic desire, yet employ diversity in perspective. However, the article focuses only on five poems.

In their article 'The Erotic and the Pornographic in Chicana Rap: J. V. vs. Ms. Sancha,' Beauty Bragg and Pancho McFarland define the power of pornography

thus: 'The type of power demonstrated in pornography is domination or power over others.'[6] This is partly the case in Auden's poem, which is already suggested in the title, taking into consideration the idea of Greek love: an older (more experienced) man seducing a younger one. The term platonic is on the one hand used ironically, since *the blow* – the act of fellatio – experienced by two men in the poem seems to be merely physical, sexual and not platonic at all. On the other hand, if one reads the title and the poem from the perspective of Platonic ideal love, one could interpret the word platonic also in terms of an ascent to the divine Eros. Plato divides the notion of love into two types, the vulgar being simply physical love and the divine the highest form of love, non-sexual, even spiritual. However, divine Eros ascends from physical allure of beauty to love for absolute beauty.

First, the speaker in the poem is instantly charmed by young Bud's physique. Hence, the active power of the erotic look brings the speaker to invite Bud to his room, and soon after they share moments of intense physical pleasure. Yet, towards the end the young boy exclaims 'O Jesus!' in an almost spiritual manner. Perhaps the persona wishes to leave some room for the platonic, for the divine. To return to the pornographic, though, the speaker seems to be in control and overcomes the young man. One could argue that he takes the power, yet the question is raised whether this is power to someone in opposition to power over someone. Bragg and McFarland claim that

> The erotic is a positive, sensuous, internal feeling that encourages personal excellence in all matters of life…. Once accessed, the erotic within will not allow for external control and domination of the self. Moreover, the erotic act of sharing deeply with another empowers and bridges differences between people.[7]

In this sense, the poem fulfils the definition of what makes a poem erotic and not pornographic. In his introduction to *The Best American Erotic Poems*, David Lehman writes that 'pornography appeals to the prurient interest, whereas erotica has literary or artistic value.'[8] However in 1948, Auden wrote in a letter to his friend: 'I am writing a purely pornographic poem,'[9] and pornographic elements are undoubtedly present in the poem:

> As I tongued and squeezed and rolled and tickled and swung.
> Then I pressed on the spot where the groin is joined to the cock,
> Slipped a finger into his arse and massaged him from inside.
> The secret sluices of his juices began to unlock.

I believe that the main difference between pornography and erotica lies in its presentation: in the camera angle, so to speak. When David Pendleton explains

porn's feature as 'porn's quasi-documentary nature,'[10] he also states that 'pornography on film is much more dangerous than pornographic writing since the photographic (or electronic) image is somehow more direct.'[11] I would, however, argue that the same definition could be applied to literary pornographic writing. Auden celebrates the 'ideology of the visible'[12] by ending the poem in a gay porn manner, with a come shot. Pendleton points out two main characteristics of current gay porn: 'its emphasis on the come shot and its "celebration" of promiscuity.'[13] Platonic or not, the poet succeeded in returning love to its purely physical context and managed to illustrate ardent desire in a porn manner, photographic and direct. It is often difficult for readers to appreciate the pornographic in literature and some quickly condemn it as simply lewd and without any value. I would like to draw a parallel with Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*. Both Auden's poem and Bertolucci's movie have pornographic features yet contain an added value, and the readers' desire can be stirred by both. There is always a dialectical opposition when it comes to pornography, and Pendleton agrees that 'Porn doesn't program people or their desires; the relationship is more dialectical.'[14]

Like Auden, Stephen Dobyns writes on desire from a male perspective, yet includes desire in a dialogic space. In his poem 'Desire,'[15] Dobyns tackles the issue of sexual desire as if writing a definition to construe the meaning of desire:

> What is desire but the wish for some
> relief from the self, the prisoner let out
> into a small square of sunlight with a single
> red flower and a bird crossing the sky, to lean back
> against the bricks with the legs outstretched,
> to feel the sun warming the brow, before returning
> to one's mortal cage, steel doors slamming.

The speaker seems to be in a dialogue with readers, almost trying to convince them of what desire is. On the one hand, the speaker understands sexual desire or Eros ('The flesh yearns to converse with other flesh.') as the only key to freedom, which brings us to Nietzsche, who also considered desire as 'the instinct to freedom.'[16] On the other hand, the speaker is being apologetic about the desire men feel and expresses a certain degree of condemnation ('What good does it do to deny desire, to chain / the cock to the leg and scrawl a black X / across its bald head'). As soon as he senses the tendency to over-apologise, though, he does not wish to admit it: 'Let these seconds not be full of self-recrimination / and apology.' The persona perceives desire as the fundamental drive in one's life. Christa Albrecht-Crane agrees that 'desire is a capacity, or an expansiveness that produces affective connections and resonances… it is a body's potential and basic drive.'[17]

Similar to Dobyns, Gail Mazur perceives the notion of desire in terms of being free or caged, using prison terminology as a metaphor in her poem 'Desire'[18] ('my

body hated the cage it had become,' 'from the old world I'd been imprisoned by,' 'where I'm released, where I think I'm free'). Readers are, however, confronted with a conflicting examination of physical eroticism. Mazur exploits the sensation of desire in Hobbesian terms of liberating desire in opposition to sexual liberation, yet simultaneously fights feelings of guilt because of her father, who let her 'angrily in' every night. The father is portrayed as the antithesis of freedom and desire. Regardless of the guilt, the speaker is driven by desire, since she feels that the pleasures in a boy's car 'were the only right thing to do.' Nevertheless, she feels less free in a way because her desire forces her to act but she also cannot act freely because her home environment controls her. Thomas Pink expands thus: 'The only thing, according to Hobbes, that can remove our freedom, is some obstacle to satisfying our desires. Our freedom can never be taken away by our desires themselves.'[19] However, this is where the contradiction occurs, since our desires also seem to be a form of bondage as in Mazur's case. She cannot help but act, so she is still not free, as her own desire takes 'that freedom away,'[20] and the logic of the last line supports this idea: 'where I'm released, where I think I'm free.' Even without the obstacle, the freedom is incomplete.

In contrast to Mazur's deprivation of freedom, Diane Ackerman's poem 'A Fine, a Private Place'[21] serves as an excellent example of how sexual desire can be conveyed as fulfilment. With the use of metaphors, the poet embraces the generous pleasure of sexual union in an ecstatic version of the carpe diem motif. The poem captures a moment between two lovers who manage to fulfil their erotic desire through the physical exploration of love. The title suggests the locus of the poem, which turns out to be the very symbolic marine environment. The sea appears as a space where boundaries are blurred, and the lovers are freely able to take pleasure in each other. Moreover, the boldly described sensual setting offers the lovers this suggestive fine and private place where they can hide from the world but possibly also from each other ('they made love / mask to mask, floating / with oceans of air between them'). The poet offers the potential of cumulative detail in visual and sensory imagery, which is vivid and precise:

> his stroking her arm
> with a marine feather
> slobbery as aloe pulp
> was wooing, or saw the octopus
> in his swimsuit
> stretch one tentacle
> and ripple its silky bag.

The metaphor for erotic sensation becomes the marine life itself, and it has an almost primordial effect ('he pumped his brine / deep within her, / letting sea water drive it'). The poet even presents the sensual at the sonic level, since she uses

alliteration ('the made love / mask to mask,' 'blue boudoir'). It is as if the speaker draws a parallel between nature, sexual union and poetry. Ackerman vividly describes the act but also the environment in great detail by naming the fish and other sea creatures: Indigo Hamlets, Clown Wrasses, starfish, abalone, scallops; the lovers seem to coalesce into the water habitat, a space where an erotic fusion of body[22] and water is possible. One is reminded of the erotic poetry by Pattian Rogers who uses poetry in a similar way in order to depict erotic spaces.[23]

Unlike Ackerman, Ruth Stone decodes desire through a more direct portrayal. In her highly autobiographical poem 'Coffee and Sweet Rolls,'[24] Stone expresses delight in the forbidden, somewhat bohemian art of an early love between two lovers ('where we lay reading Baudelaire, / your long elegant fingers, the nervous ritual / of your cigarette'). The speaker in the poem is married and has an affair with a young poet. In Stone's case, this was her future husband, Walter Stone, who later committed suicide. The poem is written as a memory and besides the fond recollection, also expresses the painful sense of loss ('I memorized for that austere and silent woman / who waited in the future / who for years survived on this fiction'). According to Dinitia Smith, 'she writes uncompromisingly about passion and unbearable loss; about living in poverty and on the margins of experience.'[25] The lucid poem illustrates the contact between the lover and beloved against the intoxication of the moment: 'where we lay like embryos; / helpless in the desire to be completed… All night, sighing and waking, insatiable.' The circumstances outside that room are, however, not as hopeful for the two lovers ('In the manic shadow of Hitler, the guttural / monotony of war'). It seems as if they can only find solace in each other, the hotel room being conceived as a space where they can escape from the eerie world, and their desire as their way to liberation ('the shy flush of your rising cock pointed toward heaven, / as you pull down the dark window shade').

Based on this reading and the participants' exploration of erotic poetry, it is clear that the essence of erotic poetry lies in desire. No matter if one reads an erotic love poem or a poem with pornographic elements, the erotic surges from desire. Poets connect sensual spaces (erotic images) and poetic expression (registers and techniques) in representations of physically driven communication that combines a creative, sometimes disruptive force. Erotic poetry is often full of dissonance, harmony, agony and pleasure and it enterprises to bring separate beings, spaces, and elements into a constructive unity. One feels that there is also a strong connection between freedom and erotic desire. Erotic desire helps the poets to express their efforts for liberation, personal and sexual but also for liberation of desire. Whether they write of desire itself or desire fulfilled, it seems they inevitably take a dialogic stance. Ann Cerminaro-Costanzi explains that 'it is through this carnal desire to commune with beings or spaces outside the self that the body generates an inclusive dialogic space.'[26] Furthermore, erotic poetry serves

as an extension of desire and/or erotic activity, and readers often witness a fusion of body and world.

Notes

[1] David Lehman, ed., Introduction to *The Best American Erotic Poems* (New York: Scribner Poetry, A Division of Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2008), xix.
[2] W.H. Auden, 'The Platonic Blow,' *The Best American Erotic Poems*, ed. David Lehman (New York: Scribner Poetry, A Division of Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2008), 48-52.
[3] Edward Mendelson, *Later Auden* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 298.
[4] *The Cambridge Companion to W.H. Auden* mentions 'The Platonic Blow' without even addressing the issue whether Auden had authored the poem. Stan Smith, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to W.H. Auden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22.
[5] Tony Sharpe, ed., *W.H. Auden in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 122, 286.
[6] Beauty Bragg and Pancho McFarland, 'The Erotic and the Pornographic in Chicana Rap: J. V. vs. Ms. Sancha,' *Meridians* 7. 2 (2007): 4.
[7] Ibid., 5.
[8] Lehman, Introduction, xxi.
[9] Mendelson, *Later Auden*, 298.
[10] David Pendleton, 'Obscene Allegories: Narrative, Representation, Pornography,' *Discourse* 15. 1 (1992): 154.
[11] Ibid., 155.
[12] Ibid., 156.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Stephen Dobyns, 'Desire,' *Velocities: New and Selected Poems: 1966 – 1992* (New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1994), 237-239.
[16] Nietzsche's notion of 'will to power' is desire, 'the instinct to freedom' (523), and 'the strongest, most life affirming drive'. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Genealogy of Morals,' *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modem, 1966): 571.
[17] Christa Albrecht-Crane, 'An Affirmative Theory of Desire,' *JAC* 23. 3 (2003): 578.
[18] Gail Mazur, 'Desire,' *The Common* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 14.
[19] Thomas Pink, *Free Will: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2004): 68.

[20] Ibid., 68.
[21] Diane Ackerman, 'A Fine, a Private Place,' *Jaguar of Sweet Laughter* (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1991), 195-198.
[22] By writing body, I do not solely refer to human body. Gilles Deleuze states that a "body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea: it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity." Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1985): 127.
[23] Gray Jacobik unveils Rogers's erotic poetry as "richly metaphoric and the sensuality is displaced onto a larger field of reality than the finite bounds of a single body, or of the bodies of two lovers, we are drawn into associations that connect human erotic sensations with imagined sensations in other species and in vegetative life." Gray Jacobik, 'The Ecstatic Erotic Poetry of Pattiann Rogers,' *The Antioch Review* 58. 3 (2000): 354.
[24] Ruth Stone, 'Coffee and Sweet Rolls', *The Best American Erotic Poems*, ed. David Lehman (New York: Scribner Poetry, A Division of Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2008), 60-61.
[25] Dinitia Smith, 'Poetry That Captures A Tough 87 Years; For National Book Award Winner, Long-Ago Loss Tinges Achievements,' *New York Times*, 10 December 2002. Viewed on 5 October 2013.
[26] Ann Cerminaro-Costanzi, 'Merging the Erotic and the Poetic in Vicente Aleixandre's "Espadas como labios" and "Ladestrucción o el amor"', *Hispania* 90. 4 (2007): 634.

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A Comrade or a Mistress? Translations of Robert Burns's Erotic Poetry in the Soviet Union

Natalia Kaloh Vid

Abstract
The whole translation process in the Soviet Union differed greatly from that in democratic societies because it was inevitably influenced by an institution of censorship and strict centralisation. The main aim of this chapter is to show how an ideology enforced by the Soviet state as the official standard for art and literature exerted pressures on soviet translations of Robert Burns's erotic poems, which underwent a series of transformations or distortions. Any reader of Burns knows that he holds a woman's physical love to be one of the best consolations in life. The exact number of Burns's mistresses is unknown but his love and erotic lyrics confirm the fact that the poet enjoyed life and woman's love. His erotic poetry is full of erotic allusions and references to sexual intercourse. However, proletarian literature was not the place for a demonstration or discussion of sexual themes. The censorship of erotic elements, swearwords and vulgarisms in Soviet discourse was absolutely severe. The Soviet regime embraced neither the femme fatales nor the femme fragiles of the fin-de-siecle, but established instead the image of the de-eroticised female comrade in the soviet literature and art. An emancipated soviet woman was consciously identified with the causes of social progress and/or political struggle and depicted as independent and feisty. For that reason, the most famous soviet translator of Robert Burns, Samuil Marshak, carefully avoided mentioning anything which may have disturbed Soviet censors, including frivolous expressions and hints at sexual relationships, while substituting kisses and hugs with comradely handshaking and erasing passionate depictions of a beautiful female body. The Soviet reader should not have gotten an impression that anything 'inappropriate' happened. As a result Burns's erotic poems were rewritten to the extent that we cannot talk about translations any more but rather about *second originals*.

Key Words: Robert Burns, Samuil Marshak, ideology, translation, poetry.

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Few poets anywhere in the world have acquired such unchallengeable status as national icons as Robert Burns (1759-1796), best-loved Scottish poet. Despite a humble background and lack of formal education, Robert Burns with his, for that time, unusual and almost unacceptable poetry, rose from poverty and neglect to glory and literary immortality. His life and work, as a poet and a song-writer, provided a focus for the incipient revival in Scottish poetry and in particular for writing in the Scottish vernacular. In his poetry, Burns successfully blended

Standard English and Scottish vernacular and was especially praised for his skill in wedding the two linguistic traditions. According to David Murison,[1] Burns had two languages at his disposal because, despite the fact that Scots and English were essentially dialects of the same original language, Anglo-Saxon, Scots had a considerable Norse element and some Dutch, French and Gaelic not shared with English.

In talking about the outstanding emotional power of Burns's poetry, its special melodic style and lively colourful images, it should be noted that he freed contemporary poetry from the prevailing theatrical and pompous style, endowing it with lively dialectal speech. Stupendous powers of poetic creation allowed Burns to represent the commonest things of everyday life, or the commonest feelings of the most ordinary person, bringing the reader as close to the experience as possible. Burns's poetry, free from artificial expressions, depicted human life, human passions, desires and delights with an overwhelming simplicity.[2]

Russian readers have enjoyed Robert Burns's poetry since the first translations were made in the nineteenth century, though the history of Burns's translations into Russian is turbulent. If Burns was a relatively peripheral figure in the Tsarist nineteenth century, he achieved an extraordinary assimilation in a Russian cultural milieu in the Soviet Union when his name became inseparable from the name of his most famous translator Samuil Marshak (1887-1964). Altogether Marshak translated two hundred and fifteen poems and his translations have remained the most extensive collection of Burns translations into Russian to this today.[3]

This chapter explores intentional deletion and omission of erotic connotations in Marshak's translations influenced by the official soviet ideology and propaganda.[4] It should be noted that as an essential part of a larger social discourse, no literary work is entirely free from ideological influence and translation is no exception. As such, ideological influence does not contradict the essence of literature, however, if a translation includes numerous ideologically favourable constraints, which cannot be explained by the translator's intention to make the text accessible to the target audience, it automatically becomes manipulative. Such was the case with translations of Robert Burns's poetry in the former Soviet Union where the existence of a single, overarching ideology, legitimated by the totalitarian power of the state, became 'a chief feature of the society'[5] and inevitably influenced literary translations, an essential part of a literary discourse.

Proletarian literature was not the place for a demonstration or discussion of sexual themes. The censorship of erotic elements, swearwords and vulgarisms in Soviet discourse was severe. The Soviet regime embraced neither the femme fatales nor the femme fragiles of the fin-de-siecle, establishing instead a de-eroticised female comrade in soviet literature and art. An emancipated soviet woman was consciously identified with the causes of social progress and/or political struggle and depicted as independent and feisty.

Following the official ideological guidelines, Marshak carefully avoided frivolous expressions and hints at sexual relationships, substituted kisses and hugs with comradely handshaking and erased Burns's passionate depictions of the beautiful female body. The Soviet reader should not have gotten an impression that anything *inappropriate* happened in Burns's poems. As a result, Burns's erotic poems were rewritten to the extent that we cannot talk about translations but rather about 'second originals.'

There are numerous examples of omissions and softening of erotic connotations which become clear in careful reading.[6] Thus, in the poem 'I am o'er Young to Marry Yet' a young girl complains that she is too young to be married. All hints at the sexual relationship with the future husband, the girl's main concern, 'lying in a man's bed,'[7] 'Were I to lie wi' you, kind Sir,'[8]and 'you an' I in ae bed,'[9] were in Marshak's translation replaced with the girl's fear of staying alone with her future husband, or omitted.

The translation of the poem 'The Rigs O' Barley' is more sentimental, pathetic and even dramatic then the original. The lines 'I ken't her heart was a' my ain;/I lov'd her most sincerely'[10] were translated

> *В одно слились у нас сердца,/Одной мы жили волей'*[11] *(Our hearts merged in one/We lived according to one will)*,

bringing the poem close to a love elegy. There are several other adaptations. In the original it is clear that the date takes place at night, 'Beneath the moon's unclouded light,'[12] while in Marshak's translation the poet meets Annie during the day

> *Во первый августовский день*[13] *(In the first day of August)*

which was probably more appropriate and less 'suspicious.' Love is never mentioned in the translation, which is also shorter than the original, as the lines 'But by the moon and stars so bright,/That shone that hour so clearly!/She aye shall bless that happy night / Amang the rigs o' barley'[14] were not translated, probably in order to avoid mentioning the fact that the poet actually spent the night with Annie in a rig of barley.

In the poem 'The Ploughman,' the ploughman's girlfriend says, 'I will mak my Ploughman's bed,/And chear him late and early.'[15] Such an immoral statement was carefully replaced, and in the Russian translation she simply admires 'her dear friend' and does not mention a bed at all. In the previous stanza the girlfriend also dares to say 'Cast off the wat, put on the dry,/And gae to bed, my Dearie.'[16] In order to avoid any misunderstanding about the relationship between the ploughman and his girlfriend, Marshak replaced her invitation to bed by an invitation to dinner.

Marshak faced the same problem in the poem 'My Collier Laddie' which was translated '*Подруга угольщика'* (Collier's Friend). The change of the title

emphasises that the poem is about a young woman who decided to spend her life with a poor collier. The Russian word '*подруга'* used in the title does not necessarily suggest a romantic relationship and can be interpreted as merely a 'friend.' In the fifth stanza a young woman also mentions how happy she is with her collier, 'And make my bed in the Collier's neuk,/And lie down wi'my Collier laddie.'[17] These lines could not be translated literally, so Marshak softened them, replacing 'bed' with 'my little corner' and erasing the words 'lie down wi' me.' In Marshak's translation, the collier's girlfriend sits with her beloved every night in her little corner.

> *Язаберусьвсвойуголок,/Мойугольщик – сомною*[18] *(I will sit into my little corner, /My collier – with me).*

In the poem 'A Red, Red Rose' the expression 'my Dear'[19] used three times in the original was omitted or, in one case, replaced by '*мой друг'* (my friend) and in the poem 'Kissin' my Kattie' the last two lines were completely rewritten. The original lines 'Drucken or sober, here's to thee, Katie, /An blest be the day I did it again!'[20] were in Marshak's translation replaced by

> *Чтомилейчеловекунасвете, Чемсвобода, покойилюбовь* [21] *(What is better for the man in the world /Than freedom, rest and love).*

In Burns's poem 'Meg o' the Mill,' the famous Scottish tradition of bedding the bride and the groom is mentioned, 'O, ken ye how Meg o the Mill was bedded?'[22] Translating these lines Marshak avoided mentioning 'bed' and simply asked his readers

> *Азнаешьчемкончилосьночьювеселье?*[23] *(Do you know what was at the end of the joy?).*

In a longer poem, 'The Jolly Beggars,' the word 'doxy' in the line 'His doxy lay within his arms'[24] was substituted with '*любовница*'[25] (mistress). Translating the second song (tune – 'Sodger Laddie') in which a prostitute talks about life Marshak had to be particularly careful. Instead of saying that 'one of a troop of Dragoons was my daddie,'[26] he mentions that a woman's mother was once a guest in the troop of dragoons. Even though it is clear what type of guest is referred to, Marshak's translation is much softer than the original. In what follows the woman mentions that the first of her lovers was 'a swaggering blade.'[27] Instead of a word 'lover' Marshak used the word '*друг*' (friend), while substituting the line 'Transported I was with my sodger laddie'[28] with

> *Чтотаить! Явлюбиласьвкрасавцасолдата* [29] *(I will not conceal, I fall in love with a handsome soldier).*

Thus Marshak creates an almost romantic atmosphere by using the words 'love,' 'handsome' and 'conceal' in what was originally meant as the confession of a prostitute. Translating the next line "But the godly old Chaplain left him in the lurch,"[30] Marshak uses the verb '*соблазнить*'[31] (to seduce), softening the whole context of the original idea that a woman changed one lover for another.

Much of the second half of the poem 'Epistle to Davie' deals with the consolation love provides. While speaking of the effect the thought of his Jean has on him, Burns uses several expressions that reiterate the physical warmth that is a token of sexual arousal. Marshak decided to replace the verbs 'to heat' and to 'beet' with 'to warm' and to 'light' and erase the word 'flame.' Instead of a passionate 'It sets me a'in flame,' Marshak uses the expression 'I am not alone any more,' In Burns's original we read 'It warms me, it charms me /To mention but her name: /It heats me, it beats me,/And sets me a'in flame!'[32] Marshak's translation is softer,

> *Довольно, невольно, /МневспомнитьимяДжин, /**Тепломне, светломне**, /Ияуж**неодин'***[33] *(It is enough for me to remember / The name of Jean unwillingly /And I feel warm and light /And I am not alone any more).*

One of the most problematic issues in the translation of the poem 'The Twa Dogs' in which two dogs discuss their masters' lives was the stanza at the end of the poem in which Caesar, a dog who belongs to a rich lord, describes his master's travelling around the world during which he denies himself no pleasure. The phrase 'Wh_re-hunting amang groves o' myrtles'[34] could not be translated directly, considering the fact that Soviet critics were overly sensitive regarding any issues connected to sexual behaviour or eroticism.[35] In the Soviet Union, direct translations of the words 'whore' and 'whoring' would be censored for the sake of immorality, while the word 'lord' was omitted for a different reason, an overall tendency of erasing religious context from the Soviet discourse. Hence, Soviet translators did not follow the strategy of shortening used in the original but substituted these problematic words with more suitable ones. Marshak softens the original by using a more poetic epithet instead, '*смуглые девы'* (dark ladies). His translation results in '*ловитьотбудетсмуглыхдев'*[36] (he will be chasing dark ladies). The meaning of the translation is obscure as it is not clear in what way the ladies are dark.

The translations made in the Soviet Union by Samuil Marshak were entirely adapted to ideological demands and clearly presented norms and value descriptions which included promotion of official Soviet doctrines according to the newly

established canons. However, while exposing the ideological background of Marshak's translations, we cannot deny their unquestionably high level of quality.In spite of obvious ideological changes Marshak's translations have become canonical and have remained the best translations of Burns into Russian for almost half a century. The next generation of translators face a hard task because the 'Russian' Robert Burns has been created by Marshak and Russian readers do not want to accept any other variants. They differ too much from that fresh and lively image which was created by Marshak.

Notes

[1] David Murison, 'The Language of Burns, *Critical Essays on Robert Burns*, ed. Donald A. Low (London: Routledge, 1975), 54.
[2] Natalia Kaloh Vid, *Ideological Translations of Robert Burns's Poetry in Russia and in the Soviet Union* (Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta, 2011), 55.
[3] A dramatist, successful poet, political satirist and state propagandist, magazine editor and author of children's books, Samuil Marshak was one of the few Soviet translators educated abroad, at the University of London. The key to the success of his translations lies primarily in his feeling for languages – Russian, English and Scottish dialects – which Marshak possessed to a high degree.
[4] In the nineteenth century, most of Burns's love and nature lyrics were translated but his satires, democratic lyrics which contained appeals to the sentiments of freedom and citizenship, patriotic songs, and ironic epigrams remained unknown to Russian readers.
[5] Edward J. Brooks, 'Socialist Realism in Pravda: Read all about it!,' *Slavic Review* 53. 4 (1994): 975.
[6] For non-Russian readers I provide my own translation of Marshak's translations.
[7] Robert Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. James A. Mackay (Alloway: Alloway Publishing, 1993), 307.
[8] Ibid., 307.
[9] Ibid., 307.
[10] Ibid., 449.
[11] Robert Burns*, Robert Burns. Stikhi*, trans. Samuil Marshak (Moskva: Hudozhestvenaia literatura, 1976), 112.
[12] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 449.
[13] Marshak, *Stikhi,*112.
[14] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 450.
[15] Ibid., 313.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 453.

[18] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 48.
[19] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 517.
[20] Ibid., 392.
[21] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 198.
[22] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 489.
[23] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 243.
[24] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works*, 184.
[25] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 167.
[26] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 184.
[27] Ibid., 184.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 167.
[30] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 184.
[31] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 167.
[32] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 86.
[33] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 96.
[34] Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works,* 144.
[35] However, it should be noted that Burns's original also shows the influence of censoring, in this case self-censoring. Burns shortened the words 'whore' (wh_re), 'whoring' (wh_ring) and 'lord' (l_ _ d), discussed above, as religious structures at his time would not have allowed him to write in full.
[36] Marshak, *Stikhi,* 361.

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Mithuna: The Erotic Symbol of Divine Biunity with Reference to the Imagery of Shiva and Shakti in Indian Art

Soumya Manjunath Chavan

Abstract
The vast panorama of Indian Art includes images and imagery of human beings, animals, gods, goddesses, flora, fauna and an unlimited depiction of themes based on events from birth to death and mystery to fantasy. The gods and goddesses are innumerable in number and have their own unique dedicated iconography with a variety of names and forms. Amongst them is Shiva, one of the Trinities, with three eyes, a crescent on his head, serpent around his neck, thick locks of hair coiled on top of his fore head which bears the Ganges, Neelakanta, the one with the blue throat, holds a trident and a drum, his wife is Parvathi or Shakti, his sons Ganesha and Karttikeya, and his abode, Mount Kailasa, one of the loftiest peaks of the Himalayas, Shiva and Shakti are considered as the primal male and female cosmic principles whose union is the source of the creation of the universe. Shiva meaning 'the auspicious one' and Shakti, his vital energy, are depicted in Indian iconography in various forms like the Linga or phallus, the non-anthropomorphic form as symbolic of their union, few other anthropomorphic erotic imagery, being Umamaheshvara meaning Shiva enthroned with Shakti, Sundaramurti refers to Shiva embracing his consort and Ardhanarishvara is the lord whose half is a woman.The present chapter will be an interdisciplinary study investigating the mithuna or the erotic imagery of the couple Shiva and Shakti depicted in Indian art on one side, and studies them as symbols of divine biunity on the other.

Key Words: Shiva, Shakti, Indian art, iconography, iconology, erotic couple, mithuna, divine biunity.

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> Only if conjoint with the Shakti would Shiva
> earn the privilege to become overlord;
> otherwise the God is not able to even stir.[1]

1. Introduction

The goal of Indian life is to attain the four purusharthas: dharma, artha, kama and moksha. *Dharma* meaning morality and virtue, *artha* or wealth and power, *kama* meaning desire and *moksha* the liberation. Kama is defined as paired, forming a pair, a pair male and female; but also 'any couple or pair,' pairing, copulation, a pair or couple.[2] This pair of male and female in union is called mithuna.[3] The whole

creation is considered to be a result of the union of the cosmic dual principles Shiva and Shakti.

Much erotic literature of India finds its beginning in the Vedas which mentions that, 'the Earth is the female that receives the rain, rain of the father and gets pregnant,' and most outstanding aim of the vedic rituals is the use of various verses with sex-imagery as psychological support to procreation and progeny.[4] This is followed by the Puranas, Natya-Shastra, Arthashastra, Kamasutra, Kalidasa's works, Kuuttanamala and Amarushataka. The erotic elements in India can be observed from the rock-paintings to the contemporary art of India. Exhaustive work has been done in documenting and analysing the erotic represented in Indian art. The distinguished scholars like E. O. James, D. D. Kausambi, Marc Eliade, J. Gonda, Moti Chandra, H. D. Sankila, M. A. Murray and B. S. Upadhyaya have also recognised the significance of sexual magic and fertility rites in Indian culture. Kanwar Lal's works on erotic being very informative and analytical, where as O. C. Ganguly throws light on the historical development of the erotic motifs in Indian art. Devangana Desai's doctoral thesis is an exhaustive volume on the erotic sculptures of India. The concept of Divine biunity has been argued and established by Stella Kramrisch, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Harsha Dahejia, however the present chapter is a humble attempt to re-establish and rethink the imagery of Shiva and Parvati as erotic symbols of divine biunity in selected examples of Indian art and compliment them with drawings and paintings by the author.

2. Mithuna: The Pairing

Rgveda refers more frequently about the Mithunikarana, for example, water with cloud. The concept of couple formation of Earth and Sky is the oldest form, according to the Rgveda verse I.I.85. Rgveda treated the third goal of life, Kama, as the primary seed of mind. According to Atharvana Veda, Mithuna was an auspicious symbol. The verses VIII.1.34 refer to the erotic etymology, recovery of last virility and also about the female generative. Nudity and prominent breasts, the emphatic symbol of fertility continued to be the main characteristic feature of mother cult. Since the dawn of civilisation, erotic realism in art has been a subject matter of much debate and serious controversies in the circle of moralists, reformers and religious puritans. At the same time eroticism has been a source of masterpieces in poetry, literature, and plastic art. Erotic motives have inspired sculptors and the poets and writers alike. The word *mithuna* stands for couple, or sex partners, or the various things used in the sacrificial settings. Puranas or the ancient Indian texts named many divine couples; Brahma Purana and Linga Puranas reveal that all women were born from Prakriti and all men from Shiva.[5] These images of Gods and Goddesses, with the male deity standing on the right of his consort, encircling her

with his arm and touching her breast are known as daivi mithunas or divine pairs,[6] and are referred to in this chapter.

3. Shiva and Shakti as Daivi Mithunas: Divine Pairs

Shiva, one of the Trimurtis, has three eyes, a crescent on his head, serpent around his neck, thick locks of hair coiled on top of his head, which bears the Ganges, a throat blue in colour; he holds a trident and a drum, his wife is Parvathi or Shakti, his sons Ganesha and Karttikeya, and his abode the Mount Kailasa, one of the loftiest peaks of the Himalayas. Shiva and Shakti are considered the primal male and female cosmic principles whose union is the source of the creation of the universe. Shiva meaning 'the auspicious one' and Shakti, his vital energy, are depicted in Indian iconography in various forms like the Linga or phallus, the non-anthropomorphic form as symbolic of their union, few other anthropomorphic erotic imagery being, Uma-Maheshvara meaning Shiva enthroned with Shakti, Alinganamurti refers to Shiva embracing his consort and Ardhanarishvara, the lord whose half is a woman. The present chapter will analyse Shiva and Shakti in three levels, the first is mithuna as the symbolic of creation, the second daivi mithuna as imagery in Indian art and the third being the experience of this mithuna as biunity.

4. Mithuna as Symbolic of Creation

Civilisations around the world have their own theories of Creation, which describe the origin of the cosmos in their own unique ways and are a symbolic narrative of a culture, tradition or people. The different thoughts of Indian philosophy like the Vedas, Upaninads, Puranas and Tantras put forward varied versions of the genesis of creation. According to the Vedic hymns, the source of creation is interpreted differently; one of the hymns of the Veda says that the process of creation is both monistic and monotheistic as it is either, God created the world out of His own nature without any pre-existent matter or, through His power acting on externally pre-existent matter. The monistic conception of creation says the Absolute Consciousness (Purusha or Brahman), which is the only one existing and the first fact of affirmation of the primal *I*, through penance, active Purusha or Brahman and passive Prakrti, are the formative principle and the chaotic matter.[7] The rest of the evolution follows from the interaction or the desire or kama between these two principles.

This concept is described in the Kamakalavilasa of Punyananda as the two cosmic principles being Shiva and Shakti, and their union the source of the whole universe in all its grandeur and multiplicity. Verses 6 and 12 exhibit this aspect in clarity:

> The two Bindus, white and red, are Shiva and Shakti, Who, in a secret mutual enjoyment, are now expanding and now contracting. They are the Cause of the creation of Word…Word and its meaning are always united, They are Shiva and Shakti which are three-fold as Creation, Maintenance and Dissolution…[8]

5. Daivi Mithuna in Iconography of Shiva and Shakti

After the death of his first wife, Sati, Shiva was left bereft. He withdrew from the world and roamed the wilderness living a life of austerity. Kamadeva, a cupid, fired an arrow and as soon as Shiva saw Parvati he fell in love once more. They were married in a ceremony performed by Brahma.[9] One of the walls in Ellora portrays the Marriage of Shiva and Parvati (Image 1). The central figures are of Shiva, the divine bridegroom, holding the right hand of Parvati. As daughter of the mountains, she symbolises the Earth and stands demure and a little shy as she weds her divine partner.[10] As Harsha V. Dahejia describes the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, and the transformation of their form and ideal from earthly to spiritual, the alingana of Shiva, where he romantically embraces Parvati, a gesture that is seen in many of the Uma-Maheshvara images in stone or bronze.[11] It can be observed that in the Uma-Mahesvaramurti, Uma is seated on the left lap of Shiva, and his left hand is placed on the left shoulder of Uma.[12] This imagery creates a sense of coming together of the couple in a very homogeneous way.

Alinganamurti, coming together of Shiva and Shakti:

In the alingana or embracing of Shiva and Parvati is the assertion of the coming together of purusha and prakrti, of the subject and object, in the process of knowledge. And the process of their marriage as a traverse from the duality into oneness; or turning around, of recognising the other as a fragment and then returning that fragment to the whole.[13] This Alinganamurti is one of the types of Chandrasekharamurti found in the temples of Southern India. In this aspect he is represented as embracing Parvati with one of his left arms: this arm might rest upon the left side of Parvati just below her breast, or it may be placed upon the left arm of her. Parvati should keep in her right hand a red lotus flower or may embrace Shiva, the two figures of Shiva and Parvathi may be embracing each other, the one with the left and the other with the right hand (Image 2).[14]

Ardhanarishvara the androgyn, half man and half woman:

Once Shiva's desires has been awakened he engages with Parvati, a heart throbbing romantic dalliance begins. Shiva is now able to move away from the sensuality of Parvati to her spirituality, from her outer form to her inner essence. This stage of dwelling together in mutual enjoyment and harmony, where Shiva is

no longer the primal and isolated but an androgyn, half man and half woman, half Shiva and half Shakti (Image 3).[15]

This form is called Ardhanarishvara and the iconography has the right side half as male, Shiva, and the left half as female, that is, Parvati. The male half has locks on the head, adorned by a crescent moon. In the right ear is the earrings of crocodile and the right half of the forehead has half of an eye. The image of Ardhanarishvara may have two, three or four arms. With the hands holding different weapons and the right side adorned with ornaments peculiar to Shiva, the chest on the right side is that of a man, while a garment of tiger's skin and silk covers the body below the lion's only up to the knee. On the right half of the chest is a girdle of snake, and the whole of the right side is covered by ashes. Collocated, the left side is the female half with a longish crown or a fine knot of hair, left eye painted with collyrium. She holds a flower, a mirror or a parrot in her hands which are ornamented. She has a round and well-developed breast and flowing ornaments with multicoloured silken cloth covering the body down.[16] Parvati is the essence of movement, Shiva is the essence of stillness; while Parvati is the meaning, Shiva is the word; while Parvati is the vowel Shiva is the consonant in the alphabet; while Parvati is time, Shiva is timelessness.[17]

Shiva and Shakti as the cosmic principles of divine biunity:

Shakti is reflected in the sensuality of Parvati, and Parvati through her spirituality in turn is reflected in Shiva and Shiva finally is reflected in Parama Shiva, the Absolute. The mirror in the hand of Parvati, in the Ardhanarishvara form, has ensured that the two become one and the initial aham, *I am*, consciousness of Shiva now moves the larger consciousness, *I am this*. In moving from just *I am* to more inclusive *I am this* Shiva has widened his consciousness where Shiva and Shakti are together in a celebratory whole.[18] This androgyn form of Shiva and Shakti is symbolic of the state of inseparable wholeness, ultimately redefining the state of divine biunity.

6. Mithuna as Divine Biunity

According to the tantric principles, all that exists in the universe must also exist in the individual body.[19] The principles of Shiva and Shakti are recognised as the Kundalini Shakti which is awakened to unite with Shiva. According to Ajit Mukherjee, the Kundalini is the female energy existing in latent form in every human placed at the base of the spine; she is the potential of psychic energy and the most thermal current. The arousal of the Kundalini through unique tantric practices leads to the spiritual experience of the flowering of the psycho-nuclear energy. This awakening of the Kundalini and its traversing through the energy centres called chakras finally culminates in the union with Shiva in his seat Sahasarara (Image 4),

on top of the head, leading the adept into a state of union, a non-dual state, realisation of one-ness, the universal joy.[20]

This state of one-ness can be identified with the union of Shiva and Shakti within, resulting in the state of divine biunity which can be further clarified by Coomaraswamy's interpretation of divine biunity:

> When one is closely embraced by a darling bride and knows naught of a within or without, even so that the (spiritual) Person (of a man) embraced by the prognostic Spirit knows naught of a within nor a without. That is his true form, in which his desire is obtained, the Spirit and the whole of his desire, he has no unfulfilled desire, nor any grief.[21]

This state of union is a symbol of Moksha, final release or re-union of the two principles Shiva and Shakti; this symbol of biunity is Mithuna, *the state of being a couple*. Mithuna as symbol of Moksha, ultimate release, means a union, like that of the Fire and its burning power, which is inseparable from, and in, the Fire from the beginning.[22] One can consider the divine biunity by saying that all the sexual phraseology is a matter of analogy and symbolism.[23]

7. Conclusion

Shiva and Shakti as the two cosmic principles find their significance in the three levels of creation, the iconography and the biunity. There is great interest in the fact that these cosmic principles are like a part of a whole; they operate on creating the cosmos which mirrors them. The same concept is symbolically worshipped through the iconographic representation, and the ultimate goal of every human's life, to attain moksha or the final liberation. This is again interpreted through the union of these two principles through the experience of divine biunity on the microcosmic level. The understanding of Shiva and Shakti in their state of union stands as a symbol of mithuna, the erotic imagery in Indian art and, at the same time, symbolises the divine biunity.

Notes

[1] Pandit S. Subramanya Sastri and T. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar, *Saundarya-Lahari – The Ocean of Beauty* (Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1948), 8.

[2] Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Private Limited, 1993), 271.

[3] Ibid., 816.
[4] G. V. Bhaskara Reddy and M. C. Mittal, *Erotic Sculptures of Ancient India: A Critical Study* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1991), 20.
[5] Ibid., 19-21.
[6] Devangana Desai, *Erotic Sculpture of India: A Socio-Cultural Study* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1975), 50.
[7] Sir John Woodroffe, *Garland of letters* (Madras: Ganesh & Company, 1998), 1-2.
[8] Arthur Avalon, *Translation, Punyanandanatha, Kamakalavilasa* (Madras: Ganesh & Co, 1953), 9-26.
[9] 'Google Privacy Policy' Viewed 7 October 2013 http://www.asianart.com/exhibitions/aalondon2001/mainpages/005.html,
[10] 'Google Privacy Policy' Viewed 7 October 2013 http://www.4to40.com/travel/index.asp?p=Elephanta&k=Shiva
[11] Harsha V. Dahejia, *Leaves of a Pipal Tree – Aesthetic Reflections on some Hindu Myths and Symbols* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2005), 98.
[12] TA Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. 2.1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Private Limited, 1997), 135-6.
[13] Dahejia, *Leaves of a Pipal Tree*, 98.
[14] Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 135-6.
[15] Dahejia, *Leaves of a Pipal Tree*, 98.
[16] Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 321-327.
[17] Dahejia, *Leaves of a Pipal Tree*, 99.
[18] Ibid., 99.
[19] Ajit Mukherjee, *Kundalini: The Arousal of the Inner Energy* (Rochester, NY: Destiny Books, 1981), 9.
[20] Ibid., 53.
[21] Ananda Coomaraswamy, 'The Tantric Doctrine of Divine Biunity,' *Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 236.
[22] Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple II* (Delhi: Motilal Baranrsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1976), 346.
[23] Coomaraswamy, *Selected Paper*, 240.

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Appendix

Image 1: Ellora cave 29 - Marriage of Shiva and Parvati, Ellora, India© 2014. Image Courtesy of Soumya Manjunath Chavan.

Image 2: Alinganamurti – coming together of Shiva and Shakti, Pattadakal, Karnataka, India © 2012. Image Courtesy of Soumya Manjunath Chavan.

Image 3: Ardhanarisvara – Pattadakal, Karnataka, India. © 2012. Image Courtesy of Soumya Manjunath Chavan.

Image 4: Awakening of the Kundalini and its traversing through the energy centres called chakras and finally culminating into the union with Shiva in his seat Sahasarara, on top of the head. © 2012.
Image Courtesy of Soumya Manjunath Chavan.

Codependence as a Symbiosis: Focusing on Sexual Relationships

Mariko Konishi

Abstract
This chapter analyses the concept of 'codependence' using the notion of 'symbiosis' as defined by Erich Fromm. Fromm analyses a type of relationship, which as it was pointed out by some researchers has a similarity with codependence: sadism which attempts to control other and masochism which desires to be controlled by other in a love relationship. According to Fromm, both sadism and the masochism share the same characteristic, which he proposes to call 'symbiosis,' that is a striving or character traits of individual trying to escape from solitude and weakness. In symbiotic relationship, people lose their difference with the other who shares the relation. Fromm mentions that sexual relationship is one of the actions that lead to symbiosis. Since codependent relationship is one of the forms of symbiosis, and so long as original meaning of codependence relates to love relationships, which of course deeply affect sexual relation, it is obvious that research on sexuality is essential for the study of codependence. However, there are no rich studies which focus on sexual relationship and codependence, and if they mention it, the sexual relationship tends to be described as sexually repressed or inappropriate, or as one where the person just obeys their partners sexually without getting sexual pleasure itself, and gives his or her sexuality self-sacrificially, even in cases in which a codependent genuinely desires to have a sexual relation or is addicted to it. Therefore I would like to illuminate codependent sexual relation, and inquire into this relational structure using the concept of 'symbiosis' which mentions masochistic sexual desire.[1]

Key Words: Codependence, codependency, Fromm, symbiosis, sadism, masochism, sadomasochism, sexual relationship, domination, submission.

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1. Introduction

Codependence refers to both a pathological symptom toward others and to human relationships themselves. Surveying the discourse of codependence, one can notice that it derives primarily from the love relationships of couples. As long as the original meaning of codependence relates to love relationships, which of course sexual relations affect deeply, then research on sexuality is essential to the study of codependence.

Among previous studies, there are no rich studies which do focus on sexual relationships of codependence, and if they mention it, codependents, who have symptoms of codependence of trying to control the one in order to make the other depend on them, tend to be described as sexually repressed or inappropriate. Or, alternatively, they are seen as people obeying their partners sexually without

getting sexual pleasure themselves, and giving their sexuality self-sacrificially, even in cases in which a codependent genuinely desires to have sexual relations or is addicted to it. Despite its apparent negative aspects, in many cases it seems that a relationship of codependence is quite captivating for people in the relationship, and they are fascinated by the love relationship, since they are likely to desire staying with the partner of codependence.

Fromm discusses 'symbiosis,' which is 'the union of one individual self with another self'[2] in a psychological sense, and which can be the aim in both sadism and masochism. We can consider that codependent relationships are also one form of 'symbiosis,' since both depict a neurotic relation and character – the masochist personality is similar to the codependent; furthermore, the example of the symbiotic relation of sadomasochism by Fromm is exactly that of a codependent relationship. Some researchers point out this connection between the two phenomena. For example, Noguchi points out that the context of codependence is similar to the story of *Escape from Freedom* written by Fromm, and that codependence is a modern version of it.[3] Also, Yamada states that the symbiotic fixation explained by Fromm is 'not love, but "codependence" which restrains freedom, and it [sic] is an immature or perverted relation between a regressing tyrant and a submissive servant or slave who is too tolerant and tender.'[4] Chancer explains codependence as 'a recent phrase of the kind of symbiotic neediness Fromm equated with sadomasochism.'[5] If we search for not only academic, but subcultural descriptions, we can find many who mention this connection.

According to Fromm's analysis, people who have either masochistic or sadistic perversion rooted in symbiosis get sexual pleasure, although the symbiotic relationship itself is problematic. It might imply that not every, but some, sexual relationships of codependence are quite captivating and give even sexual pleasure itself to codependents. Considering this hypothesis, we can understand more deeply one of the reasons why codependents fall into the terrible relationship that looks quite distressful. This chapter, therefore, focuses on and analyses the sexual pleasure of codependents which they can get through codependent or symbiotic relationship.

I first examine the literature on codependence of sexuality. That discourse argues that codependents can be regarded as persons who avoid and cannot enjoy sexual life, or use sexuality to get some rewards, namely that sex is self-sacrificing for them. Second, I analyse symbiosis by focusing on sexual relationships to reveal that sexuality is not always self-sacrificing for codependents.

2. Sexuality in Discourse of Codependence

The term of 'codependence' or 'codependency' first appeared in alcoholic clinics in the end of the 1970s in America. Before that, people had expected to find causes of alcoholism in the alcoholics themselves. However, the notion of codependence evolved to indicate that spouses (in fact wives) of alcoholics could

also be part of the cause of alcoholics' illness, since they can become dependent upon being depended-upon by alcoholics. In such a state of dependence of being depended-upon, such spouses contributed not to the recovery of alcoholics, but contributed (largely unconsciously) to making the condition worse. Codependence is, of course, not only about women, yet the term tends to be used as applied to women. I use this term femininely in this chapter, even though I recognise that this way of using the term is very provocative.

From 1940s, there had already been research on the wives of alcoholics, treating a phenomenon almost identical to codependence, research which deeply impacted the concept of codependence. A disturbed-personality theory was postulated to account for the neurotic needs of wives of alcoholics who were eager to dominate or control their husbands.[6] From the 1950s, a *stress theory* started to be used. It claimed that wives became neurotic because of the stress that came from having alcoholic husbands. These theories tended to consistently describe the wives of alcoholics as sexually repressed or to deny anything related to sex in their research on wives of alcoholics.

For example, one of the studies of disturbed-personality theory mentions the wife of an alcoholic who denied that her children could have any sexual interests, and also felt that her husband had a bad influence on the children when he drank and made sexual demands on his wife. Even during his sober periods, the wife would dress less attractively to avoid sexual encounters.[7] This woman's discomfort with sexuality is typical of the sexuality of the wives of alcoholics, and a common example of a type of codependent seen in the literature on codependence.

Let me return to focus on codependence itself. Codependents tend to have been described as women who cannot enjoy sexual relations, or feel uncomfortable about sexuality. Beattie asserts that some codependents have sexual problems; they have sex when they do not want to, refuse to enjoy sex because they are so angry at their partner, have a difficult time asking for what they need in bed, feel sexual revulsion toward their partner, do not talk about it, lose interest in sex, make up reasons to abstain.[8]

> Frequently, it is the codependent who has problems with sex. There is a range of difficulties that can be encountered in the bedroom. We may be unable to achieve orgasm, fear loss of control, or lack trust in our partner. We may withdraw emotionally from our partner, be unwilling to be vulnerable with our partner, or lack desire for our partner. We may feel revulsion toward our partner, or we don't get needs met because we're not asking to get these needs met.[9]

In addition, codependents tend to be seen as people who use their sexuality or have sexual relations only for others; they want to get love from a partner or somebody

else even if they actually cannot feel sexual pleasure by themselves. The self-help group of Codependent of Sexual Addiction (COSA; the group says that COSA is not an abbreviation and their members identify themselves in many different ways, such as 'co-sex addict,' 'sexual codependent,' 'sex-addiction family member,' 'co-addict' and so on), which is 'an anonymous Twelve-Step fellowship for anyone whose life has been affected by someone else's compulsive sexual behavior' or 'self-supporting through the voluntary contributions of members,'[10] points out that codependents incline to focus more on another person's sexual needs and do not care about their own needs.

Similarly, Kasl insists that, in codependent relationships, women's sexual availability for sexual addicts is like alcohol for alcoholics. Sex is exploited codependently when women use their sexuality sacrificially to maintain a relationship, attract a partner, prevent abandonment, or placate a partner with 'the mistaken belief that sex is the way to secure what she needs,'[11] even though they do not truly desire it. Kasl explains that:

> Sexual codependency is, in many ways, only a slight exaggeration of the culturally prescribed norm for women: the passive, sweet, servile female who believes that she must be sexual to receive love and care. Having been taught this basic partnership bargain throughout the ages, women learn to detach from their sexuality, believing it is a thing to be "saved" and "given" to men, and the means by which to control men. Women are also taught to mistake sexual attraction as a sign that they are valued as a person.[12]

In this way, the sexuality of codependents tends to have been explained as having an aspect of self-sacrifice in many discourses. Codependents feel as if they get a sense of being loved or needed from their sexual partner and notice that their relationship went well.

Furthermore, there is a different sense in Kasl's work. She also mentions that codependents do not just avoid sex, but that some of them demand sex. It suggests that they are not just *passive*, but *active* towards sexuality. Kasl states that sexual codependents can be sexual addicts who cannot stop having sex excessively in order to get a sense of security; therefore, sexual addiction and codependence are intertwined concepts. Women can switch from addict to codependent, from codependent to addict, having both simultaneously. In this sense, 'sex addiction and sexual codependency now appear closely related.'[13]

This view is a bit contrary to those expressed in traditional research, in which addicts and codependents are regarded as holding two different roles. From this viewpoint, we can notice that there are aspects regarding codependents that are more on the side of giving, or powerlessness, and they escape from sex or repress

sexual desire from every angle. However, through a richer discourse of codependence, we can find, for codependents, that sexuality is based on self-sacrifice for something or someone, and they gain something through the cost of sexuality.

3. Symbiosis and Codependence

In the history of psychoanalysis, at first, Freud established his theory focusing on the structure of the so-called Oedipus triangle. In this theory, it is the father who is the key person for the child. However, in the British school of psychoanalysis, such as Klein, Winnicott or Fairebain, we find a different theory, paying attention to the object, namely the mother, and to the mother-child relationship which is antecedent to the father-child relation. This vision prospered as the *object relation theory* around 1930s. Moreover the perspective of focusing on the mother-child relationship is widely found in psychoanalytic theory beyond the British school, even in theories in different academic contexts.

Fromm is one of those who deals with and emphasises mother-child relations in his works. He mentions that the relationship between a pregnant mother and foetus forms a 'symbiotic union' *biologically*, namely 'they are two, yet one,' and that the foetus is part of the mother and her life is enhanced by it. But after the foetus separates from its mother bodily and psychologically, the person tries to find the 'secondary bonds,' instead of primary bonds which had been composed with the mother, in order to get a feeling of security. In this process, people establish the '*psychic* symbiotic union.' According to Fromm, those striving or character traits are masochism (submission) and sadism (domination).[14] He explains that:

> The masochistic person escapes from the unbearable feeling of isolation and separateness by making himself part and parcel of another person who directs him, guides him, protects him; who is his life and his oxygen.…The sadistic person wants to escape from his aloneness and his sense of imprisonment by making another person part and parcel of himself. He inflates and enhances himself by incorporating another person, who worships him.

Fromm also states that masochistic and sadistic traits are akin to those of sexual perversion, which feels sexual excitement while being hurt and insulted by others, or from hurting and humiliating others physically. In fact, both types of masochism and sadism are essentially one and the same phenomenon, and both of them support individuals to escape from unbearable aloneness.[15] The common root of both is, indeed, *psychic* 'symbiosis' which means 'the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside of its own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely

dependent on each other'[16] in psychological sense. In this relationship, it is less possible to recognise that the two persons are separate, and indeed they are inseparable.[17] Fromm says that:

> It is always the inability to stand the aloneness of one's individual self that leads to the drive to enter into a symbiotic relationship with someone else. It is evident from this way masochistic and sadistic trends are always blended with each other. Although on the surface they seem contradictions, they are essentially rooted in the same basic need. People are not sadistic or masochistic, but there is a constant oscillation between the active and the passive side of the symbiotic complex, so that it is often difficult to determine which side of it is operating at a given moment.[18]

As I mentioned in the introduction, some research points out that we can regard codependence as one form of symbiosis. Adapting codependent theory to symbiosis theory, we can regard the codependent as the masochist, and the person who is in a codependent relationship with the codependent person as the sadist.

Examining psychic symbiosis, it shows that the sadist and the masochist share the same aim when they enter into the relationship, and that the masochists and sadists can switch roles in some moments psychologically. This is consistent with studies on codependence, which suggest that some sexual codependents are not merely passive but also active. It connotes that we might be able to find cases in which even though a person is a masochist physically, s/he is a sadist psychologically in some ways. In fact, in the discourse of codependence, the *codependent* describes the person who tries to control others, and this attempt itself tends to be sadistic, because they make the partner less powerful in order to depend on the codependents. We might be able to interpret that the sadist is also *trained* by the masochist to become more sadistic in order to control the sadist by satisfying the desire of the masochist, like a masochistic male of *Venus in Furs* written by Sacher-Masoch.

Moreover, there are some researchers who insist that

> a deeper existential analysis reveals that the sadist is symbiotically dependent upon the masochist and in fact *more* dependent on the masochist than is the masochist on him or her. Unable to admit this dependency, the sadist feels a need to punish the masochist to maintain control and connection to the other.[19]

Through these analyses of symbiosis, we can see that we cannot say wholesale that masochists, namely codependents, always receive sexual disadvantage and see sexuality only as self-sacrificing; so long as there is some possibility that they get pleasure as sexual pervert, then the symbiotic relationship is established by an interactional striving of both masochist and sadist to escape from their isolation and weakness. Both masochists and sadists need the relationship, and masochists use sadists to reach their purpose, sometimes shifting their position to that of the psychological sadist.

4. Conclusion

Surveying the sexual literature on codependence, it is obvious that codependents tend to be described as sexually repressed, and as people who use their sexuality self-sacrificially to get love from others. Analysing codependence on the basis of Fromm's theory of symbiosis, however, it can be said that there are at least some cases which are exceptions to this label, and for these cases of codependents, the symbiotic relation gives sexual satisfaction.

I recognise that we must be very cautious when we make such considerations, since there are certainly reasons that previous studies of codependence hardly mention that the codependents' relationships themselves satisfy the masochistic desire of codependents. I suspect one of the biggest reasons is to avoid misunderstandings that *every* codependent is a masochistic pervert, and desires to be treated violently. There has been conventional debate critiquing masochism.[20] This must be an essential standpoint for protecting women who are labelled *masochist* unjustly. Yet, at the same time, we should also focus on the fact of *some* exceptions which we tend to overlook or exclude, and notice that that is also reality. I think that there can be an approach to this reality of human relationships by analysing these extreme exceptions.

Notes

[1] This work was supported by Research Fellowships of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for Young Scientists.

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[3] Noguchi Yuji, *Arukohorizumu no Syakaigaku* (Tokyo: Nippon Hyoron Sha Co., 1996), 163.

[4] Yamada Masayuki, 'Study of Identity and History from the View-Point of Self-Education (V): Focusing on Oedipus Complex, Castration Complex, the "Dämonische,"' *Memoirs of Osaka Kyoiku University* 61.1 (2012): 287.

[5] Lynn Chancer, *Sadomasochism in Everyday Life: The Dynamics of Power and Powerlessness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 17.

[6] John M. Pixley and John R. Stiefel, 'Group Therapy Designed to Meet the Needs of the Alcoholic Wife,' *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 24 (1963): 304.
[7] Samuel Futterman, 'Personality Trends in Wives of Alcoholics,' *Journal of Psychiatric Social Works* 23.1 (1953): 39.
[8] Melody Beattie, *Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1987), 51.
[9] Ibid., 223.
[10] COSA. *The COSA Meeting Guide: Starting and Maintaining Sober and Sustainable Groups*, n.d., 7.
[11] Charlotte Davis Kasl, *Women, Sex, and Addiction* (NY: Perennial Library, 1989).
[12] Ibid., 43-44.
[13] Ibid., 99.
[14] Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 18-19.
[15] Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon Library, 1941), 147-150.
[16] Ibid., 157.
[17] Ibid., 130.
[18] Ibid., 157.
[19] Chancer, *Sadomasochism in Everyday Life*, 55-56.
[20] Paula J. Caplan, *The Myth of Women's Masochism* (New York: Dutton, 1985); Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

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Part II

Tongues of Sensuality

Discursive Transgression and Waste of Meaning in Georges Bataille's *The Story of the Eye*

Philip Stoilov

Abstract
This chapter sets out to analyse the unusual narrative techniques and linguistic experiments in George Bataille's novella *The Story of the Eye*. In Bataille's erotic narrative, the logic of heterogeneous experience is transposed onto the level of language, allowing for a mode of aesthetic perception beyond the differentiations and abstractions of rational consciousness. The study surveys the novella's language along the lines of Bataille's conceptual framework of the erotic sensibility and views it as a peculiar form of fictional medium which sustains contradictory relations to language as a set system of rules and which further on disrupts the relationship between language and the logic of discursive order. The story's narrative is structured by an intricate system of encoding whereby a central metaphorical image (the Eye) undergoes endless and ambivalent transformations that basically break into and transgress the norms of standard linguistic discourse. In the course of the narrative the metaphor of the 'Eye' is transposed onto various other referents, thus producing scandalous, inconceivable and outright impossible images which suspend the ability to perceive and define things according to the abstract categories of rational thought. The obscene and scandalous nature of these images is an important condition of the endeavour to probe into the incomprehensible experience of heterogeneity and the poetic imagination. The language of Bataille's novella is described as a process of unproductive expenditure: it unfolds as a joyful and orgiastic squandering of meanings that cannot be accommodated into the order of discourse. The results of this study suggest that a language of such a kind exhausts or 'wastes' itself in the attempt to refer to something beyond the stream of its metaphoric substitutions and which ultimately serves to negate referentiality by venturing to give expression to the inexpressible.

Key Words: Language, discourse, waste, excess, the erotic, the heterogeneous, the perverse, the obscene.

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In the preface of his *Critical Essays* the French critic Roland Barthes says that any written text is literary insofar as it is able to alter its primary message. The conditions for such variations are the essence of literature – what the Russian Formalists call *literariness*. Therefore, anyone who wishes to write authentically should probe into the limits of language where something beyond the expression is conveyed.[1] Such a task, however, entails transgressing the linguistic code of

discourse. For the 20th-century French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille the problem of language is an important part of his multifarious reflections on the nature of human existence. In one of his early writings,[2] he outlines the following theory of the human condition: human beings are solitary, mortal and therefore fundamentally insufficient. Their communication through the medium of language provides them only with an illusion of a stable Being. Being itself is 'nowhere' in the human's fractured experience. The human, nevertheless, is bound to language – language makes us human. At the same time we strive to reach an impossible state, free of any discursivity in order to overcome our initial solitariness and discontinuity in the world. Language is both a helpful tool and something in which we get stuck because it determines us as individual separate entities. Language facilitates communication but also furthers our essential separation from each other and the world. We communicate through language but language itself can only communicate our basic lack of unitary Being, to which our existence is sacrificed.

This dismal, nonetheless penetrating thought on the nature of language, directs our attention from Bataille's anthropological and philosophical views to the various techniques and experiments of his literary writings. In each of them is evident the writer's intention to turn language against itself so that it could communicate something inexpressible beyond its refractive surface. The aim of this artistic endeavour is a momentary glimpse at the formless and heterogeneous state of the inner experience, which can transform the discontinuity of existence into a multitude of various novel relations and allow for a freedom of perception beyond the separations and abstractions of rational enquiry. In this very important respect, the experimental strategies which Bataille employed in his novella *The Story of the Eye* cannot be analysed outside the context of his philosophical views, specifically the erotic sensibility.

In the present chapter, I allow myself on the one hand to interpret the language of Bataille's novella by way of an extrapolation of the concept of the erotic from his theoretical works and, on the other hand, I venture to present this use of literary language as a singular linguistic phenomenon, which by origin and form, sustains a contradictory relation with language as a set system of rules and which, furthermore, disrupts (according to the logic of eroticism based on taboo and transgression) the relationship between language and actual experience encoded in such a system of rules according to the logic of eroticism based on taboo and transgression.

The Story of the Eye largely recounts the erotic adventures of a nameless narrator and his partner, Simone. The events that take place, however, have little to do with the plot but are mainly concerned with the curious configuration of a number of fictional images that facilitate the violation of common linguistic norms. The movement of this linguistic transgression constitutes the structural integrity of the novella's narrative. In his essay on this novella,[3] Barthes suggests that *The Story of the Eye* is the story of an object (the Eye), in the sense that the narrative

unfolds by tracing out the cycle of metaphoric transformations of a single thematic image. The novella is, in Barthes's words, a 'metaphorical composition' which revolves around the all-encompassing virtual image of the Eye, whose globular quality serves as the possibility of its identification with many different but similar objects throughout the narrative. The Eye is the principal signifier of a convoluted web of metaphorical displacements which cause it to be associated with various different meanings within the course of its cyclic signification. It is that dominant component which, according to Formalist scholars like Mukařovský, sets in motion and gives direction to all other components and also grants the story a structural wholeness. This wholeness manifests itself as 'unity in variety': a dynamic unity of harmony and disharmony, convergence and divergence.[4]

The movement of the novella's narrative follows the metaphorical travesty of several key images. According to Barthes, these *avatars* are purely imaginary: not simply the product of imagination, but its substance as well. In this line of thought, Bataille's novella must be read, on the other hand, against the ordinary novelistic imagination which is, at best, *probable*, being connected to the mimetic representation of some actual or possible experience. On the other hand poetic imagination, peculiar to Bataille's language of fiction, is *improbable*: the metaphoric play of the images disrupts their ability to signify *real* objects. Being brought together, they seem to function more like poetic figures rather than like signifiers with stable meanings in the phenomenal world. In contrast to it, novelistic imagination is limited, spurious and diffident – it sustains itself only within the security of the actual.[5] Discontent with the servitude of novelistic imagination, Bataille expresses the belief that the ecstatic language of poetry counters the regular discourse and questions the precise distinctions between individual objects without denying their objective qualities. Poetic language only disrupts the logical order of immediate, fragmented reality which obstructs our perception of totality. Poetry deals with virtual elements and more specifically with bringing together and overlapping the semantic connections between them. Aiming at specifying the various digressions from the set model of ordinary speech in Bataille's novella, Barthes chooses to focus on the grammar of the narrative and more specifically on the *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* (metonymic and metaphoric) relations, initiated and played out contrary to their operational principle.

According to Roman Jacobson language is twofold in nature: the *syntagm* represents the connections and combinations of elements in meaningful chains on the level of discourse (the linear sequence of words), and the *paradigm* is the reserve of related yet different terms which can be substituted for each of the elements of the syntagm.[6] In his definition of the poetic function of language Jacobson recalls these two basic forms of language behaviour: *selection* is based on equivalence (similarity and dissimilarity), while *combination* is built upon contiguity. The working principle of the function itself consists in projecting the

principle of equivalence from the axis of selection onto the axis of combination.[7] In Bataile's novella the image of the Eye is varied and projected onto various different objects (eggs, testicles, a milk saucer, the sun), which are similar to it for their globular form, yet different from it because they are variously named. The basic paradigm utilises not only the similarities but also the dissimilarities among the images. Throughout the story the metaphor of the Eye simultaneously persists and varies, while its objective referents become the points of its various transformations.

For example, one of those metaphoric variations takes place between the terms *eye* and *egg* - the author's central obsession which gave birth to the story itself. Besides their semantic similarity (both are globular and white), there is also a morphological one: they have one sound in common and one in which they differ (in both English and French) - *oeil* (eye); *oeuf* (egg). Throughout the story, Bataille allows for many associations between eyes and eggs, threading themselves through many other similar yet different images. From the very beginning, Simone turns the egg into a sexual fetish by asking the narrator to throw eggs into the toilet bowl while she is sitting on it urinating. Sometimes she would view them between her thighs, or ask the narrator to bed her down by the toilet over which she bends and fixes her eyes on the eggs.[8] The characters' erotic experience is transplanted into their language, turning it into a play of ambiguous and fluctuating meanings. The matrix of metaphoric images can be discerned in Simone's random associations.[9]

The violation of logical connections that fix words onto stable meanings triggers the production of novel meanings which, however, do not refer to any recognisable object. It is an exemplary case of what the Formalists call *defamiliarization* of fixed meanings. In his reflections on poetic language Mukařovský states that this process is carried out by the lexical selection or by the uncommon semantic relationship of words close together in a context.[10] Indeed, the Eye in the story refers only to the metaphoric images of which it is the primary model. These images represent the transformations of its supra-metaphoric mode. The Eye itself is not an image of something outside the text: it exists only throughout the succession of its metaphoric mutations, each of which is meaningfully complemented by another but neither assuming a dominant position in relation to the rest. According to Barthes each component of this tier is a signifier of a neighbouring component and neither of them can be an independent signified. If there is a possible 'generative' signified, it is precisely the equivalence of eggs and eyes as signs of one another. The metaphoric chain is closed and cyclic: it is finite, thus allowing for infinite configurations and re-configurations of identity among the images as well as their varying repetitions. The central Eye metaphor alone dominates the story as that which constitutes it: as a virtual construct it stands over and above its representations as serves as the node that initiates the whole metaphoric chain.

A similar case of purely formal or grammatical contiguity is evident in the chapter 'The Cat's Eye.' Before sitting into a saucer of milk, the heroine Simone says: 'Milk is for the pussy, isn't it?'[11] Here poetic language subverts the logic of traditional discourse by a wordplay between *vagina* and *pussy* triggered off by Simone's pun. Further on, she reiterates this pivotal action with each of the objects that present themselves as hybrid projections of the ocular metaphor, thus establishing a contiguity among them. The paronomastic term *pussy* enables the crossing of the metaphors and enacts its own actualisation in Simone's placing her bare genitals into the milk saucer.[12] What is being stated and suggested by the context is both matched to and severed from what is being done. In such a case the metaphor resists metaphoricity by being *materialised* as an act of actual experience under the pressure of a semantic fixation. What comes together also stays apart in this act of irresolvable intersection between *verba* and *res.* The illegitimate crossing between a verbal image and an object of sensory perception produces a paradox whereby the fictional images determine the logical connections among the objects of actual experience and vice versa – what is given in objective experience is manifested as a figure of fictional speech. In this paradoxical juxtaposition, the act of complementation, suggesting a stable reality, is also an act of dissociation: literature and the world are inevitably separated from one another by what announces their likeness. Both present one another with an inescapable limitation, which brings them together by their mutual, two-way violation of it. The signified of *pussy* is not univocally established. Hence, discourse is set to work both for and against each term in the division between nature and culture (life/art), depriving both of any privileged position in regard to meaning. Meaning is subverted by this sterile and workless interdependence between the finite actuality of the world, whose logic is unable to assimilate two different meanings simultaneously, and the boundless virtuality of poetic language which combines multiple meanings in an ambiguous one at the expense of a stable extra-linguistic reality to be referenced.

In these initial examples the formal features of linguistic signs are brought to bear on the actual circumstances around the objects they denote. The interplay of language and actuality sets off the signifying chains of metaphor and metonymy whose paradoxical interlocking is responsible for all logical disruptions in the narrative, and also for all mutations across the cyclic movement of the images. Metaphor, the figure of similarity, and metonymy, the figure of contiguity, in Bataille's novella are brought into a most unusual and straightforwardly illegitimate relationship with each other. The two basic codes of language are deprived of their singularity by being equated according to a perverted logic[13] that transcends its own linguistic origins and limitations. Each of the metaphors in the novella is objectified and devoid of depth: the principle of selection is from the very beginning transformed and levelled out with the horizontal movement of metonymy with its immediate succession of elements. The images themselves make the story but in order to *tell* the story through them Bataille disrupts their

paradigmatic character and incorporates them into the mode of combination. As a result, the progression of *narration* is imposed as a model on each metaphoric series.

This being said, it becomes quite clear that the power of the metaphor is reduced to mimetic doubling of the metonymic connection between the images. Transgressing the condition of its figurativity, the metaphor is actualised by an impossible manoeuvre into the world of logical discourse. Thus, the virtual reserve of the metaphor is made literal and as if *flattened* onto the surface of combinative discourse. The result is an antinomic cross-reference between words and actions, each of which becomes a metaphor of the other. In such a manner of procedure, a literary figure transgresses the field of fictional language but instead of merging with actuality, it situates itself in an area of ambivalence between fiction and reality, on the verge of their mutual impossibility. In this particular case, what is said and what is done simultaneously blur and retain their contours and what counts for one should necessarily count for the other as well according to the improbable logic of poetic experience.

Evacuating meaning from discourse becomes necessary in order to communicate what does not in any way define or signify anything of what is familiar: moving beyond the limits of representation means moving beyond logical meaning. This is why the novella's language is realised at the verge of its own breakdown, between the knowledge of the familiar and non-knowledge of what is beyond expression – an impossible experience that cannot be surpassed. This is also why the images in the novella are strange, improbable and outrageous: they do not refer to a familiar phenomenal world but to the fluctuations of sensations preceding any formal differentiation. According to Mukařovský, there always exists, in the background of language communication, a reserve of potential possibilities which ordinary language use is not set to actualise.[14] Jacobson argues that when the potential equivalence of these latent possibilities is actualised, we are being presented with the poetic use of language. The images in the story are by all means scandalous not so much for their pornographic nature as for the inability of rational consciousness and standard language codification to comprehend and recognise them: their metaphorical activity is realised to the fullest and extended beyond metaphoricity i.e. beyond the principle of equivalence. This deviation makes them endlessly variable, fluid, protean. Our habitual comprehension is almost carried away by a stream of swarming variations, of constant repetition and displacement of these dubious and enigmatic images. Through such acts of linguistic transgression Bataille shows us that our insufficient knowledge of the world originates in the mediation of language: language means what it says by not really saying it. The language of *The Story of the Eye* demonstrates the opposite quality: it extends beyond limits in an attempt to say what it means and comes to an inevitable breakdown in which it is experienced as unproductive *excess*, i.e. as

joyful and orgiastic wastage of meaning that the ordered system of discourse cannot accommodate.

The metaphoric language of Bataille's novella unfolds over and above any legitimate order: it exhibits an activity of pure signification without being tied up to any signified. The 'saucer of milk' is just a saucer of milk: it does not symbolise or refer to anything beside its round form. As any of the objects in the story, it points to itself not directly but through other objects made contagious to each other by virtue of a functional web of metonymic relations. The tissue of the novella's narrative is a movement of pure signification, without *beneath* or *above*, where objects become displaced images of themselves, having no origin and being absolutely arbitrary. Prompted by the poverty of signification the language of fiction exhausts itself in random metaphoricity – it cannot articulate what is beyond its outward signs, it can only offer a vulgar and distorted version of ordinary discourse as a way of pointing to something inexpressible beyond itself. This experience, of which language is only a simulation, can nonetheless be fathomed only within some form of language, not outside any. Such a language would present itself as having no depth but exhibiting a solid surface which ultimately serves utter negation by producing an absence of recognisable meaning. It would be an impossible language, agonisingly torn between the infinite void beyond signification and the codified order of discourse.

Notes

[1] Roland Barthes, Preface to *Critical Essays*, by Roland Barthes (Northwestern University Press, 1972), xiv.
[2] Georges Bataille, 'The Labyrinth,' *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 171-178.
[3] Roland Barthes, 'The Metaphor of the Eye,' *The Story of the Eye*, Georges Bataille (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2001), 119-127.
[4] Jan Mukařovský, 'Standard Language and Poetic Language,' *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley, and Alan Girvin (London: Routledge, 2000), 227-228.
[5] Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2001), 120.
[6] Roman Jacobson, 'The Twofold Character of Language,' *Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Dan Latimer (New York: Harcourt College Publishers, 1989), 18-21.
[7] Roman Jacobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics,' *Routledge Theory Reader*, ed. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin (London: Routledge, 2000), 339.
[8] Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 33.
[9] Ibid., 34.

[10] Mukařovský, 'Standard and Poetic Language,' 227.
[11] Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 10.
[12] In the different translations of the novella the puns stand out with a relative aptness depending on the possibility of interlingual equivalence. The original text reads: 'Les assiettes, c'est fait pour s'asseoir, n'est-ce pas?' In the English translation the pair *les assiettes* (saucers) and *s'asseoir* (sit) is replaced with another one: *milk* and *pussy*, which organizes the metaphorical context of this example into a relatively successful, though paradoxical, unity. In any case, the *scandal* in the process of meaning production is not the result of a mismatch of different cultural and linguistic contexts i.e. of any possible and in most cases inevitable discrepancy in the translated versions of the original. The scandal is an essential part of the process of destroying the *logic* of discursive relations between words and objects, between what is uttered and what is performed.
[13] The logic of erotism whereby the taboo intensifies the desire for its transgression while, simultaneously, the transgression preserves the taboo and fortifies it: transgression defies prohibition without denouncing it. See Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (First City Lights, 1986).
[14] Mukařovský, 'Standard and Poetic Language,' 227.

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The Erotic Capital Onstage

Josep Martí

Abstract
Recently, Catherine Hakim's controversial book 'Honey Money: The Power of Erotic Capital', has put into debate the concept of 'erotic capital,' emphasizing the greater importance that this type of capital has for women. While many of the theses of this sociologist are hardly acceptable and have received strong and justified criticism from the feminist perspective, the concept of 'erotic capital' – previously defined by Green and derived from the idea of 'capital' coined by Bourdieu – is important and has been taken poorly into account within the social sciences and humanities. The idea of erotic capital fits well within the theoretical framework of the social presentation of the body, i.e. the conscious and voluntary way of showing the body in view of our social interactions both through all that we do *in* it and all that we do *with* it. Given that music as performance art is also embodied practice, in this chapter I will apply the concept of erotic capital to the music stage. Without forgetting the importance of gender differentiation in this issue, I will discuss the importance of distinguishing between 'representation' and 'expression' on the stage in order to understand how erotic capital actually appears and is instrumentalised in musical practices within current Western society. In this chapter, I am especially interested in exploring the display of erotic capital at the level of expression, taking into account both the display of erotic capital as a faithful reflex of a hypersexualised society and the different functions it can have within the complex dynamics of music performances onstage.

Key Words: Erotic capital, social presentation of the body, music, performance.

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1. Introduction

This chapter has to be framed within the general theoretical approach of the Social Presentation of the Body.[1] We may define this as the conscious and voluntary way of showing the body in view of our social interactions both through all that we do *in* it and all that we do *with* it. On the one hand, we are talking about the image that we offer of the body through its general care, clothing and ornamentation, and also the important resource of body modification. On the other hand, the Social Presentation of the Body has to do with gestures, body techniques and proxemic behaviour. Two keywords are important concerning the Social Presentation of the Body: *performativity*, in the sense of Judith Butler, and also *visibility*, something that goes far beyond the mere reality of an image, something that is a real social process in itself.[2] The dynamic of the social presentation of the body can be understood with respect to three parameters that are consubstantial to human nature as the social beings that we are: identity, social order and exchange. Social logic requires

us to know who we are within the community, which place we occupy within different situations of social and hierarchical order, and also with whom and what we exchange things or services. All this is signalled through the manner in which we present our body to others.

The controversial book by Catherine Hakim, *Honey Money: The Power of Erotic Capital*, has put into debate the concept of 'erotic capital.' This sociologist emphasises the greater importance that this type of capital has for women and argues that they must use this erotic capital – which a supposed patriarchal ideology has traditionally demeaned – in the sphere of personal relationships and in the work environment as well. For Hakim, erotic capital is erotic power.

While many of the theses of Catherine Hakim are hardly acceptable and have received strong criticism from the feminist perspective, the concept of 'erotic capital' – derived from the idea of 'capital' coined by Bourdieu – is important and has been taken into account poorly within the social sciences and humanities.

In fact, the concept of 'erotic capital' was already defined by Green 'as the quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses which elicit an erotic response in another,' including physical appearance, affective presentations and eroticised sociocultural styles.[3] Catherine Hakim, furthermore, elaborates the definition by enriching it conceptually. According to Hakim, erotic capital is configured through beauty, sex appeal, charm and social skills, physical fitness and liveliness, skills in self-presentation and dress and sexual competence.

'Erotic capital' is a useful concept. The idea of 'capital' is suggestive because first and foremost it means work. It is necessary to work in order to allow the accumulation of capital. The concept also implies administration or the use of strategies. In the sense of Bourdieu, there are many types of capital: we speak of cultural, social, corporeal capital, but since erotic capital cannot be understood without the copresence of individuals, it is perhaps the most human capital. Erotic capital belongs to the field of sociability; it is worked, administered and deployed.

People *have* erotic capital (beauty, a sexy body, etc.) and people *work* it (body presentation). Erotic capital also involves knowledge and techniques, such as body postures, gestures, looks, inflection of the voice or proxemics. And, above all, erotic capital is deployed when and where it is of interest. If we now take into account the two basic dimensions of all cultural manifestations, the instrumental and the symbolic, while the first refers to erotic capital as an element directly linked to sexual practice, in the symbolic dimension, the deployment of erotic capital can suggest very different things.

2. Music and Erotic Capital

In order to apply the concept of erotic capital to musical practices, we first must think about the relationship between body and music. The first thing to keep in mind is that we *see* music through bodies. The fact that music is constituted by vibrations makes us think of it as something ethereal, unlike related art expressions

such as dance or opera. But we are not always aware that music, as a performance art, is an embodied practice and that the visualisation of musicians is also relevant not only for aesthetic enjoyment but for the meanings we confer on music. This is also proven by the importance of the Social Presentation of the Body in music performances. We need only compare such diverse musical spheres as symphonic music, pop/rock, jazz or traditional music in order to see that they differ not only in the produced sounds but also in the gestures, body movements or clothing of the musicians. And when talking about the body, given the importance of erotic capital, it is easy to think that this kind of capital can be a topic worthy of discussion in the field of musical practices.

Needless to say, the concept of erotic capital in the music scene applies to both men and women. But if it is true that in everyday life physical appearance tends to figure more prominently for women[4] – and because of which women show more erotic capital than men as well – it will also be so with the performance of music.

When speaking, however, of erotic capital in musical practices it seems of interest to make an important distinction: *Representation* is not the same as *expression*, two aspects that are often confused. In the music scene we may represent erotic capital through bodies when we have plots, stories or descriptions to convey. This is representation. In the dance of the *Seven Veils* of Salome, in the well-known opera of Richard Strauss, erotic capital is represented through the unfolding of the opera character, in the same way that we can see it in the role of Bizet's Carmen, to name a few classic examples. The plot asks for this. But this is not what I have in mind when I talk about the importance of erotic capital in musical practices. What interests me is erotic capital at the level of *expression*.

In the case of representation we have imitation. The deployment of erotic capital is articulated with text, with a plot. When manifestations of erotic capital are justified in the text, it is theatre. What interests me is when manifestations of erotic capital are detached from text. Erotic capital is a corporeal expression. It arises from the individual and its performance directly appeals to us. In the words of Mitchell Green, 'expression differs from representation at least in that the former involves making a state of the self palpable.'[5] Expression is directly related to embodiment. In social interactions we know that sometimes the body expresses mental or emotional states we would rather not show. In these cases we say then, the body 'betrays us,' which is known as *body leakage* in psychological literature.

I am well aware that in the domain of aesthetics, the representation/expression dichotomy is not always simple or clear, and that to a certain extent the concepts can also merge. In fact, representation and expression converge in a good and ideal actor. In the music scene, it is possible that expression and representation are not always easily separable, but it is clear that we can imagine a continuum with clear ends with regard to these two manifestations.

When I speak of erotic capital in this chapter thus, it is not in the sense of representation, but in the sense of expression. And given that the manifestations of

erotic capital may appear unrelated to text and are therefore not justified, its deployment on the scene acquires relief. If it occurs in an oversized manner, this can lead, on the one hand, to disapproval since it violates one of the three parameters of social logic, that of social order. But, on the other hand, this may also be positively instrumentalised by the performers, as we will see below.

If we can agree on something, it is on the hypersexualisation of our current society. People speak of 'sexual citizenship,'[6] of the 'pornosphere'[7] – referring to the public sphere. Sex is extremely pervasive in the media, advertisements are overwhelmed by sexual imagery, the behaviour of teens with respect to sex is very different from previous generations and even current feminism – in any case the so called third wave of feminism – raises without any hesitation the flag of sex and pleasure. This is unavoidably reflected in musical practices as well. This fact is especially clear in popular music because the values that it conveys are much more in correspondence with the current reality than in the case of other music expressions such as classical music. But expression of erotic capital is by no means limited to popular music. Since opera productions often try to create innovative versions in accordance with the current values of our society, it is not difficult to see how in certain productions people are not limited in representing erotic capital when the script calls for it, but expresses it, as well.

The first question we may ask ourselves is how that which we denominate as 'erotic capital' is manifested on stage. In fact, it manifests in multiple ways. First, we have to consider the social presentation of the body itself: clothing, gestures, ways of looking, movements and allusions which lead us to the realm of eroticism. But in speaking of music we cannot forget such an important element as the voice. What is an erotic voice? It is difficult to define, but we all may have an idea of what it is. For semiotician Roland Barthes, the voice of well-known baritone Dietrich Fischer-Diskaus was not erotic, although it was perfect in many ways, and he compared it with the (erotic) voice of Charles Panzera. According to Barthes, that which makes us perceive a voice as erotic is what he called the 'grain of the voice.'[8] This is what makes each voice unique. In the case of erotic voices we are talking about voices of a rather low register, pleasant, rough and broken, not necessarily pretty, not clear but rather dark. Of women, we may think for example of Katalin Karády, Marlena Dietrich or Peggy Lee. Obviously we are not talking only about timbre, but about diction and volume as well; of a slow, soft and low phrasing, i.e. that which leads us to the idea of intimacy. People speak of singers with erotic voice not only in the realm of popular music but also in the world of opera. It is a voice quality which may be attributed to both men and women.[9]

It is clear that qualifying a voice as erotic is very subjective. And even more in such cases as opera singers given that important aspects such as diction or volume are determined by roles that they have to interpret. And additional visual elements may further help to affirm that a determined opera singer has an erotic voice. But aside from these remarks, what is interesting is qualifying an opera singer's erotic

voice as a positive attribute for him or her. I doubt very much that we would find these kinds of adjectives in evaluations a few decades ago.

The fact that in our society people ascribe more erotic capital to women than to men has implications for their appearance on stage. We already know that historically in Europe women's appearance on stage has often been controversial for various reasons, but especially because of their erotic capital, which was to be hidden or preserved. If, on the one hand, women, because of their ascribed erotic capital until very recent times, have been discriminated against, on the other hand, and in the opposite direction, there are also well justified criticisms against the trend in some musical scenes (especially pop, but not only) to expect women on stage to display their erotic capital more than to show their musical values.

3. The Role of Erotic Capital in Performance Practices

In addition to these realities, well-known and criticised with full justice, I will focus on the role woman's erotic capital on stage may currently have, especially as something that in the words of Hakim is worthy to be instrumentalised.

The first thing that comes to mind is explicitly using erotic capital as a resource, we could say even as a brand, for an artist's appeal. It is something that we find especially in popular music today, but that can be claimed by women even in other fields of music.[10] Erotic capital is therefore clearly an added value to the musical value itself. Since, as stated above, music is *seen* through people, and since our society currently gives an explicit value to erotic capital, there is nothing more logical than to exploit it. If this could have caused negative criticism decades ago, today, in a society that tends toward hypersexualisation, it may be understood. The use of erotic capital on stage can easily lead to scandals, something that is useful for promoting performers. These types of erotic capital-based scandals within the musical world occur more with women than men.

A daring use of erotic capital also allows entering the realm of transgression, a characteristic element for popular music practices that has been evident from the early rock days until now. In a society like ours, which has been labelled as 'sexually schizophrenic,' where there is still a negative vision of an open sexuality, erotic capital seems entirely appropriate for use as a weapon against the establishment. And, regarding women, this transgression appears twice: because of the erotic capital displayed on stage and because those who do it are women. Moreover, we must not forget that the concept of erotic capital has to do directly with desire, and we always associate prohibitions and transgressions with desire. Today, many female musicians have little to do with that image of a 'good girl,' for example Joan Baez. Today, there are many female performers who are aware of showing strong erotic capital and who are also well aware that it empowers them. They know that they have power and they exert it. The popular singer Madonna is a good example of this use of erotic capital, but there are many examples that we could add. Giddens already said that sexuality is a terrain of fundamental political

struggle and also a medium of emancipation,[11] and let us not forget that W. Reich stated very clearly that no sociopolitical reform would be possible without sexual liberation. For him, freedom and sexual health were the same thing.[12] If Joan Baez used lyrics in order to be politically transgressive, Madonna uses her body.

The displaying of erotic capital on stage as a resource goes beyond its assigned primitive function as sexual arousal. Erotic capital deployed on the stage not only stimulates but is a bearer of concrete meanings.[13] It may be used for a performer's marketing or instrumentalised in favour of ideas which promote social change. Besides this, erotic capital can also have its functionality within performance dynamics. The deployment of erotic capital can play a particular role as an element that contributes to the formation of a semiotic community among the audience.

We may think that when a performer shows her or his erotic capital on stage it is something not merely intended to attract the opposite sex. In displaying their erotic capital, women show a specific model of femininity and this targets the feminine audience as well. It is exactly the same with the rough masculinity of *cock rock*, for instance: men show their masculinity to men not as a resource of appeal but as an element which, because it is shared between performers and audience, helps to make *phatic communion* a reality, this *phatic communion* of which Malinowski, and Richard Schechner himself, in his performance theory, so often spoke. For Malinowski, the concept of *phatic communion*, which has since also been used by linguists, refers to the language used to establish an atmosphere or maintain social contact rather than to exchange information or ideas.[14]

In this way, the display of erotic capital is an additional resource to reinforce connections, to create the *communitas* feeling with the audience beyond music itself. This display constitutes an additional element which helps to create awareness of the existence of a semiotic community among the participants in the concert. Erotic capital, thus, plays phatic functions through which the links among the semiotic community constituted by audience and performers are reinforced.

To sum up, the deployment of erotic capital in music performances is constantly increasing and it is more and more present in a transversal manner throughout different kinds of music scenes. The expression of erotic capital onstage can be seen as a faithful reflex of a hypersexualised (Western) society, as a strategy for marketing performers or social messages and as a means for contributing to the reinforcement of the *phatic communion* in music performances.

Notes

[1] About this approach, see: Josep Martí, 'La presentación social del cuerpo: Apuntes teóricos y propuestas de análisis,' *Desvelando el cuerpo. Perspectivas desde las*

Ciencias Sociales y Humanas, ed. Josep Martí and Yolanda Aixelà (Madrid: CSIC, 2010), 107-22.

[2] Andrea Brighenti, 'Visibility: A Category for the Social Sciences,' *Current Sociology* 55.3 (2007): 325.

[3] Adam Isaiah Green, 'The Social Organization of Desire: The Sexual Fields Approach,' *Sociological Theory* 26 (2008): 29.

[4] In relation to differences between men and women in their general body image due to socialisation practices, Seymour Fisher speaks of a greater 'body prominence' by women; this is a greater awareness of the body that implies giving major attention to it and worrying about how it looks. Seymour Fisher, *Body Experience in Fantasy and Behavior* (NY: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1970), 524-25. See Deborah L. Rhode, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 30-32.

[5] Mitchell Green, 'How do Speech Acts Express Psychological States?' *Force, Meaning and Mind*, ed. Savas L. Tsohatzidis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 267-84.

[6] David Evans, *Sexual Citizenship* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[7] Brian McNair, *Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratisation of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[8] Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 179-189.

[9] This is the case of the opera singers Vesselina Kasarova, Danielle de Niese, Nicolai Ghiaurov…

[10] For instance, the mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins, well-known classical pianists such as Yuja Wang or Lola Astanova, etc.

[11] Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 181.

[12] Ibid., 163.

[13] And for that reason different than a pornography spectacle which is not primary intended to carry meaning but to arouse.

[14] David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 360.

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Of Folkloric Eroticism in the Algerian Raï

Sabrina Zerar

Abstract
This chapter explores the Algerian popular genre of music known as Raï with specific reference to the distinctive features of the Eros it puts on stage. It starts with setting its emergence in the context of the highly eroticised social and political relations of colonial Algeria, and follows up with the argument that it is the offshoot of a combination of factors such as acculturation, the particular way of performing Islam in Algeria and the rise of the individual, male and female, as a consequence of the colonial encounter. Taking its bearings from theories of eroticism like the ones developed by Edgar Weber, Georges Bataille, Malek Chebel, and Mikhail Bakhtin, the chapter illustrates those folkloric, feminine, humanised, egalitarian and hybrid aspects of Eros in the Raï music, all of them explaining in a large measure both its high potential of subversion towards Islamic terror, and its success in crossing cultural borders.

Key Words: Raï, egalitarian eroticism, folklore, the feminine, personal Eros, hybridity.

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1. Introduction

'Ah, ya raï/ I saw young men dancing like women/ I saw young men singing like women/ Ah, ya raï.'[1] Thus run the opening lyrics of a 1910 song by Ahmed BenHarrath, one of the Sheikh (master) singers from the Algerian Western region of Oran, the birth place of what is known world-wide today as Raï music.The argument that the term *Raï, a*s a label for a musical genre, derives from the Arabic root 'RY,' 'to see,' is highly polysemous. It includes such a wide range of meanings as 'opinion,' 'council,' 'thought,' 'will' and 'choice.' These are at least some of the meanings that BenHarrath's lyrics suggest in his linking of the leitmotif, 'Ah, ya raï,' with what he considers as the moral degeneracy of the male youth of his time. As a singer of classical music, BenHarrath holds Raï in aversion. However, even at the time of its emergence, Raï had already enough sway on colonial Algeria's youth to feel constrained to deliver his council in that medium.

2. Literature Review, Issue and Methodology

By now, Raï music whether regarded as opinion, thought or council has proved to be substantial enough to sustain academic research. The scope of its discussion, limited to polemical journalistic debate between pros and cons in the Algerian and French press of the 1980s, has widened overnight to include contributions from outstanding scholars like Miliani, Virolle, Shade-Poulsen, and Chebel.[2] The increasingly wide interest that Raï music generated came largely as a result of

Algeria's political crisis following the October 1988 youth rebellion, and the start of the war against Islamic terrorism that put Algeria in the limelight of the world media, four years later in January 1992. The rise of Raï music to popularity in this wartime context, and the considerable publicity accorded to it by the same media have led many a scholar to seek to understand what was really going on behind the scenes in Algeria through the filter of Raï music as its most visible cultural product. The terrorist assassination of Sheb Hasni, the promoter of the sub-genre of Raï called 'love-Raï' in September 1994, and Rashid Baba Ahmed, one of the pioneers of Raï music, one year later in 1995, further strengthened the conviction about the suspected existence of possible connections between the war of terror and the 'battle of Raï' waged by the 'rebels of Raï.'

Their theoretical bearings notwithstanding, nearly most of the scholars interested in Raï music have explored it as a psychoanalytic and sociological phenomenon mirroring at the erotic level the deep social and political conflict at the basis of the Algerian civil war. For Chebel, Raï is one symptomatic case among many others of the return of a repressed sexuality that has always bedevilled the Arab Muslim world.[3] He tells us that 'the battle of Raï' is waged in the name of an inaccessible sexual freedom. Defending a sociological and historical stand, Virolle interprets it as a representative manifestation of an Algerian, youth sub-culture strongly marked by a discourse of erotic desire, the purpose of which is to bring about change in an oppressing and existentially depressing socio-economic order.[4] Paradoxically, she remarks that the concomitant call for social change addressed to the Algerian youth by the 'Raï Rebels' and the Muslim fundamentalists turns them into strange bed fellows in the Algerian cultural scene. In this diagnosis, Virolle comes very close to the conclusions drawn in an earlier study of Raï music by the Danish ethnographer Poulsen.

The review of scholarly literature on Raï music shows an overall agreement on its fundamentally erotic message. However, to date, this erotic aspect of Raï music has been analysed within the limited historical context of the Algerian war against terrorism. Even Chebel's view of this musical genre is skewed by the tragic events marked among other things by sexual violence against women by Islamic terrorists. This sexual violence took the form of forced marriages, rape and 'pleasure marriages,' in other words, marriages religiously contracted for a short period of time to satisfy the male sexual urges without infringing on the Islamic law forbidding sexual relations out of wedlock. It is such tragic sexual experiences that seem to have coloured consciously or unconsciously many a scholar's view of Eros and its related functions in Raï Music, overlooking in the same process its kinship with such distant folkloric cousins as the one we meet in *The Arabian Nights*. Deploying an eclectic approach inspired by such thinkers as Bataille, Weber, Bakhtin and Chebel,[5] I shall attempt to complete the above studies by arguing that Raï's erotica is steeped in Algerian folklore, similar to *The Arabian Nights* in its resistance to Islamic orthodoxy, and in its capacity to transcend national frontiers.

3. The Colonial Origins of the Carnivalistic Eros of Racapacit

As the quote by Ben Harath in the introduction above indicates, Raï music emerged at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century in the Western Algerian region, following the French 'pacification' of the country, occupied since 1830. Being a settlement colony, the French colonisers first dispossessed Algerians of the land they owned to transform them into a pool of cheap labour. Later, with the rapid mechanisation of agriculture in the 1920s, an agriculture centred mostly on the planting of grapevines for the production of wine in the Western plateaux of Algeria, the chance for the largely rural Algerian population of finding work in the colonists' plantations dramatically shrunk.[6] While some took to the roads in search of seasonal work that paid very meagre wages, others established themselves in shanties at the periphery of urban centres with the expectation of landing menial jobs in the sector of maintenance services and the emerging transformation industry of the colony. The Depression as lived by the Joad family in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*[7] hardly approaches in its misery the one lived by the Algerian families in the Algerian West at the same period, and to which Mohammed Dib's *Algerian Trilogy*[8] bears witness.

The nascent Eros of Raï music was born during this Depression period as itinerant shepherd musicians followed in the wake of seasonal workers in the colonists' plantations and of their rural folks in the crowded colonial shanty towns in order to cater to their emotional needs. Frantz Fanon has fully documented the Manichean division of the colonial world which led among other things to a traditionalism of resistance marked by highly perverse effects on the libido of the Algerian natives. He tells us, for example, that the natives' 'emotional sensibility exhausts itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic,' the ritual purpose of which is, 'to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity to dissolve in a volcanic eruption.'[9] Admittedly, there is a lot of truth in the alienating characteristic of the native cultural life as graphically described by Fanon, but in dismissing it wholesale as a defence of a cathartic revolutionary violence directed against the colonial settlers, he inadvertently throws out the baby, Eros of Raï music, with the bathwater of his Algerian cultural history. Fanon abusively affirms perverse group psychology while he ignores the emergence of the individual who broke free from the hold of his original community as a consequence of the cultural encounter with the coloniser. To a colonial community trying to shore up its hardened traditions, Raï music celebrated an erotic subculture that affirms individual freedom.

To fully understand the erotic subculture of Raï music, and its folkloric forms of manifestation, one has to place it within the general erotic atmosphere of the colony. Already Edward Said[10] has fully studied the Orientalist eroticisation of power relations between Western countries and their colonies. So there is no need to go into details of his argument here. However, it is important to mention that by the end of the nineteenth century, French authors such as Fromentin and Gautier[11]

were already complaining about French Algeria's loss of exotic and erotic charm for the metropolitan French. Hence, at the turn of the twentieth century, after a forceful bid for the westernisation of the Algerian cultural and architectural landscape, colonial authorities were brought out by purely economic reasons to think of re-orientalising the country by, for example, adopting Oriental urban architectural styles, and giving preference to indigenous sexual folklore over imported European forms of prostitution. By 1930, the year of the centenary celebration of colonial occupation, nearly all tourist centres (e.g., Biskra, Bou-Saâda, and Laghouat) were thus boasting of their indigenous sexual pleasure quarters wherein sexual tourists can easily quench their desires. In 1946, colonial authorities went so far as to invoke the erotic specificity of the Algerian population as an argument for the annulment of a French metropolitan law, ordering the closing of prostitution houses in all French territories.[12]

To counter this forceful eroticisation of colonial life, the Algerian population opposed an arsenal of prohibitions, inspired by the local tradition of honour, to contain the acculturation process, already well under the way. However, in doing so it paradoxically heightened the intensity of the eroticism it had sought to deflect by regressing into an archaic tradition. This is hardly surprising, for, as Bataille argues, eroticism intensifies in the same proportion as the pressure of sexual prohibitions and the interrelated pressure of transgression they inevitably generate. The carnivalistic nature of Eros in Raï music is precisely the result of this dialectic. The 'civilization of mores'[13] which the custodians of tradition worked hard to impose on the whole population relegated Eros to the colonial erotic margin. Its association with colonial official festivities, wine taverns, dancing soirées in nightclubs, and open access to sexuality in prostitution houses makes it sound dubious to the Muslim pious ears. Ironically, in a reverse movement, that same civilisation of mores reclaims Eros from the underground to which it is condemned in ordinary times to make it preside over its ritually marked popular festivities such as circumcision ceremonies, Ramadan musical evenings, agricultural rites, and patron-saint feasts.

4. The Feminine Erotic as a Distinctive Mark of Raï

Patron-saint feasts perfectly illustrate the distinctively carnivalistic and feminine aspects of the erotic of Raï music. Both features, as I shall later argue, link Raï to *The Arabian Nights*. The proliferation of patron-saint feasts in Algeria shows that there is really no such thing as a single practice of Islam as claimed by current orthodoxy. They remind us, if necessary, that there are many 'Islams,' each determined by the particular times and the places of its performance. Until quite recently, patron-saint feasts marked by pilgrimage of whole tribes to the patron-saint mausoleums have been organised across all of Algeria. Apart from providing occasion for religious worship and sharing the sacred pleasure of praying together, these patron-saint feasts allowed for folk festivities of the carnival type at their

periphery. In this regard, it is particularly interesting to note that Sheikha 'Rimiti,' the female Raï singer recognised to date as the sole ancestress of this music genre, has emerged during one of these peripheral carnivals. The cultural history of this music genre recounts that Rimitti owes her name to a phonological deformation of the French phrase 'Remettez,' that she would have pronounced when her *turn to stand drinks around* had come at one of the colonial gender-mixed canteens installed on the occasion of a patron saint-feast in the 1950s.

As the one icon of traditional Raï music, *Rimitti* embodies the transgressions for which this type of music will be notorious. In the first place, the sole idea of singing and dancing, especially in the case of females, was and still is a complete anathema in a culture which not only associates singers and dancers with prostitution, but disavows them by obliging them to bear pseudo-names. The case is even worse for *Rimitti*, as her pseudo-name and the music which it has come to symbolise definitely link them to drinking bouts, a doubly serious offence in orthodox Islam, which forbids both alcohol and gender mixing. However, as already explained above, the folkloric context of its birth makes Raï music and its icon speak of the attraction and resilience of the erotic in Islam as it was performed in Algeria, notwithstanding its repulsion by Islamic law in ordinary times. Nothing exemplifies better the predominantly folkloric and feminine nature of sacred eroticism in Raï music than the popular festivities marking weddings in the West of Algeria. As Virolle remarks, mysteriously veiled female Raï singers in the rural West of Algeria seem to emerge out of nowhere during nuptial feasts to indulge the erotic dreams of a male drinking audience stretched on straw near barns, contemplating the starry skies of the Mediterranean summer night.[14]

The nuptial feasts thus recorded make the erotic experience of the newlywed taking place inside home read much more than a mere organic experience. In the manner of traditional agricultural fertility rites, they link up the sacred or the divine with the sexual or erotic, elevating at the same the female Raï singer to an officiating priestess over what looks like a hierogamous marriage. Though this folkloric conception of the erotic is expressed in bawdy language by Raï musicians, it is nonetheless similar to the sacred eroticism that thinkers such as Weber and Bataille have located at the centre of mysticism.[15] However, to affirm the folkloric dimension of Eros in Raï music, as I have done so far, does not mean that this Eros has no personal character. I argue the contrary, because if there is one genre of music in Algeria wherein Eros has really worn a distinctively personal face, it is in that of Raï music. This personal Eros, as suggested earlier, has much to do with the birth of the individual, a birth caused by the acculturation process or the cultural mobility following the colonial encounter.

In sharp contrast with other types of popular Algerian music like the *Melhoun*, the erotic experience in Raï songs is often provocatively physical, and is often recounted in the first-person singular and in a language marked by a high level of linguistic and cultural hybridity. However, as part and parcel of a performed

orality, the individuals constituting the audience of Raï music, a sonic group in grips with the same sexual taboos, do not only identify with the Raï singer's sketchy love lament, but give it mythical or legendary dimensions by imagining for themselves the missing erotic details of the recounted story. It is hardly surprising for a large population of unmarried and underemployed young men at their most libidinous and for whom sex outside marriage is forbidden not to be emotionally stirred and indulged in erotic dreams by such Raï lyrics as 'making love in an abandoned barrack,' 'ripping and tearing the hymen,' 'having sex in the sacred month of Ramadan,' all the while ensured by the singers that the blame for the transgression of religious dogma[16] will be assumed on their behalf. Raï music, as conservatives of all shades have not failed to note, can be considered a female erotic assault on traditional sexual practices that have reduced women to passive objects of male desire.

In the face of religious law, Raï music harks back to that egalitarian eroticism with which*The Arabian Nights,*as a female oral production, opposes the masculine written law of *The Koran*, where women are represented as fields to be ploughed by males. Apart from the fact that male and female Raï singers often perform together in duos, female singers often affirm their erotic agency, undoing in this way the conventional image of women as mere purveyors of pleasure for males. Female Raï lyrics such as 'They slander, but I continue to clasp him;' 'the one I love is short and cute [a euphemism for male genitalia], and in my heart he vibrates;' and 'my olive-coloured love adorns my table with his presence' make Raï-love sound essentially as a carnal, worldly love, a love offered for female consumption. Also, in this public proclamation that attempts to make us 'see,' 'stop and consider,' the shamelessly announced erotic experiences, Raï singers take us back to the deeply hidden roots of Raï music in the Arab imaginary. According to Weber, one of the fundamental features of this imaginary as it is enacted in the *Koran* and the *Arabian Nights* is the dialectic combination of 'voir/RY'(see God's wonders) and 'savoir' (to know or consider God's power).[17] So, if Raï music makes us listen to and see the wonders of erotic pleasure, erotic monstrosities for some, it is in order to legitimate them somewhat in the manner of *The Arabian Nights* as one of the continuing, miraculous works in God's open book on this earth, in opposition to the Islamic law that has deferred this erotica to an afterlife in recompense for an ascetic life in this world.

5. Conclusion

The above discussion of the folkloric, feminine, personal and egalitarian aspects of eroticism in Raï music will be incomplete if its humanising function is not mentioned. Much has been written about the lack of political commitment of Raï music against Islamic terror, neglecting to note that with an explicit commitment to 'political struggle [Raï music would never have been] able to yield to the truth of eroticism.'[18] That truth in Raï music consists in talking about love

and desire, in objectivising sexual life as erotic play, and finally in allowing the Algerian Eros, just as its counterpart in Greek myth, to arise with a fully humanised face from the chaos of Algerian political and social life in the 1980s and 1990s. Direct political opposition to the fascism of Islamic fundamentalism, as Bataille would have argued in this case, would have turned Raï music into a timid counter-image of the fascism it seeks to combat. In the end, if Raï music has managed to cross cultural frontiers so easily at a time when Algeria was caught in an unprecedented war against Islamic terror, it is thanks to the humanist dimension of Raï's eroticism.

Notes

[1] Marie Virolle, *La chanson raï: de l'Algérie profonde à la scène internationale* (Paris : Editions Karthala, 1995), 31.
[2] Marc Schade-Poulsen, *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Raï* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Hadj Mohamed Miliani, 'Une esthétique du fragmentaire: dame Rimitti et ses enfants putatifs,' *L'oralité africaine*, 1 (1992); Hadj Mohamed Miliani, *Les représentations des femmes dans la chanson populaire oranaise dite 'Raï'* (Oran: CRIDSSH, 1983); Bezza Mazouzi, 'La musique algérienne et la question raï,' *La revue musicale* 418 (1990).
[3] Malek Chebel, 'La bataille du Raï,' *Le monde de la musique* 119 (1989).
[4] Ahmed Amine Dellai, *Chants Bedoui de L'Oranie : Anthologie* (Alger: ENAG Editions, 2006); Ahmed Amine Dellai, *Chansons de la Casbah: Anthologie Poétique Chaâbi* (Alger: ENAG Editions, 2006).
[5] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984).
[6] Jacques Berque, *Le Maghreb entre deux guerres* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1962).
[7] John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Penguin, 1997).
[8] Mohammed Dib, *La grande maison* (Paris: Editions Points, 1996); Mohammed Dib, *Le métier à tisser* (Paris: Editions Point, 2001); Mohammed Dib, *L'incendie* (Paris : Editions Points, 2002).
[9] Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 57.
[10] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1991).
[11] Eugène Fromentin, *Between Sea and Sahara: An Orientalist Adventure* (New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2004); Emile-Félix Gautier, *Le passé de l'Afrique du Nord : Les siècles obscurs* (Paris: Payot, 1964).
[12] Barkahoum Ferhati, 'Ambivalence des discours politiques sur la prostitution: L'histoire bégaie,' *Naqd: Revue d'Etudes et de Critique Sociale* 22/23 (2006): 68.

[13] Norbert Elias, *La civilisation des mœurs*, trans. Pierre Kamnitzer (Paris: Agora, 1973).
[14] Virolle, *La chanson raï* , 90-91.
[15] Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Penguin, 2012), 231-257; Edgar Weber, *Imaginaire Arabe et contes érotiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990), 117-146.
[16] Rimitti, 'Annexe 1: Textes de Rimitti', see in Virolle, 181-201.
[17] Weber, *Imaginaire Arabe et contes érotiques*, 12-43.
[18] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Vol. 2: The History of Eroticism; Vol.3: Sovereignty*, trans. Robert Hurtley (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 191.

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Part III

The Allure of the Offbeat

‘Intimate with Monsters’: Mary Shelley’s Dark Desires in Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*

Doreen Bauschke

Abstract
In *The Pleasure of the Text* Roland Barthes averres that the engagement with certain texts can evoke a feeling of *jouissance*, a kind of bliss that is akin to the ecstasy one experiences during the sexual climax. This notion that the textual can amount to an erotic experience which arouses sexual desires is thematised in Shelley Jackson’s hyperfiction, *Patchwork Girl.* This digital rewrite of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* aims to tell the true story hidden behind ‘the paisley of [*Frankenstein*’s] negative spaces’; it seeks to uncover ‘the fierce hunger under [Mary Shelley’s] stays’ which she experienced when engaging with her female monster, Patchwork Girl. *Patchwork Girl* reveals that Mary Shelley’s textual passion as a writer constitutes a masked expression of her erotic attraction for her own creation, which actually turns into a sexual experience with the female monster, as the subsequent close reading of *Patchwork Girl* unveils.

Key Words: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*, hyperfiction, erotic, Roland Barthes, *jouissance*.

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In his essay-length book, *Le Plaisir du Texte*, Roland Barthes asserts that there are basically two types of texts which elicit different kinds of emotional reactions from their readers. On the one hand, there are so-called *lisible*, that is readerly, texts such as realist novels; they are marked by a straightforward design, use familiar, foreseeable narrative patterns and allow a passive consumption. The meaning of such easily readable texts is so apparent that it requires little to no effort on the side of their readers, thus eliciting a sense of comfort, a mild form of pleasure, which Barthes calls *plaisir*, in their readers because these texts reassuringly fulfil their expectations. On the other hand, there are so-called *scriptable*, that is writerly, texts such as modern or postmodern novels which ‘attempt to downplay, or even eradicate… linear codes in favour of the other more nebulous, circulating codes.’[1] These texts which aim at ‘unleashing the power of the plural text’[2] require active readers who become sort of co-writers because each reader has to actively produce his or her own meaning out of the contradictory fragments provided by the author. Such writerly texts evoke a feeling of *jouissance* in their readers, a kind of bliss which is akin to the ecstasy one experiences during the sexual climax, at least in those readers who delight in grappling with ‘the plural of the demoniacal texture,’[3] i.e. who enjoy a more experimental, unsettling reading experience.[4]

Shelley Jackson's hyperfiction, *Patchwork Girl*, belongs to this latter category of texts. This electronic novel consists of a plethora of discrete narrative fragments known as *lexias* that are connected through multiple links. Consequently, its computerised text is not only multiple but also mutable, since each reader's textual experience depends entirely on the particular paths a reader chooses when reaching one of its countless textual crossroads.

Yet, not only the writerly structure of *Patchwork Girl* is related to Barthes' notion of *jouissance*, but this idea that the textual can amount to an erotic experience which arouses sexual desires is also thematised within its shifting textual fragments. After all, the intertextual agenda of this digital rewrite of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is to tell the true story hidden behind 'the paisley of [*Frankenstein*'s] negative spaces.'[5] Concretely, it seeks to uncover 'the fierce hunger under [Mary Shelley's] stays'[6] which the 'proper'[7] Mary Shelley suppressed when writing her Gothic novel. These dark desires of Mary Shelley are revealed, above all, within one of *Patchwork Girl*'s five main sections which is entitled 'a journal.' It contains a diary written by a fictive Mary Shelley that chronicles her creation of the female monster in *Frankenstein*, which, as Jackson's rewrite reveals, was actually completed and lived, rather than being destroyed. Moreover, the main section, 'a journal,' describes the ensuing relationship between Mary and her monster.

Mary's relation to the female creature in *Patchwork Girl* stands in implicit contrast to the relation between Victor Frankenstein and the male monster.[8] This is already hinted at within the second lexia of the section 'a journal,' where Mary while going for a solitary walk is suddenly waylaid by Patchwork Girl:

> It was my monster, stark naked, standing as still as if I [Mary] had not yet breathed life into her massive frame, and waiting for me. She held in one hand a scrap of cloth I recognized, all that was left of the clothes I had thrust upon her when she fled me shortly after her conception; the rest she had lost or cast aside. I could not help but quail before the strangeness of this figure, from which, I fancifully imagined, the very blades of grass seemed to shrink, *but* curiosity, *compassion, and a kind of fellow feeling was the stronger impulse*, and I forced myself to continue.[9]

While in *Frankenstein* Victor feels loathing for his monster, which eventually results in tragedy for both creator and creature, in *Patchwork Girl* Mary predominantly feels sympathy rather than horror for her creation. However, what initially appears as pity turns out to be admiration, as the lexia 'she stood' reveals:

> She was stark naked. I noticed what I could not have seen in the dim light of my laboratory, that the various sectors of her skin were different hues and textures, no match perfect. Here a coarser texture confused the ruddy hue of blood near under the skin, there smooth skin betrayed a jaundiced undertone, there a dense coat of fine hairs palely caught the light. Warm brown neighbored blue-veined ivory.
>
> I thought of the tree that stands by the house. I have often noticed that a length of cloth however richly dyed cannot match the beauty or sustain the interest of Autumn foliage… [of its] myriad differing hues.…
>
> In this same way she was beautiful.[10]

While Victor in *Frankenstein* never tires of pointing out the appalling hideousness of the male monster, Mary sees beauty in the patched skin of the female creature, which as a patchwork is capable of capturing the beauty of autumn foliage with its myriad different hues, which a single piece of cloth never could.

However, Mary's feelings towards her creation are not entirely positive but rather as 'variegated'[11] as her creation, as Mary emphasises in the next lexia, where she specifies that she feels 'tenderness, repugnance, fear, and profound responsibility, both anxious and prideful'[12] towards Patchwork Girl. The source of Mary's ambivalent feelings for her female monster is that Patchwork Girl arouses a 'fierce hunger under [Mary's] stays'[13] that terrifies Mary. What initially begins as a mother-child relationship between Mary and her brainchild soon takes on another quality, as the lexia 'crave' suggests:

> I crave her company; I crave even the danger. Do I yearn for the easement of my own company? Do I resent the fierce mad engine that is throbbing inside my serene life, *staining my underclothes*, creasing my brow, making me jump up restless from Percy's side to go to my writing desk, the window, the bookcase, the door, while he gazes at me in gentle reproach, or speaks to me as a tutor might of the inner peace I clearly lack? Yes, of course I do. You are taking me over, I long to cry, but does one punish the food for the pain in one's empty belly?[14]

Evidently, Mary behaves like someone who is madly in love and craves nothing more than the company of one's object of affection. Mary's initial sensuous artistic admiration of Patchwork Girl gradually becomes sensual desire, so that eventually a love affair develops between them, as the following series of lexias chronicles:

> Last night I lay in her arms, my monster, and for the first time laid my hand on her skin. Her skins, I should rather say.… Her body was warm. Feverish, I might say, yet knew not what internal thermostat might hold steady and true in that preternaturally robust form.…[15]

> We turned this way and that, slipping at times into reverie, approaching intimacy and veering away again by mutual and emphatic agreement, feigning slumber and awakening. At last she turned and looked at me and I saw a sort of desperation in her eyes. Here at least she was still my child, and she would not move without a sign from me.[16]

> I moved my hand then, and touched one of her scars…those portions which her maker had stitched… [where] whitened tissue divided her torso into sectors as distinct as patches in a quilt.[17]

> I ran my fingertips along a seam that traversed her flank. It was tough and knobbled, yet slick. And it was hot, not the cold I had anticipated without knowing it. Indeed, it was hotter than the stretches of smooth skin it divided, as I proved by caressing both regions.…[18]

> …I clung to her with the full extent of my strength and the length of my body, and she returned the embrace. Our hands hunted and probed. We breathed each other's breath. Her scars lay like living things between us, inscribing themselves in my skin. I thought I too was rent and sewn, that I was both multiply estranged and gathered together in a dynamic union.
> What divided her, divided me.[19]

Artistic admiration turns into erotic longing and this eventually leads to a sexual relationship between Mary and Patchwork Girl. Barthes's notion that the textual can amount to an erotic experience which arouses sexual desires is evidently literalised within Shelley Jackson's hyperfiction *Patchwork Girl*, where Mary engages in sexual relations with her textual creation.

As a consequence of their sexual union, Mary comes to identify fully with her monstrous creation, as the last lines of the ultimate quotation but also the following passage underline:

> I [Mary] wish I had her long strong limbs; I would run up these Alps, as she tells me she does, following the changing light

> across fields of ice. How quickly now our positions reverse and teacher turns pupil! She has seen things I will never see; she remembers more than I will experience in my whole life. And yet she is hungry for more. I know she will leave me soon.
>
> I have a crazy wish! I wish that I had cut off a part of me, something Percy would not miss, but something dear to me, and given it to be a part of her. I would live on in her, and she would know me as I know myself. I fear this but crave it. I do not know if she would want it. But I could graft myself to that mighty vine. Who knows what strange new fruit the two of us might bear?[20]

This lexia epitomises that Mary ultimately perceives Patchwork Girl as a kind of role model, whose hunger for life and resolution to satisfy that hunger is not only admirable but also worth imitating, if one can muster the strength that Patchwork Girl has. Mary thus arduously desires to 'graft' herself 'to that mighty vine'[21] of Patchwork Girl and that is exactly what she does before her beloved monster leaves her and sets off to the New World; they perform a special kind of surgery[22] to commemorate each other's joining, the details of which are reported minutely in another main section of the hyperfiction, entitled 'a story,' which contains Patchwork Girl's diary. In its second subsection, called 'severance,' Patchwork Girl, on the day prior to her departure to the United States, writes:

> I held her [Mary's] leg steady as she unblinking scored a circle the size of a farthing in the skin of her calf, then from the perimeter of the circle toward the center slid the blade under the topmost layers of skin, lifting it. I could see the dark metal through her fair skin. 'Like detaching a round of pastry dough from a table top,' she said, lifting the bloody scrap whole on the tip of the blade and holding it out toward me. I wiped the piece of skin off the blade onto a bit of cotton and set the sharp edge of the knife against the knotty scar that crosses my thigh to meet my groin. We had decided that as my skin did not, strictly speaking, belong to me, the nearest thing to a bit of my flesh would be this scar, a place where disparate things joined in a way that was my own. For her part, she chose a piece of skin Percy would likely never miss, in a place where bandages could be readily explained if they should be discovered.
>
> I sliced off a disc of scar tissue the same size as the bit that lay on the pink twist of cotton, and slid it off the point of the knife onto

> the raw spot on her leg; she took the knife and laid her piece on me.
>
> The needlework was her assignment; my big hands are too clumsy for fine stitchery. I swabbed the blood from both our thighs. She was pale but her hands were steady as she joined us.[23]

As Katherine Hayles also notes, '[t]his suturing of self onto other reveals more than a wish of lovers to join. Because Mary is the monster's creator in a double sense, at once sewing and writing her, the scene functions as crossroads for the traffic between fiction and metafiction….'[24] This skin graft is not merely there to commemorate Mary's and Patchwork Girl's emotional and sexual joining but it rather has a symbolic function that is intimately tied to the rethinking of authorship in *Patchwork Girl*. After all, throughout the novel the physical body comes to stand symbolically for the textual corpus. In a similar vein, there are several layers of signification embedded in the skin graft episode. One of these meanings is hinted at in the following passage:

> I [Patchwork Girl] do not know what came of that off-shoot of me, if it dried and fell off or lived in its ring of scars. But I am a strong vine. The graft took, the bit of skin is still a living pink, and so *I remember when I was Mary, and how I loved a monster, and became one. I bring you my story, which is ours*.[25]

What is merely implied here is spelled out in another lexia which fleshes out this scenario:

> AM I MARY
> I [Patchwork Girl] wonder if I am writing from my thigh, from the crimp-edged pancakelet of skin we stitched onto me…. Is my gift a cutting of hers? Am I a host, phony, a setting for a gemstone? And if so, is that good or bad? Maybe my crude strength and my techy bent are better filters for her voice than her still-polite manners. Or does her politesse make her criminal leanings steeper, more vertiginous for the height of their drawing room origins?
>
> Mary writes, I write, we write, but who is really writing? Ghost writers are the only kind there are.[26]

The usual denotation of the term *ghost writer* as someone who writes something for somebody else, and that that person's rather than the actual writer's name will

appear on the book as author, is extended ingeniously here. It is suggested in *Patchwork Girl* that each process of text production consists of countless individual acts of appropriation, since the language a writer uses is never his or her own. Instead, each writer inevitably appropriates the words, the style, and other narrative elements which have been used before, largely by writers and speakers who are now dead. Thus, *technically* speaking, we all become ghost writers who are possessed by the dead, and we all commit multiple acts of plagiarism when we speak through this haunted language.

The skin graft episode cited earlier serves as a symbol for this collective form of authorship which is not only thematised but also structurally embodied within Shelley Jackson's hyperfiction, since many of its textual snippets are appropriated verbatim from a host of other fictional and non-fictional sources, one of them being Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. But there is still more to the skin graft and to this reinterpretation of ghost-writing if we consider the following passage, where *the speaking I* could either be interpreted as the title character Patchwork Girl or as the computer novel *Patchwork Girl*:

> Everything I'm [*Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl] made of speaks up from the dead. This language I speak, it's haunted. No, it is a haunting, possession, an unfamiliar voice, dogs growling, in my throat. Stuck succubus, I was going to say, because possession is as sexual as it sounds. A haunting and sexual intercourse / discourse.…[27]

If one considers that the textual is presented as sexual within *Patchwork Girl*, because engaging with words or discourse is equated with engaging in sexual intercourse, then it is little surprising that this 'haunting' of language also entails these sexual undertones. Yet, the result of such sexual-textual desires is dangerous, as another passage warns us: 'When we have business with language, we are possessed by its dreams and demons, we grow intimate with monsters. We become hybrids, chimeras, centaurs ourselves: steaming flanks and solid redoubtable hoofs galloping under a vaporous machinery.'[28] When we relate this quotation from *Patchwork Girl* to the plot of the main section 'a journal' it translates into the following: when Mary Shelley had 'business with language'[29] while piecing and writing *Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl, she became gradually 'possessed'[30] by her demon quilt to the point of 'grow[ing] intimate with [her] monster.'[31] However, this sexual-textual merging[32] had serious consequences for her, as a further lexia, which also serves as a warning to Patchwork Girl's readers, clarifies: 'Keep in mind… your skin is a permeable membrane…. Come closer, come even closer: if you touch me, your flesh is mixed with mine, and if you pull away, you may take some of me with you, and leave a token behind.'[33] Anyone who is possessed and haunted, sexually and textually, ultimately turns into a 'hybrid' and a 'chimera'[34]

her- or himself. Thus, the swapping of pieces of skin is meant to serve as a 'solid'[35] reminder of Mary's own monstrousness, which remained 'vaporous' [36] in *Frankenstein*, where her demonic streak could merely be 'glimpsed in the paisley of its negative spaces'[37] – but which was allowed to be placed at the forefront in *Patchwork Girl*.

Notes

[1] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 84.
[2] Ibid., 91.
[3] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text,' *Image, Music and Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 160.
[4] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975) 3-67.
[5] Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (Watertown, MA: Eastgate Systems, 1995), a story/ M/S/ she.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.,
[8] cf. Alexandra Glavanakova-Yaneva, 'Body Webs: Re/constructing Boundaries in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*', *Journal Of American Studies of Turkey* 18 (2003): 68, 71-72.; Katherine N Hayles, 'Flickering Connectivities in Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis', *Postmodern Culture* 10.2 (2000): 34, Viewed October 31, 2012, http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.100/10.2hayles.txt; Carolina Sánchez-Palencia Carazo and Manuel Almagro Jiménez, 'Gathering the Limbs of the Text in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*', *ATLANTIS* 28.1 (June 2006): 121ff.
[9] Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*, a journal/ sight, emphasis mine.
[10] Ibid., a journal/ she stood.
[11] Ibid., a journal/ meeting.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., a story/ M/S/ she.
[14] Ibid., a journal/ crave, emphasis mine.
[15] Ibid., a journal/ scars/ I lay.
[16] Ibid., a journal/ scars/ turned.
[17] Ibid., a journal/ scars/ I moved.
[18] Ibid., a journal/ scars/ fingertips.
[19] Ibid., a journal/ scars/ her, me.
[20] Ibid., a journal/ female trouble.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., a story/ M/S/ Mary.
[23] Ibid., a story/ severance/ join.

[24] Hayles, 'Flickering Connectivities', 39.
[25] Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*, a story/ severance/ us, emphasis mine.
[26] Ibid., a story/ rethinking/ am i mary.
[27] Ibid., a story/ rethinking/ voices.
[28] Ibid., body of text/ it thinks.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] cf. Laura Shackelford, 'Subject to Change: The Monstrosity of Media in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*; or, *A Modern Monster* and Other Posthumanist Critiques of the Instrumental', *Camera Obscura* 21.3 (2006): 92.
[33] Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*, *a* body of text/ hazy whole.
[34] Ibid., body of text/ it thinks.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., a story/ M/S/ she.

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The Erotic, Ethics and Philosophy: Fantasy and the Other in *Frisk*

Matthew James Bowes-Graham

Abstract
The violent pornographic content of *Frisk* becomes more interesting and coherent when read through contemporary continental philosophy, which contextualises Dennis's ethically unattainable and largely inexpressible fantasy of killing sexually attractive boys. The conflict between Dennis's fantasy and the ethical considerations that relegate this desire to his imagination underpin the narrative, but this conflict is easily overlooked for the more obvious sexualised scenes of violence without the aid of philosophy. Maurice Blanchot's suggestion that death acts as the extreme limit is central to *Frisk* because it represents both the extreme content of Dennis's fantasy, and the limit that separates his material existence from the fiction that dominates his life. The distance between Dennis's physical existence and his fantasy means that, like Blanchot, death is an unresolvable entity that is repeatedly approached through language in an attempt to articulate an engagement with it. The lie that we submit to – which Slavoj Žižek discusses through the big Other – is also central to *Frisk* because Dennis not only submits to the ethical concerns that prevent him from physically acting upon his fantasy, but also to the perversion that he obsesses over. Thus, the self-denial of Dennis's fantasy also, paradoxically, maintains his obsession through the conflict between his ethical responsibility and his compulsion to act upon this desire. As Jacques Derrida suggests, the Biblical figure Abraham was absolved of the responsibility of his call to sacrifice because of God's secret intention; but Dennis has no comparably secret morality behind his sacrificial desire, so, in a sense, his abstinence makes him more ethical because he accepts responsibility for his actions. In this way, the conflict between fantasy, ethics and material responsibility in *Frisk* are compounded by the importance of reading Cooper's narrative alongside contemporary philosophy, rather than solely as violent erotic fiction.

Key Words: Dennis Cooper, pornography, philosophy, ethics, fantasy, violence, death, Maurice Blanchot, Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Derrida.

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1. Pornography as Philosophy

Dennis Cooper's experimental novel, *Frisk*,[1] follows the protagonist, also called Dennis, as he explores the relationship between his fantasy of killing 'cute guys'[2] and a physical reality where that remains impossible. Because this violent desire is physically unattainable, Dennis's descriptions act as a medium through which he can engage with this impossibility, as writing it down remained 'exciting in a pornographic way,'[3] and provided one of the only means of conveying this

compulsion – since the descriptions of his fantasy, as well as the confessional letters which he sends out to his friends, 'rea[d] as desire.'[4] For this reason, the novel largely comprises back-to-back variations of the death of young men who are 'pale, cute and had long, straight black hair,'[5] which implies that the text has nothing to offer beyond repetitive scenes of sexual violence – including an attempt to 'saw [a boy's penis] in two'[6] during the closing scenes in a windmill in Amsterdam, and another instance where Dennis shakes hands with himself inside a boy by inserting a hand into his throat and another into his rectum. However, since Cooper suggests that *Frisk* acts as an 'attempt to take responsibility for the [narrative's] material,'[7] and these violent scenes are punctuated by Dennis's attempt to understand and articulate an image that remains beyond his comprehension, perhaps the novel's violence should not be read so literally. Death may be the unavoidable lynchpin of *Frisk*'s narrative; but when killing someone was 'never a real goal'[8] for Dennis, one should then assess how his violent fantasy simultaneously reveals both an ethical and an erotic experience, particularly when the novel is read alongside continental philosophy. The death of God not only forces Dennis to take responsibility for his sacrificial desire and its prohibition, but also presents the possibility of Dennis achieving his sacrifice *within* an ethical framework, should he find someone who 'shared these obsessions.'[9] Therefore, it is not only the active prohibition of Dennis's sacrificial desire in the absence of God, but also the possibility of attaining his desire without suspending ethics, which makes him the ethical figure *par excellence*.

The most obvious link between *Frisk* and philosophy is Maurice Blanchot's fixation upon death as 'the extreme'[10] which, like Dennis's fantasy, presents death as an 'ungraspable'[11] entity that acts as a physical limit on the one hand, while also simultaneously exceeding this limit on the other. In a sense, the death of Dennis's fantasy never happens because it cannot be reduced to a physical event; but it is precisely because Dennis, like Blanchot, is repeatedly 'turned away'[12] from any conclusive knowledge of an 'unapproachable'[13] death that 'dying in itself [becomes] a task without end.'[14] In *Frisk*, Dennis constantly 'repeat[s] [him]self'[15] because his sacrificial fantasy is without resolution, making it his task without end, since death represents both an un-crossable physical limit, and the centre-point of a fantasy which surpasses this limit. Also, because *Frisk*'s narrative focuses upon the conflict between the violence Dennis imposes on the victim of his fantasy and his physical abstinence, Blanchot's suggestion that the binary relation between subject and object is 'sadomasochistic,'[16] which frames his critique of stable knowledge within a language of violent sexual desire and excess, remains comparable to Dennis's experience. If knowledge is created through 'the reality of what it is negating,'[17] then a binary opposition offers the 'the one region where "normal" and "anomaly" have meaning'[18] because it provides the clearest means of quantifying and conveying this knowledge: through comparison. But if, for Dennis as much as for Blanchot, this binary relation that generates knowledge forces experience to be

reduced to a dialectical comparison that cannot encapsulate it, then not only is this reduction an act of violence; it also cannot express the complexity or potential incoherence of any experience through such linear comparisons. The two apparent dialectical oppositions that Dennis experiences – the master/slave binary of his fantasy, as well as the division between fantasy and physical reality – highlight not only the violence contained within his fantasy, but also the violence of any attempt to devise meaning by reducing his experience to polar opposites. Perhaps, then, this is why both Dennis and Blanchot accept that the violence of such a binary relation cannot generate conclusive knowledge: since it cannot encapsulate the entirety of an object, it can only identify what it is by describing what it is not. The inadequacy of such a dialectical relation is addressed by both Blanchot in *The Work of Fire*[19] and by Dennis in *Frisk*. Blanchot suggests that,

> if we honour [something] from afar, calling it secret… [it] makes itself an object of disgust… and if we approach it to explain it, we encounter only that which conceals itself.[20]

Likewise, Dennis, albeit in a more colloquial way, also suggests that 'you're either so far away you think in total clichés, or you're so close things blur,'[21] which reiterates that the sadomasochistic violence of such a binary relation cannot offer any conclusive knowledge of death or fantasy for either party. Therefore, neither the fantasy where Dennis mentally 'grab[s] objects off the night table, crushing his skull, then mutilating his body,'[22] nor his ability to 'drift off… during sex'[23] in order to experience this violent desire provide Dennis with any real knowledge of his desire, despite Dennis's suggestion that this fantasy acts as an 'ultimate truth'[24] which defines his identity. Yet, although Dennis's fantasy remains largely 'incommunicable,'[25] because the content of this fantasy also represents an 'ultimate truth,'[26] it would be problematic to represent the incomprehensibility of this desire alongside the 'infinite passivity'[27] which Blanchot suggests exceeds a binary relation. To view Dennis's desire as a radically other and unknowable secret, as Blanchot concludes, implies that Dennis should undertake a 'search for [a] hidden meaning'[28] when, in fact, there is nothing beyond the content of his fantasy – only the incomprehensibility of the fantasy itself. Therefore, even when Dennis's fantasy represents 'an un-knowableness… that's so profound… [i]t's incommunicable,'[29] and any attempt to articulate it appears 'fake,'[30] it remains irreducible to the absolute secrecy of Blanchot's radical other. The 'splatter films'[31] that allow Dennis to describe his fantasy may make it seem 'much more pretentious, ridiculous, [and] amoral'[32] than his experience of it, but this does not mean that an aspect of his desire remains somehow beyond this symbolic framework. Instead, it appears that Dennis experiences 'fragments [of truth]… which resist meaning'[33] within this fantasy, since, although he cannot derive coherent meaning from the symbolic order of his fantasy, Dennis's desire does not

then become somehow secret. The 'ultimate truth' [34] of Dennis's desire is represented within the incomprehensible fantasy that he cannot remove himself from, which means, rather than there being some profound and hidden truth behind it, that 'there is more truth in the mask than in the… reality behind the mask.'[35] Therefore, although Dennis's fantasy may be an unattainable fiction, because it plays such an influential role in shaping his identity, it appears to be more important than the mundane reality of abstinence that sits behind it, even though this is not an entirely adequate assertion either.

2. Is Fantasy Ever More Than Social Oppression?

Slavoj Žižek's work on sexual enjoyment and prohibition suggests that Dennis has no notable choice in his abstinence, since his all-consuming fantasy forces him to submit to two successive masters – undermining the 'idealized brutality'[36] of his master role within his fantasy as a result. Firstly, for Žižek, Dennis submits to the big Other– the 'immaterial, ideal order,'[37] the 'shared fiction'[38] that prohibits desire – because he adheres to the ethical conventions of society that forbid sacrifice, and which relegate his desire to fantasy. The 'harsh reality' [39] that imposes a responsibility to abstain upon Dennis's material existence is supplemented by his violent fantasy, which cancels the 'full impact'[40] of his inability to fulfil his desire, and, instead of leaving him 'lost' [41] in a dream world, actually makes him 'thoroughly'[42] realistic, since he is able to see 'the way things effectively are.'[43] However, even the fantasy that results from this imposed abstinence is not liberating for Žižek because Dennis's perverse desire exerts a power over him that makes him an '*instrument*' [44] which '*serves* the Other's enjoyment,' [45] since he remains unable to detach himself from this all-consuming urge. Therefore, although Dennis may be the master *within* his fantasy, when read alongside Žižek, he does not appear to be master *over* his fantasy, since his self-imposed denial not only validates the ethical status of the big Other that controls his actions, but also maintains the existence of a fantasy that dominates his thoughts. Regardless of this apparent oppression, reducing Dennis's experience to one of only submission overlooks the simultaneous act of resistance against the big Other that Dennis undertakes within his fantasy – particularly when Dennis experiences his desire 'almost religiously'[46] in the absence of God – as well as the fact that his abstinence remains ethical, whether oppressive or not. If the big Other that prohibits enjoyment is 'personified'[47] by God, the 'angelic'[48] focal point of Dennis's violent fantasy provocatively merges a God-like divinity that exceeds expression with sexual desire, and epitomises unrestricted enjoyment through limitless violence and prohibition simultaneously. The object of Dennis's desire is 'worshiped,'[49] but is also repeatedly killed within each successive fantasy. Therefore, as Michel Foucault suggests, the 'language of sexuality'[50] is 'bound'[51] to the death of God who could prohibit this sexual enjoyment, since Dennis's fantasy frames his sexuality within the space opened up by this 'absent'[52] God. During his early teens,

Dennis encounters photographs of snuff porn that structure his desire by providing him with his ideal fantasy, both through the violence of the images and the aesthetic appearance of the boy within them. So when Dennis suggests that he 'saw God in those pictures,'[53] it not only highlights how divinity, 'desire and violence seem inseparable'[54] to him, but also that the maintenance of his fantasy actually relies upon the death of God, which is exemplified through the repeated violent encounters with the divine other of this fantasy. But if the divine other is either dead or continually dying within Dennis's fantasy, who is it that prohibits his desire? The death of God does not mean that everything is somehow permitted in the 'abyss of freedom'[55] which succeeds this death, particularly when Dennis's desire does not transition from fantasy to actuality. Instead, as Jacques Lacan suggests, '*Once God is dead, nothing is permitted anymore,*'[56] since Dennis is forced to take an active role in his own desire's prohibition. So, in some respects, it makes sense that the 'founding statement'[57] of the big Other is that '[t]he only good God is a dead God'[58]: because, paradoxically, only the absence of God places an ethical responsibility upon Dennis at exactly the same moment that he is liberated from his responsibility to this higher power. However, although Dennis cannot escape the responsibility that makes him accountable for his actions in the absence of divine judgement, does this make his decision any less ethical or his abstinence any less valuable? Because Dennis's fantasy cannot singularly represent either prohibition or actualisation, the complexity of his fantasy is lost when both abstinence and divinity are reduced to oppression within the text, which emphasises the active contribution that Dennis makes towards the prohibition of his desire, and foregrounds the possibility of viewing him as an ethical figure.

3. The Ethics of Sacrificial Fantasy

The conflict between Dennis's self-imposed prohibition and his sacrificial desire not only doubles his experience of sacrifice – making it both a fetishized death and a physical renunciation – but also allows Dennis to be viewed as the ethical figure *par excellence*, particularly when compared to the Biblical figure, Abraham. On the surface, God's test of Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a 'burnt offering'[59] seems comparable to Dennis's fantasy, since both involve the hypothetical sacrifice of 'what [they] love'[60] – a young boy – and both remain incomprehensible to anyone except the party called to sacrifice. One 'cannot understand'[61] Abraham because, like Dennis's 'insane'[62] desire, his sacrifice does not appear to conform to conventional ethics. However, it is their differing relation to God that distinguishes Abraham from Dennis, and foregrounds the significance of Dennis's physical abstinence. Although Dennis fantasises about 'firewor[k] display[s] of blood'[63] that 'erased'[64] his victims, he never physically actualised this sacrifice, whereas Abraham, although never completing his act of sacrifice, was prepared to physically realise it to show his devotion to God. The Kierkegaardian 'suspension of the ethical'[65] that Abraham is forced to undertake in

order to follow through with God's request could not be more different from Dennis's actions: Dennis is not relinquished of his culpability in his violent act because, for him, unlike Abraham, there is 'no God'[66] to take responsibility for his sacrifice. Therefore, when Jacques Derrida states that Abraham's sacrifice 'must remain inconceivable'[67] for him to be able to show his devotion to God, becoming 'wholly other'[68] and 'withdraw[ing] from view,'[69] it stands in contrast to Dennis's sacrifice, which remains an inconceivable desire that tests his personal ethical responsibility, rather than his faith in a transcendental being that offers him salvation. Rather than suspending the ethics of this sacrifice by making them a 'transcendent, hidden, secret'[70] which permits him to act, as the existence of God does for Abraham, the only ethical suspension that allows Dennis to experience his sacrifice occurs within his 'psychotic'[71] fantasy. So, while Abraham's sacrifice relies upon his physical actions being ethically suspended and remaining secret from him as a test of faith, Dennis, paradoxically, only undergoes an ethical suspension within his fantasy due to his complete physical prohibition, making his fantasy a more ethical choice than Abraham's actions, since he takes full responsibility for his sacrifice in the absence of divinity.

If, as Žižek suggests, God's 'proper authority'[72] is experienced through the ethical suspension that authorises Abraham's actions, then Dennis's atheism should prevent his sacrifice because this ethical suspension is unavailable to him. However, the religious descriptions of Dennis's fantasy reinforce the link between his desire and 'sacred sacrifice,'[73] since the divine experience of his fantasy makes his sacrificial desire possible through a suspension of ethics that allows him to experience it non-physically. The 'heavy burden of total responsibility'[74] that prohibits Dennis from physically actualising his sacrifice aligns his ethical responsibility with his atheism, since, in the absence of God, the fact that people are 'only their bodies'[75] becomes the 'ultimate horizon of our existence,'[76] rather than a divine and transcendental beyond. However, even though Dennis suggests that he couldn't actually kill anyone, 'no matter how persuasive the fantasy is,'[77] he remained 'conflicted'[78] about the 'series of near-misses'[79] which meant that he could not act out his fantasy with someone who 'shared these obsessions.'[80] Between the deliberately misleading descriptions of his 'mental porn movies'[81] expressed through a series of letters, and the apparently conflicting confessions of his intentions, Dennis's distinction between fantasy and physicality is complicated by the possibility of meeting a victim who would willingly act 'in league'[82] with him, and potentially give him the 'courage or amorality'[83] to act upon his desire. So although Dennis represents Žižek's 'atheist liberal hedonist,'[84] who, in an attempt not to 'violate others' spaces,'[85] becomes 'entangled in a thick web'[86] of prohibition, he also problematises the oppressive ethics Žižek aligns with this figure. If the archetypal Žižekian hedonist's self-imposed abstinence provides an ethical code that is 'more severe than that of traditional morality,'[87] since the possibility of a destabilising ethical suspension only exists within fantasy, this is

not an entirely accurate description of Dennis. On the one hand, Dennis recognises that his potential victim's life is 'as important as anyone's, including [his];'[88] but, on the other, he also accepts that the possibility of finding a like-minded victim means that he could physically actualise his sacrificial desire without imposing it upon someone against their will. Essentially, mutual consent not only makes sacrifice possible from *within* an ethical framework that Dennis's fantasy is seemingly excluded from, but also achieves this *ethical immersion* that makes sacrifice possible in the absence of God for the atheistic hedonist.

This *ethical immersion* provides Dennis with an alternative means of theoretically making his sacrificial desire physical, which not only undermines the oppressive prohibition of the big Other, but also does not require God to provide an ethical suspension to validate his action, highlighting how Dennis can be read as the ethical figure *par excellence*. Of course, this desire for a like-minded other could be viewed as a supplement of his sacrificial fantasy, particularly when it remains unclear if Dennis would actually act upon this compulsion should he be presented with the opportunity. But it is not a question of whether Dennis is able to act upon this opening or not; rather, it is the possibility of action that not only ethically validates his sacrificial desire, but also opens it up from the personal to a community who could 'relate to the fantasy.'[89] Because there is no 'radical break'[90] from ethics for Dennis – only a complete immersion which paradoxically enables him to physically act – the significance of his abstinence is elevated alongside the possibility of attaining his sacrificial desire. Therefore, whether one focuses upon Dennis's ability to physically reach his desire through mutual consent, or the additional ethical importance of his abstinence that accompanies this possibility, Dennis is never removed from his position within ethics. As a result, Dennis becomes the ethical figure *par excellence*, but not as one would imagine him – as the subservient, oppressed or divine figure – since the potential of what he can attain from within these oppressive categories has irrevocably shifted.

Notes

[1] Dennis Cooper, *Frisk* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1991).
[2] Ibid., 107.
[3] Ibid., 123.
[4] Ibid., 113.
[5] Ibid., 27.
[6] Ibid., 101.
[7] Dennis Cooper, interviewed by Richard Canning, *Conversations with Gay Novelists: Gay Fiction Speaks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 301.
[8] Cooper, *Frisk*, 74.

[9] Ibid., 77.
[10] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 91.
[11] Ibid., 104.
[12] Ibid., 133.
[13] Ibid., 126.
[14] Ibid., 157.
[15] Cooper, *Frisk*, 32.
[16] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 19.
[17] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death,' *Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill, 1981), 45.
[18] Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, 19.
[19] Maurice Blanchot, 'Mystery in Literature,' *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 43.
[20] Ibid., 43.
[21] Cooper, *Frisk*, 85.
[22] Ibid., 34.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 107.
[25] Ibid., 78.
[26] Ibid., 107.
[27] Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, 16.
[28] Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2012), 28.
[29] Cooper, *Frisk*, 78.
[30] Ibid., 54.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 30.
[33] Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 28.
[34] Cooper, *Frisk*, 107.
[35] Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 45.
[36] Cooper, *Frisk*, 78.
[37] Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 68.
[38] Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 109.
[39] Ibid., 14.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Žižek, *On Belief*, 14.

[44] Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 92.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Cooper, *Frisk*, 120.
[47] Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta Books, 2006), 41.
[48] Cooper, *Frisk*, 92.
[49] Ibid., 98.
[50] Michel Foucault, Preface to *Transgression, Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays* by Michel Foucault, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 31.
[51] Ibid., 33.
[52] Ibid., 31.
[53] Cooper, *Frisk*, 70.
[54] Ibid., 113.
[55] Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 111.
[56] Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, 103.
[57] Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 90.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Genesis 22: 2.
[60] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 64.
[61] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 66.
[62] Cooper, *Frisk*, 53.
[63] Ibid., 101.
[64] Ibid., 107.
[65] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 85.
[66] Cooper, *Frisk*, 69.
[67] Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 61.
[68] Ibid., 78.
[69] Ibid., 89.
[70] Ibid., 67.
[71] Cooper, *Frisk*, 47.
[72] Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, 97.
[73] Žižek, *On Belief*, 63.
[74] Slavoj Žižek, 'Christianity Against the Sacred,' *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 50.
[75] Cooper, *Frisk*, 69-70.
[76] Žižek, *On Belief*, 54.
[77] Ibid., 123.
[78] Ibid., 77.

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 81.
[82] Ibid., 121.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Žižek, 'Christianity Against the Sacred,', 44.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Cooper, *Frisk*, 70.
[89] Ibid., 121.
[90] Ibid.

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Rediscovering National Identity through the Erotic: Incestual and Orgiastic in Imamura and Miike

Ana Dosen

Abstract
This chapter explores the erotic as a means of transcending the national and multicultural in films of Japanese authors Shohei Imamura and Takashi Miike. The erotic is observed through incestual, quasi-incestual and orgiastic relationships which metaphorically portray the political anxieties and identity crises of Japanese society and culture. During the period of Japan's postwar rebuilding, reinventing, positioning and opening towards the West, and impressive economic growth, on the one hand, Imamura's most significant films compel Japanese society to return to its taboo-free roots in unbound nature and spontaneous desire. Here, incestual drive represents the forbidden urge to reconnect with one's national self or its own ancestors, in spite of being ashamed and forced to live by foreign standards. On the other hand, Takashi Miike, as the most prolific filmmaker of his era, confronts (and attempts to cure) Japan's millennial apathy through the unrelenting sexual deviance of his terminally frustrated characters. Miike takes the western cultural imperative of psychoanalysis, as a tool of preserving national sanity, to extremes by purging it through orgiastic sexual practice. The erotic becomes a unifying tissue to mend dysfunctional family units and reinforce shaken belief in Japanese societal structure; the obscenity, therefore, becomes the key to unlocking and rediscovering one's own true identity.

Key Words: Japan, incestual, national, *The Profound Desire of Gods*, orgiastic, multicultural, *Visitor Q*.

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> Please grant me the part of my body that I lack.'
> Amazed, the God of Heaven asked: 'What part of your body do you lack?'
> The part of my body… that I lack to be complete… is the body… of a woman.
> The body of a woman is all I long for.[1]

What is usually easily misunderstood and viewed judgmentally by non-Japanese is the 'unconstrained' freedom in depicting issues of pedophilia, incest and different sexual practices in literature, cinema, manga or Japanese art in general. It would be inaccurate to consider Japanese society as taboo-free, but one must acknowledge loose censorship in the domain of fiction concerning these subjects. Contradictorily, the infamous Article 175 – the law against obscenity

which prohibits the realistic depiction of genitalia (pubic hair) – made it possible to view various sexual acts which are considered in other societies extreme, perverse and unsuitable for public display due to the subject's fantastical character.

Foucault perceives Japanese society as one which is endowed with an *ars erotica.*

> In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself; it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul.[2]

This Foucauldian perspective can be a basis for understanding the 'original' Japanese *eros,* or the core of *yamato damashii* – the primal ancient Japanese essence.[3]

In this chapter I investigate the erotic as a means of transcending the national and multicultural in the films of Japanese authors Shohei Imamura and Takashi Miike. The erotic is seen through incestual and orgiastic relationships which metaphorically portray the political anxieties and identity crises of Japanese society and culture. These erotic performances of characters in Imamura's and Miike's films represent a core from which to rebuild and reassemble Japan's identity.

Two Japanese directors – Imamura Shohei and Miike Takashi can both be categorised as belonging to what Donald Richie names 'real' Japan. Opposite to 'official' Japan, represented by the cinema of Ozu Yasujiro and virtues of fidelity, loyalty and the subservient woman – exported versions of how Japanese society likes to see itself, Imamura stands as one who ignores it, in the same manner as Miike today critically explores the realms within and far beyond contemporary *kawaii*[4] and high-tech Japan.

As James Quandt notices:

> Imamura's anarchic sensibility and energetic visual style, clearly inherited from Kawashima, celebrate everything that is excluded from Ozu's refined world: the irrational, the instinctual, the carnal, squalid, violent and superstitious life of Japan's underclass, which Imamura insists has remained immutable over thousands of years.[5]

However, the year 1968 held global importance with regard to social and political change, and also stood as a pivotal year, when Japan's GNP was the second largest in the world. 'Japan was cruising on one of the most rapid growth trajectories, but it was anticipating the shade of future changes.'[6] *The Profound Desire of*

Gods (1968) was released the same year and one could argue that it is Imamura's attempt to reflect on Japanese society and its future. The same year is the centennial year of the Meiji Restoration which marked Japan's opening towards the West after two centuries of the isolationist foreign policies of Edo period (1603-1868), and establishing of a modern state. *The Profound Desire of The Gods* questions Japanese identity, positioning the inhabitants of the small southern island of Kuragejima between tradition and progress.

Imamura chooses to open and close his film with a song of the Japanese creation myth of Izanagi and Izanami. The interesting point of this myth can be found in not just the emphasis on carnal bodies of gods but in their incestual relationship from which Japan is formed. Opposite of the Christian dogma of the immaculate conception, these Japanese gods, brother and sister, Izanagi and Izanami, are aware of their bodies and reproductive organs: she notices that one part of her body had not grown, as well as he notices the part of his body which had grown to excess. Izanagi then proposes to join together by placing his excess in her not completed part in order to form a new land. But awareness of human anatomy, sexual intercourse between brother and sister, is also followed by social order – after creating deformed, leech island, Hiruko, the sibling gods were advised by other gods that the male should be the one who takes the initiative (who should first compliment the female, as opposed to what they did at the beginning) and the female should be the one who waits to be seduced. The product of many islands and numerous deities – Japan is possible only with the right social order. Then, following this myth, the essence of Japanese identity can be found in the idea that every act should respect the form and order of things.

During the period of Japan's postwar rebuilding, reinventing, positioning and opening towards the West, and impressive economic growth, Imamura's most significant films compel Japanese society to return to its taboo-free roots in unbound nature and spontaneous desire. The plot of *The Profound Desire of The Gods* evolves around Kariya, a Tokyo engineer who comes to a remote island, assigned to dig a well to provide water for a sugar mill, and his encounter with the local Futori family. The inhabitants show an ambiguous relationship towards the Futori family. Embarrassed by incestual practices between brother and sister, Nekichi and Uma, the islanders believe that the gods punished Nekichi by putting a giant rock in his rice paddy. They mock Nekichi anytime they get the chance. On the other hand, Uma is treated with respect as a *noro* – a shaman priestess. In fact, the islanders seem to be conflicted between the Futori family as the oldest family on the island and the engineer – the outsider who comes to modernise and bring prosperity to the island. More precisely, the islanders are caught between a westernised outsider who comes from the distant capital and enjoys drinking Coca-cola, representing the technologically equipped Other and the local family with several incestual relationships (father-daughter, brother-sister), respectful to the gods and the land. Isolde Standish explains that Imamura saw problem not only as

> the importation of Western political and social ideals but in economic and cultural divisions between the city and the country. In the city, immigrants from the countryside were cut off from their roots and left lonely and isolated in uniform urban apartment blocks.[7]

Therefore, one can presume the logic in the engineer establishing the closest connections with members of Futori family.

Shunsuke Katori points out that:

> there were certain people who claimed that under the lead of American 'democracy' Japan had changed, but Imamura thought that if the consciousness of the common people which is constructed from the base part of society did not change, then Japanese people would not change.[8]

On the contrary, it seems that Imamura was well aware of the process changing Japanese identity and causing it to lose its own creation force. Nekichi and Uma are ready and willing to leave the soon-to-be completely modernised island with land being sold for an airport and turned into a touristic location, in order to find a new island and create new a Japan as gods. In the name of justice, mistakenly sure that Nekichi killed his sister's 'patron' and his comrade Ryugen, the islanders hunt the couple. Cruel deaths find them, with Nekichi being beaten with the oars by unstoppable islanders who wore menacing masks in honour of the Shinto gods and Uma left on the open sea tied to the pole of the boat. The islanders do not allow the incestual relationship to continue and the revival of ancestors' practices is prevented for good. The new Japan is already there along with the islanders who chose their path to progress and away from their origins.

> If for more than a century the West has displayed such a strong interest in the prohibition of incest, if more or less by common accord it has been seen as a social universal and one of the points through which every society is obliged to pass on the way to becoming a culture, perhaps this is because it was found to be a means of self-defence, not against an incestuous desire, but against the expansion and the implications of this deployment of sexuality which had been set up, but which, among its many benefits, had the disadvantage of ignoring the laws and juridical forms of alliance. By asserting that all societies without exception, and consequently our own, were subject to this rule of rules, one guaranteed that this deployment of sexuality, whose strange effects were beginning to be felt – among them, the

> affective intensification of the family space – would not be able to escape from the grand and ancient system of alliance.[9]

If creating a culture means establishing taboos in order to extract the primitive impulses from civilised behaviour, and taking into consideration Nietzsche's idea that we have art in order not to die of the truth, themes of Imamura's *The Profound Desire of the Gods* point to a universal problem which surpasses Japanese society.

An interesting character in Imamura's allegory of Japan's identity crisis can be found in Toriko, Nekichi's daughter. It is unclear whether she is the offspring of an incestual relationship with Uma, but after being 'deserted by gods,' Toriko is encouraged by Uma to be the new noro. She is a wild, mentally disabled and highly sexually driven young woman. In spite of her openly expressed libidinal desires, often fulfilled with local men, she falls in love with the engineer. A brief happiness between the untamed, uncivilised woman of nature (Japan's original identity) and modernised outsider (West or America) is possible.

Their mutual fascination is undoubted and evident but short lasting. Kuriya was ready to leave his wife in the city and enjoy the life with pregnant Toriko but years later he came back to the island with his wife to discover the new local legend about the girl who turned into a rock while waiting for her lover. Kametaro, Toriko's brother who returned to the island disappointed by his life in the city, rides the train with Kuriya and other tourists. From the bushes along the rail he sees Toriko running freely. The spirit of unfettered sexuality will haunt the westernised, technological Japanese oblivious of their true selves.

Here, instinctual drive represents the forbidden urge to reconnect with one's national self or its own ancestors, in spite of being ashamed and forced to live by foreign standards. The dichotomy of Japanese postwar thought stated in 'uncritical acceptance of Western influences and emotional return to the domestic essence' was explored by Masao Maruyama in *The Japanese Mind* (1961).

> The tendency of pre-modern relations to dissolve difference in the 'eternal embrace' of emotionally unified community only enhanced the intellectuals' regression to the imaginary Japanese past, pictured as an emotional and aesthetic totality.[10]

Imamura's perspective illuminates the eternal schism between foreign influences and native cultural impulses. 'Have you ever done it with your dad?'[11]

A few decades later one of Imamura's students and assistant director on two of his films, Takashi Miike, the most prolific filmmaker of his era, confronts (and attempts to cure) Japan's millennial apathy via the unrelenting sexual deviance of his terminally frustrated characters. Miike takes to extremes western cultural imperative of psychoanalysis as a tool of preserving national sanity by purging it through orgiastic sexual practice. The erotic becomes a unifying tissue to mend

dysfunctional family units and reinforce shaken belief in Japanese societal structure; the obscenity, therefore, becomes the key to unlock and rediscover one's own true identity. In *Visitor Q* (2001), reunification of a broken family comes with the help of an outsider who forces family members to acknowledge their own feelings, regain their unity and reconstruct the disordered social formation. Here, unlike the outsider from *The Profound Desire of the Gods*, who marks the end of essential Japaneseness, the outsider stands as 'a spirit of the past' revoking and reassembling true identities.

The most apparent determinant of multiculturalism that Miike employs in *Visitor Q* is the plot itself. *Visitor Q* is the Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema*[12] of the new millennium – reversed in its essence: a stranger who seduces and essentially destabilises the wealthy family unit in 1968 film, in the 21st century he comes as a rescuer of a bullied, harmed, degraded, economically and sexually frustrated lower mid-class family. Or, one could say, the stranger in *Visitor Q* destroys an already damaged family and reunites it. Miike mirrors contemporary Japanese society using several questions posed directly to the audience ('*Have you ever done it with your dad? Have you ever been hit on the head? Have you ever hit your mom?*') and using the main character's occupation as a reporter for a dismal TV program on the themes such as 'youth today' or 'bullied son and his father,' suggested by the character himself.

The low-budget aesthetics of *Visitor Q* emulate amateur porn and the fake documentary style of reality shows. On the one hand, the opening scene depicts the father who films his intercourse with his runaway prostitute daughter. The father, already humiliated at work and forced to take a leave of absence by showing his superiors footage of him being violated by group of teenagers, gets mocked for his lack of sexual longevity and his genital shortcomings. To his list of failures he adds an inability to pay the full price for his daughter's services. On the other hand, the mother also prostitutes and spends her earnings on drugs, but her social persona of a polite, average middle-aged wife is present only to hide the fact that she has been constantly beaten up by her bullied son. Tom Mes notes that the characters

> have conformed *in extremis* to the roles they are expected to fulfill, those of the provider (father) and the domestic caretaker (mother). Their devotion to their duties have become excuses for not having to face emotions and feeling. In fact this devotion has repressed all emotion.[13]

The visitor awakens the maternal instinct of the mother by confronting her with her runaway daughter's empty room. His method of making her lactate in excessive amounts provokes her to express feelings which were repressed by the system of societal duties that she had to fulfil. Her realisation that she is 'not pathetic nor special, but an ordinary woman' leads to her standing up to her son. The father's

re-establishing of his identity and reunification with his wife comes after raping and killing his female superior Asako. His long repressed desire for sex is finally fulfilled and, while trying to dis-attach himself genitally from the corpse stiffening due to *rigor mortis*, with the help of his wife he admits to her that he hadn't seen her so reliable since the beginning of their marriage. Reunited, the couple is then stronger and able to defend their son and their home from the bullies and kill them. After drinking his mother's milk, the son shares his thoughts with the visitor, promising him that he would devote himself to studying for the entrance exam. Moreover, the estranged daughter finds her way back home after being hit in the head by the visitor, in the same manner as her father at the beginning of the film. The final scene, ironic to a degree, depicts the father and daughter being collectively breastfed in the arms of the mother.

While in 1968 Imamura was trying to point out that Japan's authenticity was slowly fading away, through Pasolini's *Teorema* Miike reinterprets the foreign model made in the same turbulent year. Pasolini destabilises and destroys the bourgeois family, marking the end of the tyranny of the upper class. Uniquely, Miike reconstructs the Japanese family through orgiastic and deviant behaviour which becomes a revolutionary force. The European model of 'cinematic political revolution' happens outside the family and comes in the form of a seductive anarchist. In Miike's film, the visitor is not a force of anarchy but a reassembling agent who puts the family back together. It is a sharp inversion of an original idea in order to re-affirm all members of the family. As Imamura finds 'the potential for revolutionary change from within the deepest roots of Japanese tradition,'[14] Miike re-establishes the conformist social order by awakening the repressed emotions in a society that worships duty as deity.

Notes

[1] Shohei Imamura and Keiji Hasabe, *The Profound Desire of The Gods*, directed by Shohei Imamura (Nikkatsu, 1968), Blu-ray.

[2] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuallity* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 57.

[3] This could be understood in terms of *nihonjinron* (Japaneseness) – popular discourses on uniqueness of Japanese culture and nation.

[4] Notable aspect of Japanese (pop) culture marked as quality of cuteness.

[5] James Quandt, *ed*., *Shohei Imamura* (Toronto: Toronto International Film Festival Group, 1997), 2-3.

[6] Koichi Hamada, *Japan 1968: A Reflection Point During The Era of the Economic Miracle* (New Haven: Yale University, 1996), 1.

[7] Isolde Standish, *Politics, Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York & London: Continuum, 2011), 86.
[8] Cited in Standish, *Politics, Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s*, 85.
[9] Foucault, *History of Sexuallity,* 109.
[10] Midori Matsui, 'The Place of Marginal Positionality: Legacies of Japanese Anti-Modernity,'*Consuming Bodies: Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art*, ed. Fran Lloyd (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 142.
[11] Itaru Era, *Visitor Q*, directed by Takashi Miike, (Cinerocket, 2001), DVD.
[12] Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema*, directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini, (Ateos Produzioni Cinematografiche, 1968), DVD.
[13] Tom Mes, *Agitator. The Cinema of Takashi Miike* (Godalming: FAB Press, 2003), 207.
[14] David Desser, *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 88.

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Lost and Found: An Exploration of the Functioning of Hermaphroditism within Erotic Discourse

Michael Handrick

Abstract
Aristophanes' analysis of the origins of humanity explains how the original, united human, the hermaphrodite, was divided into two separate entities: male and female. This division set about the loss of unity and the search to become complete again. Based on this philosophy this chapter explores this dichotomy and the dialectic it creates within erotic literature and the fundamental nature of passive and active within sexual relations. The vast majority of erotic literature replicates this power difference within a couple, thus reinforcing gender paradigms and inequality. The literary hermaphrodite has been used by writers as a medium to both assert this difference, and to break down the confines of gender and sexuality. This chapter will examine Ovid and Angela Carter and how they use the mythical being, or divided gender, in their respective works, and what the hermaphrodite can reveal about their respective contemporary societies. A predominant theme in erotic literature is that within both heterosexual and homosexual relations there is a fundamental power struggle and inequality that restricts the sexual potential, balance and unity between a couple. It appears that erotic writings have been largely confined to the exploration of this tension and imbalance. Society creates a divide between the sexes, meaning that feminine and masculine characters are produced by socialisation into respective roles. This chapter explores how to move away from the inequalities found in gender through the hermaphrodite. The hermaphrodite will be taken in a literary sense, rather than a biological one. The chapter is in direct response to Algernon Swinburne's call for intellectual hermaphroditism, and how for writers and academics there is a space within erotic literature for balance between a couple, or for the power and tension between people to be judged as humans, rather than as assigned gender roles.

Key Words: Literature, hermaphroditism, androgyny, gender, erotic, philosophy, society, power, imbalance, sexuality.

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1. Introduction: Origins

Algernon Swinburne understood the importance of the hermaphrodite as a literary tool stating that, 'the poet, properly must be an intellectual hermaphrodite…. great poets are bisexual; male and female at once.'[1] Swinburne realised that a writer, in order to fully explore gender, sex and identity has to transcend and challenge the constrictions that society places on the dichotomy of male and female. It appears that erotic writing has largely confined itself to the

exploration of this imbalance. Society creates a divide between the sexes meaning that the feminine character is produced by 'socialization into the female role, masculine character by socialization into the male role.'[2] For the purposes of this analysis the hermaphrodite is to be taken not in its literal anatomical meaning but through the merging of two people as viewed in Ovid's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* and Plato's *Symposium*. Through an analysis of Aristophanes' origins of humanity, and of how Ovid and Angela Carter use the hermaphrodite in order to make a comment on their respective societies, it will reveal whether it is possible that through the use of the hermaphrodite, a balance between people can be made in erotic literature.

Common in debate on pornography, mostly prevalent in feminist discussion, is that 'pornography is regarded as an expression of the violence in male sexuality and a means of domination over women.'[3] It is viewed that the difference between men and women is due to 'different social expectations'[4] thus pushing

> women into expressing only the "submissive" side of the dialectic of eroticism. It is a sexist social structure that divides the two poles from one another, and assigns to men the permanent role of hunter/lover/subject, while confining women to that of hunted/beloved/object.[5]

This inequality is reinforced in society and erotic literary works where one individual is sexually and socially inferior to the other which creates a large inequality between the couple and inhibits truly exploring the potential of sex due to constrictive gender roles. What is important to note, however, is that socially created roles are not only applicable to hetero-relations. The social-sexual roles of active and passive are also applied to homosexual couples where one sometimes can be defined as 'effeminate'[6] and the other as 'mannish,'[7] applying the theory that one is submissive and the other dominant. Jessica Benjamin states that, 'the slave of love is not always a woman, nor always a heterosexual; erotic domination permeates all sexual imagery in our culture.'[8] In the analysis of erotic writings, it certainly isn't only men that dominate or express control within sexual relations; each individual has the potential to be the sexual dominant part of a relationship regardless of gender and sexuality.

The origins of man are stated in Plato's *Symposium*, where Aristophanes narrates the fate of the original hermaphrodite, arguing that at one point hermaphrodites were a 'distinct sex,'[9] that lived alongside male and female. They innately embodied both masculine and feminine symbols and origins. He claims that 'their strength and vigour made them very formidable' [10] due to the combination of the male and female that form a strong unity and balance. Zeus, in fear of the hermaphrodite's potency, 'cut each of them in two [so] they will be weaker,' [11] leaving 'each half yearn[ing] for the half from which it had been

severed.' [12] In 'their longing to grow together…they perished' [13] thus, as Aristophanes states, an individual is 'perpetually in search of his corresponding tally.'[14] The idea that each sex is lost in their search and the search for love and desire is simply the name of the 'pursuit of the whole'[15] or the merging of two people. This separation from the other half, and how the divided sexes are left weak and in pain at the loss of the other means that they cannot be restored to their dominant, powerful self until they have found their original other half and merged together once more.

It is from this dichotomy of the whole into two halves in which creates, both in heterosexual and homosexual relations, a fundamental power struggle and inequality that restricts the sexual potential, balance, and unity between a couple that was once shared. Being sexually 'passive,'[16] does not mean one is powerless and weak' [17] as there will always be an inequality or an assertion of power regardless of gender. Humans have the need to 'assert our sexual power and overwhelm someone' [18] or 'to give up our human power, to surrender it to a stronger being.'[19]

2. Ovid: Refuting the Hermaphrodite's Potential

The hermaphrodite has long been viewed as monstrous, reviled and feared by humanity as they 'threaten men and women even more profoundly in their sexual than in their social roles.'[20] Not only is it the fear of the hermaphrodite embodying both genders, thus being able to engage in sexual relations with both genders, but the hermaphrodite fundamentally challenged the 'Christian teaching that sexual relations were supposed to be primarily procreative,'[21] due to their transcendence of sexuality, thus breaking the socially regarded purpose of sex. The hermaphrodite creates the question of sex for ultimate pleasure, as well as procreation while threatening masculine dominance and control that has been created in this social, gender and sexual dichotomy.

Ovid utilises and contorts socially constructed gender roles, and the eventual merging of the two characters, to create a hermaphroditic being that eventually reveals his commentary on a man's role within society. *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* is the account of Salmacis's attempted seduction of the young Hermaphroditus. He rejects her pursuit; his cheeks 'blushed' [22] because of her advances symbolising a common attribute of the female to the male of being sexually coy. He is portrayed as being passive and disinterested in sex, qualities that some feminists, like Raewyn Connell, argue women have been conditioned to have. However, Salmacis is not deterred by the rejection and when she sees Hermaphroditus naked it 'fired her desire to new heights,'[23] she dives after the bathing boy and 'held him tight in her coils, like a huge snake carried aloft in an eagle's talons.'[24] In this image Ovid subverts traditional imagery of the snake (a common image of being a victim, and of female power) being overpowered by the eagle, instead the snake subdues the eagle, thus showing the role reversal between

male and female and highlighting the sexual dominance of Salmacis. The rape of Hermaphroditus reveals not just men, but women too can feel the 'frenzy'[25] that can consume someone in the moment of sex. Due to the provenance of this text this dominance could be interpreted as a form of fetish, in which a man willingly submits to the female's whims to gain sexual gratitude by being submissive as a form of erotica for a male readership.

Hermaphroditus is the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, from the descriptions of his origins he is described as having an androgynous physical appearance as both 'Father and mother could be seen in his handsome features'[26] therefore already blurring the boundaries between male and female. He is not masculine and defined, but like 'pure white lilies'[27] that are associated with femininity, fragility, and virginity thus highlighting the feminine nature of Hermaphroditus. Yet, this could be cleverly crafted as a way for Salmacis to mistake his physical appearance for a woman once again further eroticising the scene as a potential lesbian encounter, a tantalising scene for Ovid's male audience. Not only does it create a contrast of Hermaphroditus' femininity in comparison to Salmacis' aggressiveness, lilies are associated with death therefore subliminally foreshadowing the 'death' of the man's masculinity later in the poem.

Ovid utilises these literary techniques using the narrative point of view and imagery, in order to subvert gender assigned roles thus making his final judgment when the metamorphosis is complete. After Salmacis' plea to the gods, the two are merged together, they were 'two no more but of double aspect, which/ couldn't be fairly/ described as male or as female.'[28] What remains is that Hermaphroditus' 'manhood…had left him' and becomes 'only half a man,'[29] and he pleads to his parents to curse the pool and for any man that enters to 'emerge with his manhood diminished'. [30] Through his merging with Salmacis, Ovid unveils his social message that a man who is too feminine and allows a woman to sexually dominate him will become like Hermaphroditus: half a man. Interestingly, Hermaphroditus doesn't ask the metamorphosis to be reversed, but to curse those who fellow in his footsteps, highlighting the critical tone that Ovid has created at Hermaphroditus embodying traditional female passive traits. It reveals that to be a hermaphrodite, a merging of the feminine and masculine, is something to be feared and that a man has to fulfill his assigned gender role. It is a comment on passive homosexuality, which the original Latin language touches on, a person reviled and ridiculed in Roman culture and also illegal, that Hermaphroditus, through his femininity and sexual passivity, is the lowest of all men and is only a man on the exterior whilst being a woman on the inside. Thus Ovid uses the hermaphrodite to warn men of the consequences of becoming too passive and feminine, while at the same time using the prelude to the metamorphosis as a means of eroticism by twisting gender paradigms.

3. Carter: Trying to Bridge the Gap

Throughout the major part of *Passion,* Evelyn, embodies the role of a sexually driven male chauvinist, only interested in his sexual gratification and conquests rather than the emotional connection formed between two people. The use of the homodiegetic perspective allows the reader to understand the narrow mind set of Evelyn and what he thinks from a first-hand experience rather than a third person perspective that would detract away from the personal development and change that occurs to Evelyn. When Evelyn meets Leilah in New York it begins with a pursuit across the city, aptly linking to Valverde's analysis of man being the 'hunter'[31] and the woman the 'hunted.'[32] The protagonist is set up to be a typical sex driven male. In his pursuit of Leilah across New York, there is a moment when she is 'outlined against the face of Tristessa'[33] on a billboard, linking back to his account of his childhood when his 'cubicle at school had been plated with her [Tristessa] photographs.'[34] This clearly shows Evelyn's views that women are objects, objectified for their beauty and their ability to evoke arousal rather than as a person. This clinical view transcends into his approach to sex when he 'made her lie on her back and parted her legs like a doctor in order to examine more closely the exquisite negative of her sex.'[35] The simile of doctor and patient creates a feeling of sterilisation; by comparing Leilah to a body it shows that he thinks she isn't worth forming a connection with, nothing more than a corpse to throw away once the examination is over. The emphasis lies on the 'exquisite'[36] appearance of her genitalia; it is her vagina that is worth the interest, not her as a person. Leilah is not a person, but a body 'to examine'[37]and use for Evelyn's desire. By using 'negative,'[38] not only does it link to the colour of Leilah's skin, but also links back to the photographs and billboard of Tristessa and the objectification of women as mere photographic pin-ups, figures to evoke sexual pleasure like in a pornographic magazine. Evelyn sees Leilah's genitalia as an object to obtain and can only be developed through the potency of his 'throbbing'[39] penis, and not an organic development between two people. More sinisterly it is a prelude to the fact that Leilah is not fully developed like a negative, later it is revealed she is only seventeen and raises the moral issue that this older man has taken advantage of her immaturity.

However, once Evelyn has undergone his transformation into Eve, creating a hermaphrodite of female biologically and a male gender identity, it creates the perfect union and balance of gender. Thus with Eve meeting her male counterpart, Tristessa, Eve states 'we are Tiresias.'[40] Significantly, Eve uses 'we' instead of 'I,'[41] as she had done as a male, they are not separate entities but one merged together through their passion and intimacy. Eve no longer objectifies the body or sex, but understands that it is a connection between two people. However the use of Tiresias is significant, Tiresias is a Greek mythological figure that experienced life as male and female thus having a perfect understanding of the two. By describing the couple as Tiresias, Carter is revealing that Eve and Tristessa are now

a perfect being due to their embodiment of both the male and female, they are no longer an extreme representation of one, but of how a couple should be in equilibrium without one trying to dominate the other as seen with Zero and Mother the representations of extreme feminism and chauvinism.

The meeting between Eve and her hermaphroditic counterpart, Tristessa, finally reveals Carter's message of the need for balance and unity between male and female, and not the extremes that have been explored before. 'He, she – neither will do for you, Tristessa…composed of light'[42] this is a significant moment for Eve, an epiphany about the complex nature of gender. Eve has realised that the use of gender signified by pronouns 'he, she'[43] is irrelevant, but it is the connection with the person that is important. By describing Tristessa as being 'composed by light'[44] it shows that Eve now understands that a person is a unique entity, a creature of purity and beauty, that connections can be formed and illuminated by their interaction. A light is something that guides a person, allows them to see, thus through Tristessa's light, Eve is opened to the idea that a person is someone to be with, not to have, as was explored through Evelyn's objectification and abuse of Leilah. The image of light is extended as Tristessa's 'flesh itself that seemed made of light,'[45] it is a stark contrast to Eve's previous description of Leilah's skin being like a 'negative.'[46] It shows Eve's development from man to hermaphrodite, which before, a woman's flesh was like a negative, an object for him to develop through his own sexuality. The sheer contrast between 'negative'[47] and 'light'[48] one of darkness and shadow, the other of illumination and hope, shows the new understanding Eve has achieved from her transformation. Due to the narrative perspective, Carter can show the clear difference in Eve's interiority, development and thinking, with her transformation Eve now appreciates another person as something beautiful and to be with rather than to be consumed as she had been as a man.

The image of unity is furthered by Eve stating that 'we had made the great Platonic Hermaphrodite together,'[49] Eve's self-proclamation of becoming Plato's hermaphrodite is representative that the perfect union has occurred, that Eve has found her other 'half' resulting in the restoration of balance between male and female. Eve, because of her embodiment of both male and female and understanding of sexual interaction, has shown the vast development from when she was a man. The constant use of 'we'[50] is reflective of this and the attempt to express the couple as a 'single self'[51] shows the contrast to Evelyn who dominated Leilah. The stereotypes of male and female have been eradicated; there is no longer passive or active, aggressor and victim, but a found unity between Evelyn and Tristessa in their hermaphroditic existences. Through the language and narrative perspective Carter has showed how the mind-set from Evelyn to Eve has changed, that we all must seek to find our hermaphroditic-self and not an extreme form of either gender.

4. Conclusion

While Ovid comments that the unity of gender, the hermaphrodite, is an aim to be vilified and avoided, Carter concludes *Passion* with Eve sailing out to sea pregnant, the potential of social and gender equality carried in her stomach that will arrive in the near future, or that future completely lost to sea and can never be achieved. Jonathan Dollimore aptly summarises that, 'desire and identity are not-must not be; can never be – fixed or essentialized. Identity is contingent and mobile, desire is fluid and even more mobile.'[52] This reflects the potency of the literary hermaphrodite that both writers utilise. It is a vehicle for the characteristics of male and female to be explored in one being, to transcend social gender dichotomy, and what this can reveal about our societies and human interaction. It is a unique opportunity to delve into the nature of gender and desire.

Notes

[1] Algernon C. Swinburne, quoted in Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69.
[2] Raewyn W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 49.
[3] Ibid., 55.
[4] Ibid., 48.
[5] Mariana Valverde, *Sex, Power and Pleasure* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1985), 39.
[6] Connell, *Gender and Power*, 80.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Jessica Benjamin, 'Master and Slave: The Fantasy of Erotic Domination,' *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thomson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 281.
[9] Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1951), 59.
[10] Ibid., 60.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 61.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 62.
[15] Ibid., 64.
[16] Valverde, *Sex, Power and Pleasure*, 44.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 38.

[19] Ibid.
[20] Carolyn G. Heilburn, Preface to *Towards Androgyny: Aspects of Male and Female in Literature*, by Carolyn G. Heilburn (London: The Camelot Press Ltd, 1973), xi.
[21] Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sapphists: From Three Sexes to Four Genders in the Making of Modern Culture,' *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 112.
[22] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2004), 147.
[23] Ibid., 148.
[24] Ibid., 149.
[25] Ibid., 148.
[26] Ibid., 145.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 149.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 150.
[31] Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (London: Virago Press, 2012), 39.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 19.
[34] Ibid., 2.
[35] Ibid., 23.
[36] Ibid.
[37]Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 16.
[40] Ibid., 143.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 140.
[43] Ibid., 14.
[44] Ibid., 140.
[45] Ibid., 143.
[46] Ibid., 23.
[47] Ibid., 21.
[48] Ibid., 140.
[49] Ibid., 144-145.
[50] Ibid., 144.
[51] Ibid.

[52] Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22.

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Part IV

Topographies of Desire

Habitus and the Erotic in *Last Tango in Paris* and *Cleansed*

David Hammerbeck

Abstract
The cinema of Bernardo Bertolucci and the theatre of Sarah Kane often feature the creation of the erotic space, both from an auteurial perspective and that of character. In this chapter I examine Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* and Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* in order to define how each author creates a space where the erotic comes to the forefront, re-imagining character and plot in the process. Drawing on theories concerning the body and space as social and political constructs from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his thoughts concerning *habitus* and *doxa*, I posit that both Kane and Bertolucci succeed in creating erotic space(s) that exist outside of societal norms. My focus on the erotic body in these two works additionally will explore *mise en scène* as employed by Bertolucci and Kane, in order to highlight how the body is eroticised in the particular confines of each work.

Key Words: Habitus, Bertolucci, Kane, Bourdieu, erotic, film, theatre.

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Pierre Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* has figured prominently across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as it provides a framework for how anexus of social customs, norms, imperatives, and discourses govern behaviour and the body. When applied to two works from different media – the film *Last Tango in Paris*, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, and the play *Cleansed*, written by Sarah Kane – Bourdieu's *habitus*frequently opposes the erotic space, outside of normative societal constraints, where subjects explore Eros. But the construction of said space is limited in duration, and is not without consequences for those involved. In this chapter, I will introduce and explore salient aspects of *habitus*and *the erotic* in each work, defining how the erotic space functions within *Last Tango in Paris* and *Cleansed*.

For the purposes of this chapter, I define *the erotic* as the intimate and private expressed aesthetically, for a public, in a way that said public finds pleasing, stimulating and/or arousing. Not all such erotic expressions, obviously, are intended for all audiences. In film, to choose two mainstream examples from different contexts, the *nautch* scene, as interpreted by Aishwarya Rai, in *Jodha al Akbar*, would appeal to a different audience than, say, the intimate scenes between Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger in *Brokeback Mountain* – the *habitus*and the *erotic* differ significantly. Both *Last Tango* and *Cleansed* are decidedly less mainstream than the aforementioned films, and both distance themselves from conventional society as well as constructing different spaces and narratives, when

compared to standard 'realism' in film and theatre. *Habitus* in theatre and film can be used to delineate social structures that shape what happens within the chosen work, as well as how it happens, as this latter pertains to possible performance strategies.

Habitus, according to Bourdieu is a

> system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems.[1]

As with Foucault's concept of epistemes, *habitus*could be viewed as an all-pervasive and inescapable network of social relations and templates for individual behaviour so pervasive as to render lacunae or deviations impossible: all is enfolded within the order. I would argue, however, that Bourdieu's system of systems allows some deviation: perceptions, appreciations and actions that can be reconfigured in new combinations, reactions and 'deviations' – the latter simply a pejorative term for that which challenges the moral status quo. Bourdieu posits that *habitus*

> obeys a practical logic, that of vagueness… which defines one's ordinary relation of the world. This degree of indeterminacy, of openness, of uncertainty, means that one cannot depend on it entirely in critical, dangerous situations.[2]

Such circumstances form the very terra firma for both *Last Tango* and *Cleansed*, which then allow for new combinations, in new contexts, which challenge previous schemata – otherwise there could be no such processes as evolution or change. Both *Last Tango in Paris* and *Cleansed*, in their respective contexts, formulate such a rupture, due in no small part to their creation of *the erotic space*.

Bernardo Bertolucci's landmark 1972 film *Last Tango in Paris* challenged normative perceptions of mainstream film.]It is perhaps worth remembering some of Pauline Kael's review in *The New Yorker* which shaped public reception of the film:

> The sex in *Last Tango in Paris* expresses the characters' drives. Marlon Brando, as Paul, is working out his aggression on Jeanne (Maria Schneider), and the physical menace of sexuality that is emotionally charged is such a departure from everything we've

> come to expect at the movies that there was something almost like fear in the atmosphere of the party in the lobby that followed the screening….Many of us expected eroticism to come to the movies, and some of us had even guessed that it might come from Bertolucci, because he seemed to have the elegance and the richness and the sensuality to make lushly erotic movies….What nobody had talked about was a sex film that would churn-up everybody's emotions.[3]

The film's *mise en scène*, narrative and performances shaped the habitus of the erotic in the apartment on rue Jules Verne, next to the Bir Hakeim Bridge on the Left Bank. At the commencement of the film, following an unsettling title and credits sequence with a triptych by Francis Bacon, Jeanne passes Paul on the bridge, the latter grieving visibly in public, she encounters the Concierge (Darling Légitimus) when enquiring about a flat to let in the building, as we soon discover, where Paul lives, where his wife has committed suicide, and where their trysts will ensue. Their dialogue immediately establishes the non-normative nature of the apartment building:

> Jeanne – I've come for the apartment. I saw the notice.
> Concierge - Notice? What notice? It's always the same thing. No one ever tells me anything.
> Jeanne – I want to see it.
> Concierge– You want to rent it?
> Jeanne – I don't know yet.
> Concierge– They rent it, and rent it again, and I'm the last person to know. You find that normal? If you want to go up by yourself, go ahead. I'm afraid. [Pause] The key is gone. There are plenty of strange things around here.
> *Rattling noise of bottle being placed in the hallway as – cut to - a shaky hand reaches out of an opened door*. They drink six bottles a day. *(She sings. Jeanne, exasperated, walks away*) Wait, there must be a copy. (*Jeanne walks back. Concierge grabs her hand)*You must be very young. (*Concierge laughs maniacally, grasping Jeanne's hand harder. Jeanne finally wrests her hand away, walks away quickly*).
> Jeanne – She's mad.[4]

The Concierge does seem unhinged: when she clutches Jeanne's hand and cackles, a clear sense of sexual menace jolts the scene, only to be broken when Jeanne leaves. Jeanne takes the empty, Art Nouveau elevator, in the crepuscular, womb-like lobby, up to the flat, an equally darkened and autochthonous space. She

opens shuttered windows, revealing a dingy apartment, tinged with orange and red walls, contrasting with the blue sky of Paris outside, to discover Paul, curled up in the foetal position against a wall, retracted from society, awaiting rebirth. She regards the apartment, then him – no personal information exchanged – and minutes later, he takes her on the floor, with her willing co-operation, Paul still clad in a brown-overcoat like a caricature of a middle-aged flasher, and Jeanne very much the emblem of an early '70s, sexually liberated young woman. So their exploration of the erotic begins, confined to this apartment, for a few days, while outside the apartment Jeanne announces her marriage to her mother, then breaks it off, then attempts to resuscitate the marriage, and finally kills Paul on the balcony of her mother's flat in Paris, his place of death a liminal space between the potential Eros of the interior, and the *habitus* of the outside world.[5]

Negating society's rules, rebelling against conventional morality, as well as rewriting identity, probing memory and giving leash to their desires itself all form part of Jeanne and Paul's trysts in the flat, or rather Paul's stratagem, which Jeanne partakes of with some uncertainty. Outside, they don more conventional roles that they both grate at: Jeanne the young fiancée in *le mariage Pop*, and Paul, the grieving husband, who never knew his wife Rosa, and now has to deal with her orthodox Catholic mother, and her ex-lover. The apartment building ('flophouse') houses a myriad of types excluded from bourgeois society: junkies, pimps, musicians, winos, crazed concierges and Paul, a self-described 'lodger' in his wife's edifice. Paul seeks to eradicate all vestiges of bourgeois identity and ties to the outside world, eviscerating, as critic Joan Mellen wrote, 'the bourgeois family which dominates culture and society, suppresses "feeling" and "civilizes" the "savage" in all of us by repressing bodily needs.'[6] Paul dictates the law of this new terrain where the two will meet to explore each other in a space void of societal constraints, structures, identity; in short, *habitus*:

> I don't have a name…I don't want to know your name. You don't have a name and I don't have a name either. Not one name…. I don't want to know anything about you – where you come from – nothing … You and I are going to meet here without knowing anything that goes on outside here.[7]

Jeanne queries him 'but why?' to which Paul responds

> Because we don't need names here. We are going to forget everything that we knew, all that we do, all the people, wherever we live, we're going to forget that, everything.[8]

Paul's intent could not be clearer: a ruthless rejection of conventional *habitus* or society – the bourgeoisie, the church and the family – in order to furnish to a space

for *habitus interruptus*, the erotic space, created from ground zero, where erotic encounters with Jeanne will form the foundation of… what? Mellon glosses this relationship, and Jeanne's with Tom:

> With the heroine…and her fiancée…deep feeling is shunned and feared. The wild [how times have changed!] sexualfrenzy of Jeanne and Paul is achieved through complete seclusion from society. Only then can they risk real and unbridled emotion. The impossible and hopelessly romantic goal of…[Paul] is to unleash feeling outside of the framework of relations fixed by the external world, using a girl with whom all personal and past history will be denied….[9]

They shall endeavour to *recorporealise* space, to play on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre, to reverse the 'spiriting-away or scotomization of the body.'[10]

Paul's stab at rewriting *habitus* long-term fails, as it succumbs to prior schemata, as Mellon specifies:

> Paul…is a willing and ambivalent prisoner of a larger feminine superstructure concretely symbolized by the hotel owned and operated by his former wife Rose … for five years he has been a privileged guest in his wife's flophouse hotel, her family's dowry in a matrilineal descent…[11]

Paul's recreation of his new, erotic *habitus* spends itself in violent and misogynistic acts, only to be ended when he breaks the pact ('nonames') with Jeanne. Bertolucci pointed to the culmination of *Tango*, when he stated in an interview shortly after the release of *Tango*: 'Man is self-destructive and destructive of his partner. In nature, it is usually the female who devours.'[12] A somewhat questionable summation by the director; however, Paul's phallocentric regime fails to constrain Jeanne's agency as she is the one who survives the relationship, albeit scarred by her experiences with Paul.

Sarah Kane's 20-scene play inhabits significantly different terrain than does Bertolucci's film, due in no small part to the different medium used: live performance. Premiered 30 April, 1998 at the Royal Court Theatre under the direction of James Macdonald, the piece plays out in different locations with seven characters, locales which, according to the script, are contained within a university, which doubles as a concentration camp.[13] This imaginative, imagistic, highly non-realist work concerns the inhabitants of the university/concentration camp. Each is in love: each is tested and tortured by the character Tinker, a sadistic doctor who forces each one of them beyond their threshold of pain in order to determine their

commitment to love. The key elements in determining the *habitus* of the erotic in *Cleansed* are the *mise en scène* and the intense relationship between Grace and Graham.

Annabelle Singer in her article 'Don't Want to Be This: The Elusive Sarah Kane,' zooms in on these two elements:

> The play is full…of contradictions and conflict in the most basic conceptions of this world's reality. Is this a university? Each scene is set in a specific part of the university; 'on the college green'… 'The White Room – the university sanatorium' (6), 'The Red Room – the university sports hall' (10), etc., but each room is titled with a color, suggesting that its appearance and distinction from the other rooms, rather than its university function, should be salient.[14]

That a university would include a sanatorium indicates that this theatrical space is far removed from conventional *habitus* of conventional society, indeed totally estranged from anything as such, for in the play Tinker subjects characters to rape, mutilation, forced sex change, humiliation, beatings, electric shock therapy and more. Yet still amidst the carnage and violence, moments of eroticism stand out, shining sentinels of hope and beauty.

Kane's theatrical style eschews naturalism and standard causality, opting instead for a terse and jarring style that incessantly jars the spectator (or reader) with aggression and violence and, at times, startling moments of eroticism. The first scene of the play gives us Graham, Grace's brother, intentionally being given a lethal dose of smack by Tinker, via an injection into the eye. Graham does die of an overdose, but Grace, six months later, wills him back and his presence helps her endure Tinker's torture. At the end of the play Grace, whose mental stability has been attacked by Tinker, who has also assaulted her body, has melded with Graham, identities identical: she is now her brother.

The *habitus* of *Cleansed* can only be taken as a microcosm, as few references are made to larger or more pervasive social structures. The *mise en scène* is minimal, vague, allowing for language and body to write the space. The locus is one of pain, torture and repression, yet within the small society of seven characters onstage, the erotic plays a major role. One locus is 'The Black Room – the showers in the university sports hall converted into peep-show booths.'[15] Another is 'The White Room – the university sanatorium.'[16] Kane rigorously eschews the expected – the sanatorium becomes the locale for the erotic in one scene as Grace mates with Graham, resurrected, re-materialised, inhabiting a liminal space between life and death, the two momentarily separated from the torture outside in the pristine whiteness of the room:

> **Graham** dances a dance of love for **Grace**. **Grace** dances opposite him, copying his movements. Gradually, she takes on the masculinity of his movement, his facial expression. Finally she no longer has to watch him – she mirrors him perfectly as they dance exactly in time.[17]

The song danced to is 'You Are My Sunshine' – perhaps the most incongruous music choice possible for a play of searing mental and physical violence. Graham/Grace (for as much as we know, Graham is dead) tells Grace:

> I used to…think about you and…I used to…wish it was you when I…used to' to which Grace responds 'Doesn't matter. You went away but now you're back and nothing else matters.'[18]

They take off each other's clothes and make love:

> *slowly at first, then hard, fast, urgent, finding each other's rhythm is the same as their own.*
> *They come together.*
> *They hold each other, him inside her, not moving.*
> *A sunflower bursts through the floor and grows above their heads.*
> *When it is fully grown,* **Graham** *pulls it towards him and smells it.*
> *He smiles.*
> **Graham** Lovely.[19]

An almost child-like sincerity and belief infuses the erotic *habitus*– diametrically opposed to the ratio-centric sadism of Tinker. This reflects a Dionysian side of life, where play, art, sexuality, beauty and love cannot be repressed by Tinker's *habitus*, where the potentially transgressive energies of the body again come to the fore.[20] The undefined nature of the staged space; the enigmatic presence of Graham; Kane's *mise en scène* and dialogue all formulate a symbolic, erotic space which counters normative space, to quote Bourdieu,

> each property (a pattern of speech, a way of dressing, a bodily hexis, and educational title, a dwelling place, etc.) perceived in its relation to other properties, therefore in its positional, distinctive value…which serves to locate a position in its social space through a stance taken in symbolic space.[21]

Cleansed defamiliarises the symbolic space of *habitus*, existing in the interstices and borders to create the *habitus* of the erotic.

In *Cleansed*, as in *Last Tango*, conventional *habitus* is that against which the erotic *habitus* sets itself up. According to some who were close to Kane, while composing *Cleansed* the author was influenced by TV coverage of atrocities in Yugoslavia and Rwanda – the ethnic cleansing camps of the former were more than hinted at.[22] Bertolucci, a committed Marxist when filming *Last Tango*, targeted the stifling, conventional morality of the middle class. Critic Mellon viewed the director's animus at that particular juncture in time thus:

> the film is preoccupied with the meaning of history during the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie…. [*Last Tango*] explores how people are afflicted with the dominant values of the time, seeking in sexual release a means of escape both from the social past and the personal history of character.[23]

Kane has no such avowed political perspective: her aim seemed to be – in depicting pain and love in a phenomenological perspective that recreates the sudden and powerful blossoming of both of these feelings, in abject surroundings – to show human experience in as undiluted manner as possible. Both Kane and Bertolucci, through different media, managed to carve out respective *habitus* of the erotic that allowed the two works briefly explored in this chapter to challenge the normative *habitus* of society.

Notes

[1] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Intellectual Field and Creative Project,' *Social Science Information* 8 (1981): 89-119.

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Malden: Polity Press, 1990), 78.

[3] Pauline Kael, 'Last Tango in Paris,'The New Yorker, 28 October 1972.

[4]All dialogue and descriptions of the film are taken from the re-released original, un-censored DVD of *Last Tango in Paris.* Bernardo Bertolucci and Franco Arcalli, *Last Tango in Paris,* directed by Bernardo Bertolucci (Burbank, CA: United Artists, 1972), DVD.

[5] An idea of the balcony as a space being neither interior nor entirely belonging to the exterior world, suggested to me by Ana Dosen, Lecturer, Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia.

[6] Joan Mellon, 'Sexual Politics and *Last Tango in Paris,' Film Quarterly* 26.3 (1973): 10.

[7] Bertolucci and Arcalli, *Last Tango in Paris*.
[8] Ibid..
[9] Mellon, 'Sexual Politics,' 10.
[10] Kirsten Simonson, 'Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Levebvre,' *Geogragiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 87.1 (2005):2.
[11]Alex Hill, 'Polarization, Imprisonment and Ambivalence in *Last Tango in Paris*,' *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 24.2 (2005):86.
[12] Gideon Bachmann, 'Every Sexual Relationship is Condemned: An Interview with Bernardo Bertolucci Apropos *Last Tango in Paris*,' *Film Quarterly* 26.3 (1973): 3.
[13]Sarah Kane, 'Cleansed,' *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays* (London: Metheun, 2001): 105-151.
[14]Annabelle Singer, 'I Don't Want to Be This: The Elusive Sarah Kane,' *TDR* 48.2 (2004): 150.
[15] Kane, *Cleansed*, 121.
[16] Ibid.,, 112.
[17] Ibid., 119.
[18] Ibid., 120.
[19] Ibid., 120.
[20] Simonsen, 'Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Lefebvre,' 5.
[21] Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 113.
[22] Singer, 'I Don't Want to Be This' 151.
[23] Mellon, 'Sexual Politics,'10.

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Sexuality as a Temporary Identity of Female Characters in Video Games

Adam Flamma

Abstract
Over the last three decades, female characters in video games have changed significantly. The initial status of women in video games was relatively marginal and they were not shown as characters in games with a well-developed plot, like computer role playing games (cRPGs). A milestone in this regard was the *Tomb Raider* series, with the protagonist Lara Croft portrayed as a successful adventurer full of sex appeal and passion for dangerous weapons. However, her character did not affect the reception of female characters in video games. They still played the roles of servants, task-givers, prostitutes, vendors or not-well personalised (or simply dumb) members of player's team, especially in old fashioned cRPGs like BioWare's *Baldur's Gate* series. This period can be summarised as a time when female identity was reduced solely to that of sex object in games. Today, however, at the beginning of 2013, this image is being questioned. Games like the new *Tomb Raider* or *Remember Me* with a woman as the main character, are denying the portrait of the sexy assassin. The same thing applies to games where a woman is not the main character – like the *Mass Effect* trilogy or *Dragon Age*. Those examples show a quite significant change taking place in the video game industry. A woman is no longer, necessarily, only a sexual object in the game. What is more, her status has risen and she may become a hero equal to and often better than men. Greater emphasis is being placed on her story and emotions: she can seduce, love and abandon. In other words, woman slowly but precisely and continuously has been turning from a sexual entity in virtual worlds into a fully-fledged heroine. Ultimately, sexuality cannot determine her identity anymore.

Key Words: Female characters, video games, sexuality, identity, female sexualisation, sex in games, cRPG.

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1. First Steps with *Larry*

The presence of female characters in video games is nothing strange. Currently, we are able to see female protagonists in many games. Thus, they are not necessarily confined to any particular role; nor are they associated with any particular genre. This was entirely different in the times when video games were initially becoming popular. Back then, the appearance of a woman was usually associated with the presence of erotic themes in the title. In the 1970s and 1980s, all kinds of erotic games included female characters as sexual objects – from strip poker[1]simulations that emerged at the end of the 1970s to the breakthrough game

of Charles Benton and On-Line Systems, *Softporn Adventures.*[2] Thanks to these titles, physical love began to appear more boldly on screens, and with it, the image of a woman became synonymous with possible or successive sexual intercourse. *Softporn Adventures* was a milestone in the implementation of sexual themes in games and female protagonist representation.

It became the inspiration for video games created by Al Lowe and published by Sierra On-Line – *Leisure Suit Larry* series;[3] individual titles were released between 1987 and 1996. The main character of the game is 40-year-old Larry Laffer, presented as a loser in life who keeps trying to seduce women. However, he does it ineffectively, so the player's task is to help him succeed and lead him to find true love. In the case of this series, intercourse was the driving force of the game and it was closely related to a specific presentation of female characters in the game: in skimpy outfits, sometimes almost in negligees. Heroines were to lure Larry to complete certain tasks, which in the end would lead to sexual activity. In this tradition, in video games for some time female characters have been identified as sex objects in scanty clothes and related to banal stories often associated with physical love. Importantly, at first, women seldom appeared in games at all. But, along with the increase of technological possibilities and plot development in the game industry, the number of female characters appearing in games grew.

Over time, this number grew, but interestingly, women almost never have been the main characters of an erotic game. In the genre of erotic games, however, the last part of the series about Larry Laffer, *Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail!*[4] stands out. A main female figure, captain Thygh, appears in the game rather often and this is nearly an example of a female protagonist in erotic games, who has a non-banal personal history and holds an important position in the presented world – the position of captain of a ship. Most of the player actions are connected with her initiatives. However, the character of captain Thyg did not change the image of women in video games – she was still a sex object. This was mainly caused by elements that could be called *sexualisation process props*: skimpy attire (or lack thereof) and a role of lover or alleged lover of Larry Laffer. Importantly, other erotic video games followed with a similar female portrait.

2. The Lara Phenomenon

Undoubtedly, the change in the perception of women in games was brought by *Tomb Raider* series. The first game was released in 1996, when women in video games were still not treated seriously.[5] They were not the main characters and the player was mostly unable to control them. But all of that changed thanks to the production of Core Design, which for the first time made a woman the main character of the game. However, even as a protagonist, the eponymous Lara Croft was initially treated, like so many female characters, as a symbol of sex. And similar to them, her clothes were a tool of sexualisation: tight shorts and a close-fitting blouse exposing a slender figure, long legs and large breasts. The players

controlled her during her adventures and used weapons to fight with wild bears, wolves, bats and other wild animals. If we consider the fact that the first instalment of *Tomb Raider* became one of Britain's most popular games in history, we can name Lara Croft one of the first virtual characters who became a commercial label. Her face has appeared in many advertisements and on the covers of various magazines. Still, Lara was treated, as Anderson and Levene mention,[6] as an image of a woman strongly defined by her sexuality. Despite the opinion of many researchers and feminists, Lara Croft became both a symbol of sex, and a feminist and popculture icon – and the best proof of women's emancipation in video games.[7]

Lara Croft's figure changed substantially with subsequent games. From a visual point of view, despite the progress in technology, Lara's appearance did not change much until the game *Tomb Raider: Legend*,[8] by Crystal Dynamics. In this game Lara Croft's breasts seem to be much smaller than their previous, less realistic size; the blouse she usually wears reveals the waistline; her shorts are much shorter and her figure is more proportional and more similar to one of real women.

The real sign of change in Lara's image is the latest *Tomb Raider* game,[9] where she is presented as a young girl with a proportional appearance and figure. Her breasts are of a more realistic proportion and in some parts of the game shorts are replaced by long, close-fitting trousers. In effect, her appearance is not that significant of a factor in the reception of the story presented in the game. The second sign of progress in presenting female characters is a more detailed and complex life story for Lara Croft. In each part of the *Tomb Raider s*eries, the player learns about her skills, noble origins and personal tragedies, which include a responsibility for her mother's death and the disappearance of her father, as well as a family conflict concerning an estate of Lara's father. In addition to this 'social' context, we know that the protagonist is a polyglot and very athletic, as well as being able to handle weapons and all vehicles with ease. Each following game adds new elements to Croft's portrayal (and arsenal) and draws attention to her personality, character and family history. Though she is still considered a sex symbol in video games, and this will probably not change, her character also became an inspiration to different presentations of women and of their place in video games.

3. The Case of Adventure Video Games

The *Tomb Raider* series was one of the first attempts to implement an adventure game with a female protagonist; it was followed by classics of the genre such as Funcom Studio's games *The Longest Journey*[10] and its continuation, *Dreamfall: The Longest Journey.*[11] The main character of the first game, and reappearing in the second one, is April Ryan, a student at the Academy of Arts. Her character is far from sexually provocative in the manner of the early Lara Croft. Usually, we see her in ordinary trousers and a shirt with no cleavage. Furthermore, we do not see

her in any blatantly sexual contexts. We get information about her character from her personal story that includes an abusing father (in childhood), an inferiority complex, problems with self-acceptance and even a more trivial problem: lack of money. Unlike Lara Croft, she is neither athletic nor physically strong, and exploring new places and cultures is a difficult challenge for her.

The second part of the game presents April Ryan as a completely different person – militant leader of a rebel force fighting for freedom of the alternate world of Arcadia. The player has the opportunity to see Ryan distancing herself from her feminine traits. It is strongly apparent via her clothing and behaviour; in the game she wears a voluminous loose black coat and carries a wooden stick and as the heroine she tries to think primarily about people whom she leads. What is more, she is serious all the time and thinks about her duties as a leader. Keeping in mind such elements as clothing, behaviour and actions, which are regarded as aspects of sexualisation,[12] she cannot be considered in any way as sexualised of a character as, for instance, the first iteration of Lara Croft.

Another interesting example is the main protagonist of *Dreamfall: The Longest Journey*, Zoë Castillo, who at the beginning of the game is shown in her pyjamas. The type of clothing she wears is very important, because during the game Castillo is always dressed in low-cut blouses or tops and tight pants. She always wears makeup and underlines that she cares about her appearance. We also learn that she is suffering after a breakup with her boyfriend, whom she still loves. As the main character she is looking for her ex-boyfriend, who has disappeared, and while doing so, she carries out various tasks that emphasise her most important character traits: persistence, creativity and ambition. Although she is presented as more sexualised than April Ryan in *The Longest Journey*, Castillo is more an adventure seeker than someone who would be associated with any explicit sexual role. Thus, Ryan is part of a rare, but nonetheless existent approach to female video-game characters that considers women fascinating, showing personal stories as more amusing than their appearance or its relation to their sexuality (breast size, hair colour, leg length, and waist) as is outlined in Scott Sharkey's and Ella McConnell's rankings.[13] This is especially vivid when we consider examples of current popular games such as role-playing game (especially Massive Multiplayer Online type), where the female characters are still presented in a rather stereotypical way – in bikini armour with unrealistic proportions. Many examples of that kind of characters are presented in *World of Warcraft* or *League of Legends*. A similar but a little bit different situation can be noticed in games like *Path of Exile* or *Guild Wars 2* where female characters' breasts are proportional, but the thin waist is reminiscent of that familiar with the first two parts of the *Tomb Raider*. Still these characters and their *physis* are largely based on the imaginary stereotypes. The situation is different in games where the specific form of women are main characters. Indeed there are examples such productions as *Heavy Rain* (the character Madison Paige) or *Beyond: Two Souls* (the character Jodie Holmes).

Mentioned women have a proportionate figure, but it does not mean that they are free from any behaviour or other characteristics related to sexuality. For example, in the one game, Madison Paige is presented naked while showering. We also have the spectacle of observing her during a striptease scene. However, these are characters for which sex and sexuality itself is a tool or ordinary element of human life often associated with human sensuality. However, it does not necessarily define their perception by the player, or determine their behaviour or appearance.

4. Role Playing Games

In recent role-playing games, romance threads sometimes appear regardless of the gender of the protagonist. In that way, characters become re-connected to their sexualities, which also affects the masculine figures. The player – controlling a woman – can engage in a love affair with a man or – controlling a man – can establish a close relationship with a woman. The same applies to the services of prostitutes of both genders. In games such as the BioWare's extremely popular series *Neverwinter Nights*[14] by BioWare, the sexuality of characters, especially women, is emphasised by clothing and character portraits. In the case of women these are usually: low-cut, long dresses or tight and skimpy costumes for witches and healers or armour, emphasising the figure, breasts and long legs for warriors and paladins. Potential romantic themes or sexual relations, however, are treated only as episodic ones and are not restricted to female characters. Nowadays, we notice a lack of restrictions or rules in case of sex in video games (except PEGI rating) like BioWare's *Mass Effect*[15] series, *Dragon Age*[16] or both parts of the CD Projekt RED's *Witcher*[17] video game.

It is worth noticing that in some new games the storyline is affected by numerous decisions made by the player during the game, which signal complete retraction from linearity of the plot. Sexuality, including appearance, behaviour, dialogue or character's dress is closely related to this trend. It is usually presented similarly to romance in previous video games, but in a wider spectrum of characters' areas of life. In the case of women this means that friendship, love or sexual activity is not necessarily, or at least entirely, a form of objectification and is not necessarily synonymous with the presence of sex in a game, as was common in the beginnings of the genre. On the one hand, the importance of sexuality in games has increased, but on the other its association with female characters is beginning to decrease. In this way, game developers make the story and characters more realistic.

Importantly, the presence of romance is critical in the aforementioned titles. Often it leads to a relationship, but it is the player who decides its nature. Sometimes it can be associated with deeper feelings and can be continued or terminated. In such cases, sex is often treated as a tool by which the character satisfies his or her needs, or establishes a positive relationship with his or her partner. This sexual 'tool' is used to reach various goals, such as gaining an object

or somebody's support, as well as completing a romance-connected task. Therefore, it carries an element relevant to the main character's personal story.

A good example of this is *Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings*,[18] where eroticism – while not the most significant element of the plot – is definitely an important part (and the culmination) of an emotional relationship between main character, the witcher Geralt, and the magician Triss Merigold. As for other sexual relationships which can be established by the witcher during the game, they are mostly the result of events associated with his personal story and relations with women. Even in the case of physical contacts with prostitutes, Geralt is seduced and, by sexual pleasure, his attention is drawn away from events important for the story's plot. What is more, the importance of female characters on progress within the game is undeniable, and they often determine or influence the fate of the hero. Therefore women, mostly magicians, play an important role in games' story lines and influence the world presented in them. One fact is noteworthy in this regard: even if their clothing or behaviour is provocative, quite often these sexual aspects are not the main focus of the plot (with the exception of Triss Merigold).

The example of the witcher series must be treated uniquely, since its universe has been created based on the world of Andrzej Sapkowski's novels. The functioning of the world and the protagonists' futures is mostly a reflection of the literary vision. Nevertheless, the significance of female characters from a storytelling perspective cannot be denied. What is more, female magicians are often presented as people with high social status, equal to that of important state officials. They are often shown as royal counsellors and treated by everyone with great respect. In this way, we can notice that female protagonists are performing important social functions in the game world, which demonstrates an upgrade of women's status in at least some virtual worlds. A good example of this trend is provided by the *Mass Effect* game series, where women often perform responsible social functions – they are engineers, doctors, builders, soldiers, etc. – their appearance is much more common than that of a male engineer or doctor. Since the action happens mostly in space or on a spaceship, their clothes are tight-fitting astronaut costumes, armour, and tight pants and shirts or uniforms while on board. Interestingly, gender does not seem to matter here, since the clothing for men looks very similar, except costumes with breast shapes, to elements which appear in female armour and astronaut costumes. For example, all uniforms of commander Shepard's crew (only its human part) on the spaceship SR *Normandy* are similar. Only characters from other races have gender-typed costumes. Despite this, BioWare Studio has introduced and shown women also in sexual contexts which show and require new characteristics of protagonists: different from a simple definition of a superhero who only wants to save the world or destroy the enemy.

Despite the described above situations, sexuality in games is still not fully balanced, but it is no longer necessarily linked specifically to one gender. The prevailing storyline model has even strengthened this situation. Of course, games

where a woman is mainly a subject of sexual desire and acts merely as a decoration are still being developed, but because of cRPGs in which complex plot is currently one of the most important elements, women may be looked at from the perspective of the storyline in most popular games. There, they set trends for the audio-visual industry. In many of these games, sexuality turns out to be a no-longer-central identity of women, even a temporary one, linking the emergence of women in video games with their increasing importance in the storyline. This constant enrichment of women's portraits corresponds with their increasingly complicated past, family situation, well developed, sometimes complicated, personality; other features make a woman the main – or at least an important – character, instead of just an aesthetic avatar. Moreover, heroines are more often shown as responsible. They hold important and responsible roles as well as perform tasks which could be problematic for men. Such change in the image of women in video games is an extremely interesting issue. Perhaps, one of the possible reasons for it is the increasing number of both female programmers working in the video game industry and female players who can identify with heroines presented in games. But even if pointing to such possible reasons is a kind of speculation, the burgeoning change in the presentation of women's sexuality in video games is a fact that cannot be denied.

For instance, it may be concluded that women in *Mass Effect* hold functions which require intelligence and knowledge. Also, in the army in the game, there are a few women, but the squad led by a player includes several women, and the main character itself can be a woman. Interestingly, professions can be found in the game where there is not a single woman, or cosmic races where there are no female representatives. They also can appear as all kinds of vendors and dealers.

This is especially true for adventure games such as those described above, where the women, unlike a stereotypical male character, use their wits and other traits to perform specific tasks and thereby compensate for their physical weakness.(It is important to remember that in some types of video games that feature stealth such as the *Thief*, *Splinter Cell*, or *Deus Ex* series, male characters are also using their wits and other traits.) In the case of female protagonists, *The Longest Journey* is a proper example, especially when April Ryan fights an alchemist: since she does not know how to cast spells and is physically weak, she uses deception, her ideas and determination to achieve her goal, wherein Arcadia universum her male counterpart would perhaps apply physical strength. Analogous situations appear in detective games like *Still Life* by Microids Studio;[19] its main character, FBI agent Victoria McPherson, is the best functionary and often does jobs or tasks which her male partners cannot handle. She is also much more clever and more intelligent than them, which manifests itself in a successfully conducted investigation and effective search for serial killers.

Without a doubt, female characters in video games are one of the most interesting topics in video games' protagonist research. It cannot be denied that the

figure of a woman, a topic of real transformation, largely is affiliated with the stereotypical presentation of women as the weaker sex, which can be observed only through the prism of her physicality and sexuality. Therefore, women initially were treated as a *decorative* element in video games. But the position and the importance of women in games is changing. It was possible mainly because of games such as the *Tomb Raider* series and *The Longest Journey*. Main characters like Lara Croft or April Ryan show women in a different spectrum as strong people, resourceful, clever, but primarily as the main protagonist or even a heroine and eventually not as the supporting cast. Similarly as in the case of other new games, sexuality is more of an additional element, a sort of attribute. It is not the only prism through which you can look at these figures. Thus, in the case of many games, especially cRPGs and adventure games, sexuality is proving to be only a temporary female identity. This is demonstrated by figures such as April Ryan and the new incarnation of Lara Croft, which in terms of looks is a more realistic woman, and not the female figures that appeared in earlier games, full of eroticism and sex appeal. And this is what they give and what now has the greatest impact on the representation of female characters in many actual video games.

Notes

[1] Variation of poker in which each lost round ends with removing a piece of clothing. Viewed 5 May 2013. http://pl.pokernews.com/pokerowa-strategia/strip-poker-czyli-poker-rozbierany-3716.htm.

[2] *Softporn Adventures* (Charles Benton, On-Line Systems 1981). Production where the player has to turn the game via text messages in such a way that he gets certain items in order to seduce beautiful women.

[3] The series also includes, published in 2004, *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude* (High Voltage Software, Inc., Sierra Entertainment., 2004), but by many it is not treated as an integral part of Larry's adventures, since its author is not Al Lowe, the storyline writer of the previous titles.

[4] *Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail!* (Sierra On-Line 1996).

[5] *Tomb Raider* (Core Design, Eidos Interactive 1996).

[6] Magnus Anderson and Rebecca Levene *Grand Thieves & Tomb Raiders. How British Video Games Conquered the World* (London: Aurum Press Ltd., 2012), 235-256.

[7] It is widely described and analysed in ‘Lara Croft: feminist icon or cyberbimbo? On the limits of textual analysis’(Helen W. Kennedy, *Game Studies: International Journal of Computer Games Research* 2.2 (December 2002).

[8] *Tomb Raider: Legend* (Crystal Dynamics, Eidos Interactive, Doug Church 2006).

[9] *Tomb Raider* (Crystal Dynamics/Eidos Montreal, Square Enix 2013).
[10] *The Longest Journey* (Funcom, Ragnar Tørnquist 1999).
[11] *Dreamfall: The Longest Journey* (Funcom, Aspyr/Empire Interactive 2006).
[12] Fully described and analysed in 'Equal opportunity objectification? The Sexualization of Men and Women on the Cover of "Rolling Stone,"' Eric Hatton and Mary Nell Trautner. *Sexuality & Culture* 15 (2011): 256-278.
[13] Both rankings ('Top 5 most attractive non-sexualised women in video games' by Scott Sharkey and 'Top 10 positively portrayed female game characters' by Ella Mcconnell) present positive and non-sexualised aspects of women in video games.
[14] *Neverwinter Nights* (BioWare, Infogames/Atari 2002).
[15] Series include *Mass Effect* (BioWare, Electronic Arts Inc. 2008), *Mass Effect 2* (BioWare, Electronic Arts Inc. 2010) and *Mass Effect 3* (BioWare, Electronic Arts Inc. 2012)
[16] *Dragon Age: Origins* (BioWare, Electronic Arts Inc. 2009).
[17] *The Witcher* (CD Projekt RED Studio, Atari/Infogames 2007).
[18] *The Witcher 2:Assassin's of Kings* (CD Projekt RED Studio, Namco Bandai Games 2011).
[19]*Still life* (Microids/Anuman Interactive, Dreamcather/The adventure comp. 2005).

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Sexing the Past: Venus, the Erotic and History as a Lens for Inter-Cultural and Inter-Historical Interaction

Dena Gilby

Abstract
This chapter traces the life and afterlife of the *Venus de Milo* by examining it in its original context and analysing its use in the painting *Venus Myth* from the *Classical Aboriginal* series created by the Canadian métis artist, Jim Logan from 1991-1992 and exhibited in 1994. What is revealed in the process is that Aphrodite's body is an object of desire but not in the manner in which one might at first suppose: on Hellenistic Melos, her body is a site of inculcation for the young gymnasts viewing the artwork; she stands over them as a reminder of their social roles as inheritors of Classical Greece, as well as potential husbands and fathers. For Logan, on the other hand, the counter-appropriation of the figure not only infuses the work with a Native meaning, but also critiques how western standards of beauty have affected First Nations post-colonial culture.

Key Words: Counter-appropriation, Aphrodite, Venus, Canadian Métis, Greek art, intercultural interaction, Jim Logan.

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1. Introduction

In 1994, Jim Logan exhibited twenty-two paintings for a show titled *The Classical Aboriginal Series*.[1] The imagery of the works exhibited draws on celebrated works of the western canon, such as Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (reinterpreted as *A Rethinking on the Western Front*) and Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe* (reimagined as *The Diners Club [No Reservation Required]*). A painting in this series that is of particular interest to an analysis of contemporary (re)interpretations of myth and the idea of beauty is *Venus Myth*, a mixed media on canvas that employs the Hellenistic Greek image of Aphrodite found on the island of Melos in 1820, known as the *Venus de Milo*.[2]

To commandeer figures and historical events of the ancient Mediterranean is hardly surprising, for the lure of this period is long-standing. Early studies by Adolph Furtwängler and Johannes Wincklemann asserted that the Venus and similar works are zeniths of western culture.[3] According to these authors, the 'classical' female nude was not only the epitome of excellence and of erotic beauty, but she also stemmed from the font of western culture and should thus be both literally and figuratively imitated. Antiquarians, art historians and academics shared such a view for many years and made the Greco-Roman world the quintessential signifier of western cultural hegemony in a global context.

An overview of the history of the *Venus de Milo* is a necessary first step in the process of interrogating uses of classical mythology among contemporary artists. Likewise, an examination of the creation, exhibition and dissemination of Jim Logan's *Classical Aboriginal* series is required before delving more deeply into the analysis of *Venus Myth* because one cannot understand the individual without being cognisant of the whole. What is revealed in the process is that the artist of the *Venus de Milo* created a statue that consciously referenced the classical Athenian world of the fourth century BCE. On the one hand, Aphrodite's body is an object of desire but not in the manner in which one might at first suppose: on Hellenistic Melos, her body is a site of inculcation for the young gymnasts viewing the artwork: she stands over them as a reminder of their social roles as potential husbands and fathers. For Logan, on the other hand, the counter-appropriation of the figure not only infuses the work with a Native meaning, but also critiques how western standards of beauty have affected First Nations post-colonial culture.[4]

2. The Venus de Milo in Antiquity

A farmer named Yorgos discovered the *Venus de Milo* on the morning of April 8, 1820 as he attempted to take stones away from an ancient wall. He had found a niche and was staring at something in it when a French naval officer named Olivier Voutier, who had been digging nearby, noticed and came near to get a closer look. What was revealed was the upper torso of what appeared to be a nude female figure. Some short time later they found the lower half, an arm holding an apple and two herms in the oval niche that measured about 4.5 metres wide. Seven years later a Dutch merchant discovered a Hermes sculpture nearby.[5]

A lost plinth fragment found with the other pieces describes the sculptor as a certain '[?]andros, son [M]enides of [Ant]ioch-on-the-Maeander' as the maker.[6] This places the work some time after 270 BCE when the city was founded; indeed, a couple of other artworks attest to this artist and are in more securely dated circumstances. The letterforms of reported inscriptions found at the site reveal that the artist was active around 150-50 BCE.[7] The *Venus de Milo* stands 2.02 metres high and the formal elements are eclectic; her representation is an amalgamation of Classical and Hellenistic styles; more precisely, the symmetrical physiognomy and small features are a classical trait, whereas the 'Venus rings' of the neck, fleshy belly and broad hips, as well as the slender waist are typically Hellenistic as is the drapery treatment.

Moreover, there are several aspects of the find spot that suggest that the Venus was placed in a gymnasium complex. These include the size and shape of the niche in which pieces of her were found, the objects found with her (an arm fragment, a hand holding an apple, and two herms) and the elements of the site overall (near both a stadium and a theatre).[8] The question arises: why place a sculpture of Aphrodite (to use the name the Greeks of the time used) in a place reserved for boys and men? Rachel Kousser presents a very compelling argument that

Aphrodite's body in the gymnasium would not be perceived as aberrant in the Hellenistic period because, according to Kousser, the function of the gymnasium shifted during the Hellenistic Period from a narrow range of activities related to athletics and war training to an expanded assortment of physical and academic training.

The hand clutching an apple, arm fragment, type of marble, dowel holes and size of the fragments all indicate, moreover, that these elements belong to the Aphrodite herself and not a now-lost sculpture. These items indicate that it is most likely that the Aphrodite alluded to the myth of the Judgement of Paris and was, thus, symbolically connected to sexual desire and marriage.[9] Furthermore, although a beauty contest, this myth is a scene of *agon* (contest) whose judge was Paris; the young combatants of the gymnasium could relate to the Trojan prince and, in this way, forge a connection to Aphrodite herself who then becomes the guide in the transition from boyhood to adulthood that is physically and intellectually acted out in the gymnasium.

Another salient feature of the goddess' realms of influence during the Hellenistic should be noted: in addition to her acknowledged connection to physical desire and ideal beauty, she was also an emblem for fair sailing, as a protector in times of war, and for political harmony. All of these would be useful to the male elites as protections or characteristics they should seek out as they assume the mantle of adulthood in the increasingly cosmopolitan world of Hellenistic Greece.

3. Jim Logan's Classical Aboriginal Series

Heather Smith curated an exhibition of the mixed media paintings that comprise the *Classical Aboriginal Series* for the Yukon Arts Centre; in her forward to the catalogue, she marks out the subversive nature of Logan's oeuvre, as well as his self-appointed role as trickster, much like his Cree model Weesakeejak, to the European monolithic master narrative.[10] This narrative includes sexuality, particularly the objectified ideal of feminine beauty that is evidenced by such works as the *Venus de Milo*. Before beginning an analysis of *Venus* Myth, it is helpful to categorise the series as a whole. The paintings in this collection fall into three types: those that reference religious works (sometimes directly but oftentimes indirectly); those that quote *masterworks* of the western artistic canon; and those that interpolate images of ancient sculptures into a composition that includes items and images from popular culture. Of these latter – to which *Venus Myth* clearly belongs – one finds also *Unreasonable History* and *Questioning Intellect*. Logan favours fourth century and Hellenistic Greek works; of the five Greek statues he transforms into painted images, one is fifth century, two are fourth century, and two are Hellenistic. All of these sculptures are icons of antiquity and can be found in standard comprehensive surveys of the history of art used in college and university classrooms throughout North America.

To bring Logan's capturing of this canonical western image more clearly into focus, it is helpful to turn to the term *counter-appropriation*, defined as 'a discursive process where art styles, contents or practices are borrowed from one art discourse into another, and then used to situate the art of the second discourse in terms of the first.'[11] Logan's *Classical Aboriginal Series* is doing this for it is a response to traditional surveys of art; indeed, the series as a whole was intended to *Indianise* the history of art.[12]

4. *Venus Myth* and Contemporary Art: Identity, Politics, and Gender

In turning to Logan's *Venus Myth* one first notices its physical properties and formal structure: it is a mixed-media painting measuring 153 cm. x 91.5 cm. (60.2 in. x 36 in.) whose formal structure consists of the following: using a largely representational mode, the dominant figure is Venus who is portrayed quite largely in comparison to the other elements and stands just to the viewer's right of centre. Behind her head, forming an architrave-like border, is a strip of painted women's magazine advertisements. Flanking her at foot level are five female Indian dolls whose faces are painted white; Logan adhered them to the canvas with glue. There also exist an image of a young, Anglo woman that appears to be a page torn from a magazine; three plastic, male 'warrior' doll heads to the viewer's right at the level of thigh of the Venus where it meets the knees (the artist has stated that these represent his three sons) and a hand painted text to the left whose cursive script follows the contours of Venus' body and discusses that images such as the Venus have made his daughters feel inadequate and his sons to not view native women as alluring.

The effect of this composition is several-fold: first, underfoot and dwarfed by the looming body of Venus, the Indian dolls signify the way in which young, First Nations women are made insignificant by traditional western standards of beauty in which indigenous women – as caricatured by the dolls – appear short and round compared to the lithe body of the western deity; second, however, is a slippage, for the Venus is, like the plastic dolls and dolls' heads, literally objectified, forever replicated and – with each repeat – losing another bit of her historical and cultural meaning. The advertisements and plastic dolls and doll heads, furthermore, highlight the status of all art in the Postmodern era: one among many commodities. Additionally, one can only fully understand this artwork in relationship to contemporary discourses on identity, as well as on those of the body. Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel encapsulate these narratives in art since the 1980s. Most salient for a study of Logan's counter-appropriation of the *Venus de Milo* is the identity politics movement.[13] Even more crucial to such a study is the realisation that, at the time that Logan created the series, he was a member of the now defunct Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA). This organisation was dedicated to raising the profile of First Nations' artists within Canadian society and institutions as a whole by creating artworks that expressed

the complexity of indigenous identity and, thus, combated the stereotypes that they saw as, in part, responsible for cultural, historical and social inequity toward aboriginal people.

Logan's seizure of the goddess, combined with the contemporary advertisements from women's magazines, highlights the exclusion of the Native American woman's body as a site of the erotic. The interpolation of the Indian dolls, however, serves to deconstruct difference by illuminating how identity is not a unitary and fixed element; it is a construction, just as are popular stereotypical tourist souvenirs like these dolls. Telling, too, is the fact that the Venus relies on mathematical principles rather than observation for the figure's proportions; hence, the foundation of canons of western notions of beauty rests on a figment of the imagination. Likewise, one cannot separate ancient notions of the body from contemporary visual, discursive practices, for they resonate with one another. The figure of the *Venus de Milo* asks the viewer to contemplate – as Matthew Gumpert states, 'the very *notion of display*, the Venus long ago having become a sign for the whole category *of the exhibited, the gazed upon, the displayed*' and, one could add, 'the notion of the eroticised.'[14] Logan's strategy of surrounding the figure with images from popular culture and tourist art – both distortions of actual women's bodies – spotlights the misperceptions from antiquity to contemporary that the deity (and by extension her mortal sisters) have endured.

5. Conclusion

After examining the original context of the *Venus de Milo*, as well as exploring Logan's *Venus Myth*, what is brought to the fore is that both artworks employ a visual language of eclecticism that enhances the message by asking the spectator to question ideals of the erotic and notions of beauty culturally and chronologically. The two objects dialogue inter-culturally and inter-historically at the site of Venus' bodily representation about gender ideals and politics: the Greek artist reminds young male Hellenistic Greeks on the small island of Melos of their roles as Greeks, men and potential progenitors, and Logan muses upon the debilitating effects of western standards of beauty on the colonised long after colonisation has ended.

Notes

[1] Shown at the Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops, British Columbia; Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario; and Yukon Arts Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

[2] For illustrations of the artworks see: Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press,

1999), 81, figure 38; John Griffiths Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology, 5th ed.* (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2012), 368.

[3] Adolph Furtwängler, *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture* (London: William Heinemann, 1895); Johannes Wincklemann, *History of Ancient Art* (Boston: Little Brown, 1856).

[4] On counter-appropriation in a Canadian Native American artistic arena see Christina Marie Froschauer, 'Talking Back to the West: Contemporary First Nations Artists and Strategies of Counter-appropriation' (MA thesis, Concordia University School of Graduate Studies, 2011).

[5] Gregory Curtis, *Disarmed: The Story of the Venus de Milo* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 5-7.

[6] *Inscriptiones Graecae* XII.3.1241: —ανδρος [M]ηνίδου/ Ἀντιοχεὺς ἀπὸ Μαιάνδρου/ἐποίησεν ('-andros son of [M]enides of [Ant]ioch-on-the-Maeander made [it]').

[7] Purported to have stood above the niche the inscription that can be found in *Inscriptiones Graecae* XII.3.1091 reads as follows: 'Βάκχιος Σάτ[τ]ου ὑπογυ[μνασιαρχήσ]ας/τάν τε ἐξέδραν καὶ τὸ [ἄγαλμα(?)]/Ἑρμᾶι Ἡρακλεῖ' ('Bakchios, son of Satios, assistant gymnasiarch, [dedicated] this exedra and this [?] to Hermes and Herakles').

[8] John Cherry and Brian Sparkes, 'A Note on the Topography of the Ancient Settlement of Melos,' *An Island Polity: The Archaeology of Exploitation in Melos*, ed. Colin Renfrew and J. Malcolm Wagstaff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 53-57.

[9] *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 'Aphrodite,' (Zurich and Munich: Artemis, 1984), 2-151.

[10] See *Jim Logan: The Classical Aboriginal Series*, exhibition catalogue (Whitehorse: Yukon Art Centre, 1994).

[11] Clark's definition can be found in the *Grove Art Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), viewed 13 July 2013.

[12] Froschauer, 'Talking Back to the West.' She reports that Logan even stated that the series is 'Native perspectives 101.'

[13] Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980*, 3rd ed. (Oxford and NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47-48.

[14] Matthew Gumpert, 'Venus de Kitsch: Or, The Passion of the Venus de Milo,' *Crticism* 41.2 (1999): 169.

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The Obliterated Image: Fetishism and the Erotic in Relation to the Gaze in Photographic Practice

Fagner Bibiano

Abstract
This practice-based research reflects upon the photographic lexis and the act of obliteration in the context of the erotic. It focuses on the relationship between the framed visual field of the image and the gaze, the desire to look, through introducing acts of masking or elimination of aspects of the photographic image. Drawing from Philippe Dubois's book, *The Photographic Act and Other Essays*, this research endeavours to consider affinities between obliteration as the repressing act of censorship, fetishism and the erotic in relation to the gaze in photographic practice. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first part, I introduce my theoretical perspective, which relates to the act of obliteration and fetishism in relation to photographic practice. In the second part, I speak of an anecdote, an encounter with an image in a book by Georges Bataille, which is what prompted this research. Lastly, in the third part, I focus on examples of my artistic practice. The photographic experiments I include concentrate on the possibilities for photographic representation that explore elements of tension which unite fetishism, the erotic, and the desire to look through the act of obliteration. In my enquiry, I aim to use photographic practice as a way to propose new visual strategies that may enhance our understanding of the construction of the gaze within this visual field. My interest lies in the mechanisms of the gaze and how they relate to the obliterated image in the context of the erotic. Additionally, I am interested in the potential connections between the obliterated image and fetishism in photographic practice.

Key Words: Obliteration, censorship, fetishism, disavowal, erotic, pornography, desire, gaze, art, photography.

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1. Theoretical Perspective

I should like to begin by concisely presenting an overview of the concept of obliteration in photographic practice. This concept was previously established by Philippe Dubois in *The Photographic Act and Other Essays*[1] and it serves as an introductory catalyst: it forms an initial standpoint from which to approach elements intrinsically linked to the mechanisms of the erotic in relation to the desire to look in my artistic practice. My interest in such subjects is greatly influenced by my own personal, real-life experiences as a gay man, which I attempt to communicate and represent through *photography*. Therefore, although theoretical, this passage is written from the perspective of an artist (and not of a

theoretician or philosopher). It is intended as a means to acquaint the reader with concepts and ideas that have instigated my curiosity, and in one way or another, relate to my desire to produce, look at and talk about photographs.

It is with this idea in mind that I should set out to introduce the act of obliteration as the stringent, castrating act of censorship. Nevertheless, before bringing this aspect into focus, it is necessary to explain the context in which Dubois elaborates it. In his own (fetishistic) words, photographic practice involves 'a take of the view or the look in the image,' a cutting gesture:

> Temporally… the photographic image-act interrupts, stops, fixes, immobilises, separates, detaches duration, and captures just one instant. Spatially, in the same way, it fragments, chooses, extracts, isolates, captures, cuts a portion of the extension. The photo appears like this, in the strongest sense, as a unique, singular slice of space-time, literally cut alive.[2]

He also compares the pictorial space in painting to the photographic visual field of the image. Whilst the painter uses his or her paint to fill the empty, closed space of the canvas, in photography, one captures an image; one subtracts and cuts a part of the world, which is already there. Thus, by framing, the photographer establishes an inevitable relationship to what is left off the intended, framed space.[3]

The act of framing and de-framing (fetishistic, again!) brings forth a play between what is framed and what is left off, outside, away, yet somehow contingent to the framed space of the photograph. It bears the possibility of a proliferation of 'takes'; a multiplication of 'cuts' *within* the interior of the photograph. Dubois names this 'cuts' as 'off-frame spaces' inside the actual representational field of the image. This elaborate idea is then detailed by his establishing of four categories of possibilities of the 'off-frame space' within the photograph.[4]

The first one considers the 'off-frame space' by insertion of a frame, represented within the main frame of the photograph and empty of any new content. For example, the series of photographs *Frames* by Christian Vogt. The second category considers the 'off-framespace' by natural cuts inscribed in the referential space. For example, doors or windows, which open into a new space, situated 'behind' the framed, closed representational field. For example, the photograph *The Enchanted Hand* by Ralph Gibson. The third category, which is the one I will focus on, considers the 'off-frame space' by obliteration: anything that inserts neutralising spaces of all forms, shapes and of any nature upon the framed photographs. For example, black boxes, white rectangles, veils or phantasmatic haloes, as in the self-portraits by Arnulf Rainer. The fourth category considers the 'off-frame space' by the incrustation of mirrors. For example, the image *Self-Portrait in Mirrors* by Ilse Bing.[5]

I should like to reinforce that by bracketing off this theoretical framework, I aim to offer an initial account, a starting point which may stir up and stimulate discussion around key themes that have emerged in my photographic practice. Thus, I should also note that my emphasis is on possibilities of photographic representation which intertwine conflicting elements in regard to the erotic, the desirous gaze and the act of obliteration. The anecdote I will speak of now represents a curious relationship between obliteration, religious eroticism and horror – he story of a lived experience of the ecstatic, obsessional gaze which after years still nourishes my desire to look.

2. The Anecdote

This enquiry was prompted by an epiphany, a curious event, which took place a few years ago, in the early stages of my masters degree research at Central Saint Martins College of Art. I stumbled across a book called *The Tears of Eros,*[6] written by Georges Bataille and published in 1961 in Paris. As expected from such a writer, the book was dense and focused on ideas such as religious sacrifice and sexual debauchery. Punctuated by images of sculptures, drawings, paintings and photographs, the text spoke of an 'ecstatic and voluptuous effect' when contemplating images of extreme violence. It formulated an elaborate association between eroticism and the awareness of death, with examples dating from the Lascaux caves to Bataille's day. He spoke of

> an interminable detour [which] allows us to reach that instant where the contraries seem visibly conjoined, where the religious horror disclosed in sacrifice becomes linked to the abyss of eroticism, to the last shuddering tears that eroticism alone can illuminate.[7]

In spite of the powerful impression this idea had left on me, the most remarkable thing about the book was a photograph in its final chapter, on Chinese torture. Bataille described the image as 'the most anguishing of worlds accessible to us through images captured on film.'[8] This photograph had been taken sometime around 1920 in Beijing, and depicted a man with a delirious expression hanging on a post, after he had been tortured in a session called Hundred Pieces, a torture reserved for the most heinous crimes. He had a hole bigger than the size of my hand in his stomach and his guts were falling out of his body. In order to make his ordeal longer, he had been administered opium.

My experience of encountering the image was certainly one of rupture, an ecstatic moment – at the same time that I could not look at such excruciating pain, I could not let go of it. In Bataille's own words,

> what I suddenly saw, and what imprisoned me in anguish – but which at the same time delivered me from it – was the identity of these perfect contraries, divine ecstasy and its opposite, extreme horror.[9]

But, curiously enough, the peculiar event I mentioned earlier was still to take place. The photograph of the tortured man had such an impact on me that I decided to buy the book second hand on the Internet, after I had finished reading the library copy. It took about a week for the book to arrive in the post, and when it did, I hesitantly browsed through it one more time in order to make some notes. The desire to look at the image of the tortured corpse again was very strong. However, I had not forgotten what it had felt like to experience the photograph, so, this time, I psychologically prepared myself prior to looking at it again and I was indeed certain that the image would not distress me. To my surprise, when I (eventually) turned the page in order to face it once more, the photograph had been concealed. The person to whom the book had belonged before me had delicately cut a piece of fine paper and covered the image using some tape.

This act of obliteration upon the photograph of the tortured man is rather significant. The person to whom the book had belonged before me could have simply torn the page off the book and not have the chance to direct his or her gaze at it ever again. Nevertheless, by carefully concealing the image, by not disposing of it and there upon still allowing it to subsist, the covered image lingers. Furthermore, by only concealing it, the person to whom the book had belonged before me appropriated the photograph, thus bestowing upon it the status of sacred. As a matter of fact, concealing it not only grants the photograph the status of sacred but it also confers upon it the status of secret. The photograph is thus turned into a hidden, but nonetheless, accessible and reachable secret. It remains available to whomever is interested in directing their gaze at the image, to whomever has the desire to look, to whomever is ready to give in to their own desires and allow the power of the gaze to take hold.

3. Photography

It is with this over-all picture I have presented about obliteration and the desire to look that I should like to introduce my artistic approach to elements of the erotic in photographic practice. The methodologies I include here bring together aspects of concealment, the secret, disgust, perversion, ecstasy and the frenzied state of sexual bliss.

Photographs of sites where strangers meet in order to have anonymous, secret sexual encounters.

Image 1: Fagner Bibiano, *Waiting for Desire at Hyde Park Corner*, © 2011.
Image 2: Fagner Bibiano, *Waiting for Desire at Hampstead Heath*, © 2011.
Images courtesy of the author.

Photographs of semen of men who engage in sexual activities with strangers.

Image 3: Fagner Bibiano, *A.A. – Not Tested (from 'Status Unknown' series)*, Photographs of the semen of men who engage in sexual activities with strangers. © 2011. ***Image 4:*** Fagner Bibiano, *Installation view*, © 2011.
Images courtesy of the artist.

Photographs of news agents and shops that sell pornographic magazines.

Image 5: Fagner Bibiano, *A Higher Place #1*, © 2013. Image courtesy of the artist.
Image 6: Fagner Bibiano, *A Higher Place #24*, © 2013.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Photographs of the entrance of sex shops that sell porn films.

Image 7: Fagner Bibiano, *The Gates of Paradise #1*, © 2013. ***Image 8:*** Fagner Bibiano, *The Gates of Paradise #7*, © 2013. Images courtesy of the artist.

Photographs of sites where marginalized covert activities take place.

Image 9: Fagner Bibiano, *Documentation of Fieldwork #1*, © 2013.
Image 10: Fagner Bibiano, *Documentation of Fieldwork #2*, © 2013.
Images courtesy of the artist.

Photographs of sexual group activities broadcasted online in real time, in which the participants do not wear any protection against sexually transmitted diseases, practicing what is known as *Barebacking*.

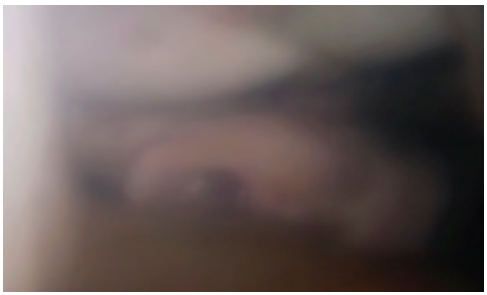

Image 11: Fagner Bibiano, *The Poetics of Bare #1*, © 2013. ***Image 12:*** Fagner Bibiano, *The Poetics of Bare #13*, © 2013. Images courtesy of the artist.

Photographs of Glory Holes.

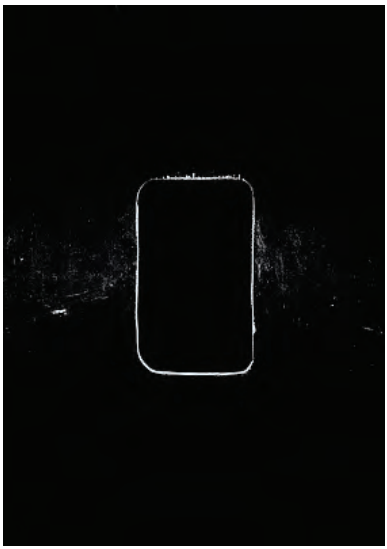

Image 11: Fagner Bibiano, *Of Black Holes And Other Glories #1*, © 2013. Image courtesy of the artist.

Image 12: Fagner Bibiano, *Of Black Holes And Other Glories #3*, ©2013. Image courtesy of the artist.

Notes

[1] Philippe Dubois, *O Ato Fotográfico e Outros Ensaios*, trans. Marina Appenzeller (Campinas: Papirus, 2012), 195. To my knowledge, this text has only been translated from French into Spanish and Portuguese. For this chapter, I have translated and summarized from the Portuguese.
[2] Online translation of paragraph from French into English. Viewed 11 July 2013, http://www.analisisfotografia.uji.es/root2/espacio_ingl.html.
[3] Dubois, *O Ato Fotográfico e Outros Ensaios*, 178.
[4] Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish,' *October* 34. (1985):89. Metz writes about the act of framing and de-framing in photography and links it to fetishism.
[5] Dubois, *O Ato Fotográfico e Outros Ensaios*, 161-215.
[6] Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros* (Hong Kong: City Lights Book, 1961).
[7] Ibid, 207.
[8] Ibid, 205.
[9] Ibid, 207.

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Part V

Arousing Female Voices across Cultures

Exploring the Erotic in Asian, African-American and Irish Women's Writing: the Rhetoric of Satire

Melania Terrazas Gallego

Abstract
This chapter focuses on the way in which the rhetoric of satire can illuminate the broad semantic nature of the poem 'The Looking Glass' (1967) by the Indian writer Kamala Das, the novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) by the African-American Nobel prize-winning author Toni Morrison and the short-story 'Birth-Certificates' (1993) by the Irish writer Evelyn Conlon.[1] These three women writers examine the theme of sexuality in their work in order to highlight the complicated social issues surrounding Indian, African-American and Irish bodies during their respective periods. In my view their masterful use of particular rhetorical means to explore the erotic is also an attempt to imagine a process of potential transformation in the lives of women in their respective countries. To establish this, I shall apply Dustin Griffin's (1994) interdisciplinary conception of satiric discourse based on rhetoric of inquiry, provocation, display and play. In doing so, I explore the role of the erotic and satirical rhetoric as the means used by these authors not only to translate women's inner energies to an outside world, but also to suggest their countries' changing cultural map. Ultimately, my reflections regarding the erotic, intimacy, emotions and feelings will highlight important cultural questions, while situating thesewriters' work as a means of asserting the social value of literature.

Key Words: Kamala Das, Toni Morrison, Evelyn Conlon, rhetoric of satire, representation of the erotic in literature, sexuality, the body, love and power.

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1. Introduction

In an essay delivered by Matthew Arnold in 1857, the critic claims: 'Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration, no single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, other literatures.'[2] It is from this comparative perspective that I wish to explorethe representation of erotic imagination inthe workof three women from three different global regions, namely, Kamala Das, one of India's foremost poets, African-American Nobel prize-winning author Toni Morrison and the talented Irish writer Evelyn Conlon. More specifically, I shall examine Das' poem 'The Looking Glass' (1967), Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and Conlon's short story 'Birth Certificates' (1993). These works are plural and multicultural, yet each author recreates the erotic by using a similar technique, that is, the rhetoric of satire. In what follows, these three works will be analysed as a dialogical event in which the

voices of history speak in the mouth of each of these authors, who is a spokesperson from her own historical and cultural context.

Das was born into a conservative Hindu Nair family having royal ancestry in Keralain 1934. At the early age of 15, she was married to a bank official, Madhava Das, who was 20 years older than her. The relationship was abusive sexually and in other ways from the outset. Nonetheless, it is Das's love poetry, in which she told the story of her sexual life that shocked conservative Indians for many years. It is no wonder that, living in fundamentalist India, Das gained fame as a rebel; but she was also a reflexive writer sensitive to her own position in history.

Morrison was born in Ohio in 1931 immediately after the Great Depression, and when Hollywood was, culturally, a fabricator of dreams, and when the white, blonde Shirley Temple had been launched as a child prodigy. It was from an early autobiographical experience that Morrison found the inspiration to narrate the story of Pecola Breedlove and of other black women characters like Polly in *The Bluest Eye*. One day, one of Morrison's black school friends told her that the thing she longed for most was to have blue eyes.[3] The late 1960s was a time of great social upheaval in the lives of black people and Morrison's novel constitutes a reaction to the cultural movement *Black is Beautiful*. Morrison was worried that this slogan of racial pride would be unable to dispel the long-term psychic effects of prejudices rooted in racialism and sexism.[4] It is precisely her rhetoric of the representation of sexuality in the lives of Polly and her husband Chollyas recreated in the erotic passage that will be examined here that permits us to understand her concern with racial self-loathing, black women's oppression, and all the social and cultural problems provoked by poverty, loss of identity and shame.

Conlon was born in the province of Ulster in 1952. She is an ex-catholic, an agnostic anda former member of Irishwomen United, a group of radical activists established in 1975 who outlined their political objectives in the magazine *Banshee*, to which Conlon was a contributor. However, it was a personal experience concerning the adoption of babies by the Catholic Church that occurred when she was giving birth to her second child in a hospital in Dublin: a young mother was forced to give up her child for adoption so that her own father would not know about the birth. This inspired Conlon's story 'Birth Certificates.' Despite the administrative aspects surrounding the event, it is the erotic passages here that permit the reader to apprehend Conlon's continuing struggle against the traditional perception of women, and their oppression in Ireland.

How, then, is the rhetoric of satire used by these writers, and how does satire engage with aspects of the erotic in a manner which would not occur with other approaches? Here I argue that Conlon's use of the rhetoric of provocation, Das's use of the rhetoric of display and Morrison's use of the rhetoric of play permit us not only to establish connections between their writings, but also to transcend the limits of substantial geography and culture. In this way, I compare not only texts, but also contexts.

I would like to start the analysis by making a very brief summary of these works. First, Das's poem is about the longing to lose one's self in passionate love. Second, Morrison's novel is about Pecola, a quiet black girl brought up in a very poor home in Ohio, yet also concerns her parents Polly and Cholly, who are often fighting, both verbally and physically. Pecola is constantly reminded of how ugly she is, which explains why she wishes most to be a whitegirl with blue eyes. However, as the novel develops, the reader finds that Pecola's dysfunctional parents also had a life as youngsters full of hardships and hatred. The erotic scene analysed in this chapter shows that Polly and Cholly eventually lost the tender and affectionate love they once had for each other.

Conlon's short story is about a journalist called Maolíosa who wants to find out about adopted babies; she contacts Miss Regina Clarke, who helps young or middle-aged adults reunite with their long-lost mothers. Although Maolíosa's boyfriend Cathal persuades her that the coy article she plans to write will never be published, she refuses to give up and Regina will eventually give her the necessary psychological support and encourage her venture.

Here I focus on the satiric discourse that occurs in certain erotic passages within these works. This is, in effect, a rhetoric of intimacy. My analysis reveals Das, Morrison and Conlon assignificant rhetoricians in the expression of the erotic. This rhetoric eventually enters into a dialogue with the universal.

2. The Rhetoric of Satire

According to Griffin, 'one result of broadening our recognition of satiric forms is to be reminded of satire's immense and perhaps incomprehensible variety.'[5] Since satire can also be considered 'a mode and a procedure rather than a literary kind, then it can appear at any place, at any time.'[6] Thus, satire can appear in the three literary genres that are analysed here: poetry, narrative and short-story. Griffin's unconventional theoretical framework is, therefore, usefully inclusive. Readers may arrive at a fuller understanding of how satire works, he argues, when they think 'of a rhetoric of inquiry, a rhetoric of provocation, a rhetoric of display and a rhetoric of play.'[7] In what follows, I shall identify satire's mark in Das's poem, Morrison's novel and Conlon's story, beginning with the rhetoric of provocation in Conlon.

Conlon is provocative because Maolíosa's sense of herself is challenged by her instinctive and unpremeditated erotic imaginings. Here is the moment when the two female protagonists meet:

> 'Call me Regina. […] Miss Clarke, Miss Regina Clarke, said to Maolíosa, shaking her hand heartily.
> It's like as if she's shaking hands from her nipple out, thought Maolíosa, at the same moment also thinking, what a ridiculous thing to imagine. What made me think of that?

> 'Sit down. No here, this seat is more comfortable.'
> Maolíosa sat on the edge of it. Regina had a bosom that an eleven-year-old would be absolutely sure to get a peep at. Certainly you should be able to see some of it, say from underneath the short summer sleeve, if she lifted one of her arms up, or definitely if she bent over to get something. God, what's got into me? Maolíosa wondered.[8]

Conlon uses the rhetoric of provocation in this erotic passage to write about the semi-suppressed sexual nature of Regina's body and she does so in a very skilled manner. Conlon's story challenges stereotypes about women's writing, particularly about sex, and notes 'the ironies of traditional Catholicism, prohibiting sexuality for women while mandating motherhood.'[9] The rhetoric of provocation serves Conlonwell here, 'as an opportunity for the display of rhetorical ingenuity,' in Griffin's words, 'for advancing an unorthodox opinion' and 'for stimulating thinking temper.'[10] Conlon believes that readers will assume that women writing about sexuality are necessarily speaking autobiographically rather than using their imaginations; this subsequently makes censure possible.[11] However, Conlon is naturally aware that women who have sexual fantasies do exist, that they may feel guilty in consequence, and so repress these feelings. Conlon's provocation is precise: Maolíosa's fantasies are not a preparation for a lesbian relationship, but rather a sign that the body may be imagined differently and without guilt. To introduce a guiltless and non-purposive eroticism of this kind is to confront gently and obliquely the conventional understanding of how the body of the Other may be conceived. Such rhetoric is different from, but not inconsistent with, the specific political demands made by women in such a publication as *Banshee* or elsewhere. The rhetoric of the story is non-moral, but it embodies a transgressive act of imagination of a kind that necessarily precedes the formulation of specific political demands whose basis is to give insights into moral problems, not providing solutions to them, and which will be enacted in the public sphere.

Regarding the rhetoric of display, Griffin claims that satire also needs to be thought of as a kind of rhetorical performance. However, some satirists adopt a mediating position between the 'moral' and the 'rhetorical,'[12] since this allows both for wit and indignationon the one hand, and for sincerity and what Griffin calls display on the other. The final purpose of such satirists is to achieve moral indignation. It is a matter of display when rhetoric has no practical purpose. In this case, the satirist becomes an entertainer: display is the outcome.

In 'The Looking Glass,' Das adopts a rhetoric of display in this sense, but also in a further sense that involves the display of the physicality of her own body:

> Getting a man to love you is easy
> Only be honest about your wants as

Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
So that he sees himself the stronger one
And believes it so[13]

.

This is both a presentation of the body, and rhetoric of irony that turns back upon the man, whose illusions about himself must be sustained. If the man is to have her at all, he must accept everything that she is:

Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers.[14]

Das uses an uninhibited frankness to describe her body and feminine desire to love passionately. These unconventional demands that should not be hidden at all are the ones she longs for mostin order to experience a total merger with her lover and, thus, feel full and sexually fulfilled. The poetic narrator is not embarrassed at all, but the man has to decide. In a context such as the prudish Malayali reading community, where all these aspects related to physical intimacy were considered to be dirty, Das's rhetoric of display constitutes a daring challenge to traditional Nair families such as hers. Das's satire rhetoric is not only aimed at shaking up traditional views of women's bodies and identity in India, but also a way of asserting herself in literature.

Likewise, women should appreciate and admire even the fond details of her lover, for which Das uses the rhetoric of display in the form of ironic praise:

Notice the perfection
Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
The shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinates.[15]

The rhetoric of display is used to show a common domestic situation in which the lover is portrayed as being somehow incompetent. At the end of the poem,the poetic narrator displays her sadness, endless female hunger for passionate love and sense of self-pity. She is aware that she will have to live without the man someday and observe how her body and hunger for passionate love are wasted. However, she does not seem to favour bridling one's passions to protect one's self.

In sum, Das works in the long satiric tradition of self-conscious rhetoric of display because she is interested in dazzling her audience with striking effects and also in persuading them to accept her satiric judgments. Dasuses the confessional mode and ornamental rhetoric in order to explore the erotic so that Indian readers

treat as normal what is in their own culture. Das is an example of the satirist-as-performer and what she displays are her rhetorical skill, wit, erudition and the power of her words. Das's taste for self-display leads her to pour herself out plainly in the poem. By making a beautiful and enduring poem out of the physicality of her body, Das's satire flaunts its own artifice rather than conceals it.

Now, we shall focus on the representation of the erotic in Morrison's novel via the rhetoric of play because this will be very useful in understanding the reasons that are behind her deft manipulation of language. Here is an unavoidably lengthy quotation from it:

> *He sure ain't give me much of a life. But it wasn't all bad. Sometimes things wasn't all bad. He used to come easing into bed sometimes, not too drunk….I make out like I'm asleep…I want him to put his hand between my legs….I want him to open them for me. He does, and I be soft and wet where his fingers are strong and hard….He puts his thing in me. In me. In me. I wrap my feet around his back so he can't get away….we stretches our arms outwise like Jesus on the cross. I hold on tight….I know he wants me to come first. But I can't. Not until he does….Not until I know that my flesh is all that be on his mind. That he couldn't stop if he had to. That he would die rather than take his thing out of me. Of me. Not until he has let go of all he has, and give it to me. To me. To me. When he does, I feel a power. I be strong, I be pretty, I be young. And then I wait. He shivers and tosses his head. Now I be strong enough, pretty enough, and young enough to let him make me come….I begin to feel those little bits of color floating up into me – deep in me….Mama's lemonade yellow runs sweet in me….And it be rainbow all inside. And it lasts and lasts and lasts….*
>
> *But it ain't like that anymore. Most times he's thrashing away inside me before I'm woke, and through when I am. The rest of the time I can't even be next to his stinking drunk self. But I don't care 'bout it no more. My Maker will take care of me. I know He will. I know He will….Only thing I miss sometimes is that rainbow. But like I say, I don't recollect it much anymore.*[16]

The narrator uses the rhetoric of play in order to unfold Polly's psychology. Morrison engages in a self-delighting activity by using the black vernacular in a remarkable display of ventriloquism to test her innovative skill. This primarily erotic passage becomes an intellectual play of irony and fantasy and shows how Pollyis made to feel subordinate as the result of an accumulation of race, gender and class factors. The language which she is given to represent her life to herself is

also the language by which Morrison allows her to overcome her humiliation. That is why humour is often close at hand. Playing, in this intimate excerpt, permits Polly to imagine her body and that of Cholly in a positive manner. She is the master, the one who leads the man and feels happy when she chooses to and fancies being her servant. Polly's erotic imaginings not only search for a total merger in her lover and a fulfilled kind of sexuality, but also constitute a way of asserting her sense of self and identity. Morrison's rhetoric of play is a kind of freedom in which moral standards, while assumed, are not allowed to dominate. Morrison makes use of the rhetoric of play in her erotic passage in order to open up the problematic of growing black and female, and of ideology as the staple of daily living, embodied in language and in social institutions. This is why this imagined erotic passage with its tumult of colours and metaphors is playful, while ordinary life also keeps breaking in.

3. Conclusion

Griffin's framework on the rhetoric of satire permits the comparison of selected work by one Irish, one Asian and one African-American woman writer from the late 1960s and the early 1990s and their contexts. Conlon uses the rhetoric of provocation in a subtle way in order to challenge oppressive traditional views of women's stance and advance unorthodox women's views of the body of the Other in Ireland. By doing so, she imagines a process of potential transformation in their lives, stimulates her readers' minds, and does so without any hint of moralising. Conlon's satire is not only experimental, unrestrained, difficult to classify formally and curious, but also deeply rooted in history and, so, referential.

Das uses the rhetoric of display in her erotic poem in order to ventilate the immeasurable world inside her that is real, but also the intensity and authenticity of her emotional and sexual experience. Das's rhetoric of display shows her obsessive concern for physical love, seek of a total merger in her lover, search of a true and lasting love, desire for total freedom from patriarchal descriptions of women and wish to reaffirm her identity. By bearing her unconscious in this witty rhetorical way, Das makes a protest of patriarchal oppression and the institution of arranged marriage in India.

Finally, Morrison uses the rhetoric of play in her erotic passage in order to share how it feels to grow black, female and poor in a white community and be discriminated against by people of your own ethnicity. The unfolding of Polly's psychology in the erotic passage examined seems to contain all the necessary aspects contemplated by Morrison to forge a positive African American female identity, that is, one exempt from male abuse, devoid of self-loathing and self-assertive of one's sexuality. In other words, far from a system that converts women like Polly into victims of one's class, gender and race. In recreating the erotic in this playful manner, Morrison makes her voice heard in the novel, and she does so

by rhetorically displaying a new female sense of self in concert with the Black Feminism of the 1970s.

The erotic excerpts by these three unconventional Irish, Indian and African-American female authors expose and explore in distinct satiric rhetoric ways women's inner lives and experiences can be shared. By focusing on sexuality and eroticism, these writers offer new perspectives on the topics they deal with, at the same time revising previous literary genre formsused in their respective cultural contexts. Further, Conlon, Das and Morrison eradicate established perceptions of sexuality in women, and present the reader with a new image of women's sensuality in their own countries that pave the way for a more authentic liberal vision of women in them. Their satiric rhetoric highlights important cultural questions regarding patriarchal oppression by factors like religion, race, gender and class, while situating their own work as a means of asserting themselves and the social value of literature. In doing so, the poetic, narrative and short story forms provide each of these writers a platform to imagine ways in which aspects of Irish, Indian and African-American society might be changed.

Notes

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[2] Matthew Arnold, 'On the Modern Element in Literature,' *Essays, Letters, and Reviews*, ed. Fraser Neyman (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1960), 6.
[3] See Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (London: Vintage, 1999), 167.
[4] See Agnes Surányi, *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11.
[5] Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1994): 3.
[6] Ibid., 3.
[7] Ibid., 4.
[8] Evelyn Conlon, 'Birth-Certificates,' *Telling: New and Selected Stories* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2000), 152.
[9] Caitriona Moloney and Helen Thompson, *Irish Women Writers Speak Out: Voices from the Field* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 15.
[10] Griffin, *Satire*, 52.
[11] Moloney and Thompson, *Irish Women Writers Speak Out*, 15.
[12] Ibid., 76.
[13] Kamala Das, 'The Looking Glass,' *The Descendants* (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1967), 11.
[14] Ibid., 11.

[15] Ibid.
[16] Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 100-102.

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Seductive Music in the Novel of Adultery: Erotic Melodies in *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *The Awakening*

Aina Martí

Abstract
Both in Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), and in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), the main characters are subjected to the influence of music. In the first case, Vasya Pozdnyshev definitely concludes that his wife is being unfaithful due to the impression which a sonata composed by Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) has upon him; in the second case, Edna Pontellier begins to acquire consciousness of her own thoughts, feelings and sensuality while listening to an interpretation of Frederic Chopin (1810-1849). Both moments are crucial for further actions, which consequently can be considered to be a result of the strong influence of music. Moreover, musical melodies are impressive enough to be perceived as an embodied sensuality, becoming almost material and arousing sexual desire as well as replacing the sexual act itself. This chapter will focus on the function of music as a seducer and its strong relation to eroticism.

Key Words: Music, eroticism, adultery, sexuality, modernism, nineteenth century ideas on sexuality, women and sexual release.

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The idea of this chapter arose from Tony Tanner's book *The Novel of Adultery: Contract and Transgression* (1981) where he defines music as an 'adulteration of ordinary consciousness,'[1] and suggests a close relationship with adultery. This chapter aims to explore the function of music in literary representations of adultery in Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889) and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), both works characterised by a strong presence of musical effects upon female characters immersed in adultery. Each work approaches music and adultery differently: while Tolstoy remains faithful to the nineteenth-century theories about music which saw it as a dangerous tool especially able to pervert young women, Chopin uses music to awaken the consciousness of her female character, Edna Pontellier, who becomes aware of herself and her own decisions due to her influence under music. Both cases end in an adulterous relationship, either evil or liberating, which responds to different social and temporal contexts.

The seductive action of music is a primordial element in the development of both plots, to the point of considering it essential for the adulterous relationships. In the case of Edna, the first contact with the musical suggestion takes place in a night under Mlle. Reisz's piano music:

> …the very first chords…sent a keen tremor down Mrs. Pontellier's spinal column.… Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth.… [T]he very passions themselves were aroused within her soul.[2]

The relationship between *truth* and *passion* is already established in this initial appearance of music affecting Edna's soul, and from now on self-consciousness – the truth of the self – and eroticism will develop hand by hand. For this reason music cannot be but a positive tool which permits Edna's awakening and consequently releases her from the man she conventionally married. Feelings, body and sexuality are experienced as a primitive unity before a proper moral and self-consciousness can awake,[3] and this pre-rational awakening is reinforced by the set of natural elements which in the first part of the novel allow a psychoanalytical reading of Edna's desires as introducing the importance of the unconsciousness.

Different passages show during the novel the music's power to definitely change Edna's life; thus, Mlle. Reisz with her piano becomes a sort of mentor for Edna,[4] and their relationship develops into a complicity especially when Mlle. Reisz's house becomes the place where Edna reads her lover's letters in his absence. Thus, it becomes a routine that Mlle. Reisz plays the piano while Edna reads Robert's letters and it is in these moments that her feelings flow fluently, touched by musical enchantment:

> Edna did not at once read the letter. She sat holding it in her hand, while the music penetrated her whole being like an effulgence, warming and brightening the dark places of her soul.[5]

This acknowledgment or discovering of unknown parts of the soul allows the identification of music with Robert, whose presence and effect upon Edna is described in the following terms:

> …in his eyes, when he looked at her for one silent moment, the same tender caress, with an added warmth and entreaty which had not been there before – the same glance which had penetrated to the sleeping places of her soul and awakened them.[6]

If music and Robert cause the same awakening in Edna, they both are interchangeable: music and lover are identified in the adulterous act.

The absence of any explicit sexual contact between Edna and Robert reinforces the importance of music as an adulterous tool; in fact, the first adultery is of a spiritual kind, and the immateriality of music penetrates Edna's soul as Robert would do with her body.[7] This deep musical immersion leads Edna to a Dionysian

experience of art: something 'heart-shaking,' a 'uniform stream of melody,'[8] which submerges men into doubt about their knowledge of reality, when dreams and life are not clearly identified as separated spheres.[9] In fact, *The Awakening* is full of allusions to dreams or, as the title suggests, to periods of sleepiness and awakening both literal and metaphorical. The Dionysian plays an important role in the unconscious, where all begins: 'it is like a night in a dream,'[10] says Edna after her first listening to Mlle. Reisz's concert. Indeed, night and dreams outline the atmosphere where Edna's 'latent dream-thoughts' [11] start their journey to consciousness. When Edna comes back home this same night her husband's presence causes the first paradoxical encounter between the old and the new Edna: 'Edna begin to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul.'[12] She starts to experience her own refusal of the place assigned to her, but still weak, she is not able to feel as own her feelings, which shortly after become materialised in a conscious way.

The musical relationship between seduction and revelation is what allows a comparison between *The Awakening* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*. However, in Tolstoy's novel, the approach to the topic is completely different: music perverts and enslaves in sin. Mr. Pozdnyshev narrates in the first person the story of how he killed his wife after noticing her adulterous relationship with a musician, Trukhachevsky. In this case, the lover is introduced into the couple's life through music, when he and Mrs. Pozdnyshev agree to play piano and violin together. In other words, there is an identification between lover and music, just as happens in *The Awakening*. Mr. Pozdnyshev's declaration at the beginning of his narration – 'he and his music were the real cause of it all'[13] – explicitly states the importance of music as a sexual and murderous trigger in contrast to its implicit involvement in *The Awakening*.

The key scene of the novel takes place in the evening. Mrs. Pozdnyshev and Mr. Trukhachevsky perform the concert; in this moment music is the only and absolute medium, it fulfils and masters the room and takes its turn to speak. Mr. Pozdnyshev is the first victim of the musical effect, and, like Edna, he affirms, 'I was discovering entirely new emotions, new possibilities I'd known nothing of before then.'[14] This is the first self-revelation Mr. Pozdnyshev experiences of himself, still in a half-conscious state where a new reality is just slightly perceived following the Dionysian immersion in an atmospheric intoxication: 'Music makes me forget myself, my true condition, it carries me off into another state of being, one that isn't my own…'[15] Both he and Edna experience an awakening of forgotten places in their souls which will change their respective lives thereafter. But, for Mr. Pozdnyshev, revelation goes further, to the point of relating the adulterous relationship between the lovers in a musical expression embodied through the dialogue between the piano and the violin: Trukhachevsky 'searched the strings with careful fingers and provided a response to the piano. And so it began…'[16]

This last, unfinished sentence is highly suggestive due to its indefinite closure inviting one to imagine what was really beginning; beyond that it suggests a secrecy which very implicitly opens the door to love and sexuality.

The performance of the concert is tightly related to a courtship episode, and even to a sexual act: by means of the rhythm present in both music and sexuality, it is indeed the bond which allows movement from one to the other. According to Langer, the essence of a composition resides in its movement which is expressed through rhythm, the 'regular recurrence of events,'[17] an endless preparation from one event to the next; rhythmical events configure a whole unity of significance with a beginning and a consummation of the fact.[18] This description of rhythm allows its application to either adultery as a relationship articulated by a chain of events ending in the sexual act, or to sexual intercourse alone from the beginning until its consummation with its respective rhythms.

When Mr. Pozdnyshev first remembers the concert, he quickly realises 'how they looked at one another,'[19] describing a typical first contact between lovers which introduces the identification of the concert with a courtship.[20] Indeed there is a set of words used to narrate the concert that belong to courtship or love vocabulary. Eguchi establishes this parallelism in his article, noting how music expresses love and sexuality especially through the rhythm of the sonata, which follows a pattern whereby 'restlessness and agitation result… from constant eighth notes, rhythmic dissonance, dynamic contrast, and ascending passages.'[21] The sexual act is embodied through an exciting melody and the intercalation of silent moments whose function is to reinforce the passionate tone: 'Beethoven's rhetorical pauses create moments of powerful silence, or relative silence, at moments of great emotional intensity.'[22] This silence belongs, as the gazes do, to the lovers' language conforming a wordless discourse now embraced by the melodic fluidity which gives form and sound to a passion.

Remembrances of the concert begin to invade Mr. Pozdnyshev's mind which lead him to think 'about the two of them making love together;'[23] the complete identification of music and sexuality takes place in that moment when Mr. Pozdnyshev becomes fully aware of the impression music has had upon him, of the message it was revealing:

> It was only then that I began to remember the way they had looked that evening when, after they'd finished the Kreutzer Sonata, they played some passionate little encore…some piece that was so voluptuous it was obscene.… Surely it must have been obvious that everything took place between them that evening?[24]

This last question is highly significant as it shows, firstly, that Mr. Pozdnyshev had no evidence of adultery before that night, as it appears in the novel where there is

no explicit scene of any sexual consummation between the lovers, in which case music would be so powerful that it alone would be able to reveal the truth. Secondly, it may be possible that indeed there was no previous physical contact between the lovers, but that all their suppressed love for each other was released in that passionate concert, taking a melodic form.

Mr. Pozdnyshev's rhetorical question is a proof of the strong impression music leaves upon him and the confusion in which he is immersed. It is this Dionysian experience that music brings out in both *The Awakening* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, immersing their respective characters in their own passions. With adultery, crime shares the scene in Tolstoy's novel, with the murder committed by Mr. Pozdnyshev being the main cause of the telling of the story. The final murder of Mrs. Pozdnyshev at the very end of *the story within the story* reinforces the idea of music approached as a diabolical tool by Tolstoy, leading not only Mrs. Podznyshev to adultery but Mr. Podznyshev to crime. Death is also present at the end of *The Awakening*, though, it is not represented as a result of a frenzy of passion, but rather as a symbolic image for the birth of the *new woman*. Regarding this aesthetic use of music, it may be said that music becomes a literary recourse to express adultery speechlessly through rhythm and feelings. Pamela Knights points out, in discussing the narrative technique in *The Awakening*, that it 'attempts to escape from the "old" words, through the impressionistic repetitions of colour and sound.'[25] Peter Childs affirms that Modernist techniques experiment with new modes of expression beyond words themselves.[26] In the texts here analysed, rhythm becomes a medium 'to represent consciousness, perception, emotion, meaning and the individual's relation to society.'[27] Both works thus explore music in regards to the concepts of enslaving and releasing, providing alternately a positive and negative vision of what would be the new female question at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Notes

[1] Tonny Tanner, *The Novel of Adultery: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1979), 79.

[2] Kate Chopin, 'The Awakening,' *The Awakening and Other Stories*, ed. Pamela Knights (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 29.

[3] 'She ran her fingers through her loosened hair for a while. She looked at her round arms as she held them straight up and rubbed them one after the other, observing closely, as if it were something she saw for the first time, the fine, firm quality and texture of her flesh' (Chopin, 'TheAwakening,' 41).

[4] 'Edna hunted up Mademoiselle Reisz. She had not forgotten the rather disagreeable impression left upon her by their last interview; but she nevertheless

felt a desire to see her – above all, to listen while she played upon the piano' (Chopin, 'The Awakening,' 65).
[5] Ibid., 89.
[6] Ibid., 108.
[7] The presence of Robert is expressed through music arousing Edna's sensuality and desire. According to Kierkegaard, music works 'by means of the all-disturbing power of voluptuousness' (Soren Kierkegaard, 'The Immediate Stages of the Erotic,' *Either/or vol.* I, 1959, ed. Howard A. Johnson (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 72.), and in this case until the point of identifying music with sexuality.
[8] Chopin, 'The Awakening,' 27.
[9] Ibid., 22.
[10] Ibid., 33.
[11] Sigmund Freud, 'Manifest Content and Latent Thoughts,' *Introductory Lessons on Psycho-analysis,* ed. Ernest Jones (London: George Allen and Unwin Brothers, 1949), 53.
[12] Chopin, 'The Awakening,'36.
[13] Leo Tolstoy,'The Kreutzer Sonata,' *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories,* ed. David McDuff (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 80.
[14] Tolstoy,'The Kreutzer Sonata,'97.
[15] Ibid.,96.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons Press, 1953), 126.
[18] Langer, *Feeling and Form,*126.
[19] Tolstoy,'The Kreutzer Sonata,' 96.
[20] During the concert Pozdnyshev already perceives a new look in his wife's visage: 'As for my wife, I'd never seen her looking as she did that evening (…) her radiant eyes, her serenity, the gravity of her expression as she played (…) I saw all this but I didn't attach any particular significance to it, beyond supposing that she had experienced the same feelings as I had' (Tolstoy, 'The Kreutzer Sonata,' 98).
[21] Mahoko Eguchi, 'Music and Literature as Related Infections: Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata OP. 47 and Tolstoy's Novella *The Kreutzer Sonata,' Russian Literature XL* (1996): 420.
[22] Eguchi, 'Music and Literature as Related Infections,' 422.
[23]Tolstoy,'The Kreutzer Sonata,' 100.
[24] Ibid.
[25]Pamela Knights, Introduction to *The Awakening and Other Stories,* by Kate Chopin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), XXXIX.
[26] Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3.

[27] Ibid.

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