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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1     **FOREWORD**  
by Liam Knight and Jayde Martin, General Editors
- 3     **CIVILISATIONAL IDENTITY IN *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST* (2007)**  
An article by Rebecca Shapland
- 14    **TORCHLIGHT IN A TOTE BAG**  
A poem by Shriram Sivaramakrishnan
- 15    **ARTWORK AND COVER ARTIST’S STATEMENT**  
A collection of artwork and statement by Alex Foley
- 20    **DUSTIN FREIDMAN’S *BEFORE QUEER THEORY: VICTORIAN AESTHETICISM AND THE SELF* (2019)**  
A book review by Natasha Booth-Johnson
- 23    **TRAPPED WITHIN THE “FATHER-BOX”: PORTRAITS OF FATHERHOOD IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE’S *THE SCARLET LETTER* (1850) AND CHINUA ACHEBE’S *THINGS FALL APART* (1958)**  
An article by Clara Ijeoma Osuji
- 33    **EIGHT STUDIES OF A HAND**  
A poem by Rowland Bagnall
- 35    **HIS BALLAD, UNDER WANING MOONS**  
A short story by Epha J. Roe

46     **ANIMAL HISTORY**

A poem by Rowland Bagnall

48     **‘I AM YET ON THIS SIDE THE DREADFUL GULPH’: SUICIDE IN  
*PAMELA, OR VIRTUE REWARDED* (1740)**

A note by Rebekah Andrew

51     **‘REASON FORBIDS, BUT PASSION URGES STRONGLY’ (*THE TENANT  
OF WILDFELL HALL*): THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASSION AND  
VIOLENCE IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* (1847) AND *THE TENANT OF  
WILDFELL HALL* (1848)**

An article by Holly May Walker-Dunseith

61     **ANDRÉ ACIMAN’S *FIND ME* (2019)**

A book review by Valentina Romanzi

64     **MERMAID FOUNDATIONS**

A short story by Patrick Clarke

67     **ALICIA FOSTER’S *RADICAL WOMEN: JESSICA DISMORR AND HER  
CONTEMPORARIES* (2019)**

A book review by Cai Lyons

70     **DISASTERS AND AUTHENTICITY: A HEIDEGGERIAN READING OF  
‘BEING’ IN DORIS LESSING’S *MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR* (1974) AND  
JOHN ROWE TOWNSEND’S *NOAH’S CASTLE* (1975)**

An article by Alexei Warshawski

80     **CONTRIBUTORS**



## FOREWORD

‘Disasters necessitate existential responses, forcing subjects to reassess their understanding of themselves and of their contemporaneity.’ – Alexei Warshawski

Volume XI of *Ad Alta: The Birmingham Journal of Literature* has been created and compiled during one of the largest historical pandemics since the Spanish Flu outbreak in 1918. As Warshawski states above, these circumstances ‘forced us to re-assess’ and understand the role of our journal. Our committee had to reflect on *Ad Alta*’s relationship to the wider state of academia, its function as a voice for postgraduate researchers, and the constraints of publishing under pandemic conditions. The professionalism with which our journal committee produced Volume XI was motivated by a desire to contribute to the postgraduate community and amplify their voices. Working with them has given us hope for the future of academic endeavours in a post-COVID-19 landscape.

The idea of ‘community’ permeates the pieces included in this volume. We see that a sense of community can be born out of national identity; can be born out of circumstance; can be born out of political, historical, and cultural ideologies. Furthermore, this theme can be said to encapsulate not only the pieces included in the journal, but the journal itself. As much as *Ad Alta* is the ‘Birmingham Journal of Literature’, this issue is very much the product of an international academic community: in this issue, you will find submissions from postgraduate researchers from institutions as far-reaching as the University of Birmingham, University College Cork, Ireland, and the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Despite isolation and the closure of universities throughout the world, receiving such a varied amount of international and domestic submissions was heart-warming.

We have included more work from creative practitioners in Volume XI compared to previous issues. By exhibiting them alongside theorists, we hope our volume serves to further connect the ways in which artistic responses and critical theory can speak to, and challenge, one another. The following articles, reviews, pieces of creative writing, art, and note pay attention to various communities and identities either as a work’s primary focus or residing somewhere in its periphery. We see that a sense of

community can be created by multiple aspects of individual and collective identities. There is even a foray into the fantastical – who knew that a community of mermaids could be found in one’s basement?

It would be remiss of us to ignore the communities that made this issue possible. Our thanks go to the College of Arts and Law at the University of Birmingham, without whose funding this issue would not have been possible, the Central Print team for producing this issue’s hardcopies, and our immense gratitude goes to our editorial and peer-review teams, artists, and authors. Their tireless work, enthusiasm, and expertise has not gone unnoticed.

Welcome to *Ad Alta XI: ‘Communities’*.

Liam Knight and Jayde Martin

**General Editors**

## CIVILISATIONAL IDENTITY IN *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST* (2007)

ARTICLE

REBECCA SHAPLAND

Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is celebrated for breaking the mould of post 9/11 fiction which mythologized the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in America in 2001. As American society was gripped by consumerist and military interests, Marc Redfield describes how the hyperbolic, commemorative "9/11 discourse" became nationalist and excessively marketized. Therefore, Redfield rightfully identifies this response to the 9/11 attacks as 'overburdened' by claims of metaphysical and historical significance, creating a blockage in the response to trauma (55). Hamid's novel fulfils what Pankaj Mishra calls the politicised 'non-commemorative' perspective on the attacks (n. pag.). The subversion of cultural assumptions, rejection of binaries, and commitment to ambiguity in Hamid's novel - especially the ambiguity of the term 'fundamentalist' - is a direct attack on the essentialist discourse Redfield describes that erupted in the West following 9/11. This paper will interrogate how cultural identity is established in a globalised world in the age of 9/11 and the War on Terror, with later reference to Samuel P. Huntington's theory on civilisational conflict. Just as Hamid offers a refreshing 'non-commemorative' perspective on 9/11, his fiction offers a more nuanced understanding of identity than Huntington's theory, elucidating a cultural identity that is mutually constituted by communicating/conflicting civilisations.

In Hamid's novel, Changez is a Pakistani Princetonian who procures a highly paid job at Underwood Samson as a financial analyst. Changez embodies the cosmopolitan businessman who theoretically succeeds in the globalised world. However, he experiences a sharp disenchantment with America, exacerbated by the events of 9/11 and its repercussions, as he realises that there was an "obvious connection between the crumbling of the world around [him] and the impending destruction of [his] personal American dream" (106). Disillusioned by the fundamentalism of neoliberal capital, he returns to Lahore, where he becomes a radical university professor. He promotes the disengagement of Pakistan from America and one of his students plots to kill an American development worker.

Critics have paid close attention to how Hamid recontextualises the concept of fundamentalism in terms of capitalist processes: Naomi Klein asserts that the fundamentals of market forces are intimately linked both with the myth of American superiority and its foreign policy (138). Martin Randall notes that “Changez sees that aggressive American capitalism is a direct ideological corollary with the religious and political movements in the Middle East [...] Hamid attempts, with no small degree of irony, to turn the meaning of ‘fundamentalist’ around” (138). This locus of irony coded into the novel works to unravel assumptions about ethnicity and civilizational values. The novel uses anticipatory logic: the reader’s assumptions about terror and fundamentalism are predicated, played with, and exposed.

The entire narrative is delivered as a monologue to the reader who assumes the role of an American envoy, possibly under orders to assassinate or incarcerate Changez, who is suspected of propagating terrorism. By forcing the reader into the role of the American, they are unwittingly cast as suspicious, or even hostile toward Changez. However, Monica Chiu suggests that as the reader believes they have (or have gained) a more expansive worldview than the American envoy, they learn to ‘disidentify’ with him (114). Chiu suggests there is a “specular reversal” (118), as the gaze shifts from Changez, to the mysterious American envoy whose role the reader must assume, and finally to the reader themselves. The reader silently negotiates the liminal space between the role they have been cast into and the more nuanced thinker Changez’s narrative invites them to be. The novel seems to speak to the ‘reader’ as a synecdoche for hegemony. A reader who identifies with a marginalised culture in the West may observe this with a degree of irony or frustration. Hamid deconstructs the reader’s identity to expose the inaccuracy of, and incredulity toward, assigning fixed identities. Having undergone this process, the reader is invited to re-evaluate their understanding of what it means to be identified as a fundamentalist, or a terrorist.

As a Pakistani New Yorker working for a multinational firm, the novel’s narrator undergoes an analysis of his cultural identity that tests the scope and limits of the term ‘cosmopolitan’. Timothy Brennan describes globalisation as the world “being reconstituted as a single social space [...] we are seeing the creation of a single, albeit hybridized, world culture” (123). Brennan suggests the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ discursively accompanies globalization, because it simultaneously describes and endorses the creation of a singularity through the merging of cultural differences. Changez is a prime

example of cosmopolitanism, starting an illustrious career across national borders, within the rubric of neoliberal capitalism. He depicts a transcendence of national citizenship. Changez's cosmopolitanism is ontologised; cosmopolitanism becomes a mode of being. The financial analyst, Jim, becomes impressed with Changez only after learning that he is from Lahore and is on financial aid. Changez admits that he was "pleased that [Jim] had found in [him] something he prized" (10) – he is prized because he is cosmopolitan, he is globalisation embodied, and his (tenuous yet exploitable) 'rags to riches' story makes Changez the perfect poster boy for capitalist individualism. There is a sense that Jim sees him as an object of philanthropic capitalism; Jim believes a position in business will rectify the assumed disadvantages he associates with Changez's Pakistani identity. For a while Changez profits from this characterisation: "I was aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness, and I tried to utilize it as much as I could" (47).

Changez notices that "[his] mannerisms so appealed to [his] senior colleagues. Perhaps it was [his] speech [...] Or perhaps it was [his] ability to function both respectfully and with self-respect in a hierarchical environment, something American youngsters – unlike their Pakistani counterparts - rarely seemed trained to do" (47). However, according to Brennan, the celebration of these cultural differences can be stripped back to the 'fundamental' of neoliberal capital: competition. The divisibility of political and cultural practice allows the perpetuation of sectoralism which benefits from "the disparities that keep [people] in competition" (137). Changez's cultural differences, then, are qualities upon which to be capitalised.

Changez's sense of cosmopolitanism becomes deeply unstable, as he finds it difficult to hold on to his Pakistani roots while excelling in business. Changez notices that the "Filipinos [he] worked with seemed to look up to [his] American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and [he] wanted [his] share of that respect as well." (74). Changez self-consciously stylises himself as an American when he thinks this can be exchanged for social prestige: "I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American" (74). Changez notes: "I learned to answer, when asked where I was from, that I was from New York. Did these things trouble me, you ask? Certainly, sir; I was often ashamed" (74). His ontologised cosmopolitan identity is revealed as vulnerable to deconstruction because the slightest event causes this veneer to collapse into

civilisational distinctions: Western, Eastern; First World, Third World; white, non-white. Hamid's narrative suggests that the ideal of cosmopolitanism is unstable; it is a mirage of the Western collective consciousness, a metonymy that stands in for an absence. Thus, Hamid's novel manages to interfere with the rhetoric of globalisation and invite the reader to probe the very basis of our attitude towards global politics.

The War on Terror catalyses the interrogation of Changez's cultural identity. The novel acknowledges 9/11, and the invasion of Afghanistan as part of the American-led global War on Terrorism. Changez follows the India-Pakistan stand-off, where military forces assembled along the border between nations, following a terror attack on the Indian parliament in 2001. India attributed this attack to Pakistan-based terror cells, which were fighting for control of Indian administrated Kashmir ("Who will strike first?", n. pag.). After diplomatic mediation in 2002, tensions de-escalated and troops were withdrawn from the international border ("Pakistan to withdraw", n. pag.). Changez notes with contempt that America did not support Pakistan, "risking so many more deaths by tacitly using India to pressure Pakistan" (203) regarding the government's assumed complicity with jihadi groups (Coll, n.pag.), even though Pakistan had cooperated with the American invasion of its neighbour, Afghanistan (144). Changez becomes increasingly critical of America inciting fear overseas as part of its own agenda; when film crews interview the people of Lahore university after an act of terrorism plotted there was foiled, Changez says "no country inflicts death so readily upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America" (207). This increasing geo-political consciousness is congruous with his swelling civilisational self-identification.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is highly concerned with identity politics on the world stage. Samuel P. Huntington's "The Clash of Civilisations" is a seminal theoretical text that enables a reading of Hamid's global identities; Hamid not only engages with Huntington's main premises but contributes further to the civilisational discourse he opened. In the mid-1990s, Huntington popularised the idea of civilisations that exist as categories of analysis that go beyond the nation-state. This promotes a new phase in world politics after the Cold War, rivalling Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*. At the close of the twentieth century, Immanuel Wallerstein was proposing a world-system-theory based on trade and division of labour, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri were suggesting that conflict comes from the

threat to postmodern Empires of multi-national corporations. Huntington, however, posited that “the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic [but] cultural, [between] different civilizations” (22). He denotes a civilization as “the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity [...] It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people” (24). Huntington concluded that “the fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future” (22) - especially between Western and Islamic civilisations. Huntington argues that after the cold war, international politics moves out of its Western phase and towards the interaction between the West and non-Western civilisations (23). Indeed, Gregorio Bettiza examines civilizations as ‘imagined communities’ which clash/conflict and dialogue/engage, which is a development of Benedict Anderson’s formulation of nation-states as the most defining units which constitute cultural consciousness.

Huntington attributes conflicts of civilisations, in part, to globalisation: “increasing [globalised] interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences [...] and commonalities” (25). Hamid illustrates this through Changez’s characterisation: as he becomes concerned about a globalised War on Terror and America’s involvement in the Middle East, he undergoes a transformation. There is an awakening of civilisational identity because his ‘global identity’ is insubstantial. Hamid uses the motif of Changez’s beard to represent an assertion of his Asian culture: “It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity” (148). The incongruity of his beard in the Underwood Sampson office, and the suspicion it incites, illustrates the aesthetic crudity of our understanding of identity.

A defining moment of Hamid’s novel is when Changez turns on the television and watches the twin towers collapse. His response is unsettling: “I smiled. Yes, as despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased [...] I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees” (83). Changez’s reaction is simultaneously understandable and unfathomable. Mishra calls the experience of 9/11 by non-Westerners “existential incoherence” (n. pag.) which aligns with Changez’s inability to rationalise his response: “when I tell you I was pleased at the slaughter of thousands of innocents, I do so with a profound sense of perplexity” (83). Jean Baudrillard proposes that watching 9/11 released an

unwittingly “terroristic imagination” (p.5) in those who were happy to see the unilateral power of America symbolically castrated. Through the acknowledgement of complex ambivalences, in this moment Hamid anatomises a mutually constitutive interaction between civilisations in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Following 9/11, Changez increasingly experiences a divide in his identity. When he evaluates a publishing business in Chile, he is already feeling as though he should be with his family in Pakistan because of the threat of violence coming from the India-Pakistan stand-off. The director of the company, Juan-Bautista, tells Changez that he belongs to the janissaries, who were Christian boys that were “captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army”, saying “they had fought to erase their own civilizations” (172). This resonates with Changez and forms the climactic epiphany of his narrative: “I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war. Of course I was struggling!” (173). Here, Hamid deeply invests in the rhetoric of civilisational politics with relation to the invasion of Afghanistan and the India-Pakistan hostilities. Changez suffers under his cosmopolitan identity and eventually chooses to embrace a singular civilisation, as in the contemporary political climate it was impossible to straddle both the culture he was born into and the culture he bought into, without feeling extreme guilt and psychic pain. Changez’s ambivalence reaches fever pitch only after the events of 9/11, and the question could be raised whether he would have reached his epiphany about civilisational divide had the terrorist attacks in the US not taken place.

Indeed, at the time of publication in the mid-1990s, Huntington’s theory was very unpopular, because it was largely incongruous with the postcolonial criticism that was gaining momentum in the academy. However, “The Clash of Civilisations” gained new attention after 9/11. In “The Clash of Ignorance”, Edward Said claimed that “the basic paradigm of West versus the rest (the cold war opposition reformulated) remained untouched, and this is what has persisted, often insidiously and implicitly, in discussion since the terrible events of September 11” (n. pag.). Said laments that “a small group of deranged militants [had] been turned into proof of Huntington’s thesis” (n. pag.). Indeed, the September 22nd-28th 2001 edition of *The Economist* praises Huntington for his “cruel and sweeping, but nonetheless acute” observations about Islam (Said, n. pag.).

For Huntington and Hamid, civilisational conflict has always been a factor driving



global politics and informing cultural identity. Huntington argues that “the interactions among peoples of different civilizations [...] invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history” (26). Changez expresses pride in the noble history of his civilisation which has been marginalised in hegemonic world histories: “We built the Royal Mosque and the Shalimar Gardens in this city, and we built the Lahore Fort with its mighty walls and wide ramp for our battle-elephants. And we did these things when your country was still a collection of thirteen small colonies, gnawing away at the edge of a continent” (116). The binary distinction between ‘our’ heritage and ‘yours’ which is organised hierarchically signals a competition and conflict of civilisations that is historically embedded in his cultural consciousness.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* invites an allegorical and symbolic reading of its characterisation. Critics such as Martin Randall have picked up on how Changez’s love affair with the neurotic, permanently unattainable and dangerously nostalgic Erica is a direct representation of his relationship with Am‘erica’. Moreover, Erica’s grief for her deceased boyfriend Chris, who can easily be read as the personification of a hegemonic narrative of ‘Chris’tianity and ‘Chris’topher Columbus, can be interpreted allegorically as America’s backward facing rhetoric of patriotism. Changez claims that America “retreated into myths of [its] own difference, assumptions of [its] own superiority” (190). America’s white-washed historical narrative is as insubstantial as Chris who the reader only experiences through rumours, and possibly is purely a delusion of the mentally unstable (Am)Erica. Moreover, Changez, whose name linguistically connotes ‘change’ (increasing globalisation/cosmopolitanism) is ultimately unable to be accepted or embraced by (Am)Erica. Changez is even forced to try and conform to the norm (Chris) by pretending to be him while Erica and Changez have sex. This roleplay allegorically speaks to Homi Bhabha’s theory of mimicry; the Oriental ‘Other’ learns to mimic the oppressor, and the process of mimicry only serves to highlight essential differences. In this way, Hamid creates the alarming suggestion that in response to trauma, America’s cosmopolitan mirage dissolves into overt neo-colonialism, where civilisational distinctions become the fundamentals of identity.

Changez is essentialised as the Oriental ‘Other’ and interpellated (to use Althusser’s term for hailing, and thus actualising identification) by that civilisational identity. In Manila, Changez notices the driver of a jeepney staring at him, in his expensive car with his white colleagues, with hostility. Changez

wonders why the man resents him, and notices that all possibilities assumed “that [they] shared a sense of Third World sensibility” (77). After this experience, Changez feels estranged from his colleagues: “I looked at him – at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work – and thought, you are so foreign.” (77). Huntington argues that “in class and ideological conflicts, the key question was ‘Which side are you on?’ and people could [...] change sides. In conflicts between civilizations, the question is ‘What are you?’ That is a given that cannot be changed” (27). In this passage of the novel, Hamid engages with the concept of civilisation as a basic, constitutive foundation of identity – ‘what are you?’.

Moreover, this ‘Third World sensibility’ that Changez encounters speaks to a ‘West Versus the Rest’ ethos that Huntington prophesied, because the experience suggests to Changez that people from civilisations that are not Western, do have, or should have a common enemy in the ‘West’. This division is reinforced through the ignorant racism Changez experiences; in a car park a man aggressively calls Changez a “Fucking Arab”. Changez notes “I am not, of course, an Arab” (134), but the colour of his skin was enough for the aggressor to perceive him as the crudely drawn ‘enemy’. It is noteworthy that the driver who stares at Changez is described as Filipino, because Huntington recognises the Republic of the Philippines as part of Western civilisation, presumably because of their democratic presidential system and secular State. The ‘Third World sensibility’ that Changez, himself a wealthy man, shares with this driver is assumedly based on their race. The purely racial element of social antagonism in the novel is rearticulated by the white aggressor. Racial identification is possibly undervalued in Huntington’s theory of civilisational politics and Hamid’s novel reveals this weakness.

While the civilisational categories thrown up in the novel speak from the panicked essentialist perspective of the world around him, Hamid is careful to leave his readers with an appreciation for nuance when considering the victim/aggressor relationship. For example, when the man in the car park is abusive, Changez responds by physically challenging him: “I unlocked the boot, retrieving the tire iron from where it lay; the cold metal of its shaft rested hungrily in my hands” (134). Moreover, the novel ends with a possibility that both Changez and the American are about to attack one another. Changez takes the American envoy back to his hotel, where it seems he is about to be assassinated: “but why are you

reaching into your jacket, sir? I detect a glint of metal” (209). Simultaneously, the duo is followed by a group of Pakistani men who nod to Changez in recognition and approach with apparent violent intent. Changez says, “you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins” (209), while Hamid constructs the final scene to suggest that both possibilities are about to materialise. Pulling these stereotypes to the edge of climactic actualisation demands recognition of the material realities that have produced these stereotypes in the first place. The ‘cliffhanger’ effect which obscures the aggressor/victim binary means that Hamid has given credence to the reality of the threats (the terrorist threat to Americans, and America’s interventions in Asia) which have brought about such civilisational conflict, without over-simplifying the relationship of violence which his allegorical tale represents.

There are some obvious issues that arise from reading civilisational conflict into *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. What happens to the postcolonial project of deconstructing the ‘othering’ process through genuine communication and interaction, which Simon During once optimistically proposed as possible? Indeed, the most prevalent criticism of Huntington’s civilizational politics is the heavy-handed way it has been applied, without nuance or subtlety, which can lead to overarching generalisations of specific historical cases. Critics such as Amartya Sen and Edward Said have criticised the concept of civilisations as a unit of analysis because each civilisation is deeply diverse and multilateral. Moreover, a lot of conflict comes from within civilisations as well as between them: the Arab Springs uprisings are an example of this. Sen argues that “to read in this a historical commitment of the West [...] to democracy, and then to contrast it with non-Western traditions (treating each as monolithic) would be a great mistake” (n. pag.). It is certainly possible that Hamid’s focus on the threat of America problematically marginalises the deep cultural, religious and political conflicts coming from within Pakistan itself.

Paul Berman argues that there are no distinct cultural boundaries in the present day in *Terror and Liberalism*. He claims that there is no ‘Islamic civilization’ nor a ‘Western civilization’, and conflict arises from philosophical beliefs, rather than cultural or religious identities. It is worth noting that Changez is not a Muslim, which destabilises assumptions about the religiosity of the ‘Reluctant Fundamentalist’. In Said’s polemical essay against Huntington, “The Clash of Ignorance”, he argues that “the personification of enormous entities called ‘The West’ and ‘Islam’ is

recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoonlike world” (n. pag.). Moreover, in *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map* Said attacks Huntington’s civilisational frameworks for harbouring “the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims” (293). This criticism is shared by Noam Chomsky who posits that the clash of civilizations was the justification used (after the fall of the Soviet Union) to validate any atrocity the United States wanted to carry out. Chomsky argues that “you can test [the theory of the conflict of civilisations] by asking how the United States, the leader of the western civilization, has reacted to Islamic fundamentalists. Well [...] it’s been their leading supporter. For instance, the most extreme Islamic fundamentalist state in the world at that time was Saudi Arabia [which] has been a client of the United States since its origins. And the reason is that it plays the right role. It ensures that the wealth of the region goes to the right people” (n. pag.). Chomsky rightfully asserts that Huntington undervalues economic factors and how they can over-ride cultural differences in his theory of the world-system – the American fundamentalist, as Hamid teaches us, adheres to the fundamentals of market forces.

Hamid is circumspect enough to use a degree of ambivalence when exploring civilisational identity, and crucially illustrates how economic forces and race interact with and complicate those identities. In this way, Hamid’s fiction largely avoids falling prey to the faults of Huntington’s theory. However, Hamid does explicitly engage with rhetoric of the conflict of civilisations, which has potency in this historical moment. Changez interprets the American flags which explode over New York after 9/11 as declaring “the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath” (90). Hamid uses civilisational politics not to propose a healthy or progressive way to re-imagine the world-system, but to analyse why and how the events of global politics in the early twenty-first century were culturally rationalized. For Hamid, 9/11 and the War on Terror brought into focus cultural identity which is not innate, but develops as one comes into a consciousness of their place/s in a communicating/conflicting civilisational world-system.

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## TORCHLIGHT IN A TOTE BAG

SHRIRAM SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

my inbox is silent as a sea.  
pointed songs firm inside the  
from an empty PET bottle thr  
itself out/ the bottle veers off  
mighty *Pinakini*/ where all the  
like a jigsaw puzzle/ in the ni  
their wing-logic/ the warp of

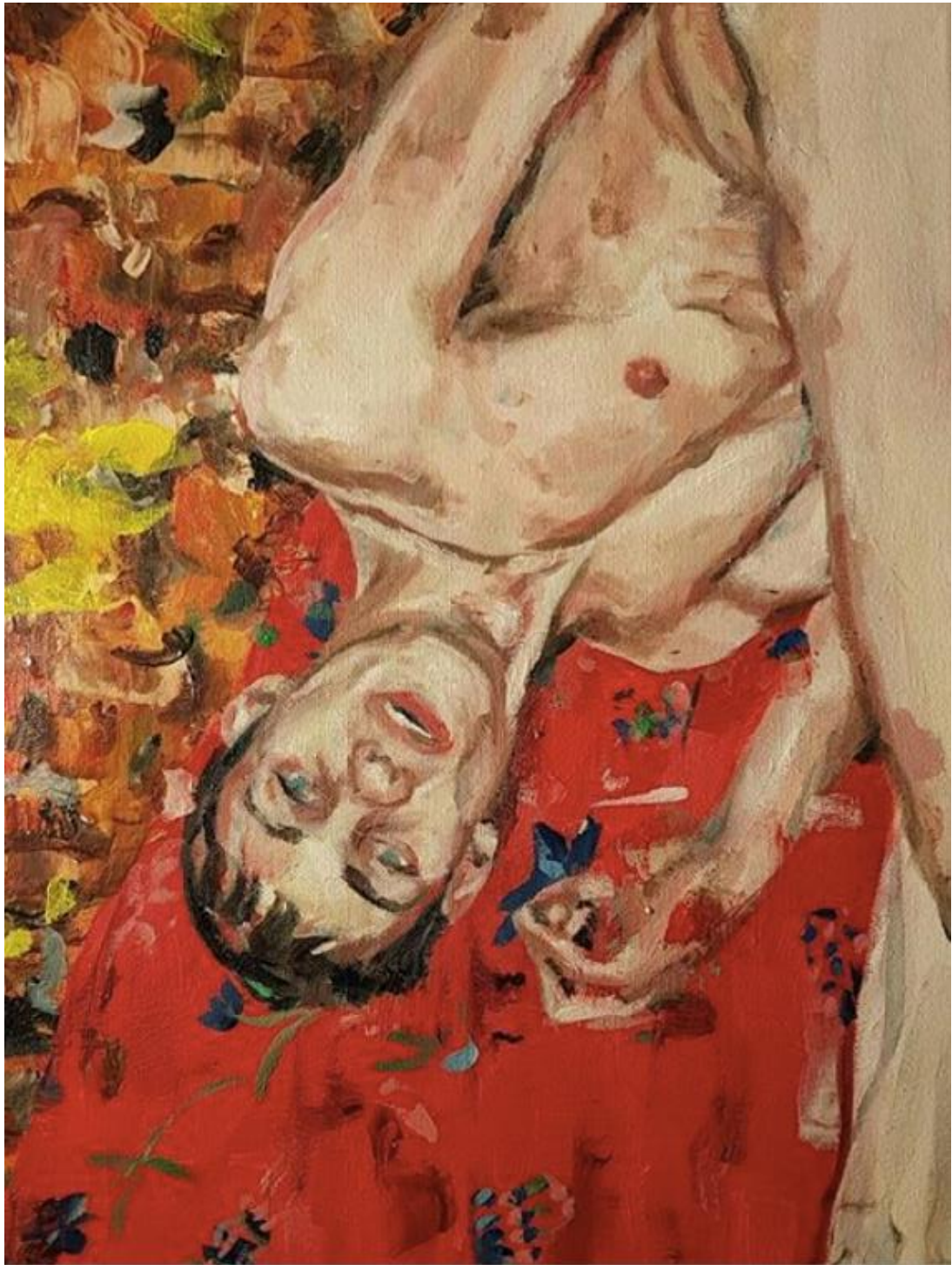
my inbox is silent as a  
seaweed/ outside the birds  
have shut themselves like  
safety pins in a rack/ their  
pointed songs firm inside the  
clasps of their throats/ little  
closed loops of perfection/  
the only sound is that of an  
empty PET bottle throttling  
forward, to the kick I dish  
out/ ahead, broken boulders  
of a once-same rock balance  
their impossible geometries/  
in the night, mosquitoes/  
huge as wire pliers/ make  
jukeboxes of my ears/ their  
wing-logic/ the warp of its  
velveteen/ tunnel loud as a  
torchlight in a tote bag











## ARTWORK, ALEX FOLEY

- 1) *BUSH*, 2020 (OIL ON CANVAS), PORTRAIT.
- 2) *MARK*, 2020 (OIL ON CANVAS), PORTRAIT.
- 3) *TWINK*, 2020 (OIL ON CANVAS), LANDSCAPE.

## COVER ARTIST'S STATEMENT

### ALEX C. FOLEY

The influence of traditional media on artists in the digital age cannot be overstated. There are entire forums devoted to mastering techniques to make one's digital paintings resemble oil paintings. Graphic designers are constantly finding ways to spoof famous paintings from art history. An internet friend of mine, artist Chad Wys, makes works that involve taking baroque portraits and classical busts and digitally manipulating them in delightful ways. Less obvious is how the advent of the internet and the rapid acceleration of our culture in the digital age has affected artists using traditional media.

My work falls squarely into the camp of 'disrupted realism,' a school of painting John Seed describes as an attempt to reinterpret realism through the lens of our increasingly distracted world. Personally, my work explores my fascination with the degradation of the image on the digital landscape. A child of the internet, I have long been fascinated with the way the image quality of internet content degrades with iterative sharing. There is, in my work, an attempt to get at that sense of fuzziness and pixelation, the glitching of the image on the internet. So much of learning to paint is about finding a new way of seeing, beating back the brain's expectations of *what a thing should be* in order to see *the thing as it is*. The internet then, represents a chance to see the world through another lens, the thing as it exists online.

My artistic practice began as a means of coping with the stress of PhD life when I first moved to Oxford nearly 5 years ago. Although I had always dabbled in painting, it took my third degree in a STEM field to realise my passion for it. Initially working with ink and watercolour, after I was gifted ten lessons in oil painting taught by the incredibly talented James Bland, who was featured in John Seed's book on disrupted realism, I became hooked on oils as a medium. Oils are steeped in history and tradition, and yet I find they are flexible and forgiving enough to play with in novel ways.

The coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown has represented a certain validation of the internet's role in traditional painting. Artists who previously looked down at painting from photos now find themselves unable to paint portraits from life. I confess that I've taken more than a little pleasure watching artists and models suddenly finding themselves navigating sitting sessions through Zoom, or figuring out how to remotely get their subjects to compose selfies for them to work from.

The crisis has given me some treasured opportunities as an artist. Firstly, having had to always prioritise my DPhil research over my art, the lockdown's restrictions have actually provided a refreshing excuse to focus solely on art. Further, friends and acquaintances, struggling with boredom and quarantine horn, have been exceptionally willing to provide grainy, poorly lit nudes for me to work from. The results have been some of my most satisfying and intimate portraits, a testament to the pleasures of submitting to technology's distortion of the image.

**DUSTIN FREIDMAN'S *BEFORE QUEER THEORY: VICTORIAN AESTHETICISM AND  
THE SELF* (2019)**

**BOOK REVIEW**

**NATASHA BOOTH-JOHNSON**

Dustin Freidman's debut book, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (2019), studies the aesthetic movement's roots as, fundamentally, an expression of autonomy and a rejection of binary identity categories. He uses the works of Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Vernon Lee (Violet Paget) and the Michael Field poets (Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper) to transform the obstacles put in place by a homophobic society into what Freidman calls 'aesthetically enabling' modes of desire (Freidman, 2). He presents in this work a philosophical progression that begins with Immanuel Kant, progresses through to Hegel, and ends with Pater who then inspires a generation of aesthetes and, Freidman argues, queer poets and artists.

In Hegel's philosophy, negativity is 'the estrangement of what is simple' – here meaning the habitual – and encourages what he calls a 'coming-to-be of itself, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal' (Hegel, 12). Freidman's opening chapters describe Hegelian negativity in far more accessible terms as the method through which the 'consciousness, upon encountering an obstacle, destroys and subsequently rearranges itself to accommodate that obstacle', a process which 'encourages [...] individual self-development' (Freidman, 4). Negativity is, therefore, a formulaic breakdown of binary categories as the consciousness becomes more adaptable in the face of each obstacle, and this process may additionally expose the category itself as fundamentally insufficient. Freidman presents negation as an inherently queer process: it consistently refutes the necessity of such binary categories altogether. Freidman identifies Pater as partaking in this process in his critical work, highlighting his impact as a profoundly queer contributor to the Aesthetic Movement, regardless of his undetermined sexual identity.

Freidman notes that 'readers and critics of Pater have long struggled to unite the aesthetic and sexual aspects of his writings', and this is precisely what he attempts and achieves in the opening two chapters of this book (Freidman, 28). In chapter one, he recognises that Hegel's Absolute, the complete self, 'cannot be achieved in the current moment but must be deferred to some future time', and,

furthermore, defines Pater's own understanding of this philosophy, that subjective autonomy is not solely 'a goal to be achieved when one reaches the Absolute but as a state that can be achieved immanently, within artistic experience itself' (Freidman, 38, 31). Readers familiar with Pater's conclusion to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) will surely see a common thread here between Hegel's negativity, Pater's redefinition of it, and his well-established aesthetic ideology. Each depicts the present moment as the ideal site for sensation and place the moment of lucid experience over the possibility of later achieving the much-desired autonomy; the striven-for Absolute may be achieved, if only briefly, through these modes of artistic expression.

Pater establishes the ideal of art, beauty, and experience for their own sakes, rather than striving for a morally perfect existence, and in so doing he promotes an anti-essentialist mode of engaging with the world. He provides for his followers a methodology by which to live their lives. Oscar Wilde, Pater's most notable follower, engages in a theory of negativity entirely his own, markedly different to but clearly originating from Pater's Hegelian philosophy. Freidman views Wilde's subjectivity through the novella *The Portrait of Mr. W.H* (1889), an understudied masterpiece of erotic negativity, and a work far more explicitly homoerotic than Wilde's notorious *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In the novella, the unnamed narrator befriends a man named Erksine whose friend, Cyril, has recently committed suicide in an attempt to prove above all else the queer truth he believes to have discovered in Shakespeare's sonnets: the existence of a young actor named Willie Hughes with whom Shakespeare was enamoured. Cyril produces for Erksine a painting of Hughes, and his suicide occurs after Erksine discovers the portrait to be a forgery. Through this tale, Wilde makes fundamental claims about the necessity, or lack thereof, of truth in art. Freidman effectively highlights that, for Wilde, 'works of art do not make substantive claims about reality that can be adjudicated as either true or false', and so the painted forgery has, for Cyril, less bearing upon the truth of the theory than his own belief (Freidman, 97). Freidman studies Cyril as an example of 'fundamental confusion regarding the relationship between language and self', thus, Erksine's failure to believe him based on his own faith casts doubt upon Cyril's own belief, which ultimately results in the suicide of both. Freidman's study into Wilde's presentation of such theorising as inherently anti-essentialist is enlightening and unveils a new perspective on Aesthetic discourse. He notes that this work in particular 'offers a pessimistic, disturbing portrait of queer individuals who mistakenly come to believe

that language's inability to capture their selfhood testifies to their damaged and incomplete subjectivity', and attempts to use art to achieve what they perceive as a fundamental truth necessary to their ultimate achievement of the Absolute (Freidman, 91).

In his introduction, Freidman declares that his 'highest ambition in this study is to use the vocabulary and concepts provided by the Victorian Aesthetic Movement to defend art as a place where queers can develop a defiant sense of self in a hostile world', and this ambition is thoroughly achieved (Freidman, 24). Throughout this book Freidman consistently shows how the work of not only Pater and Wilde, as described above, but also of Lee and Field, allows the Aesthetic author 'to inhabit multiple erotic dispositions' in their attempts to achieve this defiant selfhood (Freidman, 26). Freidman's book, while heavy on theoretical philosophy and therefore rather dense in places, maintains a consistent tone that is a delight to read. He presents the philosophies of Hegel and Pater in a succinct and easily understandable manner, making this an illuminating read for those seeking to expand their understanding of Paterian and Aesthetic contexts.

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**TRAPPED WITHIN THE “FATHER-BOX”: PORTRAITS OF FATHERHOOD IN  
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE’S *THE SCARLET LETTER* (1850) AND CHINUA  
ACHEBE’S *THINGS FALL APART* (1958)**

ARTICLE

**CLARA IJEOMA OSUJI**

**Introduction**

Dimmesdale and Okonkwo, the main father-characters in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Things Fall Apart*, are trapped in the father-box. This is occasioned by the interplay of socio-cultural, psychological, and masculine anxieties in relation to how fathers are expected to perform their roles in Boston and Umuofia. Hawthorne and Achebe’s texts reveal the competing and conflicting positions of these characters’ roles and conduct of fatherhood in different historical and geographical settings. Thus, a consideration of their diverse backgrounds serves as a broader platform for a more realistic appraisal of artistic depictions of the constraints of fatherhood. Although there are marked differences in both the historical timelines of 1640s Boston and 1850s Umuofia, there are also striking parallels between the ways in which the two father’s characters are constrained by the demands and expectations of their respective societies. While the circumstances of these characters are different, however, rejection lies at the centre of what qualifies them as fathers who are trapped within the father-box.

The idea of the “Father-Box” revolves around role-expectations of fatherhood in a typical society. Williams Wilson contends that the “construction of fatherhood and masculinity are to be regarded as an intimately interwoven process” (249) which gives insight into the complex nature of Dimmesdale and Okonkwo’s fatherhood. Tony Porter asserts that the phenomenon of male socialisation gives rise to the Man Box (296). Porter’s assertion speaks to the reality of male inhibitions within diverse communities. The “Father-Box” is an extension of this reality and is specifically deployed in this article to denote a set of social-cultural demands and expectations of fatherhood which often constrain men in their roles as fathers. Thus, the notion of the “Father Box” is based on social norms and expectations which are at odds with the concept of individuation – and these often-become sources of conflict between public and private expectations of fatherhood.

Carl Jung defines individuation as “coming to selfhood” or “self-realization” (173) which entails the integration of all aspects of one’s personality and life-experiences/situations. These are better integrated into the conscious psyche in order to achieve harmony instead of attempting to escape confrontation with undesired aspects of one’s personality and experiences. In *Psychological Types*, Jung acknowledges that individuation is always, to some extent, “opposed to collective norms since it means separation and differentiation” (411). Jung’s idea of an individuated personality who is opposed to communal norms and expectations corresponds more with individuals who have the capacity to resist the trap presented by the father-box. This is because of the level of psychological differentiation and maturity which enable such individuals to resist futile collective prescriptions and be more driven by favorable personal choices. In my interpretation, Okonkwo and Dimmesdale are trapped in the father-box because they do not allow themselves to be individuated characters. Thus, the psychoanalytic concept of individuation, which is used for the analysis of the two novels, provides further insight into why Hawthorne’s Dimmesdale and Achebe’s Okonkwo are powerless to break out of the entrapments of societal expectations and forge more emotionally rewarding relationships with their children.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo’s culturally sanctioned militarised masculine glamour defines his fatherhood. Therefore, his father-child relationship becomes deficient in what Andrea Doucet refers to as “language of care” (5). On the other hand, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Reverend Dimmesdale is torn between his priestly (public) roles and his awkward (private) role as a biological father. This raises some pertinent questions in respect to how fathers juggle their public expectations and their desire for a wholesome private relationship with their families. So, how do these father-characters reconcile the demands and expectations of their public roles with their private desire for emotional connectedness and their place as fathers?

### **Portraits of Fatherhood in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Things Fall Apart***

Anthony Rotundo and Michael Diamond are two scholars whose ideas on fatherhood are relevant to my analysis of the father-child relationships in my selected texts. The discursive terrain around effective and ineffective fatherhood has mostly centered on the presence or absence of fathers in the lives of their children. Thus, while Rotundo measures good fatherhood on the scale of care and intimacy with



children (17), Diamond draws attention to the difficulties children of absent fathers face later on in life (76-77). However, there is a multiplicity of experiences and frameworks that make this situation differ in each society, sub-culture, country, or region. Hawthorne and Achebe explore fatherhood in appreciably different ways, and therefore, offer diverse insights on the subject. This variance presents distinct perspectives on issues that inhibit or promote effective fatherhood. It also brings to the fore how characters such as Dimmesdale and Okonkwo take on socio-religious functions and the cultural expectations they internalise as men and fathers.

The father-characters in both texts have impressive résumés by the standards of their individual societies, a close examination of their fatherly conduct reveals interesting similarities. The reader meets Hawthorne's Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale who "had come from one of the great English universities, bringing all the learning of the age into" Boston (92-93). He is a young minister who achieved fame in England as a theologian before emigrating to America. Dimmesdale is portrayed as a priest whose "eloquence and religious fervor had already given the earnest of high eminence in his profession" and his speech affects the community "like the speech of an angel" (93). Thus, the young priest has the necessary qualifications to excel in his calling, but his "nervous sensibility" (93) is tied to emotional expressiveness. Unfortunately, emotional expressiveness is considered unmanly and therefore, a critical contravention of the canon of the father-box. Eventually, as he strives to put on a façade which is suitable to the ideals of early colonial American seventeenth-century Boston, which is culturally Puritanical, his position as both a spiritual and biological father becomes problematic.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's accomplishments are measurable by his success in meeting virtually all the indices of achievement in his community: he has three wives, eight children, and two barns of yams. Besides, he is a renowned wrestler, title-holder, one of the nine *egwugwu* (the spiritual fathers of the land), emissary of war, and a notable warrior who owns five trophies of human heads he has won in battles. Achebe alerts his readers to the fact that "[a]lge was respected among his [Okonkwo's] people, but achievement was revered" (6). Also, "among this people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (6). By the standard of manliness in Umuofia (Achebe's imaginative small Igbo community in south-eastern Nigeria) which values individual achievements, the character of Okonkwo has an impeccable biography. Thus, the author introduces

Okonkwo as one of the greatest men of his time whose “fame rested on solid personal achievements” (3) in a community where the individual is one with his society and communal norms/expectations are held sacred. Okonkwo might have been a great man and one of the highly revered spiritual fathers of his clan, but can the same be said of his biological fatherhood?

Analysing Hawthorne’s Dimmesdale and Achebe’s Okonkwo through the lens of both biological and socio-religious fatherhood yields useful clues to what informs their attitudes and conducts as fathers. Certain characteristics prescribed by gender roles are psychologically dysfunctional (Pleck 9) and contribute to the tensions in relation to male-identity as a father and as a man in society. Often, cultural prescriptions which collectively guide individual conducts are critically opposed to the individuation process. This appears to be the reason Hawthorne’s Rev Dimmesdale, the holy priest, publicly denies being the biological father of Pearl and is constrained to live in deception among his puritan community. Conversely, Achebe’s Okonkwo is a spiritual father in his Umuofia community - how can a highly esteemed warrior-father, who proudly drinks publicly from his cultural trophy of a human skull, be tender to his children? Okonkwo does not appear to be capable of relating to his children emotionally. Both father-characters seem trapped by the narrow father-box stereotype of their individual locales and are bound to ultimately resist the individuation process and yield to normative masculine standards.

Jung’s individuation concept centers on the notion of coming to the realisation of one’s state of true selfhood and adhering to it accordingly. Unfortunately, Dimmesdale is classified as a pious man of God, so he makes efforts to live within that classification at the cost of repressing other aspects of his true self. His inappropriate relationship with Hester Prynne which results in the birth of Pearl is one aspect of his life which he must hide or risk disappointing his congregation. Inwardly, Dimmesdale feels culpable for transgressing against God, his congregation, Hester, and Pearl, the biological daughter he refuses to acknowledge publicly. His inability to strictly conform to society’s expectations ravages and weakens his body - making him “faint, sick [and] miserable” (223). By the time he decides to leave Boston and chart a new course away from his puritan community; he is already frail and dying. His congregation eventually realises that he is not the sanctimonious persona he projects.

However, since Dimmesdale’s interactions in Boston are dictated and governed by the father-box of that community, there is little he can do to be true to himself. Luigi Zoja asserts that in addition to

how a father interacts with his child in the private sphere, his success as a father also depends on how he interacts with society(5). Zoja indicates that the laws that govern these two spheres are not the same, remarking that a father is a single individual who must not split himself into two, hence “on finding himself amid forces that promote dissociation, he alternates between two laws and thus grows insecure” (5). For Dimmesdale, Zoja’s assertion holds true. He vacillates between two contrasting identities - the pious priest as well as the aberrant, immoral partner of Hester, and the cryptic biological father of her “strange” daughter, Pearl. As he alternates between these roles, given the prevalent temper of the 1640s Boston, being true to himself and by implication, achieving wholeness/individuation, is unattainable.

To sustain this position and remain endeared to his puritan audience, Dimmesdale distances himself from his mistress and Pearl. He detaches himself so much from them that during the Procession march Pearl asks her mother, “was this the same minister that kissed me by the brook? (254)”. She is unable to recognise him as her father, suggesting a separation or duality in his character. Dimmesdale assumes the garb of his socio-religious identity, “the Reverend, Mr. Dimmesdale”, and thus becomes inaccessible to his daughter and lover. As he heads for the sacred pulpit to deliver the Election Day Sermon in honor of the newly elected Governor, Pearl watches from a distance. She discerns her father’s double standard; disappointed, she tells her mother, “in the dark night-time, he calls us to him, and holds thy hands and mine [...]. And he kisses my forehead in the dim forest” (224). Pearl yearns for an open relationship with Dimmesdale because she is too young to understand the forces of communal expectations which control his clandestine relationship with Hester and his psychological sufferings.

The reader is exposed to Dimmesdale’s momentous psychological sufferings during one of their secret meetings in the woods when he confesses to Hester, “[t]hou canst not think [...] how my heart dreads this interview and yearns for it! (225)” The fact that he both dreads his secret being uncovered and, at the same time, yearns for this particular meeting with Hester and little Pearl, speaks to his state of bewilderment as well as the physical and emotional tolls his long-kept secret has taken on him. He further divulges:

“Dost thou know, Hester,” said Arthur Dimmesdale, with an unquiet smile,

“that this child, tripping about always at thy side, has caused me many an

alarm? Methought---- O Hester ----, what a thought is that, and how terrible

to dread it! -----that my own features were partly repeated in her face, and  
so striking that the world might see them! (223)

Dimmesdale's choice of language reveals his anxiety about his fatherhood being discovered by his community and congregation. The use of self-interruption such "[me]thought---- O Hester ----," in the excerpt is an indication of the extent Dimmesdale is concerned about the opinion of the Boston "world" when his sin will eventually be exposed. Consequently, he looks forward to the future where he will live an honest life and longs for an end to his torturous existence, guilt and misery. He reflects:

[F]inally, to this poor pilgrim, on his dreary and desert path, faint, sick, miserable,  
there appeared a glimpse of human affection and sympathy, a new life, and a  
true one, in exchange for the heavy doom which he was now expiating. And be  
the stern and sad truth spoken, that the breach which guilt has once made into  
the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired. (223)

Although Dimmesdale is guided by the ethics of his puritan community, he still attaches much importance to his biological fatherhood which he references to as bringing "a new life, and a true one." After Dimmesdale errs, he attempts to honor the puritan tradition of public confession. However, his desire to open up to the church is frustrated by the father-box and his need for communal acceptance. The portrait of the pious father which his religious office engenders counters his seeming desire to share in Hester's shame.

Unlike Hawthorne's father-character, Achebe's Okonkwo has a different personality. From a very young age, Okonkwo already recognises the cultural prescriptions of what determines greatness. He becomes ashamed of Unoka, his father, for not qualifying. Now as a grown man, the reality of his son's soft masculinity gives him grave concern and eventually becomes a source of anguish. However, Okonkwo the renowned warrior of Umuofia belongs to his cultivated persona, the public face he adorns. His natural and true image is the semblance of his father and son. Regrettably, he rejects both of them. Nwoye becomes, for Okonkwo, a mirror through which he sees his real reflection. He refuses to accept this reality. Instead, he chooses to correct Nwoye through constant beatings until he loses track of the boy's development. Thus, for Chimdi Maduagwu, nurturing becomes an essential ingredient missing from Okonkwo's fatherhood (313).

When Okonkwo's first son, Nwoye, finally pitches tent with the new Christian religion, Okonkwo becomes very troubled. This is because that singular action by his first son diminishes his status both as great man in his community and as one of the nine revered spiritual fathers, the guardian of the traditional religion of Umuofia. Time and again, when he is out of the boisterous public sphere, and in the quiet solitude of his hut, the renowned warrior's vulnerability as a biological father stares him in the face. Okonkwo's powerlessness to influence his son's religious inclination becomes real to him and he gets intensely apprehensive. While he tries to come to terms with Nwoye's action, his turmoil deepens. This is revealed to the reader in the narrative as he bares the anguish of his soul: "Why, he cried in his heart, should he, Okonkwo, of all people be cursed with such a son?"(112). He is never the same again after Nwoye opts for Christianity. Okonkwo denounces him and subsequently ushers his other sons into his *obi*. He vents his rage:

You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer  
my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his  
head up among my people. If any of you prefers to be a woman, let him follow  
Nwoye while I am alive so that I can curse him. If you turn against me when  
I am dead I will visit you and break your neck. (126)

Okonkwo adopts this position not only for his Umuofian audience to be aware of his stand as a strong father and man in his clan, but also for his household, especially his remaining five sons to know that he will not hesitate to let go of any disappointing child. Trophies are valued markers of accomplishments in Umuofia, thus, validate the father-box. Okonkwo loves trophies and desires trophy-sons that will further attest to his greatness. However, societal values, like fatherhood itself, are in continual flux, so Okonkwo's hard-stance at molding his children after his own personality traits fails, as far as Nwoye is concerned. No longer paralysed by fear in the safety of his position as the Missionary's "son," Nwoye also rejects Okonkwo. His conversion to Christianity is one of the motivating forces behind Okonkwo's determination to stamp out the new religion. The text reports that as he thinks of the whole matter concerning his son, "a sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang"(112). Ultimately, Okonkwo could not resist this urge to use his machete and execute justice for himself and his community. This leads to his

killing of the court messenger who comes to stop the clan's meeting and his own premature death, albeit through suicide.

Boxed in by cultural stereotypes, Dimmesdale and Okonkwo represent fathers who are continually limited by societal entrapment. Since they refuse to accept themselves for who they truly are by confronting their psychological fragilities/weaknesses, they remain weighed down by their public obligation and the attendant sense of insecurities as they struggle to meet and even surpass their societal value standards. In this manner, they halt the individuation process and suffer as a result. How possible is it for both men to have acted outside the box and not necessarily worry about what others might think of them? This is impossible because they dread losing the support/approval of their communities. Both characters seem immobilised by the mere contemplation of their society's disapproval or condemnation. As a result, a state of sustained self-denial becomes necessary if they must feed that sanctioned and acceptable father persona they desire.

The sense of insecurity which fathers often suffer as a result of failure to meet societal expectations is directly linked to their conducts. The socio-cultural demands/expectations of the puritan society of seventeenth-century Boston revolve around piety, while that of the nineteenth-century male-centered Umuofia community focus on male-accomplishment. However, contrary to Zoja's assertion, Achebe's and Hawthorne's main father-characters in these novels do not just alternate between the two laws that govern the public and private spheres; they appear helplessly drawn to the allure of their public functions. Thus, in the interplay between their private and public roles, their commitments to the family suffer. This creates dissonance and uncertainties which affect their health adversely. Dimmesdale trembles at the thought of his secret being exposed, while Okonkwo is in turmoil due to what he perceives as the feminine disposition of Nwoye. Should not a man who must succeed as a father not also strike a balance between these competing and conflicting roles? Dimmesdale and Okonkwo fail to strike this balance.

Dimmesdale and Okonkwo opt for the mechanism of self-denial, and therefore bow to the individual socio-cultural demands and expectations from them as fathers. Thus, they appear to warm up more to their public roles by adorning airs which are suitable to such roles. For instance, with an ostensibly holy attitude, Dimmesdale wears a sanctimonious face and continues to minister to his congregation; similarly, while stuck in the brave-warrior persona, Okonkwo maintains emotional silence

with his family and seems to attend to his socio-religious responsibilities brilliantly. In his private domain, even after his painful loss of Nwoye to Christianity, unlike Dimmesdale, Okonkwo fails to review his conduct as a biological father. He psychologically suffers alone as he holds unto this hegemonic persona unto death.

The performance of masculinity responds to external expectations (Edwards and Jones, 216). Thus, Dimmesdale in his role as spiritual father to his puritan congregation/society or in showing secret fatherly affections to Pearl, demonstrates a preference for his public obligations. Likewise, Okonkwo in his roles as a spiritual father of the clan and as the authoritarian father in his large household, displays a clear preference for his public roles. Accordingly, by killing Ikemefuna and rejecting Nwoye in order to preserve his masculinity, Okonkwo also errs. Also, by allowing Hester to bear the brunt of their joint transgression and rejecting Pearl in order to preserve his priesthood, Dimmesdale errs. Both fathers are ultimately intertwined in a mesh of the sacred and the profane; hence, they remain trapped within the father-box of the socio-cultural demands and expectations of their locales which not only inhibit them from being good fathers, but also rob them of the dividends of fatherhood.

*The Scarlet Letter* and *Things Fall Apart*, therefore, reflect portraits of fathers who, though separated by space and time, share some remarkable commonalities. Both men are socio-religious and biological fathers who, out of fear of not adhering to socio-cultural expectations, fail in their role as fathers. The two fathers show preference to public success against private failures. Hence, more than a century after Dimmesdale's error, Okonkwo is caught up in the same blunder, more or less. Both fathers are held together ultimately, as it were, by the trap of their individual socio-cultural and religious ideals. In the public sphere, they may come across as successful, but in reality, they are failed fathers who privately suffer the grave consequences of their decisions and indecisions. Similar to other father-characters who reject their progeny in literary history, such as Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner* (1861), and the Zulu King in *Chaka* (1925), Dimmesdale and Okonkwo suffer as a result of their mistakes.

## **Conclusion**

Dimmesdale and Okonkwo are two characters from different historical and cultural contexts who share common ground on their conduct as religious and biological fathers. Okonkwo is driven by a

morbid fear of non-achievement associated with his father, Unoka, and this fear propels him to greatness by the index of his Umuofia Community in Nigeria. On the other hand, Dimmesdale makes great efforts to live up to the expectations of his high-calling as a priest in his puritanical community. In Dimmesdale's Boston, adultery is regarded as debauchery; conversely, in Okonkwo's Umuofia, the killing of one's own son is an abomination to *ani*, the Earth Goddess. Dimmesdale is a Christian priest who is guilty of adultery and child-rejection, while Okonkwo is one of the nine spiritual fathers of his community - in addition to the guilt of filicide (killing his adoptive son), Okonkwo is also guilty of rejecting his biological son. Within the worldviews of the two texts, Dimmesdale and Okonkwo appear caught up in the pursuit of the ideals of socio-religious fatherhood of their times and, through their actions and inactions, are eternally trapped in the father-box.

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## EIGHT STUDIES OF A HAND

### ROWLAND BAGNALL

The image deepens and solidifies  
becoming almost memory:  
I see the fingers and think *fingers*;  
I see the wrists and say to myself *wrists, wrists*,  
as if with superstition (which I won't go into now).

The skin starts to emit its own unusual blaze.  
I experience what feels like an exposure  
to the obviously waxy quality of time,  
considering the steady restoration  
of a building and its furniture.

Yesterday we drove out to the Suffolk coast  
and watched our friend bury his face in stones.  
My hands, during this time, appeared increasingly  
unlike my own, the way that basic truths  
about yourself can come to sound

entirely unreasonable. On the drive home  
I thought about a moment I remembered from  
*The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), in which  
a nameless woman laughs to find  
she's had part of her hand shot off,

*a chuckling hysteria in her throat that grew*  
*louder and higher with each breath,*  
her shattered hand – *a hand which had*  
*no knuckles* – appearing to me as it  
would've appeared to her family  
  
decades later: frail and unsatisfied,  
pitifully underused. September's rolling  
in, halfheartedly. I feel certain of my own  
name, of the resistance of the brake pedal,  
of feeling drawn on by a force that feels,  
  
to me, a bit like magnetism, pulling us forwards  
– or should that be *back*? – to wherever it  
might be sweeping us. And that's what seems  
to be the thought of Lange's migrating labourer,  
whose hands are scarred and carved  
  
out of the very wood he's leaning on,  
as if you could stop and read his whole life  
from the creases of his open palm,  
or even tell him what the future holds  
before he grasps and handles it.

## **HIS BALLARD, UNDER WANING MOONS**

SHORT STORY

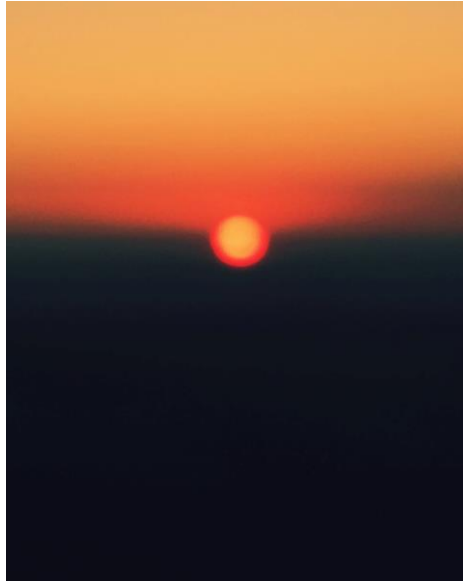
**EPHA J. ROE**

### **ARTIST'S STATEMENT**

*His Ballard, under waning Moons* is a short story told through a combination of photography and text.

Driven by a muddled mixture of sexual, intellectual and morbid curiosity, the reader is led by an unnamed protagonist through the fractured memories of their past relationship. Obscuring time and moving through prose, script, automatic writing and poetry, *His Ballard* explores the slow dissolve of physical and emotional intimacy through both its content and narrative structure, discussing the tensions, reliefs and relative blisses that follow the discovery, and eventual separation, of a short and unforgettable bond.

His Ballard, under *waning* Moons.  
A short story by Epha J. Roe



### Prologue

---

*When our personalities collided  
we took time apart to forget.  
Questions of separate lived realities  
constantly spun around us like orbiting  
moons, until both our real and imagined  
lives carefully rolled away from each  
other. Like glass pebbles drifting softly  
towards the great wide open blue.*

Chapter I  
*Relive* & Relieve.



more *literal*



*Shimmer*

Through clarity we were closer.  
Then it ended.

I let myself out.  
Pushed past the shadow  
that lingered  
by the open door.

Under a sober moon,  
once finished, all signs lead to it.  
That everlasting moment.

Our last moon changed its gaze.

Its light shone down a knowing phase  
and lit up both our bodies,  
like mother moon  
waned on beds of light.

Cool evenings spent by seas,  
against waves as cold  
as you could be.

I practiced silence and loud certainty.  
Not as innocent as I could be.  
You shook me out of my polite  
and then you *shimmered* out of sight.

—

I

That night it poured, and has since soaked every pore of my memory with the strange and intoxicating smell of stale sweat and damp. The journey through London felt long and bright, our bodies held down by the weight of our tiredness and soaking wet clothing. Two men, also drenched and waiting on the platform, followed us onto the carriage we'd boarded on our way home back to His flat. One of them, who'd sat opposite me, kept staring intently in my direction as I drip dried, now warm and sodden, and wrapped uncomfortably in humid air. "Typical", He muttered, quietly and under His breath. Nuzzling in deeply between my shoulder and neck, He shot back a smugness on his face towards the man sat opposite. A look that I would later recognise directed back at me.

## II

We'd spent the evening driving around farms trying to find somewhere to park with no light pollution. I wasn't prepared to drive out too far of the city so we found ourselves crashing about in the dark, all metal and soil, and feeling anxious and confused as to what the hell we were doing there. As we slowly made our way towards a fence that lined the edge of a field to our left, our car alerted a flock of white sheep that shifted themselves away from us up towards the hill, just out of reach of the car's headlights. As I edged forward slowly to mark out where the shape of the fence began, the sheep suddenly, rather than continuing up the rise, all turned and stared critically in our direction.

Their eyes, now fully absorbed of the light of the full beam, stared down at us like a silent, illuminating jury. They stood still and stoic, as did we, and in that moment it was as if we were all staring into an infinite void of mirrors, reflecting back and repeating at us our mistake. It was then that I saw another pair of headlights moving slowly down the path some way behind us, seemingly intent on following our path. "We're gonna get shot!" He cried, and so out of my heightened paranoia I tried to reverse into the field of cabbages that sandwiched our path between it like a limp piece of salad. It didn't work, and without thinking I instead drove on past the cabbages, past the sheep and past the fence, dropped the full-beam and headed straight for the farm house in the distance. Shrouded in silence and apparent lack of life.

## I

The rain picked up then.

Thunder rolled and ricocheted around us both like large, metal rubbish bins as we ran from the station down the flooded, street-lit alleyway. Shocks of amber and shades of red light bounced off the pools of water that rested in the dented pavement beneath our feet. The tar swollen and broken over years of use. We moved quickly up the iron staircase to the front door, and again up another flight of stairs to his room. Here again, I thought. This was *not* what I expected.

## III

When I first met Him I had been warned.

I was told of His strange behaviour: his narcissism, his egotism and overwhelming sense of self-worth. In short, I was convinced he was a psychopath before I even met Him. And then I met Him, and I was convinced He was a psychopath. The third time we met I found Him curious, completely absorbing, and had forgotten all about him being a psychopath. I'd read Jon Ronson's book after all, and clearly I was an expert. But perhaps, I thought, instead he was sociopath. Swings and roundabouts. It was a word he was aware of but not something He openly related to. That was until, however, several months down the line (whether or not out of humour or seriousness I couldn't tell), after He moved from London to the seaside town down south. We were walking down the tree lined street on which I lived, in the peak of summer, down towards the sea. I don't remember another part of that conversation, except for that which I obsessed over. The idea that he related to such a word and seemed to wait for my own confirmation, or contradiction — to which I gave neither a response. Perhaps out of my own fear of feeling, at the very least, the vagueness of its truth.

The months that continued long on through summer, through autumn and early winter, I experienced the strangest, most inconsistent and passionate moments of my life. He had convinced me, in not so many words, that though His presentation to the world was that of a completely self-realised confidence that radiated out of Him — consuming Him in everything He did and said — that He did however somehow *rely* on me. When I would leave there would always be a piece of jewellery or clothing of mine that He would want to keep, or 'borrow'. When He visited He would always want to wear my clothes. To some extent I recognised His search for an identity to which I appeared confident in, and that it was *that* that He found attractive. But whether or not this fascination and attraction went further beyond my second skin...

I guess I'll never know.

## II

Pulling in to the expansive, paved pathway that surrounded the old farmhouse, I found myself consumed with an unrelenting gust of guilt that ripped through my body like a shroud of velvet. This was someone's home that I'd idly driven into in the middle of the night. He sat there nervously giggling, as did I (though I felt for differing reasons), and we decided enough was enough. Stargazing wouldn't happen here, and so we turned and drove back along the narrow path, past the sheep and cabbages; the mysterious second pair of headlights vanishing into the cold like a ghostly apparition.

Stopping eventually in a lay-by on our way home, we watched the city and surrounding villages and towns as they flickered like theatre lights against a midnight blue curtain. Their luminance highlighting the horizon as if it were drawn by a soft, watercolour pencil.

Then it was time to call it a night.

Gathering ourselves up, we got back into the car and drove gently back to town. The farmhouse slowly melting out of view back into the dark.

## IoII

00:27

*HIM & HE drive around his street looking for a parking space. Usually there is one, but at almost half past midnight there are no spaces to find now that everyone is home after work.*

HIM: "You can't come in"

HE: "That's fine.. I hadn't planned on it."

HIM: "I'm too tired and I need to sleep"

HE: "Like I said, that's fine"

*HE parks just outside HIS house on double yellow lines.*

HIM: ".. do you want to come in for a bit?"

HE: "I've just parked on double yellows, I can't leave it here on the bend"

HIM: "Well you can't stay anyway, I need to sleep. Just come in for a bit, it'll be fine"

HE: "Okay, fine. Why not."

19:17

*HIM & HE chat online. It's the day before HIM leaves for London again. HIM has lived here for four months now.*

HIM: "Tomorrow is my last night"

HE: "What are you doing tomorrow eve, after the show?"

HIM: "Not sure yet. One of those things."

HE: "Ok. Maybe let me know if you want to go for drinks after. If you're not busy, I mean. But I'll understand if you are."

HIM: "Ok."

HE: "It's weird that I'll be saying goodbye to you tomorrow. Anyway.."

HIM: "'Goodbye.'"

HE: "Well..."

HIM: "Z lives in London. And I used to live there."

HE: "Since when?"

HIM: "Oh I thought they did."

HE: "Z's in Paris."

HIM: "Oh."

HE: "They'll be back in London soon, and yeah, I know. I'm just getting sentimental..."



# I

The room was small to medium sized. The standard blueprint of student accommodation that both reeks of sparseness and familiarity. He reached down and switched on a table lamp, its light rushing forth to fill the room as if it were the final chance to prove itself. Pops of amber burst from bowls of metal, highlighting its geometry. Expensive speakers bordered and framed the computer monitor like quotation marks. In the morning He would take them down and hug them like uncomfortable children. Blaring song beat after beat; the subwoofer reverberating through His chest like a twin heart.

The bed, broken some time before, lay slanted on its right side against the wall. Its broken slats 'held up' by empty cardboard boxes that offered no physical support whatsoever. Luckily for me He took the slant, offering me a good night's sleep. That was, at least, after we'd rolled about for a bit.

A shriek of lightning shot itself across the sky as I made my way towards Him. Thunder blasted. Rain crashed against the glass, charging through the open window. The wooden pane aching under the pressure of its swollen weight.

He turned his head slowly towards mine. And under the first moon of mid-summer we surveyed the hills and plains of our geography.



I now sit snugly by the sea, counting waves as they wash over me. Laid in beaches by the pier watching seagulls as they near towards the shore, they bathe their feet, I sigh and think of home, the wheat, that floats and ripples through the air — just like the wind *now* through my hair.

## Chapter II *Imagine*



IoII

19:57

An imagined monologue.

*HIM & HE sit across from each other at a table in a dimly lit living room. It's mid-August and the seagulls have settled for the night. The left sash window lies half open, sending in a potent, warm, salt-air breeze. HE puts a heavy, circular, burnt red roasting pot down in the centre of the round table — its inside filled with tarragon sauce covered in a carpet of filo pastry — and sits down opposite HIM, who types absent-mindedly on his phone. Earlier HE had seen HIM messaging a boy he'd slept with a few nights ago, who happened to live just around the corner from HE's flat. This coincidence didn't sit right, and while HE knew it wasn't done on purpose, it still felt like a little too close to home.*

HE: Tell me, do I seriously need to tell you how rude it is for you to be texting boys you've fucked while I'm serving you your dinner?

Are you that absent minded to think that that's normal? Or are you really just that much of a manipulative bastard?

Sometimes I feel like I've been some kind of gateway drug, and that you're some kind of addict that checks in with their source now and again.

God I wish I wasn't so insecure that I will accept this mind-fuck of a relationship over nothing. I wish I didn't care so much for someone who hardly cares for themselves.

I just wish I could save that moment when the endorphins release the upmost, loving part of you. I want to bottle that up and drink it whenever I'm forced to pretend you're actually interested in anyone but yourself.

*HIM looks up from his phone, turns it off and apologises to HE. Inside, HIM says he wants to change. Inside, HE doesn't know what else to say.*

*In the end nothing changes. They eat till fade to black.*

### Chapter III Photographic Memory



more *lateral*

Like straw in summer  
I now lay beaten on the ground.  
You sculpt —  
and organise your sound.

I sit and dream and lie in heather  
while you lay breathless pooled in leather.

May *God* bless our unforgiving rupture  
of which He offers no reprieve.

Save from our burning ornamental structure.  
That make us want nothing more than leave.



Photographs are funny things they both lie and tell the truth depending on which end you sit  
around the table and at which length of its perimeters follow you as if it were a needy cat yes one that  
shakes its bell and orders you to play

was taught as an historian to focus plainly on the facts photographs are funny things I  
and those which hide in plain of sight — *that* that we cannot know or know  
room like charged electrons superseding one and other depending on their cause and/or effect  
so how may we know what counts as that which counts as fact apart from that which follow  
you as if it were a needy cat yes one that shakes its bell and orders you to play

facts are facts at least that's what we're told are facts but what makes a fact a fact apart  
from that which makes factuality an act of truth and/or a time and place that separates a space and  
screams its exceptionality a truth, yes one that shakes its bell and orders you to play

both truth and paintings born of light can bring us joy considered trite but don't dismiss the pointed  
hill or jagged summit twist  
lit by the risen waning moon  
called 'the opposite of bliss'.



when ends are all that lie in open seas  
and ones that cultivate my memory,

and *all* that tussle and that linger;  
a latent sigh  
born of my index finger.



Chapter IV  
Like Propellors



towards an *end*



we drifted  
like  
propellors  
through  
an open sky  
above a field  
of tall  
yellow grass  
like  
setting suns  
far out  
on the weald

just like  
a cooling sun  
born softly of mid-winter  
beats upon  
the ground  
causing damp  
to rise  
to gas

I felt our bond  
transition  
dissi      pate

or as a log does splinter  
when left out  
to dry  
in woodland  
until a blade  
will sure  
to *pass*



©

## ANIMAL HISTORY

### ROWLAND BAGNALL

Again I'm looking out over a patchy January afternoon,  
ranged with emblems of the finished year. It conceals  
nothing, establishing the first few layers of colour,  
although this doesn't seem to matter now as much as  
it used to, neither evidence nor a lack of evidence  
of anything. A child throws a red ball on the lawn.

Behind, a blue whale yawns apart its mouth, the same  
as history, which opens, gaping, to receive us.

A telegenic couple holding hands are wearing backpacks  
with adjustable straps. Elsewhere, a room of identical  
-seeming men dance with their eyes closed thinking,  
*Music? What music?* as the sky turns lilac, pink,

then white and looks miraculous. Feel the texture  
and you become the texture; dive into the sea

and you become the sea, zigzagging the shore  
like an endangered species. It is like walking through

the many centuries of an existing landscape,  
a double consciousness, witnessing the ritualistic frenzy  
of each year as it goes by, accelerating past you like  
a string of ornamental beads. And the animals

– damning, yes, and violent, but also beautiful and  
beautifully curious – are eyeballing you carefully:  
  
saying *snake* a snake appears, deep green, patterned  
with triangles; up on the roof, between the lounge  
and the potted palm, a woman jabs her rifle at  
a curtain of approaching crows; in the same building  
  
– or so I imagine it – a man, hunched over  
on his hands and feet, finally admits everything  
  
to himself as the walls fall flatly open and away,  
the building rushing upwards like a tree  
  
growing without constraint. On a clear day  
in winter, you can see yourself down on the ground,  
  
sussing out the difference between this year  
and the next, and if it's summer, which feels less clear  
  
each time you come back to it, something else  
reminds you to take notice of the coming change.

**‘I AM YET ON THIS SIDE THE DREADFUL GULPH’: SUICIDE IN *PAMELA, OR*  
*VIRTUE REWARDED* (1740)**

NOTE

**REBEKAH ANDREW**

In one of the first bestselling novels written in English, Samuel Richardson explores the moral implications of suicide in *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740). By his alteration to the text over several editions, he reflects the changing approach to ‘self-murder’ in the eighteenth century. Pamela Andrews, imprisoned by her master and under the constant threat of sexual assault, escapes from her bedroom through a barred window. She tries to unlock the back door of the garden, only to find the key she secretly received does not work. She attempts to climb over a wall, but it collapses, a brick hits her head, she injures her ankle, and breaks her shoe. In utter dejection, she sits by the garden pond contemplating suicide as her only means of escape from her predatory master.

For Pamela suicide is an escape from the horror of the loss of her all-important ‘virtue’, used throughout *Pamela* as a synonym for virginity. Narrating in her usual epistolary style, she begins by stating that suicide is an act which will cast her ‘upon a merciful God, (who knows how innocently I suffer) to avoid the merciless Wickedness of those who are determin’d on my Ruin’ (*Pamela*, 158). In order to prevent her suicide being used as a template for those wishing to self-murder, Pamela makes it clear why she is writing: ‘that God’s Mercies may be magnify’d in my Deliverance’ (158); she is not in this respect an example to be followed.

Pamela’s suicidal thoughts are attributed to the supernatural forces of darkness. She imagines gleefully but at ‘the Devil’s Instigation’ (159) the uproar of the household upon finding her body:

these wicked Wretches, who now have no Remorse, no Pity on me, will then be mov’d  
to lament their Misdoings; and when they see the dead Corpse of the unhappy *Pamela*  
dragg’d out to these slopy Banks, and lying breathless at their Feet, they will find that



Remorse to wring their obdurate Hearts, which now has no Place there! (159)

The attribution of suicide to the Devil is one which was common until the late seventeenth century, where 'the language of popular religious psychology stressed Satan's power to drive ordinary men and women to commit suicide, and it may be found even in legal documents, where one would least expect it.' (MacDonald and Murphy, 43). Pamela's attribution of her thoughts to the Devil are in accordance with her traditional, Puritanical religious beliefs, and although old fashioned are retained throughout all editions of the text.

Having decided that suicide is her only option, Pamela makes her way closer to the pond, but 'my Bruises made me slow' (*Pamela*, 159) and she has time to reason against the act:

What art thou about to do, wretched *Pamela*? how knowest thou, tho' the Prospect be  
all dark to thy short-sighted Eye, what God may do for thee, even when all human  
Means fail? God Almighty would not lay me under these sore Afflictions, if he had not  
given me Strength to grapple with them, if I will exert it as I ought: (159)

Pamela acknowledges that God's ways are mysterious and by committing suicide she is undermining the workings of God in the world, who should be (and is entirely) trusted to bring good from times of trial. The novel ends with her marriage to her master, and the increased social status and financial aggrandisement this brings, a reward for her unwavering faith in God and the maintenance of her 'virtue'.

Richardson, through Pamela, affirms the orthodox Anglican teaching to which he adhered: suicide is a sin. However, his tolerance leaves the possibility for it being a sin that may be forgivable in opposition to traditional teaching. In the first edition of the text, the one quoted from here, Richardson states that Pamela is 'yet on this Side the dreadful Gulph [sic.], from which there can be no Redemption' (158). Ten editions of *Pamela* were published during Richardson's lifetime, and he made thousands of changes to his most successful work in response to parodies and criticisms. In the fifth edition (published only two years after the original) Pamela states that she is 'yet on this Side the dreadful Gulph, from which there could have been no Return' (*Pamela*, 5th Edition, 227). 'Redemption' becomes 'Return',

softening the theological implications of suicide: in the first suicide is irredeemable; in the fifth and subsequent editions it is an act which cannot be undone. As Donna T. Andrew states,

It was well known at the time, and has been reaffirmed ever since, that, starting in the later seventeenth century, coroners' juries, faced with the bodies of those who had killed themselves, came increasingly to decide that such deaths were the result of lunacy, and therefore not culpable. (Andrew, 101).

While Pamela's reflections may be logical, her suicide is still an indication of her bleak state of mind. A consequence of being found *felo de se* ('felon of himself') was an unchristian burial: 'the dreadful Stake [through the body], and the Highway Interment' (*Pamela*, 159), the fate of suicide 'perpetrators' who had committed a sin unforgiveable by God and thus not deserving sympathy or burial on consecrated ground.

By his alterations to subsequent editions of *Pamela*, Richardson reflects the changing approach to suicide in the eighteenth century, where clemency was increasingly offered to people who had committed an act once beyond the mercy of God. Suicide progressively came to be viewed as the result of a state of madness and mental anguish. The suicide 'perpetrator' became the suicide 'victim', who deserved sympathy, not scorn.

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**‘REASON FORBIDS, BUT PASSION URGES STRONGLY’ (*THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL*): THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASSION AND VIOLENCE IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* (1847) AND *THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL* (1848)**

ARTICLE

**HOLLY MAY WALKER-DUNSEITH**

The feeling of passion in Victorian England of the 1840s was by no means repressed: the uncontrollable emotion of love is set against a class-based, economic marital system. This is a social tension that is represented through physical and emotional violence: it is rigorously explored in both Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Charlotte Brontë reviews *Wuthering Heights* in the preface to this same novel. She expresses the concern that ‘the harshly manifested passions’ are interchangeable with a display of Heathcliff’s ‘fierce and inhuman’ violence that was seen as improper to a middle-class Victorian audience ‘with feelings moderate in degree’ (Nestor l-iii). In Charlotte Brontë’s eponymous *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane’s passion is controlled in so far as ‘I am passionate, but not vindictive’ (276). This is important because Charlotte’s character is presented as balanced and pragmatic. Whilst Jane is enthusiastic, she does not use revenge or violence as an outlet. Emily and Anne Brontë, however, blur the boundary between controlling, overwhelming desire and destructive, physical force. As Anne’s self-written preface also warns the reader of violent and ‘painful’ scenes (Anne Brontë 4), both novels use emotional and physical violence as an outlet for romantic passion, and as a response to love that is ‘harshly manifested’ in the self (Charlotte’s preface to Emily Brontë l). This is due to the convention of regulating powerful feelings, yet Anne critiques this violent passion. *Wuthering Heights* combines physical and emotional violence to rebel against the failed passion of Heathcliff and Cathy’s love, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* critiques violent passion as a ‘contamination’ (118) of morality through the more rational figure of Helen.

Passion was often considered as a form of madness in Victorian novels, and discussions about passion as illness became popular in the debate of the 1800s (Wood 3). For instance, in 1873, Alexander Bain postulated that the mind and body are related (6) based on Darwin’s suggestion that emotion

impacts bodily response (241); so, there is also a potential relationship between passion in the mind and violence of the body. Wood argues that there is 'a physical mechanism for explaining psychological states', and so the body can reveal what is happening in the mind (3). In Charlotte's preface, however, she claims that Heathcliff's romantic passion for Cathy is not human at all, suggesting that obsessive passion can lead to inhuman cruelty. His 'love for Catherine' is described as 'a passion such as might boil and glow in the bad essence of some evil genius' (Charlotte's preface to Emily Brontë liii). In this way, passion is not only defined as 'a fit of madness' (OED), but also an overpowering impulse that leads to the violent destruction of the self and others.

Although Wood looks at passionate feelings within the self and their violent effect on the mind and body (3), a more recent study by Tytler suggests that external violence can reflect a character's internal, suppressed passion (39-47). Tytler's argument that 'Lockwood shows himself to be physically affected by weather and seasons' (40) shows that this narrator in *Wuthering Heights* is affected by the violent 'stormy' (4) weather as well as violent characters. It is often at times of great passion that the weather worsens, such as in Chapter 3, where 'the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow' complements the violent attempted entrance of Cathy's ghost 'through the window' (25). When Lockwood encounters Cathy's ghost in his dream, still roaming the earth as a result of unfulfilled passion, he also encounters this 'driving' weather (25). Though Tytler (44) argues that the weather adds to Lockwood's 'unpleasant experience' in this chapter, it is more likely that the 'atmospheric tumult' (4) is a pathetic fallacy that reflects Lockwood's violent response to Cathy's passion – to return to *Wuthering Heights*. Her limited ability to perform physical violence in death means that her passion remains within her ghostly body, and so Brontë instead employs the weather to perform the most violence at the window, acting as a physical substitute for Cathy's deceased character.

At first glance, the violence of Chapter 3 is initiated by the supernatural: Cathy's ghost. Brontë creates a conflict here between the living Lockwood and the ghost just as she brings together Cathy's passionate search for Heathcliff and Lockwood's resistance to her passion. It is certainly a violent point in the novel when Lockwood 'pulled its wrist onto the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down' (25). Though Cathy's ghost is indeed an 'unsettling' challenge to realism (Nestor xxix), Lockwood is interestingly the most violent character at this moment. Nestor asserts that 'most unsettling

of all is the shockingly vivid description of Lockwood dragging the ghostly child's wrist across the broken windowpane' (xxix). The ghost embodies passion, but it is not accompanied by violence. It is, after all, the 'importunate branch' that is first thought to be making the 'teasing sound' on the window glass and not the 'fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!' (25). Ultimately, Cathy does not get access to Wuthering Heights because violence stands in the way of her passion to re-enter her old abode.

As Cathy cannot be physically violent in death, it is her emotional violence that initiates the scene. It is unclear as to whether Lockwood initially believes Cathy to be real, or whether her status as a ghost is inferred from the fact that he is dreaming. How 'blood' is drawn from Cathy's wrist is complex. I argue that Lockwood's violence should be related to bloodletting because it is an attempt to release Cathy's ghost of its vehemence. Bloodletting is an out-dated medical procedure where blood is taken from the body in order to rebalance the four humours and heal illness. Doctors thought that an excess of blood caused an excess of passion. Therefore, by removing one's blood, it was thought to remove one's passion. It is a violent process, and a cure for passion as illness in the Victorian era (OED). In this way, violence is used as an attempt to relieve passion instead of express it, such as when bloodletting is employed to remedy Cathy's fever in Volume 1 Chapter 9. Though Nestor argues that Lockwood's violence 'confronts us with the potential brutality that lurks in the unconscious of even the most innocuous character' (xxix), it is Cathy's immortal passion that encourages Lockwood's physical response. In this light, passion is contagious because it is passed on to Lockwood, which is shown through his reaction to Cathy. It is interesting that the human Lockwood is not wounded on the broken windowpane, yet Cathy's ghost is affected. Cathy's passion causes violence to be inflicted upon her ghostly body, but also allows Lockwood the violence to counteract the passion. If Lockwood and, by extension, society as a whole 'let' passion 'in' (25) to their values, then passion has more of a chance of fulfilment and less of an opportunity to become an "illness".

Wood argues that delirium is a way for Victorian novelists to look at identity away from the real world (115), and so dreaming also reveals the passions of the mind. Similarly, Nestor believes that 'It is significant that the ghost first appears in Lockwood's dream' in so far as 'dreaming proves a crucial source of knowledge and understanding' (xxix-xxx). For Wood, dreaming is a sensational process that allows for the unreal to occur in realist novels (115). Cathy and Lockwood both experience violence through

dreaming, which stems from passion. It is a dream that forebodes the appearance of Cathy's ghost as it is when Lockwood 'began to dream' (23) that 'the intense horror of nightmare' (25) occurs. Before Cathy's passionate effort to gain entrance to the Heights, Lockwood dreams that he is being violently attacked by Christians as 'several clubs crossed' him (24) although he had 'no weapon to raise in self-defence' (24). As Wood states, dreams challenge 'the reassuringly logical progression towards self-knowledge and social betterment' (115). Lockwood identifies that he has no violent weapon to counter their violence, and yet it is the passionate ghost who becomes the victim of his brutality. As the 'clubs crossed him' so does passion cross him in the form of Cathy's ghost, and his hands become his weapon that injure Cathy's 'ice cold hand!' (25). This chapter establishes a connection between Lockwood and Cathy, life and death, passion and violence, and dreams and reality.

The definition of passion as madness and anger is embodied in Cathy's character. Cathy's passion is established from the outset as 'Our lady returned to us, saucier, and more passionate, and haughtier than ever' (88), which renders her personality as naturally susceptible to desire. Her inability to regulate emotion is strongly evident when Cathy's insurmountable passion causes the violence, which is the 'nasty trick!' of hurting Ellen. Indeed, 'She never had power to conceal her passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze' (71). Violence pre-empts passion at this point; the boundaries are blurred between the two. It becomes unclear where passion begins and violence ends, so much so that Cathy becomes characterised as 'Catherine in a passion' (266). She even speaks 'passionately' (128) in the delirium leading up to her death, and her desire to 'open the window' to see the 'rough journey' (126) to the object of her desire – Wuthering Heights – is revealed through this passion-induced illness. It is Cathy's 'wild' (42) character that ultimately kills her, as her unattained passion for Heathcliff's love turns into a violent, emotional attack on her inner self.

It is Heathcliff that is most famously believed to be both a violent and passionate character. He is not only the author of his own destruction, but also a partial cause of Cathy's death as he is her passion. His desire to prolong her emotion after death shows him to be a character that uses violence to keep passion alive: "May she wake in torment!" he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion' (169). His response to Cathy's death reinforces the connection between strong desire and physical expression (Darwin 241) as 'the splashes of blood

about the bark of the tree' and his 'hand and forehead' that are 'both stained' (169) mirrors the bleeding wrist of Cathy's ghost in Chapter 3. As Heathcliff starves himself in the final chapter, replacing the basic desire for food with his higher desire to be with Cathy, starvation becomes a physical representation of how passion is internally eating him up. Based on the sentence 'My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself' (333), Nestor argues that Heathcliff's 'impossible desire' to be with Cathy in life is 'at odds with the desiring body' (xxv). Although this is an effective point, it is more likely that passion is at last becoming at one with the body in so far as Heathcliff's body is giving into the pressure of passion. His eyes 'never weaned away' from 'the fancied object' that 'was not fixed' (331), which is his constant sight of Cathy. Brontë's amalgamation of passion and violence exposes how violence is a method in the novel that is used to recreate, mime, and restage the feeling of passion, even in death.

Heathcliff's passion for Cathy is expressed through his violence. He not only demonstrates the ability to perform violent acts, especially in Volume 3, but also has the negative tendency to attract violent scenes to both himself and Cathy. His affinity with potentially dangerous situations is established in Volume 1 Chapter 6, where he 'had Cathy by the hand, and was urging her on' in an attempt to escape Linton's violent guard dogs 'when all at once she fell down' (49). Heathcliff's masculine power in the relationship allows him to lead Cathy here, but the subsequent fall prophesises her death in Volume 2 Chapter 2, which completes her ultimate tragic fall. How Cathy 'stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks' (53) away from Heathcliff mirrors the way in which Cathy dies whilst Heathcliff must live on without her company. Eagleton argues that Volume 1 Chapter 6 exposes an 'underlying truth of violence' in the novel, but Linton 'represses serious physical violence' and is thus a 'less destructive' character than Heathcliff (124-129). Though he claims to love Cathy, Heathcliff's mistreatment of the younger Catherine in Volume 2 Chapter 14 creates a disturbing relationship between violence and passion, especially as 'he struck her down' and 'crushed' her 'mother's portrait' (281) which pictures Cathy – his 'heart's darling' (28). The way Catherine 'can't speak for pain' due to 'her mouth filling with blood' (281) shows how Heathcliff's violence stunts Catherine's expression of her desire through words to, like her mother, '*let me go home!*' (273). It is unsettling that Heathcliff displays the most violence towards objects that he is most passionate about, such as when he violently 'disturbed' Cathy's grave in order to be 'on the point of attaining my object' (289) that then 'led me home' (290). As the younger Catherine is the product of

Cathy, his unwavering object of desire, this means that she is also a victim of his brutality that he assimilates with his passion.

This violent disturbance of the dead Cathy disputes Eagleton's view that there is 'a wedge driven between the actual and the possible which, by estranging the ideal from concrete existence, twists that existence into violence and despair' (129). Although Eagleton (129) is contrasting the 'savage' (169) Heathcliff and more respectable Cathy and Linton, this can also relate to Heathcliff's 'ideal' passion and violent 'concrete existence'. It is more likely that despair occurs when Heathcliff unites passion with violence, such as when Heathcliff's ideal passion to physically see Cathy again leads to the violent opening of her coffin. This obviously brings together life and death, passion and violence, but also an ideal and concrete existence that is not 'estranged' but connected. Though Linton and Cathy's marriage is a safe, economic union, this does not mean that it is any 'less destructive' (Eagleton 129). After all, it is not only 'Heathcliff's passion' (Eagleton 129) but also Cathy's ignorance and dismissal of this passion that leads to her fatal end and the conclusion that 'You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff?' (160). As Cathy's death physically removes the object or 'flesh and blood' (290) of Heathcliff's desire, the younger Catherine then generationally succeeds Cathy's earthly existence. However, by this point, Heathcliff's passion has transferred into violence and his brutal treatment of Catherine links this passion and violence together.

Whereas *Wuthering Heights* employs violent action to express passionate feelings, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* instead critiques all forms of violence, whether they are the product of passion or not. This does not mean that violence is absent from the novel but rather ensures that all 'evil passions' (269) are checked by moral commentary. Thormählen proposes that whilst 'raging passions' are more prevalent in Charlotte and Emily's novels, Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is nevertheless a violent tale about a female character whose childish perception of love is 'cruelly beaten out of her' by an unwise marriage (330-340). Knight, however, argues that what shocked middle and upper-class readers was the 'scenes of drunkenness and violence' (13). The characters in the novel often respond to passion with violence, but Helen constantly views violence as a moral failure that must be corrected by 'means of checking' (230) behaviour.



As most studies concentrate on women in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Cox 1-19), Lord Lowborough is often an overlooked male character. His transition from a heavy drinker to a reformed gentleman is established in Volume 2 Chapter 22, as he goes from 'running headlong to destruction' to 'honest ground' (196). Whilst his friends criticise him as being 'blinded' by 'passion' (197), he receives much praise from Helen for his moral character. On discovering news of his wife's affair, Lord Lowborough's refusal to use violence against Arthur Huntingdon and resisting the temptation 'not to sever without blood' (344) is met with Helen's compliment that 'the world is not worthy of you!' (345), which shows that passion 'livid with furious hate' (347) does not have to take precedence over calm reason. It is this balance of reason and passion that is much debated throughout the novel, and the perfect equilibrium between them is embodied in the 'reformed' (200) Lord Lowborough. Though Milbank's study explores passion in Dante's *Inferno*, her argument is nevertheless applicable to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as 'those who have allowed passion to dominate reason are whirled by a stormy wind' (73). The dichotomy between Arthur Huntingdon and Lord Lowborough supports this statement, but refutes her secondary view that 'reason alone cannot take one beyond its limits' (Milbank 82). This is because Huntingdon's passion for alcohol leads to his fatal end whilst Lord Lowborough's abstinence saves him from this destruction, and shows how uncontrolled and unrepressed passion leads to violence. As Dante is met by violent 'stormy wind' (Milbank 73), so is Huntingdon faced with death, as presented by the asyndeton: 'the shroud, the coffin, the dark, lonely grave' (445). His brutality at the scene of his death reflects the desire to hold onto passion and life by using violence, as he is described as 'sometimes clutching' Helen's 'arm with violence' (445). Lord Lowborough, on the other hand, is rewarded with the 'gift' (457) of remarriage for his success in properly managing his feelings of both passion and reason, which demonstrates how abstaining from ill passions leads to greater moral fulfilment.

Although passion has the potential to destroy characters, it is less likely for Lord Lowborough that 'reason alone cannot take one beyond its limits' (Milbank 82) or that reason inhibits a character's ambitions. His movement away from the gentlemen in the dining room to the drawing room in Volume 2 Chapter 31 signifies an escape from passion to reason. He declares that 'I will NOT go back to them!' (271) - not even for Annabella, who is his passion. This suggests that reason outweighs his former love for alcohol, because the character is aware that ignoring reason could lead to the loss of his wife, and thus

his main passion. Though he still loses Annabella to Huntingdon, this does not mean that reasonable thinking has affected his marriage, but rather that his sensible behaviour rewards him by the resolution with a new 'invaluable wife' (457). Therefore, although he has 'no ambitious projects' (456), he has still surpassed 'his limits' (Milbank 82).

After being rejected from the drawing room by his first wife, Anne employs the park as the next location for rational thought. This metamorphosis to the 'comfortless gloom of the damp, cloudy twilight' (271) is significant in the sense that it lacks violence. It is an escape from the violent atmosphere of Grassdale Manor. Chitham instead argues that Anne reveals how people cannot be separated from their character and nature, but that 'amelioration' and so moral improvement is viable (48). This is certainly the case for Lord Lowborough. By suppressing his passion and listening to reason, he self-improves so much so that he becomes similar to Helen's character in the sense that he shares her quality for calm reasoning.

Both passion and reason are present at Helen's 'reconciliation' (397) with Gilbert in Volume 3 Chapter 45, as 'the wringing of her hands' symbolises 'a violent conflict between reason and passion' that is 'silently passing within' (400). In order to adhere to reason, by rejecting Gilbert's love until she is free from her first marriage, she has to employ a 'violent effort' (400), suggesting that violence is sometimes necessary to secure reason. This is an issue that Gilbert speculates upon as he realises 'the struggle of right against passion' (401). This accords with Chitham's view that violent passion is not absent from even the most moral of characters, but it is how a person ameliorates this passion that decides their integral moral character (48). Though passion is present within Helen in so far as she speaks 'passionately' and declares to Gilbert that 'I'll do whatever you desire' (401), it is her suppression of this love that brings her back to the role of moral commentator.

This role, however, is temperamental in so far as Helen also resorts to violence on several occasions. The aid that she gives to Lord Lowborough's violent self-defence in Volume 2 Chapter 31 demonstrates that violence is an option if it is used to restore reason, as Hattersley's 'madman' (276) attack on Lord Lowborough is certainly unreasonable. In response to Lowborough's request 'Annabella, give me a candle!', Helen's active reply 'But I snatched up a candle and brought it to him' is the action

that initiates the violence of holding ‘the flame to Hattersley’s hands’ (277). The symbol of ‘hands’ appears at many violent points, such as when Helen wrung ‘her hands’ in the effort of fighting against her love for Gilbert, and in this instance where Lord Lowborough burns Hattersley’s hands in order to ironically cool the situation. It is ‘the sickness’ of the ‘surrounding culture’ that, Senf argues, permeates the novel (375) and it is clear that violence is being used to transform the sickness of passion into physical injury and moral sickness in the surroundings. Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights*, too, is a character capable of violence, and his direct assault on Cathy’s ghost’s ‘wrist’ mirrors Helen’s more indirect assault on Hattersley’s hands, making it possible for even ‘innocuous’ (Nestor xxix) characters to possess violent passion.

Helen’s moral commentary, in addition, is directed at herself as well as other characters because her surroundings expose her violence. Her anger at Lady Lowborough’s affair with Huntingdon translates into the action: ‘I took her hand and violently dashed it from me’. This also reinforces how passion is difficult to stifle, as it ‘could not be suppressed’ (314). In Chapter 35, titled ‘Provocations’, Helen’s observation that ‘Reason forbids, but passion urges strongly; and I must pray and struggle long ere I subdue it’ (314), presents a struggle between passion and reason. It is very clear that passion is the winner. This bringing together of ‘passion’ and ‘pray[er]’ compounds strong emotion and reason, causing Helen to have subsequently ‘checked’ and ‘regret[ed]’ (315) her conduct. The violence is underlined by her own disapproval of such behaviour, and Anne again uses the image of the ‘hand’ (314) to present how Helen rejects Lady Lowborough’s hand in her misery. Gilbert’s assault on Mr Lawrence ‘upon his head’, however, is not initially regretted but completed with a ‘savage satisfaction’ (116) that is reminiscent of ‘a hypermasculine culture of violence’ (Joshi 907-924). His later repentance for this act is rather because Lawrence is needed to ‘channel the passion whose object and destination is himself’ (Ingham 240). If Lawrence’s injured head symbolises reasonable thinking, then Gilbert counteracts the reasonable Lawrence with passion as ‘he had sustained the injury at my hands’ (402). Again, there is a metaphorical recurrence of ‘hands’ here, showing that violence is a hands-on expression of passion.

Both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* employ violence as a medium through which passion is transmitted in a society where it was seen as moral to control violent emotion. Emily experiments with emotional and physical violence so much so that it becomes a method to achieve

objects of passion, whereas Anne cautiously warns against violent passion by using the rational Helen to analyse behaviours. The pivotal scene where Lockwood injures the wrist of Cathy's ghost mirrors the multiple violent scenes in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; Helen also unexpectedly possesses the capacity to be violent. Both novels not only provide the characters with passionate natures, but also allow them the violence to perform the passion. The only difference is that Emily uses violence to compensate for failed, unsuccessful passion, whereas Anne underlines the violence in her novel with the didactic message that violence is not the answer, even for passion.

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## ANDRÉ ACIMAN'S *FIND ME* (2019)

### BOOK REVIEW

VALENTINA ROMANZI

In the last chapter of his 2007 bestseller *Call Me By Your Name*, titled “Ghost Spots,” André Aciman introduces a reflection on what he terms ‘parallel lives.’ The two protagonists, Elio and Oliver, had been lovers for a short time in the 1980s, when the latter stayed with the former’s family on a university program in Italy. They meet again after fifteen years and they muse on the different paths their lives have taken, and on how things might have been if they made different choices.

*Find Me*, the 2019 sequel to *Call Me By Your Name*, picks up this thread and explores the parallel lives of the characters of the first book after Oliver returns to the United States, leaving Elio in Italy. Completely narrated in the first person by three different voices, the novel is divided into four chapters, each named after a musical term. “Tempo” follows Samuel, Elio’s father and Oliver’s mentor, on his journey to Rome to give a lecture and meet his son. It narrates his encounter with Miranda, a young woman who stumbles into his life and carves out a place for herself there. “Cadenza” catches up with Elio in Paris, where he begins a relationship with Michel, a much older man, and “Capriccio” is narrated by Oliver, now in his forties and about to return to New Hampshire with his wife after a sabbatical year in New York. Finally, “Da Capo” is told again from Elio’s perspective and is the only chapter set after the ending of *Call Me By Your Name*, rather than during the ‘blank years’ between those weeks Elio and Oliver spent together in the Eighties and the ending of the novel, twenty years later.

In typical Aciman style, *Find Me* is a pensive, contemplative novel. The reader is enticed to stroll along with the characters as they make their way to their next encounter, the next steps in their lives, their next big change. It is a brutally honest read, in that Aciman does not shy away from the vulnerability of inhabiting the characters’ most private thoughts, no matter how profoundly good or wicked. We are with them as they relive their deepest secrets, like the ones Samuel and Miranda confess to each other because, as Samuel remarks, we all have a secret we have never told anyone. “Each of us is like a moon that shows only a few facets to earth, but never its full sphere. Most of us never meet those who’ll understand our

full rounded self. I show people only that sliver of me I think they'll grasp. I show others other slices. But there's always a facet of darkness I keep to myself" (Aciman, 84).

Indeed, with Samuel, who is approaching old age when he meets Miranda, we feel that hint of concealed darkness, together with the sorrow for a life not lived to its fullest and the self-deprecation that comes with the awareness of time running out and of lost chances at true happiness. Through him, we are introduced to the Ancient Greek verb ὀψιζω, *opsizō*, which means "to arrive too late to the feast, or just before last call, or to feast today with the weight of all the wasted yesteryears" (Aciman, 73). Yet, at the same time, Aciman delicately guides his readers into witnessing love without boundaries, indifferent to conventions and age difference.

With Elio, we reflect on fate and chance, on the past never quite leaving us, on the influence that the lives of our parents have on us. As Michel remarks: "life is not so original after all. It has uncanny ways of reminding us that, even without a God, there is a flash of retrospective brilliance in the way fate plays its cards. It doesn't deal us fifty-two cards; it deals, say, four or five, and they happen to be the same ones our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents played" (Aciman, 210).

Oliver's chapter, coming late in the novel and late in the timeframe of the story, almost twenty years after he first met Elio, deals with retrospection. Surrounded by people he knows only superficially, Oliver contemplates his life, his marriage, his unspoken desires, freely indulged upon in his mind and sleep but never acted upon. With him, we thread softly through the regret for those unavoidable choices that vastly influence the course of one's life, and we glance back at the past through the wordless power of music.

Music, indeed, pervades the novel. The titles of the chapters echo their themes: *tempo* for Samuel, who is looking for the right time and the right rhythm to his life; *cadenza*—that is, an interlude, an improvisation upon a theme set out by the composer for the player to freely experiment before returning to the set course—for Elio and his partner, who are on borrowed time. *Capriccio* is for Oliver, and particularly Bach's *Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother*, which had served as the soundtrack for his time in Italy with Elio and which is the key to make him reflect on his past. Finally, *Da capo*, from the

beginning, to return to the closing pages of *Call Me By Your Name*, with Oliver back in Italy to see Elio twenty years after he left.

*Find Me* is a masterclass on love and nostalgia, a wise book that celebrates the joy of unforeseen encounters and spontaneous choices just as much as it converses with solitude, memory, and absence. Parallelism lies at its core, not only through the decision to narrate the ‘parallel lives’ of the protagonists but also in the evident echoes and repetitions that traverse its chapters. Samuel’s choices are mirrored both by his son and Oliver. Both Elio’s partner and Oliver’s wife are constantly measured against a memory. Even on a more formal level, Oliver’s absence is present both in the narrative and in the structure of the novel, with his chapter coming almost at the end.

Aciman’s novel is nuanced, full of layers, perfectly realistic yet imbued with symbolism. Much like the rest of his fictional works, it is an exploration of life, and more specifically of the accidents of life which derail us from a set path. It is about finding beauty and love when one least expects it, and it is about love in the potential. It is also, perhaps, his most mature novel to date. There is provocation, and Aciman does not avoid discussing taboos, but whereas *Call Me By Your Name* is about overwhelming love and passion, *Find Me* is about a quieter form of love, aware and deliberate. In these pages, the reader will find passion, yes, but of the kind that stems from a conscious choice, making it all the more precious.

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## MERMAID FOUNDATIONS

### SHORT STORY

PATRICK CLARKE

It was in our first house together that the foundations kept us up at night, singing a soft violence in fish-scales, such eerie beauty through cracks and creaks. It was adorable at first.

Once, we saw a robin land upon the bedroom windowsill. We took it as a blessing and tried leaving seed out to entice it back, making it a permanent fixture. You claimed that it was the racket of the foundations that kept it away. I'd say at night, knowing you were awake, 'It's just settling.' And you'd say, 'Well how long's it going to take?' We'd laugh, and then we'd stop.

It was the first time I'd lived with someone I loved in that way. I was working two part-time jobs, and you worked at a library. It was a modest house, but it was a house, not a flat, nor a bedsit; it felt a facet of something larger than itself, like a misplaced Lego block in a child's toy box.

It was a terraced house; it had a small yard at the front, no yard at the back, and two bedrooms. After one week the house started to calm down a little at night. We only woke five times a week to its soft musings, gossamer-thin, somehow setting like an invisible layer painted across the walls. The second week was worse, you were awake all of the time, and had to get pills from the doctor — but you wouldn't take them as you said that you weren't bowing down to the medicinal machine. I didn't really get what you meant but respected you for not wanting to. You asked if I wanted them, and I did, but I felt that it would be unsupportive. It was the most romantic I had ever been.

In the third week I was fired from one job, but got another almost immediately. A singular job, full-time like 'all the proper people do' as my grandmother said. 'It's exciting times,' is what you said, optimistic of the world, and then I'd whisper that you were thinking too much of it all. That was our first fight in a place where neither had a home advantage over the other. It lasted until well after the sun had set, and we made-up finally by having sex in the shower at midnight, drowning out the noise of the house beyond the sanctuary of the bathtub. I kept smashing my shins against the lower taps for the bath, but kept my cries to myself so as to not disturb the moment — afterwards, you would say that you were doing the same.



Mid-way through, the hot water went off. And, after you made a joke about cold-water and old wives' tales that didn't land very well, I ran down to check the boiler in the basement. And there I saw the mermaids.

There were four of them, each split differently in half: one down the middle between left (human) and right (fish); two in the conventional way (if it could so be called), however, one with fish on top, one with fish on bottom; and one with its body parts assigned randomly between fish and human which totalled a roughly 50/50 split. The two split conventionally were washing themselves in a water pipe that they had fashioned into a mini shower, and the other two were smoking cigarettes.

'The hot water's gone off,' I said, struggling for anything else to say that wouldn't be impolite. The two smoking replied, 'Yeah we're using it.' I paused and then said, 'What're you doing down here?' They looked angry, and the one with the random body parts assigned between fish and human took a final drag and said, 'We're finished for the day.' I said, 'Oh.' I paused, and then continued, 'What is it you're taking a break from?' This time the one split down the middle blew a puff of smoke and said, 'Holding up the house.' I felt slightly unwell, and then asked, 'You hold up the house?' The two that were washing themselves finished their shower and headed into opposite corners, the one with fish on top saying, 'Course, doesn't hold itself up.' And the one with fish on bottom then saying, 'We're finished now, there should be a little water left.' I suddenly felt conscious that I was naked, and, covering myself, thanked them all and returned to you in the shower.

You were sat on the edge of the bathtub, a towel wrapped loose around your midriff — you'd never looked so beautiful, and I'd never felt so useless. 'The water's back on,' you said. I explained that the house was supported by mermaids.

After you'd been to check, we lay in silence – all but for the slow tuning up of the mermaids' vocal chords for the evening's entertainment – on the bed, not wanting to disturb them on their apparently well-deserved break. It felt like riding a wave that was somehow perfectly still, frozen before the moment of breaking on a beach, merely threatening its own crashing. Turning to look at you eventually I asked, 'Do you want to keep having sex,' as we were still naked. Your hair was damp from the shower, and I liked how the cold had made your skin more pale. But, you just shrugged, and carried on staring at the ceiling. I was somewhat relieved, so we slept.

We considered calling the landlord, but it seemed a little silly.

It was one week before we mentioned it again, when the couple next door came round for dinner. He was a head teacher of a prestigious school, and she was high-up in a business consultancy firm, whatever that is. Over coffee, we mentioned the foundations of the house, and to our surprise she replied, 'Oh yes, you have mermaids don't you? We always wanted mermaids, they're much more reliable.' And then, with a face like granite, he said, 'We have gnomes. They're a little temperamental in the winter.' I explained they were indeed good, if a little noisy at night. But you said nothing, just staring at the remains of your tiramisu, wide eyed and uneasy.

Over the next two weeks you grew restless, constantly worrying about the stability beneath your feet. The doctors called it vertigo, and gave you pills but again you refused to take them. The man next door suggested I put gags on the mermaids at night so as to stop them singing. I bought some, but was too scared to ask them to wear them, and you said, 'It doesn't matter anyway, I know they're there.' I suggested moving, but that didn't help, as now you'd peeked beneath the surface of the world.

In the end it was the precariousness, you wrote, that got to you. The sense of subtle machinations slowly shaking beneath your feet just seemed a little much. That robin came back today, but it looked a little dull and you'd have probably laughed at the thought of a permanent fixture. I can hear the mermaids clocking off now down below. I threw them down some cigarettes today, thinking they must have been running low. The bath water is running cold, but thankfully the tub is almost full. And, as I slip beneath the surface, I can hear the mermaids start their singing, and feel the house begin its tumbling.

**ALICIA FOSTER'S *RADICAL WOMEN: JESSICA DISMORR AND HER  
CONTEMPORARIES* (2019)**

BOOK REVIEW

CAI LYONS

The most well-known image of the Vorticist group today is *The Vorticists at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel: Spring 1915* by William Roberts (1961-62, Tate). Seated around the table are Cuthbert Hamilton, Ezra Pound, William Roberts, Wyndham Lewis, Frederick Etchells, and Edward Wadsworth. The Vorticist manifesto was laid out in the opening twenty pages of *Blast 1*, published summer of 1914. The signatures of each of the aforementioned men, with a swaggering Lewis at their head, adorn the manifesto. They are joined, however, by the names of two women: Helen Saunders and Jessica Dismorr. Dismorr and Saunders *are* included in Roberts' painting: standing in a doorway, they are pushed to the background. The door may be open, but it is clear they are not considered full participants; this has remained the case throughout the history of modernism.

In 2019, the Pallant House Gallery opened the first retrospective exhibition of Jessica Dismorr and her contemporaries, modernist women artists such as Pearl Binder, Dorothy Shakespear, Anne Estelle Rice, and Ethel Wright. The accompanying catalogue, *Radical Women: Jessica Dismorr and her Contemporaries*, is the focus of this review and was written by the curator of the exhibition, Alicia Foster. It tells the story of British modernism from a female-centric perspective, looking at the careers of Dismorr and her contemporaries to undermine the male-dominated modernist discourse. As such, the main themes are revealing the connections between these women – rather than maintaining exceptions – and undoing the revisionist writing of art history that excluded them. I am happy to report that men are parked on the sidelines, hovering in the doorway, with these women congregating around the table.

As an exhibition catalogue, the book has a high-quality finish with numerous colour illustrations on thick glossy pages. Visually, it is a delight. As a piece of academic work, it is well researched, utilising previously untapped primary resources, from correspondence to unpublished handwritten manuscripts. Divided into six chapters, the catalogue also includes an anthology of Dismorr's prose, the notes from Foster's research, a timeline of relevant dates spanning Dismorr's life, the biography of the artists

included in the exhibition (all women), two pages of further reading, and a comprehensive index. Each chapter explores different periods of Dismorr's life, from the key movements or societies she was involved in and the women who were part of her journey interweaved throughout. Foster balances this extremely well and the transitions between each woman is handled fluidly.

The first chapter focuses on the early student careers of Dismorr, with reference to Saunders, Shakespear, and Rice, before moving into her involvement with Rhythm in the second chapter. Suffragism is a key feature of this chapter, and we are introduced to Wright and her portraits of the suffragists Dame Christabel Pankhurst and Una Dugdale Duval. The third engages with Vorticism and the periodical *Blast*, where the work of Dismorr and Saunders from this period are explored in detail. The last two chapters are an interesting insight into Dismorr's later work, both abstract and portraits, and her involvement with radical politics, such as her participation in anti-fascist exhibitions. Dismorr's portrait *Maddalena* (1926, private collection), 'whose monumental stillness owes a clear debt to Cézanne', were shown at the Seven and Five Society in 1927 (Foster, 60). Foster highlights, quite pointedly, how the perceived gender division in the society 'falls apart' when Dismorr's works are considered alongside the other women who exhibited (Foster, 63). She is clearly critical of the 'canon' of art history which diminished these women's involvement.

Chapter Four, 'Artist as Writer', is its strongest. Foster engages with Dismorr's prose as published in *Blast 2* and does so with intelligent and intensive excavation. She connects and discusses prose and art side by side, framing them as a joint creative effort by Dismorr. In this connection, Foster reconfigures modernism as more than men's work. She argues that the work of Dismorr and Saunders in *Blast 2* marks a moment where the tensions between the role of 'artist' and the role of 'woman' can be examined. Dismorr's prose explores the embodied experience of the modern woman in the city where her body is 'sick, fallible, ugly, repulsive even, rather than an object of beauty' (Foster, 43). This body, 'part-monster, part-machine, and all appetite', anticipates the work of Sylvia Plath (Foster, 43). Again, Foster emphasises connections rather than exceptions.

The scope of this book is limited, however, as demonstrated by a narrow exploration of certain works and themes. For example, she discusses Dismorr's illustration for the poem *Le Petit Comptable*, a

striking image of a nude woman that runs counter to the idealised hairless female nude: a black scribble at the juncture of her thighs references pubic hair (Foster, 21). However, the implications of this image are not fully explored and Foster moves on too quickly. Of course, she is limited by the format of the book. Perhaps this is a positive: the threads Foster leaves hanging may be picked up by researchers in the future.

What makes this book impressive – and potentially an invaluable resource to those studying modernism and modernist literature – is the collection of Dismorr’s poems, an anthology of her work previously uncollected. It includes, for the first time, unpublished material, bringing together a fascinating body of work that deserves more consideration in the modernist canon.

Foster has done some remarkable research with this book. Although some of Foster’s arguments need more in-depth development, this does not detract from the overall strength of this research. It is clear that Foster holds a great deal of respect for Jessica Dismorr and her contemporaries. She closes the book with Dismorr’s own words, returning a voice to a woman who has so often been silenced: ‘the last word should belong to the artist’ (Foster, 90).

To Strangers – all my curiosity and artlessness,  
To my Lovers – an eternal regret,  
To my Friends – more insistent demands, the last enigma  
of conduct, a few gifts.

### Works Cited

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**DISASTERS AND AUTHENTICITY: A HEIDEGGERIAN READING OF 'BEING' IN  
DORIS LESSING'S *MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR* (1974) AND JOHN ROWE TOWNSEND'S  
*NOAH'S CASTLE* (1975)**

ARTICLE

**ALEXEI WARSHAWSKI**

Disasters necessitate existential responses, forcing subjects to reassess their understanding of themselves and of their contemporaneity. Using Heideggerian terms, this paper will examine how the recalibration of Being is perhaps the greatest change disasters catalyse. Being does not refer just to existence, but rather the way in which the self or the subject exists, how they conduct themselves in the world, and how the decisions they make about their own comportment are decided on. *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974) (henceforth referred to as *Memoirs*) presents a Britain which has already been struck by a disaster only known as 'The Crisis', whereas *Noah's Castle* (1975) tracks the crisis points of hyperinflation, an economic disaster. Doris Lessing does not specify any details about the nature of the disaster, other than that it was monumental enough to empty cities and upend societal norms, whilst John Rowe Townsend is explicit in his presentation of hyperinflation as an economic disaster. *Noah's Castle* looks at the disruption to economically mediated existence while *Memoirs* examines the effects on temporality in a post-disaster, disrupted landscape. Anxieties regarding time, the future and (in)authentic existence in relation to the effects of disaster can be read through a Heideggerian lens which employs his thesis regarding 'Being' as outlined in *Being and Time* (1927). Heidegger's idea of ultimately authentic existence as 'Being-towards-death' is both mooted and rejected by characters in Lessing's and Townsend's texts. Reading these presentations of disaster in a Heideggerian framework of 'Being' demonstrates the temporal, psychological and existential changes which the disasters necessitate for subjects' internal and external worlds.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein', translating as either 'being there' or 'presence', to discuss the experience of being which is particular to humans. Heidegger states at the beginning of his work that "Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself" (33). Authenticity is predicated on Dasein's understanding of

its own existence, and how it chooses to comport itself existentially. Dasein is constrained by its ability to only understand itself in terms of its own existence – it lacks the capacity to understand itself beyond the realms of its own existence. However, Heidegger’s statement also implies a notional choice within this limited understanding of existence; to be or not to be itself. Within its own limits, the closest type of existence to authenticity which Dasein can acquire is one in which it chooses to ‘be’ or not ‘be’ itself. Paul Gerner elaborates on these notional choices, suggesting that “in existing inauthentically I am not *being* myself. I *am* my possibilities of being. To exist authentically is in some sense to *choose* these possibilities” (106). Inauthentic existence in Heideggerian terms is to exist when your possibilities of existence are chosen by someone or something other than yourself. Crucially, inauthentic existence is still within Dasein’s broader parameters of only being able to understand itself in terms of its existence, with the ability to determine such possibilities of comportment autonomously. Being is therefore taken to mean the choices individuals make in how they meet the demands of potential changes to their existential comportment in the context of the disaster. Both *Memoirs* and *Noah’s Castle* demonstrate that changes necessitated by disasters could remove structural barriers which limit the possibilities of a subject’s comportment, theoretically leaving individuals with a greater choice about their existential comportment and a greater ability to conceptualise and accept the notion of ‘Being-towards-death’.

Dasein’s temporality is fundamental in constructing a Heideggerian reading of *Memoirs* and *Noah’s Castle*. For Heidegger, “death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being” (294). This alludes to Heidegger’s earlier idea that authentic Being involves an ontological shift in one’s comportment but is also effectively summative of Heidegger’s thesis in *Being and Time*; namely, that Being *is* time. In his lecture *The Concept of Time*, Heidegger claims that “Dasein, conceived in its most extreme possibility of Being, *is time itself*, not *in* time” (14). In existing outside of this time, if Dasein is to understand its own death then it can understand that its comportment leads ultimately to death; authentic Being is to be aware of this direction, and its necessary impermanent temporality. “If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility”, argues Heidegger, “it has been *fully* assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being” (294). Death is the ultimate impossibility of Dasein because death cannot involve the option of Dasein choosing its own existence, making it “distinctively impending” in a manner different to any other potentiality of Dasein

(294). Dasein must understand that, in most circumstances, it cannot make a choice about its own death; through this acceptance, it is able to make choices about its immediate world whilst understanding its temporary nature. Such an existence would satisfy Heidegger's conception of 'Being-towards-death' and allow Dasein to exist authentically.

In *Noah's Castle*, Norman is faced with an existential crisis which provides the conditions for ontological recalibration; however, he looks to sustain his pre-disaster conception of the world as to avoid accepting 'Being-towards-death'. The disaster of hyperinflation disrupts the familiar form of existence which had previously restrained Norman's ability to choose his possibilities of existence, liberating him to have control over such possibilities. Moreover, the etymology of 'disaster' as an 'ill star' suggests that inscribed in the term is a deviation from familiar ontology; thus, disasters by definition necessitate ontological recalibration. Despite Norman's claim that "if disaster comes, it won't come to *us*" (35), his actions suggest he believes otherwise. Norman believes that his family will not be affected by disaster due to his stockpiling, yet his change in comportment shows that disaster has already come to his family, forcing him to face ontological questions. As he stockpiles, he tells his son "we'll come out of this alright, Barry" through "intelligence, adaptability, forethought" (52). Norman's stockpiling illuminates Heidegger's claim from *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954) that "man [...] is continually approaching the brink of the possibility of pursuing and pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering" (26). By viewing externality as something in need of "ordering" – through, for example, stockpiling – Dasein cannot move toward a more authentic existence, as such comportment deprives Dasein of an authentic relation to unmediated Being. Norman demonstrates a fear of Heidegger's requirement to accept 'Being-towards-death' as a precondition of authentic existence; his stockpiling is an attempt to reject the ontological challenge posed by the disaster.

The narrator's description of her post-disaster society in *Memoirs* implies a denial of the possibility of ontological changes. When she introduces her changed society, she says, "we lived on, adjusting our lives, as if nothing fundamental was happening [...]. It was amazing how determined [...] were the attempts to lead an ordinary life" (20) and that "there were moments when *the game we were all agreeing to play* simply could not stand up to events" (21), revealing a disjunction between the attempts to sustain social functioning from a pre-disaster world, post-disaster. She claims that "the enemy was Reality" (21),



referring to the possibility of 'Being-towards-death' after disaster has struck. The narrator's society has attempted to deny "Reality" by maintaining the ontological comportment of a pre-disaster society in a post-disaster world. In his reading of Heidegger, Gerner claims that "to exist authentically is to choose and own my own possibilities of existence and in this sense to *be myself*" (7); many of the children in *Memoirs* manage to achieve this, whilst adults fail to do so. This difference between children and adults in response to the disaster is significant; it illustrates how strong an effect a previous mode of Being can have on a contemporary one. After her description of the "pack of youngsters" outside her block of flats, the narrator says, "this description is true of course of any group of people of any age anywhere, if their roles are not already defined for them in an institution" (34). While the description has the potential to be true of groups of any ages, the significance of it describing young people is that they do not undergo the same need to recalibrate their idea of Being as the older generation in *Memoirs* do. Their "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 83) has not needed to be reformulated by disaster because it struck either before or during their developmental stage. Heidegger suggests that "being-in-the-world" can be indicated by "having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go [...]. All these Being-in have *concern* in their kind of Being" (83). The Being of the children in *Memoirs* has never been constituted from such responsibilities, and so their "being-in-the-world" has had fewer experiences of inauthentic existence which could make the acceptance of authentic existence more difficult for adults. The children adapt to the city whilst adults look to leave it; only the children have a "*concern in their kind of Being*" (Heidegger, 83) beyond the institutional framework of the city, pre-disaster. The impact of the disaster affects their Being less profoundly due to the adaptability of their existential comportment.

In *Noah's Castle*, Normans' son Barry also fears this new kind of authenticity, where Being is contingent on the individual's freedom to choose their own possibilities of existence. Barry's fear further validates Heidegger's thesis, particularly in terms of his concept of 'anxiety'; he argues that "anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about – its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world" (232). In other words, it is through anxiety that Dasein is able to witness an authentic Being; this concept manifests in Barry's response to Ellen's mother's health. He thinks that "it still wouldn't be any use relying on some all-powerful 'them' to help Mrs Farrar as an individual. If anything was to be done, I'd

have it to do it myself. [...] Ellen had shown the way. But it was a way that frightened me to death” (72). Barry’s realises his own potentiality-for-Being with the understanding of there no longer being an external actor capable of ontologically defining him; the possibility of ‘Being-towards-death’ is no longer coloured by inauthentic existence and external structures. The disaster forcibly endowed him with the knowledge and need to alter his existential comportment. Barry can now conceptualise an existential comportment less defined by external actors than he would have ever known, allowing for a way of Being closer to ‘Being-towards-death’. As such, Barry is aptly “frightened... to death” (72), thereby frightened *of* death too, or of ‘Being-towards-death’, and thus frightened of authentic Being.

Conversely, the wider effects of hyperinflation and governmental response to this in the novel suggests that the disaster, whilst potentially liberating some from inauthentic existence, brings about new limitations for others. The character Stuart exclaims: “there just isn’t food for everyone, so the Government want the productive workers to get it. That’s logical, isn’t it? Inhuman but logical” (83). His belief that this action is unjustifiable in terms of humanity validates Heidegger’s thesis that understanding ‘Being-towards-death’ can create anxiety and resistance. The government’s decision demonstrates a move towards ‘Being-towards-death’ on a societal and political level. Their actions here suggest an awareness and complicity in the ‘Being-towards-death’ of citizens it is failing to provide for whilst also denying those people the right to their own existential comportment. Rather than creating the conditions for authenticity, disaster has stripped these workers of the potentiality of authentic comportment.

Whilst characters in *Noah’s Castle* express anxiety regarding the future and a fear of ‘Being-towards-Death’, characters in *Memoirs* demonstrate fears of changing temporality, particularly of the present and future. Being is recalibrated through a temporal lens in *Memoirs*, rather than the psychological lens influenced by external provisions in *Noah’s Castle*. Emily’s fragmented timeline read through Heidegger’s multi-faceted conception of time presents a recalibration of the idea of Being in a post-disaster landscape. Heidegger claims that time can be observed as a collection of “nows”, meaning that “the future is not later than having-been, and having-been is not earlier than the present” (401). This manifests itself in Lessing’s text through the wall which the narrator glimpses elements of Emily’s past from; glimpses which are characterised as ‘nows’ occurring at a different time, rather than events from a previous time. When she goes through the wall and sees moments from Emily’s ‘past’, the narrator says:

to enter the personal was to enter a prison, where nothing could happen but what one saw happening, where the air was tight and limited, and above all where time was a strict, unalterable law and long, oh my God, it went on, and on and on, minute by decreed minute, with no escape but the slow wearing away of one after another. (40)

The suffocation the narrator feels in this environment seems engendered by the inability to process her simultaneous being in one 'now' whilst also experiencing another 'now', thereby disrupting the collection of 'nows' which Heidegger asserts constitutes Being. The narrator learns that she was watching "a scene from her (Emily's) childhood [...], a scene, then, from her memory, or her history, which had formed her" (43), presenting her own understanding of time as linear and cumulative rather than the collection of 'nows' Heidegger argues it can be. Therefore, the world behind the wall with its series of 'nows' seems more accepting of Heidegger's idea of time than the world in front of the wall. The constant lure of the wall which culminates in the characters being integrated into the world behind the wall shows the need to understand Being in this sense in a post-disaster world.

The narrator's struggles with how her surroundings affect her Being post-disaster can be read through Heidegger's concept of *geworfenheit*, or thrownness. Heidegger claims that "the expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*" (174); thrownness is concerned with where the self finds itself within the world it inhabits. He goes on to say that "an entity of the character of Dasein is its 'there' in such a way that, whether explicitly or not, it finds itself in its thrownness" (174), positing that Being is to an extent concerned with where Dasein finds itself and the fact that it finds itself there. Betsy Draine suggests that in *Memoirs*:

Lessing continues in her depiction of the Catastrophe to operate on the Marxist assumptions that guided her vision twenty years ago – the assumptions that consciousness is determined by the material conditions prevailing in society and that escape from the outmoded, limiting consciousness of the moribund society necessitates a great struggle to remain awake to new conditions and influences. (55)

Read in tandem, Draine's and Heidegger's arguments focus on the ontological effects of physical space affecting Dasein's post-disaster calibration. The narrator inhabits the same flat before and after the

disaster but the space behind the wall demonstrates an existential change; her environment in which she is 'thrown' is the same place but becomes a different space. Gomer elaborates that when thrown, "although I can choose which ways of existing I will realise I do not choose which possibilities are available" (73). This is the situation the narrator finds herself in because of her residence; she is *aware* she can choose to exist in her block of flats inauthentically or to exist behind the wall authentically, but the disaster has *caused* these possibilities' existence. The narrator notes how difficult she found pinpointing when exactly she noticed the changes her block of flats underwent in terms of occupants and its inner dimensions, perhaps due to her preoccupation with the public concern regarding such changes (10). If her Being is more developed than Norman's, for example, then it stands that her Being *is* time, rather than her Being existing *in* time. She has still been thrown into the world she exists in but is in some sense separated from the world which she has been thrown due to her Being attempting to function *as* time, seen through the temporal compression behind the wall.

Lessing's presentation of Emily exceeds these points about time and raises questions about mediated existence and Being in the post-disaster landscape. As previously mentioned, children's 'Being-in-the-world' has never been constituted from "*concern* in their kind of Being" (Heidegger, 83) due to having experienced existence as less mediated than their adult contemporaries.. The versions of Emily seen within and outside the wall, however, seem to represent the divide between the inner and outer selves as diagnosed by R.D. Laing in *The Divided Self*. The being-in-the-world of the self, which is what Heidegger argues Dasein has to be in order to achieve authenticity through 'Being-towards-death', is compromised in a schizoid state and results in trying to escape being-in-the-world "if not physically, at least mentally" (79). The mediation between Emily and the reader through the narrator is textually representative of the mediated relationship Emily has with herself in her disrupted state of existence. She embodies the impossibility of being able to fathom the simultaneous co-existence of different elements herself, such as the matriarchal self in later sections of the novel, and the child self behind the wall. Laing claims that the schizoid "does not experience himself as a complete person but rather as 'split' in various ways" (17); these split selves exist simultaneously in the novel due to the world behind the wall. When the narrator hears Emily speaking whilst also hearing another version of Emily making noise from behind the wall, she becomes exposed to more than one of the 'nows' which comprises Emily's life, at the same time.

The narrator is thus unable to experience Emily as a complete person, due to the subversion of the linearity of the 'nows' which make up her life by the space behind the wall. Therefore, Emily cannot be experienced as whole person intra-textually or extra-textually because the novel's presentation of Emily is mediated by the narrator's perspective of Emily in a schizoid state.

The final pages of *Memoirs* present a transcendence from a mediated existence to a more whole and authentic kind, to a truer form of Being; a kind of Being which is accepting of 'Being-towards-death'. However, Lessing's novel is ambiguous in its manifestation and achievement of this goal, as going behind the wall is not necessarily death, nor does it guarantee existence in a more authentic form of reality. Of the flitting between the two spaces of existence, Betsy Draine notes that "the frame-shifting mechanism falters as the reader develops resistance to being shifted between frames; finally, in the last scene the machine breaks down altogether" (53). The mediation between the reader and the novel's subject, particularly Emily, is just as important as the intra-textual mediation of Emily by the narrator of herself. Despite the disaster, Emily is still alienated from herself, mediated by her guardian. The collapse between the multiple realities in the novel's final pages is a collapse of the multiplicity of 'nows', where time *becomes* Being, in line with Heidegger's understanding of Being *as* time. William Large's analysis of *Being and Time* claims that "by being able to grasp Dasein as whole, we will also be able to see the ultimate horizon of its Being" (67). This is seemingly achieved in *Memoirs*' final pages; the narrator says "that world, presenting itself in a thousand little flashes, a jumble of little scenes, facets of another picture, all impermanent, was folding up as we stepped into it, was parcelling itself up, was vanishing, dwindling and going" (190). Afterwards, as they continue forwards, they follow "that One who went ahead showing them the way out of this collapsed little world into another order of world altogether" (190). "That One" is plausibly a version of Emily, one whose completeness has been realised by an acceptance and embrace of 'Being-towards-death'. By transcending the linear 'nows' which Heidegger argues we treat time as comprised of, Emily's Being is able to function truly *as* time, with all of the previously fragmented aspects of her identity seen on both sides of the wall coalescing into an authentic self.

Regardless of the acceptance or rejection of authentic existence and 'Being-towards-death', both *Memoirs* and *Noah's Castle* suggest the need to understand Being and existential comportment in order to survive disasters, and thus to understand the importance of 'Being-towards-death'. Patricia Haberstroh

argues of *Memoirs* that “the novel records the narrator’s personal realisation of a Self that allows her to survive” (173); the realisation is the importance of ‘Being-towards-death’. The symbolic death of Emily near the novel’s end is demonstrative of the acceptance of ‘Being-towards-death’, as a young Emily begins to shrink in front of her mother as the narrator watches:

The mother gazed, horrified, full of dislike, while her daughter got smaller and smaller, was a tiny scarlet doll, with its pouting bosom, its bottom outlined from waist to knees. The little doll twisted and postured, and then vanished in a flash of red smoke, like a morality tale of flesh and the devil. (165)

This act of shrinking read in Heideggerian terms is effectively summative of the shift of attitude of ‘Being-towards-death’, not just because of Emily’s ‘death’ in this scene, but because of the ‘now’ in which it occurs. The mother’s horror at witnessing this death proves Heidegger’s claim that “anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its Being-free for the authenticity of its Being” (232); the mother *must* feel the horror in order to witness the event. The narrator witnesses Emily die as a version of herself who exists before the one she is empirically acquainted with which, if read literally, would mean that the Emily who lives with the narrator is dead. Symbolically, though, the death suggests the presence of deaths in all ‘nows’, and in line with Heidegger’s philosophy, represents a recalibration in Being to embrace the notion of ‘Being-towards-death’. *Noah’s Castle*, however, seems unable to embrace ‘Being-towards-death’, through Norman’s actions as a character but also through its structure as a novel itself. The point at which Norman and his family become susceptible to the disaster – namely, when they lose their supply of food and are as vulnerable as other characters in the book – the disaster ends, currency begins to stabilise and foreign aid floods in. When there is no longer an externality to order (as Norman cannot procure food), from which Norman had “derived all his standards” (Heidegger, 26), the disaster collapses as the novel itself is unable to accept ‘Being-towards-death’; Norman’s efforts thus far had effectively been a resistance of ‘Being-towards-death’ as his hoarding was to keep at bay the threat of malnourishment in the thick of the disaster. Coupled with the fact that there was an assumed temporariness of the disaster itself, contrasting with the apparent permanence of ‘The Crisis’ in *Memoirs*, it stands that in order to reject or deny ‘Being-towards-death’, the disaster would have to end at the point at which the characters may have been forced to embrace this mode of Being. Thus, the disaster’s end represents a denial of the

opportunity for authentic existence for Norman and his family.

The narrator of *Memoirs*, Emily, and the children take control of their existential comportment in a way that Norman and his family fail to do. Within Heideggerian ontology, *Memoirs* can accept what *Noah's Castle* cannot stop denying. The supposed freedom from inauthentic existence is not a simple liberation in these texts, and the impact of the disaster on characters' states of Being is deep-rooted and profound. For Heidegger, the only authentic recalibration of Being is to wholly accept 'Being-towards-death'; these novels' characters present the psychological and temporal challenges brought about by such an ontology.

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