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Liminality: Transitions and Marginalities

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Editorial

Liminality: Transitions and Marginalities

Marina Durnin

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When we drafted our call for papers for this issue in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had just published *Aigne*'s eighth issue on the topic of "Crisis: Predicament and Potential". Where could we go from here? The idea that the virus might be with us for some time created uncertainty everywhere around us. But isn't this something every generation goes through? While we may feel we live in unprecedented times of change and precarity, those before us faced similar fears in various guises. The war in Ukraine and the energy crisis have taken over the news from Covid-19, and people are concerned about the future anew. Every crisis brings change and may shape societies, cultures and attitudes in different ways and for years to come. Crisis is therefore followed by a transition between the before and the after, between old and new ways of doing something. It offers a chance for true change but comes at the cost of huge uncertainty in the interim. This is where the term 'liminality' came to describe our thinking. It encapsulates a state of transition wherein new ideas, identities or solidarities can come into being. As a concept it thus offers a crucial prism through which any in-between phase for a person, group, or even for a whole society can be better understood.

In the current day and age, liminal spaces permeate the essence of uncertainties and marginalities. While marginalities are often related unwholesome conditions, liminal spaces are not favoured for their lack of permanence. This space can be occupied by those in stasis, which represents detachment and departure from expectations borne of stability towards the marginal spaces of uncertainty, fluidity, and the suspended potentiality of the unknown. Although departures and transitions can lead to liminal spaces and marginal conditions, one hopes to never return to these spaces. Unlike the stigma attached to such spaces and conditions, there are various examples that suggest the positive outcome of one trudging on the path of liminality, either to remain on the precipice of the almost 'return' or to inspire a never-reached 'future'. Never forget the purgatory traversed by Dante, which not only reveals the idea of permanence, but also showcases the positivity of such uncertain spaces. However, the concept of displacement, without the knowledge of the source or the destination might be unnerving,

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could be one filled with explorations. The comfort of permanence versus the excitement of transitions can be conjectured.

The kinds of liminality responded to in this journal are varied. They take our readers from an engagement with death, grief and memory, to liminal spaces that are occupied only temporarily, all the way to analyses of female agents in or of transitions.

The first article by Margaret Bonass Madden analyses grief as a liminal space at the example of Anne Enright's novel *The Gathering*. She demonstrates how the protagonist moves between different modes of grief, exemplifying Kübler-Ross's theory of The Five Stages of Grief. For the main character and her family in *The Gathering*, the suicide of a brother and the subsequent funeral arrangements represent a definite cut in time where emotions run high, priorities are re-assessed and the past can be processed. The immediate grief is a painful transitionary period.

Rachel Andrews explores the burial site at Carr's Hill, County Cork, where initially victims of famine and later Cork's poor and unclaimed dead were buried. The site also seems to have been used to bury children whose mothers were in the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home in Cork, according to a 2019 report commissioned by the Irish Government. Equipped with this knowledge, Andrews visited the burial site, documented its appearance on the day with pictures and recorded her observations, feelings and thoughts in the form of field notes. Her account shared in this article should be read as a work-in-progress which will form the basis of her creative non-fiction writing. Andrews' engagement with this site beyond an understanding of its history or geography is an exercise of deep mapping. By reflecting on her own encounter with the burial site, Andrews adds more layers to the more known, tangible conception of the space. Her account of her experience shows how spectral traces of the past resonate from the landscape and how cultural memory and meaning are interwoven with a sense of place.

The third and fourth articles continue on the theme of liminal places and spaces. First, Kübra Vural Özbey considers the forest in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* as a liminal space. Its location is unclear, its characteristics are ambiguous and its meaning depends on each character's experience of it. Its inhabitants are all outsiders of different backgrounds, and they form new bonds in the forest setting. The forest is a place of transformation as the characters exiled from the court establish new identities here, before restoring their positions at the court in the end. It is also a place of resistance and of political critique of the court, corruption, exile and colonialism. Therefore, Vural Özbey argues, Shakespeare uses the forest as a liminal site

which veils his critical remarks on the late Elizabethan court, questioning the practice of banishment and commenting on political, social and cultural issues of the time.

Hanna Huber examines to which extent the Festival OFF d'Avignon in France unites carnivalesque exuberance with its status as a performing arts market. On the one hand, the fringe festival constitutes a marketplace for the purchase and sale of theatre productions, mirroring neoliberal structures of modern-day society and representing an initiation rite for artists and their creations. On the other hand, the festival's revolutionary story of origin still resonates when the provincial town is transformed into an in-between space every summer, a counter-reality to question hegemonic discourse and to redefine social identities.

The fifth and sixth articles engage with two novels by Stephen King. Hollie C. McDonnell examines how the characters Paul Sheldon and Annie Wilkes in Stephen King's *Misery* move fluidly between their gendered roles as well as their roles of power. The reclusive Annie rescues the author Paul and cares for him while he is injured. He is therefore cast as the physically weaker element in their power binary. Annie continuously transitions between an admirer of his creative talent and a sadistic tormentor. She becomes his captor and controls his medication and survival as well as his writing when she demands for him to bring Misery back to life. This in turn gives him power over her because he controls the fictional world she loves. McDonnell argues that the uncertainty of power and position promote the sense of horror in King's novel.

Laura Mulcahy analyses the female transition of menarche in Stephen King's *Carrie*. The novel presents menarche as a traumatic event due to societal discomfort with the abject female body. Carrie's body as a feature of the monstrous feminine is heightened by her supernatural abilities which awaken around the same time. She is marginalised as she fails to fit in with peers.

The final article by Ronan Keohane focusses on a selection of music videos by pop-star Aleyna Tilki. She is caught within a political and cultural rift in Turkey, being pulled between tradition and modernity, between religious values and Westernisation. The article provides an overview of the different ways Turkish people circumvent censorship, particularly through the use of online platforms. Keohane offers an interpretation of Tilki's music videos in terms of symbolism. He argues that, through her use of symbolic imagery, Tilki draws attention to current issues, such as misogyny and femicide.

Each of the articles engages with liminality in its many different forms and applications. They show characters in transition, others on the margins, places and spaces occupied for a fleeting time – all entering and some departing territories of unchartered ground.

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Before moving onto the book reviews, event reports and creative pieces that will round this issue off, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to our editors, contributors and peer-reviewers who have dedicated their time and expertise to *Aigne*. It's been a tremendous pleasure working with you all!

Book Reviews

This section offers a selection of reviews on recent academic publications, some of which connect to our thematic issue:

- Nevin Gürbüz-Blaich, of Heidelberg University, reviews Becky Taylor's *Refugees in Twentieth-Century Britain: A History* (2021), published by Cambridge University Press.
- Shu Wan, of the University of Buffalo, reviews Brett Krutzsch's *Dying to Be Normal: Gay Martyrs and the Transformation of American Sexual Politics* (2019), published by Oxford University Press.
- Punyashree Panda, of the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, reviews *Flann O'Brien: Gallows Humour* (2020), a collection edited by Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan and published by Cork University Press.
- Brian de Ruiter, of Brock University, reviews *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies* (2021), a collection edited by Renée Fox, Mike Cronin and Brian Ó Conchubhair and published by Routledge.
- Subir Rana, an independent scholar, reviews Catherine Keller's *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (2018), published by Columbia University Press.

Event Reports

Doris Murphy, of University College Cork, reports on the *Boundaries, Borders, and Care: Feminist Ethics in Practice* postgraduate conference, held in 2018. The three-day conference focussed on challenges in feminist and gender-focused research and the relationship between scholarship, policy, art, activism and lived experiences.

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Creative Pieces

This section provides space for creative submissions which respond to the theme of 'Liminality' in different ways and through different genres:

- Poetry: *Ghost* by Edel Hanley
- Flash fiction: *The Suit* by Mark Kelleher
- Short story: *Auschwitz Days* by Mathew Raisun

Last but not least, the image selected for *Aigne*'s volume 9 cover page was a commissioned response to the theme 'Liminality' by Grace Claro.

Anne Enright's *The Gathering*: The Five Stages of Grief in a Liminal Space

Margaret Bonass Madden

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Abstract

Applying Kübler-Ross's theory of The Five Stages of Grief to a reading of Anne Enright's 2007 novel The Gathering*, this paper will trace the journey through grief and how it is a flexible entity which affords different reactions and experiences of grief within the liminal space. The Kübler-Ross theory defines the stages of grief within five parameters: Denial and Isolation; Anger; Bargaining; Depression; Acceptance. She notes how the immediate days after the death are filled with viewings, organising travel itineraries and funeral arrangements. These days are a blur of paperwork and shock and are often accompanied by loss of appetite, lack of sleep and a removal from reality. It is when the burial is complete, and the mourners have departed, that the process of grief can re-commence. Enright's* The Gathering *focuses on the aftermath of the death of Liam Flaherty and the subsequent gathering of the Flaherty family for his wake and funeral. The Five Stages of Grief are applied in a non-linear form, enabling a more nuanced situational narrative within the liminal space. In* The Gathering*, we follow Veronica Hegarty's stages of grief, following the suicide of her younger brother, and observe how she chooses – for the most part – to cope in isolation. The liminal space afforded to Veronica enables her to process her grief through the medium of memory and her composition of an (imagined) biography of her grandmother. Enright's unreliable protagonist is creating a bio-fictional past whilst dealing with a stark present. Grief is a personal journey and closure is not always inevitable.*

The purpose of this paper is to examine the stages of grief described by Kübler-Ross's theory (2005) through the characters portrayed in Anne Enright's 2007 novel *The Gathering*. The analysis lays emphasis on the significance of liminal space, how it offers different reactions and experiences to the bereaved in the aftermath of grief itself. This trajectory, of the stages of grief and the liminal space, will be explored through the protagonist, Veronica, in *The Gathering*. People find themselves deeply thrust in grief, followed by traditional rituals, due to the loss of their dear ones. This causes them to wander through unknown depths of sorrow, here, liminality guides them through such unaccustomed stages of grief. Van Gennep's theory of liminality (1960) argues that the rituals and rites that surrounds death and burial provide respite from the normal structures and expectations of daily life. Liminal space allows and aids this journey through grief and the eventual reincorporation into society (Ní Éigeartaigh, 2022, p. xi). Kübler-Ross's theory examines and defines grief through five stages: denial and isolation; anger; bargaining; depression; acceptance. She notes that the event of death is immediately followed by viewings, organising travel itineraries and funeral arrangements.

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During this period, one is blurred with shock; accompanied by the loss of appetite and lack of sleep which expels one from reality, in addition to the legalities of paperwork. One endures the process of grief, after the completion of the funerary process as the mourners depart. Enright's Booker Prize-winning novel *The Gathering* focuses on the aftermath of the death of Liam Flaherty and the subsequent gathering of the Hegarty family for his wake and funeral in Ireland. The Five Stages of Grief are applied in a non-linear form, enabling a more nuanced situational narrative within the liminal space. This article outlines Veronica Hegarty's journey through grief, following the suicide of her brother, and maps out how she chooses – for the most part – to cope in isolation. The liminal space offered to Veronica enables her to process her grief through the medium of memory and her composition of an (imagined) biography of her grandmother. Enright's unreliable protagonist creates a bio-fictional past as she deals with her stark present. This article focuses on the stages of grief, which enables a deeper understanding of Veronica's personal journey through grief, and how she encounters her own version of closure.

In this article, prominent themes in the novel such as grief, ritual and tradition will be explored using Kübler-Ross's theory of the Five Stages of Grief. The stages of grief were postulated by Kübler-Ross in 1969 in *On Death and Dying*, and later revised in 2005. She explains that these stages were not designed to be "stops on linear timeline in grief" but were designed to help people "frame and identify" their feelings (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 7). She re-visits the theory from the perspective of the bereaved, rather than the person who is dying, as had been the original focus of *On Death and Dying*. Here, she emphasises that the bereaved does not "enter and leave each individual stage in a linear fashion" but rather they shift, often jumping back and forth, between stages (*ibid*., p. 18). This trajectory can be clearly documented in *The Gathering*, where Veronica navigates through each stage, to varying degrees, in a non-sequential manner, as she narrates Liam's death, his wake and funeral. The theory of liminality compliments and aids in unbinding the stages of grief. Liminality offers a broader understanding of separation and acts as a significant marker in traversing through the stages of grief (Van Gennep, 1960). Furthermore, the reader observes theories of liminality, especially when Veronica travels to identify her brother's body in Brighton where she seems to be detached and dissociated from her normal life, and snuck into the liminal space of death, grief, and mourning. Ní Éigeartaigh explains that this space rejects the normal regularities of ordinary society (Ní Éigeartaigh, 2022, p. xii). The stages of grief are now seen as an accepted, albeit fluctuating, measure of how one reacts to loss and enables the bereaved to deal with their grief at their own pace. Hence, the following paragraphs will outline Veronica's journey, in

and out of this liminal space, as she traverses through the stages of grief, aided by the character representations that delineate the themes of memory and trauma.

The Gathering opens with Veronica's encounter with personal grief experienced on account of her brother, Liam's death. Liam had died from suicide in Brighton, England, and Veronica was burdened by the overwhelming task of delivering the news to their mother. Reluctantly, she enters the Hegarty house and is repulsed by its very fabric. She notices the size, the layout, and the smell (pp. 4–5). Consequently, she observes the negative aspects of the house, thus denying any of its association to her happier childhood memories. Enright provides details of the family members and how they navigate in unison before Liam's wake (Wheeler Centre, 2017). Although the wake is an event towards the end of the book, descriptions of the members in the earlier pages aids in gauging their behaviours and attitudes when the reader encounters them in the book.

Veronica prepares to relay the news of her brother's death to her mother: "I turn my face towards her and ready it to say the ritual thing" (p. 6). The novel frequently refers to ritualistic words and expected facial expressions, thus demonstrating the importance of traditional practices at the time of grief. When she hears the news, Veronica's mother hits her, demonstrating a mother's grief who has lost her child. The mother seems in denial about the accuracy of the news and lashes at her daughter. Her initial silence is followed by a sound that is described as "terrible…and Quite soft" (p. 9). Her mother accepts the news of Liam's death as her brief denial and anger subside. Again, Enright uses facial expression to display grief when her mother faces her:

> so that I can witness her face; the look on it, now, and the way it will never be the same again. (p. 9)

As Veronica watches her mother's portrayal of grief, she rages against the unjust role she plays, and she is angered by the duties she has already performed, stating that she "will die of unfairness" (p. 10).

Following in a non-linear pattern of Kübler-Ross's model, Veronica seems to have passed into the second stage of grief, where anger takes over denial (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 44). The first phase seamlessly flows into the second, where Veronica's denial is overtaken by her anger due to the circumstances in which she finds herself. In this phase, Veronica resents that she is

> the one who has to drive over to Mammy's and ring the doorbell and put myself in a convenient hitting position (p. 10)

while her siblings escaped the chore. She is even angered at her dead siblings:

> I am in a rage with every single one of my brothers and sister, including Stevie, long dead, and Midge, recently dead, and I am boiling mad with Liam for being dead too. (p. 10)

The anger experienced at the time of grief need not be logical or even relevant to the current circumstance. Kübler-Ross explains that anger is a necessary stage which helps in keeping other feelings at bay, until one is ready to deal with them (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 12). She advises that anger can re-appear during later stages of grief, but rarely to the extent of its initial appearance. Anger, following a loss, becomes more diluted with time and appears in many forms (*ibid*., p. 12). While society views anger as a fearful emotion, Kübler-Ross suggests that, in times of grief, anger should be honoured and people should let it out to enable "temporary structure to the nothingness of grief" (*ibid*., p. 15).

Veronica's anger may stem from the details associated with identifying Liam's body, from afar, from which she spares her mother. Veronica recalls how she accessed the required dental records, details of height, hair colour and a tattoo marking, about which their mother would not necessarily have known. Veronica believes that she is "the one who loved him most" and that her mother would "cry no matter what son he was" unlike the pain she, herself, feels as "the one who has lost something that cannot be replaced. She has plenty more" (p. 11). Here, the reader learns of the distinct bond between Veronica and Liam who were born "eleven months apart" (p. 11) and

> came out of each other's tails; one after another […] we overlapped in there, he just left early, to wait outside." (p. 11)

However, as she watches the pain escaping from her mother's face with "saliva falling from [her] bottom lip now, in gobs and strings" (p. 11), Veronica realises that the bond between siblings could not be compared to a mother's grief:

> it comes down on me like a curse. Who am I to touch, to handle and discard, the stuff of a mother's love?" (p. 11)

Veronica's anger eases as she realises her own grief must be set aside momentarily, to perform an act of tradition:

> I must go over and touch her. I must take her by the shoulders and lift her gently up and away. I will squeeze her arms back down by her sides as I push and guide her to a chair, and put sugar in her cup of tea, though she does not take sugar. I will do all this in deference to a grief that is biological, idiot, timeless (p. 11).

This act of kindness, of performing a ritual of offering sweet tea to those who have had a shock, demonstrates how some practices, even in such trying times, can comfort people. In setting her anger aside, Veronica allows her mother's grief to become the focus and she has given way to

the idea of maternal priority, with a mother placing their child – or children – at the "centre of their universe" (Takseva, 2016, p. 156).

Veronica is held with responsibilities, on behalf of the Hegarty family, such as the formal identification of Liam's body and his repatriation which propels her into the liminal world of the formalities and bureaucracy that surround death. Veronica's first contact is with 'the bereavement people' in Brighton and Hove Council who refer her to a local page. She decides on a coffin style without consulting with her family, as she believes it is her decision: "because I am the one who loved him most" (p. 23). Once in Dublin, Veronica sets the family 'news-chain' in action, considering how each conversation must be phrased, and that no one could be left out (p. 23). Moreover, she is aware that she will end up being the one to receive return calls from each person, with requests for "times and reasons and gory details" (p. 24). She informs her mother about her travel to attend to the formal identification of Liam's remains. As she departs the house, she takes a road that turns out to be her literal liminal space:

> Instead of turning left outside Mammy's, I turn right […] I don't think about where I am going […] I think about nothing – there is nothing to think about." (pp. 25–26)

Veronica's senses are completely held by grief, which snatches her away from her daily routine, expelling all thoughts of usual performances and expectations. She begins to embrace the idea of the liminal space offered by the preparations involved in planning Liam's funeral when she notices that her husband has taken charge of managing their children and their home:

> There is something wonderful about a death, how everything shuts down, and all the ways you thought you were vital are not even vaguely important […] most of the stuff you do is just stupid, really stupid, most of the stuff you do is just nagging and whining and picking up for people who are too lazy even to love you." (p. 27)

This brief respite from responsibility is also a way for Veronica to slip back into stage one of the grieving process, which is denial and isolation. Kübler-Ross theorises that denial or "partial-denial" can be found creeping into all stage of grief, to be replaced with "partial acceptance" (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, pp. 35–36).

Veronica exploits her liminal space further by isolating herself when she learns of Liam's death. This space comforts her in such a way that instead of acknowledging the death, it allows her to partially deny it, as she is encompassed in the liminality of it all. In this context, English explains that: "In her liminal state Veronica can order and make sense of her life and Liam's" (English, 2017, p. 178). She is removed from her deteriorating marriage and the demands of motherhood. Without this isolation, Veronica may not have been offered the time or opportunity to attempt the close recollection of the past as much as she does in these solitary moments. Throughout the novel, Veronica uses these isolated periods to examine the past and

to write down an account of her grandmother's life based on her imagination. The airport road is often her destination when she drives alone. Later in the novel, London's Gatwick airport pulls her into its environs. This suggests a yearning for escape and for leaving the past behind, which is the very opposite of what she is attempting to do in the chronicling of her grandmother's life. Enright is challenging the sympathies by complicating Veronica's aborted attempts to flee the past, in what Meaney calls a "new form of denial" (Meaney, 2011, p. 159). Veronica marvels at the fleeting moments of travel that brought her to Brighton where she begins the process of repatriation. She ponders whether her journey to Brighton was a journey after all, as it seemed anti-climactic with the process of bringing back Liam (p. 41). Hence, the movement of the train seems to contradict the stillness of death. During this train journey, the author alludes to Irish funeral traditions when Veronica shows discomfort with the idea of a wake in the family home, followed by her contempt for the dingy atmosphere of her childhood house (p. 42). She reminisces the front room and tells her sister Bea that the carpet in their house compliments the corpse with its dark, gloomy colours. Sensing Veronica's reluctance to have a traditional wake, Bea yields to guilt trip: "It's how Daddy would have wanted it" (p. 42). This statement causes Veronica to acknowledge that this tradition is one which means a lot to the Irish, especially her father who had a rather traditional outlook to such practices. She thinks she would rather "eat shit" than sit in the front room with neighbours, with Liam's coffin in the corner, saying "One less. One less" and listening to anecdotes of her brother's life: "Oh! He was desperate – that is what we will say" and how he was "sensitive" and "not able for this world" (p. 44). Veronica sees these interactions as the foibles of traditional Irish funerals and not a ritual in which she wants to partake. She remembers her grandfather's wake, when she was eight years old, and how she was forced to view his corpse, reposed in his bed. She had refused to touch the body but nine-year-old Liam was aware of the rituals that were meant to be followed (p. 63). Veronica seems to think Liam surrendered to the expectations from the older people who were part of their lives. She realises this fact, of how Liam fulfilled such norms, only once he is dead.

Veronica's acknowledgement of Liam's practices of rituals demonstrates the first symbolic entrance into the third stage of grief: bargaining. Invoking the 'what if…?' or 'if only' thread, allows one to perceive an alternate story, often accompanied by guilt (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 17). This stage sees the mourner rooted in the past and struggling to "negotiate their way out of the hurt" (*ibid*., p. 15). It is often a key phase which can see the bereaved "holding a piece of the alternative future" where the death never occurred (*ibid*., p. 19). Veronica begins to question herself: If she had shared details of Liam's sexual abuse that

she had witnessed, would his life have been any different? She knew he was troubled, even at the age of seven, and is yielding to the reality of this fact. Her immersion into this stage of grief thus propels her back to their childhood to reflect on these questions. Past traumas are examined as Veronica passes through the different stages of grief and, as Harte elaborates, this as a free-flowing narration which was "formerly unspeakable" (Harte, 2010, p. 188). Furthermore, Costello-Sullivan concurs with Harte's thesis that *The Gathering* grants an immersive experience, allowing the reader their own conscious reading of Veronica and Liam's trauma:

> Veronica's self-conscious narration highlights the act of telling while representing the ways in which narrativizing trauma can be both empowering and subversive at once." (Costello-Sullivan, 2018, p. 54)

In this phase, Veronica has allowed the trauma to enter the liminal space of grief, thus allowing a deeper understanding of her own role in her brother's death, and in turn, her own grief.

This profound moment of grief is overshadowed by a gloomy aura with the introduction of Lamb Nugent. Nugent, a friend of her grandparents and landlord, kneels in prayer, rosary beads in hand and Veronica claims that she never believed men who worshipped (p. 65). He is a constant, dark presence in Veronica's memories and prominently features in her chronicles of her grandmother Ada's life. He appears to have a large part to play in the unfolding story of Liam's life and death, perhaps holding her back from processing her grief through its expected stages. Her associated memories of her first attendance at a wake are ones of forced grief and claustrophobic rituals. She allows a gentler memory of Ada's affectionate lingering over her husband's body to briefly break the darker themes but soon retreats to the 'what if?' thread, associated with the denial/bargaining stage of grief: "Nugent was there all along" (p. 66). Nugent's role interplays between her memories of her grandfather's death and her present with Liam's death. This memory seems to drag her feet through grief itself as she processes her loss in different frames due to the responsibilities that she is held as an adult.

In Brighton, Veronica identifies her brother's corpse and his belongings. She focuses on the second-hand pyjamas in which her brother is reposed, on a mortuary table. This image helps her acknowledge his death and she compares his appearance to Mantegna's Christ (p. 64). This reference to the renaissance artist Andrea Mantegna's work may symbolise how Liam's life has been cut short and he, like the image of Christ, is laid on a slab, in a morgue (Web Gallery of Art, 1996). The sight of a corpse seems to aide in the acceptance of death. Toolis suggests that this sight, especially of a loved one, is a surreal experience which serves as "a visible, tactile, irrefutable statement of [their] present and eternal deadness" (Toolis, 2017,

p. 203). This specific act helps a mourner on their path to acceptance, even if this acts as a temporary stage. Clare puts forward that

> One of the more attractive aspects of life in Ireland is how as a culture we accept and acknowledge death. (Clare in Keane, 1995, p. 15)

Irish funerals carry their own specific traditions and, despite a move toward a more secular society, funeral traditions remain largely the same: a wake, a removal, a mass, a burial, a post-funeral gathering and often the month's mind (remembrance mass). Each of these rituals brings its own traditions and each carries the mourners through phases of liminality. This is evident in Veronica's non-linear journey through grief. Repatriation of Liam's body, the funeral and wake clearly depict how she encounters grief and lapses back and forth through liminal spaces as she traverses through the different stages.

Veronica's disdain for the Irish traditional wake once again surfaces when she is informed about the time required for the repatriation of the body; this will not bode well with "all the cronies who will flock" to the family home, where they can "feast on Liam's poor corpse" (p. 74). The use of the word "feast" is a play on the tradition of the food and drink offered to the mourners who visit the wake and of the idea that such gatherings are fodder for those who enjoy the macabre elements of a funeral, under the guise of *communitas*. Once again, at the Brighton funeral home, Veronica enters a liminal space, unaware and unintentional. She refers to it as a 'hinterland' which is decorated in pastels, with office furniture and housing a "laminated catalogue of coffins" (p. 74). As she flicks through the brochure, she is performing a role, as she already knows what coffin she will choose. She feels the need to express interest in the options. She turns the pages and sees "hideous silk linings, ruchings and slubbings, like being buried in a cinema curtain" (p. 74), alluding to the expected mis-èn-scene associated with funerals. She appreciates the relaxed attitude of the young page and the fact that he "does not pretend", instead describing details about coffins in his 'what-ever' sort of way (p. 75). His gentle touch on her arm moves her, as he leads Veronica away from Liam's body:

> He is the person who comes after you have seen the worst thing. He is the rest of my life." (p. 75)

The funeral director plays an important role in the grieving process. They are often the first person, other than the family members, one approaches after the loss of a loved one. Sligo undertaker, David McGowan, says that it is the role of a funeral director to ease the load of the bereaved:

> to go in and take [the] responsibility off her or him, and allow them to get into that grieving process. (RTÉ, 2019, 02:58)

Indeed, this is the case for Veronica and as she departs from the funeral home, she allows herself to contemplate the circumstances that envelope Liam's death:

> I should play this the way it happened – I should start at the place where Liam walked into the sea – because there is an order to these things that has to be obeyed." (p. 76)

This statement refers to how she projects Liam's death in a linear form, following the sight of his body. Until this point in the story, she restrained from considering his suicide as the anti-climactic end of his life. In the liminal surrounding of Brighton's prom, in the neighbourhood where her brother's body was discovered, she feels that "Liam is in the air" and notes the presence of people, walking along the seaside paths: "The living, with all their smells and holes" (p. 76). She feels overcome with nausea when she thinks of Liam's body; its odour and eventual decay (p. 76). As she gasps, she smells the fresh air from the Brighton beach, at the same time: "the open tang, the calling, the smell of the sea. Such a miracle" (p. 76). These diverse scents reflect the extreme emotions one is subjected to when grieving. Standing across the sea, where Liam breathed his last, Veronica considers the depth of both, Liam's life and compares it with hers, "a smaller life, alive" than Liam had "walking out in the darkness; blood and whiskey into salt sea" (p. 78). She sees his suicide as "more heroic than not to be" (p. 74). Here, the reader observes how she enters the fourth stage of grief: depression, the stage grief hits the hardest.

On her return to Ireland, she examines the aspects in which she failed to help Liam. She observes a certain pattern in the manner in which he left behind his life. She recalls many occasions where she turned her back on him: "In his later, drinking years, I left him every time he arrived" (p. 124). She admits it was not just in the latter years that she left him, but it was long before his addiction became obvious, where she just glared and "walked away" (p. 124). Veronica tries to balance her feelings of guilt with ones of reason. She recalls memories of how Liam behaved when either, drunk or sober; she reasons that he was equally difficult in both states. Although she is aware of the reasons for his behaviour, it still does not ease her conscience (p. 125). This phase is also where liminality of grief is most clearly observable. The intense sadness withdraws people from their lives as they are consumed by the loss. The daily chores one automatically performs become irrelevant and, at times "life seems pointless" (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 21). Initially, when she rings home to check on her children, Veronica is upset that her husband has not continued with their afterschool activities. She accepts that this lapse is not important, that these activities were her own construct and created to give meaning to her role as a mother. Mid-way through the novel, Enright skips forward in time, allowing momentum to this stage of grief. Veronica's depression hits its peak, shortly

after the funeral, when she admits she is "in the horrors" (p. 133). She has left the liminal space where her daily chores were suspended and is "back to school runs and hoovering and ringing other-mothers for other-mother things", but underneath it all "everything was sad" (p. 133). By yielding to feel this sadness and experience depression, Kübler-Ross asserts it will leave "as soon as it has served its purpose" (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 22). She admits that sometimes intervention is required for those who struggle to handle their depression but that, mostly, one must "accept our sadness as an appropriate, natural stage of loss" that allows people to slow down and process their loss (*ibid.*, p. 24).

Veronica finally allows herself to cry when she thinks of the logistics surrounding Liam's death. She ponders over the three facts that she learned about her brother's death: that he was wearing a hi-vis jacket, that he had weighed his trousers down by placing stones in their pockets and that he was not wearing any underwear or socks (p. 141). The absence of underwear triggers feelings that finally allow her to deal with and accept the past (p. 142). This is where the final stage of grief, acceptance, comes into play. Kübler-Ross advises that this stage is

> not to be viewed as forgetting your loss, or diminishing your grief, but as an acceptance of reality and understanding that this is now a perpetual reality. (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 25)

Acceptance allows the bereaved to identify and navigate through grief: "a world without our loved one and adjust our lives accordingly" (*ibid.*, p. 25). Enright, however, undermines the manner in which Veronica demonstrates her acceptance, as she rewinds back to the past. The non-linear narrative of the novel articulates how the characters traverse through the stages of grief, switching back and forth in time. The funeral and wake are events that might last a couple of hours, but the preparations for the event, succeeded by the period that follows are elements in the novel that help in gauging the grief that has engulfed the Hegarty family.

Liam's wake opens with the comparison drawn between the Irish and British attitudes to funerals. Yet again, the reader is reminded of the liminal space which the Hegarty family now occupies on account of the event that outlines the beginning of the very end:

> The British, I decide, only bury people when they are so dead, you need another word for it. The British wait so long for a funeral that people gather not so much to mourn, as to complain that the corpse is still hanging around […] They do not gather until the emotion is gone. (p. 182)

The delay in Liam's funeral infuriates and upsets Veronica. She resents the British system and deals with the dull staff involved with the process; she realises she needs to be prompt and must "get on with things" (p. 182). The gloomy aura of death, the delay in the repatriation of the

body and the fact that Veronica had to manage the procedures all by herself, leaves her in a state of void. Although she tries to manage the circumstances, the void seems to pull her to a state of uncertainty with various things (p. 182). Dell'Amico suggests that these small moments of uncertainty represent Veronica's heightened awareness of a "serious matter left unattended" (Dell'Amico, 2010, p. 65). The state of uncertainty yet again represents how Veronica has entered her liminal space, where she dutifully returns to the family home to sit with her mother, and occasionally a female sibling. The female Hegartys "sit in a formal kind of way" and Veronica feels the siblings "look diminished, overgrown" and that, despite being middle-aged, they are now "being treated like children again", not necessarily by their mother, but "by death itself" (p. 183). Death has enforced a regressive atmosphere where the Hegartys are forced to cede their hitherto independent-adult roles.

The atmosphere in the Hegarty house is "sombre, empty and tatty". Veronica anticipates the family reunion and the drama that will inevitably ensue: "They are waking up. They are coming back […] A hosting of the Hegartys. God help us" (p. 187). Enright's use of "God help us" could be seen as a flippant phrase, which is often used as a humorous, colloquial term to lighten the mood, but it also suggests a more genuine call to God to offer spiritual assistance at the time of need. Veronica admits to praying in private so this may be a genuine request which is part of the bargaining stage of her grief; praying to God to ease her grief (p. 184).

On the day of the wake, Veronica reluctantly prepares to partake in the rituals associated with the viewing, feasting and storytelling: "I am expecting the house to be crammed" (p. 192). When she learns that there is only a handful of neighbours, she thinks to herself that this should not be surprising:

> Who's going to come and look at a dead body in your living room, when there isn't even a decent glass of wine in the house?" (p. 192)

As she enters the house, she seems to detach herself by thinking about re-carpeting her own house. She then comes to her senses and realises she is looking at Liam, reposed in his coffin:

> The room is almost empty. There is no one here I can talk to about […] carpet[s]. Dead or alive. Liam does not care about these things." (p. 193)

She has pivoted, in one moment, from denial to acceptance, from thinking about redecorating her house, to accepting that her brother is laid out before her. She notices that Liam is dressed in a navy suit and blue shirt ("like a Garda") and realises that this must have been supplied by the Brighton undertaker as it was not her brother's style (p. 193). The layout of the room is not as she had expected, she finds fault with how the coffin is placed, forgetting that the room is

not big enough to accommodate her preferred mis-en-scène. When her sister, Kitty, asks Veronica if she will take over the duty of sitting with Liam ("in case a mourner should be left indecently alone with the corpse"), Veronica refuses: "The whole business is finished for me now, it is beyond finished. I just want to get the damn thing buried and out of the way" (pp. 193–194). It is only when she notices the complete silence in the room that she realises she has been left alone with Liam, "tied […] to this piece of garbage in the front room" (p. 194). Despite her earlier insistence on not wanting to remain in the room, she now prefers this in contrast to greeting the people who come to pay their respects. She chooses to stay with her brother. She accepts that her liminal space is diminishing, as she finds herself within the confines of the wake room.

Veronica comments on the appearance of her mother when she enters the kitchen, responding to mourners paying their respect (p. 197). In due course, her mother has accepted Liam's death and, after the prolonged wait for the return of her son's body, Veronica sees how it has "as they say, 'hit her'. Like a truck" and she notes that this acceptance has afforded "a peacefulness to her" (p. 197). As neighbours offer their condolences, with their short anecdotes and "ritual words", her mother repeats the mantra of the grieved, who must acknowledge the words offered to them: "'Yes', says Mammy, again. 'Thank you. Yes'" (p. 197). Veronica greets her mother and is surprised to be granted with a kiss to her cheek and a "hazy kind of love in her voice – for me, the table set with food, for everyone here" (p. 197). This shows how the rituals and traditions which surround the wake and funeral are a great comfort to the bereaved. Toolis believes that attending an Irish wake is a good way to "rediscover the oldest lessons in humanity" which are the lessons of loving another, how to live through losing them and how to "face your own death with the aid of your community." (Toolis, 2017, p. 262). He suggests that a handshake accompanied by a simple condolence to the bereaved is gratefully received (*ibid.*).

The Hegarty gathering not only allows a space for the family to grieve, but also for the wider community. The rituals and traditions of the Merry Wake have been diluted over time but have not completely disappeared. According to Hourihane:

> There is no strict definition of the Irish wake – it can refer to almost any social interaction associated with a death. But, the classic image – open coffin in the middle of the room, mourners mirthfully toasting the dead – has deep roots in Irish culture (Hourihane 2020, p. 55).

There is plenty of food at Liam's wake and Veronica observes the feast prepared for those visiting. She notes the staple foods of "yet another family gathering", foods of their past,

prepared by family members before returning to the family home. Veronica also notes the absence of alcohol: “There is no wine” (p. 201). She corrects this statement to note that there are, indeed, two bottles of wine on the table, which she thinks are “perhaps in honour of Liam’s prodigious drinking” (p. 201). More chairs are added to the room, to enable the feast to commence. The rituals of eating and drinking at a wake are a way of accepting the “ordinariness of it all” and that death is the end, whether climactic or anti-climactic (Toolis, 2017, p. 263). Veronica prefers to stand instead of sitting and watches her family “scoffing the funeral meats” (p. 192). She is slightly repulsed as she observes the way people are feasting. She thinks her uncle Ernest “is particularly terrible to watch”, “[e]ven my mother eats with a sudden greed” and her neighbours “forget themselves so much as to scoff the lot” (p. 202). Veronica’s uncle Val is briefly introduced, allowing for her brother’s suicide to be acknowledged. At the wake she observes him “helping himself” to the “array of little treats, concerned to get a decent amount of food into himself” and this allows the author to insert additional anecdotes, relating to the efforts made to assist Liam in his troubled life and addresses both the past and present:

> Uncle Val loved endings. He was especially fond of suicides. He used to talk us through the neighbour’s houses, and tell us who shot himself and who used the rope […] It occurs to me that I wasn’t the only one who tried to save Liam – this man tried too, and […] will always feel guilty that he did not succeed. The word ‘suicide’ is in the air for the first time – the way we all failed (pp. 202–203).

Sometimes grief can alter memories of the deceased. Bleaker times are often airbrushed out of memory, but the presence of mourners can result in the less-edited memories and stories of the deceased. The above extract aids in explaining Val’s role in Liam’s life may not have been recognised if it were not for these memories which would not have been stirred without the wake.

Veronica realises she needs some alcoholic escape:

> I want to get drunk. Suddenly. This is a calamitous thing to want, but it cannot be denied […] ‘We need a bottle of something. Is there a bottle, for after?’” (p. 204)

When the mourners have departed, the family produce some alcohol and proceed to conform to the tradition of raising a glass to the dead:

> Ita comes in from the corpse room and plonks a bottle of peculiar whiskey in the middle of the table […] This ritual is strange for us because, although the Hegartys all drink, we never drink together.” (p. 208)

This, in turn, leads to loosened tongues and the revealing of secrets from the home. Without the liminal space of the wake, this opportunity to discuss family issues would not have arrived. Equally, without the alcohol, the conversations may have been more censored. Veronica

considers how she would disclose about Liam's abuse to her family: "*I never told any of them the truth*" (p. 207). Enright's use of italics not only shows her internal dialogue but displays the importance of this declaration. Suddenly, Veronica feels guilty about the situation. Nevertheless, she nudges away the idea of unravelling the truth aside, as she considered that it was not the right moment: "There are other things, surely, to talk about. There are other things to be revealed" (p. 207). There is a shift in the emotion as tensions release when the visitors leave. Voices are raised, a plate and knife held aloft, "like it is dripping in blood" (p. 208). Her brother Jem is dispatched to the off-licence to purchase wine. The siblings surrender to their need to unwind and prepare to break their family tradition of never drinking together. Kübler-Ross suggests that the "numbness or stoicism" associated with the early stages of grief are often replaced with "anger and rage" but eventually will settle as a feeling of loss (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 75). The sombre atmosphere in the house reflects the mood of the siblings. Veronica feels "like we are all dead. And that's just fine" (p. 209). When the wine arrives, the siblings "do not toast the dead but merely drink and chat, as ordinary people might do" (p. 209). English suggests that the ordinariness of the chatting over wine is "separating the siblings from the facts of death" and allows them to compartmentalise their grief and set it aside, even for a brief time (English, 2017, p. 174). As the night progresses, the siblings continue the gathering in the Hegarty kitchen, with a continuing rota of sitting with the corpse. They talk of things which would normally be forbidden topics: money, sexuality, each other's appearances, and Veronica notices this fact: "Something has happened to this family. The knot has come loose" (p. 210). When Veronica returns to her own home, she relinquishes the responsibility of sitting with the corpse to her siblings. The reader learns that she had "made a bit of a fuss in the front room" and had been given "a pill" to help her relax. She hears that there had been a game of cards in the wake room, which is a nod to the Merry Wake, where games were traditionally played in the presence of the corpse (O'Connell, 2009). Veronica is drained by her grief and by the gathering of the Hegarty clan. Her resurfaced memories have shifted her stoic response to grief into one of utter exhaustion.

The novel's constant switching between the past and the present allows for a non-linear reading of Veronica's grief and her examination of past traumas. Five months down the line, Veronica still struggles to accept Liam's death. She battles with her memories and their unreliability but knows she must face the truth: "I owe it to Liam to make things clear" (p. 223). Veronica needs to process Liam's death at her own pace, although she has admitted his fate as it was. She drives the airport road again, allowing her car to "go where it wants, which is North, as always" (p. 237). With aircraft flying overhead, Veronica ignores the road home:

"I go to the airport instead and, after a little while, I get on a plane" (p. 239). She needs some isolation that can be accessed by entering the liminal space. Kübler-Ross suggests that the journey to finding acceptance affords the chance to "live again, but we cannot do so until we have given grief its time" (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 28). Veronica is giving her grief the time by boarding a flight and escaping her daily norms. This liminal space is something Veronica needs to help her process her grief, at her own pace.

Again, the novel switches back to the day of Liam's funeral and Veronica notes the large attendance, ironically commenting that "[s]uicides always pull a good crowd" (p. 240). She believes they have turned up "on principle" due to the nature of Liam's death (p. 240). She finds herself embracing the Irish way with death:

> And suddenly I feel very Irish as I reach out to take her hand in both my hands, to thank her for making the journey, to welcome her in and allow her to grieve. (p. 241)

Veronica moves down the church aisle, with the remaining Hegartys, and feels "drowned in the emotion, whether love or sadness, that floods my chest" (p. 243). She finds that she cannot cry but is aware that she is expected to show some form of grief, she readies her face:

> My face sets into the mask of a woman weeping, one half pulled into a wail that the other half will not allow. There are no tears. My head twists away from whichever side of the church is most interested in my grief, only to show it to the other side (p. 243).

Once again, Enright uses the face as a way of displaying grief, whether genuine or not. Veronica's lack of tears troubles her, as she feels she is disappointing the mourners who expect outward signs of emotion. A metaphorical mask is used to appease the congregation.

Following the funeral mass, as per tradition, the family accept condolences from mourners, at the church entrance. Veronica describes "shaking five hundred people's hands" half of whom she does not know (p. 245). The usual apologies are uttered:

> 'I'm very sorry for your trouble.' […] 'I'm very sorry' and 'It's a great loss.' All of them apologising for the fact that someone you love is dead." (p. 245)

Toolis describes this as a typical aspect of the Irish funeral, where people come "in great numbers" and are "under a moral obligation to shake the hands of the principal bereaved" and to apologise for your loss (Many Rivers, 2018, 03:45). He suggests this is a way of "countering death in Ireland" as it is not just the process of shaking hands, but a way of saying "'they're dead, they're dead, they're dead', they're dead, they're dead'" which allows for the bereaved to accept that their loved one is not coming back (*ibid.*, 04:14). In Ireland, this is a cultural experience that shows no sign of waning. Many mourners attend the after-supper in a local hotel, like the wake, there is a feast: "two hundred people I sort of know are sitting down to

soup or melon, followed by salmon or beef' (p. 247). The presence of young children is noted, speeches are performed, and songs are sung. When a small child shouts "'Shut up'", the room fills with laughter and Veronica declares that she has "never been to a happier funeral" (p. 248). The Irish funeral rites and traditions, in many ways, allow for a space to process grief. Veronica embraces the laughter as it offers a break from the darkness of the day.

The novel approaches its end with Veronica's stay in a London Gatwick airport hotel, which she describes as an indeterminate, in-between space: "not England. This is the flying city. This is extra time" (p. 255). After five months of insomnia, in this particular phase of liminality, she is able to sleep and is loath to leave. As she wanders through the shops in the boarding area, preparing for her return to Dublin, she feels tempted to return to the bland hotel but knows she must return home. She knows "this time the plane will land properly" and recalls that when she flew home with Liam's body "it didn't land properly" (p. 259). She recalls the moment of landing in Dublin, five months ago, and how it

> wasn't the place I used to know. Perhaps none of it was real. I feel like I have spent the last five months up in the air." (p. 259)

This shows how she is willing to leave the liminal space and return to her normal life. Her journey through the Five Stages of Grief has come to a natural end. When the previous four stages have been processed, the fifth stage of grief can be the most difficult to enter. Kübler-Ross proposes that this acceptance is "not a resigned and hopeless" one, but rather "a monumental task which is required to achieve this stage" (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, pp. 99, 105). The reader is not offered any resolution to Liam's narrative, instead, his death has caused a shift in Veronica's personal life. This is her journey to accept the past and the future without her closest sibling.

In conclusion, Enright demonstrates the five stages of grief in a non-linear narrative, which (unintentionally) compliments the theory postulated by Kübler-Ross. In *The Gathering*, the author has allowed for the liminal space to become a tangible rationale, rather than merely a theory within a theory. Veronica uses the liminal space afforded to her, in grief, to literally escape from her daily norms and thus allows for her own personal progression through her stages of grief. Breffni McGuinness, a National Bereavement Development Specialist working with Irish Hospice Foundation, suggests that grief cannot be treated as a rigid, structural theory:

> [W]hile death is an event, grieving itself is a process, and that process, it isn't linear…[a bit like] a rollercoaster, it kind of goes up and down." (Irish Hospice, 2021, 09.40)

Each member of the Hegarty family process their grief in their own way, with Veronica choosing to blend the past with the present to facilitate her personal journey through her non-

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linear stages of grief. The rituals and traditions associated with Liam's wake provided her the liminal space to process her grief, with its reliance on hidden memory and her analysis of their shared past. English suggests that Enright's novel deals with the trauma that repression of grief can cause on a family and that "the past must be re-examined, the pain exposed, before grief can be overcome" (English, 2013, p. 204). However, grief needs to be allowed time and space to settle into the mourner's new life, without the deceased. The stages of grief can assist the transition from liminal to post-liminal and allow for flexibility in dealing with memory, trauma, and depression. Kübler-Ross's model may have caused critical debate, but it opened a narrative which still resounds today, albeit in a more fluid representation of how people deal with grief. Enright's *The Gathering* shows how the non-linear approach to grief is vital in allowing the bereaved to accept that some narratives do not have obvious conclusions. In allowing Veronica to pass through each stage of grief, Enright has created an immersive experience for the reader, as they navigate through the liminal space offered by the Irish funeral and wake. The subtle shifts between the stages of grief broaden the narrative and increase the realities of life before and after the loss of a loved one.

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Recovering: Mapping the Spatial Presence of Ghosts at an Unmarked Burial Site in County Cork, Ireland

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Abstract

This article invites readers to reflect on the unmarked Famine Graveyard on Carr's Hill, County Cork, where around 30,000 famine victims are buried, along – it is likely – with the remains of many children whose mothers were in the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home in Cork. Deep mapping provides the methodological blueprint for the exploration of this site, and the article will draw on the work of Gordon, Till and others, in its consideration of the process of deep mapping as a means of creating "the spaces and times for ghosts" (Till, 2010 p. 7). The article contextualizes the project with reference to key works in culture (visual arts, literature) and it documents the author's own mixed ethnographic and artistic research methods, which include the process of writing live on site. It argues that the inclusion of a creative non-fiction response to the site is a crucial factor in exploring its meaning, and suggests that it is this creative work, underpinned by academic scholarship, which is best-placed to offer examples of the way a present and future society can begin to engage with this liminal and still traumatic territory.

How to map the spatial presence of ghosts? This is a question raised by the liminal space of the unmarked burial site on Carr's Hill, County Cork, where around 30,000 victims from the Irish Famine are buried, along – it appears likely – with the remains of many children whose mothers were in the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home in Cork between 1922 and 1998 (O'Keeffe, 2019; Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters,[1] 2019). This article sets out to demonstrate how and why 'deep mapping' was employed as methodology and aesthetic choice to explore the spectral traces associated with this site. Deep mapping as a practice offers a counterpoint to conventional Western mapping exercises, which have operated out of positions of surveillance, control, and the establishment of borderlines (Loeffler, 2016; Wood, 2010). Deep mapping, by contrast, presents the possibility of orientating ourselves differently across time and space (Loeffler, 2016; Biggs, 2010b; Till,

[1] The report by the Commission of Investigation (COI) into burial practices at Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland was the COI's fifth interim report and it was released in 2019. It will be referenced as COI from here on forward. The COI issued its final report in January 2021 and was dissolved in February 2021. The COI was established in 2015 by the Irish government to investigate mother and baby homes.

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2010; Wood, 2010), so as to create map work that comes from a place of openness, from listening, from gentleness and fluidity, and from a commitment to the relationship with a particular place (Loeffler, 2016; Biggs, 2010b; Till, 2010; Wood, 2010). This article suggests that the practice of deep mapping is of particular consequence when it comes to attending to what Till (2010, p. 7) has termed "phantoms, stories, remnants, and submerged ways of knowing". While De Certeau, Girard, and Mayol (1998) contend that all places are haunted by ghosts, this article posits that the unmarked grave at Carr's Hill is especially unsettled, a wounded site marked by trauma and injustice. Deep mapping is thus a way of carefully engaging with such a site, and, in doing so, making space for the spectre (Till, 2010; Davis, 2005; Gordon, 2005; Derrida, 1994), and for what Casey has called the unresolved remainders of memory (Casey, 2000, p. 622).

This article will begin with an overview of the Carr's Hill burial site, which was constructed as such in 1847 during the Famine but which continued to be used as a site for Cork's poor and unclaimed dead until at least the 1940s (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112). It is also the likely burial place of many children whose mothers were in the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home in Cork between 1922 and 1998 (O'Keeffe, 2019; COI, 2019). This overview is to gain an understanding of the site's history as a zone of transition (Till, 2010), as well as to consider its complicated significance for contemporary Irish society.

Next, the concept of deep mapping will be introduced, examining its relevance as well as its limitations as a methodology. This section also sets out to contextualise the project at hand by reference to other works in Irish culture that have engaged in forms of mapping of traumatic space. The article then introduces reflections from the beginnings of the author's own deep mapping engagement with the burial site – an engagement that includes notetaking, image-making, walking, observing, and creative writing both on and off-site.

The article concludes with a brief examination of the possibilities of creative practice-with-research, a definition that encompasses the author's own way of working, with the suggestion it is this approach (the employment of creative mapping practices underpinned by academic scholarship), which is best-placed to encourage a new spatial imaginary of the site (Jonker and Till, 2009), and offer an example of the way a present and future society can begin to engage with this liminal and unhappy territory.

The unmarked burial site at Carr's Hill, Co. Cork

The All Saint's Famine Graveyard, which sits on a hilltop off the busy N28 road, midway between the Cork city suburbs of Douglas and Carrigaline, was constructed as a burial ground in 1847, after it became clear that the nearby gravesite of St Joseph's Cemetery in Ballyphehane, Cork, would soon no longer have room for the thousands who were dying from famine in the Cork workhouse (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; O'Keeffe, 2019). In late 1846, the Board of Guardians of the workhouse advertised for a new burial ground and George Carr, the storekeeper of the Cork Union, successfully tendered his plot of three acres as a suitable location (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112). The Guardians were relieved to think they had solved the problem of finding a new burial site, noting the new location "contains about 51/2 acres, is well fenced, has an abundance of surface and depth of soil and is very eligibly situated" (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996, pp. 10–11). They agreed to pay Carr a £150 entrance fee and £2.10s a year for each of the three acres on the site as well as the substantial fee of 2s 6d per corpse, with Carr transporting and burying the bodies from the workhouse beginning in February 1847 (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112).

Problems, however, began almost immediately at the location. Residents objected to the manner in which the paupers were buried (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112), with suggestions in local newspapers that the dead were being buried without coffins and that the site was thus a health hazard (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996). Newspaper reports were scathing, criticizing the Guardians for their ineffective management of the site, with complaints of shallow grave burials, starving dogs disinterring corpses and the terrible stench that hung over the area (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112). There were no gravestones, nor were any records maintained for the dead (Lynch, 2019). Carr defended his actions, although he did undertake to build a wall around the site to block it from public view (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996). Eventually, he ended up in court charged with creating a public nuisance (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996), and received a suspended fine of £300 on condition the graveyard be cleaned up within three months. With no other alternative site available, however, the workhouse Guardians had little choice but to continue using the grave at Carr's Hill. In response to a second advertisement for a new cemetery in August 1847, they received only two responses – the cheapest of them being from Carr. He was again awarded the contract and received a 999-year lease for the site (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112).

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The graveyard's unhappy reputation as a pauper burial ground continued long after the Famine (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112). While it is estimated around 30,000 were buried there during the Famine years (Lynch, 2019), it was subsequently used as a site for Cork's poor and unclaimed dead – abandoned and stillborn children, and unknown individuals – until the 1940s, possibly even the 1950s (Hegarty & Hickey, 1996; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112), with the bodies allegedly buried only after dissection by Queen's College medical students, and then often without coffins, laid to rest instead in canvas bags (Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112, O'Keeffe, 2019). Most Cork residents preferred to pretend the graveyard did not exist, until 1958, when local taxi driver William 'Jack' Sorenson built a 54-foot galvanized steel cross in his back garden and erected it on the site as a memorial to those buried there (Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112). Sorenson also illuminated the cross every evening until his death in 1979 (Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112), after which the lights were turned off for many years, due to funding problems as well as the cross's proximity to Cork airport (Hogan, 1997; Lynch, 2019). After a 20-year interlude, the cross was lit up again following repairs from the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) and a commitment to use a form of lighting satisfactory to the airport authorities (Hogan, 2000).[2] Meantime, the site was further revived in 1997 when the Cork Civic Trust and the local An Gorta Mór Famine Commemoration Committee erected a memorial stone on the site to mark the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Famine (Hogan, 1997; Lynch, 2019; Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112). Today, the An Gorta Mór Memorial Project, formed in 2017, with the aim of seeing a memorial to the Famine placed in the centre of Cork city, holds an annual Memorial Ceremony at the site; this includes prayers and blessings, speeches, poetry recitals, songs and traditional pipe laments (An Gorta Mór Memorial Project, 2020; echolive.ie, 2017).

Despite these initiatives, the Carr's Hill site remains a locus of sadness and controversy. The assumptions it had not been used as a burial site since the 1950s were thrown into doubt in 2019 following the publication of the report by the Commission of Investigation (COI) into burial practices at Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland (COI, 2019; O'Keeffe, 2019). The report, which found that it could not establish the burial place of more than 800 children who died at the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home in Cork between 1922 and 1998, identified documentary evidence indicating at least one Bessborough child, who died in St Finbarr's

[2] Subsequent to this, the lighting once again did not function for many years, but was restored one more time in 2012 by Airtricity as a result of efforts by the Cork and County Famine Group (Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107-112; McMahon, 2011). The Group now goes under the name of the An Gorta Mór Memorial Project.

Hospital in Cork city in 1960, was buried in Carr's Hill (COI, 2019, pp. 26–39), and suggested numerous other Bessborough children – as many as 113 who died in St Finbarr's Hospital – might be buried there also, having been told by a local resident that the site had been used to bury infants and children until at least 1962 (COI, 2019, pp. 26–39; Hennessy, 2019). The absence of the Burial Register associated with the Cemetery, which the Commission searched for but could not locate (COI, 2019, pp. 26–39), means this assertion cannot yet be proven, although the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, which owned and ran Bessborough from 1922 until its closure in 1998, did agree publicly with the Commission's speculation that many of the babies could have been buried off-site in Carr's Hill (Roche, 2021). It was certainly cheaper to bury them in this site, which is now owned and managed by the State, than in the privately-owned St Joseph's Cemetery on Tory Top Road (Wills, 2021), although, of course, a strong possibility remains that many of the children are buried in unconsecrated ground somewhere on the Bessborough estate (COI, 2019, pp. 26–39; Wills, 2021).

Carmel Cantwell, who found out only from the Commission's report that her baby brother, William, was the identified child buried at the Carr's Hill site (Ó'Fátharta, 2019), has stated she now annually visits both Bessborough and Carr's Hill, along with her mother (Cantwell, 2021) to commemorate the children who died in the Home. An image posted by Cantwell on social media of her elderly mother walking alone amidst the high, unkempt, grass at the burial ground – "A lonely figure looking for any evidence of burials on a huge site" (Cantwell, 2019) – denotes the burial area as a ghostlike, spectral location. The site is tended to once a year in the autumn for the Memorial Ceremony, but the rest of the time it lies largely neglected and forgotten (Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112), with only a small sign pointing the way to it from the roadside and then a narrow access route through farmers' fields, alongside brambles and an electric fence, before a visitor must clamber up some stone steps to a gap in the stone wall surrounding the space (see Figure 1). While there were once calls for the site to be turned into a public park, these have never been acted on, with the site instead "restored to just what it was when Carr and his men turned over the final shovels of soil to bury the Famine victims" (Hogan, 1997), resulting in the location remaining an out-of-the-way, still taboo arena on the outskirts of a city busily preoccupied with its modern-day concerns.

Could there be any other way for such a place? Mark-Fitzgerald has drawn attention to the "paradox of commemorating" this particular burial space, suggesting the "unknowable nature of this Famine landscape, the anonymity of its inhabitants and their history of

Figure 1: Narrow access to the burial site at Carr's Hill

segregation," along with the site's "peripheral location", serve to "work against preservationist notions and preclude any easy assimilation into the present" (Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, p. 112). Her argument builds upon Whelan's description of the Irish landscape as a palimpsest, "containing contested narratives of history and culture" whose "monuments and traces reached from the present down into earlier layers from which they derived their power and presence" (Whelan, 2004). Meantime, Jonker and Till (2009), writing about the discovery of the skeletal remains of slaves at a construction site in Cape Town, South Africa, noted that the bones, essentially "spectres" of Cape Town's colonial history, "haunt both the contemporary city and the imagination of transition, as transformational and memorial strategies fail to exorcise pre-apartheid injustices" (Jonker and Till, 2009, p. 305). Till has considered a similar issue in her work on Berlin, which sought to interrogate places of memory in a city that is "haunted with

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landscapes that simultaneously embody presences and absences, voids and ruins, intentional forgetting and painful remembering" (Till, 2005, p. 8). In Berlin, Till's focus settled on "why people make places to create meaning about who and where they are in the world," as well as "how they expect places to work emotionally, socially, culturally, and politically" (*ibid*.). In Cape Town, along with Jonker, she sought to describe the city in terms of "a *memorial cartography* anchored by sites of trauma, struggle and popular memory", an approach that tried to "create spaces for both the dead and the living" (Jonker and Till, 2009, p. 306). The Carr's Hill site outside of Cork city, already made liminal and problematic by a history of isolation, anonymity and stigmatization (Mark-Fitzgerald, 2013, pp. 107–112) and now further complicated by the probable presence of the unmarked graves of children from Bessborough Mother and Baby Home (COI, 2019, pp. 26–39; Cantwell, 2019; O'Keeffe, 2019), also suggests itself as a location that can be described in terms of memorial cartographies.

In my approach, I am conscious of engaging with the specific complexities of mapping spectral traces in an Irish context. As choreographer Fearghus Ó'Conchúir has noted, the Irish post-colonial body has had to prove itself "disciplined, worthy of being independent", resulting in bodies that were – and are – "controlled in particular ways" (Ó Conchúir, 2017). Through *The Casement Project*, which invited viewers to dance with the queer body of Roger Casement, Ó Conchúir sought to explore "the possibility of moving bodies from where they were before to new places, and to making visible kinds of bodies or articulations of bodies that didn't exist before" (*ibid*.), a thought process that also informs my own interactions with Irish bodies that were deemed unruly, and thus subject to punishment, to discard, to being hidden, silenced and forgotten.

Deep Mapping

In her account of deep mapping, Springett suggests the term first emerged in relation to the work of American travel writer William Least Heat Moon, who spent nine years documenting Chase County, Kansas, in the Midwest of the United States, and whose subsequent publication, *PrairyErth (a deep map)*, interwove recorded interviews with locals, botanic information, Native American folklore and histories, literary and archival records, weather reports, geological data and cartographic references with travel writing and personal poetic reflections (Springett, 2016, pp. 1–3). While noting the work of Moon as an important milestone, Biggs is also careful to reflect on deep mapping's history as a multi-disciplinary practice (Biggs, 2010b, p. 5). In his introduction to the practice for the *Mapping Spectral Traces 2010* symposium guide, he references the work of visual artist Lewis DeSoto; the site-based performances of

Mike Pearson, Michael Shanks, Clifford McLucas, and the radical Welsh performance group *Brith Gof*; the walking, writing, and mapping projects of Iain Sinclair and Tim Robinson; and the sound, video, and digital artworks of Sue Palmer (Biggs, 2010b). Springett (2016) also pays close attention to the interdisciplinary nature of deep mapping, noting, in particular, that the writings of Pearson & Shanks, regarding a practice-based, *performative* approach to deep mapping, have proved seminal for contemporary understandings of the process. In *Theatre/Archaeology*, performance-creator Pearson and archaeologist Shanks trace their theoretical and practical collaborative encounters with landscape, their "'incorporations'", which they explain as:

> juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual…. which leave space for the imagination of the reader….meaning is not monopolised. As such, they may function as an alternative kind of site-report. (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p. 159)

It is this thinking, or more accurately, this questioning about place, about interacting with place and space, that has proved particularly salient for me in my own approach to the process of deep mapping:

> How can we read a landscape? How do memories attach to places? What is the relationship between landscape, experience and identity? How do we make sense of the multiplicity of meanings that resonate from landscapes and memories? What constitutes a sense of place? What is the relationship between personal and public memory? How does place act as a mnemonic for memory? How do we use the past to help create a sense of identity? How are notions of place operational upon us? Are they still relevant in an era of mobility and notions of shifting identity? (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p. 146)

These questions are fundamental to my practice. Equally so, however, is what Springett – in her discussion of McLucas' text "There are ten things that I can say about these deep maps" – terms the "openness and humble nature of deep maps", i.e. the idea that "rather than being a declaration or avowal they are to be considered a conversation" (Springett, 2016, p. 7). In their chapter on deep mapping, Biggs & Modeen echo such a sentiment, refusing what they term a "catch-all" definition of the practice, arguing that "deep mapping means different things to different people," with their suggestion being that the emphasis should be on process, rather than result, as deep maps will always and inevitably "exceed our ability to realise them" (Biggs & Modeen, 2021). These considerations, of deep mapping as an activity *not* preoccupied with the arrival at certainty and the elimination of doubt – and thus contravening enlightenment/colonial/modern ideas of the map as a vehicle for sorting and organizing the world (Biggs & Modeen, 2021) – are also reflected in work of artist, researcher and educator

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Silvia Loeffler, whose deep mapping project of Dun Laoghaire Harbour, the *Glas Journal* (2014–2016), adopted:

> a rigorous yet poetic approach, informed by visual arts practices, a heartfelt feminism and a carefully developed consideration of a harbor understood both as 'a Chronotopic Threshold Structure' in the tradition of Bakhtin, and a prismatic evocation of those places that are woven into our daily lives – those we name 'home', 'haven' or 'harbour'. (Biggs & Modeen, 2021)

Writing about the project, Loeffler discusses her approach to the mapping of the harbour, suggesting she employed "emotional mapping" which she terms an "engagement of spatial practices with the human condition" (Loeffler, 2016, p. 35), as well as "Liquid Mappings" which allow for a "fluid and performative discourse… a medley of geography, topography and history of a place that is based on a heteroglossic narrative" (*ibid*., p. 39). These approaches, she argues, helped her move towards "an alternative cultural production" of the Dun Laoghaire Harbour, one that allowed for an "exploration of intimacy with public space in a way that I could not have grasped with the objectively structured methods of a scientific analysis" (*ibid*., p. 45). Loeffler's approach, which foregrounds David Seamon's concept of the "place-ballet" (Seamon, 1980, cited in Loeffler, 2016, p. 31), along with Biggs' consideration of the deep mapping process as one that should "strive to remain 'unstable, fragile and temporary… *a conversation and not a statement*'" (McLucas, n.d., cited in Biggs, 2010a), have been thus to the fore of my thinking as I conduct my deep mapping project of the Carr's Hill burial site.

It is, however, important to bear in mind that the open approach to deep mapping can itself become a potential difficulty. As Roberts notes, the

> process of framing an 'open' deep mapping runs the risk of a sort of 'inverse disciplining' on account of the very fact that it *is* an object of discourse, even if it is trying its best not to be. (Roberts, 2016a, p. XI)

Conscious of this risk, Roberts challenges himself to a balancing act: that of, on the one hand, "questioning the coherence and validity of deep mapping …. and maintaining a loose, plural and open application of the term on the other" (*ibid.*). My work seeks to build upon such a thought process, upon the "sense of the fundamental *unmappability* of the world the 'deep map' sets out to map" (*ibid*., p. XII).

Before drawing this review of deep mapping to a conclusion, it is worth mentioning two works in Irish culture that have engaged in forms of mapping of traumatic space, and which I see as providing important context for my own project. The first, Alannah O'Kelly's multi-media trilogy *The Country Blooms, a Garden and a Grave* (1992–1995), was conceived by the artist as a response to unmarked famine graves in the Irish countryside. By means of photos,

video, sound and performance works – which included references to nature, to the landscape, to childbirth, nurture, death, decay and rebirth – O'Kelly's aim was to tell the stories of the mass famine graves, to "uncover them, to let them be known" (O'Kelly, 2005, pp. 141–142). As Marshall writes, the result of the work was to make "visible a festering wound at the centre of Irish life," while also acknowledging "pain and the need for public grieving, creating a space for loss and a model for that grieving" (Marshall, 2016).

The second work, Kimberly Campanello's 'poetry object' *MOTHERBABYHOME* (2019), is an attempt to 'map' the liminal space of the unmarked gravesite of at least 796 children, who were housed at the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway. By means of a project of 796 pages (one page for each of the children), as well as an 'avant object' edition of the work, which entailed a small set of individual copies housed in a hand-made oak box, created because the children were not buried in coffins, *MOTHERBABYHOME* operates as a form of caring for a place (and the lives associated with that space), which had until recently been all but erased from the Irish collective memory and culture.

By situating and considering my own works of deep mapping alongside these artistic projects, I aim to engage in a process that creates an opportunity – for space, for reflection, for breathing, for healing to potentially begin.

Mapping the Spatial Presence of Ghosts at Carr's Hill

It is silent, lonely, here, taken over once again by nature. This is an entry from my notebook, written after my most recent visit to the site in July 2021. I had come equipped for the trip – my third to the location and the first time I had come to the space on my own – with an A4 notebook and a pen for field notes; an iphone for taking photographs, and a bottle of water to mitigate against the sunshine and the heat, which I also documented, writing in my notes about *this week of glorious summer.* My two previous visits to the site were made to coincide with the annual An Gorta Mór Memorial Project, in 2020 and 2019 respectively. On those occasions the grass had been mowed to a flat carpet of yellow ochre, and the tall stalks shrouding the memorial stone erected in 1997 had been pulled away, in order that the gathered audience could read its commemoration with ease. Wreaths had also been placed on either side of the memorial, which has the inscription:

> 150th Anniversary/An Gorta Mór/In Memory of the Thousands/of Cork People who died during/the Great Famine/and are buried here/Go nedeana dia trócaire orthu[3]/Unveiled by/Jean Kennedy Smith US Ambassador/Erected by/The Cork

[3] May God have mercy on them.

Remembrance Committee/2nd June 1997

At the 2020 Memorial event, a second, smaller plaque had also been placed on top of this memorial. It reads:

> 1845–1850/Ar Mhór na Ngeabheal/I gcuimhne
> na Daoine/Bás Reilig Seo[4]

The new plaque, the mown grassland, and the ceremonies, represent significant progress for the Memorial Project, which held its first commemorative event in 2009 at St Joseph's Cemetery on Tory Top Road (celebratingcorkpast.com), but was only able to move to Carr's Hill in 2017, when the condition of the gravesite was improved as a result of efforts by the An Gorta Mór Memorial Project – formerly known as the Cork and County Famine Group (An Gorta Mór Memorial Project, 2017; McMahon, 2011). On those occasions, I listened to speeches, recitals, songs; I looked at the black and white drawings of the Famine horror, which had been pasted to white tableaux placed at the foot of Sorenson's cross for the event. I watched as the small crowd lined up to offer monetary donations to the Memorial Project. However, my engagement with the site in July 2021 was a much different, more melancholy, but potentially more significant experience. My notes from that day in 2021 pay much attention to the nature surrounding me:

> I listen to the crickets. I sit shrouded by high grass listening to the cars pass on the main road. I hear the cattle lowing even though all around me I can only see tall grass. Flowers come up to my chest. I hear birds in the silence. I see a brown admiral butterfly. I am stepping over the long stems of ferns. The only noise is my rustling. (Field note extract)

My notes also record my decision to walk around the perimeter of the site. It is clear this was not a straightforward act: I write that "I am hampered by the long weeds and the sea of ferns" (see Figure 2), and write also that it is only when I reach the foot of the large cross that I find any grass dampened down by the footsteps of others. The walk, however, allowed me to take my time exploring the large site, just as it allowed me to come close to both memorials, pull back the grass to read slowly the words inscribed on them, take note of the bunch of plastic red roses that had been laid atop them. I walked up to and around the base of Sorenson's cross, with the four large spotlights at its base. More unexpected, and poignant, was my discovery, as I walked, of a tree stump, behind and to the right of the cross, which had been festooned with a

[4] 1845-1850//The great slaughter of the Gaelic people/ In memory of the dead people in this graveyard.

Figure 2: Long weeds at the burial site at Carr's Hill

silver tinsel garland, two small teddy bears, and a bunch of what looked to have been lilies (now withered) (see Figure 3). It is clear that this is a makeshift memorial for the children who may be buried here, but for the moment, my notes only record an observation of what I see, rather than any attempt to make sense of it. In fact, despite the evidence of human presence at the site (the memorials, the cross, the dampened grass), the notes from my visit to the location of July 2021 suggest a burial space that has been almost entirely reclaimed by nature, now with its own ecology and rhythm, contributing towards what Roberts has termed an "interiority of place and experiential dwelling" (2016b, p. 164), separate and distinct from the busy road close by, the noise of the cars, the evidence of contemporary life. My notes reflect this sense of being inside a place apart – I note the sense of calm, the feeling of peace. If I didn't know about the unmarked graves of the dead, would I have felt any sadness during my time there?

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Figure 3: Tree stump with silver tinsel and two small teddy bears

I did, however, know about the presence of the unmarked graves. While it is no doubt the case, as Roberts states, that “in an environment such as this the mind is left to follow its own course: consciousness and geography alike become unmoored” (*ibid*.), my train of thought on the occasion did follow a particular course, related to the specific conditions of the site: “Who gets to be remembered? Who gets to be a ghost? What is the place memory of the site?” (Field note extract) I made these notes after I had finished my walk around the site, as I sat alone amidst the tall grass and was in a position to take stock of what I had seen and what I felt. My reflections at this point largely concern the juxtaposition of the natural world with the sense of the place as a space of the unsettled (human) dead, and thus a location that defies a straightforward response. Towards the end of my visit, I wrote the following thoughts in my notebook:

> I try to bring myself back to the people who died with no name, to the babies who were brought here. We really don't know who is buried here. What am I doing here, here with the birds and the mist in the distance, walking on the lives of others, treading on their memories? (Field note extract)

As these latter field notes attest, the deep mapping exercise I carried out that day appears to have raised more questions than answers. This distinguishes it not only from the "finite and neat chronological narration models" discussed as problematic by Loeffler (2016, p. 45), but also means the exercise possibly allows for a way of moving "beyond *categorical* modes of thinking" (Biggs, 2010a). It thus offers a form of response to a site that is itself neither fixed nor settled, that itself moves beyond categories, that is itself a complex, complicated space. This is not to invalidate the work of the An Gorta Mór Memorial Project, nor to suggest that calls from advocates for the Bessborough mothers and babies to mark the graves of the children buried there (Cantwell, 2021; Hogan, 2020) are not necessary and urgent. It is, however, to remember the difficulty, the danger even, of a past that is

> organised and structured through place to create a chronotope, or time-space formation, through which contemporary narrations and performances of subjectivity and authority are inscribed. (Bhabha, 1990, cited in Till, 2005, p. 10)

Meantime, in her research exploring the position of the author in relation to the site of writing itself, Rendell suggests that "where I am makes a difference to who I can be and what I can know" (Rendell, 2007, p. 179). As evidenced by some of my field notes from the Carr's Hill gravesite, I am attempting similar interrogations, trying to investigate, in both process and outcome, "the spatial and often changing positions we occupy materially, conceptually, emotionally, and ideologically" (Rendell, 2007, p. 180). It is an understanding that is also informed by my reading of black feminist scholar bell hooks, who writes that black people unwilling to play the role of "exotic Other" must "invent spaces of radical openness" (hooks 1989, p. 36). hooks terms these kinds of spaces as "a margin – a profound edge," and acknowledges that while locating oneself there is difficult, it is also necessary (*ibid.*). The deep mapping work I am involved in is informed by an attempt to locate myself within such a margin, while also creating work that becomes of the site, like the site, work that is, as Pearson & Shanks note, "fractured and provisional" because there will "always be tension between what you know, what you can find out and what you can never know." (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p. 146). By considering who I am in relation to the liminal space of the unmarked gravesite, along with consideration of the Other, my attempt is to create a broader understanding of material and spatial experiences in a complex and complicated site, with the enquiry thus not focused

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on “the mastery of a certain historio-geographical discourse” but instead one that stresses the “importance of the bricolage, the fragmentation and the in-between in its production of meanings” (Loeffler, 2016, p. 41).

Conclusions on creative practice-with-research

In considering creative practice-with-research, I argue for the validity of what Loeffler has termed “hybrid explorations of ethnographic space” (Loeffler, 2016, p. 45), in this instance the interweaving of creative practice (prose writing) with research. In other words, “new cultural productions of spatial meanings” (*ibid*.) are necessary to explore the significance of unmarked gravesites in contemporary Ireland.

While I have not yet established the exact manner in which the creative-non-fiction writing will interweave with the academic thinking, the works of artists/thinkers such as Loeffler, Rendell, Pearson & Shanks, and Biggs, along with the artistic considerations of O’Kelly and Campanello, as noted earlier, are key to my approach. Visual artist Fiona Woods, whose project *Walking Silvermines* (2007–2011), a response to abandoned mines around the North Tipperary region in Ireland, included drawings, photographs, documents, writing, as well as a digital presence with text, images, and sound, has also proved formative for my thought process/creative practice. Richard Skelton’s *Landings* (2019), a publication assembled from a diverse array of materials that responds to the moorland landscape of Anglezarke; Marit Kapla’s *Osebol* (2021), a recording of testimonies from a tiny village in northern Sweden, and Rachel Lichtenstein’s *Digital Memory Map of Jewish Manchester* (2021), are also important signposts for my thinking. Jane Rendell, meantime, presents a variety of approaches to site-writing through a series of projects that combine:

> image and text to produce variations in spatial relations; exploring the architectural and spatial qualities of storytelling; blending personal and academic writing styles to create different subject positions; investigating the interaction between material and psychic states; articulating the interactive relationship between writing and art/design practice; and showing how written responses to specific sites can propose innovative urban genres that hover between fact and fiction. (Rendell, 2019–2021)

In other words, the possibilities for site-writing, for writing *of* and *about* site, are vast, while the form such writing can take, both in process and outcome, is equally expansive. On the one hand, this refusal of fixity (Rendell, 2010, p. 2, referencing Braidotti, 1994) is a potentially exhilarating prospect, because all approaches are on the table, and all approaches can be seen as valid. At the same time, as Rendell also notes, the attempt to situate oneself academically

and artistically in the "place-between" (Rendell, 2011, p. xii), can prove problematic, most immediately when it comes to the strictures of providing clarity for funding bodies (in art and academia) and the publishing industry (in terms of disseminating writing and finding readers), but also for me a practitioner as I attempt to feel my way forward without a clear map. Here again, Rendell (2010, p. 242) points a way of advancing in this situation, writing that theory has always informed her responses to the difficulties posed by a specific writing situation, and this is an approach I seek to echo, as I turn to the research for grounding, for balance, for support in finding my way through the long grass and weeds.

The unmarked gravesite at Carr's Hill, County Cork, reflects meanings of shame, confusion, loss, love, silence, abandonment and recovery. The act of mapping the spectral traces at the site presents the possibility of other forms of meaning, which may, as Till and Jonker (2009) suggest, involve disturbing, dispelling, or accommodating ghosts, but always operates as part of an attempt to acknowledge and pay attention to the presence of those who have gone before. The work of deep mapping, of walking, observing, slow residency and of waiting, of taking notes and images at the site, along with a consideration of the history and cultural memory of the location, is all part of the work of care, of holding deeply. It is part of allowing what Edward Casey describes as the "unresolved remainders of memory" which, he suggests, "fall outside of the supposed lucidity of consciousness and exist beyond the formal realms of commemoration and narrative" (Casey, 2000, quoted in Till, 2010, p. 6). This form of mapping, when interwoven with the artistic practice of creative-non-fiction writing, will move towards the making of a work that interlaces the "historical with the contemporary, the political with the lyrical, the factual with the fictional, and the discursive with the embodied" (Till, 2010, p. 7). In doing so, the work attempts to sketch out the complex pathways of "political struggle and social trauma, joy and pain, mourning and memory, and invite us to engage our sense memory" (*ibid.*), so that these liminal and still traumatic territories can be engaged with in a manner that asks for empathy, tender exploration, listening, and, perhaps, points a way forward, to an opportunity "for healing to happen" (Marshall, 2016).

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The Forest of Arden as a Liminal Site for Criticism in *As You Like It*

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Abstract

The Forest of Arden in Shakespeare's As You Like It *has been conceptualised as a pastoral setting and a utopian land, and the play has been a matter of discussion in green and ecocritical studies. However, the ambiguous rendering of the setting and its contradictory qualities make the play a storm centre of such critical works. Undoubtedly, these debates meet with critical acclaim, and the play still stirs up a discussion about its spatial setting. In effect, Shakespeare's play lays bare the traits of liminal place in the deliberation of the forest setting and the experiences of its inhabitants. While the first act is set at Duke Frederick's court, the rest of the play takes place in the Forest of Arden where the characters develop communitas as outsiders. When the sixteen forest scenes of the play are analysed, one may posit that there are different definitions of Arden. First and foremost, Arden's exact location cannot be identified; it might be situated in a French, English or other European border. Secondly, Arden is fused with contradictory and ambiguous characteristics. The forest is fraught with economic difficulties, hunger, coldness and dangerous threats for men and women. Yet it is a place of familial and romantic love, friendship and bliss. In addition to its ambivalent traits, the perception of the forest changes from one character to another. Each character adds a different meaning to the forest regarding their own experiences in this setting. The forest is also a place of transformation and transition as the characters leave the court, go to the forest and return to the court after establishing new identities and restoring their positions in the end. Moreover, Arden becomes a site of resistance against usurpation and banishment, and a place of political critique of the court, corruption, exile and colonialism throughout the play. Therefore, Arden emerges as a multi-layered and ambiguous place and such qualities make the forest a liminal landscape. This paper sets out to claim that the Forest of Arden in* As You Like It *can be regarded as a liminal site in which Shakespeare veils his critical remarks on the late Elizabethan court, implicitly questions the practices of banishment and exile, and comments on contemporary political, social and cultural issues by using liminality as a tool for criticism.*

Written at a time when pastoral works were popular on early modern stages, *As You Like It* (1599–1600) accorded with the form and content of the pastoral tradition. This comedy is Shakespeare's reworking of Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde: Euphues Golden Legacie* (1590) which is a pastoral romance. Most scholars agree, as will be outlined further below, that this source, therefore, shapes the play's pastoral mood through which Shakespeare creates a pastoral surrounding in the Forest of Arden. The retreat of the characters from the court to the green setting, their appreciation of rustic life and the dominant theme of love resonate pastoral

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conventions laden with anti-court satire. The fact that Shakespeare's play presents the court only in the first act whereas the rest of the four acts are set in the Forest of Arden heralds the play's engagement with the pastoral as a critical tool. To be more specific, in the play, the forest becomes a site in which an alternative community is established to provide a critique of corruption and decay at the court. Moreover, the life in the pastoral landscape for newcomers is not associated with restriction and confinement; it rather suggests freedom and liberty from oppressive boundaries. From the start of the play, the characters and nature reciprocally define each other. As the courtiers in exile regard the forest as a place of liberation, the forest reveals itself as a place of freedom when Celia, fleeing from Duke Frederick's court with Rosalind and Touchstone, declares that their journey to Arden is "[t]o liberty and not to banishment" (2006, 1.3:135). Although it is not unusual to define all of these elements in terms of the life and culture embedded in the pastoral mode, the play offers an alternative reading, particularly in relation to its setting. When analysed closely, the details about life in the forest indicate that Shakespeare uses the setting to censure the contemporary practices of deforestation, colonialism and political punishments in the late Elizabethan period. And, it is the contention of this paper that Shakespeare creates the Forest of Arden as a liminal place which can be called an ambiguous, in-between place of transition and transformation loaded with opposite potentials, and this liminal forest serves as a means of Shakespeare's political criticism in *As You Like It*.

In effect, the ongoing debate about *As You Like It*'s setting illustrates that Shakespearean scholars propose different views on the play's pastoral features and the utopian vision of this genre. On the one hand, many critics have defined the play's pastoral genre. From David Erskine Baker's definition of the play as "the truest pastoral drama that ever was written" in 1764 (Baker, 1979, p. 25) to Todd A. Borlik's most recent claim on "a pastoral vision of an ecological commonwealth" (Borlik, 2011, p. 181), the argument on pastoral has been established. What is more, such analyses present an extensive discussion of the play's utopian landscape drawing on the idea that the rustic life is tinged with images of Eden, Arcadia or the Golden Age myth as can be clear from Jan Kott's reference to "the [play's] images of the Renaissance utopia" (Kott, 1965, p. 40) to Terry Gifford's comment on "Shakespeare's English Arcadia" (Gifford, 2010, p. 84). On the other hand, Shakespeare's use of the pastoral land is atypical and ostensibly not utopian. Some scholars, therefore, have questioned the play's seemingly pastoral / utopic realm on the grounds that the characters complain about harsh weather conditions, suffer from economic troubles and easily become vulnerable to animal attacks. Ryan Farrar, for instance, argues that:

> Shakespeare's pastoral comedy challenges conventional expectations as he combines a mode of utopian optimism with a mode of artistic realism, creating a dissonant conflict between the two. (Farrar, 2014, p. 367)

That is to say, *As You Like It* cannot be easily framed within the pastoral tradition while its forest setting does not reside in the utopian serenity of the pastoral site. The discussion about the play's engagement with the pastoral suggests that the forest setting is still open to further commentary since its definition remains problematic. Hence, defining Arden as a liminal place can be an alternative to the well-worn interpretations of the play's setting.

Originally referring to the beings "neither here nor there" (Turner, 1969, p. 65) and betwixt situations in the rites of passage, liminality grows into a concept to define in-between, transitional and ambiguous spatial and temporal positions. Broadly conceived, liminal locations are thresholds, borders or in-between zones which, as has been articulated by Teresa G. Reus and Terry Gifford:

> may involve actual spaces in which the transition is enacted places apart, or places to escape through or to escape to, places to occupy temporarily as well as experiences of transition undertaken by an initiative to act in the decision to separate from a prior state of security (Reus & Gifford, 2013, p. 6).

Here transition is indicative of mobility for the liminal entity; the person in a process of change departs his/her place and moves to a transitional site before constructing a new self. Therefore, liminal space is temporarily occupied while the liminal figure inhabits this place for a short period of time. Arnold van Gennep includes forests in his list of in-between zones: "ordinarily deserts, marshes, and most frequently virgin forests where everyone has full rights to travel and hunt" (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 18). Van Gennep, then, emphasises the sense of in-betweenness in such places: "Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. It is this situation which I have designated a transition" (*ibid*.). A similar experience can be identified in the liminal forest of Shakespeare's play when the characters from the court temporarily occupy the forest.

This study thus sets out to provide a new understanding of the Forest of Arden in Shakespeare's comedy as a liminal place. It is of interest to refer to Peter V. Marinelli's description of the pastoral land as

> a middle country of imagination, half-way between a past perfection and a present imperfection, a place of Becoming rather than Being, where an individual's potencies for the arts of life and love and poetry are explored and tested. It points two ways, therefore, backward into the past and forward into a possible future (Marinelli, 1971, p. 37).

The landscape, in other words, has an in-between nature since it mediates between the past and the future and, hence, it puts forward the idea of becoming in its present circumstances. Viewed in this way, such a place unravels its liminal quality as it evokes a fusion of values, in-betweenness, transition and transformation by offering a process of becoming. Considering these strains, the Forest of Arden can be called a liminal place as it unfolds different aspects of spatial liminality. Although the concept of liminality has been studied in relation to Shakespearean comedy by Penny Gay (2008, p. 11) and to Rosalind's cross-dressing and gender identity by Robert H. Bell (2011, p. 128), this article examines the forest setting in *As You Like It* as a liminal site. Therefore, the argument will be built upon the play's setting as a liminal place in the rest of the article. First, the features of Shakespeare's liminal setting will be presented with respect to the forest's in-betweenness, uncertainty, ambiguous potential and its transformative and transitional power. The article will then reconsider the aim of Shakespeare's use of the liminal place in this play. In search of this aim, the article argues that Shakespeare explores the liminal forest as a tool for his political criticism. More strongly than any other settings of his plays, Shakespeare makes use of liminal Arden to criticise the late Elizabethan practices of land politics, colonisation and Elizabeth I's methods of punishing courtiers. Thus, the final part of the article will offer a topical reading of enclosure, the political conflict between England and Ireland and the case of Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex's struggle with the Queen.

Liminal Forest of Arden

The beginning of the play illustrates that Duke Senior's throne has been usurped by his brother Duke Frederick, and Duke Senior and his courtiers had to leave the court. Duke Senior and his supporters are living in the Forest of Arden as exiles. Duke Senior's daughter Rosalind, on the other hand, is still living at the court of her uncle. However, in the first act of the play, Duke Frederick banishes her from his court because he regards Rosalind as a threat to his political power and his daughter Celia's position at the court. After this crisis, Rosalind, accompanied by Celia and the court fool Touchstone, flees to the forest. Orlando, Sir Rowland de Bois's youngest son, likewise, must escape from the court and go to Arden because of his tyrant elder brother Oliver who hates Orlando and threatens his life. Therefore, the major characters of the play retreat from their usual course of social life at the court to the forest. The forest thus serves as a "place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action" (Turner 1969, p. 167). It is also telling that being in exile is, according to Mihai I. Spariosu, a liminal experience (Spariosu, 2015, p. 28) which also creates liminal worlds as "indeterminate ontological landscapes or gray

areas located in between alternative worlds, subworlds, and superworlds" (Spariosu, 1997, p. 68). Considering that Arden is the alternative world to the court, and going into exile breaks down the ordinary course of life for the characters, they go through a process of transformation in the forest. Thus, the experience of exile in Arden contributes to the forest's liminal status. Through the withdrawal from courtly life, the forest in the play provides a refuge to the characters, but Arden is not simply a utopian pastoral setting. While the forest is a temporary host that enables the characters to transform, it is fraught with contradictions and ambiguity. In the play, Arden is rendered with liminal qualities of ambiguity, transition, in-betweenness and transformation. Taking all these into consideration, the rest of this study deals with the detailed scrutiny of Arden as a liminal place and then exposes the reason for Shakespeare's use of liminal spatiality for political criticism.

The first feature of liminal Arden can be explored in relation to how the forest is composed in an in-between state by the playwright. The Forest of Arden, to be more precise, oscillates between fact and fiction, revealing a liminal state of in-betweenness. As Shakespeare works with both a real forest and an imaginative one in his presentation of Arden, the forest appears halfway between fact and fiction. Although the fusion of reality and imagination is a common characteristic in Shakespeare's works, this combination functionally designs spatial in-betweenness and ambiguity. Indeed, this helps the playwright locate his play into the context of England from a safe distance through a sense of alienation. To begin with the realistic aspects of the forest, it is telling that Shakespeare, drawing from Lodge's *Rosalynde*, ascribes the setting of *As You Like It* to the French court and the Forest of Ardennes. The play indicates this as follows: Orlando "is the stubbornest young fellow of France" (1.1:133–34); Duke Frederick's court is a distant French court where the courtiers use some French words (1.2:96); and some characters like Le Beau and Jaques have French names. The distance from England is also advocated in the depiction of Arden in comparison to Robin Hood's English forest by the character Charles, the wrestler of the court (1.1:111). These details of the play do not cast doubt on the setting's Frenchness as Shakespeare works with the source text's setting, Ardennes. A close look at the location of the real forest of Ardennes reveals a detail of the place's liminality. The real forest of Ardennes is located between the French cities of Bordeaux and Lyons. What is peculiar about this forest is that Ardennes was a borderland among countries in early modern Europe and its boundaries still extend from Belgium to Luxembourg, Germany and France. Maurice A. Hunt clarifies that "the forest of Ardennes in Lodge's *Rosalynde* [is] a territory straddling the boundaries of modern France, Belgium, and Luxembourg" (Hunt, 2008, p. 78). Lisa Hopkins, too, delineates Ardennes as a "border country

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between France and what is now Belgium" (Hopkins, 2014, p. 70). That is to say, Ardennes is a forest on the edge of the three European countries. It being on the threshold reveals the place's liminal quality.

The debate about the forest's liminal location illustrates that the play strategically works on this ambiguity to allude to England from a safe distance. In other words, the liminal in-betweenness of the forest is functionally used to a great degree to veil the references to the changes in early modern England. Shakespeare's use of the English spelling of the French Ardennes deliberately causes confusion and diverts attention from the French setting to the English one. In this regard, the Forest of Arden can be regarded as a real landscape located within the borders of England. As a matter of fact, when the play was written, Arden was situated on the northern side of Avon in Warwickshire, Shakespeare's hometown. Before Shakespeare's birth, the Forest of Arden was heavily filled with trees (Hunt, 2008, p. 140), but the area was not very dense in Shakespeare's time. The forest covered some woodlands, pastures, a few agricultural lands and mines at the end of the sixteenth century (Barton, 2017, p. 8). In the play, it is not easy to identify whether the forest is densely occupied with woods or trees. The words such as forest, wood, tree or forester are occasionally used to remind the audience of the forest setting. Although the type of trees is not clarified in these references, a palm tree, olive trees and an oak tree are mentioned (3.2:171–72; 4.3:76; 4.3:103). However, the forest is called a desert six times throughout the play (2.1:22; 2.4:71; 2.6:17; 2.7:111; 3.2:122; 4.3:140). Along with the notes in the Arden edition of the play, Robert N. Watson clearly indicates that the desert in the play refers to "the place by human abandonment" (Watson, 2011, p. 81). The fact that Duke Frederick's moral reformation and dedication to religious life takes place in the forest reveals that Arden may have a trace of the medieval forest and the image of a desert. Corinne J. Saunders notes that:

> [t]he definition of the forest as uncultivated landscape, rather than simply as woodland, allowed the writers of the Middle Ages to equate easily the forest of their own times and the desert of the Bible. This desert landscape carried with its specific associations of solitude and divine inspiration which were to be appropriated as part of the forest's symbolism in the romances. (Saunders, 1993, p. 10)

As with Duke Frederick's sudden conversion, Arden echoes the medieval Biblical desert as a transformative landscape of devoutness and spirituality. Read in this way, the references to the desert may advocate the meaning of the word as a barren land. Accordingly, the references to the forest can also be associated with the play's depiction of a woodland and an uncultivated land together. Moreover, the forest in the play might illustrate the historical process of deforestation as the green areas in England diminished in time. At the beginning of the 1590s,

Borlik reports, the decline in the number of trees was a serious issue for the nation (Borlik, 2008). For this reason, according to Borlik, the current environmental crisis forced some to deal with the English forestry as a special topic in their writings among which Michael Drayton, Shakespeare's contemporary, presented the ecological devastation of Arden in one of his poems (*ibid*., p. 40–46). Hence, Arden's ambiguous topography in the play may refer to such an ecological change at the time.

As an instance of another historical resonance, the inhabitants of the forest are portrayed in line with Arden's real population at that time. Hunt claims that there were various kinds of people in the Forest of Arden in the Elizabethan period: "Hunters, gatherers, masterless men and women, and cottage industries populated this rapidly thinning woodland" (Hunt, 2008, p. 80). Likewise, Shakespeare's foresters are exiles, outlaws, courtiers, shepherds and country people. More interestingly, a real Arden family appears in this work. Orlando and Oliver's surname, de Boys, is a play on the French "de Bois" meaning "of the forest" (Halio, 1962, p. 201). While the meaning intensifies the emphasis on the forest, this surname belonged to a family living in Warwickshire who had a manor in Arden (Barton, 2017, p. 130). This is to say that Shakespeare builds up his image of a real Arden in reference to the real inhabitants of the forest. This strengthens the claim that the play advocates a realistic forest setting in early modern England.

While Shakespeare colours Arden with some details from real life, he also borrows from previous literary works and traditions, other than the pastoral, in his presentation of the natural world in the play. This contributes to his development of the liminal land and community on the threshold of fact and fiction in his play. Among the different sources of the fictive forest, the influence of Robin Hood stories comes to the fore in Shakespeare's depiction of Arden. Indeed, this suggestion is directly made in the play when Charles tells Oliver that Duke Senior:

> is already in the Forest of Arden and a many merry men with him, and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England (1.1:109–111).

The reference to Robin Hood is ostensibly an element to stress the Englishness of the setting which evokes a sense of familiarity, enabling the audience to comprehend the correlation between Arden and England. Plays with Robin Hood as the protagonist[1] were especially popular in the 1590s. Lois Potter states that:

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[1] To name a few, as Jeanette Marks reports, there was a lost play called *Pastoral Plesant Commedie of Robin Hood and Little John* (1594) (Marks, 1972, p. 158). Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert Earl Huntington* and *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntington* (1598) were other examples of popular Robin Hood plays according to Albert H. Tolman (1922, p. 75) and Jeffrey L. Singman (1998, p. 63).

> [a]ll the extant Robin Hood plays belong to the 1590s, a period of uncertainty about the succession to Elizabeth I, and the plays both reflect and displace popular anxiety by dramatizing other periods of instability (Potter, 1998, p. 21).

Carrie Griffin argues that the forest in these plays is a site belonging to the outlaw and emphasises the Englishness of the place (Griffin, 2016, p. 60). Drawing on the Robin Hood tradition, Shakespeare alludes to England in Arden by using the forest as an ideological locus as in the case of Robin Hood's story.

Moreover, the reference to Robin Hood is functional for the depiction of the liminal community in Arden. According to Helen Phillips, the Robin Hood community in exile is a group of merry men away "from normal power and comfort" in their alternative site of living (Phillips, 2008, p. 86). This group's distance from "normal" life is a key point to acknowledge the Arden community's connection with liminality. In the play, Duke Senior and other courtiers are the equivalent of Robin Hood's community living temporarily away from the structural and hierarchical boundaries of the court. Duke Senior's depiction of the community as his "co-mates and brothers in exile" (2.1:1) in the forest fits into Turner's definition of *communitas*, a liminal society "as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal ritual elders" (Turner, 1967, p. 97). The exile of the courtiers in Arden is a liminal experience as Paul Stenner states that:

> [a]ny situation involving the removal or erasure of the usual limits that organize life (providing recognizable social identities and positions with allocated rights and responsibilities, etc.) can be considered liminal (Stenner, 2017, p. 62).

After taking liminal action of exile, the community grows into *communitas* as they collectively experience liminality in Arden. As they suspend the structures and norms of the court in the forest, they temporarily exist together in an anti-structural state of *communitas*. Therefore, the allusion to Robin Hood functions twofold. Arden is first poised between fact and fiction, indicating the forest's liminal in-betweenness in order to create the image of England in the reader/audience's mind. Then, the correlation between Robin Hood's community and the courtiers helps to uncover the liminal community in Arden. In this respect, Arden wavering between fact and fiction provides a shelter for the liminal community who resists against the oppressive rule and structure in this in-between site.

In addition to the liminal sense of spatial in-betweenness, the play provides another aspect of liminal landscape, namely the forest's presentation of conflicting possibilities to its inhabitants. The liminal forest plays on different aspects of potentiality because the land is betwixt and between both an idyllic and dangerous site. First, Arden manifests the creative potential of liminality as the forest offers an ideal vision to its visitors. In this respect, the play

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essentially reveals that Arden provides the foresters with a comfortable zone as well as pleasure and peace. For instance, Duke Senior and his men live like those in the Golden Age (1.1:111–113). Duke Senior conceptualises an ideal place and declares that they "[h]ere feel [. . .] not the penalty of Adam" (2.1:5). In this context, even in the forest's name, Arden evokes the garden of Eden, recalling a paradisiacal atmosphere. In contrast to the Biblical story, the courtiers are not expelled from their Eden; conversely, they are driven into the forest after they leave the court. Also, the characters who suffer from the corrupt policies of the court dwell in Arden where peace prevails. While the court is the home of ambition and degeneration, Arden is immediately associated with contentment and serenity. Duke Senior's address to other lords indicates the difference between the two worlds: "Are not these woods / More free from peril than the envious court?" (2.1:3–4). Likewise, Rosalind, with Celia and Touchstone, willingly goes to the forest "in content / To liberty" (1.3:134–135) to make the most of the idealised land. After a while, they all find happiness in the forest where "love is crowned with the prime" (5.3:36). While the forest enables its inhabitants to lead an alternative life by rejecting the adverse qualities of the court life, their lives are devoted to pleasure, peace and idleness. In this light, there is a common tendency to read the forest as the Edenic landscape with respect to the discussion on the pastoral elements of the play. Alternatively, Phebe Jensen (2008) presents an extensive discussion on the festive culture merged with the Robin Hood tradition in the play. Analysing the play's application of Robin Hood with traditional parish entertainments, Jensen concludes that "the religious potential of festivity" embedded in the pastoral can be observed in Shakespeare's comedy (Jensen, 2008, p. 148). What remains to be seen in the context of liminality is that the elements of festive and merry life in Arden reveal only one aspect of the liminal place. Regardless of religious festivity, Arden, broadly speaking, is an in-between zone of positive and negative potentiality. Thus, the utopian picture of the forest evidences the creative potential of the liminal site.

The process of becoming by the characters and the transformative agency of the liminal land can be pieced together to explore the reciprocal relation between the place and characters. Of importance is the potential of love to transform the characters during their rites of passage within the context of spatial liminality in Shakespeare's comedy. In fact, the play demonstrates that liminal "power acts upon 'self' and identity at specific points in space" (Slater & Coyle, 2017, p. 385) as the characters "let the forest judge" (3.2:119) from the beginning of the play. By this point, Jeffrey S. Theis's depiction of early modern forests as places of change and transformation is also noteworthy because the act of transformation is directly related to liminality (Theis, 2009, p. 39). Considering that liminality is about the process of change,

Arden's transformative agency manifests the liminal land's power over the characters. Although there is always a possibility of negative process in liminality because of the indeterminate nature of liminal experience (Stenner, 2017, p. 185), *As You Like It* pinpoints the positive transformation of the characters through different kinds of love in the forest thanks to its generic structure as a comedy.

Initially, romantic love is underlined in the play. As Arden reveals its creative potentiality as a happy land, the characters complete transitional rites and return to the society that they had left before. Therefore, Arden acts as a limen to maturity which leads them to a happy ending and a reintegration process through the manifestation of love. Considering that "[t]he theme of the comic is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it" (Frye, 1957, p. 43), the play celebrates the marriage of four couples, Rosalind–Orlando, Celia–Oliver, Phoebe–Silvius and Audrey–Touchstone (5.4:126-38), when the last phase of rites of passage, the rite of incorporation in the case of a wedding ceremony, takes place in the forest. As the forest becomes a home of romantic love, the characters transform themselves and embrace stable identities in society through marriage. In the last scene of the play, the wedding of the characters takes place after the intervention of the supernatural Hymen when Rosalind unmasks her real identity, but only Touchstone has already married before. For his marriage ceremony, despite Jaques's warning about Sir Oliver Martext's incompetence as a priest, Touchstone chooses Martext (his surname as a pun of marring) to marry him in case he may later leave his wife (3.3:76–85). Nevertheless, the play does not indicate that Touchstone is leaving his wife in the final scene so the liminal forest functionally leads all of these characters to love and marriage as a sign of their reintegration. At the end of the play, the last phase of rites of passage takes place in the forest through the wedding ceremony, which is a rite of incorporation. Therefore, the union of all couples emphasises the positive transformation of the characters.

Furthermore, the forest transforms the characters who have caused troubles in their families. The transformation of Oliver and Duke Frederick is worth noting because it evidences the liminal setting's power to change the characters dramatically. In addition to romantic love, familial love pins Arden's positive potentiality in the case of Oliver. In the relationship between Orlando and Oliver, it appears that violation takes place both on the domestic scale, that is in the family, and on a larger context of governance. Denton J. Snider asserts that Shakespeare

> has here [in the play] portrayed society in contradiction with its fundamental object; it has driven off those whom, by every tie of blood and of right, it was bound to protect, both State and Family have become the instruments of the direst injustice; on all sides we behold 'the world of wrong' (Snider, 1997, p. 317).

The happy atmosphere of Arden, too, enables the characters to redress the wrongs of family and state. Although Oliver previously plots against Orlando to harm him, Orlando makes peace with his elder brother Oliver after saving his life. Moreover, after this reconciliation, Orlando regains his property when Oliver tells him that:

> [i]t shall be to your good, for my father's house and all the revenue that was old Sir Rowland's will I estate upon you (5.2:9–11).

Familial love, accompanied by the characters' romantic love experience, restores the relationship between Oliver and Orlando so that the problem of inheritance is solved. When Oliver also falls in love with Celia and marries her, he takes his wife's family property as well. Therefore, familial love and the constitution of family through marriage both enable them to solve problems. As it is the forest that allows this change to take place, the liminal setting's transformative function manifests itself again.

Lastly, Arden's transformative potential comes out in the form of religious love in the play. Precisely, in the usurpation plot concerning Duke Senior, religious love becomes influential in the transformation of Duke Frederick. In the last act, it is announced that Duke Frederick who intends to kill Duke Senior in the forest meets a religious man on his way and becomes a different person:

> And to the skirts of this wild wood he came, / Where meeting with an old religious man, / After some question with him, was converted / Both from his enterprise and from the world" (5.4:157–60).

As stated above, Duke Frederick's moral conversion in Arden is a residue of the medieval forest concept, echoing the Biblical desert. In line with Arden's liminal potential, the spiritual power of the forest resonates with the landscape's transformative and constructive agency over the characters. This final transformation taking place in the forest is significant for Duke Senior to restore his position so that it brings a solution to the political problems of usurpation and tyranny. As can be seen, in different types of love, Arden becomes a transformative place because these characters develop into different figures in the forest. Therefore, the forest's transformative power reveals its liminal trait as a threshold to new identities.

Following the analysis of the forest's generative aspects, it has to be clarified that liminal places, unlike utopian places, do not merely embody positive possibilities. What is unique about the forest's liminal potentiality is that this place is hedged around with destructive capability. Shakespearean scholars, such as Kott (1965, p. 224) and Farrar (2014, p. 367) have underlined the adversity of the forest life that contradicts the Arcadian image in the play, but there is no clear definition to enunciate the conflicting qualities of Arden. Thus, it is possible

to identify the physical and economic challenges of the landscape in terms of the forest's liminal potential. Arden remains on the threshold of creative and destructive possibilities because liminal places are indeterminate sites with positive and negative potentials. Arden's uncertain potential capacity comes to the fore with its serious challenges to the characters. The play both renders the natural world as a comfortable place and packs it with potential danger that could destroy them.

The first negative potential of the liminal zone is a problem related to living in nature. This is the struggle experienced in harsh weather conditions. Broadly speaking, living in open air in close proximity to nature is advocated in the pastoral tradition, but this pleasure of life is only limited to spring and summer. This fact emphasised in Arden gives a realistic detail about the foresters' lives. It is Duke Senior who first voices their suffering from cold weather (2.1:6–8), and his follower Amiens also sings a song about winter and coldness, claiming that "winter and rough weather" are their enemies in the forest (2.5:7).

Secondly, wild beasts inhabiting Arden threaten the foresters' lives. Possible attacks from animals indicate the insecurity of the inhabitants, and it is possible to interpret both the threat of and actualised attacks as Arden's negative potential both on literal and allegorical levels. Beyond doubt, the animals that attack Oliver, a lioness and a serpent, demonstrate that Arden is a dangerous and savage world; thus, the rural reality is obviously far from the idealised conceptualisation of Arden. People and animals both fight to survive, suggesting untamed wilderness and savagery dominant in the forest. It is also possible to focus on animal symbolism here. The interpretation that the serpent and the lion may symbolise evil in the Christian context indicates that the Forest of Arden does not foster a positive ambience and devilish forces may threaten the foresters. More strikingly, Samantha S. Snively offers a political reading of the land and animals that Oliver depicts and relates them to Elizabeth I's threatening and dangerous power in England at that time:

> The aged and barren landscape that frames the encounter with the snake and lioness links these allusions with anxieties about the psychic threat posed by Elizabeth's body. Reading the landscape as an allusion to an aging, nonreproductive Elizabeth reframes the animals' potential meanings as well: the threats in the landscape of a barren, aging sexuality highlight the serpent's dominance through the threat of oral penetration and the lioness's monstrous nonmaternal body that disrupts patriarchal success and succession. (Snively, 2018, p. 335)

Snively's topical reading highlights how the Queen's political and sexual power is considered to be a threat to her country. What is interesting is that the literary and allegorical perception of the animals both suggests that the forest poses a direct threat to its inhabitants. Therefore, Arden displays not only its conflicting values but also proves its liminal in-betweenness by

shifting between safety and danger. In other words, the forest is between generative and destructive possibilities because of its liminal nature.

More significant as evidence for Arden's adversity is the problem of finding food and coping with economic troubles. In stark contrast to the idealised version of shepherds' lives, Arden is a hostile place to its inhabitants as can be strongly observed in the case of the shepherds Silvius and Corin's standard of life in the forest. Shakespeare subverts the idyllic representation by highlighting their lack of food and subsequent hunger in the forest. Although natural life may be regarded self-sufficient with its resources, Orlando and his servant Adam's first appearance in Arden points to the hardship of survival in the forest. When Adam is dying of hunger (2.6:1–4), Orlando finds food at Duke Senior's banquet. Moreover, the play displays that the circumstances make life unbearable for those who permanently inhabit Arden. As a point of interest, when Celia and Rosalind come to the forest, they come across Silvius and Corin. Celia asks these shepherds to give them food, but Corin unexpectedly rejects to share. He discloses that he cannot afford to offer food because he has to answer to his absent master:

> But I am shepherd to another man
> And do not shear the fleeces that I graze.
> My master is of churlish disposition
> And little recks to find the way to heaven
> By doing deeds of hospitality. (2.4:77–81)

In these lines, Corin indicates that shepherds do not enjoy natural life because they are stuck in a master-servant relationship. Corin, a labourer in the forest, depicts the economic system that dominates Arden (3.2:70–4). Arden's economy is stimulated by a system prioritising private ownership and profit. In this capitalist system to earn more, the forest's land and the shepherd's flock are both on sale. Corin announces that his master's

> cote, his flocks and bounds of feed / Are now on sale, and at our sheepcote now, / By reason of his absence, there is nothing / That you will feed on [. . .]" (2.4:82–85).

Thus, Rosalind offers gold to buy "the cottage, pasture and the flock" (2.4:91). Corin's selling draws attention to the changing dynamics of natural life in which the power of money prevails above all. Therefore, Shakespeare situates the forest between the shepherd's pastoral idyll and capitalism, placing it on the edge of different value systems. Although the forest is a land of escape and freedom, it is not easy to survive in this money-based economy. Challenging the view that a green site offers many opportunities to its inhabitants, the play suggests that Arden is not a suitable place for those without financial power. The fact that nature is not always kind to these characters renders a realistic picture of Arden and highlights another facet of liminal

site by placing the forest between a wonderland and an insecure zone owing to its negative potentiality.

Altogether, Arden is replete with good and bad qualities. Bearing in mind all these liminal potentialities of Arden, the setting's liminality extends to its ambiguity. As Arden operates in the multiple views that the characters have, the setting's liminal ambiguity becomes clear. In other words, when the forest is delineated in a different way by each character, the setting's liminal ambiguity unfolds itself in the opposing perceptions of Arden. Therefore, throughout the play, the ambiguity of the setting is reliant on the characters, their language and experiences. Crudely put, the definition of the forest changes upon the characters' viewpoints, indicating its ambivalent liminal status. For example, Orlando's definition of the forest is significant to grasp this point. When he approaches Duke Senior and his followers with his sword, he is shocked by their attitude towards him and says: "I thought that all things had been savage here" (2.7:108). Orlando's words suggest that in contrast to the civilisation that the court represents, the forest initially may denote the ideas of barbarity and savagery. The animals that Orlando later fights allude to the brutal nature of the forest to which he alludes. However, Arden is threaded with liminal ambivalence as Orlando acknowledges at the moment in this particular scene. To take another example, Arden's physical depictions display the setting's indeterminate quality. On the one hand, the play depicts the forest as a pastoral landscape filled with different trees, animals and a peaceful atmosphere. On the other hand, the references to the barren land and harsh living conditions remind the audience that Arden is not a utopian place either. Moreover, although the forest resolves the problems between brothers and lovers, it is not a source of happiness and joy for all characters. Touchstone, for example, calls himself "the more fool", expressing his regret for his presence in Arden (2.4:14). The forest is also a ground for Jaques's melancholy. Although Jaques is part of Duke Senior's community living in Arden, he complains about their usurpation of the real inhabitants of the forest. After a stag is killed, he laments over the forest life (2.1:40–43). Consequently, these conceptions give differing meanings to Arden so it cannot be defined in a singular way. In Theis's words:

> *As You Like It*'s forest begets multiple, conflicting definitions so that a single site can be repository to multiple meanings based upon individuals' differing, lived experiences. (Theis, 2009, p. xii)

The multiple voices that define Arden also bring out an ambiguous state for the perception of the forest, contributing to its liminal status. Given the different definitions of Arden, the forest remains in flux and appears to be as each character 'likes it' (to use the play's title).

Having established various aspects of the liminal forest, what remains to be discussed is a final point about Arden's liminality in reference to its ending. The last scene of the play culminates in the idea of transition, and Arden's emergence as a transitional site can be regarded as the last attribute of the liminal landscape. According to Carol C. Davis, the forest is a symbol of a threshold (Davis, 1989, p. 300) so the place is grounded on not only an experience of in-betweenness but also transition when one occupies the forest. Considering that the concept of liminality is also about transition, the forest as a passageway between the corrupt and restored courts becomes a liminal site for the characters. In the play, the characters come from the court and meet in Arden. The banished characters no longer belong to the court, but they find a new place to stay. After the separation from their usual circumstances at the court, they are in the forest to gain new and independent selves. Yet they cannot be thoroughly a part of Arden because they occupy the forest for a temporary period. Thus, Arden grows into a liminal transition place as the characters (except for Touchstone and Jaques[2]) decide to return to the court at the end of the play. This act of returning unfolds that Arden is a transitory place. The forest, situated in-between the two courts, becomes a passage for the courtiers who come and go back. As an intermediate place, Arden is a liminal site which positively contributes to the establishment of a good government since the courtiers do not return to the same court. Between Duke Frederick's tyrannical court and Duke Senior's restored court, Arden becomes a temporary place of residence for the courtiers, revealing its liminality.

The Liminal Forest as a Site of Criticism

The evidence highlights that Shakespeare makes use of the liminal setting in *As You Like It*. The reason why he exploits liminal characteristics in Arden can be ascribed to Shakespeare's critical approach to the destructive practices and policies of the late Elizabethan court. Because of the rules of censorship enacted on the early modern stage, Shakespeare had to find out some means to veil his political criticism so that the liminal forest becomes his tool to implicitly comment on the contemporary political atmosphere during the late Elizabethan age. Therefore, a topical reading of the Elizabethan land policies, colonial practices in Ireland and the Queen's punitive methods is necessary to understand how the liminal forest becomes a tool for criticism in the play.

[2] Only Touchstone who tells Duke Senior that he "press[es] in here [Arden], sir, amongst the rest of the country copulatives" (5.4:55–56) and Jaques who decides to attend Duke Frederick (5.4:182–183) stay in Arden.

Turning to the historical context of the late Elizabethan period, the 1590s emerged as one of the periods of trouble, decay and chaos in English history. The war with Spain, religious tension in the country, the concurrent succession problem and financial troubles exhausted the aging Queen. In addition to those troubles, a series of economic and political practices afflicted the country. In this atmosphere of the late Elizabethan period, the liminal forest in Shakespeare's play enables the playwright to allude to the contemporary troublesome practices in a critical tone. In the period of theatre censorship and restrictive punishments on the playwrights, Shakespeare unveils his critical approach to the destructive state policies with ambiguity thanks to his use of a liminal site. Accordingly, the first issue that the liminal forest is functionally used to illustrate is the practice of enclosure and the subsequent social unrest at the time. Although there were four million acres of forest in sixteenth-century England (Ward, 1992, p. 6), the number of such lands went into a decline, especially in the Elizabethan era, because of the enforcement of enclosure. In the sixteenth century, certain English forest areas were privatised since they were transformed into agricultural areas or lands to raise livestock and produce wool, and the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire was among such converted sites (Borlik, 2011, p. 183). Elizabeth not only burnt down green areas to create material sources for the wood industry but also sold royal forests to avoid possible financial trouble since the Irish wars costed much (Theis, 2009, p. 52; Barton, 2017 pp. 6–7). Viewed in this way, the forest was converted into a battlefield for the market economy which resulted in enclosure riots. According to Chris Fitter's account, Shakespeare was most probably informed about the ongoing problems at Stratford caused by such practices of enclosure and deforestation in Arden when he wrote *As You Like It* (Fitter, 2012, p. 176).

It is possible to focus on Shakespeare's critique of destructive practices and its consequences by means of the liminal setting in more detail. In the play, for instance, the clearing of forest land is indicated in Oliver's question "[w]here in the purlieus of this forest stands / A sheepcote fenced about with olive-trees?" (4.3:75–76). The word "purlieus" is "the legal term for a cleared area on the edge of a forest retaining certain privileges within – and Arden itself" (Barton, 2017, p. 208). Shakespeare mentions the deforested area in this detail, illustrating that the forest is cleared to open land for rearing sheep. While the liminal sense of in-betweenness and ambiguity makes it hard to pin down the location and topography of Arden, Shakespeare functionally uses the liminal forest to represent the current troubles in England. More than that, as in the case of the increase of the population in the historical Arden, the number of characters in the play's Arden increases with the arrival of seven characters from the court. Thus, the changing population, as reflected in the play, was prone to the trouble of

finding land and producing food after the practices of enclosure at the time. When the historical Forest of Arden was exposed to the practice of enclosure, people were competing to obtain land in order to survive the threat of starvation. Victor Skipp highlights the rapid change in Arden in the late sixteenth century and claims that "the local food supply […] simply was not increased quickly enough to feed all the additional mouths" (Skipp, 1978, p. 53). While Adam's hunger, Orlando's search for food and the inequality between shepherds and masters resonate the troubles of local foresters, Shakespeare might be alluding to the ongoing unrest in the country in his representation of Arden. Mihoko Suzuki claims that "the 1590s were especially marked by social disorder and protest" (Suzuki, 1996, p. 181) as poor and hungry people rebelled. As the practice of enclosure ended in the riots of the foresters in the 1590s all over England, Shakespeare's comedy presents such rebellious actions in a delicate manner as well. For instance, it is known that the rioters disguised themselves with masks at nights and dressed like women to damage the surrounding areas (Wilson, 1992, p. 10). The same practice of crossdressing, albeit for different purposes, is used as an important element of the play considering that crossdressing initially triggers the course of events between Rosalind and Orlando in the forest. Richard Wilson also explains Shakespeare's reference to the rebellions that:

> [p]oaching, damaging trees, sending letters in fictitious names, blacking, and crossdressing: *As You Like It* parades all the felonies associated with forest rioters. (*ibid.*, pp. 13–14)

In other words, Shakespeare offers non-violent ways of protest in the way that he reminds his audience of enclosure riots. In contrast to the government's denunciation of the outlaws, poor and vagabonds through a series of acts from the 1570s to the 1600s, Shakespeare displays the problems of rural life and presents the resistance of outcasts in his comedy. Undoubtedly, the genre of comedy provides Shakespeare with proper means to veil his criticism since the change of place, a convention in his comedies, enables the playwright to transfer the courtiers to the place of rebellion. Fitter rightly observes that:

> demystifying its fake golden world as a realm of injustice and desperate poverty, the drama conversely rehumanizes its economic victims, the demonized woodland vagabond [in Shakespeare's play]. (Fitter, 2012, p. 176)

Of significance is that the playwright critically deals with such problems by setting his work in the liminal place by creating a medium of criticism without any fear of punishment.

Secondly, the play dwells on another practice, that is colonialism, in the liminal setting. Hopkins (2002, p. 4) and Leah S. Marcus (2014, p. 171) both refer to *As You Like It*'s source, Lodge's *Rosalynde*, by highlighting that Lodge wrote it during his journey to the Canaries. The

voyage to the Canaries, for both critics, acquires a special topicality with respect to English colonialism. Hopkins emphasises that the use of the Golden-Age world in the play can be deemed relevant to the material search and abuse in English colonialism (Hopkins, 2002, p. 5). She specifies how the play associates Rosalind with Ireland by dealing with England's colonial practices in reference to the play (*ibid*., p. 11) and she reaches her argument to Shakespeare's mocking of Sir Walter Ralegh's colonialist ideals (*ibid*., pp. 17–20). On the other hand, Marcus mostly focuses on Jaques and his ambiguous attitude to colonialism. Although Jaques takes the side of the victim of colonialism in the forest, he still acts as a coloniser from Marcus's point of view through his "narcissistic" sense of "moral superiority" (Marcus, 2014, p. 179). To further argue, the play proposes the practice of colonialism in Ireland in different ways. Chris Butler, for instance, embarks on the idea of primogeniture problematised in the conflict between Orlando and Oliver and alludes to England's colonial strategies in Ireland. Butler specifically mentions a pamphlet called *A letter sent by I.B.* (1572) in which the practice of "send[ing] these 'yonger brothers' to colonize 'the cuntrie called the Ardes' in the north of Ireland" is encouraged (Butler, 2013, p. 90). Albeit his different motivation to escape from the court, Orlando, troubled by his elder brother out of the rule of primogeniture, goes to Arden, the place that has a nominal correlation with "Ardes of Ireland." According to Butler, Ireland's colonisation by younger brothers was once supported by the first Earl of Essex, Walter Devereux, Robert Devereux's father (*ibid*.). Although Shakespeare does not promote a war over inheritance rights between Orlando and Oliver, he alludes to Elizabeth I's sending of Robert Devereux to Ireland to quell the riots against the English in 1599, which will be recounted in detail below, in the play. As indicated in the notes of the Arden edition, Rosalind's mention of "an Irish rat" and "the howling of Irish wolves against the moon" (3.2:173; 5.2:105–106) is a topical allusion to Essex in Ireland when the play was penned. While these political readings highlight the characters' relation to colonialism in the play, the argument can be extended to Shakespeare's use of the forest to deal with this political matter. Bearing colonial practices in Ireland and deforestation in England in mind, the play unveils the story of the colonised land in its details. From this standpoint, one may look anew of Arden's liminal ambiguity and in-betweenness. The forest's unclear depiction as a green land and a barren land, the killing of deer and the attack of animals may display the negative influence of colonialism on the forest and the forest's struggle to preserve itself. The exploitation of the natural landscape reveals itself with the loss of green site, and the play alludes to this fact through the forest's oscillation between woodland and desolation. The murder of the animal suggests the annihilation of the forest's native inhabitants by the colonial oppressor. Yet the attack of the

lioness and snake may be associated with the agency of the forest. Arden's non-human residents resist and react the oppressive forces even though they are defeated. With respect to colonial history, Arden turns into a political territory as it becomes a site of struggle between the opposite groups. In this context, Arden's liminal features enable Shakespeare to approach the issue of colonialism in a critical manner from a safe distance. While he does not directly attack on the ongoing abusive practices, he is able to show its negative consequences by working with the liminal setting.

The last issue of criticism in the play is about the contemporary courtly politics of the time. When the play was written at the turn of the new century, the Elizabethan court was going through a period of crisis. John Guy calls the period from the 1590s to the Queen's death as Elizabeth's second reign and comments on the political atmosphere at the court:

> A sense of *fin de siècle* is crucial to an understanding of Elizabeth's 'second' reign. Contradictory forces changes the atmosphere: ambition, apprehension, expectation, insecurity, authoritarianism, self-interrogation. (Guy, 1995, pp. 7–8)

This late Elizabethan court can be seen to be represented in the corrupt court of the play that Duke Senior and others challenge in Arden. In the first act, the way that Duke Frederick and Oliver hold power at the court indicates that the court is the locus of tyranny, envy and rivalry. Nick Potter claims that the forest "is identified with values arising from a consideration of 'naturalness' against 'artificiality', and 'authenticity' against flattery and self-interest" (Potter, 1990, p. 83). Duke Senior's restoration of the court highlights the corruption of Duke Frederick's court which can be regarded as a representative of the late Elizabethan court. In this regard, Arden emerges as an ideological site, pointing to the decay, competition and corruption at the court in a critical manner. Although Elizabeth I entrusted her favourite courtiers with important governmental duties, the eminent figures of her court tended to plot against her and each other to attain power and status even after her death. The rivalry between Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex was illustrative of such a contest, and their factional strife finally led Essex to rebel against the Queen. As Juliet Dusinberre states, there is not one particular character that represents Essex in the play, but the play energises the Earl's character by means of several characters such as Rosalind, Orlando and Jaques (Dusinberre, 2006, p. 104). Moreover, the play implicitly evokes and criticises the courtly atmosphere in which Essex and Cecil struggled. In order to offer a critique of the late Elizabethan court, the play presents Arden as the ideological landscape in which the liminal society, *communitas*, challenges power structure and restrictive hierarchies with their sense of equality and comradeship. In contrast to the competition and ambition of Duke Frederick's court, the Arden community endorses

collective support, sharing and contentment. In addition, the play strongly demonstrates that the court, rather than the forest, is a centre of savagery and cruelty when Orlando observes a civilised community in Arden considering the fact that he fights hard in order to save his life and escapes from death at his brother's court. As can be observed in Rosalind and Celia's life in Arden, the liminal forest also enables the community to transgress boundaries and offers liberation from the structures and norms that have limited the characters at the court. Thus, Arden hosting the liminal community underpins a criticism of the court by enabling a group of people to unite and exist together without oppressive divisions in an alternative place.

Considering that the play is about the experience of political exiles escaping from the usurped kingdom and corrupt court to the forest, it is possible to highlight the play's criticism of the political practices of punishment as well. In particular, the use of the liminal setting provides the playwright with a safe distance to deal with the political context of the late Elizabethan period concerning the troubles of the Earl of Essex who was a close friend of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton. After the years of success and reputation, Essex fell out of Elizabeth's favour as he tried to control the Queen's appointments at the court in order to empower his own position. Particularly when he was sent to Ireland to quash the revolt led by the Earl of Tyrone in 1599, Essex knew that his absence at the court would trouble him after his return. His presence in Ireland might have provided an opportunity to re-establish his reputation, but it was rather like an exile for the Earl, and his conflict with the Queen next drove him to an enforced exile. It is true that Essex was a representative of England so that he was the symbol of the English colonial power in Ireland. However, Essex felt himself banished there. Drawing on David Bevington's idea that this play illustrates Essex's banishment in the figure of Duke Senior (Bevington, 1968, p. 18), it is possible to establish a connection between Arden and Ireland in terms of Essex's story. When the Privy Council under the influence of the Cecilian faction did not provide Essex with more military supplies in Ireland (Asquith, 2018, pp. 176–177), the Earl returned without Elizabeth's order and intruded into her bedchamber to talk with her. This transgression resulted in his punishment in the trial on 5 June 1600, and the decision was for him to be put under house arrest, totally banished from the Queen's court. When the proclamations of banishment are examined during the Tudor reign, it becomes clear that it was a common punishment and the Queen's favourite penalty:

> Under Elizabeth, proclamations were issued for the banishment of Anabaptists, the Irish, Negroes and even those whose swords exceeded the length set down in the sumptuary laws. (Kingsley-Smith, 2003, p. 11)

In addition to the Arden-Ireland correlation in Essex's exile, the retreat of the courtiers to the forest in the play echoes Essex's withdrawal to the woods following his banishment. In a poem, "O sweet woods," written by John Dowland (2002), an acquaintance of Essex some of whose poems were claimed to be written by the Earl, the speaker retreats into the woods after having a problem with his lover. The poem specifically refers to Wanstead as the rural place of withdrawal (Dowland, 2002, lines 29–32), the frequent address of Essex in the 1590s (Ruff & Wilson, 1969, p. 38). This reference corroborates Essex's voice in the poem so the banished courtier withdraws into the forest on a self-imposed exile. The poem and Shakespeare's play, therefore, have a common point which is the idea of taking refuge in the forest following departure from the court. Although the withdrawal to nature is a convention of pastoral, the experience of being in exile is a key point for Arden's liminal spatiality. Considering the fact that the experience of characters defines the site that they occupy, their exile which is a liminal act augments Arden's liminality in the play. In the play, the liminal site is politically designed to allude to Elizabeth's practice of punishment as in the case of Essex's banishment and exile. The ambiguities arising from liminality in this landscape veil Shakespeare's criticism of the Queen's methods to punish her rivals at the court. While Arden enacts transgression for the courtiers as an ideological place, the political tension of retreat suggests a critical reading of the late Elizabethan policies of punishment.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Shakespeare employs liminality to the forest setting of *As You Like It.* The sense of in-betweenness and ambiguity, the transformative agency and the transitional state that define Arden can be reconsidered as the attributes of this liminal forest. The exile of the characters and their process of becoming in Arden also lay out the forest's liminality. It is the particular argument of the article that Shakespeare has a political aim in using the liminal forest. In other words, the use of liminal characteristics in the setting is functional to carry the political undertone and criticism of the play when the Elizabethan playwrights suffered from theatrical censorship and punishment. In reference to the protests arising in the 1590s and the play's topical allusions, Fitter is right to observe that *As You Like It* is "a protest play" which obviously highlights the play's political content (Fitter, 2010, p. 114). Drawing on Fitter's words, I claim that Shakespeare's "protest" takes place in the liminal landscape of Arden. As Duke Senior declares that their life "[f]inds tongues in trees" of Arden (2.1:16), Shakespeare uses the forest to criticise deforestation, colonialism and political punishments. Opposing the destructive practices in the late Elizabethan period, the playwright forms a site of resistance

and criticism by using the elements of ambiguity, in-betweenness, uncertain potentialities, transformation and transition. While the play upholds the view that liminality "is a state in which the capacity for change, for inventiveness and communion is maximised, where the polluting and dangerous properties associated with it can be productively harnessed to effect social critique and social reform" (Duffy, 2011, p. 25), the liminal forest veils Shakespeare's criticism of the late Elizabethan court and the problematic practices.

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Betwixt and Between Work and Play: Liminality at the Festival OFF d'Avignon

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Abstract

Previous festival research based on Victor Turner's concept of liminality essentially shows two tendencies: either festivals are interpreted as initiation rites of artists and artworks (Teissl, 2013; Valck, 2007), or they are described as carnivalesque inversions of the everyday in which participants temporarily engage in deviant behaviours and renegotiate social identities (Luckman, 2014; Pielichaty, 2015; Ravenscroft & Gilchrist, 2009). Yet, certain social divisions and behavioural patterns remain powerful even within liminal festival spaces (Van Heerden, 2011; Jaimangal-Jones et al.*, 2010).*

This paper examines to what extent the Festival OFF d'Avignon *in France unites carnivalesque exuberance with its status as a performing arts market and is thus situated 'betwixt and between' work and play. Today, the non-juried fringe festival constitutes a marketplace for the purchase and sale of theatre productions, mirrors neoliberal structures of modern-day society, and represents an initiation rite for artists and their creations. Amidst the market bustle, the festival's revolutionary story of origin still resonates in the memory of its participants, when the provincial town is transformed into an in-between space every summer.*

Conceptualised as a mixed methods research, this article draws on a combination of qualitative interviews, quantitative data evaluation, and secondary literature.

In his study on the Festival OFF d'Avignon published in 2005, Alain Brunsvick observes that the papal city offers every visitor and theatre-lover an exceptional parenthesis outside the ordinary to mingle and merge and willingly overthrow social codes and hierarchies. At the same time, theatre professionals showcase their artistic propositions on the fairground of Avignon, while curators and *programmateurs* gather in a carnivalesque rush to make a good bargain (Brunsvick, 2005, pp. 20–21). Building on Brunsvick's analysis, this article explores the OFF d'Avignon today as situated 'betwixt and between' work and play. While the festival serves as a marketplace for the purchase and sale of theatre productions and represents an initiation rite for artists and their creations, its counter-culture heritage of social protest and political activism resonates in the memory of its participants. At the example of the Festival OFF d'Avignon, this paper discusses the applicability of Victor Turner's concept of liminality as a method for festival research and in particular for the investigation of fringe festivals.[1]

[1] The term fringe festival originally comes from Edinburgh, when back in 1947 eight acting companies performed uninvited on the "fringe" of the Edinburgh International Festival.

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From Counter-Culture Festival to Performing Arts Market

On the fringe of the renowned Festival d'Avignon founded by Jean Vilar in 1947, the actor and playwright André Benedetto staged his play *Statues* at the Théâtre des Carmes in July 1966 without having been officially included in the festival program. This rebellious act marked the initial impulse for the genesis of an alternative festival on the fringe. Two years later, the happenings of July 1968 intensified the thirst for free artistic expression and encouraged creations by independent artist collectives outside institutional structures. According to the actor Philippe Caubère, the political activism of 1968 finally gave birth to the OFF d'Avignon (Rumello, 2016, p. 34). By contrast, André Benedetto claims that such an adventure of mankind does not originate at a specific date but gradually develops. In his view, the revolutionary movements of 1968 had derived from the human need to speak up, perform, and create, which then became manifest in the fringe festival (Léonard and Vantaggioli, 1989, p. 12).

The local population of Avignon experienced the political activism of May 1968 with a two-month delay (Loyer and Baecque, 2016, p. 255), while it had already begun to subside in Paris. Like the occupation of the Théâtre Odéon in May (Huber, 2022a, p. 39), the central Place de l'Horloge in Avignon was changed into a forum for public debates every evening. Amidst the agitated atmosphere, the French police arrested the twenty-one-year-old Gérard Gelas on 18 July 1968 for having written the controversial play *La Paillasse aux Seins Nus* (Bredeson, 2006, p. 79). All performances by his amateur theatre company Le Chêne Noir were banned even before the play's premiere. This manifestation of public censorship provoked a general mobilisation fighting for freedom of expression and creation (Rasse, 2003, p. 42).

Parallel to these events, the Living Theatre, who had been invited at the Festival d'Avignon in 1968, explored the stage as an instrument to enact a renewed model of society (Jouve, 2018). In their new creation *Paradise Now*, Avignon itself should become mankind's paradise, a fundamental counter-space to the dominant social class (Brauneck, 2007, p. 25). Theatre was thus conceived as "a Utopian forum for revolutionary praxis: a social laboratory that could alter human nature and enact various radical forms of political and social change" (Penner, 2009, p. 17). The context of the political activism in 1968 offered the ideal testing ground for their experimental performance *Paradise Now*. "[W]ith its reliance upon spontaneous improvisation, Artaudian physicality, and anarchist principles," their new creation "was meant to bring about revolutionary change" (Pellerin, 2018, E-1).

The events of July 1968 illustrate how the limitations of conventional theatre were contested and performances conquered the streets. In close proximity to the official Festival d'Avignon, public space was converted into a forum for political debates and a laboratory to

explore alternative models of society. While Jean Vilar initially referred to alternative performances on the fringe, e.g. by André Benedetto or Gérard Gelas, as "hors festival" (Midol, 2003, p. 65), the name Avignon OFF was then used by the journalist Jacqueline Cartier in 1971, who compared the non-juried fringe festival to the OFF Broadway.

More than fifty years later, the OFF d'Avignon has become a central networking platform for acting companies in France. The festival's open-access policy has led to a rapid influx of not only artists and festival visitors, but also curators, producers, and talent scouts looking for new artistic talents and future hit productions. The acting companies self-organise and self-finance their participation hoping to attract attention and to sign promising contracts for the upcoming season.

At a certain point, the unregulated growth of a non-juried festival necessitates organising structures, which let the artist Alain Léonard found the association Avignon Public OFF (APO) "for my colleagues and friends" in 1982 (Léonard and Vantaggioli, 1989, p. 63). Succeeded by Avignon Festival & Compagnies (AF&C) in 2006, the intention remains to act as neutral custodian by compiling a festival program and organising membership cards without intervening in artistic decisions. Pierre Beffeyte, president of AF&C from 2016 to 2020, named professionalisation as their primary goal saying,

> Ce que je souhaiterais […] c'est de montrer que le festival du Off, ce n'est pas juste une troupe de barbares qui viennent s'installer dans une ville à un moment donné, qui la recouvrent d'affiches et qui s'en vont à la fin du mois, en laissant tout derrière eux, avec indifférence. (Beffeyte cited in Monastier, 2019)[2]

Thereby, he clearly distances the present-day festival from its origins in the late 1960s, where provocative performances in the streets had caused public disorder. In another interview two months later, Beffeyte stated that the OFF hid behind its legacy of 1968, but liberty also comes with responsibility (Van Egmond, 2019). Consequently, AF&C promotes professionalisation of this once chaotic event as the optimal solution and advances measures like the instalment of a *Fond de Soutien à la Professionnalisation* to financially support selected acting companies and the separation of the open-access *Village du OFF* from a newly created meeting spot for professionals only called *Village des Professionnels*. Thus, the fringe festival leaves behind its revolutionary heritage and is heading towards a new image as a professional theatre market. François Ribac unmasks the liberal rhetoric and management of cultural organisations that are

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[2] [translation: "What I would like […] to show is that the OFF festival is not just a group of barbarians who conquer a city at some point, cover it with posters and depart at the end of the month, leaving everything behind with indifference"]

"literally obsessed with professionalisation", which actually results from the "growing commercialisation of human activities" (Ribac, 2003, p. 18).[3]

This development meets contradictory reactions among the participating artists: the actress Anna Cottis, who knows the OFF d'Avignon since the 1980s, warns that progressing professionalisation might also exclude acting companies who do not fit into the image of the "artrepreneur", caught between the idealism of creating art and the necessity of running a business. Some might be excellent artists but lack entrepreneurial skills to economically balance their festival participation and obtain funding (Cottis, 2021).[4] The actor Laurent Chouteau remembers the OFF in the 1990s as wild, unbridled, without control, and much more fun compared to the increasingly professional, regulated, and serious festival editions in recent years (Chouteau, 2021).[5] By contrast, Sophie-Anne Lecesne, co-president of the actors' association AAFA, is convinced that artistic freedom and professionalisation should not be perceived as opposites. Instead, it is an absolute necessity to guarantee fair work conditions for freelance artists, which allows them to fully focus on the act of creation (Lecesne, 2021).[6]

To which extent does the Festival OFF d'Avignon unite its counter-culture heritage with its status as a competitive sales fair, and is thus situated "betwixt and between" work and play? In how far does the concept of liminality represent a methodological approach that permits further insights in the festival's position today?

Liminality and Performance Studies

In 1909, the French ethnologist Arnold van Gennep described the universal structure of *Rites de Passage* performed by individuals or social groups. He, thereby, distinguished three phases: (1) During the separation phase (pre-liminal) the participant is detached from everyday life. (2) In the transformation phase (liminal) the participant is placed in a state "between" all possible

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[3] The French original reads: "La rhétorique libérale et le management sont littéralement obsédés par le professionnalisme et ce mouvement résulte du mouvement de marchandisation croissante des activités humaines auxquelles les arts du spectacle n'échappent pas." (Ribac, 2003, p. 18)

[4] "C'est le péril de la professionnalisation […] Si les gens qui ne savent pas faire tous les dossiers n'ont pas accès à la création artistique. Là on rate quelque chose, parce qu'être administrateur n'est pas la même chose que d'être artiste." (Cottis, interviewed on 6 August 2021) [translation: "That is the danger of professionalization […] If people who do not know how to do all the files do not have access to artistic creation, then we are missing out on something, because being an administrator is not the same as being an artist."]

[5] "Dans les années 90, ce qui était génial, c'est qu'il y avait des spectacles dans la rue et de la musique, beaucoup de spectacles de rue. C'était un peu fou, plus sauvage, un petit peu plus débridé, et beaucoup plus intéressant. Là, tout est tenu, sous contrôle, c'est moins drôle." (Chouteau, interviewed on 21 July 2021) [translation: "In the 90s, what was great was that there were street performances and music, lots of street performances. It was a little crazy, wilder, without restraint, and much more interesting. Today, everything is held under control, it's less fun."]

[6] "Je ne vois pas forcément l'opposition. […] On peut avoir une liberté artistique et une régulation des conditions d'accueil et de la rémunération." (Lecesne, interviewed on 22 July 2021) [translation: "I don't necessarily see an opposition. […] We can have artistic freedom and a regulation of the working conditions and payment."]

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areas, which allows new experiences. (3) The incorporation phase (post-liminal) signifies the participant's return into society with a transformed identity. In pre-industrial societies rites of passage represent an essential component of social life and mark the transition from one stage to another, e.g. in birth, puberty, marriage, and death (Van Gennep, 1909).

Van Gennep's publication was not translated into English until the 1960s, whereupon it was read and highly appreciated by the British social anthropologist Victor Turner, who took up this concept and elaborated on the phase of liminality, i.e. a time of inherent possibility representing a temporary inversion of social structures. Thereby, Turner focused on "the creative potential of ritual" and connected "rites with notions of performance" (Andrews and Roberts, 2015, p. 132). To allow a broader application of this concept, it seemed necessary to gradually divorce the "theory of liminality from a concept of the sacred", which "facilitates a move from thinking about tribal cultures to thinking about industrial cultures" (Crosby, 2008, p. 7). Turner's framework had a considerable impact on the study of liminal experiences in various scientific fields, ranging from geography to tourism studies, psychotherapy to performance studies.

At a conference entitled "Cultural Frames and Reflections: Ritual, Drama and Spectacle" in 1977, Victor Turner and Richard Schechner met and exchanged ideas, which contributed to the formation of "Performance Studies" as an independent academic discipline and "entailed the epistemological shift from object-oriented art to processual creative performances" (Abeliovich, 2018, p. 286). In *Theatre and Anthropology*, Schechner analyses patterns of performance sequences analogous to initiation rites:

> [L]ike initiations, performances 'make' one person into another. Unlike initiations, performances usually see to it that the performer gets his own self back. (Schechner, 1985, p. 20)

In theatre studies, Erika Fischer-Lichte draws a similar comparison between rituals and theatrical performances, saying: "[I]n theatre the transformation brought about by the liminal state is reversible and does not ask for public acclaim" (Fischer-Lichte, 2005, p. 38). Patrice Pavis uses the notion of liminality in his description of the spectators' experience who enter and exit an imaginary world by anticipating the happenings on stage (Pavis, 2016, p. 127). To what extent is this concept a useful lens for festival research situated at the crossing point between anthropology and performance studies?

Festivals create a space and time outside the everyday, which permits participants to temporarily abandon working life routines, experience a different reality, and engage in festive sociability. This article examines whether the Festival OFF d'Avignon still represents an

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inversion of the everyday. The following three sections discuss power struggles within liminal festival spaces, the function of fringe festivals as initiation rites for artists and artworks, and the progressing professionalisation of former counter-culture events.

Power Struggles Within Liminal Festival Spaces

While festivals do invite participants to escape existing boundaries, to renegotiate dominant discourse, and to redefine social identities, a close analysis shows that, first, suspended hierarchies are reinforced immediately after the festivities are over and, second, some social divisions and patterns of interaction remain powerful even during the time of transgression.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1965), the carnival is a time when all rules and regulations are suspended, in particular all forms of social hierarchy, and the world is turned upside down. Yet, the carnival is confined in time and suspended hierarchies are reinforced as soon as these exuberant celebrations have come to an end. Neil Ravenscroft and Paul Gilchrist point out that "contemporary festivals, as carnivalesque inversions of the everyday" are "deployed to maintain and reinforce social order and, thus, the discipline of bodies and behaviours" (Ravenscroft and Gilchrist, 2009, p. 36). They argue that festivals

> offer a liminality in which people can engage in 'deviant' practices […] safe in the knowledge that they are not transgressing the wider social structure they encounter in everyday life and that is infused in the moral codes of the festivals themselves. (Ravenscroft and Gilchrist, 2009, p. 36)

Dewi Jaimangal-Jones *et al.* analyse how social norms and established structures are transcended at electronic dance music festivals. Travelling to these events represents both "a rite of passage" and "a pilgrimage or source of spiritual fulfilment" (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010, p. 254). The temporarily staged festivals allow participants to abandon existing social structures, enter a "world of beingness and nothingness" (*ibid.*, p. 255), challenge norms of everyday life, and discover new ways of "constructing their self-identity" (*ibid.*, p. 259). Likewise, Susan Luckman (2014) describes outdoor music festivals as an alternative social space which allows participants to transcend the structures of urban life by exploring new forms of social identity. The end of the festival signifies a return to familiar social structures and behaviour patterns. Examining the rock and popular music tribute festival Glastonbudget, Hanya Pielichaty argues that festivals act as "social vehicle[s] employed to maintain order and discipline," while providing individuals with "liminal space to momentarily lose themselves and behave in a care-free manner" (Pielichaty, 2015, p. 239). According to these observations, festivals offer a controlled space, which temporarily permits a celebratory chaos, artistic freedom, and deviant behaviour, in order to reinforce the pre-festival status-quo afterwards.

Comparably, the annual Festival OFF d'Avignon creates a space and time outside the everyday. When I arrived in Avignon in September 2017, a French student introduced me to his hometown with the following words, "En juillet, Avignon, c'est la folie! Le reste de l'année, c'est mort,"[7] which illustrates that the local population experiences the festival as a period of radical transformation. Similarly, Annika Wehrle claims that due to this seasonal division the rest of the year is characterized by a withdrawal of theatrical activities to the private sphere (Wehrle, 2011, p. 146). Georges Banu even refers to Avignon as two cities (Banu, 1996, p. 20). In order to counteract the ambiance of a "ville morte" after the lively festival, the municipality in cooperation with local theatres has put increasing effort in organising cultural events such as the annual Fest'Hiver in the winter season.

Yet, the carnivalesque atmosphere at the OFF d'Avignon is perceived and appreciated primarily by festival visitors, who admire the papal city with medieval flair, colourful posters, and artists in extravagant costumes. The artists themselves experience their festival participation as hard work. In order to advertise their plays, they hand out flyers while singing songs or reciting extracts in the street. Since the 1980s, the non-juried fringe festival has become a highly relevant platform for freelance artists to showcase and sell their new creations. In order to finance their festival participation, acting companies oftentimes take out a loan, which they hope to pay off after having signed contracts with *programmateurs* for the following season(s).

Turner's description of liminal space "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial" (Turner, 1969, p. 81) might lead to the naïve conclusion that festivals operate as utopian sites that transgress *all* social boundaries and break open *all* culturally defined categories. By contrast, Esther van Heerden argues in her analysis of South African arts festivals that inversions of established social norms are only partly executed, as "only certain behavioural transgressions were permitted and the control of social interaction was such that some behavior was prohibited or highly constrained" (Van Heerden, 2011, p. 66). Also Jaimangal-Jones *et al.* emphasise that "in even the most oppositional cultural formations, some social divisions and patterns of interaction, particularly with regard to gender and class, remain powerful" (Jaimangal-Jones *et al.*, 2010, p. 255).

Graham St. John (2001) claims that the ConFest, Australia's biggest alternative lifestyle festival, allows participants to temporarily abandon the social structures of their everyday life and assume a new identity. He contends that Turner's concept of the "liminal ritual" would not

[7] [translation: "In July, Avignon is madness! The rest of the year it's dead."]

entirely capture the complexity of contemporary festivals, as this "pure, ideal category" tends to when applied inflexibly "disregard 'complicated' performative spaces and intra-event strife" (St. John, 2001, p. 48). In contrast to that, St. John argues that public events like festivals represent "contested cultural arenas" and he views ConFest as a "realm of competing discourses and practices" (*ibid*., p. 53).

At the OFF d'Avignon, the festival's open-access policy suggests that every participant has the same chance. In fact, the opposite is true. Only acting companies with sufficient financial resources have the possibility to rent expensive timeslots at private theatres with an excellent reputation: Performance venues like La Manufacture, Le Train Bleu, and 11 Avignon (formerly 11 Gilgamesh), also referred to as "IN du OFF," have become focal points of *programmateurs* and, thus, significantly increase the visibility of artists. By contrast, unknown acting companies without regional or national subsidies can only afford renting provisional *garages à spectacle*[8] with little space and poor infrastructure instead, whereupon their plays are barely visible among the nearly 1600 competitors.[9]

Under the heading "Les compagnies à l'assaut des remparts: Liberté, Inégalités, Fraternité",[10] Catherine Benzoni-Grosset examines the social inequality at the neoliberal theatre market: "Il est impossible de nier l'aspect budgétaire et le fait qu'il soit en Avignon comme ailleurs source d'inégalités" (Benzoni-Grosset, 2003, p. 138).[11] The overabundance of plays increases the importance of costly marketing campaigns in order to attract attention. She writes: "[L]e principe de liberté achoppe sur une réalité dictée par cet univers marchand. Une première sélection s'opère par l'argent" (*ibid*., p. 155).[12] Despite the festival's founding philosophy to represent an open-access space of artistic liberty, money dictates artistic decisions and economic success.

Nikson Pitaqaj, *metteur-en-scène* of the acting company Libre d'Esprit and vice-president of AF&C from 2019 to 2021, stages text-based plays such as those by Václav Havel that transmit socio-political criticism and address an intellectual audience. He notices that small artistic projects have steadily been losing ground at the OFF d'Avignon over the past decades,

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[8] The local expression "garages à spectacle" designates poorly-equipped performance venues whose proprietors profit from high rental charges distributing time slots on a first-come, first-served basis.
[9] The theatre landscape at the OFF d'Avignon is much more complex than outlined in this paragraph, as it unites around 140 performance venues that differ with regard to their artistic orientations, business models, and mission statements. For a more detailed analysis, see: Huber, 2022b, pp. 116-120.
[10] [translation: "The acting companies attacking the city walls: Liberty, Inequalities, Fraternity"]
[11] [translation: "It is impossible to deny the financial aspect and the fact that this is in Avignon like elsewhere the source of inequalities."]
[12] [translation: "[T]he principle of freedom stumbles against a reality dictated by this commercial universe. A first selection is made by money."]

while the commercial entertainment industry producing stand-up comedies progressively conquers the festival (Pitaqaj, 2021).[13] Furthermore, the amateur actress Cécile Canal who invented the fictional character Alice L'accen, a politically interested clown, does not recognise herself in the one-man-shows advertised at the Rue de la République, but instead locates her political monologues in the sector of public education (Canal, 2020).[14]

It therefore appears that large production companies with sufficient financial resources and entrepreneurial strategies gain more visibility on the open-access theatre festival than individual artists staging political plays for an intellectual audience. In this regard, the OFF no longer offers an egalitarian in-between space in which social hierarchies and patterns of interaction are inverted, as it was aspired to by OFF artists of the 1960s, but in fact reproduces them. Thus, the OFF mirrors the mechanisms of today's neoliberal, capitalist society.

Festivals as Initiation Rites for Artists and Artworks

Marijke de Valck (2007) argues in her analysis of European film festivals in Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and Rotterdam that individual participants do not necessarily undergo a rite of passage in the course of these festivals, but films do. Therefore, she coins the term "Sites of Passage", i.e. a combination of "obligatory points of passage" according to the Actor-Network Theory by Bruno Latour and the ethnological concept of "rites of passage" by Van Gennep. With this term De Valck combines the spatial ("site") with the temporal component ("passage"). Accordingly, film festivals represent a central node within the cinema industry and an obligatory passage for filmmakers to access a global network. Similarly, Verena Teissl emphasises that festivals take over the function as "gatekeeper" and represent a turning point of individual artworks, resulting in their approval or rejection among artists, critics, and the audience. Thus, the world premiere, for instance, of films in Cannes constitutes their ritual entry into a commercial and alternative market (Teissl, 2013, p. 77).

[13] "J'ai l'impression que les compagnies comme la mienne qui sont des compagnies avec un engagement de théâtre politique, un engagement de texte intime, personnel, on perd du terrain tous les jours. A place de ça il y a de grosses structures de production, de grosses machines qui gagnent du terrain. En fait, il y un déséquilibre." (Pitaqaj, interviewed on 15 July 2021) [translation: "I have the impression that acting companies like mine, which are acting companies with a commitment to political theatre, to intimate and personal texts, we are losing ground every day. Instead, there are big production companies, big machines that are gaining ground. In fact, there is an imbalance."]

[14] "Je ne me reconnais pas dans tous ces one-man-shows qu'on voit dans la Rue de la République. Même si je joue seule en scène, je me trouve plutôt à côté de l'éducation populaire." (Canal, interviewed on 20 July 2020) [translation: "I do not recognize myself in all these one-man-shows that you encounter in the Rue de la République. Even if I act alone on stage, I see myself rather in the domain of popular education."]

Today, the OFF d'Avignon has become a highly relevant platform for independent artists to present and sell their new creations. The actress Isabelle Kancel from Guadeloupe confirms that gaining visibility for her *seul-en-scène* represents the primary motivation to travel to Avignon, as the OFF remains the biggest international showcase to build up a reputation and to sell the show to *programmateurs* from French-speaking countries (Kancel, 2021).[15] Correspondingly, the actor Emmanuel van Cappel emphasises that the OFF signifies an obligatory passage for acting companies in search of touring opportunities, as theatre professionals from all over France are present (Van Cappel, 2020).[16] William Mesguich, known as the "Marathon Théâtral Man" performing in up to four plays per day during the three festival weeks, also confirms that Avignon offers the opportunity to sell one's plays and to earn enough money, which then permits working on new creations (Mesguich, 2021).[17]

The Parade d'Ouverture organised by AF&C at the beginning of the festival marks the artists' first encounter with the public. Hereby, they move along the Rue de la République from Avignon Gare Centre, symbolising their connection to the outside world, to the Place de l'Horloge, one of the biggest public squares in the heart of the inner city. In his description of initiation rites, Turner points out:

> The passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another. (Turner, 1982, p. 58)

Similarly, the artists enter the arena of Avignon *intramuros* like gladiators. Mesguich emphasises that today the parades are very framed, very formatted, completely different to the frenetic, excessive performance of the Living Theatre in 1968. In this regard, the OFF d'Avignon mirrors the evolution of the Western world society (Mesguich, 2021).[18]

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[15] "[Le OFF] reste la plus grande vitrine internationale pour se faire connaitre et éventuellement pour vendre le spectacle. On souhaite qu'il y ait des programmateurs du monde entier qui puissent être intéressés – en tout cas, des pays francophones." (Kancel, interviewed on 10 July 2021) [translation: "[The OFF] remains the biggest international showcase to become known and to potentially sell the show. We hope that there are programmers from all over the world who are interested – in any case, from French-speaking countries."]

[16] "[Avignon], c'est vraiment là où on peut rencontrer tous les professionnels, les acheteurs, les journalistes, les producteurs, les directeurs de salle etc. Donc, je crois que si on a envie de tourner, c'est vraiment un passage obligé et puis si on veut aussi être visible sur tout le territoire." (Van Cappel, interviewed on 27 July 2020) [translation: "[Avignon] is really the place where you can meet all the professionals, buyers, journalists, producers, theatre managers, etc. So, I think that if you want to go on tour, it's really a must and if you also want to be visible throughout the territory."]

[17] "Le but du jeu Avignon c'est quoi ? De vendre le spectacle. Je n'échappe pas à la règle. Je vais vendre une trentaine de fois. Je vais mettre 40.000 euros à gauche pour ma compagnie, ce qui me permettrait de faire un autre projet. Je gagne ma vie […] en multipliant les projets." (Mesguich, interviewed on 23 July 2021) [translation: "What is the goal of the Avignon game? To sell the show. I am not an exception to this rule. I will sell around thirty times. I will put 40,000 euros aside for my company, which would allow me to do another project. I earn my living […] by multiplying the projects."]

[18] "Il y a encore de fameuses parades, mais c'est aussi très encadré, très formaté. Il n'y a peut-être plus cet engagement frénétique qu'avait à l'époque le Living Theatre. […] On est quand même bien plus sage, c'est

The OFF represents a rite of passage not only for artists, but also for their creations. Alexis Armengol, playwright and *metteur-en-scène*, points out that staging a play repeatedly in front of an audience is a chance to better know, develop, and let evolve an artistic creation (Armengol, 2021).[19] The actress Pierrette Dupoyet, participating at the OFF since 1984, describes the festival as a laboratory to experiment and test new creations (Dupoyet, 2020).[20] When she encounters her audience after the performances and receives feedback, she adapts and modifies her plays accordingly. At the end of the festival, Dupoyet knows whether her new creations are understood and appreciated by the audience or whether they need to be reworked (*ibid*.).[21]

Few but oft-cited plays enter the world of fame by passing through the 'magic door' of Avignon. *Adieu Monsieur Haffmann* by Jean-Philippe Daguerre had its premiere at the OFF in 2017, was celebrated by the audience, praised by critics, and received four Molières. One year later, *La Machine de Turing* by Benoît Solès created enthusiasm among the festival audience, was awarded four Molières in 2019, and still tours in France and internationally. These successful productions stand as a pillar of hope for all aspiring artists who take out a loan to finance their festival participation. Yet, with a total of 1592 theatre productions presented in 2019, one should not forget that a considerable number of acting companies remain unseen and leave the OFF indebted, exhausted, and frustrated.

Professionalisation of Supposed Liminal Spaces

terrible. […] On n'est plus dans cet excès des années 60, ce qui est dommage. Comme la société j'ai l'impression qu'on est devenu très formaté, très cadré." (Mesguich, interviewed on 23 July 2021) [translation: "There are still famous parades, but they are very framed, very formatted. There is no longer this enthusiastic commitment that the Living Theatre had at the time. […] We are much more reasonable today, it's terrible. […] We are no longer in this excess of the 60s, which is a shame. Like society, I have the impression that we have become very formatted, very framed."]

[19] "Le fait de jouer 17 fois quasiment de suite avec des gens devant c'est une chance, parce que ça permet de mieux connaitre son spectacle […] de pouvoir évoluer au cours d'un mois. En fait, je dirais que jouer en général c'est un laboratoire et là le fait de multiplier les représentations, coller les unes aux autres, six fois par semaine, évidemment c'est génial." (Armengol, interviewed on 26 July 2021) [translation: "The fact of playing 17 times in a row with people in front of you is a chance, because it allows you to better know your show […], to develop it over the course of a month. In fact, I would say that acting in general is a laboratory and the fact of multiplying the performances, placing one after the other, six times a week, obviously that's great."]

[20] "Le Festival OFF d'Avignon est un laboratoire où on expérimente, on essaie sa mise en scène, les éclairages. Et puis, le public vous parle." (Dupoyet, interviewed on 7 September 2020) [translation: "The Festival OFF d'Avignon is a laboratory where we experiment, we try out the mise-en-scène, the lighting. And then, the public responds."]

[21] "Il y a un vrai dialogue et quand vous quittez Avignon, vous savez si votre spectacle va tenir jusqu'au bout, s'il va dépasser la centième représentation, ou si malheureusement il n'est pas assez abouti et qu'il faut le retravailler." (Dupoyet, interviewed on 7 September 2020) [translation: "There is a real dialogue and when you leave Avignon, you know if your show will last until the end, if it will go beyond the hundredth performance, or if unfortunately it is not successful yet and must be reworked."]

While festivals were oftentimes associated with social protest and political activism in the past, their increasing commodification has changed their function in society (Sharpe, 2008). In particular, the agitated summer of 1968 transformed Avignon into a liminal space to renegotiate social identities and political power structures. Students danced and sang of the revolution in front of the Palais des Papes. On the central Place de l'Horloge, artists of the École des Beaux-Arts repurposed streets and walls as their canvas for critical and subversive messages such as "L'art n'existe pas. L'art c'est vous" ("Art doesn't exist. Art is you") and "La poésie est dans la rue" ("Poetry is in the street") (Williams, 2011, p. 286). Short performances in public negotiated controversial issues, such as the role of the French government in the Algerian War of Independence.[22] The French philosopher Maurice Blanchot remarked about the atmosphere in France at the time:

> Depuis mai, la rue s'est éveillée: elle parle. C'est là l'un des changements décisifs. Elle est redevenue vivante, puissante, souveraine: le lieu de toute liberté possible. (Blanchot, 2003, p. 180)[23]

The street awakening of 1968 radically opened the accessibility of public space that became a canvas for revolutionary poetry, a forum for political debates and a stage for social criticism. Festival visitors entered the liminal space at their arrival, where they witnessed or actively participated in performative projects that challenged hierarchical social structures and attacked the rigid bourgeois value system. Their experiences within the liminal space altered their perception of their everyday life to which they returned at the end of the festival.

Today, visitors observe and partake in the ludic atmosphere at the OFF d'Avignon, while artists experience their participation as a serious endeavour with the objective to sell their play and gain recognition. According to Hanya Pielichaty, the "commercialisation of contemporary festivals demonstrates the societal and political control present in supposed liminal spaces" (Pielichaty, 2015, p. 239). This development is clearly noticeable in Avignon: Professional artists view their participation at the OFF as an obligatory milestone in their career. Thus, the fringe festival is clearly attributed to the working world and mirrors the dynamics, mechanisms, and values of neoliberal societies.

In the 20th century, the cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1938) remarks a disappearance of the playful in modern societies, as leisure time is increasingly structured and

[22] The documentary film *Être libre* (1968) focuses on the festival participation of the Living Theatre in July 1968 and their performance *Paradise Now*, but also permits insights in the revolutionary atmosphere on the streets of Avignon.

[23] [translation: "Since May, the street has awakened: it speaks. This is one of the decisive changes. The street has become alive again, powerful, sovereign: the place of all possible freedom."]

functionalised. This may be true even more so today as leisure is no longer able to maintain its ludic character, being over-organised in a technical sense and taken too seriously. The playful and subversive nature of the fringe festival has slowly been transformed into the serious endeavour of acting companies striving for success. Jennifer Elfert notes that since the 1980s and 1990s many theatre festivals define themselves not only as entertaining events but as work meetings among professionals, and thus include workshops as well as round tables, colloquia, and live debates (Elfert, 2009, p. 79). Similarly, Bianca Ludewig observes an elimination of the work/leisure dichotomy, establishing festivals as important networking meetings in the professional arts community (Ludewig, 2018, p. 8).

The progressing transformation from counter-culture event to performing arts market has accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic. After the festival cancellation in 2020,[24] the OFF d'Avignon of 2021 took place in a reduced form, marked by safety and hygiene measures. First and foremost, the opening parade had been cancelled, whereupon only few acting companies kept up the tradition to wear costumes in public during the three festival weeks. The majority were just dressed in everyday clothes while addressing pedestrians and handing out flyers to advertise their plays. As a result, the festive atmosphere was less visible in public. Theatre halls had to be aerated and disinfected between performances, which reduced the number of timeslots available per venue. Consequently, only 1,070 productions were staged in 2021 compared to the record high of 1,592 in 2019 (Avignon Festival & Compagnies, 2021, p. 2). Face masks had to be kept on during the performance; hand disinfectant was available at each venue; and from 21st July onwards, festival visitors had to show their *pass sanitaire*[25] before entering a theatre hall for more than 50 spectators. These measures led to a noticeable decrease in attendance figures, whereupon several acting companies were repeatedly confronted with a nearly empty auditorium. Moreover, many *programmateurs* had postponed their theatre season by one year, as cultural venues and other institutions had remained closed due to multiple periods of Covid-19 lockdown in 2020/2021. Consequently, 2,087 accredited professionals attended the festival in 2021 compared to 3,250 in 2019, which marks a decline by 36 percent (*ibid*., p. 4).

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[24] When AF&C announced the first cancellation of the OFF d'Avignon on 15 April 2020, the loose organisational structure of the non-juried fringe festival risked breaking apart and every theatre director acted autonomously by either cancelling the scheduled programme, creating online alternatives, or organising independent micro-festivals. For a more detailed analysis, see: Huber, 2023.

[25] The so-called *pass sanitaire* meant that festival visitors either had a valid PCR-test or their second Covid-19 vaccination dated back at least 14 days.

These circumstances increased the competition among acting companies and let professional objectives overshadow the carnivalesque atmosphere. Even more noticeably than in previous years, the Festival OFF d'Avignon was perceived not just as an entertaining event but a serious work meeting and important networking platform among theatre professionals. Having been confronted with the uncertainty whether and under which conditions the OFF 2021 could take place, it was even discussed in one of the *wébinaires* held by AF&C at the beginning of the year to organise a "festival pro" instead. That would have permitted acting companies to showcase their new creations and to sign contracts with *programmateurs* but excluded 'ordinary' festival visitors who come to Avignon just for the joy of going to the theatre. The thought behind this suggestion was to drastically reduce the audience numbers, in case Covid-19 infection rates would not have permitted large gatherings in July. This measure, which in the end was not necessary, would have repressed the carnivalesque atmosphere even further by transforming the festival into an exclusive work meeting among theatre professionals only.

The festival cancellation of 2020 and the reduced edition of 2021 also stirred up participants to rethink the organisational structure and work practices at the OFF d'Avignon that have caused unhealthy competition, collateral social damages, a survival-of-the-fittest mentality, and a standardisation of aesthetic forms. To tackle this issue, work groups were launched, panel discussions were organised, and objectives were written down. Lecesne, co-president of the actors' association AAFA (Actrices et Acteurs de France Associés) and co-founder of EGOFF (États Généraux du Festival OFF d'Avignon), is convinced that the microcosm of OFF d'Avignon does not only mirror problems of a neoliberal economic system, but by revealing them, it potentially serves as a laboratory to discover, explore, and test alternative models of cultural politics (Lecesne, 2021).[26] The association EGOFF, founded in 2020 with the intention to reinvent the OFF d'Avignon, considers the non-juried festival as a testing ground for a social and ecological economy in the cultural sector. In other words, the clearly framed microcosm of the festival still inspires participants to review and renegotiate socio-political structures of everyday life. While it was the streets in July 1968 that were converted into a public stage to share and explore utopian visions of society, the OFF today

[26] "On peut faire civilisation, on peut faire modèle de société […] La base n'est pas suffisamment pourrie pour qu'on y renonce. Effectivement, l'objectif c'est d'en faire un phare culturel. […] Le OFF pourrait être un modèle de société." (Lecesne, interviewed on 22 July 2021) [translation: "We can make civilization, we can make a prototype of society […] The base is not rotten enough for us to give it up. Indeed, the objective is to make it a cultural beacon. […] The OFF could be a prototype of society."]

provides a site for discursive and analytical formats, which encourage thought experiments on how to guarantee free artistic creation as well as sustainable work practices.

Conclusion

According to Victor Turner, the liminal space "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial" (Turner, 1969, p. 81) represents a "realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (Turner, 1967, p. 97). Festivals, i.e. carnivalesque inversions of the everyday, permit participants to experience a different reality. On the fringe of the Festival d'Avignon, July 1968 did indeed provoke a release from hierarchical structures and the creation of a temporary utopia. The streets were transformed into a public forum for political debates and free thinking, a canvas for provocative slogans and mural paintings and an open space for communal life and self-discovery. More than fifty years later, the streets of Avignon serve as advertising space for acting companies who distribute flyers and address potential theatregoers, curators, talent scouts, and journalists.

While festival visitors today might still experience the carnivalesque atmosphere as a joyful inversion of the everyday, the artists view their participation as a serious endeavour that involves considerable financial risks. The supposed liminal space has become an important networking meeting in the professional arts community. Economic constraints and social hierarchies dominate and impact the autonomy of acting companies. Thus, the OFF d'Avignon represents a clearly framed microcosm that mirrors social and economic injustices of neoliberal policies in a condensed form, which in return permits one to recognise, identify, discuss, and reform these structures and mechanisms. Today, the OFF d'Avignon operates as a liminal space, not necessarily by suspending the everyday, but by mirroring, reinforcing, and thus revealing the impact of neoliberal economic structures on the cultural sector. In further consequence, the OFF is again taken as a laboratory to experiment with alternative models of society, not by acting them out on the streets, but by engaging in thought experiments and panel discussions.

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The Misery of Women: Liminality of Gender Roles in Stephen King's *Misery*

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Abstract

This paper suggests that the liminal and fluid roles of the characters Paul Sheldon and Annie Wilkes in Stephen King's Misery *disrupts the binary of man and woman as well as captor and captive. The liminal space in which Paul and Annie exist allows the two to move fluidly between their gendered roles as well as their roles of power. By analysing the role of Annie as both lover of the literary world created by Paul, and the 'maniac' that has captured him in her home, this paper discusses the issue of the female presence in liminality as well as the transformation of the creative process. As liminality is "understood as transition and transgression" it "becomes a valuable tool for the interpretation of literature" (Bergmann, 2017, p. 479). In this context, it demonstrates not only the emotional and mental transition made by those, like Paul, who suffer trauma and horrific events but also Annie's movement from a submissive to a tormented captor.*

In a feminist understanding, the role of Annie is especially applicable to the concept of liminality and the space of her own home where she continuously transitions between a submissive, avid fan of Paul's writing and sadistic tormentor. She eventually completes the transition into the "crazed female", becoming something Paul fears even after he has killed her. Her matriarchal, female qualities of caring for Paul and adoring his writing become twisted and disturbed as Paul continues to "make mistakes" or upsets her in different ways (Keesey, 2002, p. 54). She transitions from submissive female, performing in the role of caretaker, to the dominating, powerful role of violent kidnapper. This uncertainty alongside Annie's unpredictable changes are juxtaposed with the creative space that Paul enters as he writes, sometimes producing excellent work but also producing writing of which Annie disapproves. She becomes not only the one who controls his medication and survival but also his writings and creative environment.

This paper suggests that the liminal and fluid roles of the characters Paul Sheldon and Annie Wilkes in Stephen King's *Misery* disrupt the binary of man and woman as well as captor and captive. The liminal space in which Paul and Annie exist allows the two to move fluidly between their gendered roles as well as their roles of power. Although *Misery* "focuses on an obsessive relationship and the inner and introspective world of Paul and Annie while they are trapped in a web of trauma, violence and survival", there is also an element of liminality and transition present in the disruption of the binary of power between captor and captive (Jaber, 2021, p. 205). By analysing the role of Annie as a lover of the literary world created by Paul

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and as the 'maniac' who captures him in her home, the issue of the heteronormative gender expectations and its presence in liminality will be discussed. The potential dangers associated with fandom and fan behaviour will be examined as a secondary element to the gender presentations. As Malynda Strother Taylor suggests, "women's experiences can provide a good resource for the study of liminality", and while this narrative is not told from the perspective of Annie, her role as one half of the captor/captive and male/female binary is one of the focuses of the liminal aspects of this text (Taylor, 1998, p. 12). As the "attributes of liminality" can be described as being "necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications", this understanding of liminality can be applied to the fluidity of Paul and Annie's roles in *Misery* and how this disturbs both the gendered binaries within the text, as well as the power binaries (Turner, 1969, p. 95).

The continuous transfer of power between Paul and Annie demonstrates the function of liminality within this text, as well as their disruption of the expected gender performance of their roles. As "the roles of Annie and Paul are not merely that of victim/victimizer", their roles are constantly in transition alongside their control of the power within the dynamic. The validity of applying the concept of liminality to this text is revealed in the in-between space that Paul and Annie occupy as they transition between roles. While neither Paul nor Annie make a physical journey from one space or culture to another – although Paul arguably transitions from his public world to the private world belonging to Annie and her house – their space of liminality and transition is revealed within the power dynamic of the two. According to Margret A. McLaren in her discussion of Foucault and power dynamics, it is often difficult to "distinguish the difference in power between the dominators and the dominated" (McLaren, 2002, p. 2). This criticism becomes a useful critical analysis for this paper. By applying this understanding of power and the dynamic of being unable to identify the dominated and dominating within a defined binary, the liminal roles of Paul and Annie continue to dismantle the set binary of captor and captive. While Annie may be the one holding Paul as her captive, she is still his 'number one fan' and is obsessive in her love of his character Misery Chastain.

Misery begins with the rescue of injured author, Paul Sheldon, by a socially reclusive Annie Wilkes. Paul, injured in an automobile accident caused by poor weather conditions, becomes indebted to Annie from the beginning of the text, which should identify him as the weaker element in the power binary. Annie is Paul's self-proclaimed 'number one fan' and is extremely disappointed to learn that Paul has killed the main character of her favourite novel series: Misery Chastain. This hint of obsessive fan behaviour indicates that Annie is somewhat submissive to Paul and his creative talent, despite her being the reason for his survival. From

the beginning of the text, the binary is already shifted and dismantled, demonstrating the liminal roles of Paul and Annie from the onset of the narrative. Although Annie initially acts as a carer for Paul and allows him to remain in a drug-induced stupor for their early time together, Annie soon grows violent with Paul, often having rage-filled outbursts that brutalise his already injured legs. These outbursts act as 'punishments' for Paul when he does not act in a way that Annie deems acceptable. She insists that he write a final novel in the series in order to bring Misery Chastain back to life. Paul works under the impression that his imprisonment will be lifted once he does. After realising that Annie has no intentions of releasing Paul once he completes the novel, he plans to free himself and, after a violent attempt that results in Annie's death, manages to do so.

As liminality is "understood as transition and transgression", it "becomes a valuable tool for the interpretation of literature" especially within this text, as the binary of captor and captive is continuously threatened and questioned (Bergmann, 2017, p. 479). As Foucault suggests "power is not unilateral […] and it is not possessed by an individual or group of individuals […] it is a relationship, not a thing" (McLaren, 2002, p. 4). This proves applicable to this liminal relationship between Paul and Annie. The possession of power continues to switch between them, and, in this context, it demonstrates not only the emotional and mental transition made by those who suffer trauma and horrific events – Paul – but also Annie's movement from submissive to tormented captor. The heteronormative expectations of gender roles also contribute to the concept of liminality within the text, suggesting that Paul may deter from the expected gender norms just as much as Annie does. By the end of the novel, Paul arguably acts with the same level of violence as Annie has done throughout the novel, ultimately killing his captor.

Although the primary strength of the use of liminality in literature is arguably to represent the concept of migration and hybridity, applying the concept of liminality to horror and this text in particular, the understanding of liminality and transitional spaces adapts to create a space of terror and uncertainty – which "heightens the horror and terror of the text" – as well as aiding the understanding of an unstable binary opposition of power (Conner, 2019, p. 78). The role of Annie is especially applicable to the concept of liminality. Foucault's analysis of power aids this understanding, as Annie continuously transitions between a submissive, avid fan of Paul's writing and his sadistic tormentor. She eventually completes the transition into the "crazed female", becoming something Paul fears even after he kills her (Keesey, 2002, p. 54). This relationship between Annie and power within the text demonstrates the validity of understanding power through Foucault's definition; it is a relationship

continuously in transition. Her matriarchal, female qualities of caring for Paul and adoring his writing become twisted and disturbed as Paul continues to 'make mistakes' or upsets her in different ways. She transitions from submissive female, performing in the role of caretaker, to the dominating, powerful role of a violent kidnapper. In his creative "hole in the page", Paul sometimes produces excellent work but also presents writing of which Annie disapproves (p. 205). She controls not only his medication and survival, but also his writings and creative environment. The issue of power and how it transfers from Paul as captive to Annie and her role as captor is intrinsically a part of the text. Paul as the writer and fictional world creator and Annie as the avid fan alongside an anti-social madness within society contrast their power roles within the novel.

Paul begins the story physically debilitated, injured, under the control of Annie and subject to her care. The power structure of Paul as idolised author and dependent patient versus Annie as a star-struck fan and dedicated nurse is one that transitions and transforms into the ultimate roles of Paul as tortured captive and creative author and Annie as disturbed captor and mentally unwell obsessive fan. It is important to note here, however, that since Paul's injuries are debilitating, lasting throughout the narrative, the aforementioned structure of Paul as the dependent patient is one which remains constant. While Paul remains physically dependant on Annie due to his injuries and his need for pain medication, he still maintains the power in the relationship between himself and Annie as he is the creator of her favourite world.

Though this transformation of the roles is essential for the progression of the psychological terror of the novel, the two characters exist in a liminal space in which they occupy both their respective roles at once as well as moving from one to the other. Annie's mental illness is linked to her dedication as Paul's fan, while Paul's creative world must be called upon to escape from his role as an injured patient. The power is continuously in flux and transition, passing from one end of the binary to the other in a manner which disrupts the binary itself: Paul to Annie, man to woman, author to reader, creator to a fan and captive to the captor. Each binary is questioned and dismantled through the liminal process of power exchange. This power exchange and disruption of roles creates a liminal and transgressive space as both characters are powerful and powerless within the context and move fluidly from one role to the other within this liminal state. Neither truly deviates from their initial roles presented in the text but exist within a space of liminality throughout their journey. The characters of Paul and Annie exist on both sides of the power structure simultaneously, denying a fixed presentation of their characters within a binary. This disrupts both the understanding of power and the binary system, replacing these structures with a liminal space of existence. Annie dies as a vindictive

madwoman, intent on killing Paul but also dearly loving his creation. Paul, by the end of the text, remains haunted by Annie and traumatised by thoughts of her but still exists in his 'hole' through which he writes:

> He heard a noise behind him and turned from the blank screen to see Annie come out of the kitchen […] he closed his eyes, opened them, saw the same old nothing, and was suddenly angry. He turned back to the word processor and wrote fast, almost bludgeoning the keys […] the hole opened (p. 205)

This 'hole' is the creative space that Paul inhabits as he writes, staring through the hole in a page as he creates and narrates the literary world over which he has control. The liminal space in which Paul's character exists throughout the text is dominated by his writing sessions, during which he escapes the reality of his capture and exists within 'the hole' in the page. This metaphorical space acts as the key liminal space within the text; he is both creator and spectator, narrator and audience. He inhabits the creative role fully, the world of Misery Chastain interrupting the narrative of the text *Misery.* It is here that he reinvigorates, albeit reluctantly, the world he has created for Misery Chastain and her return from the dead, as demanded by Annie.

Although he does initially begin writing *Fast Cars*, a text that he had previously worked on but decides to complete while in Annie's care, Annie makes him destroy this text to begin a new novel that will revive Misery. Even within his creative world, there is an issue of power and control – Paul created the world of Misery and now he must unwrite her death. While he invades Annie's space – although she welcomes and compels it – she, in turn, invades his creative world. *Misery* is "loaded with text and subtext alike about writing and the relationship between creator and audience", detailing Paul's creative process and his opportunity to escape through withdrawal from the drugs Annie prescribes him, as well as from her violent attacks although he does not succeed in full escapism (Katsanakis, 2019, p. 2). Paul's writing and his creative world exist only for Annie within this environment as she demands certain power over his "hole in the page" (p. 205).

After Paul's escape and Annie's death, he is continuously tormented by Annie's ghost. Though he is physically free of her capture and gains freedom through her death, the trauma of the experience continues to affect him beyond the event. He exists in a space of liminality – living with the memories of his torture yet finding freedom in his writing. This space is transformative as he moves through the process of healing from his trauma, haunted by the memories of his experience but trying to embrace his "hole in the page" and continue with his own creative world (p. 205). Although both his writing and his physical character are freed

from Annie, his mind remains captured by her. Similarly, Annie experiences great joy by having Paul in her home and having him write for her while she nurses him. However, she is also tormented by her mental illnesses and often angered by his creative choices with regards to his writing and his responses to their interactions if they clash with her own beliefs:

> 'Don't call it that. I hate it when you call it that.'
> He looked at her, honestly puzzled. 'Call what what?'
> 'When you pervert the talent God gave you by calling it a business. I hate that.'
> 'I'm sorry.'
> 'You ought to be,' she said stonily. 'You might as well call yourself a whore.'
> (p. 49)

These interactions and the violence of her reactions increase steadily in their occurrence. Suiting the genre of the text, the increased horror of Annie's reaction to Paul's discussions and actions leads to an understanding of the constant state of change in which Annie exists. Although acting as a feature of Annie's mental stability, the uncertainty of her reactions and outbursts of violence juxtaposes with the gentle nature with which she treats Paul as well as the love she demonstrates for his writing. Even in the above quote, her anger stems from Paul discussing his talent for writing as a business, utilising his talent for monetary gain. Although Annie's view of writing as a creative talent is not evil or unhinged, her repeated unexpected outbursts create a tension of uncertainty for Paul. Although he "could calculate her rage", her unexpected assault on his already injured legs – a punishment for requiring different supplies than the ones she buys him – is a violent occurrence that is continuously echoed throughout the text (p. 50). These moments of rage, which often follow a disagreement between the two, act as a catalyst for the exposure of Annie's liminal character on the precipice of doting carer and violent captor. Despite her "sycophancy" as "easy once you got the hang of it" and Paul developing a certain understanding of Annie and her quick mood changes, she remains an unbalanced character, her mood "tide" wavering throughout the text (p. 11).

It is of interest to note the lack of attractive femininity in Annie, despite her role as a carer and homemaker. She is "a dowdy, unexotic villain" described by Natalie Schroeder as a "phallic" woman (Schroeder, 1996, p. 138). This role as 'phallic woman' is key to Annie's liminal presence within the text. As Maysaa Husam Jaber argues, "in King's horror, the body, especially the female body, is one of the main ingredients in a complex recipe" as it "involves the depiction of the killer concerning the dynamics of conformity, agency and transgression", suggesting that Annie's role as both woman and villain is key in creating the horror within the text (Jaber, 2021, p. 167). By removing any erotic attraction Paul may feel for Annie despite her mental instability, she is seen as a definitive threat and her obsessive fandom is unsettling

rather than pleasing for Paul. As John Katsanakis argues, "*Misery* is a stunningly prophetic novel about the rise and normalization of toxic fandom culture" (Katsanakis, 2019, p. 2). This suggests that obsessive behaviour of fans is somehow accepted within the world of fandoms and popular culture, especially in contemporary literature: "Annie Wilkes […] a character written in 1987 before social media was even a thought" demonstrates "the power that fandom now claims" with regards to fan culture analysis in contemporary literature (Katsanakis, 2019, p. 3). The structuring of Annie and her obsession with Paul positions Annie as both a lover of his work and a critic who demands that her desires for the Misery Chastain franchise are met. Although extremes are reached in the text through the violence of Annie's actions, this liminal, unstable relationship between fan and creator exists within this gendered power structure.

This discussion of Annie as a fan and Paul as the creator also illustrates the importance of Annie being a 'phallic woman' and a character who often defies the expectations of her gender performance. Foucault's "view that subjectivity is produced within power relations results in a concept of the subject wholly determined by social forces" (McLaren, 2002, p. 2) suggests that Annie and Paul control and are denied control of power in the text through the performance of their gender and the social defiance of this performance. As a woman and a decidedly unattractive, 'phallic' one, Annie is framed as somehow threatening Paul's creative work. As "creativity is solely a masculine prerogative, for the artist is male, and both the reader and the character/antagonist […] are female", just by existing within the gender binary, Annie is by default a threat to Paul's work (Lant, 1997, p. 93). The artist's power, if it is, in fact, masculine and thus threatened by the feminine role of an avid fan, is not fully threatened by Annie if she is positioned as a somewhat androgynous woman. Annie exists within this liminal space of being a woman, but not performing in a way expected by the society of the text, and thus disrupts the 'subjectivity' of power. If Annie did not embody the liminal space with regards to the gendered power within the text, she would not be as dominant as Paul's captor, physically saving and later hobbling him through her strength and unfeminine manner. It is Annie's ability to temporarily seize the power within this gendered binary as "a monstrous female, a serial killer and a memorable female representation" which allows her to disrupt the binary of man and woman, situating her in a liminal space of performing beyond her gender expectations and possessing power beyond the social expectancy (Jaber, 2021, p. 172).

Misery "is devoid of any supernatural elements; it has no creatures, no fantastical forces and no imaginary setting", placing Annie as a very human threat and forgoing the familiar female power of the witch or monster (Jaber, 2021, p. 172). She gains the power of inciting terror through her liminal power as a captor; like a woman but not a woman who performs

according to social expectations. Her power is gained in the text through her role as captor, especially through the violent acts she commits towards Paul and the crippling of his body. She gains power by physically disabling him and ensuring he is dependent on her for his survival. By denying her character and most of her 'feminine' indicators, Annie becomes fluid within her role as both fan and tormentor, sometimes existing as both. The revival of Misery Chastain is motivated by Annie's threat, yet it is created to please her as a fan. Although he is inhibited by her and forced to destroy his previous text *Fast Cars*, Paul is still in control of his creative world and this power relationship. This denial of complete control and power in any aspect of the text – physical, creative process – places Paul and Annie in the continuous liminal space in which both are controlled and controlling at the same time. There is no definitive divide between Annie and Paul in terms of power. While Annie's violent actions are often outbursts of rage, they are encouraged by her love of Paul and his writing and her inability to accept that he has killed off the main character Misery Chastain. It is explained in the text that Annie's actions are not a recent phenomenon and that she has always had a tendency for violence, suggesting that her obsessive nature and acts of violence are intrinsically linked. Does she hurt Paul so he will reward her with Misery? Or is it because he has taken Misery from her for a moment that she punishes him? While he controls her obsession, she can control his pain, resulting in a constant switching of roles within the power dynamic, a fact which Paul uses to his advantage to initiate the final confrontation between himself and Annie.

Although Annie holds Paul captive, he holds a sense of power over her as the creator of the world she loves. His choice to destroy the final version of the book in front of Annie, to "do a little trick with it" demonstrates this power that he holds (p. 193). He burns the text, echoing her previous order to destroy *Fast Cars*. It is prompted by his realisation that she will kill him once the book is complete and by the need to escape, even though he might die in the process. This destruction of the text, encouraging Annie to do "exactly what he had almost known she would" and attempt to save the text, switches the power control from Annie to Paul in an instant (p. 194). Although he remains her captor and is bound to a wheelchair due to her violence against his body, he seizes the power within the binary by threatening his creative work and the source of her fandom. Throughout the text, Paul has remained physically submissive to Annie, both as a captor and as her patient, but it is in this moment that Annie submits full power to Paul. This is also the event that enables his escape from the horror.

Even though the trauma of his experience with Annie remains with Paul his escape from the horror within the text is also his escape from the liminality of his relationship with Annie and power. He no longer exists within the continuous shift of power but gains the control within

a newly established binary of survivor and villain. His existence is no longer liminal, existing beyond the horror of the house and his relationship with Annie. This aspect indicates the role of liminality within the process of healing from trauma and surviving in horror texts. It suggests a temporary role of liminality within horror texts as once a character moves beyond the trauma of an event they are removed from this state of liminality. As Xavier Pons writes on liminality:

> …it makes it easier to bring out the fluidity of life because it discounts closure – what matters is not how this or that process ends but how it evolves and why it runs in a particular direction. It preserves a sense of indeterminacy or uncertainty which is very much part of how people experience the course of events in their lives. And although liminality inescapably involves the notions of 'before' and 'after,' by focussing on what at once separates and links them makes for a more complex picture than this binary suggests (Pons, 2014, p. 12)

The memory of the events, of the control, and his captor continues to haunt Paul, even in his "hole in the page" (p. 205). He exists both within the binary as a survivor, and outside of it through his memories and traumatic hauntings. The narrative is simply an experience, of which a liminal existence allows him to occupy a marginal role as both captive and celebrity. While the physical state of existing as Annie's captor is momentary, the lasting terror of the events is not.

This too suggests that Annie's kidnapping violence against Paul, and the horror that it inspires within him, are not temporary either– they have lasting power in that the trauma forces him into a liminal experience. He "weeps" even as he enters his "hole in the page" and continues his creative process (p. 205). As Jaber discusses, this text "highlights the trauma of Paul's experience as told by the writer himself […] the trauma of witnessing Annie's brutality […] the narrative uncovers not only the horror of trauma but also the trauma of horror; it is this two-sided experience of trauma/horror" presenting both horror and trauma as an experience in which one does not exist without the other in the structure of the text (Jaber, 2021, p. 172). There is the experience of each terror – being disabled by Annie, being held captive in her home – and the terror of his experience, including remaining physically injured after the event and being haunted by her ghost once she is dead.

Many of Paul's experiences within the text take place as a captive in Annie's home, the "setting of Annie's house, however, is far from being a representation of domesticity; it is a setting for serial violence" as it is within this private domain where Annie initially cares for Paul, but then tortures and torments him (Jaber, 2021, p. 173). Just as Paul feels trapped by Misery Chastain – having previously written her death to be finished with the series – he is physically trapped within this private environment. He is captive in a manner which stimulates the terror of never being discovered and of eventually dying in Annie's home, "in an alien

environment far from the reach of the social […] identities that sustain us" (Sewlall, 2008, p. 110). This idea of a binary between space of the reality of the house and Paul's "hole in the page" are both infringed upon (p. 205). Annie attempts to control Paul's writing and Paul explores Annie's house during moments she is absent. Even the fictional world of Misery Chastain and Paul's "hole in the page" is a 'border crossing' in which the terror of Annie's home and his reality as captor begins to affect the creative space of Paul's writing, especially after his first manuscript is destroyed (p. 205). As Claire Valier writes:

> The power that operates in and through penalty is hence much more than a matter of what is seen, known, and displayed […] This power also involves the invocation of horrors and imaginative engagement. (Valier, 2002, p. 320)

As previously discussed, Annie often punishes Paul for his mistakes or for angering her. She amputates his left foot when she discovers he has been escaping his room to explore the house, and she burns his manuscript when she discovers the writing has nothing to do with her beloved Misery Chastain. She often threatens to withdraw his access to pain medication as punishment, and he is left in the basement towards the end of the text as Annie grows increasingly frustrated with his actions. While this element of punishment is essential for the horror in the text as it acts as a threat of violence for both Paul and the reader, is it also fundamental in the idea of 'border crossing'. While Annie insists that Paul continues to write about Misery Chastain – a side effect of being his number one fan – she accomplishes this by invading his creative world. Paul's "hole in the page" world begins to transition into a world controlled by Annie (p. 205). His creative space is marginalised in the horror setting of Annie's home.

Although the use of liminality as a space of migration between two physical spaces has been touched upon, it is the liminal role of gender, its disruption to several binary systems, and the control of power within the text which prompt the most interesting examination. While the text itself was originally published in 1987, the gender binary and liminal nature displayed throughout the text remains relevant to the construction of gender in contemporary society. With the understanding of gender as being "culturally constructed" and one which relies on the expectations of gender within a society (Butler, 1999, p. 9), *Misery* questions these binary positions through the marginal characters of a submissive, helpless man and a powerful, threatening, phallic woman. As Judith Butler writes, if "gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way" (Butler, 1999, p. 10). This situates *Misery* as a text which challenges the heterosexual, normative assumptions of gender through the liminal existence of Paul and Annie as marginal characters within their gender. The constant cycle of possessing and losing the power in a

binary opposition of creator and fan, captive and captor, destabilises the binary itself. If "the category of sex is understood depending on how the field of power is articulated" (Butler, 1999, p. 25) and power is a liminal feature within this text that is in constant flux, then the heteronormative understanding of gender is also in a consistent transition from feminine to masculine attributes, upheaving the binary understanding of the genders. While Annie is a 'phallic woman' who embodies many 'masculine' attributes commonly associated with heteronormative assumptions such as physical strength, domination, and ability to commit acts of violence, Paul is the revered man who takes on feminine gendered qualities such as dependence and physical weakness. He exists in a state of "ambivalence toward a state of dependency, which he both desires as a relief from the burden of independence and fears as a challenge to his hard-won autonomy" (Keesey, 2002, p. 54). This also suggests that "Annie may disguise a desire to return to the mother" as she takes on the role of Pauls' caretaker (Keesey, 2002, p. 54). This assumption, however, would deny Annie her role as a 'phallic woman' and her failure as a nurse, a profession from which Paul learns she was fired after the death of several patients. By allotting Annie her role as tormentor and as a 'phallic woman', both Paul and Annie defy the expectations of their genders and dismantle the binary of gender through their liminal roles. Instead of embodying the role of a mother who creates and nourishes life, Annie becomes a killer, one who takes life and torments Paul, as Paul becomes a physically dominated man and contained to the domestic sphere.

As previously mentioned, *Misery* is a text which discusses issues surrounding the creator and the audience which experiences their creations. Although this is justifiable to assume, as King's relationship with the consumers of his creations has "taken several horrifying turns", it is this aspect of liminality in gender beyond the "bodied sex" which warrants further discussion with regards to fan behaviour and the relationship between the creator of the text, the text, and the intended audience of the text (Lant, 1997, p. 89). Despite being hailed as a "complex exploration" of the "powers of the artist […] the pressures of the audience" and "the workings of creativity", the representation of gender and heteronormative expectations in this text are challenged by the liminal roles of Paul and Annie, and their hold on power (Lant, 1997, p. 82).

In conclusion, while the use of liminal space and characters aid the representation of marginalised individuals in a general understanding, in this context it also provides an understanding of the expectations of gender roles and the disruption liminal characters and spaces cause binary systems. The binary system, in this case, encompasses several pairs: man and woman, captor and captive, creator and consumer, author and reader, celebrity and fan,

dependent and carer, and horror and escape. While each binary places Paul and Annie on either side of the power structure, their positions are never truly fixed and often exist within a liminal space which defies the heteronormative expectations of their identifying gender, deconstructing the binary itself and allowing Paul and Annie to possess power as discussed by Foucault. As mentioned previously, this attribute of *Misery* maintains its relevance in contemporary society as the identification of gender and sexed bodies is a continuous discussion. The shifting power allotted to each gender and their disruption of the gender binary reveals the true liminal space in which Paul and Annie exist throughout the text. This uncertainty and constant flux of power and position aid the horror of the text in a similar manner as the violence and uncertainty Paul experiences. This "uncertainty created by avoiding an absolute explanation heightens the horror and terror of the text" for both the reader and Paul (Conner, 2019, p. 78). There is a stark contrast between the environment of Annie's physical home – and the site of Paul's entrapment – and the "hole in the page" which Paul dominates and inhabits (p. 205). This not only act as a representation of the horror of Paul's reality and the freedom of his creative mode of escape but also demonstrates how fixed environments may also be altered and terrorised by the concept of liminality. Paul is both the creator and the controlled, Annie the lover and the puppet master. With both the spaces and the characters themselves existing in a state of liminal conflict and transformation, *Misery* lends itself to being analysed as not just a text describing the creative process and the horror of overly zealous fans and fandom culture, but as an exploration of the liminal experience of gender and the uncertainty of position and power in horror.

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Unsettled Boundaries and Insidious Trauma in Stephen King's *Carrie*

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Abstract

This article examines the concept of unsettled boundaries and insidious trauma in relation to Stephen King's Carrie (1974). Mulcahy argues how the titular character is viewed as monstrous due to her inability to hide abject features of her female body, specifically her menarche. In relation to abjection, the article relies on analyses presented by Julia Kristeva and Barbara Creed, who explain the abject as the border between the rational and the irrational. This article discusses how menarche is presented as a traumatic event due to societal discomfort with the abject female body, how Carrie's body as a feature of the monstrous feminine is heightened by her supernatural abilities (which awaken around the same time as her menarche), and how she views herself as a witch. Mulcahy analyses how Carrie views fitting in with society as a way of escaping from her insidious traumatic experiences, and discusses that, when this attempt to fit in fails, she is unable to overcome her trauma and instead succumbs to the monstrous feminine image as which society views her.

The concept of abjection is concerned with what unsettles and lies outside the boundaries of the rational subject. In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva describes the abject as that which "is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 2). The features of abjection, such as vomit and faeces, are associated with anxiety aroused by the abject due to its capacity to unsettle the boundary between inside and outside. Corporeal features of the female body, such as menarche, are abject, and thus unacceptable within the realms of everyday society. Women are required to hide any traces of the natural body, which instead "must bear no trace of its debt to nature" (*ibid.*, p. 102). The experience of repressing natural features of the female body contributes to the idea that femininity is monstrous. In Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), the titular character suffers from insidious trauma due to her peers and mother abusing her as they see her as abject, which leads to her internalisation of misogynistic ideas concerning the female body. The novel focuses on a teenage girl who has just experienced menarche, and as well as this, has gained supernatural telekinetic abilities. There is an exploration of the abuse she faces due to her abject status, which ultimately culminates in a prank that consists of spilling pig's blood on her at her senior prom and leads her to react by carrying out a violent revenge through the use of her telekinesis. Carrie attempts

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to escape her association with the abject in order to fit in with society, and as such, her identity places her in a liminal space. The relationship between corporeal femininity and abjection in the horror genre has been discussed by theorists such as Barbara Creed (1993). She argues that the concept of a border is central within the horror genre, and that which is monstrous threatens "to bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability" (Creed, 1993, p. 216). The horror of *Carrie* strongly relies on the idea of corporeal femininity threatening the stability of a constructed patriarchal society, and Carrie's status as the monstrous feminine is gained due to her inability to exist within the boundaries of socially acceptable femininity. This article explores Carrie's role as abject amongst her peers, which is shown through her naivety towards her menarche, which occurs at the same time as the awakening of her telekinesis. Her telekinesis not only serves as a metaphor of her status as abject, but also acts as a defence mechanism against her abusive mother. Carrie's attempt to fit in with society to escape her insidious traumatic experiences is analysed and how her inability to do so leads to her attack on the town, and subsequent death. Overall, this article aims to highlight the relationship between Carrie's status on the borders of society and her insidious trauma.

Patriarchal society commonly views the female body as abject. Menstruation is considered one of the most abject qualities of the female body, as women are instructed to hide all signs of blood. At the time of the publication of *Carrie* in 1974, menstruation was sparsely represented in any other genre than horror. Creed makes note of the fact that "it is the horror film that we must turn for any direct reference to woman's monthly cycle" (Creed, 1993, p. 77). In the horror genre, menstruation is represented as abject, and thus is reflective of the taboo status of discussing menstruation in society. Sherry B. Ortner (1972) puts forward the idea that, historically, women have been closely associated with nature, while men have been associated with culture. Men's bodies are not associated with nature, and thus not bound by the same rules of cleanliness as women's bodies. Aside from when they are wounded, the male body is not viewed as abject, but women's bodies are framed as abject throughout various stages of life, such as menarche, pregnancy and childbirth. These stages of life are viewed as abject due to their association with nature. As Ortner notes:

> It is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it 'natural' to subordinate, not to say, oppress them. (Ortner, 1972, p. 73)

In order to remain within the boundaries of patriarchal society, at the time of the novel's writing in 1974, women are required to hide the 'unclean' features of their bodies and allow culture to

subsume natural features of their bodies. Society teaches women that the natural processes that their bodies go through are abhorrent and must be hidden at all costs. These narratives are internalized and, in turn, lead to women's self-hatred towards their own bodies, due to society's disgust towards menstruation.

When women are unable to conceal their 'debt to nature', they are ostracised and viewed as abject, which can lead to experiences of insidious trauma. Judith Herman (1992) notes that the experience of insidious trauma differs from single-event trauma which is regarded as a wide-scale traumatic event, such as war or natural disaster, that is generally not a part of everyday life. The first definition of PTSD, included in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* defines it as the psychological response as a "traumatic event that is generally outside the range of human experience" (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, p. 236). Insidious trauma, by contrast, is the result of ongoing traumatic events. Herman notes that "survivors of prolonged abuse develop characteristic personality changes, including deformations of relatedness and identity" (Herman, 1992, p. 119). It is worth examining the idea of insidious trauma resulting in the deformation of one's identity particularly in relation to women's trauma. Within a patriarchal society, women are taught to hide any bodily features considered unclean; any woman who fails to hide her 'debt to nature' is seen as an outlier. In *Carrie*, the consequences of the inability to repress one's corporeal femininity is portrayed in a traumatic manner, as the titular character is subjected to abuse by her peers and mother, due to the fear of her abject body. The trauma caused by being viewed as unclean is constantly ongoing, as the abject features of the female body are inescapable. Thus, the trauma described in *Carrie* cannot be viewed as a singular traumatic event outside the range of human experience. Carrie's trauma is the result of living in a body that is constantly associated with the abject and placed on the borders of society.

In the opening scene, Carrie is described as "a frog among swans" (p. 4), instantly setting her apart from her female classmates. Her inability to perform socially acceptable femininity is shown through her pimply skin and sweat. The other girls are successful in presenting themselves in a socially acceptable manner, and thus, their bodies are not regarded as abject. Carrie, on the other hand, is immediately associated with dirt and slime, which emphasises that she fails to embody the perceived standard of beauty for American teenage girls. The narrative defines her as "the sacrificial goat" (*ibid.*), emphasising that she is condemned to the borders of society as she represents the perceived uncleanliness of the female body. Carrie's abject status is further shown through the occurrence of her menarche. Her unawareness surrounding menstruation before this moment leads her to believe that she is

dying, and she makes no attempt to hide her bleeding. Instead, she pleads for help from her classmates, who react by pelting her with tampons and pads. As King describes the girls' laughter as "disgusted and contemptuous" (p. 7), their reaction to Carrie's menarche aligns with Kristeva's ideas on disgust as the natural response to being confronted with the abject. Kristeva argues that the "abject confronts us [...] with those fragile states where man strays on the territory of animal" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 12). When examining this within the context of the novel, it can be understood that Carrie's peers' hostile reactions are a result of her visibly displaying what is considered animal within a social space. She disrupts societal boundaries by being unable to hide her menarche, which threatens the social order regarding the idea that women are required to hide the unclean features of their bodies.

The occurrence of Carrie's menarche is a traumatic event which is heightened by her peers ostracising her. Due to her mother's severe repression of corporeal femininity to the point where she does not inform her daughter about menstruation, Carrie is unaware of the abject status of her menarche. Her first period is a traumatic experience due to her belief that she is dying, and she is subsequently attacked by her peers for explicitly displaying the abject. She is abused for her inability to hide what is considered abject, which leads to her being isolated by her peers. Existing outside of the boundaries of what is socially acceptable results in her isolation. The role of the wider community, in the case of the novel, Carrie's high school peers, in response to trauma is highly significant to the survivor, according to Herman, as she notes how "[t]he response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of trauma" (Herman, 1992, p. 70). Carrie's fears over her menarche are met with hostility and aggression, which subsequently feeds into her view of her own body as monstrous. It can be seen that Carrie's trauma occurs as a result of societal hatred of the female body. Her female peers are taught to internalise the idea that their bodies are abject, and when they witness a girl unsettle the boundaries between the rational and the irrational, they are disgusted by her. Following Carrie's menarche, her teacher observes: "Maybe there's some kind of instinct about menstruation that makes women want to snarl" (p. 20). From this description, it is apparent that the presentation of Carrie's menarche evokes animalistic reactions from her peers.

Shelley Stamp Lindsey analyses this scene in relation to Brian De Palma's 1976 cinematic adaptation of the novel, where she discusses the portrayal of Carrie's peers before and after her menarche:

> These two views of the locker room ask us to look twice at the girls, to consider them first as nymphs, then demons [...] So while Carrie's menstrual blood signals her own monstrosity, the entire locker room of girls is implicated in this horror as well. (Lindsey 1991, p. 35)

Carrie's peers are transformed from normal teenage girls who repress their corporeality to fit in with society, into monstrous demons upon being presented with Carrie's terrified attitude towards menstruation. Elizabeth Grosz draws attention to the fact that, within a patriarchal society, women are expected to repress their bodies, as she argues that the female body's corporeality, as well as "feelings, emotions, and psychic representations must be ignored, as must its role as threshold between the social and the natural" (Grosz, 1994, p. 10). The female body acts as a threshold between the natural and the cultural, and when Carrie unsettles the boundaries between the subject and the abject, it causes discomfort for her classmates. Therefore, the only way to restore the social order is to isolate Carrie and treat her in an animalistic manner, emphasising the idea that her body is monstrous due to her inability to repress it. This serves to intensify her traumatic experience, as she has no community to turn to for support, leading her to believe that the ideas surrounding her monstrous body are correct. Carrie's status as abject is intensified by her supernatural abilities. Her telekinesis, an ability which has remained dormant since she was a child, reawakens as she menstruates for the first time. Her telekinesis emerges in a moment of heightened distress, as she causes a lightbulb to explode once the concept of menarche is explained to her. This draws a direct correlation between her telekinetic abilities and her menstruation, signifying her status on the borders of society. The association of the female body with the supernatural portrays fears and anxieties surrounding the female body, as its natural processes are viewed as threatening. As noted, her peers already regard her as abject during this occurrence, and the emergence of her telekinesis serves to push her further outside the boundaries of society. Her supernatural abilities position her as a witch-like figure. According to Creed, the role of the witch is abject:

> The witch sets out to unsettle boundaries between the rational and irrational, symbolic and imaginary. Her evil powers are seen as part of her 'feminine' nature; she is closer to nature than man and can control forces in nature such as tempests, hurricanes, and storms. (Creed, 1993, p. 76)

The shower room scene establishes Carrie as a figure who unsettles the boundaries between the rational and irrational, public and private, outside and inside. Her supernatural powers emphasise the discomfort inspired by the female body and, given that the awakening of her powers occurs at the same time as her menarche, the supernatural and the abject biology of the female body are connected. These simultaneous events serve to position her outside the boundaries of society and she is seen as a witch due to her abject status. She is not only seen as a witch by her peers and abusive mother, but also by herself, as shown through one of her fragmented thoughts after she experiments with her telekinesis in her room:

> She thought of imps and families and witches.

> (am i a witch momma the devil's whore)
> riding through the night, souring milk, overturning butter churns blighting crops while
> They huddled inside their houses with hex signs scrawled on Their doors. (p. 78)

The use of intrusive thoughts presented in closed parentheses, as seen above, is regularly utilised as a motif in trauma literature. This has been observed by Roger Luckhurst who notes how the intrusive thoughts "cut across the narrative in distinct typographic intrusions that collapse linear temporality to the insistent presence of traumatic timeless time" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 100). In this case, the intrusive thought described above reflects on Carrie's hatred of her own body influenced by her mother's harmful beliefs, believing it to be an expression of monstrous femininity. Her intrusive thought clearly shows that she views herself as a witch, signifying the internalised hatred of her own body and the effects of being seen as an outsider by her peers. The supernatural has long been used as a means of expressing societal discomfort with the female body, as discussed by Creed,

> Woman's blood is thus linked to the possession of supernatural powers, powers which historically and mythologically have been associated with the representation of woman as witch. (Creed, 1993, p. 79)

Creed's analysis draws attention to the fact that despite menarche being a natural occurrence, it is associated with witchcraft and the supernatural. The female body causes discomfort and disturbance in society, which is due to the idea of hiding certain female bodily processes in order to fit in with patriarchal society. Carrie's telekinesis connects with societal ideas about the menstruating female body, as she is viewed as monstrous by her peers, and the onset of her telekinesis serves to push her further from the boundaries of society. She associates herself with the figure of the witch, who exists within her own liminal space and unsettles the boundaries between nature and culture.

The reawakening of Carrie's telekinesis is not only connected to her menarche, but also the ongoing abuse at the hands of her mother, Margaret. Carrie inherited the idea of the connection between menarche and the supernatural from her mother, who upholds a patriarchal worldview under the guise of religion and teaches her daughter that women are inherently sinful. Her hatred of the female body can be seen through her belief that Carrie's menarche is a sign that she is sinful, claiming that "It says in the Lord's book: 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'" (p. 96). Margaret's teachings uphold the idea that menstruating women are linked to the wicked and supernatural, and their inability to repress their corporeality is a sign of sin. Carrie's telekinetic abilities reawaken moments after she is informed about menstruation for the first time, indicating the correlation between the supernatural and female biology. Prior to this, the only noted telekinetic incident occurred in her childhood during an attempt to defend

herself from her mother. The incident occurs after Margaret finds Carrie observing a sunbathing teenage girl's body, which causes Margaret to start harming herself to punish her daughter. Her reaction to seeing an adolescent girl's body, which then causes her to demonstrate anxiety about her own body, indicates Margaret's extremities in repressing corporeal femininity. Her distress indicates her belief that the female body must be completely covered up and repressed. After Carrie is yelled at by her mother, she causes stones to rain on their property, portraying the first sign of Carrie's status as an outlier.

Her mother self-harms in an attempt to punish her daughter for expressing curiosity about the female body, and in response to this punishment, Carrie's telekinetic powers emerge. Carrie's first telekinetic response is not only indicative of her existence outside the boundaries of society, but also acts as a manifestation of her trauma due to her mother's abuse. As Herman notes,

> The language of the supernatural, banished for three hundred years from scientific discourse, still intrudes into the most sober attempt to describe the psychological manifestations of chronic childhood trauma. (Herman, 1992, p. 96)

Carrie's supernatural abilities are tied to her abject female body, which has been repressed as a result of her mother's abuse. As her powers do not emerge again until her menarche, it is clear that her powers have a direct association with the aspects of female biology that her mother tries to repress. The thread of abuse can be followed as Margaret self-harms to punish Carrie as a child, and after Carrie's menarche, she physically abuses her daughter and locks her in a closet. Carrie's telekinesis emerges as a response to her mother's abuse, which is directly tied to the repression of women's bodies. Her supernatural abilities can be seen as a manifestation of the trauma she experiences as a result of her internalisation of the harmful way that her mother, and wider society, views the female body. She uses her telekinesis in order to protect herself from her mother, but as well as this, her powers create a tangible manifestation of the abject status of the female body. Her view of her body as monstrous and existing on the borders of society is influenced by her mother's teachings, and her telekinesis acts as both a manifestation of her monstrousness and as a defence mechanism against abusers to counteract traumatic experiences.

The insidious nature of Carrie's trauma stems from the fact that she is unable to escape her status as an outlier in society. In order to escape the margins of society, she attempts to perform femininity in a socially acceptable manner. She attempts this by dressing up and putting on makeup when preparing to attend prom. As well as this, she explicitly makes it clear to her mother that she wishes to be seen as normal:

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> Momma, please see that I have to start to… to try and get along with the world. I'm not like you. I'm funny – I mean, the kids think I'm funny. I don't want to be. I want to try and be a whole person before it's too late to – (p. 94)

Her desire to fit in with her peers emphasises the isolation that she feels existing on the borders of society. By obtaining the chance to partake in a regular high school event, she sees an opportunity to escape the insidious trauma that has emerged from her inability to repress her abject body. As well as this, she expresses her desire to be a 'whole person', which indicates that her abject nature leaves her without a complete identity. As Pete Falconer notes in relation to her identity,

> Her classmates and gym teacher view [Carrie's menarche] as evidence of excessive innocence and naivete, her mother as the consequence of sinful thoughts or some other impurity. As a virgin, her character remains unconfirmed and open to interpretation. (Falconer, 2010, p. 127)

Taking this analysis into account, it is clear that Carrie's identity cannot be easily categorised. Her mother sees her as sinful due to her developing body, while her peers isolate her due to her naïve attitude towards menstruation. Despite the idea that they abuse Carrie for opposing reasons, their hatred of her is entrenched in their discomfort with her unsettling of the boundaries between rationality and irrationality due to her abject body. Her attempt to present herself as a normal teenage girl by trying to fit with her peers and repress her corporeal femininity is a way of establishing a solid identity and escaping her existence as a feature of the abject. As her traumatic experiences are inherently tied to her witch-like status, her recovery from her insidious trauma can only occur once she is accepted into society.

Carrie exists within a liminal space between nature and culture, represented by her status as abject combined with her desire to fit in with general society. However, Carrie is viewed by her peers as a sacrificial goat: she represents the role of the nature within a cultural society. As noted earlier, Ortner demonstrates that nature is seen as something to be subsumed by culture, as she notes how a cultural society relies "precisely on the ability to transform – to 'socialize' and 'culturalize' nature" (Ortner, 1972, p. 73). Nature is viewed as something to be transcended, and thus, the corporeal female body is understood as something outside the boundaries of the rational subject. It is something that must be jettisoned in order to achieve subjectivity, and within the novel, Carrie is punished for failing to jettison the natural. After being awarded the title of prom queen – a supposed signifier of her acceptance into society – one of the antagonists drops pig's blood on her, remarking, "Pig blood for a pig" (p. 114). Once again, this draws a connection between the abject protagonist and animalistic tendencies.

Despite her attempt to find a place within her society, Carrie is unable to escape the natural realm.

The spilling of pig's blood serves as a reminder of her traumatic experience of menarche:

> …she was red and dripping with it, they had drenched her in the very secretness [sic] of blood, in front of all of them and her thought
> (oh… i [sic]… *COVERED*… with it)
> was coloured a ghastly purple with her revulsion and shame. She could smell herself and it was the *stink* of blood, the awful wet, coppery smell. In a kaleidoscope of images she saw the blood running thickly down her naked thighs, hear the constant beating of the shower on the tiles, felt the soft patter of tampons and napkins against her skin as voices exhorted her to plug it UP; tasted the plump, fulsome bitterness of horror. They had finally given her the shower they wanted. (p. 180, original emphasis)

Her reaction to having blood poured over her is one of disgust and shame. As her mind immediately returns to the memory of her first period, it serves both as a reminder of the traumatic event and of her menstruation as animalistic. The view of her own body as animalistic serves as a way of dehumanising her. As she is incapable of hiding her abject body, she is seen as having the same level of worth as an animal. Her brief social acceptance through her victory as prom queen temporarily shows her that despite her past shortcomings in performing femininity, she has been accepted within society. However, the spilling of pig's blood and subsequent public humiliation emphasise that she is seen as an outsider and add credence her mother's accusations of her being a witch. Since the emergence of her telekinesis, she has seen herself as witch-like, but attempts to repress her powers to fit in. However, the spilling of pig's blood on her leads to the idea that the abuse and insidious trauma she faced throughout her life were a punishment for her true nature as the monstrous feminine, which is a result of her association with nature rather than culture, a status that she then chooses to embrace through the prom massacre.

Carrie's undeveloped identity is formed by harmful ideas about women's bodies, as taught to her by her mother and the general society around her. She accepts her place as a witch, as a menacing force that exists on the boundaries of society by causing death and destruction with her telekinesis. She uses her telekinesis to trap and murder her classmates, and then leaves the school to inflict the same destruction upon the town. Her actions can be correlated back to her earlier understanding of witches as figures that ride through town in the dead of night and destroy everything. Her understanding of her body as one belonging to a monstrous witch also correlates to her mother's misogynistic teachings under the guise of religion. She lives out her mother's predictions: "And didn't Momma say there would be a Day of Judgement" (p. 21).

There is a connection between this prediction of a Day of Judgement and Margaret's constant assertions that Carrie is a witch and spawn of the devil. It can be argued that Carrie inverts the legacy that Margaret imposed on her, through constant verbal abuse, by being the one to deliver the Day of Judgement. Carrie's positioning as abject aligns with Kristeva's observations on the relationship between the abject and religion:

> [Abjection] finally encounters, with Christian sin, a dialectic elaboration, as it becomes integrated in the Christian World as a threatening otherness – but always nameable, always totalizable. (Kristeva, 1980, p. 17)

Kristeva's argument indicates that the teachings of Christianity form the abject into something tangible, indicating that the abject is a representation of sin.

In the novel, Margaret's teachings define Carrie's monstrosity and sin through her menarche. Therefore, the natural occurrences of women's bodies are viewed as a representation of 'threatening otherness'. The fact that she has pig's blood dropped on her emphasises that she is seen as a representative of that which must be exiled from society in order to keep the perceived social order intact. Margaret's teachings allow for Carrie to settle into her role as the harbinger of destruction to the town. Her transformation into the monstrous feminine is a direct result of her mother's abuse, as seen through the echoing of one of her mother's phrases: "Time to show them a thing or two. She giggled hysterically. It was one of Momma's pet phrases" (p. 184). Her embrace of her mother's ideals comes directly after her peers reject her, and this emphasises the toxicity of her mother's attitude towards the world and towards her daughter. Due to the fact that she never had a positive community to reach out to in order to help her cope with her insidious trauma, she is led to concur with her abuser's teachings about the world and woman's place in society, and by believing that Margaret is right about the rest of the world being sinful, Carrie approaches her victims with ruthlessness. Her lack of mercy towards the other members of the town emphasises how her worldview has been completely warped from years of captive abuse and the belief that the female body is monstrous.

Carrie is willing to damage her body through the extensive usage of her telekinesis for the purpose of inflicting revenge on the society that is responsible for her insidious trauma. Her attack on the town is her attempt at confronting her trauma, but as her attempt ends with her death, it is not a successful confrontation. According to Herman, "[h]elplessness and isolation are the core experiences of psychological trauma. Empowerment and reconnection are the core experiences of recovery" (Herman, 1992, p. 197). Isolation has been central to Carrie's experience due to the fact she is viewed as abject. She lacks the positive social connection required to help her develop a more positive sense of self. She succumbs to society's harmful

ideas surrounding the female body, as shown through her destruction of her hometown. Once she has destroyed the town, killed many of her peers and her own mother, she has exhausted her body to the point of death. Shortly before she kills her mother, she is stabbed, and the combination of this attack alongside the physical and mental toll of intense usage of her telekinesis leads to her death. Therefore, she verges on becoming what is considered to be the strongest feature of the abject, which is the corpse. Kristeva claims the corpse, "seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life" (1980, p. 4). She also claims that imagery of the abject must be "thrust aside in order to live" (*ibid.*), therefore showing that the body without a soul is regarded as something that unsettles the boundaries between the rational and irrational. When Carrie is discovered by Sue Snell, one of her surviving classmates, she once again exemplifies the abject through her dying body. She forces Sue, much to her horror, to witness her final thoughts as she dies. This mirrors the opening of the novel, where Carrie inspires fear and disgust through her presentation of female corporeality, and at the end of the novel, she unsettles the boundaries of everyday life by presenting that which must be confined to the borders of society. The way Sue feels upon being telepathically pulled into Carrie's mind in her dying moments aligns closely with Kristeva's observations on being in the presence of death,

> She tried to pull away, to disengage her mind, to allow Carrie at least the privacy of her dying, and was unable to. She felt that she was dying herself and did not want to see this preview of her own eventual end. (p. 229)

According to Kristeva (1980), individuals are pulled towards the abject despite their discomfort, and this is reflected through Sue's inability to pull away. Carrie unsettles yet another boundary, as her dying thoughts set her on the edge between the living and the dead. In this moment, she represents death as a feature of the abject, as she openly displays what is repressed for the sake of rationality in society, starting with menstruation and ending with the corpse.

Carrie's death not only serves to solidify her status as abject, but it also portrays her failure in overcoming her trauma. Her final thoughts are shown to be solely focused on her now deceased mother, '(momma i'm [sic] sorry where)' (p. 230), which shows the inescapable quality of trauma. Despite the fact that her mother is dead, Carrie still cannot pursue a life outside of the chronic abuse she faced and cannot escape her abject role in society. The fact that Carrie cannot exist independently of her mother is inherently abject, as it collapses the boundary between two distinct identities. Creed makes note of the fact that eventually "the child rejects [the mother] for the father who represents the symbolic order" (Creed, 1986, p.

212). While a father figure is not present in the novel, Carrie's brief attempt to fit in with the symbolic order of society marks her attempt to reject the mother, which she ultimately fails to do, as she dies believing that her mother was right about her monstrosity.

The novel's fragmented format informs the reader that Carrie's identity as either monster or victim is still heavily debated following her attack, indicating that even in death, she is still not viewed as someone with a solid identity within society. The narrative is interspersed with excerpts from various journal articles and books that aim to define Carrie's identity as either victim or monster. These excerpts begin a debate about whether or not Carrie is monstrous. As these various sources attempt to make sense of Carrie's attack, it is noted that both medical and psychological writers on the subject agree that Carrie White's exceptionally late and traumatic commencement of the menstrual cycle might well have provided the trigger latent for her talent (p. 9).

This analysis draws a direct correlation between menarche and dangerous supernatural powers, which draws on historical ideas of women being viewed as witches when they are unable to control their abject bodies. In relation to Brian de Palma's adaptation of the book, Lindsey discusses how female sexuality is frequently presented "as monstrous and [this] constructs femininity as a subject position impossible to occupy" (Lindsey, 1991, p. 34). In the aftermath of Carrie's destruction, the secondary sources presented in the novel come to the conclusion that her supernatural powers are a sign of the dangers of corporeal femininity. However, throughout the narrative, Carrie is presented as desperately trying to escape her abject status and presents a desire to be normal. To be accepted by society would result in her departure from the liminal borders on which she exists, which would also entail escaping the trauma she faces as a result of her abject status.

The spilling of pig's blood on her indicates that she would never be able to exist within the confines of society. She is marked as abject, and her mother's teachings on her role as a witch were correct. As mentioned above, Herman discusses the importance of a positive community in assisting a trauma victim, but when the victim is denied this type of community, it damages their core sense of self. According to Bessel Van Der Kolk, when trauma victims feel out of control, they "often begin to fear that they are damaged to the core and beyond redemption" (Van Der Kolk, 2015, p. 2). Carrie's transformation into the monstrous feminine is caused by the harmful ideas surrounding her own body, damaging her sense of self. Her confrontation of her trauma involves destroying her body as well as the society responsible for her abuse. The follow-up reports and articles about her attack continue to attempt to decipher her identity, which indicates she is still not whole. As Falconer notes,

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> Carrie White is manipulated, discussed, interpreted and subjected to conspiracies both helpful and malevolent in intent. In short, she is treated as if her identity has yet to be solidly established. (Falconer, 2010, p. 127)

Indeed, the various articles presented in the novel either try to present her as a victim or, alternatively, they contribute to the harmful idea that she is monstrous due to the awakening of her telekinesis at the same time as the occurrence of her menarche.

Ortner's essay on nature and culture (1972) defines the two as being a binary, emphasising how men are always associated with culture, while women are associated with nature. In order to fit in with culture, women must hide their bodily processes that are deemed abject. Women who do not hide their abject nature have historically been associated with outside figures such as witches. As explored above, *Carrie* conveys the trauma that comes with being associated with the animalistic. The consistent abuse described throughout the course of Carrie's life, particularly in the weeks following her menarche, indicates that her powers are a response to the insidious trauma she has faced. These powers act both as a defence mechanism and as a manifestation of the idea that she is an outcast in society due to her corporeal femininity. Her desire to fit in with her peers shows an awareness that she may escape the abuse from her peers and mother by shifting away from the natural and into the cultural. Therefore, she exists within a liminal space. She shows a desire to be a part of cultural society, but her body inherently ties her to the natural, therefore isolating her. This isolation leads her to internalise the misogynistic ideas presented by her mother that she is monstrous, and when blood is spilled on her, she succumbs to the status of the monstrous feminine. Due to the fact that she exists within the liminal space between nature and culture, there is a lack of a supportive community that she fails in overcoming the trauma caused by her mother's abuse and harmful ideas about the female body. Ultimately, Carrie's existence within a liminal space conveys isolation from her peers, and leaves her unable to escape the trauma that is caused by societal misogyny.

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Liminality and Transition in Turkey: Coded Methods of Subversion through Music Videos

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Abstract

This article provides insight into crowd manipulation methods used in modern Turkish society under an increasingly authoritarian regime while also exploring various cryptic methods of subversion used by people under free speech limitations.

Turkey is a nation divided politically, geographically and ideologically. Throughout the years, Turkey has seen increasingly limiting censorship and intimidation at the hand of the current government. Due to limitations on free speech, people have had to rely on cryptic messages encoded through symbolism in their works or online forums under the guise of being something else to convey their feelings towards Turkey's leadership and towards Turkey's unique situation.

Aleyna Tilki is a famous young singer who has faced intense public scrutiny and negative media coverage. Tilki's dress sense does not conform to Islamic standards in the context of a nation undergoing increasing Islamisation and she incorporates a range of international stylistic elements into her image and music videos in the context of a nation becoming increasingly isolationist and inward looking. Hidden messages conveyed through symbolism have been seen in a number of her works.

Turkey and Turkish politics arguably currently exist in a liminal state, 'betwixt and between' the neo-traditional (neo) Ottoman authoritarianism represented by Erdoğan's government on the one hand, and (neo)liberal Westernisation / globalisation on the other. As a result of increasing authoritarianism of the current government, political dissent is being repressed within Turkey under the current ruling party, the 'Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi' (Justice and Development Party, AKP). The 'CHP' (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) which translates to 'republican people's party' currently stands as the main opposition. An objective approach is required when discussing Turkish politics since both political orientations have been met with a plethora of criticisms from within and outside of Turkey, many pointing to the ways in which either party have disproportionately negatively impacted certain segments of Turkish society while privileging others. Political liminality is reflected in many of Turkey's institutions, ranging from government all the way down through Turkish pop culture. This article analyses one example of liminality in Turkish society by focusing on a young female celebrity popstar:

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Aleyna Tilki. Tilki is an artist who exists in-between these contrasting political forces and tries to navigate her way between authoritarian neo-traditionalism and neo-liberal globalization.

This article begins by outlining the liminal conditions prevailing in Turkey today through situating the present with reference to deeper historical contexts. It then moves on to discuss how the virtual sphere has become both a tool of crowd manipulation by the government and a tool of political dissent by the populace. Particularly, the utilisation of the virtual sphere by the government as a crowd manipulation tool through attempting to influence public opinion is discussed while examples of political dissent conveyed through more implicit or concealed means to avoid imprisonment is also examined, exemplifying how the virtual sphere has become a battle ground for these political tensions. Furthermore, the life and work of the singer Aleyna Tilki, who has utilized her platform within the virtual sphere to draw attention to social issues after gaining a mass following at the age of 16, is used as an example of how she has become a lightning rod for conflicting and colliding forces in geo-political 'culture wars', and how she negotiate these ambivalent and ambiguous powers.

Following mass arrests of journalists and academics after the failed 2016 military coup and because of growing restrictions on freedom of speech, alternative public spheres have been employed as a means of conveying political discord and disillusionment with the current leadership. This is an important trend to consider since there is a wide variety of examples of alternative public spheres where messages are cryptically conveyed and more difficult for the Government to assert authority over. These alternative public spheres include online forums and social media websites disguised as dictionaries. The political dissonance conveyed in these alternative spheres reflects ideas held by sectors of the populace (notably young, urban people) regarding the political condition of their country and the policies imposed onto them by the current government. This article examines the dissonance associated with the current liminal conditions prevalent in Turkish politics and culture through analysing encoded visual symbolism in music videos of Aleyna Tilki, a popular young Turkish singer. This is carried out through a thematic analysis of various imagery within music videos. The aim is to indicate overall how websites, social media pages, music and symbolism in music videos have become appropriated by young Turkish people, who generally identify as metropolitan / liberal-progressive, as a platform for resistance to AKP policies while simultaneously avoiding any direct consequences because of these political subversions.

Geographically, historically, and culturally Turkey exists in the threshold between 'Orient' and 'Occident'. Today, as a modern nation, Turkey is divided politically and ideologically, with a large population in affluent cosmopolitan cities and with a vast interior

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agrarian hinterland with peasant villages where people live very traditional lives. Many Turkish people live in liminal spaces – in between past and future, tradition and modernity, East and West, secular liberalism and neo-Islamic conservativism. These powerful colliding forces are deeply ambivalent, ambiguous and paradoxical: global-American Western liberalism promises 'freedom', but often a dubious freedom of profane commodity fetishism, consumerism, nihilism, and vacuous celebrity. Neo-Islamic traditionalism promises to restore 'morality' against encroaching Western 'decadence', but usually this means the restoration of patriarchal authoritarianism and stern repression, of women especially. There is no easy solution or 'correct' position to hold in this enormous culture war as all possible positions are ambiguous and ambivalent. Aleyna Tilki appears to represent global Western values on the one hand, while she also represents aspects of deep traditional Turkish values and multiple cultural inheritance(s) on the other hand, thus reflecting in a hybrid image.

Background: Liminal tensions in Turkey

Liminal tensions that have been a feature of Turkish society for centuries have become particularly exacerbated in the 21st century. The post-Ottoman, modern, secular, democratic, national republican state of Turkey which was founded under Ataturk in 1923 (following the collapse of the Turkish Empire after the First World War), although relatively stable for some 75 years, is flawed in several ways. The founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey was 'Kemalism' (also known as 'Atatürkism'). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a charismatic leader who emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman empire in the wake of the First World War, and whose personality and oratory conveyed a vision that assimilated many diverse strands of Turkish history and culture. He founded the oldest political party of Turkey known as the CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi). The origins of the Turkish nation alongside Turkish nationalism are usually seen as coinciding with one another, as many scholars point to the way in which policies of Ottoman modernisation gave rise to nationalism (Göl, 2005 p. 136). Göl theorises that Turkish territoriality was often accomplished through the othering of Armenians and Greeks in order to establish the Turkish Nation (*ibid*., p. 122). Since the origins of the early Turkish nation were founded on the legacy of such an expansive and multi-ethnic empire, there was not as strong an emphasis on shared ethnic lineage as there have been in other nationalisms. Ataturk's 'six arrows' of his vision were republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism, and revolutionism (Caliskan, 2020, p. 417). Kemalism emphasised unification through national solidarity and a secular society. This ideology was not entirely inclusive to all factions of Turkish society which marked the start of brewing resentment. Further, although neither the

CHP nor Ataturk were widely considered to be corrupt, it is notable that economic benefits were reserved to people who were close to the CHP (Baran & Davis, 2000, p. 130). This brew resentment throughout Turkish society (*ibid*., p. 131). While most Turkish people remained impoverished, economic and political wealth and power was concentrated amongst a westernised elite. It was on the back of this continuing inequity under the guise of Europeanisation that the current regime came to power, under neo-conservative, populist Islamist authoritarian President Erdoğan. Erdoğan, the AKP and their followers enjoy wide support because many Turkish people are disillusioned with the plethora of disadvantages which came along with efforts to westernise Turkey and the propositioning of values such as liberalism, secularism, and free-market capitalism which had largely only benefitted a certain group of elites while disempowering rural people.

These tensions have become more exacerbated in the modern age of globalisation which is often criticised as being Western-centric. With growing international awareness of harmful effects of American hegemony alongside the worldwide protests of the International Monetary Fund, it is arguable that this consensus is becoming more. The AKP party was officially founded on 14th August 2001. At first, they showed promise in implementing a more democratic, less corrupt system into Turkey's government which had previously been ruled by a corrupt elite (Kubicek, 2020, p. 11). The AKP rose to power in the 2002 elections, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became prime minister in 2003 and President of Turkey in 2014. Against the official principle of secularism, which had become associated with the corrupt powerful westernised elites, current AKP leadership promotes religion within the educational system to nurture an ethno-religious nationalism, and Islam is promoted as a crucial component to national identity (Yavuz & Öztürk, 2019, p. 2). Whereas secular-liberal Western culture was seen as having become corrupt and amoral, Islam could provide Turkey with a renewed moral centre. In the context of previous elite rulers continually being regarded as immoral, Erdoğan had a particularly strong influence on political processes and his leadership style is more authoritarian (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p. 376). The extent of Erdoğan's power over political institutions is particularly remarkable: After a 2017 referendum Turkey became a presidential system and Erdoğan can now follow his volition without approval from legislative and judiciary bodies (*ibid*., p. 357). This represents the political transition in Turkey from a corrupt parliamentary democracy to an authoritarian Islamo-moralistic autocracy (Yeşilada, 2016, p. 19). According to Freedom House, a non-profit US-based organization which evaluates the rights and liberties of the civilians of 192 different countries around the world (Casper & Tufiş, 2003, p. 3), Turkey has been rated as 'unfree' since 2018, a classification that Turkey has not

had for decades since the 1980's (Kubicek, 2020, p. 2). Although the extent of Freedom House's trustworthiness has been brought into question since it is a largely government-funded institute which has been criticised for primarily focussing on US interests, this large shift in classification is indicative nonetheless of major changes in Turkey. This repression has transgressed into the realm of Turkish academia and has been seen most recently in the case of Boğaziçi University and the protests that broke out in early 2021. These protests started because of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appointing Melih Bulu (a man who was the former Sarıyer district president of the ruling AKP party) to be the rector of the University. This was met by outrage and a string of protests lasting approximately six months ensued, attended by many Boğaziçi University academics, students and campus staff. Ultimately, Melih Bulu was removed from his position by President Erdoğan on 15th July 2021 following the controversy. It can be argued that the appointment of a man who was heavily politically affiliated with the AKP for rectorship of the university is indicative of an attempt made by the AKP to limit Boğaziçi University's academic autonomy and an attempt to expand power from the political realm alone and transgress into the academic realm of Turkish society.

The virtual sphere as a crowd manipulation tool

Power struggles have seemed to extend beyond the realm of Turkish politics and institutions and have largely played out within the virtual sphere. The Gezi Park protests (May to August 2013) were a rolling wave of popular protest across several Turkish cities on ecological, political and cultural issues, related to Erdoğan's authoritarianism and neo-Islamism. They attracted major attention both within Turkey and internationally since it had such a large reach and inspired several different events. The protests highlighted the extent to which social media plays a role within political movements as social media facilitates sharing information, communication amongst demonstrators along with garnering international recognition (Chrona & Bee, 2017, p. 57). The Gezi park protests began as a pacifist demonstration against urban development plans which erupted into larger scale protests after the police reacted violently using riot control weapons in an attempt to end the protests (Chrona & Bee, 2017, p. 57). The demands of the protesters were personal liberty, democracy and improved regard for the environment (Taştan, 2013, p. 36).

Despite having come to power as a protest movement against the unaccountability and corruption of previous ruling elites, the current government has sought to suppress any criticism or dissent against the AKP or its policies. Increasingly this is seen on social media due to the major influence that social media has had on the youth as well as on political

processes in recent years. The term 'cyber troops' has emerged in recent years which Bradshaw and Howard define as "government, military or political party teams committed to manipulating public opinion over social media" (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017, p. 3). These have been utilised by government actors in Turkey to spread false news throughout social media platforms (*ibid*.). The instrumentalisation of the Internet as a political tool by the government has been increased seen since the Gezi Park protests. The Gezi Park protests are believed to have inspired the AKP's creation of so called 'AK trolls' (Saka, 2018, p. 172). AK trolls are internet trolls who target prominent artists, journalists and academics who are in any way critical or defiant of the current leadership (Bulut, 2017, p. 4093).

The use of AK trolls is an example of crowd manipulation. Due to the vast number of AK trolls that exist, they eventually begin to form a crowd within social media platforms. From the perspective of group psychology, Gustave Le Bon (1977) argues how individuals tend to do things in large groups that they would never do individually due to the fact that they are less likely to consider responsibility for their actions. Individuals also gain a sense of power in larger numbers and the activities of the group eventually become contagious (Le Bon, 1977, p. 34). This is a well-known phenomenon and has often been cited as a plausible explanation behind why many people who are not trolls or connected to troll networks can oftentimes 'blend in' with the crowd of trolls. Since the attempted military coup in 2016, the current government has arrested many journalists, public officials, army officers and academics – some sources claim more than 76,000 people were arrested (Ghilès, 2016, p. 2). There has also been a major increase in authoritarianism, with journalists facing intimidation and Turkey's Internet becoming increasingly censored (Handziuk, 2016, p. 185). The national army which protected Kemalist values has found its influence increasingly weakened by the AKP. Many of the officers have been disempowered and the secular laws that were originally put in place have become rolled back (Alvi, 2015, p. 24). Due to this steadily increasing censorship and limitations on free speech, many musicians and artists have been pushed to the margins, and in fear of persecution they have had to rely on more non-explicit methods of expressing their discontentment with the direction their country is going in and speaking out against the current government. In an increasingly illiberal, neo-Islamist, authoritarian, heavily censored Turkey, people expressing their dissent with and resistance to Erdoğan and the AKP have developed carefully coded subversive means of communication to express their views.

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The virtual sphere as a subversion tool

The methods used by Turkish people to combat the increasing limitations on their political liberties generally, and freedom of speech particularly, are varied. Online communities and social media pages where people can express any differing opinions or criticisms of the government disguised as dictionaries have become increasingly popular over the years. One such example of this is *Ekşi Sözlük*[1] which is one of the most frequented websites in Turkey used to discuss political issues among other topics (Akca, 2005). The topics discussed and range of discourses that occur on *Ekşi Sözlük* are extensively broad. It can be described as a collaborative hypertext dictionary but, under the guise of being merely a dictionary, it provides a forum for political discussion. *Ekşi Sözlük* combines a search engine, an online forum, a chat room, a platform for advertising and an account of history among many other things. Due to this broadness and wide range of obtainable information, it has become associated with postmodernism (Gürel & Yakın, 2013, p. 217). Due to the breadth of the topics discussed it cannot be solely classified as purely political.

Furthermore, the Instagram page 'Turkish Dictionary'[2] is a social media page that has colloquial Turkish terms and phrases, news infographics and infographics about Turkish national holidays translated into both English and Turkish but with certain political undertones. Some of the infographics discuss major issues in Turkey such as femicide, homophobia, corruption scandals, banning of alcohol sales, Turkish withdrawal from the Istanbul convention and increased waste and environmental pollution. Since the infographics are translated into English and the page calls itself a dictionary, it is also not classifiable as purely political.

Online websites, such as the page Yalnızyürümeyeceksin.com,[3] have provided a platform for people to anonymously discuss experiences of living under strict and conservative rules inflicted onto them by their elders (Arda & Akdemir, 2021, p. 2). While the majority of people who share their experiences tend to be female, males who face similar social pressures are free to submit to the site (*ibid*., p. 6). It further emphasises the idea of a common bonding through discussion of shared experiences and denotes a need for change which has been seen in other feminist movements such as #metoo (*ibid*., p. 3). A topic heavily discussed on this website is the social pressures that young women are subjected to about wearing a headscarf and conforming to Islamic dress code. Many women express unhappiness with the obligation to wear the Islamic headscarf. They further mention, since they were underage when they were

[1] [translation: "sour dictionary"]
[2] @turkishdictionary
[3] [translation: "you will never walk alone"]

first obliged, they had a lot of power exerted onto them by parents as well as school authority figures which had a negative impact on their wellbeing (*ibid*., p. 7). Frequent feelings of alienation as well as certain levels of resentment towards the gender imbalance that exists in organised religion can also be seen (*ibid*., p. 8). The fact that this website allows users to share their criticisms about religion and share their personal experience represents the nourishment of critical thinking as well as giving voice to young people who are struggling in their cultural and religious contexts.

Aleyna Tilki as a symbol of Turkey's cultural and political liminality

Aleyna Tilki is a musician who utilises her large fanbase and online platforms to exhibit symbolisms in her music videos as a means of criticising patriarchal aspects of Turkey through the virtual sphere. Tilki is a famous Turkish musician who rose to prominence after the release of the hit single "cevapsiz cinlama"[4] which currently has over 545 million views on YouTube. Tilki is an artist who is known for introducing international stylistic elements into her music videos and image. By combining various international elements, Tilki represents all that is liminal and transitional about Turkey today, and for this she is a highly ambivalent figure. She is celebrated and idolised by many and equally hated and reviled by many others, particularly traditional and neo-Islamists to whom she embodies all that is Western, corrupt and immoral, influences that have 'ruined' and are 'ruining' Turkey. She is particularly targeted by AK trolls, for whom she is a convenient scapegoat to redirect focus on populist authoritarian neo-Islamic politics. Tilki embodies many influences: she represents all of the multiplicity and diversity of historical and cultural influences – Eastern and Western; secular and Islamic; male and female, amongst many other elements, that constitute 'Turkish' identity as composite and complex. Thus, Tilki cannot be reconciled with Erdoğan and the AKP's envisioned version of Turkey, but at the same time she is not easily assimilated into Western culture either and so she continues to be irreducibly Turkish.

Aleyna Tilki has combined many cultural influences into her music and performances to produce a unique individual style. This individualism is arguably a subversive approach in the Turkish music industry since Turkey as a country is remarkably inward looking and issues arise when an individual defies social and political norms (Haynes, 2010, p. 326). Tilki emerged from the sixth season of 'yetenek sizsiniz Turkiye'[5] where she placed as semi-finalist.

[4] [translation: "unanswered ringing"]
[5] A Turkish reproduction of the 'Got Talent' global series.

Since this success, she has released multiple music videos and signed with Warner Music. Tilki has also received English language training in Los Angeles, which makes her a perceived representative of modernisation, globalisation and Westernisation in Turkey. She is seen by many to be the embodiment of all that is immoral about that global culture industry – vacuous and trivial, hyper-individual, anti-social – as a celebrity, a product in a corrupt, decadent and amoral commercial market.

Tilki can be considered to represent the rift and the collision between two Turkeys: On the one hand a modern, secular, global, Western, progressive Turkey in continuity with the lineage and inheritances of Ataturk. But that lineage from Ataturk for many Turks had turned out to be only a false promise of secular-liberal Westernisation and a corrupt lie. A significant portion of the population have recently turned to another, different lie: the false promises of a neo-traditional, neo-Islamist, authoritarian Turkey on the other hand, which re-aligned as a major regional power and asserted leadership in what had formerly been its Empire. And in the middle of all this conflict between 'new' and 'old', between two completely opposite sets of lies and false promises is Tilki, a young woman who has become the subject and object of these enormous social and political forces, ambivalently heroized and demonised. Her lyrics also express the lonely, anxious child, born and raised in an inland provincial city in Turkey's rural and conservative heartland, aspiring to break out and become an international celebrity, a star on a world stage, an aspiration that she has expressed since her childhood and particularly represented in her choices of style and fashion, an assemblage of the multiplicity and variety of cultural influences in what is contemporary Turkey.

In terms of her fashion, Aleyna Tilki is seen regularly sporting midriff tops which are an example of a Western international stylistic element into her look since they were originally introduced by French fashion designer Madeleine Vionnet in 1932. Coincidently, the 1930's were the highpoint of Ataturk's political career and also the high point of the French colonial empire throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Vionnet was also widely credited in the Western world for her contributions to women's fashion which included liberating women's bodies and even introducing more androgynous elements to women's clothing (Stewart, 2008, p. 9). The midriff top is an exemplary instance of French Orientalism, the exoticisation and eroticisation of Arabic / Middle Eastern and Turkish culture, and its appropriation and assimilation into Western fashion (Scarborough & Hunt-Hurst, 2014, p. 49). The frequency of this clothing item in Tilki's image can be interpreted as a fashion statement aimed to affirm agency over the orientalist gaze in the face of Western-dominated globalisation. Tilki's music usually consists of synth-pop fused with Middle Eastern music, potentially striving to establish

a middle ground between the Western orientalist imagined reality of the Middle East and Tilki's lived experience of the true reality.

In her English language debut 'Retrograde', Aleyna does a pole dance to synth-pop with Turkish inflections. The lyrics assert a woman's choice in rejecting her would-be boyfriend and declares her intentions in a refrain "I ain't goin' backwards now' / ain't doin' retrograde". This apparent a message to her boyfriend is a coded message against Erdoğan and the AKP's authoritarian retrogressive backwards revolution. Tilki is part of this culture war. How much does it control her? How aware of the historical-political context is she? How much is she in control of her representations and performances; and how does she consciously and deliberately play with all these various contradictory contexts in the political theatre of contemporary Turkey? These are complex and difficult questions.

With regards to her image, Tilki incorporates a wide range of different cultural influences into her fashion and music video imageries. In terms of more far-Eastern international stylistic elements, Tilki incorporates a certain number Kawaii[6] elements into her image. The influence is seen in her music videos which is noteworthy as this has been a growing fashion trend in Turkey over the years with the increasing popularisation of Japanese brands such as Hello Kitty and the widespread viewing of anime and manga (Duman, 2020, p. 88). Kawaii is a gendered term with the origins and usage in traditional patriarchal masculinist Japanese culture. More recently in contemporary Japanese culture, however, these meanings have been appropriated and inverted, embraced by young Japanese women who recode them to signify their empowerment (Kinsella, 1995, p. 244). The word Kawaii was an ancient Japanese word that originally meant something along the lines of 'ashamed' but is now a word that is typically defined as 'cute' when translated into English (Nittono *et al.*, 2012, p. 1). Kawaii culture represents an idealised childhood but became a way in which women could express independence. Japanese women and Turkish women arguably share a certain affinity, as constrained by the traditional patriarchal cultures in their respective societies, and their search for codes and languages and styles through which to express themselves.

Kawaii culture is often popular among unmarried women since it represents freedom from marriage and distances them from being oppressed by social expectations (Kinsella, 1995, p. 244). This relates to Tilki as she has continuously incorporated it into her image, suggesting her seeking more empowerment in addition to making her image more internationally influenced. In regard to her music videos, a commonly occurring colour scheme used in Tilki's

[6] Kawaii aesthetics originates from Japan.

music videos is pastel. In her music videos for her song "sen olsan bari"[7], there is an involvement of Kawaii elements such as a big teddy bear and a toy unicorn with various pastel-coloured foods. In her music video for "dipsiz kuyum"[8] there is a more "kimo kawaii"[9] touch, as her style is slightly more gothic and the visuals and colours are darker and bolder, including a red-and-black colour scheme in one shot and a bright pink neon LED colour scheme in the second shot. Her music video for "sen olsan bari"[10] uses similar elements as well as pig tails, pyjamas and LED lighting, which give the music video a childish touch (Duman, 2020, pp. 102–103).

Since her rise to national stardom at age 16, Tilki has become a controversial figure in the Turkish music industry. Her outfit choices do not conform to Islamic dress code standards. The Quran emphasizes modesty, which is practiced by many Muslims worldwide by wearing clothing that does not expose too much skin (Esposito, 2003, p. 105). Tilki not dressing 'modestly' arguably challenges cultural and social norms which are rooted in Islamic teachings. At the same time, she is highlighting the contradiction and sexual double standard that the same patriarchal Islamic culture that preaches chastity and modesty also institutionalises the harem, the belly dance and the sex slave. The essential problem is that while she is denounced as Western, Tilki is unmistakeably and defiantly Turkish, and because of this irreconcilable collision of cultures that she represents, she is targeted by Erdoğan, the AKP and their social media trolls. She has been repeatedly publicly criticised by government officials and national news outlets for performing in alcohol-serving venues underage and faced multiple claims that performing in bars is deeply harmful to her mental health (Cantürk & Toracı, 2016). In late September 2017, she has also received nationwide negative media coverage after allegedly rejecting to switch off her phone on an airplane. National news outlets did not report impartially about the incident and used defamatory headlines such as "someone tell this spoilt child to stop!".[11] Many news outlets tended to characterise Tilki as spoilt as a result of this incident. Beyaz TV, a national news broadcasting network, had a sensationalised national news broadcast about the incident, making remarks such as "Aleyna put everyone's life in danger."[12] Besides the exaggeration, the story could equally been a fabrication or twisted narrative, considering that most of her media representation is negative and paints her in a bad light.

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[7] [translation: "Solitary flower"]
[8] [translation: "My bottomless pit"]
[9] [translation: "Creepy cute"]
[10] [translation: "If only it were you"]
[11] [original: "Biri bu şımarık çocuğa "dur" desin!"]
[12] [original: "Aleyna herkesin hayatını tehlikeye attı"]

Another incident causing nationwide media hype and public discourse included the release of her second music video “Yalnız Çiçek” which portrayed Tilki pretending to eat various foods (such as a pizza slice, spaghetti, multicoloured cereal and a pink doughnut) which was considered troublesome by some people because the video was released during Ramadan, which is widely practiced throughout Turkey. While this religious transgression is the one that is mainly focused on – even though ironically there is no transgression, for in fact she is not eating and thereby fasting – they miss her point completely: American junk food, shown in sickening ways and eaten on a bathroom floor, in a sink or in a bathtub, draws an association between the junk food and bulimia nervosa as bulimic patients tend to consume meals in bathrooms (Woods, 2019, p. 9). Tilki’s code references the travails and pains of her generation of young Turkish women trapped between two cultures, namely the neo-traditionalist and the hyper-modern, with two sets of expectations for young women, both gendered and harmful to young Turkish women, albeit in different ways. The AKP, their bots and media trolls focus on controversies such as these to try to systematically damage Tilki’s reputation, public image, and her mental health. Many of the comments on her social media pages are negative and disturbing comments towards the young singer and her family with the usage of a lot of profanity and sexual remarks (Sözcü, 2018).

The music video for the famous song “Yalan”[13] by Tilki is a noteworthy example of non-explicit defiance due to its references to Turkish history, Turkish culture and possible references to the issue of femicide in Turkey which has become a rising topic throughout Turkey, frequently described as being political. When this music video was released in 2020, 300 women were killed by men and a further 171 were found dead in suspicious circumstances that year (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız, 2021). A motive behind a considerable number of femicides is that the women in question wanted to become more independent and make their own life decisions such as starting to work (Atuk, 2020, p. 285). In the first 30 seconds of her music video “Yalan”, Tilki is seen weaving a carpet on a hand loom which has her name woven onto it. Anatolian rugs represent a highly important component of Anatolian culture. They were most typically woven by young women due to their superior physical skills and mental abilities in comparison to older women who typically wove less valuable or important objects (Öter, 2009, p. 654). Tilki’s weaving indicates the importance placed on the loom historically in Turkish traditional society and how a woman’s purpose in life revolved around the loom. Turkish carpet weaving is a very old tradition in Turkish society and women were usually their

[13] [translation: “lie”]

artists as well as labourers for centuries. Carpet weaving was one of the only ways in which women were historically able to earn money in the context of repressive sexism in Ottoman culture. The income they generated was vital for the survival of the household and the method of carpet weaving was in tune with the Middle Eastern tradition of women's restricted movement beyond the domestic realm (Berik, 1986). Tilki is seen weaving her first name, symbolising her attempt to create a name for herself. She is sporting pink clothing, a short skirt and pigtails which are all stylistic elements that are traditionally associated with femininity and youth. In the next part of the music video, Tilki displays a bubble container with a cherry symbol and a bubble wand. This further gives the music video a youthful touch to it which relates to her Kawaii stylistic elements previously discussed. The symbolism of the cherry is significant since it is one of Turkey's main exports since the climate of many Turkish regions nurture their growth (Demircan *et al*., 2006, p. 1762). The cherry could symbolise Tilki's effort to export Turkish music to the rest of the world in the same way that Turkish cherries are exported all over the world. The bubble-wand (filled with blood) and the teacup (a symbol of Turkish domesticity) represent the blood of Turkish women killed by Turkish patriarchy in its traditional and contemporary variants. The cherry's liquid also resembles blood. The blood may also represent menstrual blood, and the cherry symbolises the hymen, both relating to the expectation that Turkish women should be virgins at marriage, and the dire consequences and punishments they would suffer if their husbands, in-laws or fathers suspected that they were not virgins. All this dark history of patriarchy and femicide – in Turkey' past, and on the increase again in Erdoğan's Turkey – is subtly encoded in Tilki's music video. The small ceramic cup is one that is used for hot beverages such as tea or coffee. Tea and coffee, much like the carpets, are both important components of Turkish culture. Tea is very widely consumed in Turkey, topping international consumption per capita charts. The frame of the liquid (which has an uncanny resemblance to blood) right in front of Tilki (dressed in such a traditionally feminine manner) could symbolise the sharp increase in violence against women and femicide that has occurred in Turkey. Furthermore, the liquid's positioning in the ceramic teacup could symbolise how femicide and violence against women is so normalised due to the fact that tea and coffee are such important aspects to everyday Turkish domestic culture and society.

Femicide is a serious issue in Turkey with an increasing number of femicides occurring in Turkey over the past few years. Many men who have murdered their wives revealed that their motive was protecting honour and asserting male dominance (Altınöz *et al*., 2018, p. 4182). Numbers have increased dramatically since 2012 (Afsar, 2016, p. 78; Cetin, 2015, p.

350), in parallel with the AKP obtaining more power and a major share in parliamentary representation (Alvi, 2015, p. 22). The increase in murder of women is directly correlated with the changing status of women and the collision culture that exist when tradition and modernity meet (Cetin, 2015, p. 346). When investigating motives for femicides, a common thread exists: A woman is acting independently of her husband's wishes and taking initiative over her life and/or wishes to separate from her husband (Cetin, 2015, p. 353). The issue at stake is invariably the charge that a woman has transgressed a perceived limit, crossed some or other traditional patriarchal threshold and is therefore the cause of a troubling liminality. One aim of the AKP government is to increase the importance of religion in society and as part of a national identity (Lüküslü, 2016, p. 639). This recent trend of femicides by reason of protecting honour in the context of a country whose government promotes Islam to such an extent is telling that honour has been becoming more and more important in Turkish society. Tilki signifies the breaking of limits and crossing of thresholds as valuable and important, as necessary and as beautiful, and for this she is hated, feared and thus targeted by the neo-traditionalist Turkish regime.

In the last scene to "Yalan", Tilki is presented with a large white teddy bear with blackened eyes. Various details on the bear resemble injuries found on other high-profile female murder victims both in Turkey and in the West, indicating that the issue of femicide is a complex global issue. One of the most well-known photos of Ayşe Paşalı, the victim in an infamous case of femicide by her former husband, shows her with bruised eyes wearing a white coat. The popular image of Paşalı has become a symbol in protests against violence towards women (Cetin, 2015, p. 356). The bear also has a 'Glasgow smile' which is an injury to the mouth area made by making an incision on the corner of a person's mouth until the wound reaches the person's ears, eventually forming the shape of a widened smile. This is an injury that was found on the high-profile murder victim Elizabeth Short's body. Similar to how Ayse Paşalı became a symbol of femicide in Turkey and had her picture become widely used in demonstrations, Elizabeth Short's murder became a symbol in Western popular culture (Havermans, 2021). Tilki's bear shows a combination of these two well-known injuries from femicide victims in Turkey and United States, thus drawing attention to a global issue. The last few seconds of the music video to "Yalan" show Tilki reaching out her hand before the colour red appears on screen. Reaching your hand out and exposing your palm is a commonly known gesture for telling someone to stop.

Conclusion

The main issue this article addresses is the methods that Turkish people have had to resort to in order to voice political dissent as a result of increasing authoritarianism under the rule of the AKP and repressive policies restricting freedom of speech. People in Turkey have had to employ alternative spaces of protest and present their dissent in a much less explicit way to get their messages across through the virtual world where they can gain a wide viewership. Aleyna Tilki utilises her large virtual platform as an accomplished singer and presents encoded symbolism in her music videos that highlight misogyny and femicide in Turkey. As a young woman, Tilki represents both Turkey's political liminality and cultural liminality. Politically, Tilki represents the drift of the Turkish youth towards more individualist values and less religious lifestyles, for which she is targeted by AK trolls. Culturally, Tilki represents the vast cultural influences within Turkey through her usage of international stylistic elements as well as the struggles that young women in her cultural context face being on the margins of both the Eastern and the Western worlds. This theme is particularly addressed in her song and music video for "Yalnız Çiçek".

Tilki herself symbolises the Western influence in Turkey, with all its faults and false promises, and thereby has also become a symbol of resistance to Erdoğan, the AKP, and their new web of lies and false promises. Tilki on first impressions seems a trivial pop-star, but in carefully crafted coded messages articulates a powerful critique of the regime.

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Book Review – *Refugees in Twentieth-Century Britain: A History,* by Becky Taylor.

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Refugees in Twentieth-Century Britain: A History by Becky Taylor is a book about the country refugees found refuge in or were excluded from. The years spanned by the book lead us from Britain as a global sovereign power to Britain as a post-colonial country lying in the European Union. This book examines in detail four groups of exiles: refugees from Nazism in the 1930s, the Hungarians escaping from the Soviet invasion in 1956, the Ugandan Asians dismissed by Idi Amin in 1972 and refugees from Vietnam who came to Britain after 1979.

In the last century issues of migration and refugees have been a dominant part of social and political discourse in Europe. This is especially true in Britain which has already faced diverse migration pushes. The writer and critic John Berger regarded the twentieth century as "the century of departure, of migration, of exodus, of disappearance: the century of people helplessly seeing others, who were close to them, disappear over the horizon" (Dyer, 1995, p. 128). Global conflicts, revolutions and civil wars have played a major part in these processes of movement and loss, exposing combatants and non-combatants to personal risk. The book by Becky Taylor under review dramatically focuses on four cohorts of refugees – Jewish and other refugees from Nazism; Hungarians in 1956; Ugandan Asians expelled by Idi Amin; and Vietnamese 'boat people' who arrived in the wake of the fall of Saigon. The historian Becky Taylor demonstrates how refugees' experiences, rather than being marginal, were emblematic of some of the principal developments in British society.

The first chapter, titled "Protectionism vs Internationalism: Refugees from Nazism" focuses on two of the inclinations of refugees originated by the Nazi regime: the struggles of Jews before "the outbreak of war in September 1939; and "the arrival of thousands of Dutch and Belgian refugees in Britain in May 1940 as they fled the Nazi advance" (p. 31). It shows how 1940 was to identify a crucial division: no longer prevented from having access to public funds, refugees were now entitled to the exact same Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB) profits as the prevalent community.

The second chapter titled “Post-War Settlement: The Hungarians” brings an exploration of the reception and resettlement of Hungarian refugees moves us beyond theory to reveal the actual extent and limitations of the post-war cognitive and policy shift (p. 12). It explains in detail how Britain's decline as a world power in the second half of the twentieth century was brought about by its membership in the international Hungarian resettlement programme. Taylor also proposes to initiate a discussion to acknowledge the true significance of Britain's acceptance of Hungarian refugees, to consider the national picture. The chapter describes in detail the procedures of 1950s Britain, the regulations of the reception camps, and the regulations of the camps.

The third chapter, titled “Rivers of Blood: The Ugandan Asians” explores the arrival of the Ugandan Asians who were expelled by Idi Amin in 1972. The time when the Ugandan Asians arrived in Britain is described as a time when Britain was increasingly turning its back on the Commonwealth. This was both as a financial stock and as a container of cultural 'Britishness'. This chapter examines how Ugandan Asians were varyingly, and sometimes concurrently, classified as "refugees," "immigrants," and "expelled" (p. 9). It also provides an excellent illustration of the extent of change in the nature of British civil society: the committee coordinating the work of the sixty-three major voluntary organisations involved in the Ugandan Asian programme ranged from “the Jewish Board of Deputies and the National Council for Social Service to the Institute for Race Relations, the Supreme Council of Sikhs in the UK, the Indian Workers’ Association and the pacifist International Voluntary Service (IVS)” (p. 21).

The fourth chapter, titled “Marketisation and Multiculturalism: Refugees from Vietnam” tracks the arrival of Vietnamese refugees in Britain between 1979 and 1983, and the process of resettling them, which emphasized the ongoing effect of the Cold War on the displacement of new refugees and in establishing “a wider geopolitical context in which their settlement in the West was seen as both desirable and possible” (p. 9). In chapters two and four, the impact of the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, which ratified the Refugee Convention and its guiding bodies in 1951, is discussed considering the Hungarian and Vietnamese resettlement plans that Britain participated in as one of the organisation's first signatories. Moreover, chapter four attempts to answer questions such as: Why it was that Britain, in global quarters, applicable to the range of the matter, received so few? (19,355 Vietnamese, or around 2.5 per cent of the total). On the other hand, why, in light of the declared aim of all governments after the 1971 “Immigration Act to decrease settlement to the lowest possible level, did it take so many? How was it that Thatcher, in her first weeks in office, departed from the electoral

program encouraging further curbs to immigration to accepting over 19,000 Vietnamese refugees?" (p. 213).

Overall, by examining the differing responses of Britain to these four influxes of refugees – who all appeared within a definite timeline and at such a scale that their occupation needed to be acknowledged by both voluntary societies and governments – this book uncovers some of the significant changes experienced by the British government, foundations, and community during the middle decades of the twentieth century. During the course of this book, the reader will discover the value of advancing analysis further and considering the implications of the arrival of refugees. This will enable him/her to consider a broader range of historical issues. Similarly, the book shows that each group of refugees studied was confined to meeting "expectations around acceptable behaviour and performances of gratitude, with those failing to fulfil expectations often quickly identified as a 'problem' requiring punitive action" (pp. 16–17). Hence, this book can appeal to a vast audience ranging from scholars, researchers, and policymakers to a more general reader.

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Book Review – *Dying to Be Normal: Gay Martyrs and the Transformation of American Sexual Politics*, by Brett Krutzsch.

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In the last decade, American society has witnessed a consistent fluctuation in the dynamics of LGBT rights. In 2015, the Supreme Court's landmark decision in the Obergefell v. Hodges civil rights case guaranteed the legitimacy of same-sex marriage. However, deviating from the progressive tendency, the conservative poliBcies of the Trump administration (2017–2021) – including the restrictions on transgender military servicemembers – are a reminder of the gloom of discrimination affecting the LGBT community in the United States. While President Joe Biden's appointment of Rachel Levine as the Assistant Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services in 2021 encourages us to imagine the emergence of the first LGBT cabinet members, LGBT citizens still face considerable bigotry.

Beyond the tension between the liberal and conservative political attitudes to the LGBT community in contemporary American society, Brett Krutzsch's monograph *Dying to Be Normal* casts light on the forgotten process of the memorialisation of gay martyrs and their martyrdom. Through several case-studies of the deaths and legacies of American gay figures, he examines the interferences of Christianity and religious rhetoric together with the cultural representation of gay martyrdom in contemporary American society and its recent history.

Beginning with the death and legacy of Harvey Milk (1930–1978), an iconic figure in LGBT history, the first chapter primarily explores subtle connections between the gay rights and Black civil rights movements. Murdered in 1978, Milk was an active participant in the gay rights movement when he was alive. He was chosen to be enshrined as the heroic martyr by LGBT activist organisations. Through a comparison to Martin Luther King, he was described as "Saint Harvey" of the LGBT community.

After examining Milk's martyrdom, Chapter 2 focuses on an ordinary gay person – Matthew Shepard (1976–1998). Unlike Harvey Milk, Matthew Shepard had not been a public figure before he died. As Krutzsch states, "in death, though, he achieved remarkable popularity and widespread veneration" (p. 47). Examining the process of memorialising Shepard and

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constructing his martyrdom, Krutzsch recognises the predisposition of secular LGBT activists to use Christian rhetoric in the portrayal of Shepard. Despite the difference in their lifetime, Shepard's and Milk's legacies underwent the same process of being enshrined as significant "saints" in the American LGBT community.

The monograph then shifts to a gay man's life and legacy in the new millennium. Chapter 3 examines the representation of Tyler Clementi (1991–2010), who died by suicide, in American popular culture in the 2010s. When discussing the drama "It Gets Better Project" which memorialises Clementi's death, Krutzsch reveals how it "reflected early twenty-first-century white, gay assimilationist trends," in which a/the gay youth is assumed with white middle-class identity.

Following the visual representation of gay martyrdom to the general public, the last section of this monograph switches from individuals to cinematic depictions. This chapter traverses the LGBT-themed films *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *Two Spirits* (2009), and *Out in the Night* (2014). In contrast to the memorialisation of the three figures mentioned above, Krutzsch demonstrates the films' success in disclosing "how gender, class, race, religion, and their constant intersections shape not only the lives of gender-variant and sexually variant people but also who the public embraces as having lives of value" (p. 121). This indicates the intersectionality of racism and homophobia in the formation of gay martyrdom and memory.

Besides those prominent figures and films exemplifying the emergence and transformation of gay martyrdom, the epilogue of this monograph deals with the more recent tragedy of the Pulse nightclub shooting in 2019. It "became the largest mass killing of LGBT Americans in U.S. history" (p. 150). The memorialisation of this terrible event resonates with Krutzsch's argument that there is a persistent tendency of stigmatisation and discrimination of Gay martyrdom in post-war American society. As Krutzsch states: "the queer memorialisation following Pulse suggested that an unapologetic celebration of righteous anger, the non-normative, the gender-subversive, and the explicitly sexual represented the best strategy LGBT citizens had to upend America's insidious sexual and gender hierarchies" (p. 160).

Situated in the proliferation of academic literature involving the representation of the LGBT community in American culture and history in the last decade, Krutzsch's monograph highlights the convergence of religious rhetoric and the representation of LGBT figures. Thanks to the construction of political correctness in contemporary American society, direct discrimination seems to be eliminated for the most part. However, underlying the neutral narrative of those gay people's deaths from murder or suicide, politicians and the public are still insistent on discriminatory positions when speaking of LGBT people. This prevalent

homophobia and prejudice are embedded in history, which continues to influence the formation of the memory of LGBT figures.

Overall, this thought-provoking book illuminates forgotten parts of public memory about gay people and their deaths. It may encourage further research on the changing meaning and representation of gay people in contemporary American society.

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Book Review – *Flann O'Brien: Gallows Humour*, edited by Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan.

Cork University Press, 2020. 358 pp. €39

Punyashree Panda

Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswat

Brian O'Nolan, more commonly known by his pseudonym, Flann O'Brien is one of the most prominent Irish literary figures of twentieth century literature. He is not an easy read for one not clued into modern Irish history, and analysing O'Brien's work through the complex lens of gallows humour could therefore be an extremely challenging task. In Cork University Press's *Flann O'Brien: Gallows Humour*, Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan take up this mantle with the goal of mapping O'Brien's acutely perplexing sense of humour, thereby making it more accessible to a wider audience.

The 'Editors' Introduction' sets the tone for this study on gallows humour within O'Brien's writings. The editors discuss five themes in their introduction chapter: 'Death and Laughter', 'Impolite Bodies', 'Body Politics', 'Falling Bodies', and 'Bodies of Writing' that offer adequate clues to the primary subjects covered in the book. However, the essays are divided into the following three sections: 'Part I. Body Politics', 'Part II: Falling Bodies' and 'Part III: Bodies of Writing'. This could be slightly confusing for readers who might expect the book to be divided into the five aforementioned subthemes however, this is only a minor hitch.

Part I of the book, titled 'Body Politics', offers the readers five essays on O'Brien's major works, most prominently the oft-celebrated newspaper column *Cruiskeen Lawn*, written under the pseudonym Myles na gCopaleen, and his debut novel *At-Swim-Two-Birds*. This section of the book begins with Catherine Flynn's critical review of the presence of the political and the breakdown of language in O'Brien's writings, especially in the *Cruiskeen Lawn*. Flynn's review renegotiates Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation and nationality with reference to O'Brien's insistence on resistance through language. Also discussed in this article is his conspicuous use of visual puns to address contemporary geo-political realities as well as a twentieth century obsession with eugenics. This essay is followed by Katherine Ebury's detailed take on O'Brien's use of humour surrounding death and the death penalty. Ebury brings forth striking examples from the O'Brien universe that make a joke of death. Conor

Dowling's essay that follows is about the Bakhtinian carnival and the idea of the free state in relation to *At Swim-Two-Birds*. The fourth essay in Part I, 'Spare-Time Physical Activities: Cruiskeen Lawn, the GAA and the Irish modernist body', written by Richard T. Murphy has a thought-provoking section titled 'Refereeing Irishness' that throws ample light on na gCopaleen's take on "Irish-language tokenism" (2020, p. 68), the GAA and "nationalist masculinity" (2020, p. 70). Alana Gillespie's essay, 'Soft Misogyny of Good Intentions: The Mother and the Child Scheme, *Cruiskeen Lawn* and *The Hard Life*' is a feminist take on O'Brien's work which focuses on the lack of women's opinions and an overall lack of women's presence in O'Brien's work and how this is reflected in his construction of humour.

'Part II : Falling Bodies' contains five essays encompassing O'Brien's major works, including *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *At-Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*. While each essay adds to the theme of gallows humour and offers fresh insights into O'Brien's intertwined world of body and politics, Yaeli Greenblatt's ''the tattered cloak of his perished skin': The body as costume in 'Two in One', At Swim-Two-Birds and The Third Policeman' stands out for being one of the most accessible essays in the collection. Greenblatt's success lies in the establishment of a clear relation between the body and the uncanny. The said essay dwells upon and draws from Tim Armstrong's concept of "prosthetic modernism" (2020, p. 141) to further the idea of a rupture between the sense of self and derived identity. Another interesting piece from Part II that is worth a mention here is Catherine O. Ahearn's detailed stocktaking of the 'enforced' disappearances of Myles na gCopaleen. Where she chronicles O'Brien/na gCopaleen's fractured relationship with *The Irish Times*. The essay also gives details of O'Brien's deteriorating health conditions from 1947 to 1966 and how O'Brien uses gallows humour to describe illness. Noam Schiff's essay deals with the idea of metamorphoses and how it manifests in O'Brien's literary world to emphasize "chaotic irregularity and spatiotemporal reconstitution" (2020, p. 123). The last two essays of Part II, presented by Lloyd (Meadhbh) Houston and Maebh Long respectively, focus on health and immunology, apt topics for discussion and deliberation in the current scenario of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The last part of the book, 'Part III: Bodies of Writing' comprises six essays. Siobhán Purcell's essay titled 'Reading the Regional Body: Disability, prosthetics and Irish literary tradition in *The Third Policeman* and *Molloy*' begins this last section of the book. Of special interest in this essay is Purcell's discussion of a variety of Irish literary tropes such as inter-generational fights and misunderstandings, illness and disability and troublesome representations of race and eugenics. This concrete comparison between O'Brien and Beckett proffers the opportunity to analyse these two giants of twentieth century Ireland. The second

essay of this section is by Michael McAteer who contrasts Samuel Ferguson's *Congal* and W.B.Yeats's *The Herne's Egg* with O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, referencing law, the Irish civil war, the Irish nationalist movement and other pertinent zones of conflict. Also of interest here are McAteer's keen observations on the preposterous trivialization of rape in *The Herne's Egg* and *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Chapter 14, Daniel Curran's essay on the absurd and the authentic as a backdrop to death is a particularly notable addition to Part III. This piece discusses O'Brien's exaggerations within the text, especially regarding his circulatory 'endings' in generous detail. Curran achieves this by keenly recording O'Brien's obsession with names and naming and the subtle manner in which O'Brien negates the authority of religion and so-called normative life practices. Einat Adar's essay on *The Third Policeman*, the penultimate piece of the book focuses on O'Brien's swinging relationship with contemporary science and how it impacts the thematic pole of *The Third Policeman.* Adar observes the influence of Einstein as well as the lesser known MacCruiskeen. The other two essays in this section are ''sprakin sea Djoytsch?' Brian Ó Nualláin's Bhark i bPrágrais' by Tobias Harris and Elliott Mills's 'Origin, Iterability and Violence in The Third Policeman'.

Almost all the essays in this collection offer new knowledge. Typos and other structural aspects are tightly edited with no noticeable errors. However, a piece on how O'Brien deals with memory and loss of memory would potentially have added to this otherwise well-knit book.

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Book Review – *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies,* edited by Renée Fox, Mike Cronin, Brian Ó Conchubhair.

Routledge, 2021. 518 pp. £152

Dr. Brian de Ruiter
Brock University

The primary goal of the *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies* is to outline, chart and engage with the shifting ideas of what Irish Studies is in the post-2008 period, as austerity measures following the Celtic Tiger, relations with Northern Ireland, Brexit and COVID-19 have created significant changes and uncertainties. These changes, in conjunction with how Irish Studies has been previously conceptualised through a narrower lens, have contributed to an 'identity crisis' that has affected the field. The editors of this volume, Renée Fox, Mike Cronin and Brian Ó Conchubhair, correctly contend "what it means to be Irish has been transformed" due to the economic, social, cultural and demographic shifts that have occurred within the last two decades (p. 6). This handbook, which presents an interdisciplinary approach to Irish Studies, is divided along the following thematic lines: 'Overview', 'Historicizing Ireland', 'Global Ireland', 'Identities', 'Culture', 'Theorizing' and 'Legacy'. Although organised in this way, there is some degree of overlap as issues and topics, including the critiques of neo-liberalism and Direct Provision, resist such clear-cut categorisation and are covered across these categorial lines. Given the length of the book, this review will not provide coverage of all 37 chapters, but it will engage with some of the main ideas expressed in the volume.

The 'Overview' charts the development of Irish Studies in the United States and presents an intriguing discussion regarding Irish Studies from the perspective of the non-Anglophone world. One of the goals of the book is to present ways in which Irish Studies has been and can be (re)conceptualised, which the second chapter by Michael Cronin accomplishes. It highlights the diverse ways in which the non-Anglophone world can shape Irish Studies that extends beyond the narrow confines of perspectives towards Irish literature. In addition, Cronin recognises such engagement "offers the most obvious growth opportunities for Irish Studies" (p. 33).

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'Historicizing Ireland' engages with ideas of "what history means and how it is made" by focusing on the work of antiquarians, folklorists, memory studies and oral history (p. 45). This section invites the reader to consider different types of sources that can allow us to broaden our own understanding of Irish history in innovative ways and charts the changes that have occurred in Irish Folklore Studies within the last fifteen years. This point on methodologies is important, particularly given the criticism directed at Irish historiography for largely being slow in adopting "cutting-edge methodological or conceptual innovation" (p. 47). The editors of this volume attempt to address such criticism by including chapters that suggest new ways to engage in historical inquiry, and, on a broader level, to conceptualise Irish Studies in different and fresher ways.

'Global Ireland' engages with various aspects of the diaspora, including its use as a tool to help stimulate Ireland's floundering economy in the post-Celtic Tiger years and Irish diasporic identities in Britain and the United States. One of the issues highlighted in this section is the idea of belongingness and/or self-identification in Ireland, Britain and the United States. This section also includes a chapter that examines global capital and the transformation of Dublin as the government sought to attract multinational digital companies through its tax policies and the creation of a digital zone within the Irish capital. As Kylie Jarrett illustrates, the presence of these multinational digital companies in Dublin has affected smaller indigenous ones and has had social repercussions for Dublin residents and, more broadly, for Ireland.

'Identity' is designed to facture ideas of binarism that have traditionally been used to simplistically conceptualise Irish identity, as it invites the reader to examine it in more multifaceted and nuanced ways. This section presents multiple avenues in which to explore Irish identities, including immigration and demographics, gender and reconceptualising the meaning of *queer* and how it can be further applied in Irish Studies. Furthermore, Oliver P. Rafferty's chapter assesses the role of the Catholic Church in Ireland, as he contends "Catholicism no longer epitomises broader Irish culture" (p. 260) due to "its inability to move beyond past regulations and systems" (p. 268) in a changing Ireland. This section of the volume reflects on some of the changing realities that have occurred in Ireland in the last two decades and informs readers what directions more recent scholarship in these fields has taken.

'Culture' assesses aspects of the cultural sector in the post-2008 period and includes discussions on strategies to engage with nineteenth-century fiction; sports, with a concentration on rugby and soccer; material culture and music, with a focus on *Mise Éire*. Returning to the previous criticism of Irish historiography and its failure to lead the way in adopting innovative approaches, Kelly Sullivan outlines that "material culture was slow to gain prominence in fields

beyond folklore and archaeology" (p. 313). This engagement with material culture is important, particularly since Ed Madden, whose work is featured in the 'Identities' section of the volume, recognises that "[b]oth Irish Studies and Queer Studies have been arguably uneasy with material things" (p. 252), which he attempts to address in his chapter. This volume looks at the importance of examining material culture and how it can be used in a variety of different fields, with Sullivan exploring *Asylum Archive* in her chapter. Méabh Ní Fhuartháin's assertion regarding the importance and value of Music Studies to Irish Studies is certainly valid, particularly to specific fields of inquiry, such as identity, commemorations and tourism.

'Theorizing' invites readers to consider the further possibilities for Irish Studies if more of its scholars adopted "theoretical perspectives that reshape the relationship between the human and the world" (p. 346). Taking this focus on relationships as well as the need to adopt diverse perspectives as points of departure, this section explores issues of eco-criticism, film, Disability Studies and Animal Studies, which allows one to chart these fields of study and some of the more recent contributions they have made within Irish Studies. One issue highlighted by Nessa Cronin in this section is the need for the cultural sector to create 'new languages' to help mobilise change on some pertinent issues affecting Ireland and the global community (p. 358). This is certainly a valid point and aligns with similar sentiment from those in the film sector, who believe in arts' power to invoke emotion within the audience and create interest in a specific subject matter to mobilise the public.[1]

'Legacy' is used to bookend this volume as it attempts to "discern the intricate new shapes that the present often makes of such histories and to trace the ways these shapes change over time" (pp. 403–404). This objective is accomplished by examining the shift of some Irish novelists, who have "redirect[ed] their attention from trauma to recovery", as illustrated in *The Green Road* (p. 408). That said, writings about trauma and "the unspeakable" still have a presence in Irish novels as shown in *The Secret Scripture* (p. 421). This shift is also evident in the ways that recent literature has been active in reconceptualising what aging means for males and females by entering dialogues with stereotypes, assumptions and attitudes towards middle and old age. 'Legacy' also includes a chapter by Mike Cronin, who examines how the centennial commemorations related to the 1916 Rising are not politically neutral and have political and social capital in the present day. Cronin highlights that these commemorations

[1] Filmmaker Ryan Boyko discusses this in relation to educating about the internment of Ukrainians during the First World War in Canada. Consult, TheMark Newsvideo. (2010) *Educating Canadians about Internment Operations.* [online] Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uPHU99jXJA [accessed 19 Feb 2023].

can also create forums for criticism due to the exclusion of voices, as demonstrated by the #wakingthefeminist campaign.

This book achieves one of its goals of examining Irish Studies in more complex ways than has traditionally been the case because of the diverse topics employed to discuss each theme. The interdisciplinary approach lends itself to presenting new frameworks to (re)conceptualise Irish Studies and allows for the use of diverse approaches and underutilised methodologies. This is the case regarding material culture. The chapters that survey a given field also identify key texts for undergraduate and graduate students to review, identifies gaps within the existing body of literature and propose future directions for research. The wide range of topics found within the 37 chapters of this volume indicates its usefulness to diverse fields of scholarship and enhances its marketability.

This volume also includes several chapters that incorporate a digital component into their discussions, whether that be how digital technologies can be utilised in Irish Folklore Studies, sports gambling and maintaining connections between diasporic communities and Ireland. Jarrett's chapter takes a more expansive focus on how the digital age has affected Dublin and raises the important point about connectivity issues in some of the rural spaces of the country, which has gained added urgency and attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. This reviewer contends digital issues will undoubtedly play a larger role in Irish Studies given the evolving state of technology and how we continuously incorporate it into our lives.

The editors have no illusions regarding their inability to adequately explore every subject within the realm of Irish Studies due to its broad nature and the interdisciplinary approach they have adopted. Irish Studies is too expansive for a single volume of this length. Understandably, decisions over content need to be made that are influenced by numerous controllable and uncontrollable factors. That said, one area that could have been further explored is tourism, particularly given Michael Cronin's[2] well-established background in the field, since the topic connects to changes that have occurred in Ireland in the last two decades. Furthermore, a greater discussion of tourism would connect to one of the handbook's broader ideas on how the government has projected Ireland to the global community. This greater focus on tourism could also be used to segue into an examination of Irish Food and Drink Studies. This is not to suggest that tourism is absent from this volume as Cronin wrote a chapter on it

[2] Consult, Cronin, M. and O'Connor, B. (eds.) (2003) *Irish Tourism: Image, Culture and Identity.* Toronto: Channel View Publications; O'Connor, B. and Cronin, M. (1993) *Tourism in Ireland: A Critical Analysis.* Cork: Cork University Press.

in regard to the diaspora, but greater focus would have been appreciated in this important and engaging field.

Overall, *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies* provides readers with a good selection of the diverse topics that have encompassed Irish Studies, including some of the underexplored topics in this field and identifies areas within the field for further exploration. This volume also touts a collection of contributions from prominent scholars in Irish Studies, most of whom are associated with academic institutions in Ireland and the United States. This demonstrates the high level of influence scholarship from these two countries currently have in Irish Studies.

Dr Brian de Ruiter has been an adjunct professor at Brock University since 2008, teaching in the Centre for Digital Humanities, Department of History, the Centre of Intercultural Studies, the Centre for Canadian Studies and the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. He received his PhD in 2014 from Swansea University focusing on North American Indigenous Cinema.

Book Review – *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public*, by Catherine Keller.

Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 232, £21

Subir Rana

Independent scholar

Political theology as a subject of discourse and deliberation is entwined with political philosophy, ecology and theology whose purpose is not just to theorise but to agonise and mobilise according to Keller whose book is currently under review. The book is divided into four chapters namely '*Political*, *Earth* and *Theology'* with a Beginning and an '*Apophatic Afterword'* at the end whereby the author aims to read together the "collective earth moment" (p. 7) through an account of the political, of the earth and of theology. This schematisation of three chapters according to Keller is an argument built up to establish the political theology of the earth. In the Indian case, '*Bhagavad Gita'* is a befitting example of an oriental text which is a political and philosophical debate about India's history and its place in the comity of nations as also a political theology of the earth.

Giving a genesis of the sub-discipline, Keller, a noted eco-theologian and feminist philosopher of religion, says that political theology has developed into a branch of theology quite recently although previous attempts to establish it began with the movement of European solidarity with fresh voices of liberation theology in the global South. This included powerful names like Johannes Metz, Jürgen Moltmann and Dorothee Sölle as well as John B. Cobb Jr's '*Process Theology as Political Theology'* (1982) whose works remained largely influential yet did not quite establish their hold in theological circles. It seemed that political theology had felt too Eurocentrically generic to catch on among progressive Christian thinkers for the rest of the century. However, it stages a comeback by way of the involvement in philosophy and in social activism as well as in recent political theory. Keller suggests contracting the entanglement of differences so that it takes a constructed theological form or what Moltmann referred to as "the solidarity of hope" and debunks the "radical political theologists" who set forth the "insurrectionist manifesto" of a radicalised democratic possibility. Keller views her project as theo-political which is also collated with eco-theology and which answers "revolutionary messianism".

The book, centred around the notion of 'political theology', is understood by the famous twentieth century legal theorist Carl Schmitt whose "pivotal and problematic" text '*Political Theology'* (1921) has influenced generations of political scientists. According to Keller, this book tries to reconsider Schmitt's concept of a sovereignty decided "in the exception". Further, she adds that theology has an ancient practice for liberating insight from certitude, for thinking on the edges of the unthinkable which she calls negative theology or apophasis – "unsaying" born in antiquity as a negation of any name, dogma, or knowledge of the divine, however true and non-negotiable it may seem. Apophatic theology according to her operates as a means of mystical insight and takes the shade of an ethical critique. Keller says that a political theology of the earth always and mindfully casts a shadow of darkness, and therefore it can sometimes appear as a "negative political theology".

Chapter 1, "The Political: Sovereign Exception or Collective Inception" takes on the political theology's classical standpoint of Schmitt's politics of friend vs. foe and which is responded by William Connolly's and Chantal Mouffe's notion of "democratic agonism" which is a "vibrant clash of political positions and an open conflict of interests" (p. 26). Agonism or healthy antagonism is hard to be missed in the current politics of we versus they or us versus them. Here, Keller tries to introduce Kelly Brown Doglas' geneology of white exceptionalism, correlating it to multiple registers of exceptionalism trending towards planetary emergency.

Chapter 2, "The Earth: Climate of Closure, Matter of Disclosure," attempts to highlight the havoc and destruction caused by the great crisis of our times namely that is climate change. This section has frightening imageries of natural / manmade disasters including the melting and flooding, droughts and fires, immigrations and the inequities not only materialising but reaching epic proportions in the Anthropocene. In this section, Keller introduces Donna Haraway and Karen Barad for some energising loops through the nonhuman.

Chapter 3, "Theology: 'Unknown Better Now," mediates on a theological unknowing, apophatic theology, in relation to the standard certitudes of a theology of Christian exceptionalism. Process theology poses the metaphors of a constructive alternative in which sovereign omnipotence gives way to a depth of creative indeterminacy known as '*seculareligious'* political potentiality begins to materialise.

The conclusion titled "Apophatic Afterward" tries to read the ruptured and hyphenated present of the earth from the perspective of theology. According to Keller, political theology is always *negative theology* and secularisation is a kind of apophasis, as a logos of theology itself but which needs its own '*docta ignorantia'*. She further adds that the political apophasis

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doesn't silence all traces of religion but listens to its echoes. According to her, the argument of the book has proceeded from the juxtaposition of the power of the sovereign exception to the potentiality of an eco-social inception.

Key to political theology has been its readings of the German legal theorist Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty in terms of emergency. The current conversation in political theology has been unfolding with the rush of a theoretical currency fuelled by old, indeed ancient, theo-political language. It also explains how a theology forged in alliances of entangled difference helps that alliance to emerge in the face of what may be mounting planetary emergency. The author supports local movements of planetary resistance to the new merger of capitalism with white male authoritarianism and there have been umpteen examples of public angst and dissent on matters of freedom of speech and that of religion to begin with and India along with many others in the Eastern and the Western world are classic examples.

Keller tries to interpret the feedback loop of political and ecological depredation and one can safely add catastrophes like global climate change and health emergencies like the ongoing pandemic as secularised apocalypse. Keller calls for dissolving the opposition between the religious and the secular in favour of a broad planetary movement for social and ecological justice. She also adds that confrontation by populist, authoritarian right wings that are founded on white male Christian supremacy can be countered with a messianically charged often unspoken theology of the now-moment that calls for a complex new public. A political theology of the earth like Keller proposes has the capability of activating the world's entangled population and who are participating in solidarity with their commitment to revolutionary solutions to the crises of the Anthropocene.

Keller has been labelled as a "poet theologian" by her colleagues, one who has tried to push the case for a progressive theology and one who argues that the resource of Christianity allows hope to prosper and a new public to emerge. The book calls upon eco-activists to explore the spiritual affinities between us in order to respond to the emergencies of the Anthropocene. This is surely an evocative and thought-provoking book particularly in the current times when the globe faces threats and ideological warfare of various kinds be it terrorism, racism, casteism and gender violence or popular resistance against tyrannical governments among such others.

Dr Subir Rana has a PhD in Sociology from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and a Post Doc from the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. He currently works as an independent researcher in Bangalore. His doctoral thesis discusses the past and present of a

Denotified Nomadic Tribe (DNT). As a sociologist by training, his research interests are cultures, societies and developmental issues like citizenship, human rights, (new) protest movements, popular culture, history of disenfranchised communities and other associated themes.

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Academic Event Report

Doris Murphy
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Brenda Mondragón Toledo
Centre for Mexican Studies, University College Cork

Clare Geraghty
Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, University College Cork

Postgraduate Conference: Boundaries, Borders, and Care: Feminist Ethics in Practice
Venue: University College Cork
Date: 19th to 21st May 2021

'Boundaries, Borders, and Care: Feminist Ethics in Practice' was a three-day conference, organised by myself and two other postgraduate students: Brenda Mondragón Toledo and Clare Geraghty. The conference benefitted the support of Dr Céire Broderick and Dr Caroline Williamson-Sinalo from the Violence, Gender and Conflict research cluster in the School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, and was generously funded by the Centre for Advanced Studies in Languages and Cultures (CASiLaC). This event saw artists, scholars, and activists gather virtually to discuss feminist ethics.

Over the course of the conference, we explored the practical challenges that we face as early career researchers faced in feminist and gender-focused research. Specific challenges arise with these types of work, such as a risk of burnout, ethical questions, and professional and personal boundary-setting. We were eager to make space to discuss the relationship between scholarship, policy, art, activism, and lived experiences. In total, 65 tickets were sold via Eventbrite, with up to 35 attendees at each panel.

Panel 1: Relationships and conflict in feminist activism

The conference began with a challenging panel on how we relate with others and which conflicts may arise within the feminist movement in Ireland. For this panel, our speakers were Emily Waszak and Dr Theresa O'Keefe, who have both engaged as migrant feminist activists in Ireland. The main issues arising from these conversations were on the avoidance of conflict

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that currently exists in Irish feminist movements. Most importantly, the panellists pointed out that generative conflict is something to be embraced rather than feared.

The conversation developed around the panellists' common experience as migrant women in Ireland and how they through the lens of Irish groups. Their role in the movement has allowed them to analyse the imbalance of power within feminism. Emily drew attention to the constant backing of those with the most power, considering how this ends up excluding minority voices, and the problems this generates when building dialogue and resolutions. Panellists mentioned how migrant voices have been excluded from the debates, and migrants' previous experiences in activism are often undermined. It is damaging to leave minority voices behind as they are a central contribution to action. Finally, this dialogue emphasised the significant presence of White feminism in Ireland and the urgency of challenging it in order to build a more egalitarian movement.

Panel 2: Mobility and roots in feminist academia

The second panel saw Dr Chiara Bonfiglioli (Co-ordinator of the MA in Women's Studies, UCC), and Dr Armida de la Garza (Senior Lecturer, UCC) discussing mobility and roots in feminist academia. Both noted that academia is not always the warmest community, however finding support groups, or groups with shared interests, can help one to generate roots in a new culture or country. It is important to collaborate and build communities of belonging, yet this requires energy and initiative.

The panellists were asked about maintaining boundaries between work and life, and they noted that this can be challenging when one is working in an area of passion. It is vital to cultivate this passion, which can be productive and generative, without losing your balance. In discussing career progression, both panellists agreed that this can mean reciprocity and living in line with your values, as well as being upwardly mobile. The panel also considered the issue of women's/gender studies being under threat globally, and the importance of taking an affirmative stance rather than defensive regarding the centrality of gender issues.

The final discussion of this panel related to interdisciplinarity, and the gendered assumptions made about specific disciplines. An engaged audience provided their own ideas on how to persevere in feminist academia, and how to work collaboratively and ethically across disciplines. Some ideas included sharing authorship credits, citing other feminist academics, and creating alternative spaces of dialogue, so that academic discourse can be more open to everyone. The discussion also touched on transnational solidarity and opposing the de-radicalisation of universities. One audience member introduced the term "trebuchet", which

involves throwing rocks over the walls of hegemonic academia, by performing small loving actions, such as providing references or platforms for early career researchers. We also discussed strategic essentialism, following Gayatri Spivak, to maintain our energy in the face of international threats.

Panel 3: Queer activism and the arts

This panel brought together Karen Miano, artist, producer, DJ, community organiser; Bulelani Mfaco, spokesperson for MASI (Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland) and board member of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties; Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan, arts manager, writer, performer. Some of the questions/points raised during the session included the following:

Karen Miano is a co-founder of Origins Eile, an organisation for queer people of colour in Ireland. They spoke of the importance of inward-facing activism, such as closed events and spaces that are only for community members. This can be an opportunity to heal and nourish the community from within, rather than always focusing on public events. They also stressed the value in promoting Black liberation through joy and celebration, instead of exclusively through narratives of suffering and trauma.

Inclusive spaces within the arts, where ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups can contribute as creators, are essential. The power of ownership and recognition for underrepresented communities can be very positive. Art can be a tool to interrogate reality and has been essential in contexts such as protests against the South African apartheid, of which Bulelani spoke.

How do we decide to self-identify as an activist? Many people involved in organising may not describe themselves as an activist, and relationships to this term may be complex.

How can we interact care-fully with each other as activists, artists, academics? By this we mean, in an ethical manner that shows consideration. There can be an awkwardness in being asked to speak on panels about who we are, rather than what we do, according to Chandrika. Particularly as an organiser of this event, I was encouraged to reflect upon why certain people had been asked to speak and others had not been, as well as the potential limitations regarding accessibility that we had perhaps failed to overcome.

Panel 4: Pride, culture, and feminist alliance building

Our penultimate panel featured Zoe McCormack, of Disabled Women Ireland, and Brigid Carmody, of the Cork Traveller Women's Network. Initially, they discussed their experiences as members of over-researched communities. The panellists noted that researchers should

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realise that they are guests in the community, and not experts "on" the community, despite their academic prowess. It is vital to avoid epistemic exploitation, and one way of ensuring this is to involve marginalised communities at every step of the research process, not just as gatekeepers to participants. It is important that people stop romanticising and simplifying human experiences, as this erases their complexity. The panellists were asked about taking pride in their identities and cultures, and Brigid noted that Traveller Pride takes place in June, and there are also Traveller Culture awareness training sessions. Zoe noted that maybe we don't feel proud of particular labels, but we shouldn't be ashamed. She went on to note that creating spaces for communities where people can be fully themselves is vital, for example the Autistic Art Club that Zoe founded. We discussed how to build alliances between marginalised communities and noted that arts and culture provide many opportunities. It is important that we amplify each other's voices, recognise people as experts in their own lives, and pass on opportunities. It was also noted that collectives such as Disabled Women Ireland have more power than individual smaller segregated organisations. Furthermore, we can lift each other up by recognising each other's strengths and struggles and maintaining an open mind.

Panel 5: Craftivism

Our final panel concerned Craftivism, which recentres the power of making, and we had the fortune to invite two craftivists to speak with us: Laura Whalen from The Bábóg Project and Claudia Hernández Espinoza from Zurcido Visible. Both of these women's projects use creativity to talk about sensitive matters such as the loss lives of babies at the Mother and Baby homes in Ireland (The Bábog Project), and the murder, disappearance and feminicides across Mexico (Zurcido Visible) by the increasing levels of violence in the country. Laura and Claudia presented their projects and the aims of craftivism in society.

We discussed how even slow processes of making are also forms of activism as they carry the power to communicate in the process as well as through the final outcome. In many cases, the process of making involves healing in community, as well as in silence and privately. This makes it incredibly relevant to discussions of traumatic experience. Claudia noted that we can process trauma when we share it in supportive and empathetic spaces, which helps us to mend wounds in society. The panellists encouraged the conversations around care; how we care for others and how we care for ourselves, and Laura outlined the importance of letting the emotions flow. This panel problematised the rigidity of theorising in academic spaces which can underplay or ignore the relations of emotional affects.

Creative conclusions

Our conference concluded with a creative workshop, in which participants, facilitators, and panellists reflected on the themes of the conversation, while making scrapbooks as reference to the conversations. We used the materials provided to continue the conversation about care, creativity, feminism, ethics, art, activism, academia, and to consider new ways of integrating all of these ideas. We focused particularly on how we can care for ourselves and each other, whilst continuing to engage in ethical feminist practice. Whilst we certainly do have all the answers, we discovered new possibilities to help us forge the right questions.

Doris Murphy is a PhD candidate in Sociology and Women's Studies in University College Cork. She is exploring sex work and care through Participatory Action Research. She is interested in the gendered nature of care, and how sex workers experience care in relationships at personal and societal levels.

Ghost

Edel Hanley
University College Cork

Looking at myself in the mirror the other night, I could see you standing behind me,
feel your long, dark hair brush against skin like grass on bare legs.

I knew for sure it was you when I caught your cologne inside my throat and held it for
as long as I could, trying not to look into your big, blue disappointment,

and when I blinked, you had gone, without leaving the vaguest of footprints to follow,
so switching on the lights, I wipe tiredness from me eyes, you from the mirror.

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The Suit

Mark Kelleher

Writer

The sea was elephant grey when it gifted me the suit.

Would a creature on this Earth believe me if I told them that it revealed itself by riding improbably on a small wave to my bare feet?

The alien sight of it, held tightly together by its skinny necktie, wrenched me clear away from whatever faraway memory was haunting me that evening. Though soaked right through, it somehow glowed, and through its unlikelihood communicated something distant to me.

Some moments later, I had it on.

That it fit to the inch only confirmed that I was the chosen party in an event long fated to occur.

On a fissured boulder I abandoned the trousers and sweater I had been wearing and set off towards home. Along the way, peculiar visions reeled me into unfamiliar worlds and words with harsh sounds and unknown meanings crowded on my tongue. I saw whoever I was now distressingly awake on a sleeper train as it bored through deepest night in a land of mountains and pink smoke. There were scarcely populated airport terminals, a drained strait viewed from the elevated vantage point of an electricity tower, the faintly blurred image of a woman who appeared to be perpetually stuck in a gesture of slow waving.

The words I could not get a hold of at all. I imagined they were what one might groan out in opaque dreams, an unheard shadow language summoned by mysterious forces deep within.

The easterly gusts had dried the suit by the time I reached the house. In the corner, the dog rose hesitantly from his bed and eyed me as he would a shadow moving across the ceiling. I went to the window and in the sky's dying light there flashed scenes of a man wearing the same suit shuffling uncomfortably through a hotel lobby before sitting and writing postcards depicting beauty spots local to here. As he wrote, I felt the motion of it stiffen through my own hand while the rest of my body eased itself into a calm so total it felt artificially induced.

Later, as I lay down in bed, still in the suit, I considered the words my story would be met with if I chose to someday tell it. At best, I would be accused of tasteless decoration, of

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taking what was later accounted for in the newspapers and attempting to make someone else's sad story my own. For attention, some might say, or even for reasons nefarious in nature.

As the time-stretched night expanded around me, I let such thoughts drift mercifully away and there, face down, I saw myself unknown, nameless, floating gently towards a place that, though foreign to me, seemed to be calling me home.

Photo Credits: Mark Kelleher

Auschwitz Days

Mathew Raisun
Lovely Professional University, Punjab

"FIRE!" — whenever the men roared for it, the sweetness of blood was tasted. The hedonic excitement overpowered the patriotism of human emotion and relationship. "Drink from it, all of you. This is the blood of the covenant, poured out to forgive the sins of many." The Head of Execution peacefully addressed the gathered men in the warmth of the beautiful music played in the background. Their wine tasted like the blood consumed by the mob that echoed the words of their authorities who shouted, "Kill him!"

Darkness had already begun to engulf every source of light that had many obstacles to sustain its fire. Desolation in the city extended to the nearby villages that had previously been affected little by the hatred spread by the stubborn stone-hearted man to many similar souls on earth. Its gradual dissemination gave the victims less hope for survival.

"Daddy, why are you packing your clothes?" little Yehiel asked Goldberg. Though he tried to pretend to be happy, he wasn't. All the men in the village were informed by the army to get ready for work at the places that had been allotted for them. It was disappointing as they had no guarantee that they would get their wages on time. The unfortunate situations in the country made them uncertain about their future. Even amid financial constraints, he showed no hint of any emotional outburst towards his family. On the brink of getting shattered into pieces, he would crush his emotions and put a lovely smile on his face. He knew Yehiel would miss him and cry as soon as he stepped out of the house. As he expected, it happened. He could hear her cry that gradually dissolved in the humidity of the parlous atmosphere until the bus crammed with men took a turn in the right direction. He might have told her that he was going for a job, but his blood red eyes soaked with tears made her question the lack of truth in his words. Many times, she has felt it from him – especially when they met the barbarous officers waiting to torture them in the city.

"Do you have an idea of where they are taking us?" asked a man with a bald head and bulging eyes at Goldberg. He nodded his head as if he knew nothing about the present and the future. It was a mutual feeling among all in the bus which might have been used before for cattle transport. "They might use us to do hard labour. It's our fate as we are Jews," said a man who stood next to them. "There is a rumour in the city that those who were taken for work had

not yet returned even after several months. If we are taken to such a workplace, we will also have to be away from our home for … I don't know how long!" said the bald man. Though they crossed various streets, buildings, houses, woods, and farms that crossed his eyes while looking through the windows, he could only see Yehiel and Greta. Both were smiling at the same time when they were bitterly sad. Yehiel was five years old. He couldn't provide a better life because of the discrimination and restrictions on Jews working in the city. The kids were aware of the situation and never asked for anything. Yehiel knew that something beyond the realm of her understanding hauled the happiness that she tried hard to nurture with their limited resources. Whenever she went for a walk with Goldberg in the city, she saw officers who struck men and women and accused them of crimes they had not committed. She also saw them treat her aunt brutally. When she asked her, "Why did they behave so badly towards you?", she replied, "They know nothing about humanity. They are monsters of the law, not humans." When she saw them on the streets after that, a huge portrait of a monster jumped out of her mind, saying, "Not humans, but monsters."

"Get down, you bastards!" — an arrogant voice yelled. Hearing this, Goldberg reminisced thoughts of his home and his past. They reached a placed fenced with thick walls that acted as barriers. The walls intimated the men of the strict rules that lay within. He realised that he would be alienated from the world outside. Once the bus drove in, he momentarily stared outside the gates, considering it to be the last he captured of the world outside. The compound was huge with many armed officers, fully armed, positioned everywhere. It seemed like a military base that seized the accused criminals who spent the rest of their lives within the confines of the walls. The pale algal growth creeping through the brick walls epitomized their lives within this enclosure.

Moving in a single file, Goldberg was directed to a hall with men of forty years and above. It took a while for him to get adjusted to the odour of clothes, the shabby room, and the stink of the common toilet at the corner of the room. Though he expected such situations, the reality made him taste the bitter truth behind his journey from his home. He saw a few sleeping, some lying on the bed that barely had any space for one, some in the middle of a conversation with other members in the room, some sitting as if ready for anything that could invite death, and some walking around the space they could find as if restless to fight against anyone who opposes their way.

"EVERYONE, MARCH TO THE CORRIDOR!" An army officer shouted through the grid that separated him from the prisoners. As instructed, within seconds, everyone began to queue and find their place. Though he requested for a spot, he was rejected. He wondered why

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they declined such a request. *Has everyone turned selfish? Have they had enough by this time to be inhuman to a fellow being? I haven't asked for anything that belongs to them – it's just a little space that the earth has granted everyone.* Goldberg began to have random thoughts in his head. As he searched for a space, hoping that the line would end soon, he saw an endless loop of people, one behind the other, that came from nowhere to join them. *Where the hell did they all come from?* As he moved to the backside, hoping to secure a spot in the line, he discovered more room-like halls, thickly populated. *Good God! This is horrible.* He thought to himself. A man with a white beard, saw Goldberg standing helpless outside the row, dragged him inside as if nothing had happened. Goldberg turned back to see who was the person. The man forced him to look straight. *Who is he? Why did he get me in when no one was there to help me? Why did he restrict me from looking at him?* Goldberg uttered several questions to himself. "Do not turn. It will cause trouble for both of us," the old man said. *Thanks, at least he spoke.* "Who are you? Why did you help me?" – asked Goldberg, slightly moving his head to his right., "I'm Norbert Brady. I don't think you know me. I'm an old friend of your father, Mr Benjamin. We were neighbours." Though Goldberg knew nothing about Norbert, his response was satisfactory enough to make Goldberg happy.

The line of prisoners marched to the corridor where the higher officials of the place were present to evaluate the strictness and order of the labour camp. They had to sign a book that registered their official entry into the place. Goldberg was given a number to identify him inside the compound – 9034. They were directed to the factory that worked on the backside of the compound. While moving there, the old man held his hand and asked, "Why did you come to this hell?" It was a question immersed in an utter reality that had the power to dissolve every statement of the lie the officers had announced in the village.

"Did you say 'hell'?" Goldberg asked.

"Yes. If not hell, what is this? Tell me," Norbert said.

"Workplace?" Goldberg replied with doubt.

Norbert laughed hard at this response. "Even when we get a goat for our holy sacrifice, we take proper care of it. We give them what they require right up to the last moment. Don't expect it here. We are taken not to live but to serve them," he said. "I have heard some rumours spreading in our city. People say, we will return to our home only after a few months, if I am right," Goldberg said. Norbert laughed again. That wasn't out of joy, but because he knew that he wouldn't be able to go back to his hometown anymore. He did not say anything to Goldberg. He thought it would be better for him to gradually discover what awaited him in the camp.

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That day went quite well for Goldberg. He had the work of assisting his fellow members in transferring loads of goods from one section of the factory to the other. Day two, three, four, ... ten, fifteen, and so on went as normal. He felt it was like a labour camp that was guarded by officers who always had aggressive eyes and mouths towards them. The Jews did not expect a warm welcome in a place controlled by the German Armed Forces. The harshness and negligence of the officers increased daily. Goldberg found out more secrets regarding the place they inhabited, the reason for their arrival, and what had happened to people who had come before them to the same place. Though he knew it was actually possible to happen, he couldn't believe it. One day, when Goldberg was busy at work in the factory, he saw someone shouting. It could be an officer using his authority over one of the workers, he thought. He still wanted to find out the matter. He saw a superior officer reprimanding his junior who made some mistake. Without a doubt, he looked for a clear sight of the junior officer's face. It was Joseph Heinrich. He knew him well. They grew up together as friends. When Joseph's father was transferred, they moved to another place. *That's a surprise! How could a shy and soft person like Joseph make his way to become a member of such a group? Has he changed, is he not as innocent as he used to be? Those years have passed, he may hate the likes of us!* Goldberg calculated the years and the many incidents triggered by the political and social conflicts in the country. It flashed through his mind. Power blinded men, who now act as demons.

After a few minutes of the session conducted by the superior, Goldberg walked downstairs to console him. Joseph was silent. He might have been sobbing. "Joseph, it's okay. You need not take it seriously," Goldberg said softly. "WHO THE HELL ARE YOU ON EARTH? GET TO YOUR WORK AND FINISH IT SOON," Joseph shouted at him with a wave of great anger that broke the walls of the soft-layered heart that Goldberg expected in him. "I'm sorry," Goldberg said and went back to his work. *He has changed a lot. He isn't the old Joseph who used to come to my house to play with my toys. He isn't who I expected. Isn't that Joseph? I made a mistake as I was excited to see him. I deserve it.* Goldberg murmured. He was sad because he was insulted in front of his co-workers. "Joseph wasn't like this. Maybe these men changed him, or he wanted to change himself to adapt to his job," Goldberg tried to convince himself by sharing his feelings with his fellow roommates. Whenever he saw Joseph later, he tried to hide from his sight.

During work, Goldberg was informed to report at the officer's launch. He walked slowly as he did not know why he was called personally at the odd time. Reaching an area that was covered with thick shrubs, he was dragged to the place behind a giant tree. "Why are you here? I didn't expect you here." It was Joseph. His eyes had a tone of sympathy that

overpowered his helplessness. "So, you remember me," Goldberg asked. "I know you. If I had not reacted like that on that day, it would have been you who would have suffered. Don't you know that no workers here try to have a conversation with the officers?" he asked. "I know. It happened out of my excitement. I was happy to see you … but was sad to see you getting fired on that day," Goldberg said. "We shall speak more. I need to speak more. Now, get to your work." Joseph said.

They conversed through gestures so that other officials wouldn't notice them. Joseph had sympathy for Goldberg's situation in the camp. He knew there was no life inside or out for Goldberg. Whenever they got a chance to meet, they made use of the time. Through Joseph, Goldberg could sort out conversations with his family. He felt relieved. Joseph informed Goldberg about the changing situations in his village and the how the Nazi ruled every part of the country.

"Why do you work for them?" Goldberg once asked Joseph.

"To live and not die," Joseph answered.

Once, when there was a mock drill for the officers in the camp, Joseph tried to help Goldberg escape from the place. He managed to get Goldberg out of his caged room, walked through the corridors, overcoming the watchdog-sight, moved through many cells packed with prisoners and asked him to wait on the backside of the vineyard. While moving through each cell, Joseph informed Goldberg about the plight of their lives. For the first cell, he said, "These people were once proud of their existence until they were imprisoned. These men have forgotten the value of humility. They are now disturbed, aggressive, and violent. Be careful."

As they covered one after the other in the cell and reached the second, Joseph said, "Have you ever had envy, Goldberg?"

Goldberg said, "Yes. To people who saw me as not worthy of living in this world."

Joseph said, "These men were brought here because they had everything, at least something that made my officers envy them."

Goldberg asked, "So, you mean… if we had nothing, they would liberate us? I have very little possession of my own."

Joseph said, "Not in the way you think. They envy your life, your race, and your existence." Moving towards the third cell that was stinky and suffocating, Joseph said, "Their envy has turned to great anger. They might cook you in it. Do you know why these men stink?"

Goldberg said, "No. Why?"

Joseph said, "Look at their legs. You see why it is." Their legs had swollen skin that excreted some kind of white liquid that covered them surrounded by wet-sucking flies. Seeing it, Goldberg controlled his ache for vomiting. "Never mind. Come fast." Joseph said.

They passed the third cell and reached the fourth. "Do you know why the officers make you work day and night without proper food and shelter?" Joseph asked.

"No," Goldberg replied.

"You might have seen how the officers in the corridor work. Half-sleep and half-rest. They are too lazy to do their work. That is why they make you do everything in the name of service to the nation. What kind of service? Just serve their wish." Joseph said. Goldberg nodded his head while walking slowly to exit the room where everyone was asleep. They reached the fifth cell.

"You are here not only because they are arrogant, angry, envious, and lazy. You are here because they love you." Joseph said.

"Love us? Are you joking? They love us when they spit on our food!"

Joseph said, "They love you. They love what you have. They love your land. They love your wealth. They love your peace. They love your love. They take everything from you, and you are left with nothing here. This place becomes the place of nothing." Goldberg agreed to it, saying, "You are right. They took every happiness that I had. My family, my village, my people. I'm here as nothing."

Reaching the sixth cell of prisoners, Joseph said, "But, you know, Goldberg... that's just nothing. I can say that they won't gain anything by grabbing whatever you have. They won't become anything that they have thought to conquer and become." Goldberg asked, "Why? They are powerful. They will continue to be powerful and will surely eradicate my race. I'm helpless other than to witness it."

Joseph said, "I know. But remember, the same way you lost everything in your life…" Goldberg interrupted him, asking, "So you mean, these men won't be able to get back to their families soon to regain what they lost?"

Joseph said, "As you said before, they are powerful and sometimes ... I don't know, may eradicate your race. I'm helpless other than witness it."

"So, you mean, they will also kill me? Kill my family?" asked Goldberg, nervously. "That's why I'm trying to save you, Goldberg," said Joseph. "We should have told others the same. We need to save them too," Goldberg said in a hurry. "Not possible. If you get out of here, the authorities may not notice it soon. If they all manage to escape, that will get me in trouble." Joseph said.

"Okay. As you wish. But please try to let them escape soon. You were saying something …" Goldberg said.

"Yes. I was saying, the same way you people lost everything in your lives, they will also lose one after the other. You see, no autocracy that tortured people has sustained for a long time. Everything in this world will have its fall one day." Joseph said. "But the question is, will we both be there to witness it," Goldberg added.

They moved to the seventh cell. "Have you ever eaten until your stomach said it was about to burst?" Joseph asked. "No. Not even to the required quantity." Goldberg said. "Have you seen the dining tables and food plates of your officers?" Joseph asked.

"No. Never. How can I?" Goldberg said.

"I have seen it several times. Fully loaded plates that wait to dispose of the waste as soon as they finish it in the midway," Joseph said.

"That's what I have heard. Very cruel," Goldberg replied.

"I know that these people you see here may die within a few days. I'm helpless. If I give them food, I will also be thrown here," Joseph said. Goldberg looked at them with great fear, anxiety, and sympathy.

They reached the last cell. "Have you ever felt the warmth of lust?" Joseph asked. "Not from anyone other than my wife," Goldberg answered.

"Do you believe that the women here in this camp are safe from it?" Joseph asked. Goldberg had no answer.

"I know women who are forced to submit themselves to my officers. That's why I hate them." Joseph said.

"Do you believe that your wife and child are safe at home?" Joseph asked. Goldberg looked at him helplessly. "You said they are safe. You met them last time, right?" Goldberg asked. "I did. They are safe for now. I can't guarantee that safety any longer," Joseph replied. They reached the gate that opened to freedom. Joseph managed to move the guards from the gate for some time. He opened it for Goldberg. With great gratitude, Goldberg hugged Joseph. He had no more words for him to say a formal goodbye. Having shed a few drops of tears on the ground of the camp, he left there.

Goldberg hid behind the walls, shrubs, and under the vehicles. Joseph had told him to stay beneath a vehicle that would leave the camp in the morning. Goldberg did as per his instructions. He waited there patiently. The morning welcomed him with a great noise, cries, and howls. He looked in the direction of those sounds and saw Greta and Yehiel in the long row of people who were made to march into the camp. He couldn't believe his eyes.

Without thinking about anything at the moment, he got out of the bottom of the vehicle. As soon as he got out, the vehicle moved. He ran to them. Upon seeing him, Yehiel came towards him with great joy. As he was about to touch her hand to get her to him, he was kicked by an officer to the ground. He saw them taking Yehiel away from him to his wife. He was dragged in front of them to one of the prisons in the camp. Joseph ran to the place and stood helpless without being able to say anything to support of Goldberg. He could only see Goldberg's wife and child, tears and emotions that made anyone immerse in its sadness.

Though they were in the same camp, they were not allowed to meet each other. Goldberg could only see them from a distance, and that too, when they got out for work. One day, Joseph came to Goldberg and said, "You are allowed to see your family tomorrow." For more than a month, Goldberg waited for this moment of happiness. On that day, he saw Greta and Yehiel on the other side of the grid. Their eyes were soaked with the saltiness of their lives. He could touch their fingers that had many memories to share. Though he couldn't kiss them properly, he managed to touch his lips on their cheeks. They were crying and did not stop it even when they saw him. Though he stopped them from crying, his words did not have the power to console them. After a few minutes, they were separated again. Greta tried to hold on to the grid to resist the officers taking her back to the room. She couldn't resist the power that ruled her. Joseph had told her the truth that Goldberg would be taken to the gas chamber that evening. She couldn't control herself from crying. It was more than what her heart could take. After their meeting, Joseph said to Goldberg the same. He had no response. He was calm. He knew he had no option other than to face it. "Maybe, that's why you allowed me to see them for the last time, right?" Goldberg asked. Joseph had no words for him other than to have his head down for not being able to help him in any way.

When the lights were turned off, when there was no ray of hope, men and women were taken to the gas chambers. Goldberg saw many faces that tried to speak to the world from their hearts. He saw light, and he saw darkness. He saw shadows of humans around him until he went unconscious to embrace the truth of life – death!

*

Goldberg jolted out of his bed. Nurses came to him and calmed him down. He couldn't believe what he saw. "Are they alive?" he asked them. "Who?" the nurse asked. He had no idea where he was or what had happened to him. He saw the digital clock that was kept on the table. The time was 12:15 pm. Friday, April 15, 2022. He could also see a translation of the book *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri kept on the table near him. He took it and turned the pages to trace the secret of what he had just seen.