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Edited by:

Magdalena **C**ieślak, **A**gnieszka **R**asmus

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Introduction

The present volume aims to introduce a number of young scholars currently affiliated with the University of Lodz, where they have either just completed or are in the process of their Ph.D. programme. The papers illustrate a diversity of research interests, textual choices and methodological approaches that attest to the wide scope of academic inquiries in various disciplines within humanities at the University of Lodz. They analyse literary texts by Anglophone authors representing the international and intercontinental nature of English studies: Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), and Kazuo Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans* (2000). Each paper applies unique and interdisciplinary methodologies, which offer original readings of the novels. Agnieszka Jagła's "The Transformative Potential of Trauma in *Waiting for the Barbarians* by J.M. Coetzee" uses trauma studies to explore the representation of traumatic experiences of the main protagonist to present the mechanisms of othering from a posthumanist perspective. Rafał Łyczkowski's "Charles Dickens and Colonial Expansionism 'Obscured' in *When We Were Orphans* by Kazuo Ishiguro" reaches to intertextual references of *Great Expectations* in Ishiguro's novel to address the complexity of the legacy of the British colonialism. Finally, Piotr Płomiński's "From a Botched Body without Organs to a Plastic Brain. A Reading of P.K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*" analyses the disintegration of a human mind, presented in a typical futuristic context, from an innovative perspective. Using Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and Malabou's concept of brain plasticity, the paper highlights the transformative potential of a posthuman body that seeks alternative modes of being. Apart from the three articles in the main section, this volume includes also a didactic paper by Joanna Matyjaszczyk, a lecturer and teacher at the University of Lodz. It analyses a medieval romance, *The King of Tars*, with the intention of offering a teaching manual for university lecturers who wish to discuss that text in class. The paper approaches *The King of Tars* from the perspective of the discourse of the Other, so it can also be helpful to those who wish to use a similar angle to study and teach other medieval texts. With this contribution, A.R.T. continues to offer a more diverse range of papers catering to various readership interests.

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The Transformative Potential of Trauma in *Waiting for the Barbarians* by J.M. Coetzee

Abstract

This article analyses the novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) by the South African author J.M. Coetzee from the perspective of the transformative potential of trauma. *Waiting for the Barbarians* is a novel centred around the conflict between the Empire and the Barbarians, which prompts the active participation of the individual. The trauma in the protagonist's life becomes the motivator of the dramatic change in his humanist mindset. In my paper, I discuss the manifestations of indirect and direct trauma experience of the protagonist, which transform his attitude towards his personal situation, as well as the situation of "the other." The resulting perspective is compared to the concepts of posthumanist philosophy outlined by Rosi Braidotti. The article expands the viewpoint on the possibility of reading Coetzee's novels in the light of posthumanism. Through the analysis of the text, the article creates the interpretative framework linking the author with the fields of trauma theory and posthumanism.

Keywords: *Waiting for the Barbarians*, posthumanism, trauma, John Maxwell Coetzee

Introduction

In its announcement of the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature, the Swedish Academy described John Maxwell Coetzee as a writer "who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider" ("The Nobel Prize"). His novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) tells the allegorical story of the Empire overtaking the territory of indigenous Barbarians. The political conflict, although set in an unidentified place and moment in time, can be viewed as a commentary on postcolonialism and apartheid, and as a simultaneous exploration of a seemingly incomprehensible rebellion of an individual against the system prompted by the unjust suffering of others. In *Waiting for the Barbarians,* it is indeed the involvement of the outsider – the Magistrate – with the natives that changes not only the status quo of the colonial regime, but also initiates a profound transformation of the protagonist.

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The aim of this paper is to present the analysis of this transformation from a posthumanist perspective. I will focus on the representation of direct and indirect trauma experience as a catalyst for the Magistrate's posthumanist turn. Initially, the vision of the world propagated by humanism can be seen in Coetzee's protagonist, who, through his gender, race, and attitude, becomes a representative of the humanist ideal, which in turn accentuates his later transformation. As the novel progresses, the Magistrate changes his perception of the world, assuming the lowest position, that of a prisoner and a victim, which enables his unconscious growth as a human being.

Trauma Theory and Posthumanism

As claimed by the Swedish Academy "Extensive reading reveals a recurring pattern, the downward spiralling journey he [Coetzee] considers necessary for the salvation of his characters," this very journey in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is laid open by the secondary trauma and follows the protagonist from the humanist position on top of the society downwards into posthumanist stance of embracing otherness ("The Nobel Prize"). The theoretical background of the article connects Freudian influences on trauma theory with Rosi Braidotti's take on posthumanist philosophy.

Sigmund Freud coined the term "traumatic neurosis," which entered his oeuvre as a consequence of his hysteria studies. E. Ann Kaplan further notes that in his study with Breuer, Freud relates "the symptoms of hysteria" to "the result of trauma" (26). Freud comes to claim that

> The symptomatic picture presented by traumatic neurosis approaches that of hysteria in the wealth of its similar motor symptoms, but surpasses it as a rule in its strongly marked signs of subjective ailment (in which it resembles hypochondria or melancholia) as well as in the evidence it gives of a far more comprehensive general enfeeblement and disturbance of the mental capacities. (12)

The aforementioned "disturbance" is caused by the external trauma experience "powerful enough to break through the protective shield" (Freud 29), which leaves a lasting mark on its victim, for whom recovery becomes a time-consuming process. Another key factor increasing the impact of trauma is unexpectedness, resulting in the victim's impossibility to activate the "protective shield": "[w]e either do not have time to prepare for it, or whatever receptive capacities (and defenses) are in place prove inadequate" (Hartman 257). The third crucial characteristic of trauma pointed out by Freud is latency. Sometimes referred to as belatedness, latency denotes the process of repressing the traumatic event in order to create a defense mechanism. In such a case the trauma is wiped from memory to protect the victim from the unbearably negative impact of the traumatic event. However, the memory of the event may return, triggered by external stimuli. As Michael Richardson notes, "this latency makes the traumatic event precisely that which resists representation: Its very status as trauma is defined by its refusal to be known" (321). A similar point is made by Beata Piątek, who pays attention to the "haunting" aspect of trauma, which is impossible to be represented on a one-to-one basis, and therefore instead of being processed and worked through, it might take the form of constantly recurring flashbacks.

Traumatized characters in Coetzee's novel face the difficulty of articulating the traumatic event, an inability that is another characteristic acknowledged by trauma studies. Geoffrey H. Hartman recognizes in this act of repression the ultimate need of the expressiveness: "As a specifically literary endeavour trauma study explores the relation of words and wounds. Its main focus is on words that wound, and presumably can be healed, if at all, by further words" (259). Hartman considers "expressiveness" to be the key factor in the process of healing and working through trauma; he believes that "Literary verbalization, however, still remains a basis for making the wound perceivable and the silence audible" (259). Marinella Rodi-Risberg

acknowledges the fact that "art can offer sensitive readers a unique view of other people's suffering" (115) despite the sheer impossibility of fully understanding the trauma unless the reader has had a similar personal experience. Contrary to that view, Dominick LaCapra remarks on the possible dangers of overidentification with the victim, resulting in vicarious victimhood: "But a difficulty arises when the virtual experience involved in empathy gives way to vicarious victimhood, and empathy with the victim seems to become an identity" (47).

In Coetzee's novel the protagonist experiences two types of trauma, which are here referred to as direct and indirect depending on whether the traumatizing events affect the life of the protagonist through his personal suffering or the suffering of others. I will argue that these two sources of pain result in the development of two types of traumatic disorders in the protagonist – PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and STSD (secondary traumatic stress disorder). The use of doubled traumatic disorder in the novel strengthens its impact on the protagonist and becomes the situation which transforms the humanist mindset of the character into the posthumanist one.

Developed in the late 20th century, posthumanism opposes what it deems a pernicious manifestation of anthropocentrism perpetuated by humanist positioning of the white male (in the form of the Vitruvian Man) at the center of attention. Rosi Braidotti discusses the critical approach of anti-humanists towards the humanist idea of anthropocentrism, claiming that "[t]his flattering self-image of 'Man' is as problematic as it is partial in that it promotes a self-centred attitude. This paradigmatic self-representation, moreover, is deeply male-centred and Eurocentric" (*Posthuman Humanities* 2). Braidotti draws attention to the prejudice introduced by the humanist thought, as its two important markers illustrate explicit preference over gender and race. Such beliefs have resulted in humanism becoming exclusive, applicable only to white, male individuals. Humanism does not allow "otherness" into its realm:

> In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as "others". These are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies. (Braidotti, *Posthuman Humanities* 15)

In response to such limitations of humanism, posthumanism is inclusionary and open to everyone, including not only humans, but also non-humans in its scope.

Being in many ways opposed to humanism, posthumanism moves away into the anti-anthropocentric vision of the world no longer focused on a white, male figure. Posthumanism disproves humanism's claim of being a "universal" philosophy. One of the primary features of posthumanism is the critique of the "human-centred (anthropocentric) ways of understanding life and reality" (Roden 10). Posthumanism moves human beings away from the centre of attention, and yet, simultaneously it underlines the prominence of our actions and impact they have on the state of future life and the environmental situation in the world. Braidotti importantly remarks that "the posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming" (*The Posthuman* 12). Therefore, the changes happening in the world should have a positive impact on humanity. They should encourage individuals to assess their human condition and strive towards self-improvement. Braidotti draws the attention to the importance of the human species in the world. According to her, "posthuman theory is a generative tool to help us re-think the basic unit of reference for the human in the bio-genetic age known as 'anthropocene,'" which she defines as "the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet" (*The Posthuman* 5).

This article addresses the influence of the trauma of "the other" on the life of the humanist individual, as posthumanism undermines the view that the world should be seen through the lens

of gender and racial segregation. The posthuman aspect here is limited to the discussion of human trauma – that of the barbarian girl, which in turn leads the protagonist into the direct trauma experience. The synthesis of trauma psychoanalysis inspired by Freudian theory and Braidotti's posthumanist philosophy will guide the analysis of the novel**.** To lead our understanding of these processes, I will start by analyzing the relationship of the Magistrate with the barbarian girl and explore how the posthumanist transformation of the Magistrate is visible throughout their affair and afterwards. My goal is to trace his journey of "becoming a person" (Grafe 25), which is prompted by his conscience awoken by the indirect and direct trauma experience.

The Trauma of the Barbarian Girl: Indirect Trauma Experience

Before he met the barbarian girl the Magistrate used to repress the inevitable presence of death and suffering of others from his life. However, the development of personal relationship with the girl, who can be seen as a representative of "the other," can be considered his first step in acknowledging the presence of trauma imposed by the Empire on the Barbarians. Thus, he rejected what Braidotti suggests is the very basis of ethical approach to life. She argues:

> This proximity to death is a close and intimate friendship that calls for endurance, in the double sense of temporal duration or continuity and spatial suffering or sustainability. Making friends with the impersonal necessity of death is an ethical way of installing oneself in life as a transient, slightly wounded visitor. (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 132)

The meeting with the barbarian girl and their relationship which follows afterwards makes the Magistrate see the repressed and allows him to experience the vulnerability of life in the way described by Braidotti. Subsequently, he is finally able to explore the sensitive side of himself, and thus, as I argue, become more humane. This relationship ignites his interest in the signification of visible scars covering the body of the girl as the indicators of the suffering she has undergone. The Magistrate offers her work and shelter, as she cannot be permitted to beg on the street. The readers are introduced to the girl's trauma through the effects of torture on her body and physical appearance, manifested in her partial visual disorder and broken limbs, which force her to use sticks while walking.

The lack of similar traumatic experiences in his past prompts the feeling of alienation in the Magistrate because he realizes he will never be able to identify with her pain. His rituals of washing her body manifest his urge to understand the girl's trauma through the scars. The protagonist becomes so engaged in the physical evidence of torture that he begins to treat the girl merely as an object of trauma, viewing her as "incomplete" (45). Małgorzata Hołda notices the potential of working through the trauma via providing the comfort to the body instead of focusing solely on the mind:

> In the trauma caused by either mental or physical affliction, the human body is the site both of feeling pain and of the possibility of its release – the body remembers the wound and is the potential ground for the healing process. The healing practice recognizes the interrelationship between the verbal and the physical aspects of trauma and the positivity of healing through the body, specifically in situations in which working through trauma via the narrative delivered by the wounded person does not suffice. (285)

The Magistrate's rituals of washing of the girl's body, something towards which he is instinctively (unconsciously) driven, can be viewed therefore, as the "release" for her trauma. However, his consciousness is too fixated on the unspoken trauma of the mind to notice the bodily comfort he provided for the girl can be just enough for her to heal. The Magistrate wishes to establish the

connection between the body and the mind, when it comes to detecting trauma, yet ultimately fails to notice this very connection, and the importance of the body in the healing process. He still operates under the humanist assumption that the body and the mind are separate entities that he needs to unite, whereas from the posthuman perspective they are a single continuum to begin with. His obsessive interrogation of the girl in order to extract the oral recollection of the traumatic event proves futile. As a result, he realizes his affinity with Joll, the torturer: "[t]he distance between myself and her torturers, I realize, is negligible; I shudder" (29). The Magistrate does not initially realize that his investigation would inflict additional distress and trauma on the girl, resulting in her deflection of his questions. Also, the girl opposes the idea of being defined by her torture, which the Magistrate fails to understand, being too self-absorbed with his fetishization of her wounds and scars. He believes in the Caruthian "story of a wound that cries out" (4), which suggests the traditional belief that trauma strives to be relieved. What the Magistrate wishes the girl to do is to "act out" on her trauma, to express it, but she withdraws, as she resents the idea of discussing the event. The Magistrate is ignorant of the fact that the girl's trauma is inaccessible to him. Only after his own experience as a victim is he able to realize this. When the barbarian girl declines to describe her trauma, it leads the Magistrate to the obsessive desire to "work through" her experience. The concept of "working through" is taken from Freud, and LaCapra explains the process as an attempt to "gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between the past, present and future" (143). Yet the girl's reluctance to discuss the experience may lead the readers to believe that she has already accomplished the process of "working through" her trauma. What the Magistrate fails to understand is that "certain wounds, both personal and historical, cannot simply heal without leaving scars or residues in the present; there may even be a sense in which they have to remain as open wounds" (LaCapra 144). It seems unacceptable for him to grasp the inevitable manifestation of the past trauma in the form of scars and wounds of the body and psyche. Such an attitude causes the Magistrate to impose imperatively the role of the victim on the girl.

When the Magistrate realizes the similarity between his treatment of the girl and Joll's tyranny, he is petrified: "I must assert my distance from Colonel Joll! I will not suffer for his crimes!" (48). Aware of his political involvement[1], the Magistrate develops the sense of guilt for the crimes of Joll and the Empire. Becoming like Joll is his greatest fear and, therefore, pursuing the opposite position, he chooses to become a martyr. In his view, any possibility of resemblance to the Colonel would confirm his complicity with the tyranny of the Empire. Therefore, the Magistrate represses the idea that he and Joll might have something in common: "extreme binarization is actually a way of concealing anxiety and the ways in which the seemingly pure opposites also mark each other and may share certain things" (LaCapra 149). However, the Magistrate's peculiar behaviour towards the barbarian girl still illustrates his affinity with Joll. The girl's unwillingness to share the trauma with the Magistrate results in his withdrawal from the relationship and his escape into sexual encounters with prostitutes. This brings him temporary alleviation of his guilt. Then, the protagonist decides to take the girl back to her tribe without asking her first. His decision arises from his failure to "cure" the girl, and from the fact that her presence reminds him constantly of his guilt. Despite his final resolution to part company with her, the relationship between the characters changes the Magistrate's life in a substantial way.

The trauma of the barbarian girl ignites the protagonist's interest in the ill-treatment of prisoners and becomes the moment of his awakening. It triggers his desire to understand the

[1] For the reader, the protagonist is defined by the function he performs for the machinery of the state, as in the novel his real name is never mentioned.

victimhood, to change his own role in the system and to find a purpose in life. Only later, when he himself becomes a martyr, is he able to partly understand the girl's behaviour and her actions. She frequently reappears during his time in prison in the form of dreams, flashbacks, and visions. Although she is physically no longer present in his life, his own victimhood makes him closer to her. In the next section I explore the direct trauma of the Magistrate, which stems from his relationship with the barbarian girl.

Direct Trauma Experience

Living in a borderland town, the Magistrate is directly traumatised when he becomes a prisoner of the Empire and suffers from the brutality of physical torture and public humiliation. The protagonist's imprisonment is a consequence of his involvement with the barbarian girl and the journey he organises to return her to her tribe. When arrested by Colonel Joll, the Magistrate is declared the enemy of the Empire.

Because of his position of the principal administrative officer, he is merely subjected to inconveniences and brutality of life as a prisoner during his first arrest. The Magistrate is acutely aware of the fact that he receives preferential treatment when compared to the imprisoned Barbarians. The novel illustrates the protagonist's evolving craving for discomfort, or even pain. Such a peculiar urge is driven by his wish to comprehend the significance of pain by himself, and not by means of the impersonal experience of others. Through his relationship with the barbarian girl, first unconsciously and then more consciously, the Magistrate develops a will to take part in the experience of collective trauma. He seeks suffering as a way of proving to himself that he has changed from a passive outsider to an actively involved individual:

> I take my fingers from my eyes and a grey world re-emerges swimming in tears. I am so profoundly grateful that I cease to feel pain. As I am hustled, a man at each elbow, back through the murmuring crowd to my cell, I even find myself smiling. (118)

The Magistrate's desire to feel pain is driven by his conviction that through martyrdom, he would be able to redeem himself for his passivity and alleviate his sense of guilt. Yet despite his wishes of becoming "the righteous one," he remains the creation of the despised Empire: "the Magistrate, against his innermost desires, represents Empire of evil while the girl stands for the victimized other" (Kowalczyk-Twarowski 71).

The Magistrate manages to escape from prison, yet when he sees the public shaming of the Barbarians, he cannot remain indifferent upon seeing a hammer – the threat of upcoming torture: "[n]ot with that! . . . You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast!" (117). For his outburst the Magistrate is arrested again and only then is he subjected to various forms of physical torture, intended to show him "the meaning of humanity" (126), as the torturers claim that being a human is manifested through corporeality, and this, in turn, is to be experienced through pain. His subsequent imprisonment gives him ample experience of torments and humiliation. As a result, his desires become limited to the alleviation of bodily pain and suffering.

The narrative is preoccupied with the bodily experiences of pain and desire. The physical aspect of torture proves to be the key to confessing the truth; by wounding the body torturers aspire to break human spirit. In his speech in front of a crowd, protesting against the torture of the Barbarians, the Magistrate says: "'[w]e are the great miracle of creation! But from some blows this miraculous body cannot repair itself! . . . 'Look at these men!' I recommence. 'Men!'" (117). The protagonist brings the readers' attention to the image of the body, invoking its fragility. This judgement is driven by his relationship with the barbarian girl, who has scars on her body – the

signifiers of pain and torture. Sam Durrant refers to the scenes of washing the girl's body by the protagonist, claiming that they indicate the Magistrate's "inability to work through his failure to put her body back together, an inability to absolve himself of having allowed the torture to take place in the first place" (44). This leads the protagonist to the obsession with the body and its relevance.

The aftermath of the traumatic events evokes in the protagonist a form of mutism, identified as one of the trauma characteristics. To his own surprise, the Magistrate finds himself unable to talk about the experience. His cries have worn him out; afterwards there is no more he can say. During the period of imprisonment, he wants to prove to himself and others that he truly feels the pain:

> "Let everything be said!" I told myself when I first faced up to my tormentors. "Why clamp your lips stupidly together? You have no secrets. Let them know they are working on flesh and blood! Declare your terror, scream when the pain comes! They thrive on stubborn silence: it confirms to them that every soul is a lock they must patiently pick. Bare yourself! Open your heart!" So I shouted and screamed and said whatever came into my head. (141)

He believes his behaviour is different to that of the barbarian girl, yet in the aftermath of torture, he becomes just like her, unable to speak about his shame and suffering. The language does not seem to be a medium capable of transferring the pain and making it accessible for outsiders. The pain finds its way of expression only through the screams, which are inarticulate. The Magistrate's cry is reminiscent of the previously heard cries of the tortured Barbarians at the beginning of the novel. This illustrates the inhuman nature of the torture, which cannot be articulated through language, and can only be conveyed through unintelligible scream. However, Coetzee signals to the reader that the key for deciphering and understanding trauma lays in honest and empathetic interaction with the other.

The Posthuman Turn

These transformations happening in the Magistrate's attitude towards the Barbarians may be attributed to traumatic experiences, as described throughout this article. The intensity of his trauma gradually impels the Magistrate to endorse a different social, metaphysical and ontological paradigm in which the polarization between "us" and "them" is blurred. The elitist perspective is transformed into an egalitarian one, and the Magistrate himself realises that in terms of suffering there is no disparity between him and the Barbarians; the pain proves them equal.

At the beginning of the novel, the Magistrate is presented as an elderly man whose uppermost wish is to retire peacefully, which results from his self-centred attitude directed at the fulfilment of his own needs. His high office of the country magistrate gives him a sense of power and makes him respected among the society. The Magistrate accepts the division between his community, belonging to the Empire, and the Barbarians, which is based on the notions of the colonizer and the colonized. His attitude towards the Barbarians makes it apparent that he is the product of the Empire. Initially it is blatant for the reader that the protagonist is far from becoming engaged in a political conflict between the two parties. Although he does not necessarily consider Barbarians the threat to the Empire, unlike Joll, his opinion shows that he views them only as primitive nomads, which is a marker of his feeling of white superiority, characteristic of the anthropocentric vision proposed by humanism.

The division between the Empire and the Barbarians is an example of segregation characterized by the racism against the natives. Even the way they refer to them as the "Barbarians" is marked by prejudice and a sense of superiority of Empire. At this point in the novel, the Magistrate exemplifies a humanist model of indifference towards others, focusing primarily on his own comfort

and serene lifestyle. Until Joll's arrival, the Magistrate's life could be considered rather calm and uneventful. However, the visit from Colonel Joll from the Third Bureau changes everything. The regime dictated by the state apparatus of the Empire results in the creation of culture in which torture has become a regular tool used against the Barbarians. Despite the fact that the Magistrate finds Joll's interrogation measures disquieting and uncomfortable, he is forced to endure them and chooses to do nothing about the matter.

The violent treatment of the victims by the Colonel and his men leaves the Magistrate feeling ashamed of himself. His conscience is unable to accept the fact that he remains the part of the system which introduces such a regime. After Joll leaves, the Magistrate's first action is to take care of the imprisoned people; he orders the soldiers to "restore the prisoners to their former lives as soon as possible, as far as possible" (26). Another thing he demands his soldiers to do is the cleaning of the barracks: "I want everything cleaned up! Soap and water! I want everything as it was before!" (26). The crimes of the Empire trigger in the Magistrate the desire to purify himself from the shame he feels because of his passiveness. His obsession with the ritualistic purification continues later, during his relationship with the girl, which prompts the connection with Lady Macbeth: "[l]ike Lady Macbeth, he is unable to wash away the marks of his complicity" (Durrant 44). This complicity is distinctly visible in the scene in which the Magistrate desperately tries to ignore the cries of the tortured prisoners:

> I would like to be able to stop my ears to the noises coming from the yard below, which has now, it appears, become permanently a prison yard. I feel old and tired, I want to sleep. I sleep whenever I can nowadays and, when I wake up, wake reluctantly. (22)

The event makes him realize that by his passiveness, he becomes responsible for the torture as well. It marks the beginning of the process of awakening conscience: "His attempt to deny having heard the cries produces a crisis" (Durrant 43). Adrian Grafe observes in this moment the conflict between the wish to instinctively repress the feelings of guilt and simultaneous moralizing and critical sense:

> At the same time, the Magistrate tries to turn a deaf ear to his own moral deafness. It is an attempt to stifle his conscience, but that attempt is useless – he pleads his own cause because he knows he has behaved unethically by letting the Colonel take the prisoners away for questioning so easily. This weighs on his conscience. It is as though his personhood, dependent on his conscience, were at once affirmed and denied. (Grafe 25)

It becomes the first step taken by the Magistrate against the regime of the Empire. The audible and visible suffering of the Barbarians accounts for the protagonist's secondary stress disorder leading to his questioning of his role in society and becomes one of the factors determining his actions and new attitude to oppose the system. He wants to alleviate his sense of guilt for the mistreatment of barbarian prisoners by providing shelter for the barbarian girl.

However, the atonement that the Magistrate seeks by taking care of the barbarian girl is interfered by the sight of her "deficient" body. These wounds lead the Magistrate to an unconscious breakdown. He represses the idea of responsibility for the crime of the Empire, as well as the trauma itself, so deeply that it finds its representation in haunting dreams with the girl as their continuous protagonist. The trauma is experienced indirectly and because of the Magistrate's participation in trauma it is hidden by his own unconscious. The latency of the Magistrate's engagement in the conflict can be explained by the fact that the idea of complicity in the brutal reign of the Empire and the amount of wrongdoing is too overwhelming for the mind to be realised and accepted. Cathy Caruth notices that at times trauma is unavailable to the individual because of its unexpectedness

and consequently can find its way through "the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4). Therefore, it comes back and haunts the victim later repetitively, as it was unable to be known at that time. The same is noted by LaCapra, who claims that: "Traumatic *Dasein* haunts or possesses the self, is acted out or compulsively repeated" (90). It is crucial that trauma may be "relieved" with or without the intention of the victim: "It may not be subject to controlled, conscious recall" (LaCapra 89). In the novel, the Magistrate experiences recurring dreams, which can be seen as a continuation of one narrative, which varies slightly each time. These nightmares "haunt" the Magistrate, oftentimes causing him to scream during his sleep, and become the signifier of the repressed. The Magistrate knows unconsciously that as a part of the system he is responsible for the torture imposed on the Barbarians, but he does not want to admit this to himself, which activates his morality through dreams.

As Kai Wiegandt points out, the Magistrate's mind produces visions in which the barbarian girl is disguised as a snowman – inanimate object, or hooded child, whose face is "featureless" and simultaneously can be viewed as a human face or a face of an animal. She sees this "dehumanization" as "an attempt of the magistrate's conscience to disown responsibility for the girl" (83). Not only do the dreams raise his awareness in terms of his complicity in the torture culture, but they also introduce the posthuman realm through the transcendence between human and non-human. The experienced trauma, which becomes a basis for the Magistrate's view of the girl as "incomplete," allows her to be transformed in his visions into an object or an animal or neither, because torture deprived her of humanity and gave her "less than human" status. Such a fluid representation of the barbarian girl shows that she moves freely between those categories and, thus, she can be viewed as a signifier of non-anthropocentrism and stand for widely understood category of "the other." This is an important point as it highlights the fact that the aforementioned classification proves irrelevant. In a sense, the girl deprived of humanity through torture makes humanist ideal and non-human others equal:

> Violence done to animals cannot be considered torture in a culture accustomed to exploiting non-human creatures. However, the magistrate begins to doubt the culture of the Empire. It becomes uncertain to him whether animals can be tortured, but things certainly cannot. (Wiegandt 83)

Dreams become the symbolical moment in which the Magistrate unconsciously crosses the line between humanism and posthumanism for the first time. The juxtaposition of two events – when he ignores the cries at the beginning, disregards his conscience, and when he stands in the defence of the Barbarians in public, following his conscience – is an illustration of the change that has taken place in the protagonist. The Magistrate goes from repression and indifference towards activism. He develops the qualities of the posthumanist subject: compassion, empathy, and the feeling of responsibility for the wrongdoing. He refrains from his man-centred vision of the world. His conscience leads him to forgetting about his own comfort and safety and challenges him into the victimhood and sacrifice for the sake of others.

This shows that he has disregarded the feeling of superiority, which was a part of his privileged position in society, but also his postcolonial legacy of imperialism. He withdraws from thinking about the Barbarians as inferior. Another change in his attitude towards the Barbarians is visible in the way he "translates" the language of the Barbarians. At the beginning, he considers them primitive shepherds, but with the change of his mindset he becomes open and sees his previous prejudice and racism. He proposes that the Barbarian language "can be read in many orders" (122), which exemplifies the shift in his outlook on the world. Braidotti points to decentralizing of the Euro-centric, universalist construction of humanity as a crucial project of the posthuman turn. She goes on to argue that:

> The process of becoming-minoritarian or becoming-nomad of Europe involves the rejection of the self-appointed missionary role of Europe as the alleged centre of the world. If it is the case that a socio-cultural mutation is taking place in the direction of a multi-ethnic, multi-media society, then the transformation cannot affect only the pole of "the others". It must equally dislocate the position and the prerogative of "the same", the former centre. The project of developing a new kind of post-nationalist nomadic European identity is certainly challenging in that it requires disidentification from established, nation-bound identities. This project is political at heart, but it has a strong affective core made of convictions, vision and active desire for change. We can collectively empower these alternative becomings. (*The Posthuman* 53–54)

In the novel, the Magistrate realizes Braidotti's vision of a post-national selfhood. The protagonist undergoes a fundamental change due to the crisis of his conscience: from the dutiful country magistrate submissive to the Empire towards the posthumanist version of the man. He withdraws from his sense of superiority and prejudice, becoming mindful and taking responsibility for the evil he has contributed to.

Conclusions

Grafe argues that the Magistrate develops into "a man of conscience", which is ultimately "what truly makes him a person" (30). Indeed, the traumatic experiences provoke a disturbance in his existence, a turmoil which becomes an irresistible force shattering his former way of life. The new posttraumatic reality cannot be understood or dealt with by means of the humanist model. The suffering of the individual evoked by trauma through its humiliating and degrading nature, which strips the victim of "grace," introduces the idea of shame. In this very moment we observe the symbolical "fall" of the false ideal of the Vitruvian Man represented by the protagonist. *Waiting for the Barbarians* underlines the metaphorical decline of the character when the Magistrate himself comes to the bitter conclusion, claiming that "[w]e are fallen creatures" (152). Throughout the course of the novel the main character does not only lose his position in the hierarchy of the system, but also becomes increasingly more aware of his own feebleness.

The Magistrate recognizes that his previous actions were driven by his sense of white supremacy towards the people of colour. Even though women are not the central protagonists of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the traumatic experience of the barbarian girl proves no less important to the Magistrate than his own suffering. Indirect trauma in the novel becomes a powerful incentive in the life of the protagonist, because it proves that when it comes to pain everyone is equal. No gender, race or species is immune to suffering. As the trauma is not only restricted to one's individual experience, but above all influences the Magistrate's life indirectly, it simultaneously makes him aware of the other. This, in turn, changes the focus from the main character of the novel to the narrative of the others. In this way, Coetzee illustrates that the central position of male characters only seemingly is his focus. The course of events shifts the male-driven perspective towards the broader vision, where the suffering of the other becomes acknowledged. The traumatic experience creates a fracture in a well-organised humanist vision of the characters. Subsequently, this fracture allows them a glimpse into a different mode of being – the posthuman. The loss of supremacy of the Vitruvian Man generates in the protagonists the ability to notice and embrace otherness.

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Charles Dickens and Colonial Expansionism "Obscured" in *When We Were Orphans* by Kazuo Ishiguro

Abstract

The intertextual associations with Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations* in *When We Were Orphans* seem unobvious. In this paper I will show that Dickensian motifs are nonetheless noticeable in Ishiguro's novel and, relating to Dickens's fictionalised biography by Peter Ackroyd, some events from his turbulent life can also be recognised. The concept of "obscurity" of the image that derives from Emanuel Levinas, and which was later elucidated by Homi K. Bhabha, will be employed in my analysis. Ishiguro seems to conceal a true picture of British colonialism, drawing the reader's attention to Christopher Banks's futile mission to find his missing parents, remaining myopic to the real evil around him. The enunciation of "the unspoken," that is to say, the history of colonial power dynamics will be particularly clear while elaborating on the story of Christopher's mother, Diana Banks. I will also demonstrate that *When We Were Orphans* accentuates the issue of the binary opposition between the West and the East, which explicitly alludes to Edward Said's politics of bipolarity.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans,* colonialism

The intertextual connections with Charles Dickens's fiction and life in *When We Were Orphans* (2000) seem inapparent. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Dickensian motifs are nonetheless discernible in Ishiguro's novel and, referring to Dickens's fictionalized biography by Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (1991), some events from his turbulent life can also be identified. The methodological basis of my analysis is "obscurity" of the image, a term first coined by Emanuel Levinas, later elucidated by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Citing the novel *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison, the latter theorist accentuates that the presence or "the eruption of 'undecipherable languages' of slave memory [in the house number 124] obscures the historical narrative of infanticide only to articulate the unspoken" (Bhabha 15). In addition to this, Bhabha draws a telling conclusion:

> Is it not uncanny that Levinas's metaphors for this unique "obscurity" of the image should come from those Dickensian unhomely places – those dusty boarding schools, the pale light of London offices, the dark, dank second-hand clothes shops? (15)

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Uncovering these "obscured" signs exposes "an externality of the inward" (Bhabha 15), which allows for the emergence of other narrations or the enunciation of the subject's history. Ishiguro seems to similarly articulate the unspoken through obscuring a real image of British colonial expansionism, focusing the reader's attention on Christopher Banks's utopian mission to find his missing parents and eradicate evil of the world, remaining blind to the real evil around him. The articulation of "the unspoken," that is to say, "the historical narrative" of colonial expansionism will be particularly explicit while analysing the story of Christopher's mother, Diana Banks.

When We Were Orphans is a story of Christopher Banks, a British teenager raised in the Shanghai International Settlement (the British and American enclave), who is sent to England after a mysterious disappearance of his parents. He becomes a famous detective and returns to Shanghai at the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937) in the hope of finding his missing parents. The novel explores the theme of British presence in China in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, driven by the demand for the Chinese commodities (tea, porcelain, silk), which had a devastating social and economic undertow. British outposts controlled and guarded the trade that was based on a barter system: Chinese goods were sold to the British in return for opium delivered from India, a practice which resulted in forming an addicted and socially unstable Chinese population.

Trauma is a primary element that connects Kazuo Ishiguro's novel with Charles Dickens's life and oeuvre. Yet, *When We Were Orphans* seems also to be the articulation of colonial trauma of the Chinese caused by the British opium trade and the subsequent Japanese invasion. As Carey Mickalites notices, Ishiguro provides the reader with the appalling image of "the plight of refugees, the orphans of colonial capitalism and imperial war," the nameless orphans of "an economically weakened China" on account of the opium trade, emerging as easy pickings for Japanese imperial aggression (118). They are seen when Banks and his school friend Morgan drive through the French Concession of Shanghai:

> Once we went down a side-street on both sides of which the pavements were filled with huddled figures. I could see them in the lamplight, sitting, squatting, some curled up asleep on the ground, squeezed one upon the other … They were of every age – I could see babies asleep in mothers' arms – and their belongings were all around them; ragged bundles, bird-cages, the occasional wheelbarrow piled high with possessions. […] The faces were mostly Chinese … . (Ishiguro 108)

There are also discernible, though obscured, parallels between the life of Dickens which emerges from Ackroyd's biography and Ishiguro's fictitious protagonist, Christopher Banks. *When We Were Orphans* is imbued with an issue of orphaning, which implicitly refers to the Dickensian portrait of an abandoned child as well as the writer himself. Just as Christopher Banks, Dickens was beset by his past and was not able to supplant the perplexing thoughts of being emotionally orphaned, which became an intrinsic part of his life. It is a well-known fact that, as a twelve-year old boy, he had to make a living at rat-infested Warren's blacking factory, the consequence of his father's debts and incarceration in the Marshalsea Prison (Ackroyd 81). Being part of a working-class society in the blacking factory, young Dickens must have felt abandoned and experienced emotional orphanhood. Dominick LaCapra notes that the traumatic experience "relates to the past that has not passed away – a past that intrusively invades the present," adding that "so-called traumatic memory carries the experience into the present and future in that the events are compulsively relived or reexperienced as if there were no distance or difference between past and present" (55–56). This definitely befell Dickens, and the recurring experience of the blacking factory was reflected both in his fiction where, being especially empathetic toward the fate of the forsaken and aggrieved children, he attacked social injustice, and the reality in which his yearning

for love, emotional protection and financial stability was never fully satisfied. In *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861), the novels containing the most autobiographical elements, hunted by the traumatic memory, Dickens seems to return to a state of emotional orphanhood he experienced in the factory, attempting to "rewrite the world […] to make it more secure place […] so that the child himself can be remade and thus redeemed" (Ackroyd 87).

Dickens was considered a moralist uncovering the evils of the Victorian era or, as Walter Bagehot called him, a "sentimental radical" (145), whose fiction expresses his disapproval of social constraints, vices and individual suffering of his times. It also refers to his traumatic childhood which impinges upon his life, thereby the writer's urge for creation as if "the plight of a solitary child provoked [him] into full-scale conceiving and scheming and designing, […]" (Ackroyd 327). It is not only potent on the pages of his fiction where the image of the "insecure, maltreated, starved, frail, sickly, oppressed, guilty, small" child still dwells within the novelist (106), but also in real life. Dickens felt exigency of a mission to reveal the evils of the British system in the Victorian era and to assuage them: "I have very seldom seen, […] in all the strange and dreadful things I have seen in London and elsewhere, anything so shocking as the dire neglect of soul and body exhibited in these children" (Ackroyd 427). It is unquestionably an echo of his own memories from the blacking factory. Thus Dickens's fiction exemplifies his retributive tone while lambasting child labour, child neglect and parlous living conditions, especially those of the orphans.

Dickens's yearning for his carefree years of early childhood, before experiencing the feeling of abandonment which is comparable to orphanhood, was reflected in his attitude to his children back when he used to be a caring and affectionate father. His need to return to the times before the ignoble occupation is perceptible in his self-communing with his children before their adolescence, when he "could retrieve his own early happy childhood" (Ackroyd 477) as well as in his novels and public readings, which marked him out as embodiment of familial unison and domestic hearth. However, when his children became older, he developed an increasing reserve and emotional coldness towards them, making him more sensitive to his fictional characters. His son Henry sensed this detachment and described later Dickens's "heavy moods of deep depression, of intense nervous irritability, when he was silent and oppressed" (478). As for Dickens's marriage, it may be concluded that for twenty-two years his wife felt completely overpowered by her eminent husband. After their legal separation, Dickens, who ceaselessly relied on his audience for approval and pleaded not guilty for the breakdown of his marriage, published the "violated letter" in which he charged his wife with all anguish and referred to her mental disorder (Ackroyd 859–860).

After being released from prison and notwithstanding the pecuniary problems, John Dickens wanted his son to return to school and regain his lost ambitions and expectations. However, his mother insisted on keeping him in the blacking factory. This fact sank deep into Dickens's memory, impinging upon his later life, especially on the relationships with women and his children. "I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back" (Ackroyd 102). The whole gamut of traumatic events, humiliations, rebuffs and disappointments he experienced as a child, seems to have shaped his entire life. The past that invaded his life, the traumatic experience of an abused, orphaned child found its way in his novels, such as *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Great Expectations*.

A parallel conjuncture takes place in *When We Were Orphans*, when Christopher Banks is unable to extricate himself from the traumatic past – the inexplicable disappearance of his parents in the International Settlement in Shanghai. As a child, he lived happily with his parents and his next-door friend of Japanese origin, Akira, in a protected Eden of which one day he was abruptly deprived. He prematurely enters a cruel world, and later becomes a disappointed idealist sticking

to his illusion of repairing the world: "those of us whose duty is to combat evil, we are like the twine that holds together the slats of a wooden blind. Should we fail to hold strong, then everything will scatter" (Ishiguro 80). Banks is "likely to retreat into his childhood memories [persisting] in his mission to find his mother" (Ge 13) since the experienced trauma seems to consume his mind and results in the perpetual search for security and a state of childhood innocence. Throughout the novel, he is relentlessly overwhelmed by his utopian yet abortive mission of finding his parents, which, in his reasoning, entails purging the world of evil. His becoming a detective was mainly driven by his imperative yearning to "[root] out evil in its most devious forms, often just when it is about to go unchecked […]" (Ishiguro 18). Sensitive to the fate of orphaned children, Banks adopts an orphan, Jennifer, whose parents got drowned in Cornwall. However, the recurring childhood trauma makes him incapable of building a wholesome relationship with his adopted daughter. It can also be seen in Christopher's inability to strike up a lasting relationship with Sarah Hemmings. She appears as a shadow, a mirror, an embodiment of his childhood memories, making them more vivid, especially when she recalls her own trauma after her parents' death.

In the course of *When We Were Orphans*, an adept detective, Christopher Banks, possesses the power of observation, deduction and constructive imagination while solving crime cases. It is another parallel between Dickens and Ishiguro's protagonist. In Dickens's biography, focusing on his disposition of observation, Peter Ackroyd elucidates that in the writer's journals, letters and fiction there are heterogeneous extracts concerning his infancy, recounted with an extraordinary precision. Dickens himself purports, "I was a child of close observation […] different peculiarities of dress, of face, of gait, of manner, were written indelibly upon my memory" (15). In addition, in the novel *Bleak House*, Dickens introduces the first significant character of a detective in English literature, Inspector Buckett. Perhaps, the introduction of this figure mirrors Dickens himself as a proficient detective with an exceptional eye for details, famous for noticing the finest peculiarities in other people's looks and character. It has to be stressed that, before reaching eminence as a fiction writer, Dickens had some achievements and much experience in journalistic and reportorial work, where he could make use of his extraordinary gift of scrutiny and accuracy to details.

Still, examining Dickens's and Banks's childhood memories, the reader will come to the conclusion that the latter's infant recollections seem to be devoid of this clarity. It is particularly noticeable when Banks mentions a conversation between his mother and a health inspector: "while I am fairly sure I have remembered its essence accurately enough, turning it over in my mind again, I find myself less certain about some of the details" (Ishiguro 41). Banks's blurry memory of the essence of the conversation, which is definitely the repulsive opium trade, emerges as a telling trope to British expansionism, namely, as Carey Mickalites stipulates, Bank's unsound memory of the colonial opium trade "underscores his partial and hazy comprehension of imperial exploitation" (116). Brought up in the secure International Settlement perceived as "a site of English authority and colonial stability" (Mickalites 116), the protagonist develops a distorted image of imperial Englishness and, in addition, "a microcosm of global trade, uneven development, and exploitation […] in Bank's memory […] remain bracketed off from both an ideal of Englishness and the forces of historical change, evident in his nostalgic attachment to the International Settlement" (Mickalites 116). Such an obscured image of the British Empire can be read as the articulation of the unspoken colonial history. It also hints at the Victorian society's blind faith in its nation's flawless morality, and British colonial expansionism regarded as the noble mission and godly obligation to eradicate the "savagery" of the so called "inferior races," enlightening them with the "glow" of the Western civilization, as proposed in Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899).

I contend that the elites inhabiting the protected zone of the International Settlement out of the reach of the war become a mirror reflection of the citizens of London, the imperial core. Their indifference to the Japanese aggression of China is evident during the extravagant gathering of Shanghai's elite in the Penthouse of the Palace Hotel. The sound of the far-off gunfire and the battle that overshadows the party become nothing more but a spectacular phenomenon or, as one of the guests tells Christopher: "the shells actually arc over us and land over across the creek. After dark, it's quite a sight. Rather like watching shooting stars" (Ishiguro 194). This quotation implicitly hints at Edward Said's statement that "[t]he Orient's cultural, political, and social history are considered mere responses to the West" (109). The West is privileged to rule, judge and survey the non-white world, which becomes a scene of the western hegemony – "The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behaviour" (Said 109). Following Said's politics of bipolarity, Irina Toma adds that "China is an infant in need of Western protection" (64), which foregrounds the issue of the binary opposition between the West and the East. The representatives of the West, in this case, the elites of the International Settlement, become the invisible judges of the colonial power dynamics of "the perfidious Chinese" (108), who, after all, are "not quite as human as we [the West] are" (Said 108).

In addition to this, the blindness to Japanese aggression in Ishiguro's novel seems to more generally reflect the myopic attitude to the realities of colonialism which characterized the Victorians. Sven Lindqvist comments on this as follows: "the men representing civilization out in the colonies were "invisible" not only in the sense that their guns killed at a distance, but also in that no one at home really knew what they were doing" (85). A parallel situation occurs in Ishiguro's novel where, as Carey Mickalites notices," the chaos of a war that, like the commercially exploitative opium trade, takes place outside the reach of the international law" (118). In other words, the white man becomes invisible. Just as the International Settlement was literally divorced from the brutal reality of people dying outside its borders, so did the Victorian core's (London) marginalization of the British colonies evince itself in the profound detachment from the genocide happening therein. Such an attitude was evident in Dickens's fiction in which he ridiculed the vices of the British society and felt sorry for the fate of the aggrieved and the orphaned, but remained completely indifferent to the atrocities of the colonial imperialism, that is to say, those orphaned by British expansionism.

Another analogy to Dickensian fiction is noticeable in the story of Christopher's mother, Diana Banks, who is, on the one hand, a representative of colonial ideology, and, on the other, an ardent advocate of the anti-opium campaign, fully committed to her principles. Her character emerges as an unobvious parallel to Estella's mother, Molly, the character from Dickens's *Great Expectations*.

Diana's life is overshadowed by a sense of a mission to fight against a trade of opium widespread in Shanghai, which "had brought untold misery and degradation to a whole nation" (Ishiguro 36). Here, Ishiguro openly refers to the colonial imperialism of the British, who wanted to subordinate the trade in China. By delivering opium from India to China, the British contributed to getting the Chinese addicted to the drug, making them stupefied and unable to make any sensible decisions, thus exposed to easier annexation by the imperial powers. Ishiguro's depiction of the opium trade and the backdrop of Sino-Japanese war in the novel is the author's intention to articulate one telling, though obscured, issue: the Japanese invasion of China is the implicit consequence of colonial expansionism, which "stems from colonial exploitation and uneven economic development" (Mickalites 112). According to Brian Finney, the novel depicts "a vivid confrontation with the death and destruction produced by the commercialism and imperialism of the industrial nations prior to

the War, death that inevitably adds heavily to the number of children left orphaned" (26). The motif of weakening the underprivileged nations by the use of mind-numbing substances is further developed by Sven Lindqvist in *Terra Nullius* (2014), a story of colonial horror and genocide of the natives by the European powers in the nineteenth century. Lindqvist demonstrates that addiction, in this case alcohol, not violence, is an ultimate way to get rid of the indigenous inhabitants and create a no one's land, the land which can be easily conquered by the white: "Alcohol is just the latest ploy for achieving a terra nullius" (236).

Diana Banks's anti-opium campaign reflects a Victorian notion of repairing and enlightening the world. Yet, her endeavours are repressed by a warlord Wang Ku, who, once offended by Diana, kidnaps her with a view to taming her, "as he would a wild mare" (Ishiguro 179), compelling her to submissiveness and concubinage. Wang Ku "regularly whipped [Diana] in front of his dinner guests. Taming the white woman, he called it" (Ishiguro 181). It seems that this discriminatory practice was widespread not only in colonial contexts as evidenced in *Great Expectations*, where Dickens also explored the motif of taming a woman. Its hallmarks pervade Mr Jaggers's servant Molly, Estella's mother, who is described by Mr Wemmick as "a wild beast tamed" (Dickens 186). After being acquitted by Mr Jaggers's of a charge of murdering another woman, Molly becomes the lawyer's debased servant or a slave with a "face to bear a curious expression of suddenness and flutter" (Dickens 195). Mr Wemmick's comment that the taming process "depends on the original wildness of the beast" (Dickens 186) encourages us to extend the metaphor to the colonial reality of taming the "inferior" indigenous. The wildness of the indigenous inhabitants from colonial territories could be compared to that of an untamed animal, thus the punishment had to be harsher. Dickens's intention to underscore the mechanism of the violent process of intimidation of the weaker is reflected in Ishiguro's depiction of the mechanisms of colonization and then subversively reversed in his portrayal of the treatment Diana Banks received from Wang Ku. The main tool of subordination was violence and, as Lindqvist states, "people are seized with a kind of madness when they take to violence" (30).

The colonists perceived themselves as noble, philanthropic heroes sent to the uncivilized world of darkness with a view to bringing enlightenment to "primitive" races. The sense of white race superiority in comparison to other races is manifested in the above mentioned poem by Rudyard Kipling's, where the author regarded the colonial mission as "an ethical imperative" (Lindqvist 77). In his work and life, Kipling extolled the British Empire, which, in his presumption, was "an island of security in a chaotic world" able to: "maintain stability, order, and peace amongst the heathen, to relieve famine, provide medical assistance, to abolish slavery, to construct the physical and the psychological groundwork for 'civilization'" (Cody). In *When We Were Orphans*, Diana Banks seems to follow Kipling's manifesto and burdens herself with it, that is to say, "considers the building of the British Empire as an essentially civilizing activity" (Webley 189). Although ashamed of her husband's complicity with the company engagement with the opium trade, and driven by Christian values, Diana has to face the unpleasant truth that her family's financial status is owned "to such ungodly wealth" (Ishiguro 37). She is contra-volitionally drawn to the sinful practices of the company, part of the infamous British expansionism. Alyn Webley accentuates the fact that Diana becomes "part of the machinery of empire […] a machinery dedicated to the continuance of European rule, the exploitation of natural resources, and the spread of European cultures as an accompaniment to the continued subordination of native peoples" (189).

Lindqvist mentions a book *In the Shade of the Palms* (1907) by a Swedish missionary Edward Wilhelm Sjöblom, in which the author describes types of corporal punishments administered by Europeans to the indigenous people in Congo. According to Sjöblom, during colonization, the

white assented in one matter: "only the whip can civilize the black" (qtd in Lindqvist 30). In this light Ishiguro subverts the colonial practices by showing a white woman as a victim of the same process implemented in other parts of the world by the Europeans. Wang Ku's "taming process" of Diana Banks is a reversal of dehumanizing colonial practices that deprived the natives of their identity, dignity and hope, leaving nothing but despair. In *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro illustrates another reason for trauma, the fall of Victorian values, and the failure of a woman with unusual aspirations and expectations, who ends up in a mental hospital. Ishiguro shows Diana Banks, a model of Victorian values of morality, fall to a nefarious fate of becoming a victim of repetitive sexual and physical abuse. She is the one who gets punished because "her sense of religious mission supplements the establishment and preservation of colonial power" (Webley 189). With this manoeuvre Ishiguro openly condemns the colonial ideology aimed at civilizing and Christianizing the non-European world, and, by subverting, ridicules and annuls Kipling's manifesto of "The White Man's Burden" and the so-called Victorian "morality."

The intertwining stories of Christopher Banks, his mother Diana, Sarah Hemmings, and her husband Sir Cecil Medhurst have one thing in common – all the characters suffer utter defeat in their pursuits to fight evil. Through these characters' actions, Ishiguro, an outsider in the English world, attacks and ridicules the Victorian society and the so-called "eminent statesmen" described in the novel as "greedy and self-seeking, lacking any idealism or sense of public duty" (8). In addition, the author expresses his strong disapproval of the actions of the opium-based European trading companies regarded as "un-Christian and un-British" (Ishiguro 37) or the narcissistic European ideals focused on redeeming the world, especially in the colonial times. The failure of the missions presented in the novel, especially Banks's and his mother's, seems an intentional measure Ishiguro employed as a metaphor of lampooning the notion of Kipling's manifesto so deeply ingrained in colonizers' minds.

Ishiguro's reference to *Great Expectations,* especially the theme of a mysterious benefactor is another significant, though not explicit, link with Dickens. Abel Magwitch, condemned by the Victorian society and forcedly deported to a penal colony in Australia, is presented as the one orphaned and forgotten by his mother-country. Bracketed off from the imperial core and used in the exploitative labour in the colonial realities, Magwitch evokes the image of the faceless Chinese people in Ishiguro's novel, abused and disobliged by the British Empire in its global expansionism. These forsaken, nameless "huddled figures" on the street, victims of British and then Japanese colonial imperialism, bear close affinity to the image of sick Magwitch kept in prison after returning to England – the social outcast, abandoned and sentenced to death by the Empire he helped to build.

At the end of Ishiguro's novel, Christopher Banks finds out that Wang Ku, who had kidnapped his mother, was his benefactor: "Your schooling. Your place in London society. The fact that you made of yourself what you have. You owe it to Wang Ku" (Ishiguro 181). In Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Pip's education and gentility is similarly fully credited to the ex-convict Abel Magwitch. Pip's expectations for the better future seem suddenly thwarted just like Christopher's ambition to find his parents and eradicate evil from the world. Nonetheless, when comparing the relationships Christopher-Wang Ku and Pip-Magwitch, one can conclude that it is interpreted differently by Ishiguro. Banks's secret benefactor is a villain, an embodiment of lascivious inhuman desires, whereas Abel Magwitch, paradoxically presented at the beginning of Dickens's novel as a hardened criminal, turns out to be a pattern of honour, gentility and benevolence. Pip and Magwitch's first encounter is filled with a feeling of dread, yet, at the end of the novel, a strong emotional bond develops between them. In the case of Christopher, no such relationship will ever be possible with his benefactor, Wan Ku, a man who once became a source of his childhood trauma.

It has to be noted that Magwitch made a fortune through hard work, thus in fact acting in accordance with the Victorian values of multiplying the capital.

It is a complete opposite to Wang Ku, for whom seizing opium shipments was a source of income. It seems paradoxical, if not hypocritical, that in Dickens's novel the Victorians got rid of Magwitch and regarded him as the undesirable citizen, whose behaviour was contrary to the norms of accepted morality, whereas their own treatment of the poor and the non-whites in overseas territories was far from appropriate. The same British hypocrisy seems to be reflected in Ishiguro's novel when Diana's opposition to her own people's involvement in the opium trade reveals that they are actually not a bit morally better than their Chinese accomplice Wang Ku.

However, one question arises: why did Ishiguro decide to relate to *Great Expectations* and evoke the figures of a secret benefactor and an ex-convict? It seems to be a reference to the colonial era, when in 1788–1840 convicts from England were deported to the penal colony in Australia (Pajewski 307), the plight of Abel Magwitch in Dickens's novel. Another reason may be the wish to depict the motif of a boy stepping into the world of the privileged society. Both Pip from Dickens's novel and Christopher Banks from Ishiguro's are presented as orphaned beneficiaries of British colonial aggression in Victorian era. Pip's education and prosperous life as a gentleman were at the cost of Magwitch's exploitative labour in the Australian penal colony, while Christopher Banks's advancement was possible due to his mother enslavement and the money from the opium trade. Brian Finney comments:

> protected childhood was bought at the price of his mother's servitude to a Chinese warlord, so the protected and privileged existence of the wealthy community living in the International Settlement was bought at the cost of widespread opium addiction and poverty among the Chinese population.

The character of Sarah Hemmings in the analysed novel is another feature that alludes to *Great Expectations* in Ishiguro's novel. She is presented as a manipulative "snob of a new resort" moving in the upper-class circles, who does not "consider a person worthy of respect unless he or she possessed a celebrated name" (Ishiguro 12). Such a characteristic makes Sarah a reflection of Dickens's Estella from *Great Expectations*. Also, the initial relationship between Banks and Sarah appears to be reminiscent of the one from Dickens's novel: both Christopher and Pip seem too common to live up to Sarah's and Estella's expectations. Banks's lack of high social rank and communing among eminent individuals make him too average to be noticed by Sarah. Their first encounter offers a parallel to an episode when Estella criticizes Pip for being "a common labouring boy" (Dickens 57).

> Indeed, I sometimes got the impression she was unable properly to breathe anything other than the air surrounding the most distinguished persons. For a time she became linked with Henry Quinn, the barrister, only to distance herself again after his failure in the Charles Browning case. Then there came rumours of her growing friendship with James Beacon, who at that time was a rising young government minister. In any case, by this point, it had become abundantly clear to me what the silver-haired man had meant when he had declared there was little point in a "chap like me" pursuing Miss Hemmings. (Ishiguro 12)

Banks's inferiority complex as well as his encroaching on the snobbish community make him similar to Pip from *Great Expectations*. After leaving the world of childhood innocence, both characters are presented with new expectations, creating their own myths which are bound to fail – Christopher's ambition to become an extolled detective to combat evil can be compared with Pip's strong yearning to become a gentleman. To achieve their goals, these protagonists dwell in the worlds of delusions, rejecting people who really care for them, Pip rejects Joe and Biddy,

Christopher rejects Jennifer. Yet, Sarah's restraint and coldness towards Christopher is only a mask since, unlike Estella, who kept Pip in the world he did not belong to, Miss Hemmings becomes for Banks the only chance to renounce his obsessive pursuit of the mission and leave his past behind. She persuades Christopher to escape with her to another country:

> I suppose I was surprised when I heard her utter these words; but what I remember now, overwhelming anything else, was an almost tangible sense of relief. Indeed, for a second or two I experienced the sort of giddiness one might when coming suddenly out into the light and fresh air after being trapped a long time in some dark chamber. It was as though this suggestion of hers – which for all I knew she had thrown out on an impulse – carried with it a huge authority, something that brought me a kind of dispensation I had never dared hope for. (126)

Christopher Banks is unable to free himself from his trauma, especially from the image of a "dark chamber" that stands for the prison of his subconscious. At the end of the novel, the protagonist cannot extricate himself from the nagging past and seems to remain "a perpetual exile and orphan who has no home except childhood memories" (Ringrose 182). Moreover, having been brought up in Shanghai, Christopher seems to feel like a recluse when he is forced out of the city to settle in England where he feels he is "not enough Englishman" to be part of London's high society Sarah is so well acquainted with (Ishiguro 44). The disappearance of Christopher's parents is also an aftermath of his disturbed sense of national identity and lack of well connectedness. Hence, Christopher Banks's mission to find his parents acquires a more profound meaning – he searches for his lost identity after moving to England as an orphaned child, which is implicitly shown in the novel as the legacy of British colonial imperialism.

The motifs of orphanhood, childhood trauma and the exigency of eradicating evil employed by Ishiguro in *When We Were Orphans* emerge as the themes not only explored by Charles Dickens in his fiction, but also present in his biography. However, in his criticism of social constraints, Dickens was definitely blind to those "orphaned" in the process of British colonial imperialism, the outcomes of which are articulated and problematized in Ishiguro's novel. Orphans of global imperialism suffering outside the borders of London or the International Settlement are real, and Ishiguro highlights the "problem of global perception: the moment at which the laboring populations of global capital become undeniably visible to the so-called international community" (Bain 242–245). The ignorant elites inhabiting the International Settlement in the novel seem to have become a compelling trope. Both Victorian Londoners and Dickens, scrupulously avoided commenting on colonial topics, focusing only on the problems at home. It seems that in *When We Were Orphans* Ishiguro alludes especially to Dickens's *Great Expectations* to show the defeated hopes of an orphaned boy who, living in the safe bubble of his high expectations, collides with the harsh realities. However, Ishiguro rejects the world of delusion Christopher and the Victorian society lived in, particularly evidenced in their indifference to colonial barbarism, and implicitly exposes the truth about the imperial power dynamics in China.

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From a Botched Body without Organs to a Plastic Brain
A Reading of P.K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*

Abstract

This article analyzes the 1977 science-fiction novel *A Scanner Darkly* by Philip K. Dick, and focuses on the split personalities of the main character: Bob/Fred/Bruce. The reading is supplemented by the use of the concepts of Line of Flight and Body without Organs introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* as well as Catherine Malabou's concept of brain plasticity. The article argues that the progressing deterioration of the protagonist's mental state caused by drug abuse and social environment may be seen as a representation of a "botched BwO" – a body that has lost its productive potential and cannot be reintegrated into a stable territory. At the same time, I contend that the final chapter of the novel depicts a reparative transformation in which, thanks to brain plasticity, he is integrated into an autopoietic system of his environment.

Keywords: Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, twentieth century science fiction, posthumanism, body without organs, brain plasticity

Introduction

In the post-script of his 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly,* ostensibly a science-fiction story, Philip K. Dick openly admits that the work is a thinly veiled autobiographical account of the American drug users' culture and their antagonistic relationship with law enforcement. Much of the experiences described in *A Scanner Darkly* are based either on his own struggles with addiction or the events he witnessed in his community. Equally prominent to the depictions of the destructive consequences of drug dependence is the underlying feeling of paranoia and cognitive confusion stemming from the unstable ontology of the world dominated by oppressive and constant surveillance. The science-fiction elements serve to emphasize the themes of the novel by intensifying certain aspects of the drug culture presented in the novel. The fictional narcotic "substance D" combines the destructive potentials of various real amphetamines and opiates, while through the invention of the scramble suits and holographic scanners Dick extrapolates the

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technologies of surveillance employed by the state. The aim of this article is to analyze how the narrative of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* depicts a variety of fragmentation of the human subject through intense movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization brought upon by those social and bio-chemical factors, and the subsequent formation of a posthuman autopoietic system as a form of prosthesis. The reading will make use of the concepts introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* as well as the idea of brain plasticity as presented by Catherine Malabou.

An Outline of Concepts

BwO and Movements of Deterritorialization

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* duology introduce the term "Body without Organs." Such a construct is free to recreate itself and enter a new set of relations – to reorganize its organs into new assemblages. A schizophrenic represents a subjectivity in flux, produced by capitalism but capable of escaping the confines of bourgeois reality through the process named by the philosophers "deterritorialization." As Adrian Parr puts it, "deterritorialisation can best be understood as a movement producing change… [D]eterritorialisation indicates the creative potential of an assemblage. So, to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations" (67). A Body without Organs is a kind of transitory state between territories, wherein an organism is able to detach the capacities of its subordinate "machines" or organs (understood here for example as patterns of behavior, desires, codes of conduct) from the limitation of the functions, organizations and hierarchies imposed on the organism by the rules of a given territory. As Daniel Smith explains:

> The body without organs is supposed to designate all of those things that an organic body could do, but that it is prevented from doing because of its homeostatic self-regulation processes. The body without organs is the full set of capacities or potentialities of a body prior to its being given the structure of an organism, which only limits and constrains what it can do: it is ''what remains when you take everything away." (106–107)

Therefore, an organism has a certain inherent potential to reinvent itself, to leave behind the stable structures and configurations of their organs. By casting off the former productive function the BwO can experiment and rearrange its organs to settle into a different territory, to create something new out of itself.

Next, Deleuze and Guattari introduce a model of reality based on the idea of a rhizome. In simplified terms, it is a non-hierarchical network of dynamic assemblages (relationships between objects, units of information or language) expanding unpredictably in many directions. This conception of reality is based on multiplicity and heterogeneity, since, as the authors argue, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (*Plateaus* 7). In such a configuration no meaning is static, allowing signs, objects and subjects (as the previously mentioned Bodies without Organs) to flow freely through modes of deterritorialization. "Lines of flight" are those trajectories which allow for movements of total deconstruction or deterritorialization of the subject into a BwO. These are the paths of unrestrained creativity but also of detachment from any concrete points of reference for the subject.

Brain Plasticity

Catherine Malabou is a French philosopher who undertakes an interdisciplinary approach to the posthuman condition, combining the areas of biology, neurology and critical theory to propose an ontological model of what she calls "brain plasticity." At the core of her theory there is the assessment that the model of a unitary human subject, whose identity remains constant, is false. Malabou goes against the claims of a "flexible brain," that is a supposed construction of subjectivity which can return to its original organization by rebuilding itself following psychological or physical trauma or injury. Marc Jeannerod explains in the foreword to Malabou's *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*: "plasticity is a mechanism for adapting, while flexibility is a mechanism for submitting" (xiv). What Jeannerod means is that the societal pressure under capitalism expects its subjects to undergo repeating cycles of mental strain without changing, so that the subject can be continuously exploited for their productive capacities. However, as Malabou states: "What flexibility lacks is the resource of giving form, the power to create, to invent or even erase an impression" (*What Should We Do with Our Brain?* 12). In contrast, plasticity has the capacity of "the modification of neuronal connection by means of modulation of synaptic efficacy… [I]t is at this level that plasticity imposes itself with the greatest clarity and force in 'opening' its meaning. In effect, there is a sort of neuronal creativity that depends on nothing but the individual's experience, his life, and his interactions with the surroundings" (*What Should We Do with Our Brain?* 21–22). A plastic brain is therefore constantly changing and adapting to its interactions with the environment, circumstances and the subject's own physicality. Plasticity allows the nervous system to make new connections, and to compensate for the damage not by the way of recreation but creativity. If the subject's sense of self, their personality, is destroyed by the outside forces, chemical imbalance or severe trauma, plasticity offers a prospect for a new subjectivity to emerge.

Throughout this article both the Deleuzoguattarian framework as well as Malabou's concept of brain plasticity will serve to uncover the complex transformations of subjectivity experienced by the characters of *A Scanner Darkly*.

Scramble Suit – Dismantling the Face

While the novel is heavily grounded in the realities of L.A.'s sixties' and seventies' drug culture, Dick opts to move the action into the near future and employs several science-fictional technologies, the most prominent of which is the invention of "the scramble suit". It is a microelectronic membrane covering the entire body which displays on its surface "a million and a half physiognomic fraction representations of various people" (30) in a randomized sequence. The ultimate effect is that by projecting onto the body discontinuous, rapidly changing fragments of people's faces and physiques, with the addition of a voice-altering device, the wearer becomes virtually anonymous. To any person perceiving them, they appear only as "a vague blur" (28). The device is utilized by the undercover narcotics agents from the Orange County Sheriff's Department as a way of hiding their identity not only from the drug users, but also from the corrupted officials and drug traffickers who have apparently infiltrated the law enforcement.

The protagonist of the novel, Bob Arctor, is one such agent. On a day-to-day basis he lives as a jobless junkie, addicted to substance D. Once in a while, however, he hides himself inside the scramble suit and assumes the persona of Fred. As Fred, a narcotics agent, he informs and spies on Bob Arctor's house, where scanning devices have been installed. Fred's task is to survey and document the drug-users' habitation in order to discover potential dealers. Absurdly, he is also required to snitch on Arctor – himself – since omitting his name would expose Fred's identity to the corrupt agents within the Sheriff's department. The scramble suit is therefore both a cause for

and a product of social paranoia. On the one hand, it provides anonymity to the agents of the state, thus creating distrust among the drug-users since anyone of them can be a potential "narc." On the other, the narcotics agents fear that criminals may discover their identities.

It can be argued that the scramble suit and the broader state apparatus which utilizes it enact what Deleuze and Guattari would call a social and technical machine: a productive order which attempts to impose itself on the subject to keep it from achieving a Body without Organs. They condition and organize the subject to channel their creative force toward the production of capital. The philosophers use the example of a clock, which from different perspectives can function either as a technical machine, a simple tool for measuring time, or "as a social machine for reproducing canonic hours and for assuring order in the city" (*Anti-Oedipus* 141). The technical function of the novel's imagined device is to anonymize the individual. As a social machine, it works to enforce order by producing a sense of surveillance. However, as we shall see, there also exists a potential for decoding and dismantling the identity of the wearer. This tension realizes itself as a deterritorializing force which in the Deleuzoguattarian framework is called "a line of flight". It is a vector of movement between the nodes of an assemblage which enables a deterritorialization of a productive subject into a Body without Organs. As the authors claim in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

> Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change nature and connect with other multiplicities…. The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight. (9)

Multiplicities, diverse complex structures not subordinate to a dominant signifier or a prior unity (Parr 176; Young 213), have the ability to transform by following a line of flight, outside of the limited scope of a rigid social structure. This line creates new possibilities for the multiplicity, which are not constrained by a single territory. Once the organization of a multiplicity is dismantled, the restrictions of the previous territory are lifted. The body can conceptualize itself into a new multiplicity – reterritorialize and once again organize its organs to function in a productive process. In *A Scanner Darkly*, the anonymity and the morphing projections of multiple physiognomies granted by the scramble suit can be seen as a facilitation of that deterritorializing potential. The scramble suit – a machine that is designed as a tool of control becomes a potential site or catalyst of deterritorialization which, after all, is a movement away from authoritarian control over the individual.

In the novel, we can witness that moment of rupture in the organized body of the protagonist that releases the accumulated potentialities into a line of flight. In an instance of social anxiety, Bob desires to fall back to his Fred persona and starts to consider different alternative identities offered by the scramble suit:

> What am I actually? he asked himself. He wished, momentarily, for his scramble suit. Then, he thought, I could go on being a vague blur and passers-by, street people in general, would applaud.... It could be somebody other than Fred inside, or another Fred, and they'd never know, not even when Fred opened his mouth and talked. They wouldn't really know then. They'd never know. It could be Al pretending to be Fred, for example. It could be anyone in there, it could even be empty. (28)

Bob notices the deterritorializing potential of the scramble suit. He begins to understand that for an external observer the identity of the person behind the scramble suit is intrinsically undefinable, which feeds the possibility of a transformation, or a rearrangement of the self for the wearer. The line of flight which springs forth from the assemblage of technologically mediated anonymity can be articulated as a subject's realization of his own capacity for making himself a Body without Organs. If this shift of perspective, or even an identification of a possible fluidity of identities can

be indeed called a line of flight, then the anonymity (and its consequences for the construction of identity) offered by the scramble suit would be a kind of line of flight located between the territories of the "straight" society, and the drug-users commune. The protagonist of the novel traverses this path each time he switches between the personas of Fred and Bob.

If the above is true, then it must also be concluded that the deconstruction of visuality as the marker of stable identity that serves as the basis for the scramble suit's function is also indicative of the device's role in destabilizing any concept of essentialist identity. The idea of dismantling the stability of facial features as a marker of stable identity is central to the acts of becoming sketched out by Deleuze and Guattari. They argue that "the face itself is redundancy… The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of" (*Plateaus* 168). This function of the face is to individualize; the face is what *makes* the subject. For D&G, the indeterminate potentiality of the body is constrained, weighted down by the linguistic signification that the listener/observer chooses to apply to the expressions, facial features and the overall physiognomy of their interlocutor. If an identity is legitimized by its performance and societal perception, then obscuring or getting rid of faciality may liberate the subject from the calcified lines of the former territory. To rid oneself of the face is therefore to renounce signification, or in D&G's words: "If the face is a politics, dismantling the face is also politics involving real becomings, an entire becoming-clandestine. Dismantling the face is the same as breaking the wall of signifier and getting out of the black hole of subjectivity" (*Plateaus* 188).

What Bob/Fred experiences whenever he assumes one or the other persona is a series of movements between social frameworks, or territories. Each of them organizes the BwO into different sets of desires and ethics. He becomes a "schizo" in the Deleuzian sense, one who "carries along the decoded flows, makes them traverse the desert of the body without organs, where he installs his desiring-machines and produces a perpetual outflow of acting forces" (*Anti-Oedipus* 131). Bob and Fred are schizoid in that they are endowed with discrepant productive capacities. The two of them, physically different only in that one of them dons the scramble suit, are molecules in two assemblages, with distinct desires and traversing different territories.

However, as with all configurations considered by schizoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari warn that: "[d]ismantling the face is no mean affair. Madness is definite danger: Is it by chance that schizos lose their sense of the face, their own and others'…, the sense of language and its dominant significations all at the same time?" (*Plateaus* 188). As we shall see, this threat proves true for Bob/Fred. The signifying link between Fred and Bob weakens, as does the connection between Arctor and humanity as a whole. Jennifer Rhee, referring to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, claims that the scramble suit's alienating qualities also lead to a detachment from the sphere of ethics: "Fred is deprived of face… De-faced, Fred is excluded from participating in the face-to-face encounter and thus not given entry into the intersubjective relation…" (138). By removing himself from the system of signification, Fred/Bob also inhibits his ability to form connections with other people. He becomes paralyzed, helpless to take any action or communicate his circumstances, since he is trapped between two frameworks of signs and ethics: that of a member of a commune, and that of a narcotics agent. The anonymity – the denial of a face – inhibits empathy and any sense of belonging, making him emotionally detached. The association between Fred/Bob's autobiographical consciousness and identity diminishes. The process is additionally intensified by the effects of substance D (which will be scrutinized in the next section). In short, the scramble suit puts Fred/Bob in a situation in which he lacks the means to recognize his own reflection in a mirror. The dangerous experiments with identity undertaken by him may prove to resolve in the annihilation of selfhood.

Destruction of the *Self* – Failed BwO

As the plot of the novel progresses, so does the mental instability of Bob Arctor. In his desperate, drug-fueled struggle to operate between two territories, his personality splits. Shifting back and forth in a nervous movement between emulating two incomparable modes traps Bob/Fred in a limbo outside of social structures. The narration unveils how the protagonist sees himself in different positions at the same time: "To himself, Bob Arctor thought, *How many Bob Arctors are there?* ... Two that I can think of, he thought. The one called Fred, who will be watching the other one, called Bob. The same person. Or is it? Is Fred actually the same as Bob? … *But*, he thought, *who am I? Which of them is me?*" (99). Fred/Bob falls into an existential crisis when he stops entirely to recognize the other persona as himself.

A major component of this confusion comes from the overwhelming tension between identities imposed on the subject. In the Deleuzian framework, to escape such a productive force one must make themselves a Body without Organs and experiment with fluid configurations of assemblages. However, Bob/Fred seeks the means for this maneuver in a hallucinogenic drug: substance D. At first, Bob excuses his growing addiction by rationalizing it as a way for a narcotics agent to blend into the commune. Later, the act of consuming the substance becomes a coping mechanism against the looming realization of his neurological damage. He claims: "I know, if I just had another hit, that my brain would repair itself" (67). Bob is already dealing with a mental crisis of identities. The drug adds to that a disturbance in the perception of reality, overriding outside stimuli with mental projections. At various points in the novel he experiences olfactory hallucinations overpowering his cognizance in a moment of stress, seemingly isolating him from the reality of the situation; the drug disturbs passage of time and it inhibits his rational faculties. All these psychological phenomena, compounded with Bob/Fred personality split, are revealed to be effects of the drug wreaking havoc on the protagonist's brain. During a check-up, a medical deputy diagnoses Fred with neurological damage:

> In many of those taking Substance D, a split between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere of the brain occurs. There is a loss of proper gestalting, which is a defect within both the percept and cognitive systems, although *apparently* the cognitive system continues to function normally … It's a toxic brain psychosis affecting the percept system by splitting it. (115)

If the effects of the drug are so severe, then what, aside from chemical dependency, pushes Bob further down the spiral of addiction and schizophrenia? While Dick constructs this phenomenon based on a 1968 neurological study[1], if we approach this diagnosis through the Deleuzoguattarian framework, it can be seen as the effects of "a botched BwO."

In his attempt to produce a Body without Organs, Bob/Fred fails at what Deleuze and Guattari point to be "a very delicate experimentation since there must not be any stagnation of the modes or slippage in type: the masochist and the drug user court these ever present dangers that empty their BwO's instead of filling them" (*Plateaus* 152). Firstly, in the case of the protagonist of *A Scanner Darkly* this "stagnating mode" of being as a BwO is the deadly drive towards escapism into a hallucinatory state. However, while the addict strives to disengage from the order of production imposed by society, he does not realize that he is immediately pulled back into it by the process of signification as the mold of shunned drug user. Those repeated attempts are stagnant in that they do not get him any further from the state machine, while the body and mind deteriorate.

[1] Bogen, Joseph E. "The other side of the brain: An appositional mind." *Bulletin of the Los Angeles Neurological Society* 34 (1968): 135–162.

The combination of drug abuse and juggling identities dislodges the trajectory from a single line of flight and into a state of limbo. As D&G warn: "If you free [BwO] with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe" (*Plateaus* 161). If a "filled" BwO is one that transforms its organs along a controlled, deliberate trajectory, or line of flight, then an empty BwO has wasted its transformative energy and cannot resist outside signifying forces, and is essentially "drifting" between territories until it falls into the gravity well of the dominant territory.

The black scenario presented here is what Bob/Fred experiences when he is torn asunder between two states of being, and thus throws himself into the unreality governed only by intensities of his desires. The most prominent instance of such a collapse of subjective reality can be distinguished in the moment of the novel when Fred, at that point already dissociated from Bob, reviews the holographic projection of a surveillance recording taken in Bob's bedroom. Earlier, a fellow drug user, Donna, had rejected Bob's sexual advances. To console himself, Bob slept with another junkie, Connie. When Fred watches the intercourse captured by the scanners, he notices that Connie's face is replaced with Donna's. Believing he imagined the anomaly, he rewinds the tape, only to discover that Donna's likeness is apparently grafted onto the recording. Fred experiences a hallucination so strong that it becomes implanted onto the physical reality distorting the digital information. Interestingly, the ontological confusion is mediated or even amplified by technology. Fred utilizes the scanner as a prosthesis to validate his hallucinatory perception. In combination with his scanner, he inadvertently makes himself, a schizoid machine through which desire produces a reality.

At first glance, this could be considered a successful creation of a Body without Organs and its subsequent reterritorialization, through "a schizophrenic experience of intensive qualities in their pure states…. These are often described as hallucination or delirium" (*Anti-Oedipus* 18). In their reinterpretation of Judge Schreber's account,[2] Deleuze and Guattari argue that

> Delirum and hallucination are secondary in relation to the really primary emotion, which in the beginning only experiences intensities, becomings, transitions. Where do these pure intensities come from? They come from two preceding forces, repulsion and attraction, and from the opposition of these two forces…. Further, if we are to believe Judge Schreber's doctrine, *attraction and repulsion* produce intense *nervous states* that fill up the body without organs to varying degrees… following an endless circle of eternal return (*Anti-Oedipus* 18–19).

Since the present persona, Fred, is disconnected from Bob, so are his desires and emotions. Because of that, the hallucination does not become a positive force. The preceding forces, which are supposed to initiate the flight, are divided between two subjects. Therefore the BwO becomes "empty", that is, it loses the ability to reconfigure its organs back to any productive functions. Or, as Eugene B. Young defines it, it is "a poorly constructed BwO, or failed experiment, whose flows or intensities are interrupted, blocked, or stratified, and thus do not produce anything" (56). With no clear vector of escape, Bob/Fred is left with an impotent intensity. The accumulated

[2] Deleuze and Guattari analyze the famous personal account of schizophrenia of a German judge, Daniel Paul Schreber, previously interpreted by Sigmund Freud, as a way of critiquing Freudian psychoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari find Freud's concepts such as oedipal complex as reactionary and reductive. They deem that the modern configurations of the human psyche cannot be adequately expressed as merely a culmination of libidinal and traumatic drives. As they claim, Freud "doesn't like schizophrenics. He doesn't like their resistance to being oedipalized" (*Anti-Oedipus* 23). They point out, on the basis on the case of dr Schreber, that Freud ignores the aspects of divergent mental states which do not fit his psychoanalytical model.

energies cannot be transferred into an appropriate line of flight since Fred does not recognize Bob's desire emerging from the latter's mind, bringing to the former only shock and confusion. In a violent movement, the protagonist is flung away from any coherent territory allowing the holographic/hallucinogenic vision of Donna to usurp his reality as a sort of interference, cross-wiring of two identities which overloads the system. The BwO cannot reterritorialize, to reform a coherent organism. The hallucination confirms that Bob/Fred is permanently stuck between two incongruous assemblages. The desiring functions of organs of one seep into the other, at which point their interaction with reality breaks down. The intensities dissipate transforming a potential BwO into the empty BwO of a drug user.

Arctor's experimentation with drugs and identities eventually leads to brain-tissue necrosis. According to the medical deputies, the damage in his left hemisphere causes the right one to attempt to compensate for the impairment. This compensation can be seen as the beginning of a process of repair that will be analyzed in the next section. However, because the brain is not adjusted to that change, Bob/Fred perceives "the world as reflected in a mirror… *pulled through infinity*" (170). Fred finally realizes the extent of his mental deterioration through that metaphor: "that reflection that returns to you: it is you, it is your face, but it isn't… I have seen myself backward" (170). The catastrophic disconnection of identities is complete, to the point where Bob/Fred cannot identify his autobiographical self even without the barrier of a scramble suit. When the identities of both personas collapse, Arctor, in a final desperate act seeks help in an addiction treatment facility called the New Path, where he is given yet another name: Bruce.

Bruce – the Prosthesis/Reflex Machine

Desperate to recover, Arctor is brought by Donna to the New Path drug rehabilitation clinic. There, under a regime of physical strain and psychological abuse the protagonist transforms for a final time into Bruce. This is where the reader is met with two revelations. First, New Path is a cover for a criminal organization manufacturing substance D and the patients are brain-washed into becoming mindless slaves working on producing the drug. Second, Donna is secretly a federal narcotics agent who deliberately primes and sends Arctor to retrieve evidence of New Path's criminal role.

When cautioning against the danger of botching a BwO, Deleuze and Guattari note that "[s]taying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen: the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back on us heavier than ever" (*Plateaus* 161). This danger – the violent return of organizing forces – is realized at the end of the novel. On one side, the machine of capitalism reabsorbs the empty BwO that used to be Bob Arctor. He is reintroduced into the same productive territory that caused his destructive deterritorialization – Bruce is now making the drug that created him. On the other side, the state apparatus that initiated Bob's/Fred's confusion of identities now capitalizes on his damaged body to extend its scope of surveillance. During a short fragment when the narration moves away from Arctor's point of view, the reader gets a glimpse at the thought process of another narcotic's agent, Mike:

> Substance D, like heroin, was organic. Not the product of a lab. So he meant quite a bit when he thought, as he frequently did, that all those profits could well keep New Path solvent – *and growing.* The living, he thought, should never be used to serve the purposes of the dead. But the dead – he glanced at Bruce, the empty shape beside him – should, if possible, serve the purposes of the living… The dead, Mike thought… they are our camera. (266)

Arctor – Bruce – is reified into the state apparatus as a camera, a scanner. The reprogramming suffered at New Path assimilates him into a recorder. This quality is emphasized by the fact that Bruce suffers echolalia: he automatically repeats whatever is said to him. Emptied from his potential intensities, he is instrumentalized as a reflexive organ, stripped of agency, prior personality. In the words of David Murakami Wood, "this is the organ without a body rather than the body without organs. Fred/Bob/Bruce has become by this stage in his view, not exactly a machine, not exactly a human, but only the mechanical watching components of a human being" (51). Any other organs – the protagonist's mental capacities to return to full consciousness, to reterritorialize on his own terms – are obliterated. However, there is still hope. The destruction is not final. A trace of the transformative potential still remains in the form of a biological prosthesis. Bruce's brain can be framed as an autopoietic system which rebuilds itself, circumventing the ruination.

The realization of that potential may be seen in the final chapter of the novel, when Bruce is sent to a farm to tend to the New Path's crops. The mental conditioning applied in the facility is supposed to put an epistemological block, preventing the workers from perceiving the actual crops: little blue flowers, *mors ontologica* – the organic source of substance D. However, for just a moment Bruce overcomes that cognitive barrier, whereupon the New Path's director covers his eyes:

> "You're seeing the flower of the future," Donald, the Executive Director of New Path, said. "But not for you."
> "Why not for me?" Bruce said.
> "You've had too much of a good thing already," the Executive Director said. He chuckled. "...A transcendent vision, is that what you see growing here? You look as if it is." He tapped Bruce firmly on the shoulder, and then, reaching down his hand, he cut the sight off from the frozen eyes.
> "Gone," Bruce said. "Flowers of spring gone."
> "No, you simply can't see them. That's a philosophical problem you wouldn't comprehend. Epistemology – the theory of knowledge."
> Bruce saw only the flat of Donald's hand barring the light, and he stared at it a thousand years. (284)

This scene may be read as an illustration of a complex process wherein a body with greatly diminished, if not completely destroyed, self-reflexive capacities becomes reorganized as an instrument of perception for a broader network of its environment. As I will explain further, this organization may be facilitated by the plastic quality of the brain, but first I want to outline the relation of this new body-as-perceptual-apparatus to its environment.

The narration and dialogue, such as the mention of "a transcendent vision" and the revelation that "there was nothing [Bruce] did not know," suggest that in this configuration, the resultant perspective is somehow broader or more receptive to the material complexity of this new assemblage. Posthumanist scholar Cary Wolfe proposes that "[u]nder pressure to adapt to a complex and changing environment, systems increase their selectivity – they make their environmental filters more finely woven, if you like – by building up their own internal complexity by means of self-referential closure" (14–15). If this understanding of self-reference is to be applied to the human, then consciousness emerges as such a selective filter, ordering the constant flow of stimuli. A conscious human subject, in the process of self-organizing constructs a subjective reality, and a boundary between themselves and the "outside." Once this mechanism is disabled, as is the case with Bruce's brain damage in *A Scanner Darkly*, the environmental complexity floods in, the system/environment distinction collapses, and the body becomes an organ of the environment. If individual consciousness is the result of a reduction of material complexity so that the subject may conceptualize or signify reality, then with the loss of the self that complexity reveals itself. Bruce changes from an observer equipped with a faulty instrument into an instrument of observation for a broader system.

When Arctor becomes "a camera," he no longer has to rely on his consciousness – which produces reality distorted by conflicting territories – and can instead be positioned as an organ in the network that is his environment. This is what allows him to notice the flowers, hidden beneath the crops and obscured by New Path's brainwashing. When the Executive Director puts his palm over the eyes,[3] he effectively turns off the camera/scanner: he deprives the perceptive organ – literal: the eyes, and metaphorical: Bruce himself – of its only function. This may be why time itself seems to momentarily stop for the protagonist; with the individualized self annihilated "there was nothing left to happen" – no subjective temporalization or thought – without the connection to the rest of the assemblage.

The process of Bruce becoming such a reflexive system may be explained by the idea of brain plasticity as presented by Catherine Malabou. She asserts that "the idea of cellular renewal, repair, and resourcefulness as auxiliaries of synaptic plasticity brings to light the power of *healing* – treatment, scarring, compensation, regeneration, and the capacity of the brain to build natural prostheses… the affected structures or functions try to modify themselves so as to compensate for the new deficit" (*What Should We Do with Our Brain* 27–28). The new personalities that Arctor adapts in his struggle against the pressures of society and the biological damage of drug abuse can be interpreted as forms of those natural prostheses. The progressing trauma is compensated for with whatever new, temporary formulation of identity can be built upon his experiences and surroundings.

However, the shift into Bruce is certainly more radical than shuffling between the personas of Bob and Fred, since the latter were, at least to a degree, a) self-aware, and b) interacting and influencing each other. Bruce, on the other hand marks a definite detachment not only from the previous identities, but also from a functioning, conscious subjectivity. In a later work, *The New Wounded*, Malabou analyzes the possibility of a trauma so severe that the brain's compensating plastic processes have to erase the previous, damaged personality and construct a new subject, often with diminished or completely lacking emotional and self-recognizing affects. She assesses:

> If the wound, as the determining cause of the transformation of the psyche, has a plastic power, it can only be understood in terms of the third sense of plasticity: explosion and annihilation. If brain damage creates a new identity, this creation can be only *creation through the destruction of form.* The plasticity at stake here is thus destructive plasticity. (17)

Bruce certainly fits that mold; Malabou acknowledges that even in this sort of negative, destructive plasticity, there remains a trace of the previous subjectivity, if only as the origin point, the facilitator of its self-destruction or replacement:

> [I]t would be necessary to consider that, in order to think the work of negative plasticity – that is, evacuation of identity, absence from self, or absence to oneself – one must also postulate the existence of an internal, endogenous, process of destruction that responds to the traumatic stimulus and welcomes it, in a sense, facilitating its work of annihilation. (*The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage* 70)

Perhaps in Bob/Fred there existed a certain internal assessment, an anxiety that the only line of flight which had not collapsed was this destruction of self. In that case, Bruce would be a product of a negative plasticity that has been molded from a desperate desire to escape the trauma suffered by his preceding subjectivity.

[3] Crucially, the narration repeatedly describes them not as "Bruce's eyes" but "the frozen eyes" or "the dead eyes" – as if these organs were somehow separate from the subject.

Fred/Bob engaged in the surveillance apparatus as an undercover agent in the hope of contributing to the disruption of the manufacturing and trade of substance D. In the final scene of the novel, Bruce hides the flower of *mors ontologica* in his shoe in the hope of showing it to his "friends" (narcotics agents) at a later opportunity. Physical evidence such as this, provided by Bruce, would instigate an investigation into the New Path as the manufacturer of Slow Death. The narration leaves it ambiguous whether Bruce is aware that he is helping to bring down the drug production. Yet, if we follow Malabou's theory of plasticity, we can come to the conclusion that the question of *what (or who) exactly* does the thinking here is moot. An agency is on display here, even if it is not the agency of the narcotics agent Bob, but rather a plastic brain's prosthesis. It is a Deleuzoguattarian organ that reformed; it adjusted its function in a new territory and took the place of the destroyed *self*. The consciousnesses of Bob and Fred did not survive until the finale of the novel, nevertheless their goal – to bring down the drug trade – has been reached by that which replaced them.

It is important here to make a distinction between Bob Arctor's personal ambition to end the drug trade stemming from his experience within the community, and the drug war perpetuated by the control apparatus of the state, for which Bob Arctor (as Fred) was a tool. While Bruce's final action indeed contributes to the goal of the state, thus confirming his reterritorialization, ultimately it does not register as such, since the final sentence of the novel reveals that he treats the smuggled flower as "a present for my friends" (286). Bruce's agency is not so much an extension of the state's power but a residual echo of a personal, subjective effort on Bob's part to contribute to the betterment of life of his community – the friends. It is the sentiment first expressed at the beginning of the novel, when Arctor goes off-script in his speech to a group of politicians (arranged by the sheriff's office): "Don't kick their asses after they're on it. The users, the addicts… Just try to keep them, the people, any of us, from getting on it" (26).

When the personas of Bob and Fred spiral into decay, Bruce usurps the primary spot in the brain, operating on those parts on the brain, which have not been destroyed. In fact, for Malabou the default mode of being in the contemporary society is for "the individual ... to occupy the midpoint between the taking on of form and the annihilation of form – between the possibility of occupying a territory and accepting the rules of deterritorialization. … We live in an epoch in which identity is defined no longer as a permanent essence but as a process of autoconstruction" (*What Should We Do with Our Brain* 70–71). Where Bob/Fred errs in this endeavor is that navigating this midpoint requires a delicate balance, whereas he moves intensely and violently between territories, pulled by the forceful tides of the apparatus of surveillance from one side, and substance abuse from the other. The price he pays is the overwhelming trauma, reparable only through "negative" plasticity. The destruction is not final since the plasticity creates a new autopoietic system, Bruce. What he regains is the availability of lines of flight, which have been denied to Bob/Fred. Combining the posthumanist philosophy with Deleuzian vocabulary, David Roden defines a line of flight as "an abstract potential for the transformation of a non-unified and one heterogeneous system or »multiplicity« into a new state or new mode of functioning" (31). Bruce is one such posthuman machine, inducted into an autopoietic system as a scanner, an eye for a broader assemblage. He is unable to see the whole picture on his own, but through interaction with the other nodes of the multiplicity, a clearer interpretation of reality is produced. Bruce is not burdened by either ego or desire. Without personality, without the ability to look inward, to create an idea of self, there is nothing which can be projected outward. With the outside/inside barrier obliterated, Bruce becomes a part of an autopoietic system of his environment, a true node in the network, capable only of receiving stimuli and outputting unfiltered information of reality.

The deconstruction of a human being as a set of informational processes embodied into a biological physicality is what scholars such as N.K. Hayles argue for as a model of the posthuman. For Malabou, too, the consciousness is a secondary phenomenon, preceded by what she calls the "proto-self," "a form of *organic representation of the organism itself* that maintains its coherence" (*What Should We Do with Our Brain* 59). It is a nonconscious process organizing the biological stimuli into a coherent signal which only then emerges as the autobiographical self. However, once the *self* has been annihilated, the signal has to move along a different continuity. The plasticity alters the neural pathway of information to something other than consciousness.

For Bruce this becomes the de facto state of being. He can be seen as the sort of posthuman distributed intelligence that Pramod Nayar describes as "the posthumanist vision of human embodied intelligence that draws its 'selfhood'… from the sum total of the interactions of its part within an environment. In place of the self-contained consciousness, we now have a consciousness that can only emerge within an environment and through distributed, beyond-the-brain networks" (58). If we consider this statement in relation to Bruce and the idea of plasticity, he could be considered as a posthuman being whose ontology is extended beyond the body and outside of identity. Instead of trying to bring back the neural arrangement that constituted personality, the neural plasticity engages in an autopoietic process of repair that, for a lack of any individual subjectivity on which to rebuild consciousness, reaches to the parts of the network beyond the body. It draws stimuli from components working in the world to produce a *distributed self.* Bruce becomes something altogether different than human: a perceiving machine, unbound by temporality and synthesizing information through reflexive brain processes. Bruce's final prosthesis turns him into a posthuman camera: one with a comprehensive perspective on the inter-connectivity of reality, yet comprehending none of it. Without a subjectivity, a way of looking inward, the thresholds of human dissolve completely, and the being can immerse itself, become an integral organ in the body of reality, reflexive and sensitive to all its facets.

Conclusions

On the surface, the fate of Bruce presented in the novel appears to be solely negative. The intense experimentation with drugs and changing identities has left him a husk of the former self, an empty BwO. However, under a careful scrutiny, equipped with the posthumanist framework, one can notice the positive, reparative aspects of those circumstances. Every movement of the subject towards annihilation is met with a counter-movement towards regeneration and healing. Yet, it is not a movement in an opposite direction – a return to the humanistic subjectivity – but a construction of a new line of flight. As Malabou stresses, the brain is not flexible – it will not spring back to some predetermined configuration – but plastic, constantly adapting and compensating for the damage. Bruce's plastic brain adapts and subverts the role of a reflexive organ. The inner workings of the nervous system surface to the pulverized consciousness as epiphenomena, loose connotations that do not form a bigger picture for Bruce, but which are nevertheless consistent. The empty BwO is still able to produce a vestigial organ, independent of the damage done to the organism.

In *A Scanner Darkly*, Dick paints a vision of a posthuman reality far removed from the techno-utopian dreams of humanity transcended through technology. Instead, the author, in one of his darkest, and at the same time, most personal novels, writes of survival at all cost in a world imbalanced by the aftershocks of rampant capitalism. The posthuman cyborg emergent in these circumstances is the result of irreparable trauma. However, thanks to the autopoietic qualities of a plastic brain, this new being can still find new pathways of becoming, alternative ways of

experiencing the world. In the novel, Dick scrutinizes and deconstructs the human by framing identity as a prosthesis, malleable and supplementary to perception. When taken away, the network is forced to search for alternative modes of being, which in turn brings it closer to other elements of the environment. The self-creation following the ultimate deterritorialization in Dick's account is bleak for a human: the consciousness is annihilated, leaving behind a shell: an empty BwO. However, for a posthuman it is just another movement along the flat plain of modes of experiencing the world.

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Teaching about the Discourse of Otherness in *The King of Tars*

Abstract

The present article is a teaching guide for a class or a series of classes about the discourse of Otherness, as employed in the medieval romance *The King of Tars*. It proposes an in-class discussion that reveals how the romance tells a story of an encounter with the Other and how it perpetuates the discourse of Otherness while doing that. Various strategies used in the tale to perform Othering are analyzed. These include the presentation of Muslims as a dehumanized out-group, with its main representative – the Sultan – being portrayed as a beast missing the rational part of the soul; contrasting the said presentation with that of the rational Christian Princess; employing and modifying the motif of monstrous birth to define the Sultan further through his failure as a father and through the absence of what the tale sees as the essence of the human soul; setting the transforming power of the dominant group's rituals against the ineffective, empty rituals of the out-group; the use of the rhetoric of proximity, i.e. pointing to certain similarities between "us" and "them" only to make the differences even more pronounced. The analysis of these strategies helps to recognize that while the characters within the represented world of the romance other Muslims through their actions, the narrator does the same through the use of the discourse of Otherness. The article is also devised as a review of criticism on the romance in the context of Otherness, so it can be useful as a starting point for those willing to research this matter further.

Keywords: Othering, *King of Tars*, Middle English, college teaching, medieval literature

The present article explores the didactic possibilities of using the medieval romance *The King of Tars*[1] as a resource to teach about the process of Othering. When read against the appended teaching guide with study questions and selected fragments for close reading, it outlines the

[1] The Auchinleck version of the text has been used. Compiled in the 1330s, Auchinleck is the oldest of the three manuscripts containing the poem. An online edition by John H. Chandler, available at https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/chandler-the-king-of-tars, is quoted in the appendix and its glossary has been used when preparing the modernized version of the selected quotes provided in the appendix alongside the Middle English original. A side-by side modern translation of the whole romance, by Blake Hahn, is available online at https://sourcebook.stanford.edu/sites/all/modules/custom/vm/VersioningMachine/texts/King_Tars_0.html. This translation, however, substitutes some of the offensive wording of the original with more neutral equivalents, which makes it slightly less suitable for the needs of the analyses proposed in the present article than the literal modernization offered in the appendix.

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directions which the in-class discussion may take and suggests ways to steer it in those directions. The proposed segments are devised and arranged so as to form a coherent whole, with the analysis and interpretation of Otherness in *The King of Tars* unfolding and expanding as the lesson progresses, but some of the sections may also serve as independent exercises in close reading, so the teacher may only select the segments they deem the most relevant for the needs of a particular course they teach. The material offered here will either cover a single class or a series of classes, depending on their length and level.

The overall aim of the proposed in-class discussion is to examine how *The King of Tars* tells the story of a confrontation with the Other, and at the same time participates in the discourse of Otherness, i.e., how it itself performs Othering. As a result, students will get a better understanding of how various discursive strategies of Othering work. Either a deductive or inductive approach could be assumed to achieve this aim: the theoretical framework could be established at the outset, with the following analysis and interpretation referring to that framework, or, alternatively, the discussion could delve into the analysis and interpretation of the romance from the outset, with the subsequent elements of the theoretical framework being gradually induced from it. The former approach will perhaps be a default option if the whole course is centred around the discourse of Otherness in literature and culture and an in-depth theoretical understanding of the concept as applied in various disciplines (such as cultural and literary studies, but also philosophy, sociology, anthropology, geography, and psychology) is arrived at first, before the course proceeds to analysing some particular manifestations of the discourse in the primary sources. The latter strategy may work better if time constraints do not allow for such an introductory theoretical discussion, Otherness not being the main subject matter of the course taught.[2] While the present article stems from the practice of teaching *The King of Tars* as part of a course on Otherness, it will nonetheless follow the inductive approach, as more universally applicable also outside the context of a course devoted to that single subject.

Defining In- and Out-Group[3]

The opening of the romance is aimed at defining two opposing groups, represented by two rulers, which are readily distinguishable in terms of both religion (Christian-Muslim) and geography (Tars-Damascus) (Rajabzadeh 174). One may pay special attention to the adjectives used to describe both rulers: the "trewe" ("true") King of Tars in line 4 and the "hethen" ("heathen") Sultan in line 5, which are aimed at portraying the King of Tars in a good light from the very outset (Boyadjian 56). The opening six lines thus provide us with two elements that are the *sine qua non* for talking about Othering and it may be elicited at this point of the class that these are first of all the division into "us" and "them" (in- and out-group/the dominant and the dominated), and, as can be

[2] If the course is not devoted to the issue of Othering/Otherness, but the teacher would like students to have a general understanding of the terms before discussing *The King of Tars* in this context, recommended background reading may include, for example, excerpts from M. Rozbicki and G. Ndege's *Cross-Cultural History and the Domestication of Otherness* (1–2), Riva Kastoryano's "Codes of Otherness" (79–80) or J.F. Staszak's entry on "Other/Otherness" in the *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (43–44) (the term is explained in an accessible and universal way in these studies).

[3] The proposed lesson plan is focused on textual analysis rather than the history of the text. Those interested in outlining the historical background and the genesis of the story told in the romance are advised to consult the following studies: Hornstein's "The Historical Background of the King of Tars"; Geist; Boyadjian (51–54).

deduced from the choice of the descriptors, the hierarchical relationship between those, "us" being above, i.e., better than, "them." It may also be observed already at this point that the religion of the out-group is identified based on exclusion and absence – "heathen" may be defined as one who does not belong to the widely held religion, and "true," when set against the "heathen" Sultan, implies that the latter is defined through him lacking that truth.

The Presentation of "Saracens": Imagery

In this segment of the discussion, the presentation of the out-group is to be further explored, with attention being paid to the animalistic imagery evoked when the representatives of that group are mentioned. To put the discussion in a broader cultural context, the teacher may first ask students to try to identify the figure of the prophet Mohamed and a Muslim ruler in two pictures from an illuminated manuscript *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (both figures are portrayed there as dogheads).[4] Having pointed out the popularity of the idea of Muslims being dog-like in the Middle Ages, rendered not only through a commonplace "race of dogs" to denote them, but also through literal pictorial representations of them as dogheads (see Strickland 223), the discussion may now proceed to finding instances of the use of analogous imagery in the romance. Students may be encouraged to quote specific fragments where Muslims are referred to as dogs,[5] as well as comment on the symbolic role of the prophetic dream of the Princess, which features hundreds of black hounds chasing the heroine, led by one that is later transformed into a white knight. It may be pointed out that the transformation foreshadows what is going to happen to the Sultan later in the romance. Having established who the black dog, turned in an oneiric manner into a white knight, stands for, students may further investigate what role the three devils accompanying the dogs play – Aman Nadhiri argues, for example, that the devils may be a mockery of the Christian Trinity and symbolize "the 'Saracen trinity' that Saracens were believed to worship" (97). Students may also notice already at this point that the animalistic imagery is not limited to using the word "hound" to refer to Muslims but is also conveyed through the description of the Sultan's behaviour as that of a wild boar in lines 97–111 – the fragment may be discussed in detail here or in the next segment.

Students may now be encouraged to think of what such a presentation of the out-group reveals about the discourse of Otherness. One possible conclusion is that it treats the representatives of the out-group as a homogenous mass with few common essential characteristics – all we learn about them is that they are indistinguishably animal-like and perhaps also devil-like. What is more, the fact that the Other possesses some discernible characteristics does not mean that they have their own, independent group identity. To the contrary, they are defined through absence – in this case, the absence of humanity. The effect is achieved through the use of imagery that relates Muslims to animals and to devils, i.e., animalizes and demonizes them, both strategies leading to dehumanization.

[4] Both illustrations are available online through the University of Cambridge digital library: https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-MM-00005-00031/173 and https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-MM-00005-00031/374; they are also reprinted and discussed by Debra Higgs Strickland (223–224); see also figure 13 on p. 51 in Strickland for another representation of Muslims as dogheads. I owe this reference to the pictorial representations of Muslims to Czarnowus (77).

[5] See selected fragments in the appendix; the fragments are also enumerated in Gilbert (108).

The Portrayal of the Sultan and the Princess: A Comparative Analysis

Having analysed the presentation of Muslims in the romance, the discussion may now focus on the most important representative of this group, i.e., the Sultan. As students may have already noticed, he too is portrayed as animal-like when his rejection by the Princess is described: he is compared to a boar and then to a lion. The Sultan's fit of anger, in the form of him tearing his clothes apart and demolishing his chamber, lasts the whole day and night, during which time no one is able to control him and so everyone leaves him alone, as if escaping from a wild beast that cannot be tamed (Czarnowus 79). One may notice that the Sultan symbolically dissociates himself here from civilization – humans, unlike animals, wear clothes, eat by the table and live in a community of fellow humans, and the Sultan rejects it all in the said scene.

Such emotional, irrational responses are characteristic of the Sultan throughout the tale and are worth comparing and contrasting with the reactions that the Christian Princess displays. When the Sultan learns his child is born a formless and lifeless lump of flesh, he reacts emotionally and immediately starts accusing his wife and her false conversion of being the reason behind the tragedy (lines 583–597; notice how many exclamation marks are used in this fragment, implying the Sultan's emotional tone). The difference between his and the Princess' reaction is striking – she, far from falling into despair and assuming an accusatory tone, devises a logical, methodical, two-step plan of saving the child (lines 598–617). When the Sultan's prayers fail to make the child transform into a human, he displays yet another uncontrollable fit of anger that again stands in sharp contrast to the Princess' response (lines 634–681; notice the violence of both the Sultan's actions and language, as contrasted with "that good woman" answering "well courteously" [lines 670–671]).

The comparative analysis of what the Sultan and the Princess say in these situations and how they say it points to the underlying dichotomy employed in constructing the two characters and it may be elicited at this point that the opposition in question is one of irrationality and rationality, or emotions and reason.[6] Students may now be familiarized with or reminded of the Aristotelian idea of the three degrees of soul (nutritive, sensitive, rational — a division later adapted by St. Thomas Aquinas), since it further illuminates the contrast between the two characters. Namely, in the light of this concept, the Sultan, unlike the Princess, is presented as not possessing the part of the soul exclusive to human beings.

The Newborn and Its Symbolic Significance

Once the contrast between the Princess and the Sultan is established, the discussion may proceed to the analysis and interpretation of the episode involving their child. Students may now be asked to paraphrase the description of the newborn (for the teacher to make sure they understand that the child is in fact a shapeless lump of flesh) and then try to put forward their hypotheses as to the reasons behind this kind of presentation of the baby and the fact that the focus is on the parts of the body that are non-existent. The child has no bones or blood, so no structure of a human body, it has no limbs, which is to emphasize that it is unable to move, and no eyes or nose, which makes it unable to see and smell, that is to make contact with the outside world. As Sarah Star notes, "the lump's body, if it can be so called, is both undeveloped and unanimated" (452). While parts of the human body are mentioned, it needs to be underlined that the newborn is in fact not really a chaotic ensemble of

[6] See also the Princess' calm and reserved speech when she decides to become the Sultan's wife and announces it to her parents. That speech is yet another example of the Princess containing her emotions and allowing her rational side to guide her.

unstructured human body parts, but a shapeless lump, with no sign of what this matter was supposed to be. The parts of the body are only enumerated to underline their lack.

The teacher may remark at this point that various versions of the legend underlying the story of the monstrous birth in the romance were in circulation in the fourteenth century[7] and that some of its analogues differed in the exact form in which they related the child to have been born. Some of them say the child was born hairy all over its body or that it was half-hairy, others describe it as half-animal or half white and half-black (Hornstein, "New Analogues" 434–439). A question to be considered at this point is what these incarnations of the "monstrous birth" motif have in common with how the child is described in the romance and in what respect they differ. It is clear that regardless of the version, the child is never presented as an ordinary human being, but the difference between *The King of Tars* and other renderings of the story is that here, rather than being an incoherent hybrid that in most cases is not fully human, the child is monstrous in the sense of being uniformly shapeless (Florschuetz 104). In other words, while the variants of the legend point to the incompatibility of the parents that results in a child which lacks coherence, here the matter of the two parents' contribution is not as self-evident, and so it begs further exploration.

The tale itself draws attention to the question of the fault for the newborn's deformity when it relates how the Sultan accused his wife of falsely converting and thus being the one to blame for the tragedy. While the Princess does not formulate an analogous accusation explicitly, her remark concerning what the child is missing in line 755 is worth noting. She states there that, if christened, the child should acquire a form. A form, then, is what, as the Princess rightly observes, the child is missing. Students may be asked at this point to share any ideas on how this formlessness implies what went wrong during the conception of the child. A distinction that may be explored here is one between the body, which the newborn is missing, and the flesh, which is how the child is kept being referred to before the transformation. According to Jane Gilbert, the former was "a symbolically ordered entity allied with the soul but the latter vulnerable and excessive. Body was gendered masculine, flesh feminine" (106).[8] The discussion may also be once again steered onto Aristotle's thought, this time his theory pertaining to the four causes.[9] Any object may first be used as an example to explain what the four causes are and then it may be discussed how that translates into the four causes behind the existence of a human being: the material cause being the matter out of which a human is created; the formal cause – the form i.e. the shape of a human being; the efficient cause – what makes the material take the form it is supposed to take, i.e. bringing life (human spirit) to a lifeless matter; and the final cause – the purpose that a human is to fulfil. If students are not familiar with this concept, they may be asked to make an educated guess as to who, following Aristotle's ideas, would be the material cause for a human being (i.e. who would provide the matter) and who would be the remaining causes (i.e. who would provide the form, spirit and purpose). The answer is that a mother was believed to be responsible for the former, and the father for the latter – a baby was supposed to be formed in its father's image, animated by him

[7] Lilian Herland Hornstain identified as many as seventeen accounts of the story in Anglo-Latin, Franco-Latin, German, Germano-Latin, Hispano-Latin and Italian sources (Hornstein, "New Analogues" 434).

[8] See also Walter (119–120).

[9] Gilbert (105), Calkin, ("Marking Religion" 228–229), and Akbari (192) all discuss the conception of the child within the framework of Aristotle's theory of four causes. Calkin also mentions the Princess' awareness during the conception of the sinful nature of her inter-faith union as one possible explanation of the child's deformity ("Marking Religion" 229). Heng suggests that it remains understated in the romance whether the monstrous birth is the fault of the Sultan being Muslim or rather of the Princess pretending to renounce her faith or conceiving a child with her husband before converting him (228). I would argue that the tale puts the blame on the father rather unambiguously.

and its purpose was to follow the father's footsteps. Thus, while in the other variants of the tale the father contributes to the creation of the child, providing its animalistic or racially divergent half, *The King of Tars* implies that the Sultan utterly failed to make his contribution and so the child ended up being the mere formless matter. Much as the tale focuses on what the child is missing, thus emphasizing the failure of the father, it also repeatedly draws attention to what the child is, pointing to the success of the mother to make her contribution. The conclusions of this and the previous segment can now be combined to address the question of why the Sultan is unable to fulfil his role as a father.

For one thing, the Sultan is presented as missing the highest form of soul reserved for humans (see section 3 above), and so is perhaps unable to contribute to the creation of another human being – as Nadhiri observes, "[t]he birth of a deformed child recasts the marriage (and sexual union) of the Soudan and the Princess as something unnatural, an inter-species union rather than an interfaith/interracial union" (97). A closer look at the formulaic expressions used between lines 478 and 681 further hints at who exactly grants the ability that the Sultan lacks and, consequently, why the Sultan cannot possess it. Students may now devote some time to finding the commonplaces related to religion in this fragment and look for any patterns and regularities. As it will turn out, all the formulaic expressions used in the selected fragment point to the creative power of the Christian God. As Roger Dalrymple observes, "Creator-formulae are strategically deployed" at this point of the poem (105) and it may be considered why this is the case, i.e., how the choice of these particular commonplace expressions, which could be seen as mere fillers, actually underlines the message of the poem. The use of such formulae, alongside the miraculous transformation of the child produced by the ritual of baptism, are there to highlight that it is the Christian God that created mankind and is still responsible for the creation of fully-fledged human beings. As Geraldine Heng notes, "Christianity, it seems, possesses a spiritual essence with the power to reshape biological fleshly matter and, we must assume, also to confer a divine soul in the process of making a human being" (229). The formulaic expressions thus foreshadow the final result of both parents' endeavours to save their child.

Alongside the allusions to the Christian God's power to create humans, the impotence of the Sultan's religion is demonstrated in the story. The imagery used in the scene of the Sultan's prayer may now be analysed in some detail to identify this contrast. When the Sultan brings his child to the temple, the picture composed by the narrator is that of a lifeless, stone-like lump of flesh set against the background of stone sculptures representing the Sultan's gods. As it turns out, the sculptures are just that – they remain unresponsive to the father's prayers and the child remains the lifeless lump. Thus, both the child and gods are confined to the material world. When the Sultan smashes the sculptures, he destroys the illusion that they are anything more than a formless, inanimate stone matter, just like the child (Gilbert 106).

As Siobhain Bly Calkin observes, "the sultan in *The King of Tars* seems to have failed to perform adequately in the conception of the lump. The sultan's defining characteristic in this text, however (as is shown by his lack of any other appellation than the Saracen-linked "Soudan"), is his Saracenness. Thus, his religious identity can be seen to have been inadequate to the task of shaping a Christian woman's matter" ("Marking Religion" 229). Gilbert explains this inadequacy in the following way:

> In KT's stark schema the lump-child represents not some naive popular belief that certain historical peoples could literally not procreate, but the ideological contention that non-Christians are incapable of exercising the paternal function. And without symbolic paternity human beings cannot reproduce, in the sense that they cannot pass on the cultural qualities that distinguish people from animals.

> Therefore KT, like the analogues, makes the father responsible for the child's monstrosity. Whereas in those versions his heathen presence imprinted itself as physical irregularity, in the Middle English romance his religion is interpreted as a symbolic absence which leaves his child fatherless, unable to take the crucial step from maternal flesh to paternal body. (Gilbert 110)

The tale is determined to prove time and again that Otherness is always to be defined negatively through the prism of what it lacks.

The Power of the Christian and Muslim Ritual

The present segment of the discussion serves to elaborate on the issue of the two religions as presented in the romance. I suggest it starts with analysing the moment of the Princess entering into the Other culture and comparing it to an analogous moment of the Sultan being incorporated into the Christian community. The similarity between the two scenes is that in both of them a character undergoes a transformation to make them fit into the new community. The difference lies in the nature of this metamorphosis. The Princess has her clothes changed to look like any other Muslim woman, but lines 388–393 emphasize the ineffectiveness of the incorporation (the contrast between her and other Muslims' appearance is still stark) and its superficiality (she seems happy on the outside but deep in her heart is suffering).

Later in the tale, the Sultan is incorporated into the Christian community through the ritual of baptism. Calkin undertakes an in-depth analysis of the communal dimension of this ritual, i.e. how it serves not only as a means of religious transformation, but also how it performs the social function of making the Sultan part of the Christian community ("Romance Baptisms" 105–112). First of all, the teacher may ask students to enumerate what elements the ritual consists of: these are the presence of a priest who is a representative of the Christian community and who has the authority to administer the ritual; the use of water, which is a physical sign of the ritual being fulfilled that the whole community can see; and acquiring a Christian name which is pronounced publicly. One more element which is of utmost relevance is the physical metamorphosis that the Sultan undergoes and which, unlike the Princess' temporary and reversible transformation, is permanent. Since the Sultan takes part in the ritual stripped naked, this change of the colour of his skin is yet again a clearly visible physical sign that everyone present can readily discern. As Calkin explains, both in the case of the Sultan's and the newborn's baptism,

> the text suggests that baptism physically incorporates outsiders into the Christian community by making them look like other Christians, such as the beautiful Princess of Tars who is "As white as feţer of swan" (line 12). The physical effects of baptism prove irrefutably that the lump and Sultan are Christian and should be accepted as such. Indeed, the text even states that the Princess knows well the Sultan has forsaken his Saracen beliefs "For chaunged was his hewe" (line 945). In this text, baptism is a predominantly physical, visible process that effects physical, visible results to prove the veracity of the convert's new religious identity to the larger Christian community. ("Romance Baptisms" 111)

The fact that the emphasis is put so clearly on the communal aspect of the ceremony, i.e., on including the Sultan in the Christian community, is indicative of the relevance of the ritual for the discussion of the matter of Otherness. Namely, the ritual is clearly aimed at making the Sultan become part of the in-group, as much as it is to bring about his spiritual transformation. In order for that assimilation on the earthly level to be possible, the Sultan needs to blend in. The latter is assured by the change of his skin colour and the change of name – two elements that have very tangibly set him apart. The message that this fragment of the tale communicates is that there is no place for diversity in the in-group – it needs to be eliminated so that the in-group remains coherent.

An attempt at summarizing the difference between the two acts of incorporation can be made at this point. It is self-evident that one is more powerful and effective than the other because while the Princess undergoes only outward, symbolic change, the Christian ritualistic gestures are presented as having the power to actually shape the reality. The students may now be asked to share their thoughts on why the Muslim rituals – that of incorporation of the Princess, but also that of marriage – are ineffective. What the tale seems to suggest is that the Muslim law is not a true one. It is rather an empty ritual that does not effect any real change. A true law should be able not only to provide the frameworks to perform some symbolic actions, but to grant an actual change of reality through those. The ritual of marriage, for example, is supposed to elevate the union between two people from the level of mere biological, sexual relationship to the level of a cultural bond reserved for human beings, as the tale aims to prove. While procreation is possible outside of marriage sanctioned by the true law, such legitimization is presented as a precondition for the rightful, and thus successful procreation and inheritance.[10] The romance tries to prove in a very graphic way that the Muslim marriage does not have such power, since it does not grant the Sultan the potential to become a father of a human being. Likewise, the ritual of the incorporation into the Muslim community does not actually serve its purpose as it has no bearing on the Princess' inward sense of belonging. In other words, the actual opposition in the tale is not between two different laws: Christian and Muslim, but rather between the presence and the absence of the Christian law; the conclusion is yet again that the Muslim law is defined negatively, not through what it is, but through what it lacks.[11] As Gilbert puts it, "[i]t seems that the desire to produce oneself and others as true human beings by adhering to the tenets of a symbolic law is common to all human creatures; but, according to the poem, only dupes believe that a 'hethen lawe' (504) can fulfil this symbolic function" (108).

(Apparent) Inconsistencies and the Rhetoric of Proximity

So far, the discussion focused on the differences between the two cultures represented in the romance. The aim of this segment is to explore the matter of the apparent similarities and their role in the tale. While *The King of Tars* frequently underlines the incongruity of the Muslim and Christian faith, students may now be asked to try to identify any fragments where the opposite effect is aimed at, i.e., where the focus is on how the two religions coincide in some respects. The most prominent example of the latter would be the narrator's remark that the Sultan, just like a Christian man, would not marry a woman unless she professed the same faith as him (lines 406–409; see Calkin, "Marking Religion" 222). Another instance of the representatives of both religions being presented in a non-contrastive way is at the beginning of the story, when the King of Tars' and the Sultan's fierceness and rage on the battlefield are portrayed in a similar vein (cf. lines 181–186 and 193–198).[12] A debate on the possible reasons behind employing the analogies may ensue at this point. Students would be encouraged to share their views on whether the similarities weaken the "us" and "them" division (i.e., undermine the binary opposition on which the tale is

[10] See Gilbert (107) for the discussion of the role of a father and of the marriage ties in distinguishing humans from animals, which is discussed within the Lacanian framework.

[11] Star also sees Sultan's religion as not having any essence of its own: "For the author of *The King of Tars*, religion is figured chiefly in terms of presence and absence and is determined according to either the belief in, or ignorance of, Christ. Within this framework, the Sultan is thus a "Sarazin," not because he follows any written doctrine, but because he lacks knowledge of Christ" (442).

[12] See Elias (52–53) for a discussion of the similarities between the King of Tars' and the Sultan's displays of anger at the beginning of the tale.

based). One possible approach is that the analogies do to an extent make the tale deconstruct the opposition it rests on. An alternative interpretation may be that the similarities are to foreshadow (Elias 53) or enable (Burge 113) the eventual conversion of the Sultan, signalling from the outset that he is closer to Christianity than it may seem.

Yet another reading that is worth exploring, especially in the light of the tale's engagement with the issue of Otherness, is one that asserts the analogies are there to in fact strengthen the overall effect of Othering. I base this reading on Susan Schibanoff's idea of the "rhetoric of proximity" that she identifies as being used in the discourse of Otherness to seemingly bring the opposing groups closer together, but only to make the key differences even more prominent in the end. The underlying mechanism is that the more proximate the Other appears to be, the stronger the need to define the boundaries of the in-group and to continually protect them through the differentiation from the Other. The role of the rhetoric of proximity is thus to maintain "rigid binary oppositions by temporarily destabilizing them" (Schibanoff 251).[13] Schibanoff employs the concept to analyse Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale," and her argument is that in the tale, "[t]he Man of Law renders Islam threatening not by depicting it as different from Christianity – as idolatrous – but by revealing its dangerous closeness to his own religion." Through the rhetoric of proximity, then, Islam is portrayed "as an insidious heresy that mimics Christianity" (Schibanoff 250). This approach is all the more applicable here given that Chaucer's tale may be seen as an analogue of *The King of Tars*.[14]

The analogies between the two faiths and their representatives in *The King of Tars* may be interpreted in a similar vein to how Schibanoff sees such analogies in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale," that is, as serving to ultimately make the differences even more pronounced and to point to the inferiority of the Other. Islam is to appear to the reader as a misguided imitation of Christianity and, in this sense, it is to be seen as closer to heresy than to a different, independent religion.[15] In the end, any analogies turn out to be superficial in the light of the ineffectiveness of the Sultan's pleas as opposed to the miracle granted by the ritual that the Princess initiates. Likewise, the Sultan's rage, though seemingly resembling the King of Tars' anger, is, as Marcel Elias notes, ultimately presented as excessive and self-destructive, i.e. aimed at his comrades and gods as much as his enemies, which stands in sharp contrast to the righteous and justified anger of the King (53). Assuming that the message of the tale is that the proximity of the Other poses danger, the undifferentiated, and therefore monstrous, lump of flesh may be read as a warning against too close a proximity between the in- and out-group that ignores or downplays the differentiation (see Calkin, "Marking Religion" 227–228).[16]

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[13] Schibanoff derives her concept from Jonathan Dollimore's observations on the anxiety evoked by sameness of the Other made in his book *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). As Schibanoff explains, "[i]n Dollimore's terms, 'similarity' or 'proximity' indicates the intimate relationship that exists between supposedly opposite binaries. Such 'intimacy' ultimately stems from the Christian anti-dualistic notion of evil as good's privation, not good's opposite, of vice as the perversion rather than antithesis of virtue. Evil and vice are thus 'the more dangerous and potentially subversive for being in intimate relation with good'" (Schibanoff 275, footnote 17; see also pp. 250–251). Defining the Other through the prism of what it lacks, and not what it is, is thus related to defining evil as the privation of good.

[14] The discussion of the representation of Muslims and women in Chaucer's tale as dangerously proximate Others, based on Schibanoff's study, would serve as a perfect complement to the classes proposed here that would consolidate the conclusions about the process of Othering and enable students to apply them in a new context, i.e., that of antifeminist discourse.

[15] See Schibanoff (254–256) for the discussion of the manifestations of the idea of Islam being a Christian heresy in the Middle Ages.

[16] Calkin not only interprets the product of the hybrid marriage as signaling the danger, but also sees the outward transformation of the Princess as dangerously ambiguous and possibly tantamount to actually betraying her Christian

The Position of the Narrator and the Implied Audience of the Romance

The King of Tars may seem to be inconsistent in that it draws analogies between Christians and Muslims while emphasizing the differences in such a pronounced way, but, as was argued in the preceding section, that apparent confusion may be cleared up once the tale is recognized to participate in the rhetoric of proximity. There is, however, yet another potential source of inconsistency in the tale, this time originating not in the presentation of the Saracens, but in the at times controversial portrayal of Christians, who are otherwise idealized. The discussion in this segment may be opened with students coming up with some examples of Christian characters' actions that seem morally questionable. The matter of the Princess' double dealing is one such example. Her actions are, after all, based on deception that involves false conversion and what could even be seen as blasphemy, given that she pretends to renounce her faith and praise other gods. And yet, they are in fact presented as justified and even commendable.[17] As Anna Czarnowus observes, the Princess' strategy, far from drawing condemnation, "merely displays her intelligence in implementing gradual Christianization of the Orient. Ethical values, such as honesty and truthfulness, undergo relativization" (74). Another example of relativization is the tale's approach to violence. The brutality of Christians, including their king, may be seen as justified in the case of the battle that opens the romance, since at that point they just respond to the Sultan's attack and defend themselves. However, the ferocity of their assault on Muslims who have refused to convert at the end of the tale is much more controversial, at least from the modern ethical standpoint. Still, the narrator is far from condemning violence and murder as long as it is committed by Christians, including the neophyte Sultan. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen observes,

> The bloody actions which "the soudan that was blac" (l. 799) undertakes early in the text, so central to his racialized identity, are later performed by the King of Tars with the aid of the same sultan, now "al white bicom" (l. 929). The two men crusade together against "hethen houndes" (l. 1097). The murders, persecutions and imprisonments which characterized Saracen Damascus come to mark Christian Tars, a place where those who refuse conversion are decapitated, '"hong & drawe," burnt, or incarcerated (120).

The question that arises is then how Christians remain unambiguously positive characters throughout the tale despite those moral flaws, i.e., how it is possible that cheating, lying, pretending and slaughter do not discredit them as protagonists. Students may notice at this point, or their attention may be drawn to the fact that in order to perceive the Christian characters in a positive light, the audience needs to share certain assumptions concerning the means that are justified when trying to achieve

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faith. I, however, agree with Lomuto that the Princess' identity remains unambiguously stable throughout the romance (Lomuto 180–182) and so I see the tale as putting emphasis on the necessity of the Other to either become fully assimilated or to remain clearly separated (or even annihilated, as the ending of the tale suggests), but not as the criticism of the particular method the Princess adopts to achieve her goal.

[17] If time allows, the matter of the Princess' potentially blasphemous acts may be further debated at this point. Students may be encouraged to attempt at justifying her actions within the frameworks of the text's own logic and conclusions drawn so far – my interpretation would be that the Princess acting out her conversion is not problematic within the represented world of the tale, because the religion she pretends to convert to is presented as only having the surface level, so in fact it is not even possible for the conversion to be anything more than a meaningless performance. As proven later in the story, the Saracen gods are just empty surface forms of the sculptures, so in fact the opposition boils down to either being a believer (by definition a Christian believer) or believing in nothing. The Princess does not undergo any change because she does not lose her faith – she remains a believer and does not turn to believing in nothing. That does not in itself mean that the Princess' actions cease to be controversial even within the represented world of the tale, since they still involve lying.

certain goals – and the ultimate goal that justifies any morally questionable actions in the romance is spreading Christianity. The assumption, therefore, is that this religion is superior to others, and the implied audience of the text is expected to share this view. In other words, the addressees of the tale are people who already believe in the power of Christian belief – it literally preaches to the converted.

That brings the discussion to its conclusion and the final question to be considered as part of this analysis and interpretation, which is whether *The King of Tars* is designed so as to perform the same thing it talks about. If we assume that what the romance tells is a story of a miraculous conversion, then what has been established about the implied audience clearly rules out that possibility – the aim of the story is not really to convert anyone, as it requires already believing that what it teaches about Christianity is true in order to accept the binary opposition it is based on without ever questioning the clearcut division into noble Christians and evil Saracens. Yet, as the discussion so far has already proven, *The King of Tars* is as much about the interaction of the in-group with the Other as it is about the conversion of a non-believer. Students may now be encouraged to consider whether the romance performs what it is about in this respect. In order to do so, they should try to pinpoint who exactly performs Othering in *The King of Tars*. An initial response may be that these are the Christian characters who aim at the separation from, assimilation or eradication of the Saracens. These scenarios all assume the necessity of maintaining the hierarchical division into the in- and out-group. Within the represented world of the story then, the characters perform the Othering of Saracens through their actions and attitudes. Once it has been established that the Muslims are othered on the intradiegetic level, it remains to be scrutinized what happens on the extradiegetic level, i.e., in terms of how the story is told.

This level has been, in fact, under scrutiny throughout the whole discussion, so what remains to be done is to define it explicitly, which can be done through analysing the narrative voice of the story. Students may either be asked to describe the type of the narrator on their own, or may be given some characteristics to choose from: are we dealing with a narrator who describes the events or describes and comments on them? Is the narrator's tone judgmental or non-judgmental? Does the narrator take sides or remain impartial? Examples of the narrator offering a commentary instead of merely reporting the events, being judgmental and taking the Christian side abound in the text, and they include the already discussed opening lines (the use of the adjectives "true" and "heathen"), the fragments where the narrator sides with the Christians when describing their battle with the Muslims (e.g. lines 210–213), or the lines where he expresses his sorrow at the sight of the beautiful Princess standing next to her "faul mate" (lines 388–390 – here not only the religious but also the racial prejudices of the narrator come to the fore since he focuses on the Princess' radiant complexion and how it contrasts with that of the Sultan). Once it is established that the narrator is very much involved and biased, the conclusion emerges that he, just like the implied audience, belongs to the in-group and assumes its perspective in his storytelling. The Saracens are thus not only othered within the represented world of the story, but also through the language used by the narrator to tell it. The partial tone, dehumanizing imagery, and evaluative adjectives create a biased perspective that affects the reception of what is told. Resorting to the rhetoric of proximity is yet another example of the narrator re-enacting the message of the tale on the level of the language used to tell it. While the story itself illustrates the dangers of too close a proximity of the in- and out-group through the figure of the monstrous lump, the rhetoric of proximity sometimes used by the narrator recreates the same danger on the discursive level. The tale does perform what it talks about in the sense that it not only relates the story of Saracens othered by Christians but also participates in the act of Othering through perpetuating the discourse of Otherness and directing it against the group of people that the implied audience is encouraged to differentiate themselves from, define themselves against, and remain hostile towards.

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Appendix: Study Questions and Fragments Selected for Close Reading

The selected fragments of the original text are quoted from:

The King of Tars. Ed. John H. Chandler. Medieval Institute Publications, 2015. https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/chandler-the-king-of-tars

I suggest that the questions **in bold** and the selected fragments **are shared with students in advance**, so that they can use those as a reading guide when preparing for the in-class discussion. Follow-up questions (not in bold) may be asked to advance the discussion in case students need some extra prompting, or to further expand its scope (some of these questions would already imply answers to the preceding ones if given to students in advance).

1. Defining In- and Out-Group

- **How does the text of the romance establish from the very outset who the two conflicted groups are going to be? How does it suggest which of the two groups is to be deemed praiseworthy?**

Lines 1–12

Herkneth to me bothe eld and ying, For Marie's love, that swete thing, Al hou a wer bigan Bituene a trewe Cristen king And an hethen heye lording, Of Dames the soudan. The king of Tars hadde a wive, Feirer might non ben olive – That ani wight telle can. A douhter thai hadde hem bituen, Non feirer woman might ben – As white as fether of swan.	Listen to me both old and young, For Mary's (i.e. Blessed Virgin Mary's) love, that sweet person, All (i.e. the whole story of) how a war began Between a true Christian king And a heathen high lord, The sultan of Damascus. The king of Tars had a wife, Fairer might none be alive – as anyone can tell. A daughter they had between them, No fairer woman there might have been – As white as the feather of a swan.

2. The Presentation of "Saracens": Imagery

- **What imagery is used when the text refers to the Sultan's men?**

Lines 169–180

Ther hewe houndes on Cristen men And feld hem doun bi nighen and ten; So wilde thai were and wode That men might sen alle the fen[18] Of Cristen both fremd and ken, The valays ren on blod. The soudan and his folk that stounde Hewe adoun with grimli wounde Mani a frely rode. Allas, to wele sped Mahoun! The Cristen men yede al adoun Was nought that hem withstode.	There hounds chopped Christian men [to pieces] And felled (i.e. cut) them down by nine and ten; So wild they were and mad That men could see all the bloody mess of Christians both strange and known, The valleys ran with blood. The sultan and his folk at that moment Have inflicted grim wounds [During] many a noble foray (i.e. raid, sudden attack). Allas, to victory hastened Mohammed! The Christian men suffered defeat [There] were none who them (i.e. sultan's army) withstood.

[18] John H. Chandler's note: "*That men might sen alle the fen*. The reading in Ak is obviously a corruption since "that men might sen alle the fen" makes little sense, unlike the Vernon reading – "falde hem doun in þe fen

See also lines 93: 'Hethen hounde' he gan thee calle ('Heathen hound' he called you); 145: The soudan gaderd a rout unride (The sultan gathered a gigantic [also: monstrous] company); 740: We schul make Cristen men of houndes – (We should make Christian men of hounds), also lines 1091, 1170 and 1172.

- **How is that imagery made use of in the Princess' dream? What does the dream symbolize? What does it foreshadow?**

Lines 418–453

And als sche fel on slepe thore Her thought ther stode hir bifore An hundred houndes blake, And bark on hir lasse and more. And on ther was that greved hir sore, Oway that wald hir take. And sche no durst him nought smite For drede that he wald hir bite, Swiche maistri he gan to make. And as sche wald fram hem fle, Sche seye ther stond develen thre And ich brent as a drake.	And as she fell asleep there It seemed to her that there stood before her A hundred hounds black, And barked at her all together. And one there was that gave her sore, Away that would her take. And she dared not him strike For dread that he would her bite, So threateningly he began to behave. And as she would from him flee, She saw there stood three devils And each burned like a dragon.
So lothliche thai were al ywrought, And ich in hond a gleive brought, Sche was aferd ful sore. On Jhesu Crist was alle hir thought; Therfore the fendes derd hir nought; Noither lesse no more. Fro the fendes sche passed sounde, And afterward ther com an hounde With browes brod and hore. Almost he hadde hir drawen adoun Ac thurth Jhesus Cristes passioun Sche was ysaved thore.	So loathly (i.e. ugly) they were all shaped, And each in hand brought a spear, She was very afraid. On Jesus Christ was all her thought; Therefore the fiends harmed her not; Not at all. From the fiends she passed sound (i.e. safely), And afterward there came a hound With brows broad and hoary. He almost had her drawn down But through Jesus Christ's passion (i.e. crucifixion) She was saved there.
Yete hir thought withouten lesing Als sche lay in hir swevening (That selcouthe was to rede) That blac hounde hir was folweing. Thurth might of Jhesu, Heven king, Spac to hir in manhede In white clothes als a knight, And seyd to hir, "Mi swete wight, No tharf thee nothing drede Of Ternagaunt no of Mahoun. Thi Lord that suffred passioun Schal help thee at thi nede."	Yet it seemed to her without lying (i.e. I'm not lying) As she lay in her swoon (i.e. sleep) (that strange was to say) That black hound her was following. Through might of Jesus, Heaven[ly] king, [it] Spoke to her in manly demeanor (i.e. human form) In white clothes as a knight, And said to her, "My sweet lady, You need not dread anything Of Ternagaunt[19] nor of Mohammed Your Lord that suffered passion Shall help you at your need."

[mud/dirt]." Perhaps "fen" should be read as a metaphor in response to line 170 and anticipating line 174, hence my gloss "bloody mess."

[19] OED: "an imaginary deity held in medieval Christendom to be worshipped by Muslims"

3. The Portrayal of the Sultan and the Princess: A Comparative Analysis

- **How is the Sultan presented in the story? Think of his reactions to different situations (rejection by the Princess; learning what his child looks like; prayer in the temple and what follows).**
- **How is the king's daughter presented in the story? Think of her reactions in analogous situations.**

Lines 97–111

When the soudan this wordes herd Also a wilde bore he ferd. His robe he rent adoun; His here he rent of heved and berd; He schuld venge him with his swerd, He swore bi Seyn Mahoun. The table so hetelich he smot It fel in to the flore fot-hot And loked as a lyoun. Al that he raught he smot doun right – Serjaunt, squier, clerk, and knight, Bothe erl and baroun. Al thus the soudan ferd, yplight; Al that day and alle that night No man might him schast.	When the sultan these words heard As a wild boar he behaved. His robe he tore apart; His hair he rent from head and beard; He should avenge himself with his sword, He swore by Saint Mohammed. The table so violently he struck [that] it fell to the floor immediately and [he] looked like a lion. All that he touched he smote down right – Servant, squire, clerk and knight, Both earl and baron. All [the time] thus the sultan behaved, indeed; all that day and all that night No man could him control.

Lines 583–617

The soudan com to chaumber that tide And with his wiif he gan to chide That wo was hir bigon. "O dame," he seyd biforn, "Ogain mi godes thou art forsworn! With right resoun Y preve The childe that is here of thee born Bothe lim and lith it is forlorn Alle thurth thi fals bileve! Thou levest nought wele afine On Jubiter no on Apoline, A morwe na an eve, No in Mahoun no in Ternagant. Therfore is lorn this litel faunt. No wonder thei me greve!" The levedi answerd and seyd tho, Ther sche lay in care and wo, "Leve sir, lat be that thought; The child was geten bitwen ous to. For thi bileve it farth so, Bi Him that ous hath wrought! Take now this flesche and bere it anon Bifor thine godes everichon	The sultan came to the chamber that time And his wife he started to chide (i.e. scorn) That woe had begun [with] her. "O dame," he said before [her], Against my gods you are forsworn! With right reason I prove The child that is here of you born Both limb and joint it is forlorn All [this] through your false belief! You believe not thoroughly In Jupiter nor in Apollo, [Neither] in the morning nor in the evening, Neither in Mohammed nor in Ternagant. Therefore is lorn this little child. No wonder they (i.e. the gods) make me unfortunate!" The lady answered and said thus, There [as] she lay in care and woe, "Honorable sir, let be (i.e. put away) that thought; The child was begotten between us two Therefore believe it fares so, By him that us has wrought (made)! Take now this flesh and bear it anon Before your gods every one

That thou no lete it nought,	So that you spare no effort,
And pray thine godes al yfere,	And pray your gods together,
Astow art hem leve and dere,	As you are to them beloved and dear,
To live that it be brought.	To life that it be brought (i.e that it is brought to life).
"And yif Mahoun and Jovin can	And if Mohammed and Jove can
Make it fourmed after a man	Make it formed after a man
With liif and limes aright,	With life and limbs proper,
Bi Jhesu Crist that this warld wan	By Jesus Christ that this world won
Y schal leve thee better than	I shall believe even more than you
That thai ar ful of might.	That they are full of might.
And bot thai it to live bring	And unless they it to life bring (i.e. unless they bring it to life)
Y nil leven on hem nothing	I won't believe in them
Noither bi day no night."	Neither by day or by night."

Lines 634–681

And when he hadde al ypreyd,	And when he had all prayed (i.e. when he finished his prayers),
And alle that ever he couthe he seyd,	And all that he ever could he said,
The flesche lay stille as ston.	The flesh lay still as stone.
Anon he stert up at a breyd,	Anon he jumped up suddenly,
And in his hert he was atreyd,	And in his heart he was troubled,
For lim no hadde it non.	For limb had it none.
He biheld on his godes alle	He looked upon his gods all
And seye ther might no bot bifalle;	And saw there could no help come;
Wel wo was him bigon.	Very deeply grieved was he.
"O Sir Mahoun," he gan to grede,	"O Sir Mohammed," he cried out
"Wil ye nought helpe me at this nede?	"Will you not help me at this need?
The devel you brenne ichon!"	[Let] the devil burn each one [of] you!"
He hent a staf with grete hete	He lifted a staff with great vehemence
And stirt anon his godes to bete	And started anon his gods to beat
And drough hem alle adoun,	And pulled them all down,
And leyd on til he gan to swete	And continued till he sweated
And gaf hem strokes gode and gret,	And gave them strokes good and great,
Both Jovine and Plotoun.	Both Jove and Pluto.
And alder best he bete afin	And best of all he beat thoroughly
Jubiter and Apolin,	Jupiter and Apollo,
And brac hem arm and croun,	And broke their arm and crown (i.e. head),
And Ternagaunt that was her brother –	And Ternagaunt that was their brother –
He no lete never a lime with other	He left no limb with other (i.e. he destroyed them completely)
No of his god Mahoun.	Nor of his god Mohammed.
And when he hadde beten hem gode won	And when he had beaten them very well
Yete lay the flesche stille so ston,	Yet lay the flesh still as stone,
An heye on his auter.	On high on his altar.
He tok it in his hond anon	He took it in his hand anon
And into chaumber he gan gon,	And into chamber he went,
And seyd, "Lo, have it here.	And said, "Lo, have it here.
Ich have don al that Y can	I have done all that I can
To make it fourmed after a man	To make it formed after a man (i.e. to make it look like a man)
With kneleing and preier,	With kneeling and prayer,
And for alle that ichave hem bisought	And for all that I have them beseeched

Mine godes no may help me nought. The devel hem sett afere!" And than answerd that gode wiman Wel hendeliche to that soudan: "Leve sir, here mi speche. The best rede that Y can, Bi Jhesu Crist that made man, Now ichil you teche. Now thou hast proved god thine, Yif me leve to asay mine Whether is better leche. And, leve sir, prey thee this: Leve on Him that stronger is For doute of more wreche."	My gods may help me not. [let] the devil set them afire!" And then answered that good woman Well courteously to that sultan: "Beloved sir, hear me speak The best advice that I know, By Jesus Christ that made man, I shall teach you. Now you have proven your gods, Give me leave to test mine Whether [he] is a better healer. And, dear sir, allow you this Believe in him that stronger is (i.e. believe in the one that turns out to be stronger) For fear of more affliction."

4. The Newborn and Its Symbolic Significance

- **Take a look at the fragment which describes the newborn's looks – what is characteristic about it? How is it described? What kind of information is provided? What is the newborn compared to?**
- **By looking at the newborn – would it be possible to know what it was supposed to be, i.e., what it could potentially be?**
- **a follow-up question:**
  - Why do you think are the non-existent body parts enumerated?
- **a version of this legend was in circulation in the fourteenth century and some of its analogues differed in the exact form in which they related the child to have been born. Some of them said the child was born hairy all over its body or that in was half-hairy, others describe it as half-animal or half white and half-black – what do all these incarnations have in common with how the child is described in the romance and in what respect do they differ?**

Lines 574–582

And when the child was ybore, Wel sori wimen were therfore, For lim no hadde it non, Bot as a rond of flesche yschore In chaumber it lay hem bifore Withouten blod and bon. For sorwe the levedi wald dye, For it hadde noither nose no eye Bot lay ded as the ston.	And when the child was born, Well sore women were therefore, For limb it had none, But as a round (lump) of flesh cut (i.e. butchered) In chamber it lay before them Without blood and bone. For sorrow the lady wished to die, For it had neither nose nor eye But lay dead as a stone.

- **What is the child is missing, according to what the Princess says in line 755?**
  follow-up questions:
  - Does the form (or rather formlessness) of the child suggest what went wrong? Why such a presentation? What is the significance of the newborn's appearance?

- Who, according to Aristotle, would be the material cause in the conception of a human and who would be the formal cause (i.e., who would provide the matter and who would provide the form)?
- What can the Princess mean by saying that the child is not the Sultan's in line 807?
- Why is the Sultan unable to fulfil his role as a father? What is he implied to be missing? (Think of the imagery used to describe him and the contrast of his behaviour and that of the Princess)

Lines 751–756

"For in Him is mine hope aplight, The Fader that is ful of might Mi sorwe schal me slake. Yif it were cristned aright, It schuld have fourme to se bi sight With lim and liif to wake."	For in him is my hope indeed The Father that is full of might My sorrow shall me slake. If it is christened properly, It should have a form to see by sight With limb and life to stir [into life]."

Lines 799–810

The eeds seyd, "Leman min, Ywis icham glad afin Of this child that Y se." "Ya, sir, bi Seyn Martin Yif the halvendel wer thin Wel glad might thou be." "O dame," he seyd, "how is that? Is it nought min that Y bigat?" "No, sir," than seyd sche, "Bot thou were cristned so it is – Thou no hast no part theron ywis, Noither of the child ne of me.	The sultan said, "My Sweetheart, Indeed I am glad thoroughly [Because] of this child that I see." "Yes sir, by Saint Martin If the half were yours Well glad might you be." "O dame," he said, "how is that? Is it not mine that I begotten?" "No sir," then said she, "Unless you are christened as it (the child) is – You have no part in it indeed, Neither of the child nor of me.

- **The romance makes frequent use of formulaic expressions related to Christianity (e.g. line 2: For Marie's love; line 40: Bi Him that dyed on the rode; lines 56–57: Forsake Jhesus our Saveour / That suffred woundes five?; line 61: Jhesu mi Lord in Trinité; lines 64–65: O God and Persones Thre One / For Marie love, Thi moder fre etc.). The fillers of this kind do not necessarily convey any particular meaning, serving instead as commonplace expressions of faith. It seems, however, that the selection of the formulas used in the romance between lines 478 and 681 does correspond to the content of the story: find any formulaic expressions in the fragment in question: What particular property of God do they underline and how do they foreshadow what the result of the test proposed by the Princess is going to be?**

the following fragments can be used by students to substantiate their answer:

Lines 485–486

And Jhesu Crist mi Lord forsake,
That made Adam and Eve

Lines 512–513

To Jhesu sche made hir mon,
That alle this world hath wrought.

Line 569
Sche bad to Jhesu ful of might

Line 603
Bi Him that ous hath wrought!

Line 674
Bi Jhesu Crist that made man

- **What is the function of comparing the child to a stone in the Sultan's prayer scene? What does the scene tell us about the child and the gods that the Sultan prays to? What parallel does the presentation of the gods here draw between the two?**

Lines 618–660

The soudan toke that flesche anon Into his temple he gan to gon Ther his godes were dight. Biforn his eedss he gan it leyn And held up his honden tuein, While men might go five mile. "A, mightful Mahoun," he gan to seyn, "And Ternagaunt, of michel meyn, In you was never no gile. Seyn Jubiter and Apolin, Astirot and Seyn Jovin, Help now in this perile." Oft he kneled and oft he ros And crid so long til he was hos And al he tint his while. And when he hadde al ypreyd, And alle that ever he couthe he seyd, The flesche lay stille as ston. Anon he stert up at a breyd, And in his hert he was atreyd, For lim no hadde it non. He biheld on his godes alle And seye ther might no bot bifalle; Wel wo was him bigon. "O Sir Mahoun," he gan to grede, "Wil ye nought helpe me at this eed? The devel you brenne ichon!" He hent a staf with grete hete And stirt anon his godes to bete And drough hem alle adoun, And leyd on til he gan to swete And gaf hem strokes gode and gret, Both Jovine and Plotoun.	The sultan took that flesh anon Into his temple he went There his gods were arrayed. Before his gods he laid And held up his hands two, While men might go five mile (i.e. For as long as it would take one to walk five miles). "Oh, mightful Mohammed," he said, "And Ternagaunt, of great might, In you was never any guile Saint Jupiter and Apollo Astarte (i.e. Venus) and Saint Jove Help now in this peril." Often he knelt and often he rose And cried so long till he was hoarse And he wasted all his time. And when he had all prayed (i.e. when he finished his prayers), And all that he ever could he said, The flesh lay still as stone. Anon he jumped up suddenly, And in his heart he was troubled, For limb had it none. He looked upon his gods all And saw there could no help come; Very deeply grieved was he. "O Sir Mohammed," he cried out "Will you not help me at this need? [Let] the devil burn each one [of] you!" He lifted a staff with great vehemence And started anon his gods to beat And pulled them all down, And continued till he sweated And gave them strokes good and great, Both Jove and Pluto.

And alder best he bete afin Jubiter and Apolin, And brac hem arm and croun, And Ternagaunt that was her brother — He no lete never a lime with other No of his god Mahoun. And when he hadde beten hem gode won Yete lay the flesche stille so ston, An heye on his auter.	And best of all he beat thoroughly Jupiter and Apollo, And broke their arm and crown (i.e. head), And Ternagaunt that was their brother - He left no limb with other (i.e. he destroyed them completely) Nor of his god Mohammed. And when he had beaten them very well Yet lay the flesh still as stone, On high on his altar.

5. The Power of the Christian and Muslim Ritual

- **What happens when the Princess arrives at the Sultan's court? How is the moment of the Princess entering into 'the other' culture marked in the text?**

Lines 373–393

He com with mani gret lording Forto welcome that swete thing When sche was brought in chare. He kist hir wel mani a sithe; His joie couthe he no man kithe – Oway was alle his care. Into chaumber sche was ladde, And richeliche sche was cladde As hethen wiman ware. Whan sche was cladde in riche palle, The soudan dede his knightes calle And badde that maiden forth fett. And when sche com into the halle, Bifor the heyghe lordinges alle, Toforn the soudan thai hir sett. Gret diol it was forto se, The bird that was so bright on ble To have so foule a mett. Thei that sche made gret solas The sorwe that at hir hert was No might it noman lett.	He came with many great lords To welcome that sweet thing When she was brought in chariot. He kissed her well many a time; His joy could no man describe – Away was all his sorrow. Into a chamber she was led, And richly she was dressed As heathen women were. When she was clad in rich clothes, The sultan did his knights call And bade the maiden forth fetch. And when she came into the hall, Before the high lords all, Before them the sultan placed her. Great sadness it was that to see, The woman that was so bright (i.e. radiant) of complexion To have so foul a mate. Although she [appeared to] enjoy herself The sorrow that at her heart was Noone could prevent.

- **Something analogous happens to the Sultan – what is that analogous moment?**
  Follow-up questions:
  - What elements of the ritual of baptism are emphasized in the description?
  - In what sense is the Sultan's baptism a ritual of incorporation into a different culture?
- **(a general question) What is the function of rituals? What are the words and gestures of a ritual supposed to do? Are they just a performance or is there more to them?**
- **(a general question) What binary opposition are laws and rituals part of? Why do people impose the ritualistic frameworks on their actions? (hint: think of the difference between mating and marriage)**
- **What is the difference between what happens to the Princess and the Sultan during their rituals of incorporation and when it comes to the effectiveness of the two rituals?**

a follow-up question:

- What does the tale imply about the Muslim ritual? Why is it ineffective in changing the reality? (think of what we have said about the presentation of the Saracens, including the Sultan, in the tale, about the transformation of the Princess and about the marriage that should have allowed the Princess and the Sultan to become parents)

Lines 907–930

And when it was light of day The riche soudan ther he lay Up bigan to arise. To the prest he went his way And halp him alle that he may That fel to his servise. And when the prest hadde tho Dight redi that fel therto In al maner wise, The soudan with gode wille anon Dede off his clothes everichon To reseyve his baptize. The Cristen prest hight Cleophas; He cleped the soudan of Damas After his owhen name. His hide that blac and lothely was Al white bicom thurth Godes gras And clere withouten blame. And when the soudan seye that sight, Than leved he wele on God almight; His care went to game. And when the prest hadde alle yseyd And haly water on him leyd, To chaumber thai went ysame.	And when it was light of day (i.e. in the morning) The mighty sultan [from] where he lay Up began to arise. To the priest he went his way And helped him all that he could That appertained to his service. And when the priest had then Prepared [everything] that appertained to this In all manner wise, The sultan with good will anon Took off his clothes every one To receive his baptism. The Christian priest called Cleophas; He named the sultan of Damascus After his own name. His skin that black and loathly was All white became through God's grace And clear without blame. And when the sultan saw that sight, Then believed he well in God almighty; His misery turned into mirth And when the priest said (i.e. pronounced) all And holy water on him laid, To the chamber they went together.

6. (Apparent) Inconsistencies and the Rhetoric of Proximity

- **There are moments in the tale in which the narrator suggests that there are some similarities between Islam and Christianity and between the followers of these two faiths. Can you think of any such moments?**

  the following fragments can be provided as examples:

Lines 181–186

The king of Tars seye that sight; For wretthe he was neye wode, aplight. He hent in hond a spere And to the soudan he rode ful right. With a stroke o michel might, To grounde he gan him bere.	The king of Tars saw that sight; For wrath he was nearly mad, assuredly. He grasped in hand a spear And to the sultan he rode full right. With a stroke of great might, He (i.e. the king) bore him (i.e. the sultan) to the ground (i.e. he unhorsed him).

Lines 193–198

And when he was opon his stede, Him thought he brend so spark on glede For ire and for envie. He faught so he wald wede: Alle that he hit he maked blede. "Help, Mahoun!" he gan crie.	And when he was upon his steed, It seemed to them that he burned like a spark on a live coal For spite and for envy. He fought as if he would go mad: He made all [people] that he hit bleed. "Help, Mohammed!" he went crying.

Lines 406–409

Wel lothe war a Cristen man To wedde an hethen woman That leved on fals lawe; Als loth was that soudan To wed a Cristen woman,	Well loath were a Christian man To wed a heathen woman That believed in false law; Also loath was that sultan To wed a Christian woman,

- **Why are the analogies there? Do you see them as weakening the 'us' and 'them' division (i.e., undermining the binary opposition on which the tale is based)? Do these analogies make the story less anti-Islamic? (hint: 'us' vs heresy / vs religion with some similarities / vs religion that is completely different, has absolutely nothing to do with 'us' – which of the three is most and least prone to othering in your opinion? Why?)**

7. **The Position of the Narrator and the Implied Audience of the Romance**
   - **Can you think of any instances of Christians' behaviours that we would call morally questionable or wrong, but that are justified in the tale?**
     prompt questions:
     - how does the tale present the Princess's double-dealing?
     - How does the Saracens' violence compare to the Christians' anger and the ensuing crusade?

     a follow-up question:
     - How does the tale manage to present cheating, lying, pretending and slaughter as something positive? What kind of implicit assumptions make it possible to present this kind of deceit in a positive light? How come that this behaviour does not discredit the Princess and the crusaders (and therefore undermine the whole binary opposition the tale is based on), but, quite the contrary, makes them even more positive characters? What kind of assumption does the implied audience of the tale need to share in order to accept the behaviour of the Princess and of other Christians? In other words, who is the implied audience of the tale?
   - **What kind of narrative voice is used in *The King of Tars*?**
     prompt questions:
     - Does the narrator relate the events or relate and comment on them?
     - Is the narrator's tone judgmental or non-judgmental?
     - Does the narrator take sides or remain impartial?
   - **Do you think the tale is designed to perform the same miracle as it describes, that is to convert infidels? Does it do what it tells in any other sense?**