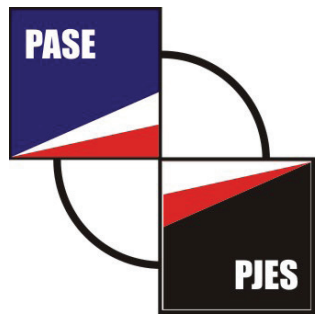

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From the Editors

The academic novel (or university, college, or campus novel) is of course a subgenre. It may be statistically unimposing if compared to, say, the mystery or science fiction or romance varieties (though all these are represented in academic fiction). There may be critics who dismiss its interest or complain of its narrow appeal, critics who are themselves usually university-based academics. And yet the academic novel not only continues: it flourishes. Novelists write them and readers, most of whom are not professors, read them. Moreover, it is a subgenre that has appealed to many major literary novelists, including such authors as Vladimir Nabokov, Javier Marias, Zadie Smith, Philip Roth, A. S. Byatt, Bernard Malamud, and Nobel laureates Saul Bellow and J. M. Coetzee. A majority of the best-known academic novels have been from the Anglo-American world but this is changing as new examples spring up outside the Anglosphere.

Explanations for the attractions of the form are many and range from the usefulness of the academic milieu and the prescribed academic term as closed systems to the supposed fun of seeing intellectuals made to look petty or venal, cowardly or lustful. That a university is a setting for thinking and the attainment of wisdom, among other activities, invites writers and readers who want a cerebral quality in their fiction. And the university seems to lend itself to comedy and satire.

In November of 2019, one in a series of seminars on the academic novel organized on the Continent (earlier seminars or dedicated portions of seminars on academic fiction had been held in Ghent, Bucharest, Vienna, Gdansk, Kyiv, and Lublin) took place at Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Alongside scholars from several Polish universities there were representatives from the United States, Britain, Romania, Spain, and even India for two days of presentations. The series we present here brings together a selection of articles most of which are based on the presentations in Kraków.

In "Research Scholars and Rebel Angels" Rowland Cotterill discusses three novelistic portrayals of the university, C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* (1945), Simon Raven's *Places Where They Sing* (1970) and Robertson Davies's *The Rebel Angels* (1981) as academic "theodramas" revolving around a battle between forces of good and evil. Acknowledging the supernatural framework of the selected novels and consistently referring to the myth of Faust (especially in Goethe's and Marlowe's works), the author treats the novels by Lewis, Raven

and Davies as twentieth-century manifestations of some of the conflicts and dilemmas attendant on human ambition and the desire for knowledge.

Zbigniew Głowala discusses the representation of the private and professional lives of Oxford dons in J.I.M. Stewart's *The Aylwins* (1966). The novel is treated as an illustration of the genre of "collegiate story", as the narrator himself describes it. Starting with the premise that *The Aylwins* is based on a number of stereotypes about academic life, the author refers to *The Academic Tribes* (1976) by Hazard Adams in order to demonstrate that most of the observations Adams makes in his book are confirmed in Stewart's fictional story.

Another satirical take on the life of scholars may be found in Michael Frayn's *The Trick of It* (1973). Through its academic protagonist's failures and frustrations, the novel mocks the secondary, derivative nature of scholarship as opposed to creative work. In her analysis of Frayn's story, Isabel Berzal Ayuso employs Simon Critchley's typology of humour (2002). It is argued that irrespective of its multi-layered comic aspect, *The Trick of It* conveys a positive image of academia.

Izabela Curyłło-Klag analyses Evelyn Conlon's short story "Two Gallants" from *Dubliners 100*, a volume of contemporary re-writes of Joyce's stories, issued to mark the centenary of the original publication. Conlon both openly alludes to Joyce's story of the same title, and targets the critical industry that Joyce's work has amassed over the past century. The motif of two men swindling a servant girl is reworked into a story of belated feminist scholarly revenge. The female protagonist, who turns out to be descended from the woman who supposedly served as a model for the Joycean character, offers a new version of the real-life story as well as exposes unfair and predatory academic practices of her male colleagues.

David Lodge's *Thinks…* (2001) dramatises the well-known opposition between "the two cultures" as a professional and private relationship between a writer and scientist, in a campus setting. Informed by Bakhtin's views on novelistic dialogism, Lodge's novel sets up several binaries without resolving them conclusively. The chief dualism addressed in the novel stems from different approaches to human consciousness. Bożena Kucała's article provides a detailed analysis of how this and related kinds of dualism are represented in the novel.

Ewa Kowal analyses James Lusdun's representation of academia in his 2002 novel *The Horned Man*. The book tells the story of a British scholar working at an American college and, in the course of his work, confronting issues of gender relations and sexual harassment in what may be identified, in hindsight, as a pre-#MeTwo movement era. Despite the fact that Lusdun's novel

gradually departs from the realist mode, the article highlights its topicality and perceptive engagement with some of the most controversial and thorny problems in contemporary academic life. Carefully tracing the trajectories of the increasingly confusing and unreliable narration, Ewa Kowal also offers a detailed interpretation of the novel's numerous intertextual allusions and cultural references.

Corina Selejan's article addresses a spectrum of fictional representations of academe in contemporary Romanian novels. The author outlines the cultural and political context of Romanian academic fiction, pointing out that this is a relatively new phenomenon since this genre was almost non-existent in Romania before the fall of Communism. In her article, Selejan references numerous Romanian academic novels and suggests a periodisation of Romanian academic fiction into the realist phase, the metafictional phase, and, the most recent phase, the turn towards magic realism. The author also poses questions concerning the viability of applying postcolonial theory to the study of literature after Communism.

Michał Palmowski examines attitudes to teaching as well as images of teachers in a wide range of academic novels, by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, Jonathan Franzen, J.M. Coetzee, Philip Roth and Michel Houellebecq. Drawing on pedagogic literature, he distinguishes fear-driven, anger-driven and passion-driven approaches to teaching in the selected novels. The main focus of his article is on the teacher-protagonist and his relations with his students. The author's special interest is in the teaching of literature, its proper purposes and relevance to students' needs.

Merritt Moseley
Bożena Kucała

Research Scholars and Rebel Angels: Faustian Drama and the Modern University in Novels by C.S. Lewis, Simon Raven and Robertson Davies

Rowland Cotterill
Independent scholar

Abstract: In novels by C.S. Lewis, Simon Raven and Robertson Davies, universities are depicted as plausible, and theologically over-determined, settings for battles between cosmic forces, good and evil – battles foreshadowed in earlier "Faustian" dramas and involving "middle spirits", ambiguously poised between gods and devils, as they relate to humans. Human desires for knowledge, creativity and personal freedom, arguably the consequences of a theologically definable (and perhaps fortunate) "Fall", are shown to be institutionally entrenched in (Anglophone) universities and caught up in socially recognisable and "modern" contradictions. They are seen also, and to that extent plausibly, as offering opportunities for diabolic agencies whose effects take shape, within the outworkings of apparently human projects, as a set of systematically unintended, and tendentially disastrous, consequences. Representations of such conflicts, and of their violent consequences, vary, between the three novelists under discussion, in terms not only of the writers' personal creeds and convictions, but also of social plausibility and diverse modes of narration and emplotment.

Keywords: universities, angels, devils, Fall, Faust, projects

In this paper I shall discuss three novels – C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, published in 1945; *Places Where They Sing*, by Simon Raven, published in 1970; and Robertson Davies's *The Rebel Angels*, published in 1981. At these respective times of publication, Lewis was a Tutor of English at Magdalen College, Oxford, Raven was a successful freelance author of novels and of plays for radio and television, and Davies was Professor of English Literature and Master of Massey College in the University of Toronto.

In the context of a discussion of these novels as "academic fictions", it is relevant to indicate their authors' connections with academic life and work. Lewis's

undergraduate studies had been in classics and philosophy; his widely acclaimed academic publications were largely in the field of medieval literature. He was a conspicuous figure within his college, but would soon be an unsuccessful candidate for an elective university post, the Professorship of Poetry. Raven, a brilliant classics scholar of King's College Cambridge, never wrote a word of his projected doctoral thesis, joined the regular Army but later resigned on account of gambling debts, and was maintained by his publishers on the conditions of his living at a distance from London and producing publishable fictions every couple of years. Davies, mainly educated in Canada, gained his only academic qualification, a B.Litt. in the field of Elizabethan theatre, at Oxford near the end of the interwar years; after two years as an actor at the London Old Vic, he returned to Canada, where he edited and largely wrote a major city newspaper, the "Peterborough Examiner", before being invited to lead a new, small and originally all-male postgraduate college.

Given such varied careers, it is also relevant to consider the novelists in terms of the relations between these specific texts and the writers' overall outputs and beliefs. For Lewis, academic publication had, by 1945, become somewhat overshadowed by the writing of Christian apologetics; *That Hideous Strength* was the third in a series of science-fiction novels sharing such apologetic ambitions. Raven's *Places Where They Sing*, for its part, is the sixth in an ambitious sequence of ten novels, *Alms for Oblivion*, charting changes in English society from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s. Davies's *The Rebel Angels* was the first in a sequence of three, *The Cornish Trilogy.* Lewis was a convinced and militant Christian, orthodox in beliefs and romantic in feeling. Davies saw himself as having moved from his childhood indoctrination into a dour Presbyterianism through an adult fascination with the teachings of Carl Jung. Raven, a rebel against public school Anglicanism, professed to combine respect for the moral teachings of Jesus with a violent dislike of Christian institutions and a positive acceptance of the "pagan" values – the brevity of life, the finality of death, and the supremacy of personal pleasure and honour.

These novels have attracted very little academic discussion – in Raven's case, virtually none. Much writing about Lewis and, to a lesser extent, Davies has been biographic or hagiographic. With very few exceptions, which shall be noted, the criticism of specifically academic fiction has passed them over; certainly they have never been drawn together within the sub-category which in this paper I shall outline and develop. This category could appropriately be termed "the-

odrama", insofar as it involves a sequence of relationships between superhuman and human agents. Such relationships were pre-eminently the focus of two major dramatic works, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust,* and I shall touch on features of those works which are salient to the arguably "Faustian" novels under consideration here.

First one may set out the premises shared by these three fictional texts. It is no accident that a major pioneering study of academic fiction, Ian Carter's *Ancient Cultures of Conceit* (1990), was written by a professional sociologist; for the terrain of representation, in such fiction, has been taken to be that of a set of institutions defined by human agencies and demands, collective and individual. The novels analysed here proceed upon a rather different basis. Within them, academies and universities are the contexts, plausible and indeed over-determined, for spiritual conflict that is potentially "apocalyptic", in both its violence and its theological significance. Such conflicts involve battles between angelic and diabolic forces, which cannot always be distinguished clearly from one another. To these battles can arguably be traced, in the opinions of the two alternating narrators of Davies's novel, the very origin and continued existence of universities. More generally, for all three novels, contemporary academic developments amount to new episodes in an ancient and protracted spiritual warfare.

For the purposes of Lewis's and Davies's fictions, this warfare began in a double Fall, of humanity and, before that, of "rebel angels". This Fall was, for angels and for Lewis's scenario, only partial, but, for humanity, universal though perhaps not complete. In Davies's novel the Fall is regarded as fortunate, leading to outcomes creative, educative and unpredictably diverse. For Lewis, fallen humanity, though redeemed by the birth and death of Christ, seems still bound in sin. Such sin typically takes the forms of possessive greed, material ambition, and solipsistic pride, all endemic for Lewis even or especially within traditional universities. For Raven's purposes, God may exist but has largely abandoned His human creatures, leaving them a few tokens of His presence, in nature, in culture and in morality.

For Lewis, the medieval Christian foundations of universities seem largely obliterated by modern developments, social and intellectual, in such fields as finance, architecture and disciplinary frontiers. For Davies, more optimistically, a new university college with an ancient name ("The College of St John and the Holy Ghost", nicknamed "Spook") conducts its young research scholars towards new levels of intellectual, emotional and spiritual awareness through the

intermediary workings of figures whom he calls "rebel angels", some human some superhuman. Raven, within an ostensibly less supernatural framework, depicts an ancient Cambridge foundation, Royal and religious, which he names "Lancaster College", as it attempts a purely secular adjustment to new, revolutionary and potentially violent demands voiced by staff and students. The college is defended by a diverse group, again of students and staff, seeking to uphold precarious human standards of intellect and culture, personal honour and sheer hard labour.

All three novelists organize their narratives around projects which are humanly plausible in the contexts of mid-twentieth-century Anglophone universities. These include projects for new academic subjects, for increases in student intake, and for the rectification of grotesque imbalances of numbers and of perceived power in gender relations. They especially relate to the erection, or the expensive restoration, of buildings which are aesthetically pleasing, architecturally trendy, or scientifically necessary. Such projects, in the course of the novels, acquire spiritual significance and narrative volatility from the presence, within the universities, of angelic and diabolic agencies. Such agencies enact, through the self-delusions of human individual and administrative planning, their own cosmic and perhaps providentially guided warfare and "theodrama".

Within this framework, it is worthwhile to look more closely at three general issues. I shall consider, first, the terrain of university life, within which this "theodrama" finds a congenial site for enactment; secondly, the nature and the participating agents of this theodrama – and here the parallels with Faustian dramas are relevant; thirdly, issues of narrative representation and emplotment to which the cosmic scope of the novels gives rise.

First it is instructive to compare various diagnoses, within these texts and derivable from other comparable academic novels, of the nature of contemporary university life. One might well wonder whether conditions were such as to offer credibility, not to say warranty, to claims about the operation of supernatural agencies. Two points will at once become clear. First, Lewis and Davies deploy their own pre-existing concerns, theological and narratological, in depicting the university contexts which appear in their novels (the case with Raven is more nuanced and complex). Second, the explicit supernaturalism informing Lewis's text generates a representation of university and college life scarcely, if at all, more pessimistic than that which appears both in Raven's overtly secular novel and in the analysis of academic fiction offered by the

avowedly secular sociologist Ian Carter (to whose book I have already alluded). In this respect it is Davies whose depiction of contemporary collegiate life offers an optimistic alternative.

For Carter, writing in 1990 with awareness of the three novels under discussion here, English universities, old and new, were in a fraught and barely sustainable situation. They were dominated by outdated and inappropriate reverence for Oxbridge institutions and mores. Many of them taught outdated curricula setting supreme value upon ancient languages and early-modern philosophy. In others, ideas of syllabus change were driven by merely fashionable valorisation of "social sciences", and by inadequately-considered notions of "interdisciplinarity". The ostensibly practical and vocational fields of law, medicine, and theology were dominated by self-protective professionalism. Elitist and Arnoldian ambitions to educate and lead an otherwise "philistine" national culture rang hollow alongside arbitrary and ineffectual opposition to political and social currents demanding radical change. The governance of universities was ambiguous, as between centripetal and centrifugal institutions – administrative and executive officers on the one hand, colleges and departments and (newly) Faculties and Schools on the other. In consequence there was endemic tension between the forces of national policy and the impacts of local and civic pressure, and between State, local authority, and family as the sources of educational funding and student maintenance. The intake of English universities was, in proportion to the overall population, small, and selected on prejudicial grounds. Arrangements for accommodation were outdated and divisive. Existing gender imbalance in individual institutions and in the student body as a whole was indefensible. Social relations, partly in consequence, were frequently repressive and generally unstable – relations between teaching staff and administrators, staff and students, and (the most common theme of academic fiction) staff and staff. Universities were thus characterized (these are my terms, not Carter's) at once by fragmentation and petrifaction. Something, or many things, had gone badly wrong.

Compare with this some remarks by the temporarily-omniscient narrator of Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, near the centre of the novel;

> Despair of objective truth had been increasingly insinuated into the scientists; indifference to it, and a concentration upon mere power, had been the result […] Dreams of the far future destiny of man

> were ragging up from its shallow and unquiet grave the old dream of Man as God. There was now […] a real chance for fallen man to shake off the limitation of his powers which mercy had imposed upon him as a protection from the full results of his fall. If he succeeded, hell would at last be incarnate. (1945, 3)

Davies's novel, both in continuity with Lewis's terms and in sharp contrast to Lewis's tone, offers this diagnosis;

> Adam and Eve had learned how to comprehend the Kingdom of the Father […] and their descendants have been hard at it ever since. That's what universities are about, when they aren't farting about with trivialities. (1983, 4)

The balance of judgements here, and the supernaturalist framework of the two novelists, are amply in evidence in an earlier text, which also anticipates Lewis and Davies in its conception of the human and supernatural agents predictably operative within a university context – Goethe's *Faust*. In this grandest and most subtle of university fictions the protagonist, already a proto-modern marvel of interdisciplinary virtuosity, exhibits a restlessness with all acquired knowledge, which is characteristic of the Biblical Adam and Eve;

> Well, that's philosophy I've read,
> And law and medicine, and I fear
> Theology too, from A to Z,
> Hard studies all, that have cost me dear.
> And so I sit, poor silly man,
> No wiser now than when I began […]
> And I see all our search for knowledge is vain,
> And this burns my heart with bitter pain.
> (Goethe 1987, 15, ll. 354-60, 364-65)

The oscillations of Faust's restless moods incur, or invite, the intervention of a devil, Mephistopheles. He leads Faust from his gloomy Gothic study into an adventurous quest for the knowledge and experience, intellectual and erotic, cultural and social, with which Faust might construct, from and amidst a fallen

world, a new self-conscious and aspiring human community. For such a community, Davies's maxim might be appropriate;

> The striving for wisdom is the second paradise of the world. (1983, 6)

Faust's career, across the two parts of Goethe's vast drama, never quite abandons the context and the trappings of an intellectual prestige and charisma rooted in the institution of a university. Nor does Faust ever quite put off the naivety of a career intellectual in face of the ways of a world where Mephistopheles is inextricably at work. Faust charms and consoles Gretchen with the rationalisations of "modern theology". He impresses the Emperor with classical learning, with a parade of alchemy and with the skills of Renaissance stagecraft. To a Euripidean Helen of Troy he teaches the prosodic skills of medieval and Romantic verse-construction. Once rewarded, by the Emperor, with new terrain for building works, he projects an ecologically invasive intervention upon hitherto-unplanned natural sites. Such a career, however far it is inflected by Mephistophelean malignity, is also recognisable in terms of what has subsequently been perceived as academic modernity.

A linkage between these notions, pertinent to an understanding of the agencies at work in the novels of Lewis and Davies, was articulated by William Empson in his posthumously-published study of another Faust-drama, that of Marlowe; he wrote of

> […] a strong intellectual belief in Middle Spirits, neither from Heaven nor Hell […] [this belief] gave a tolerable picture of the pagan gods […] for any study of Nature, at the start of the sciences, it was essential to be allowed a belief in spirits who were neutral. (1987, 99-100, 104)

Empson, passionately anti-Christian and seeking to associate Marlowe to this persuasion, regarded Mephastophilis, in *Doctor Faustus*, as a stage embodiment of just such a Middle Spirit. Marlowe's Faust, accordingly, would be, despite his fears of Christian damnation, neither damned nor saved but dissolved, rather like Shakespeare's Ariel, into the elements. By contrast but perhaps no less obscurely, Goethe's Faust is saved, by a very non-interventionist God and by the pleading of repentant women, into an unexpectedly Catholic (and catholic) Heaven.

The situation for Lewis's characters is less ambiguous and highly polarised. His scientific technicians, together with a radically modern post-Christian priest, and led by administrators both vapid and inhuman, are overwhelmed by the supernatural forces which their own tamperings with diabolism have let loose. These forces are also provisionally entrusted to the more benign hands of a magician, the resurrected Merlin, equipped with his own resources of "pre-Atlantean magic". Such magic is potentially indifferent in its nature, like Empsonian Middle Spirits, but capable of damaging even its own well--intentioned users. The positive protagonist of Lewis's thriller, the academic linguist Ransom, must, accordingly, be extracted from the worlds of human and of academic "nature" by which he can no longer be appropriately, or safely, contained. His followers, some of them fellow-linguists, mourn his departure; but the collegiate institution, initially hospitable to the devil-worshipping intellectuals, and effectively destroyed by Merlin's powers, can and will be put back together again, in all its dubious potentialities.

Ransom remarks that such agents as Merlin

> weren't ministering spirits sent to help fallen humanity, but neither were they enemies preying upon us […] Merlin is […] the last vestige of an old order in which matter and spirit were, from our point of view, confused. (Lewis 1945, 351)

In Raven's novel, the nearest equivalent of such spiritual forces is a character named Mayerston, described as a "revolutionary". He is unattached to the focal intellectual institution of "Lancaster College, Cambridge" (aka King's College), but wields hypnotic and destructive power over the brilliant Lancaster English student, Hugh Balliston, who is Raven's anti-heroic protagonist;

> Hugh […] was drawn on and upwards into a blue empyrean that had no end, until he was hanging there in space […] supported only by the […] infinitely reassuring clasp of Mayerston's soft hands. The hands released his […] he started to fall, very fast, from what must surely be an immense height. (Raven 1970, 150)

For the quasi-Faustian Hugh, Mayerston represents a quasi-Mephistophelean figure – a plausible notion in view of the aerial travels assigned to the Fausts

of both Marlowe and Goethe. The "middle spirit" of Davies's novel is more explicitly named; he is John Parlabane – a speaker of harm, a persuasive orator, an apostolic witness to both good and evil,

> as slippery-tongued, as entertaining, and sometimes as frightening as the Devil himself […] (Davies 1983, 205)

and thus, like Goethe's figure, one who partly seeks evil and always generates good.

The deliberate ambiguities, which I have discussed, within the representation of the possibly supernatural agents of these three novels are carried through in the domain, to which I now turn, of narrative emplotment. Prominent here, above all, is the motif of "unintended consequences". This motif is, of course, already in play within the theological scenarios of the Fall (considered as an outcome of defensible intellectual curiosity) and of Redemption (considered as a self-defeat for forces of evil, human and supernatural). Thus Lewis's protagonist Ransom explains to his followers that the scientists pitted against them had, to some extent knowingly and purposefully, invoked the devilish forces who secretly governed our fallen planet Earth; they had thereby provoked intervention and rescue by angelic Powers.

> If of their own evil will they had not […] let in the celestial Powers, this would be their moment of victory. Their own strength has betrayed them. They have gone to the gods who would not have come to them, and pulled down Deep Heaven on their heads. (Lewis 1945, 363)

In Raven's story, of a malign but humanly intelligible challenge to collegiate institutions and property, more recognisable motivations, and more numerous agents, play determining roles. The heroine Hetta loses her boy-friend Hugh to Mayerston's hypnotic skills, and to Hugh's self-imposed demands and desires for recognition and leadership. The college Council debates, with deliberate delaying tactics, proposals both revolutionary and conservative for expenditure upon building projects. Hetta is led into a new love-affair – with a biology professor, Balbo Blakeney, foul-mouthed and irreligious but a passionate champion of medieval architecture and Renaissance music.

At the novel's violent climax, it is their affair, and alliance, which defends from destructive assault the East Window of the college's Chapel, in effect the world-famous chapel and musical establishment of King's College Cambridge. Raven presents this chapel as the symbolic embodiment of a sustainable and hard-won worldly spirituality. A crucial defensive role is also played by a History don, Tom Llewyllyn. His untypical background in popular journalism empowers him with a charisma and a communicative style which are capable of redirecting, for good, the amorphous energies of popular protest. Meanwhile Fielding Gray, successful novelist and spoiled college Scholar, allows himself to be dragged away to ignominious safety by his lover – Raven, here as throughout the *Alms for Oblivion* sequence, presents an unheroic version of himself. Thus a large number and a wide range of projects, encountering one another, lead to a contained explosion of violence, accompanied by a sense of much remaining business still unresolved.

In Davies's novel, complex relationships are set up between five major characters; and the projects of these characters are variously focussed around the disposition of a large property, the "Cornish Bequest", left at his death by a former collector of paintings, curios and rare manuscripts, Francis Cornish. (The two subsequent novels in Davies's trilogy fill out the narrative of Cornish's own life and of the eventual effects of the bequest.) Three characters are tenured academics – Hollier the "historical anthropologist", McVarish the Renaissance historian and "virtuoso" in objets d'art, and Darcourt, who is a theology professor, a priest, and one of the two internal narrators of the story. The other two characters are or have been research scholars. One is Maria Theotoky, the other narrator (her surname is taken to mean "God-bearer"), an ambitious student of Rabelais and of his putative links with Paracelsus and practitioners of alchemy. The other, already mentioned, is John Parlabane, formerly an unproductive though brilliant research student, more recently a spoiled monk. Maria loves and/or wants sex with her supervisor Hollier. Parlabane tempts her towards his own besetting scepticism and intellectual despair. Darcourt turns his own desire for her into Platonic love. From the materials of the Bequest, McVarish, under cover of an unchallenged lie, steals an alchemical manuscript coveted, by Maria for her work, and by Hollier as a tool of purely professorial dominance over her. In due course, Parlabane is found to have killed McVarish, secured the stolen manuscript as a quixotic offering for Hollier and for Maria, and killed himself. Hollier is led to see, in the double death, an outworking of his own proprietorial

greed and of his hatred for McVarish. Darcourt withholds the manuscript from Hollier, reserving it instead as a gift for Maria on the occasion of her marriage to a mercifully non-academic character, the young financier Arthur Cornish, nephew of the dead Francis.

In the subsequent novels, alchemy yields place, as a privileged site of quasi--supernatural forces, to painting and to music-drama. Insofar as the "rebel angels" of the first novel – the forces empowering characters defined as scholars and intellectuals – continue their operations, these are shown to generate artistic rather than scholarly activities. Such activities are morally somewhat dubious; they include the creation, in 1939, of a quasi-Renaissance painting, and an unfinished German romantic opera provided with a pastiche-like completion, at once innovative and ironic. The implication is that such ambiguous but creative work befits the energies, at once critical and positive, of a contemporary university. Davies's *Rebel Angels,* in keeping with the rest of the trilogy, develops an open-ended moral perspective upon the narrative outcomes traced within it. Its alternating narrators, Maria and Darcourt, both face their own limitations, in clarity and honesty, and are each shown indirectly to be the fields of spiritual conflict, rebellious and/or angelic – conflicts which continue, through different narrative agents and subjects, in the two subsequent novels.

By contrast, Lewis's novel closes a trilogy in whose earlier volumes the nature and powers of angels and devils are very sharply distinguished. The first and second volumes of the trilogy display those powers as they affect both Earthly humans and the rational inhabitants of other planets (Mars and Venus – "Malacandra" and "Perelandra"). The battle between good and evil forces in *That Hideous Strength* amounts, in turn, to a concentration, within an earthly setting, of a set of narrative agencies and projects which in their essence are not earthly but, so to speak, interplanetary. By contrast, the novel's main human centres of consciousness are a relatively innocent and even passive young couple – Mark, an ambitious and over-pliable sociologist, and Jane, an English Ph D student trying to resume work on her thesis on John Donne. Their marriage is nearly destroyed. Mark's career plans lead him, without much more than naive acquiescence on his part, into the heart of scientistic and technocratic darkness. Jane's unusual power of veridical dreaming, meanwhile, is seized upon, at first against her will, by the Christian academics and intellectuals grouped around Ransom. Through her, and by Ransom's own angelic powers, the magician Merlin, already resurrected, is recruited for goodness and equipped with "Middle-

-Spirit"-like energies for the undoing of evil. But since neither Jane nor Mark is equipped with any project whose fulfilment, or reversal, might be central to the novel's structure, neither of them is positioned so as fully to grasp what, in their adventures, is truly at stake. Hence their awarenesses need to be amplified by much authorial comment, largely devoted to a clarification of the nature of the superhuman agencies at work.

This authorial comment guarantees, for the novel's moral compass, an extreme lack of ambiguity, certainly by comparison with the nuanced stagings of events arranged by Raven and Davies. Yet what is lost in ambiguity is perhaps gained in force, particularly in Lewis's portrayals of the ambitious and short-sighted dons of "Bracton College". It is their projects to raise the profile of their academic institution which give leverage to the more consciously diabolical administrators of the "National Institution of Co-ordinated Experiments" and to their plans for a dehumanised world. In turn Lewis achieves great brilliance in the representation of the two leaders of the "NICE". One is John Wither, whose endless circumlocutions deliberately aim at meaninglessness and are eventually turned, by Merlin's powers, into gibberish. The other is Augustus Frost, whose "Augustan" insistence upon extreme verbal clarity conceals from himself his drive towards suicide. The endless velleities, the would-be clarifications and the mutual back-biting of university professors and administrators have rarely been so devastatingly depicted. Yet, for this triumph of satiric style, Lewis's novel pays a price in terms of social plausibility. While the scientists and administrators become mutually unintelligible, the allies of the good angels are allocated no institutional embodiment, little discernible agency (as they themselves complain) and no powers of self-maintenance. They are left merely to remember their leader Ransom as he, literally, ascends into the heavens. It is strange that Lewis's "Bracton College", for all its antiquity, lacks any chapel, any priests, and any defenders of Christian faith. It offers no redemptive site for any of its present employees – still less for their totally invisible students.

The action of Raven's *Places Where They Sing* offers a strong contrast to the novels of Lewis and Davies, in its complex narrative mode and in the plausibility of its social representations. It is propelled by the actions and the inertias, the desires and the formulated plans of a very large number of characters, each marked out convincingly by styles of diction and rhythms of conversation. It concerns a potential redistribution of college funds and assets, into architectural and educational projects both traditional and aggressively modernising. These pro-

jects recognisably embody debates about planning and regulation taking place, within and beyond universities, during and after its time of writing. The novel stands, within Raven's sequence of ten, as a central and exemplary case. It embodies an encounter, between an undeserving but tenacious and over-privileged older generation and their younger and impatient heirs and prodigal children, emblematic of Raven's sense of the England in which he wrote. Raven's sense of himself as an exemplary "case" is relevant here. He saw himself as exhibiting the reverse pattern, a glamorous traditional scholarly career frustrated, or creatively corrupted, into the life-style of a successful, up-to-date, and scandalous popular novelist. This conception can be felt to determine many local emphases and lasting images within the text. And it is this sense of centrality, of a particular college to a general national condition, which comes to determine, within the narrative, another mode of centrality; that which pertains, vis-a-vis the college, to its natural physical setting, and to the architecture and institutions of its chapel.

In an early set-piece of ecphrastic narrative, the heroine Hetta walks, from her lover's modern student accommodation, through the full extent of the college grounds, transparently recognisable as those of King's College. She passes initially alongside "Scholars' Meadow" – a small but beautiful mini-landscape, partly uncultivated but also, it is believed, carefully tended by an "unknown gardener". The unknown gardener is, in fact, a perhaps-absent God; arguments centred on the notion of the Christian God as an unseen but inferable agent in affairs natural and human frequently centred, during debates in the 1950s and 1960s, around a parable of an "unseen gardener". Hetta strolls on, passing college buildings more and less ancient, until she reaches the college's front court – where her lover's revolutionary and socialist principles encourage her to avert her eyes from what, ultimately, she finds herself drawn to admire and even adore; the college's chapel. It is the chapel which rather unexpectedly becomes the chosen target of the unwashed and untaught revolutionaries, of town and gown, in the novel's concluding scene. This scene is set up by Raven's bold appropriation and metamorphosis of a major and still continuing institution of Anglophone cultural and spiritual life, the King's College Christmas Eve carol Service. Shifted in the novel by six months, this becomes Lancaster College's midsummer Madrigal Sunday.

At the cost of her life, Hetta defends and preserves the honour of the chapel and of its royal and Christian founder (Henry VI). Her worldliness, not to say her sexual enthusiasms, are found to be compatible with, rather than opposed

to, such spiritual loyalty. In an earlier radio play, entitled *Sir Jocelyn, the Minister Would Like a Word*, Raven had voiced, through another college professor, a nuanced acceptance of the charismatic power of something hidden, precluded from direct representation or explicit narrative agency; and such power is, already in this play, located in a college chapel.

> […] essential knowledge […] is never readily available […] [it] is the knowledge of first and last things […] the mystery from which came the immensity of the galaxies and the tiny seed of man. Such things are to be found in no lecture room […] and in no chapel. But at least a chapel invites attention to the existence of the mystery […] The priest in your chapel will tell a lot of foolish lies; but he will remind you that there is something which you do not understand. (Raven 1966, 442)

Raven's allusions to, and invocations of, the structures of "theodrama" as embodied in the novels of Lewis and Davies, are covert. But they acquire, one may feel, greater plausibility through the emphatically worldly concerns and discourse of the characters in *Places where they sing*. By comparison, again, with those novels, Raven's writing also stands out in its refusal totally to marginalise, as they do, the concerns and agencies of undergraduate students. As J.P. Kenyon noted long ago (the observation remains valid at least for English academic fiction), "Hugh Balliston is one of the few credible students or undergraduates in the whole genre […] He is even seen doing some work, something surely unique" (2007, 90).

Now in the tenth and final novel of Raven's sequence, entitled *The Survivors*, Lancaster College chapel still stands; the college is still threatened by unregenerate students and by its own corrupt or self-serving Fellows; but Hugh Balliston also makes a surprising guest appearance. He has seen the error of his former ways. He has become a monk. One could ask whether his assignment by Raven to such a vocation, or fate, amounts to an unexpected vote in favour of Christianity or of explicit supernaturalism. Some hesitation, and some critical comparison, would be appropriate here. Lewis offers strenuous authorial comment on the moral neutrality or otherwise of "Atlantean magic". Davies's learned academics pontificate about orthodox and unorthodox theology concerning "rebel angels". Raven remains content, at the climax of *Places Where They Sing*, to note a certain

similarity, of style and content. This is the similarity between the religious slogans directed, by a revolutionary crowd, against endemic academic corruption, and the secular sermonising, by which Tom Llewyllyn holds that crowd at bay, targeted against lazy critiques of academia. On the one hand, Mayerston leads

> […] a series of violent denunciations of the church, the clergy and the entire academic establishment, which was still associated with them. Every denunciation was framed like the verse of a psalm […]

On the other hand, with reference to Llewyllyn's heroically improvised sermon,

> […] the hell which he spoke of was of this world, the hell of envy and sloth, and the salvation which he offered was also of this world, by grace of intelligence, truth and hard work. (Raven 1970, 213)

Simon Raven could appropriately have staged himself in his novel as a John Parlabane, exiled from the pleasures of academic life and working enviously to dismantle the false aura and charisma associated with them. Equally he could have inserted himself as a "rebel angel", operating to redeem, despite itself and its failings, the status and the functioning of a traditional and still-beloved college and university. Shrewdly avoiding these paths of representation and of critique – paths less cautiously embraced by Lewis and Davies – he notes, as in their measure Lewis and Davies also do, the difficulty of drawing distinctions, in issues of academic life and in academic fictions, between good and evil agencies. To this extent Raven, in his novel, demonstrates his adherence to the lineage of "Faustian" academic fiction, and offers an example of such fiction which merits more analysis, and more commendation, than it has received.

The critical significance of the three novels under discussion here lies in their depiction of academic life as pervaded, in its origin and of its very nature, by supernatural powers and agencies. It would not follow that the professional academic characters in these novels, or in others resembling them, should be seen as definitively or consciously either diabolic or angelic. Rather, as has been suggested, their academic projects, whether intellectual or more obviously careerist, expose them to failures of self-recognition which, imbued as they are by professional prestige and hybristic rationality, they may be unusually slow to identify. In this respect, also, the figure of Faust stands as an important and recognisable

precedent. The general point here, upon which it is appropriate to conclude, is enunciated memorably in two utterances by Shakespearean characters, each of them morally ambiguous – Angelo and Malcolm;

> Let's write "good angel" on the devil's horn.
> 'Tis not the devil's crest. (*Measure for Measure* 2.4.16-17; Shakespeare 1997, 88)

> Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell. (*Macbeth* 4.3.22; Shakespeare 1997, 934)

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J. I. M. Stewart's *The Aylwins*: The Collegiate Story Exemplified

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Abstract: J. I. M. Stewart's novel *The Aylwins*, the story of an Oxford don deeply troubled by the fact that his son has been expelled from school for cheating, is a fine example of academic fiction or, as its narrator puts it, "a collegiate story". The novel encompasses many instances of academic life: dons customarily dining together in the common room during vacations, the turmoil caused by the Provost's terminal illness, scholars engaged, more or less willingly, in college politics and their cordial, yet somewhat patronising, attitude towards an outsider to academia like the narrator himself who is the protagonist's close friend. The purpose of this paper is to present *The Aylwins* in terms of stereotypes about life in academia as discussed in *The Academic Tribes* by Hazard Adams.

Keywords: academic fiction, stereotypes, genre, Oxford University, collegiate story

To categorise a book as an academic novel may appear fairly easy. It seems that the main elements of the novel that should be taken into consideration are its protagonist and its setting. The former is, of course, a scholar while the latter should be a university, a college or a campus. Here is a simple formula for academic fiction. But is it really that simple? Out of numerous definitions of this particular genre, none is really as concise as the one above. Most of them, in fact, focus on a variety of features or plot elements which may appear in one definition but are not necessarily included in the other which makes the overall definition of the campus novel rather fluid. So which one should a confused reader choose? None of them seem truly precise, let alone exhaustive. To find such a definition one should, of course, consult a dictionary and *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* does provide its readers with the following, overly narrow, definition of the campus novel: "A novel which has a university campus

as its setting. The majority have been written by those who were or are academics" (Cuddon 1999, 107). With all its complexities, literary allusions, plot layers and erudition of its authors, the campus novel seems to be best defined in simple terms. It does not mean, however, that it does not deserve more.

Elaine Showalter in her *Faculty Towers* states that the academic novel should "experiment and play with the genre of fiction itself, comment on contemporary issues, satirize professorial stereotypes and educational trends, and convey the pain of intellectuals called upon to measure themselves against each other and against their internalized expectations of brilliance" (Showalter 2005, 4-5). As a satire, it is, according to Showalter, "wildly funny" and yet it should include a dose of "seriousness, even sadness" as "academic life has so much pain, so many lives wasted or destroyed" (Showalter 2005, 3). In the introduction to *The College Novel in America* John O. Lyons also writes that he considers "a novel of academic life one in which higher education is treated with seriousness and the main characters are students or professors" (Lyons 1968, xvii). So not a satire, after all. On the other hand, Kenneth Womack in *Postwar Academic Fiction* stresses the importance of the satirical quality of the academic novel and seems to regret that "critics of academic fiction […] neglect to address the satiric ethos that undergirds the genre's thematic landscape" and, unfortunately, "the scathing representation of professors and institutions" stays "unexamined in the scholarly monographs devoted to the study of the academic novel" (Womack 2002, 1). In my article entitled "University or Universal? Revaluating the Academic Novel" I offer a definition based on the ones provided by Showalter and Womack (but also by Brian A. Connery who stresses the importance of the town-and-gown theme for the genre's satirical nature in "Inside Jokes: Familiarity and Contempt in Academic Satire" [Connery 1990, 128]): the university novel is "a satire on a professional group (academics) and its struggle not only with university life but also with exigencies of life outside the university" (Głowala 2010, 21).

In his article "Types of Academic Fiction" Merritt Moseley does not propose only one definition. Instead, he distinguishes a few categories into which the campus novel may fall: novels that focus on students (which may either be "redolent of nostalgia for the beauties and ineffable subtleties of undergraduate life" [Moseley 2007, 100] or may present "the real conditions of student life; they are more likely to include eating disorders, suicide, unwanted pregnancy, study, and fear of failure […]" [Moseley 2007, 104]), the ones that

focus on administration (Moseley 2007, 105), and novels revolving around the faculty which the author further divides into subcategories (this part consists mainly of various forms of a satire) (Moseley 2007, 108-113). In *Ancient Cultures of Conceit* Ian Carter dwells on how very little space for creativity has been left for authors of academic fiction (or how little of it the genre, in fact, provides them with) and distinguishes three variations of the university novel: "how an undergraduate at Oxford (usually) or Cambridge came to wisdom; how a don at Oxford (usually) or Cambridge was stabbed in the back physically or professionally, sometimes surviving to rule his college; and how rotten life was as student or teacher outside Oxford and Cambridge" (Carter 1990, 15). Finally, there is Mortimer R. Proctor who observes in *The English University Novel*: "[…] it is not always easy to say what is and what is not a university novel. The reason lies in the tendency of the subject matter to slip entirely out of sight. In novel after novel there comes a point when the author's exhaustion is evident, when he discovers he has done all he can with the university theme and is driven to move on into the more varied world beyond" (Proctor 1977, 2-3).

The purpose of this article is to present a collegiate story in terms of popular stereotypes about academics and academic life that academic fiction might have created or perpetuated but also refuted. To introduce this subgenre of the academic novel, a probably lesser-known example of academic fiction has been chosen, namely *The Aylwins* by J. I. M. Stewart. The stereotypes have been discussed in *The Academic Tribes* by Hazard Adams, a university teacher himself. As Adams claims in the preface, this is a book "about academic life and politics, in which I induce certain principles of tribal behavior on the basis of personal and quite unscientific observation" (Adams 1988, ix). Even though the author's primary focus is not on academic fiction, he does, however, mention some examples of the genre (for instance, *The Groves of Academe* by Mary McCarthy and *Pictures from an Institution* by Randall Jarrell [Adams 1988, 37]) and the stereotypes he examines correspond to the ones produced and reinforced (but also occasionally disproved) by authors of university novels.

Stewart's novel is the story of Arthur Aylwin, an Oxford don, who is believed to be a perfect candidate for a Chair of History. Later, when the Provost is said to be terminally ill, Arthur is expected by some to stand for the post. However, the protagonist learns that his elder son, Robin, has been expelled from school allegedly for cheating and this leads him to a nervous breakdown

as Robin's action reminds him of his own offence. It turns out that Arthur has been tormented by a feeling of guilt over what he did in 1929 when he and Frank Deasy came to Oxford for the first time for their scholarship examinations. Apparently, while waiting for one of his interviews, he managed to read two questions from the upcoming exam which one of the tutors had left carelessly on the table. Arthur spent hours in the library cramming for the exam and he passed it. However, he has been guilt-ridden ever since he won the scholarship, with only some periods of inner peace. Arthur's story is told from the perspective of his old friend, Frank Deasy, the narrator and the fictional author of *The Aylwins* who, even though not a member of the academic society himself, is still perceived by some dons as "one of them". A witness to certain conventions, college practices and procedures, Frank wants to produce what he calls "a collegiate story" (Stewart 1966, 49).

Even though it is not as popular as other examples of academic fiction (for example, works by David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and, of course, Kingsley Amis), Stewart's *The Aylwins* seems to be almost a classic instance of the genre. What is more, Ian Carter writes quite extensively about Stewart's novels in his *Ancient Cultures of Conceit* where he calls him a novelist who "has written most books about the most popular university". Nevertheless, he claims that readers may be surprised to learn that such a prolific writer has received so little recognition and critical attention (he mentions only one article on Stewart written in German) (Carter 1990, 23).

The first stereotype discussed by Adams is "the good life stereotype" (Adams 1988, 32). To illustrate it the author writes about a film (Adams remembers neither its title nor its plot but it is actually *A Letter to Three Wives* from 1949) in which Kirk Douglas plays a college professor who apparently lives the affluent life. Adams writes how he himself lived together with his wife in two rooms and "a closet converted to a shower" (Adams 1988, 32) and how he "was lucky to have gotten any job that year" (Adams 1988, 33). Nevertheless, he admits: "This was the condition of all of us except the highest-ranking professors and those few who had private means or wives with money" (Adams 1988, 33). In the novel, Arthur Aylwin lives outside Oxford in a big house that, according to Deasy, "pleased" him (Stewart 1966, 13) and Boars Hill, where the house is situated, "was much favoured, a generation or two ago, by such Oxford dons and professors as were not without substantial means quite apart from their academic emoluments" (Stewart 1966, 12). Arthur's wife, Mary, does have "a pri-

vate income (small but useful […])" (Stewart 1966, 13), the house is spaciously furnished and yet some parts of it are "untidy and in indifferent repair" (Stewart 1966, 12). Nevertheless, Greyswood (as the house is called) has beautiful views as its windows "look straight down upon the distant colleges and churches of the city" (Stewart 1966, 13). Therefore, this first stereotype in Adams' book has been partly reinforced in *The Aylwins*, but on the other hand Arthur does not appear to be a Kirk Douglas type of professor, wearing a black tie and a tuxedo when he entertains while in the background there is "a silver topped cocktail shaker on the coffee table in front of a pleasant fire" (Adams 1988, 32).

The second stereotype is what Adams calls "the detached life stereotype" (1988, 34). The author says that it is associated with the belief that "the college is the isolated small community" and the stereotype should be traced to "the treatment of professors as absent-minded, pleasantly eccentric, ineffective in public situations, and so forth" (1988, 35). This description may actually apply to the protagonist in *The Aylwins*. Slightly paranoid about his professional life, Arthur Aylwin is believed by Frank to be, in fact, a competent scholar and historian whose "writings are spirited and elegant" and acclaimed by both his readers and his colleagues (Stewart 1966, 15). One of them believes that Arthur's colleagues in the History Department "underestimate Arthur simply because he writes so damned well" (Stewart 1966, 69) whereas another one points out that "one feels that Arthur enjoys himself most when sitting in front of a type-writer" (Stewart 1966, 69). Most of them agree that Arthur should become a Chair of History, and some of them believe that he would make a good Provost since he meets the following fundamental requirements: he is a distinguished scholar and a writer and his wife is, in his colleagues' words, "adequate" (Stewart 1966, 75), "extremely nice" and "not without a private competence" (Stewart 1966, 70). Arthur, on the other hand, frequently jokes, quite modestly it may seem, that it is Frank who is "anima naturaliter Oxoniensis" – a natural born Oxonian, while he himself is just an outsider to the academic community (Stewart 1966, 60). He believes that through his dishonest action back in 1929 he somehow cheated Frank, who was an equally good student, out of his scholarship or, in Frank's words, deprived him of his birthright to become an Oxonian (Stewart 1966, 60). Now when his older son has been expelled from school allegedly for cheating, Arthur is convinced that his sin has been passed on to his son. "You don't understand," he says, "Robin went wrong because I did. There's a pattern in these things" (Stewart 1966, 117). And what he really despises is the continuity of the whole thing:

> No cheating, no Scholarship. No Scholarship, no Lectureship. No Lectureship, no Fellowship. I don't collect a penny, I don't own an atom of standing or regard, that doesn't flow directly from that miserable hour. Of course I must resign. […] I'm going to confess the truth, and give up my job. (Stewart 1966, 117)

Just as in any tribe,[1] also in the academic tribe there is the oldest member of the community, a doyen or an archetypal sage. Interestingly, it is Arthur's former tutor and the man who interviewed him in 1929 and who left the exam on the table thus unwittingly becoming at least partially responsible for the protagonist's sin. His name is George Elford and he is a retired scholar, nearly a hundred years old. Elford fits the category of the Jungian wise old man who, as described in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, represents "knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help" (Jung 1990, 222) and who "tests the moral qualities of others and makes his gifts dependent on this test" (Jung 1990, 225). Whether the exam left on the table was a test aimed at testing Arthur's moral qualities or not is, of course, disputable. Nevertheless, Elford is the man whom Arthur wants to meet first before he confesses the truth to the rest of his colleagues as he believes he owes the old man an explanation and he probably hopes for some sort of absolution. Little does he know, however, that Elford has the power to do more than that. He can actually acquit Arthur since he has been keeping all his students' works for all these years and now they can actually look into Arthur's answers. They find out that his feeling of guilt is, in fact, a result of his, as Frank calls it, "wretched neurosis" (Stewart 1966, 183). Therefore, Elford is truly an archetypal wise old man who, according to Jung, "always appears when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea […] can extricate him" (Jung 1990, 217-218).

Ancient, slightly mad, still entertaining his guests in the same old room that is decorated with the same collection of paintings and antiques which Arthur admired when he was interviewed by him in 1929 ("I took one look, and decided I was going to have a room like that myself", admits Arthur after all these

1 To use Hazard Adams' terminology who in his book writes, for example, about "a differentiation of tribal (departmental) behavior" (Adams 1988, 63).

years [Stewart 1966, 113]), George Elford seems to be fantastically suspended in time, not only physically but also mentally. He mistakes the past for the present: he sometimes seems to recognise Arthur and a moment later he thinks that Arthur and Frank are some of his students who have visited him to present their essays. As Frank notes, "Elford's mind obviously wanders – and a good deal more in the past than in the present. But he isn't irrational […]" (Stewart 1966, 178). All this makes their meeting with Elford seem like an almost mystical experience – the feeling that strikes Frank the most. He says: "Certainly we were all three of us in what is now called an archetypal situation: the curtain was about to be twitched, the casket opened, the oracle consulted" (Stewart 1966, 181). Whether a sage or an oracle, Elford appears in the novel right in time to provide the hero with sound advice and save him from his imminent fall. Thus, Aylwin and Elford both appear to be eccentric. The former's neurosis and the latter's modest madness make them both truly detached from life. Nevertheless, as Adams points out, "university faculties […] value eccentricity, or at least protect it […]" (1988, 26) which may, in fact, appear to be another stereotype.

One more stereotype that Adams discusses is "the nonlife stereotype" (Adams 1988, 36) or a vision that students conjure up about their teachers:

> In this vision the faculty member is a pure presence rather than a being-in-the-world. He has no spouse, no child, no dog, no cat, no home. He may be seen entering a car, but he disappears into nothingness when he leaves the range of the naked eye. He does not sleep or eat. Either he is in his office or his classroom or he is nowhere. (Adams 1988, 36)

Arthur Aylwin has a wife and two sons, and has a teaching room in the college, "large and lofty" with a fireplace and "a long wall clothed in well-tooled eighteenth-century books" (Stewart 1966, 46) in which he sees his students. However, the reader does not know much about his students as in *The Aylwins* they are virtually nonexistent. Therefore, one does not learn anything about how they perceive their tutor which is essential for (dis)proving this stereotype.

It is worth mentioning here what Adams writes about the academic community in general. He posits that for the members of the faculty "the outer world, sometimes referred to peculiarly as the 'real world,' is suspect; possibly it is an enemy; often it seems incapable of understanding academic language and in possession

of quite different customs and values" while the community outside the university "does have an astonishing ignorance of the academic society, even though it is presumably the community that has sanctioned the smaller society's existence" (Adams 1988, 24-25). "I've never felt awkward, for example, in the higher academic circles I shall presently be going on to describe", states Frank towards the beginning of the novel (Stewart 1966, 8). Deasy is not a don himself but he is capable of fitting in perfectly. He spends some time in Arthur's college as a Schoolmaster Fellow-Commoner which means that he has been invited by the college to stay and live with the dons for an academic term during which he conducts his own research which he hopes will help him write his first historical novel. As a Fellow--Commoner, Frank, for example, dines with the dons in the common room. Nevertheless, on different occasions he stresses the fact that he is not a member of the academic community. "I'm not an Oxford man", he says (Stewart 1966, 14) but, it seems, without regret as he appears to be perfectly happy with being a schoolmaster now. And even though Cropley, the Provost, informally accepts him as one of the scholars by saying with confidence: "You are entirely one of us, after all" (Stewart 1966, 124) and one of the dons goes as far as to state: "You have been so much one of us that our anxieties ought to be known to you" (Stewart 1966, 153), Frank suspects that such behavior results merely from the dons' cordiality. He is not a member of the family (for the faculty may be considered to be one and this might also disprove the "nonlife stereotype": even though a don does not have a wife and children, the other scholars are, in fact, his true family), not even a distant cousin, but rather a family friend. Yet as such he is still allowed to participate in the family life, observations of which he includes in his book.

The academic society presented in Stewart's novel is definitely tight-knit and closed, which Frank points out on different occasions. He, for example, notes that "all these people adopted the convention of using each other's Christian names" (Stewart 1966, 67) which is a remark that only an outsider to a community would make. The expression "all these people" stresses the contrast between academia and the outside world. It is "them" not "us", as if the dons were some strange species and using other people's Christian names was particularly donnish. Frank says that "perhaps it is pointless to chronicle such an unimportant matter, but in a closed society shades of usage can be significant" (Stewart 1966, 67). He also observes that academia is a separate community when he wanders around the college and notices the gates that a porter closes behind the scholars. He says:

> If I wanted to go and roam the streets of Oxford […] I should have to ask this man to let me out. And only he could let me in again. It was true that I had been given a key to an unobtrusive entrance elsewhere. But the massive iron-bound gates swinging to were symbolical, I reflected, of how cloistered these places were. Arthur had been thus cloistered for at least thirty-five years. (Stewart 1966, 64)

But perhaps the most revealing about this distinctive and intrinsic character of academia is what the dons say about themselves. When Frank suggests that they may wager money on the candidates for provostship, Jeremy, one of the younger dons whom Deasy has befriended, exclaims: "What a vision of us you're going to carry off with you, Frank!" (Stewart 1966, 73). And when Frank goes to visit Cropley before his departure, the Provost says: "Speak kindly of us, if you can conscientiously do so – and please send us a pupil from time to time" (Stewart 1966, 93). Finally, when one of the dons meets Frank outside Oxford, he asks him almost impolitely: "You liked us, did you? […] Perhaps […] you've even caught a touch of Magdalen Tower fever?" (Stewart 1966, 135-136). To say that is rather rude, given the fact that Frank did not win a scholarship and now, after all these years, he appears in the college not as a true scholar, but a Fellow-Commoner, which may be perceived by some as a consolation prize. Frank, of course, may feel slightly hurt and he explains: "It *was* uncivil. For I recognised the expression as having been coined by some college tutor or other as applicable to young men who, without sufficient academic ability to linger in Oxford with profit, are nevertheless sentimentally or lazily disposed to do so" (Stewart 1966, 136). All that proves that scholars perceive themselves as members of a separate community and they, in fact, form a distinctive group.

The penultimate stereotype discussed in Adams' book is called "the absurd life stereotype" (Adams 1988, 37). Here the author writes about the academic novel as again a satire which is "often a symbolic act of revenge against a world that has turned out to be different from what has been advertised" (Adams 1988, 37). In Stewart's novel, however, the absurdities of academic life are few. "To the extent that what I have to tell is an Oxford story – or, at least, is a collegiate story – I'm bound to make an inexpert job of it" (Stewart 1966, 49), states Frank modestly. Nevertheless, being an outsider works to his advantage since as such he is able to make some accurate and shrewd observations

about what is, for example, "donnish" (Stewart 1966, 57). The first one comes very early in the novel and may serve as a witty characterization of the academic community in general:

> I've come to make, as will appear, a number of friends in Oxford; I've been welcomed there; it wouldn't be becoming in me to speak disparagingly of any of its institutions. Yet it's perhaps permissible to remark that Oxford dons aren't on the whole deficient in a due sense of their own distinction. They're quite pleased with themselves, if the thing may be vulgarly put. This is partly a matter of the structure of their University, which consists of more than a couple of dozen property-owning, self-governing and self-perpetuating corporations. Within each of these colleges there is very little of hierarchy, and as a consequence the whole place is rather like a South American army as popularly conceived. Nearly everybody is a general, and a colonel's rank is the lowest that can be found. This does a little conduce to corporate self-satisfaction. At the same time, because nobody inside the place feels obliged to be particularly impressed by anybody else, there is generated a certain tendency to regard oneself as impressively circumstanced in relation to the world outside. (Stewart 1966, 17)

During his stay in Oxford Frank also dines with the dons in the senior common room. On occasions like these he is able to form additional opinions about the dons. He, for instance, finds out that dons "are not always the most ready of conversationalists" (Stewart 1966, 50). When forced by the situation, they do talk to each other about the weather but in most cases, as Deasy notes, they stare "fixedly and awkwardly at each other's toes" (Stewart 1966, 50). Most of them simply wander around the room waiting for the meal to be served with glasses of sherry in their hands. Frank is also surprised to notice that the Provost, who would normally dine with the rest of the dons, is absent and his chair is taken by Pym, the Vice-Provost. This results in a slightly embarrassing situation. When everybody at the table waits for the Vice-Provost to say grace (for they are not allowed to rise from the table before it) and that moment does not come because Prym mistakenly believes there is still one more course to be served, it is one of the dons who feels that it is his duty to preserve, as Frank puts it, "a desirable standard

of behavior" and recites: "Benedicto benedicatur" (Stewart 1966, 56). This whole situation, together with the Vice-Provost holding a spoon and a fork in a way that, as the narrator writes, was "more appropriate to a child in a nursery than to the ripe scholar he was supposed to be" (Stewart 1966, 56), is an example of "mild academic absurdity" (Stewart 1966, 55).

Interestingly, Jeremy notes that there is something rather unusual about the way the dons sit at the table as if some of them subconsciously chose the seats that would be occupied by certain disciples according to the artistic depictions of the Last Supper. "Have you ever noticed", he asks, "that when we sit down at the table Jimmy Chilmead chooses the position which, according to the traditional iconography of the Last Supper, is prescriptively Judas Iscariot's?" (Stewart 1966, 55). Even though this remark is meant to be light-hearted, it may actually suggest that there is something religious, mystical, almost cult-like about this tight-knit community of scholars. Despite the fact that he finds this comment meaningless, Frank must admit that "there was something a little out of the way about this evening" and that the young scholar's words "did touch in the idea of hidden forces at play" (Stewart 1966, 55). Frank has, of course, yet to learn that the Provost is terminally ill (the reason for his absence) and this (or the next) supper may in fact turn out to be his last.

The last stereotype in Adams' book is "the political stereotype" (Adams 1988, 38). The author writes about politics in broader terms mentioning, among others, the opinion that "faculties are politically unbalanced" which has been formed outside academia (Adams 1988, 39). Stewart, however, focuses on the internal politics of the college. That the provost is resigning, Frank learns from Jeremy. It appears that he has decided to resign his post before he dies. This is when *The Aylwins* becomes a novel similar to *The Masters* by C. P. Snow, a book whose plot also revolves around the election of a Master at a Cambridge college. Stewart is, of course, aware of that fact and makes Jeremy suggest that Frank's book should be modelled on Snow's: "You could write a novel on it – as C. P. Snow did about a similar dust-up at Cambridge" (Stewart 1966, 76). This is probably the moment when Frank decides to write his "collegiate story" instead of a historical novel, as he has previously intended. In this case, the dust-up, as Jeremy puts it, is between Jimmy Chilmead, one of Arthur's colleagues, and, surprisingly, Arthur himself, whom everybody believes to be running for a Chair of History. The whole process of election is described by Jeremy in a rather nonchalant way. He claims that the sole fact that the dons elect a new Provost makes it "so frightful" and the whole thing

is a "blight" (Stewart 1966, 74). A perfect candidate, according to Jeremy, is someone who is "just about past useful work, is fearfully eminent or can be represented as fearfully eminent, has an aristocratic wife and a comfortable private fortune" (Stewart 1966, 74). Therefore, a new Provost is "all our own work", as Jeremy sums it up (Stewart 1966, 74). Interestingly, both Frank and Jeremy refer later to the whole situation as the "war" (Stewart 1966, 188). When Jeremy describes the pre-election period in the college he says: "Well, the war went on for most of the term, although Cropley's resignation hadn't actually come in. A kind of cold war, with everybody trying to find out where everybody else stood. It was really very curious. I'd hardly have believed it. Ignorant armies clashing by night" (Stewart 1966, 188).

Some of the stereotypes that Hazard Adams discusses in his book have been illustrated and reinforced by Stewart in his collegiate story which is only one of many of his books that, according to John Dougill, "comprise the most imposing literary monument ever raised to the institution" (Dougill 2001, 210). Dougill actually succeeds in providing his readers with a satisfactory definition of the subgenre when he discusses Stewart's works. He observes that "the celebration of college life is central to his concern" and that his "college preoccupations can seem stifling at times" (Dougill 2001, 210) since his characters appear to rarely leave this "closed world of which he writes" (Dougill 2001, 210). Additionally, Dougill posits that "Stewart's world is dichotomous" for it is based on the inside/outside division (Dougill 2001, 211) and Oxford itself is "discounted" and reduced to the "cluster of ancient and central colleges" (Dougill 2001, 211). Therefore, one may safely assume that a collegiate story may be defined as one in which, as stated by Dougill, "reality resides in college" (Dougill 2001, 211). It does not mean, however, that *The Aylwins*, or any other university novel for that matter, is a truly reliable source of information about the academic community. Academic fiction is actually built upon stereotypes and often erroneous impressions created by the authors who are, after all, academics themselves. "Academic novelists like to put colleagues into their books and answer colleagues in their books", writes Adams, "But serious treatments are rare" (Adams 1988, 37). Therefore, it is not important how many of the stereotypes have been refuted in the novel. What is more important is that many of them have been actually included in the plot. It seems then that the more stereotypes the author has recreated in his novel, the bigger its satirical quality is and the more academic (or "collegiate", as is the case with *The Aylwins*) it becomes. After all, as Adams observes, "a serious novel with an academic setting is likely to be treated as satire in spite of itself" (Adams 1988, 37).

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The Academic as Comedian: Humour in Michael Frayn's *The Trick of It*[2]

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Abstract: Michael Frayn's comic novel *The Trick of It* (1989) explores the relationship between academia and creative writing and the derivative, secondary nature of literary research. Through its main academic character and only narrator, Frayn's text recurrently identifies the role of a scholar with the role of a humourist in that both share a higher-than-average degree of self-awareness and detailed knowledge about the world. Through such identification, present in the novel both implicitly and explicitly, *The Trick of It* underscores the secondary and limited nature of academic work, yet it also gives an ultimately positive image of it. By pairing academic research and humour, Frayn's novel shows that literary scholarship is as a discipline that, much like humour, can enlarge our understanding and enjoyment of whatever it refers to.

Keywords: academic fiction, humour, Simon Critchley, Michael Frayn, Sigmund Freud

According to Janice Rossen, Michael Frayn's *The Trick of It* is one of the best British novels dramatizing two frequent characteristics of academic fiction: a scholar's excessive personal investment in their work (Rossen 1993, 145) and the mutual dependence of literary scholars and writers, since the former require creative writing to carry out their research and the latter need positive academic criticism to obtain literary recognition (Rossen 1993, 180-181). Written entirely as a series of letters that Richard Dunnett, a young British literature professor, sends to an Australian colleague, Frayn's novel tells the story of how Richard meets, courts, and marries his field of expertise, the novelist JL. Although he is at first both anxious about meeting her and interested in testing a few of his ideas, it is soon clear that Richard's curiosity is mixed with resentment and jealousy. He believes that "it's a blooming shame" that

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academics have to work on mere fictions, that "honest working folks like us, in our great concrete knowledge factories, have to *report,* have to *learn,* have to *know,* have to *expound* these shrugged-off nothingness" [emphasis in the original] (Frayn 1990, 9). As the story evolves, such spiteful and hostile approach to his job turns into an obsession with creative writing, which he tries to pursue himself to no avail. By the end of the novel, Richard realises that his only contributions to literature are the letters he has been sending to his Australian colleague. The novel finishes, however, on a rather tragic note: his addressee admits to having lost them and we leave Richard experiencing a deeply felt sense of personal and professional failure in the midst of a marriage verging on divorce.

Albeit through JL and Richard's marriage the novel grants a certain degree of interdependence between academics and novelists, it underscores the scholar's secondary and even precarious position. Readers see JL weeping and changing one of her novels substantially to please her husband/critic's expectations, but she does so only once and temporarily, as she obtains positive critiques from publishers and other scholars and finally submits her original text. By contrast, as the story is told entirely through Richard's unreliable perspective, the novel contains many of his resentful comments. These describe the second-class nature of his work, which is further emphasised by his own inability to write fiction: "Writing on the back of things again! I suppose that's what my entire life consists in" (Frayn 1990, 54). In these comments, he also complains about the unequal and unfair relationship − to Richard's mind − that exists between scholars and writers, a claim which the structural irony of the text clearly portrays as absurd and pretentious, for writing about other people's work is the essence of literary research, but not so of creative writing:

> I read every word she writes, even though not a single one of them is about me. She reads not a single word I write, even though most of them are about her. (Frayn 1990, 50)

Considering these statements together with the fact that, as Richard fears throughout the novel, he finally fails to make any significant contribution to literature and "disappear[s] off the face of the earth […] leav[ing] little trace behind" (Frayn 1990, 152), it seems that *The Trick of It* presents a rather bleak image of academia as merely secondary or even unnecessary. However, that

rather desolate picture is described within a very funny novel[3] displaying a multi-layered use of humour, which, as I will argue, also conveys a positive vision of the role of scholarship. Through Simon Critchley's idea of humour as a form of philosophical inquiry rather than a mere stylistic choice, which is most helpful in understanding Michael Frayn's practice, I hope to show that even though the novel's humour partly emphasises the secondary nature of academic work and its less sympathetic aspects, it also affirms its valuable and rightful position.

Critchley's starting definition of humour is similar to many theories of humour based on incongruity: humour is produced by "a disjunction between the way things are and the way they are represented", a discrepancy "between expectation and reality" (Critchley 2002, 1). But to that original definition he adds, inspired by Henri Bergson, that for there to be a distorted picture, there needs to be an undistorted version of the same. In other words: if there is no social congruity, there is no comic incongruity (Critchley 2002, 4). Consequently, humour indirectly reveals "the depth of what we share" (Critchley 2002, 18), which may include moral, cultural, social norms and customs as well as more general conditions like our physical and intellectual limitations, thus making us "become philosophical spectators upon our lives" (Critchley 2002, 18). The way humour recalls those shared conditions may vary, however, as it can do so to celebrate them, which Critchley calls a comedy of recognition (2002, 11), or to challenge, criticise and attack them. To understand its implications in depth, therefore, humour requires a conscientious analysis of what is at stake in spontaneously "getting the joke". Following this framework, which is also common to most distinctions between satire and comedy and other humour-related discussions, first we need to classify humorous scenes in the novel, depending on whether they are directed to attack or criticise a target different from the humourist or whether they include the humourist himself in the jest.

Throughout the novel, all the instances that intend to criticise or attack particular targets take the form of vituperation. As instances of humour they render the object of humour incongruous − often through exaggerated and preposter-

3 The 1990 Penguin Books edition includes fragments of several reviews that call attention to the novel's comic tone when dealing with serious topics. Anthony Burgess's review, originally published in *The Observer* (24th September 1989), highlights precisely the novel's combination of tragedy and comedy: "The Trick of It, at the end anyway, very nearly made me weep. And yet it is one of the few books I have read in the last year that has provoked laughter".

ous comparisons − and, in so doing, they reveal some kind of underlying congruity, or undistorted picture. In these cases, they mostly expose and criticise the high levels of competition that characterise academic life.

Significantly enough, Richard's insults are directed to anyone he feels threatened by. When he meets a man at JL's house in London whom he immediately perceives as a romantic/professional competitor, he turns him into a grotesque figure: "Is it a long journey back to wherever it is? asked Dirty Books solicitously (one look at his feet and you knew his specialty was eighteenth-century erotica)" (Frayn 1990, 52). Similarly, later on in the novel, when his then-wife, JL, jeopardises his comfortably solitary life by rekindling the contact with his estranged family, Richard mocks her as "some maniac with a metal-detector, digging forgotten old aunts and half-cousins of mine out of the earth" (Frayn 1990, 109). Likewise, he describes his family as "creatures creeping about" who are "about a thousand times larger and five thousand times more destructive" than centipedes (Frayn 1990, 92-93).

It seems, then, that it is precisely because he feels threatened that all the references Richard makes to fellow scholars are insults − except for those about his Australian addressee, of course. This is most remarkable in the case of the other academics who also work on JL's oeuvre, whom he wants to consider "comrades in arms" but cannot help seeing as mere "rivals" (Frayn 1990, 7). One he names "Vlad, the Impaler" in order to signify that he "sweeps his specimens off on joint family holidays in Tuscany before he puts them into the killing-bottle and pins them into his collection" (Frayn 1990, 7). The other, Dr Spoff is "a human personification of the Society for the Propagation of Feminist Fiction", whose name he comically twists to Dr Sloff, "a small town in the Western Ukraine […] which is noted from its provincialism" (Frayn 1990, 119), and to Dr Smoff, "a form of laxative porridge" (Frayn 1990, 120-121).

These insults are funny inasmuch as they create absurd comparisons and images and, in doing so, give insight into the world of scholars. Underlying Richard's insult to Professor Katc from Chicago, Vladimir's real name (Frayn 1990, 146), is the pressure that academics experience to publish (or perish). It seems that he becomes "Vlad, the Impaler" because he manages to publish more than Richard, who actually admits to struggling with naming things (Frayn 1990, 88; 160). In the case of Dr Spoff, the insult seems to imply a clash of ideas or an intellectual disagreement, another frequent conflict in both academic life and fiction.

Richard's comic insults reveal, then, the high levels of competition inherent to academic life and their effect on academics − be this competition due to the pressure to achieve economic stability (tenure), an irresistible urge to acquire intellectual prestige, or a combination of both. In fact, although they do not include Richard as the object of humour, they reflect more on Richard than on the people insulted, as he himself admits at one point in the story (Frayn 1990, 40). They expose a weakened character who refuses open confrontation of ideas with Dr Spoff and who uses humour as a form of veiled aggression to channel his own frustration and envy for another scholar's productivity. Thus, through Richard's rather unhealthy approach to his work and his recurrent dismissal of his colleagues, the novel raises awareness of the pernicious effects of competition in academia.

But Frayn's novel also describes multiple incongruous situations that make Richard himself the object of humour. Among these we find the absurdity of taking turns to sip from the same glass of water as a seduction strategy or the recurrent comparison between publishing and the experience of fatherhood:

> Ten pounds five ounces, our little monster − I've just weighed the typescript […] Did your baby have to be sent away for typing? […] I talk about "our" book, and dandle it fondly on my knee. I even occasionally change a dirty spelling. (Frayn 1990, 99-101)

There are other examples in the novel of this second type of humour, such as Richard's momentary inability to write on a train ride (Frayn 1990, 69), or when he struggles to spell *peripeteia* correctly under the effects of alcohol (Frayn 1990, 83). In some, it is Richard himself who creates the comic situation, whereas in others, such as the example of his inability to write on a train ride, he is merely the butt of the joke. All of these cases, however, can be considered what Critchley calls a comedy of recognition, for their use of incongruity − a discrepancy between how things are and should be or we expect them to be − reminds us of shared truths and conditions with no critical intention (Critchley 2002, 11). Whereas in Richard's comic insults one could hint at a certain critical stance towards unhealthy levels of academic rivalry, here we find humorous scenes that simply reflect on daily situations and human limitations. These include the effects of alcohol and the movement of a train, the fact that most people expect seduction to be creative and include some kind of aphrodisiac component, and that books are ultimately not like children − even if our love for them leads us to believe the contrary.

As seen thus far, Frayn's novel presents readers with two main different types of humour, comic vituperation and (self-)ridicule, and what most of these humorous situations and statements have in common is Richard's sharp eye for comic distortion. Particularly in the case of the instances of self-ridicule, they reveal the narrator/protagonist's over-awareness of the norms that are being violated and/or the expectations that are not being fulfilled. In this respect, Richard can be considered a fictionalisation of a melancholic character who has reached a high level of self-knowledge and that is frequently found in comedians such as Woody Allen.[4] Moreover, he even recreates, quite literally, the workings of humour understood as a super-ego's kind reminder to the ego of its own limitations. As Critchley puts it: "in humour, we see the profile of 'super-ego II', a super-ego which does not lacerate the ego, […] [but] liberates and elevates by allowing the ego to find itself ridiculous" (Critchley 2002, 103).[5] Tellingly, Richard shows a split personality that dissociates the paternal task of the super-ego − the reminding of norms and limitations − from the ego's reaffirmation of its own perfection. He projects the first role on the anticipated reactions of his Australian addressee and takes upon himself the task of defending his decisions and actions.

Such comic ego-vs-super-ego interaction appears in the letter in which Richard relates how he and JL sleep together for the first time. Told in the form of a fake dialogue between Richard and his Australian penfriend, we first read Richard's account in which it seems it was just a casual encounter that neither of them had seen coming. However, with the introduction of the anticipated reactions of his colleague (or super-ego personification), we find out that Richard had carefully planned to seduce JL for a while:

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4 "In melancholy […] there is a splitting in the ego between the ego and a critical agency, the Über-Ich, the 'over-I' or 'super-ego' that stands over against the Ich, sadistically denigrating it. […] The subject becomes an abject object, and when the melancholic talks about himself it is as though he were talking about some loathsome thing. This is why melancholics talk so obsessively about themselves; in a sense, they are talking about somebody else. […] One is reminded of Woody Allen's endless monologues, where he complains about himself in the most voluble manner, a technique of self-objectification and splitting of the ego brought to dramatic perfection in *Play It Again Sam,* where the super-ego who lacerates and consoles the abject Allen ego is literally objectified in the person of Humphrey Bogart" (Critchley 2002, 97-98).

5 Simon Critchley reworks here Freud's brief 1928 article "Humour". In it, Freud addresses humour as "a contribution to the comic made through the agency of the super-ego" (Freud 1928, 5). His theory stems from an understanding of humour as the triumph of pleasure in the face of adversity, and the role of humourists as paternal figures whose role is diminishing suffering for both themselves and others.

> − Hold on a moment, I can imagine you saying at this point.
> What is it?
> − On a point of academic interest. This descent upon her lips is merely one simple move in a whole campaign. What interests the outside world, surely, is not the tactics but the strategy. At what point did you actually decide on this course of action?
> What course of action?
> − Making a pass at her?
> The dismissive coarseness of our expression is inappropriate. I was not making a pass. […] This was mutual. Nor did I decide. I knew. We both knew. She knew that I knew and I knew that she knew.
> − When?
> What?
> − When did you know?
> I'll tell you. We knew as soon as I met her at the station. […]
> − Yes, yes, yes (you interrupt). But what about the bottle?
> What?
> − The bottle of whisky. Are you telling me you put it into her room, or imagined that you might put it into her room, or whatever you or your unconscious did or didn't, *after* you met her? When she was already occupying the room?
> Obviously not. I imagined putting the bottle of whisky into her room when I collected the key from Administration.
> − Before you went to meet her at the station?
> Naturally. (Frayn 1990, 22-23)

This passage is comic in that it discloses Richard's incongruous behaviour in a rather benevolent manner, and once again such incongruity reveals a shared human condition, namely, our ability to deceive ourselves about the power that the lower passions can have over us. But most importantly, as it mirrors the way humour operates, this scene is also meta-comic, and thus gives insight into the internal workings of a comic mind.

The two types of humour that have been discussed so far, humorous vituperation and self-ridicule, have enriched our understanding of the novel at the level of character description and interaction and confirm that we are dealing with a co-median, a humourist character/narrator. But in the manner of Sterne's *Tristram*

Shandy, the insightfulness of Frayn's approach is that, through his main character's split comic personality, humour also becomes metafictional. Richard brings up incongruities that reveal our expectation that literature can (re)create reality and the simultaneous awareness that it is a limited attempt. This is particularly noticeable in Richard's account of his chaotic second visit to his future wife in London. He tries to create an illusion of reality − the suspension of disbelief which is the key to most realistic literature − through an accurate, step-by-step representation of what he felt and experienced. In doing so, however, he is very much aware that, paraphrasing Wordsworth, this is all being recollected in tranquillity (Frayn 1990, 63) and it does not represent reality in reality's own terms:

> You're holding your hand to your head again, I can see, very silently and patiently. You can't understand a word of this. No, well, I should think not. Nor can I − and I'm there in the middle of it all. […] But one of the difficult things about battles, I can tell you, whether you're fighting them or whether you're describing them afterwards, is that people don't stop to introduce themselves (Hallo, there! I'm Colonel Bollockoff, 753rd Infantry Division. You must find all this awfully confusing, but what we're trying to do is to outflank you to the right, and then drop a small tactical nuclear weapon on top of you…). (Frayn 1990, 62)

Again, this reflection takes the form of a fake dialogue between Richard and his colleague that reflects on Richard's behaviour, in this case, his (lack of) skill as a writer of fiction. Through the form of this humorous dialogue, Richard brings up incongruities that seem to imply that realistic literature is impossible. Yet, this implication has to be measured against the fact that, by the end of the novel, Richard is moved to tears by his wife's literary recreation of his mother − thus proving him wrong in thinking that realistic fiction is impossible and/or made-up nonsense:

> And suddenly the tears came to my eyes. It was the blueness of the scarf that did it. So stupid. There never was such a scarf, or such a night. They were made-up things. And yet somehow I was glad to find my mother young again, running along the street, with a home to run to, and a blue scarf, and the droplets of fog trembling

> in her hair. Was it my mother I was weeping for, or the words? It was the way words caught her, the way they honoured her. Like sunlight haloing and honouring a cloud. (Frayn 1990, 162)

The bottom line is then that Richard would like to (re)create reality, but fails to do so, not because the task is completely impossible, but because he is a scholar, that is, a privileged reader who knows *too much* about how literature works. His failure at writing, therefore, is presented as a direct consequence of his academic frame of mind. His melancholic over-awareness of rules, norms and limitations mirrors his probing, scholarly personality and vice versa. Significantly enough, the two roles of Richard's internal discussion take on two distinctive personae in these passages; his ego naïvely believes he can recreate reality through creative writing, whereas his super-ego takes a rather scholarly personality who constantly reminds him of the fictionality of literature:

> Hold on, though, you think. […] Because, with your usual acute eye for the text, you have noticed a tiny discrepancy in the account above. […] The phrase "brief handshake", it's true, doesn't fully cover the events outside the guest-room door. They were extended by one of those off little things that are so difficult to give any account of afterwards − the kind of snaggle in the narrative that you leave out when you tell the story. (Frayn 1990, 17-18)

From these humorous scholarly interruptions we can gather several conclusions on the novel's stance on academic work. First of all, they reflect once again the secondary and derivative role of academia that the novel highlights, since they are invariably written as commentaries and responses that come after actions and descriptions. The novel thus stresses that scholarly research is always written as a response to literature, whereas it is hardly ever the case that fiction is written as a response to an academic work. This creates an ongoing irony in the story: even though Richard resents his condition of commentator, as quoted before, he cannot avoid behaving as such. And the final irony of the story lies in his realisation, after the letters have been sent (and lost), that it is precisely this type of derivative work that he should collect and publish.

Written in the form of interruptions and responses, academic work is also represented as slowing down the development of the story, further trumping

the already-difficult task of writing literature. However, these parentheses also enrich the narrative by adding details to the story and revealing the internal workings of fiction, such as its silences and rearrangements of time. They function in the way that the best academic writing works, by enlarging our understanding of texts. As instances of humour, they reveal literature's inescapable limitations as a human product that tries to (re)create reality. Yet, these are not brought up to leave readers merely pondering on those limitations, but rather to affirm a different type of enjoyment, one that focuses on literature as an object. In Freudian terms, they insist that the "wounds dealt by the outside world" are "merely occasions for pleasure" (Freud 1928, 2). Arguably, this reflection on the nature of literature could be reached through means other than humour. The difference lies in that, through humour, the text makes such a point more "quietly, practically and discreetly" and avoids the "clumsiness of a theoretical discussion" (Critchley 2002, 18).

By making these connections between academic writing and humour, *The Trick of It* shows that although academic work is indeed secondary and derivative, it is also incisive and (can be) very entertaining. Just as academic work seems unnecessary and derivative, so is humour − it seems entirely gratuitous and needs implicit, shared congruities outside itself to work. Similarly, like humour, academic research is inquisitive and insightful. By making academic work funny, therefore, Frayn's novel ultimately restores the value of the discipline, apparently discredited by the emphasis on Richard's failure and his frequently reprehensible behaviour. The novel suggests that academic work is a penetrating form of analysis which, at its best, increases our enjoyment of texts.

Richard's complex melancholic personality shapes Frayn's novel, constantly merging the role of the academic with that of the humourist. As we have seen, such a double role as a comic academic or an academic comedian affects the narrative structure of the novel. This connection between academia and humour is also explicitly acknowledged through Richard's own voice in the novel. He realises he has a "weakness for the ludic touch", that he has been "a comic novel" (Frayn 1990, 78) and constantly emphasises JL's serious nature against his own comic spirit: "I do the jokes and the salad; she does the bread and the sincerity" (Frayn 1990, 89). Significantly enough, Richard repeatedly insists that his wife should include some sense of detachment, of "ironic self-awareness" in her novel (Frayn 1990, 115) and it is precisely when Richard's suggestions about the novel are rejected (Frayn 1990, 116) that we see JL laugh

for the first and last time, which reads very much like her revenge on Richard by using his favourite means of deprecation.

Frayn's multi-layered use of humour, therefore, is a complex and very rich literary representation of humour as "practically enacted theory" (Critchley 2002, 18). On one level, it serves to reveal and address critically the high levels of competition that plague academic life; on another, it is used to reflect on the nature of fiction. Even more, it works as a mirror of the reflexive and enjoyable nature of academic work. Following Elaine Showalter's suggestion, then, we can rightly count *The Trick of It* among the best academic novels, for it innovates within the subgenre, addresses academic competition and experiments with fiction itself (Showalter 2005, 4-5), but it also gives insight into the nature of our academic endeavour.

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Another Look at Joyceans: Evelyn Conlon's Rewrite of "Two Gallants"

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Abstract: The subject of the article is the satirical portrayal of Joyce scholarship in Evelyn Conlon's short story "Two Gallants", offered for the tribute volume of *Dubliners 100*, a writerly joint venture edited by Thomas Morris in 2014. The analysis acknowledges the intertextual richness of Conlon's creation, as she engages not only with the master text, but with other writers' responses to Joyce's work. Questions related to repetition, referencing and repurposing of the words of others prove central to the story's plot, in which a female scholar has to guard her research against an ungallant tandem of plagiarist colleagues. The motif of feminist revenge looms large in the narrative which ties the fate of a cheated servant maid with that of her modern granddaughter, lashing out against unfair academic practice.

Keywords: *Dubliners*, Joyce industry, intellectual theft, gender imbalance in academia, (un)creative writing

James Joyce once remarked about *Ulysses*: "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries" (Ellmann 1982, 521). This wry but prescient comment envisaged the continuous growth of critical commentary, produced by a community of academics deriving benefits from Joyce's achievement. Invited to write a contribution for a centennial tribute collection *Dubliners 100*, Evelyn Conlon decided to focus her attention on the absurdities of the so-called Joyce industry, and on the gender dynamics in scholarly circles. Her remake of "Two Gallants" is also a playful exploration of the issue of plagiarism in its less and more acceptable forms (e.g. adaptation, parody, uncreative writing), as well as a rumination on the obstacles encountered by disadvantaged writers, both in the literary world and academia. The theme of parasitical relations between scholars (and between texts) is presented in a story that does not function too well as a standalone; instead, it feeds off Joyce's host narrative and subsequent reactions to it and to the whole "revolution of the word" that his

writing has caused. What is more, Conlon's offering engages with the long tradition of academic fiction, often compromised by the problem of representation itself, and by the repetitiveness of its own conventions. The motifs of faculty scheming and revenge, pranks played on senior scholars, promiscuity in university circles, fraud as a career choice etc. are quite familiar to the enthusiasts of the genre, as is the tendency to satirise the people and practices of academia through the use of what Kenneth Womack terms "pejorative poetics" (Womack 2002, 1). With her experience as an adjunct professor in creative writing and that of a frequent writer-in-residence, Conlon is well aware of both academic and critical tricks of the trade. She piles one intertextual reference upon another, delighting, Joyce-style, in pastiche and retelling, and expecting the readers to remain busy as they are trying to follow her story to its suspenseful conclusion. In accordance with Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, the remake of "Two Gallants" provides us with all the pleasures of derivative writing, stemming "from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (Hutcheon 2013, 4).

The narrative begins with a rather kind-hearted depiction of academic criticism as a way of "mak[ing] sense of things through looking at writers and what they might have meant, and how the dead ones stood up or didn't"; we also learn that this occupation is "as good a way of making sense of the world as say business is, or prayer" (Conlon 2014, 60). Very soon, however, the picture is marred by a disclosure of petty rivalries, careerism and duplicity. Conlon sets out to show how navigating the treacherous seas of a scholarly gathering poses a particular challenge for women academics who have to be on guard against predatory male colleagues, shamelessly appropriating their ideas and words.

The story's main protagonist, Ruth, attends a conference at Trinity College, to speak about a servant girl in "Two Gallants", whose prototype, as she has discovered, was her own grandmother. The revelation is to be shared with fellow Joyceans, most of whom Ruth knows or recognises from previous scholarly events. Unimaginatively titled "Another Look at Joyce", the conference has attracted a predictable set of participants. Despite the fact that the community of Joyceans stretches worldwide, the same types tend to turn up on this as on other occasions. A seasoned female conference attendee can distinguish between the safe male companions, whom one can fraternize and even sleep with "without fear, if so minded" (Conlon 2014, 64), and the exploitative, patronising males who would not stop short of plagiarising the women they are

also casually attempting to seduce. Ruth knows the ropes; having honed her defensive skills through countless encounters:

> she'd had to fight for every inch of intelligent space as most people around her did their very best to dirty her brain with small talk and small views of herself. She'd looked at conversations that she was being forced into and she'd seen them metamorphose into mouths that were chewing and spitting out her dreams. (Conlon 2014, 60)

It can be assumed that other women present at the conference feel similarly circumscribed. They are in a minority and tend to stick together, disregarded by self-important male academics. Even the exchange of salutes reveals the pecking order: "The delegates entered the hall, gave some mild greetings to colleagues, Ruth to Peggy and that Italian woman, Toby to Joseph and to him from Princeton" (Conlon 2014, 60). Female researchers from outside the Anglo-Saxon context are stereotyped and treated with condescension. When Rosa Maria from Italy reveals "in an olive voice" (Conlon 2014, 61) that she will also be speaking on "Two Gallants", she faces a surprised reaction:

> 'What,' the tall man bellowed, looking down at Rosa Maria, 'I would have thought you'd hate them.'
> 'Why?' Rosa Maria asked, looking up at him with one eyebrow higher than the other. Her hair was black, her face illumined with enjoyment.
> 'Well…' There was a trap somewhere, but he couldn't find it.
> 'Ah, but I like the way they were imagined. I could hate them but I don't,' she said, her eyes crinkling at the corners, letting him off, saving his fall.
> 'I see,' Toby said, from the left hand side of the circle, not seeing at all.
> A woman pushed a teacart on the outskirts and started collecting cups. (Conlon 2014, 62)

The women at the conference seem to humour the male delegates, out of politeness and so as not to hurt their pride. The men assume that they know how and what women think. Given the story's finale, Rosa Maria's merciful backtracking from the confrontation may be seen as equivalent to the servant girl's

first lending of money to Corley in the original "Two Gallants". Patriarchy in 21st century Dublin is almost as strong as a hundred years before, in Joyce's time, with females cast in auxiliary, nourishing roles (the impression is subtly reinforced by the figure in the background, serving refreshments during coffee breaks, and cleaning up afterwards). Yet, as the story develops, a possibility of feminist revenge looms on the horizon, both with regard to Corley and Lenehan for their deception of the servant girl in Joyce's original, and with regard to the characters of Lachey and Toby Doyle, two academics scheming to steal their colleague's writing. Additionally, Conlon's remake of "Two Gallants" enters into intertextual play with "Two More Gallants" (1986) by William Trevor, which is also a response to the story from *Dubliners*, and features a revenge plot involving a Joyce scholar.[6] The result is a multi-layered narrative, emphasising the recurrence of betrayal and theft, as well as the frustrations accompanying the attempt to write something new on Joyce, and after Joyce.

Like Conlon herself, the characters of her story struggle with the anxiety of influence. Within the space of the past century, Joyce has acquired such an elevated, canonical status that it is difficult to add anything original to the nonetheless ever-expanding commentary on his work. One of the conference's early speakers, a young attractive male, dismisses the premise of the whole gathering by quoting from Patrick Kavanagh's famous ditty directed against the Joyce industry, "Who killed James Joyce?".[7] He then disappears, never to come back. Of course, the delegates do not take this rebellious (if, admittedly, derivative) gesture seriously; the man is taken for a "smartarse" who tries to disguise the fact that he has got nothing prepared. There are no Kenneth Goldsmith[8] enthusiasts in the audience to admire his brilliant recontextualisation of another writer's work, even though Joyce himself would have probably endorsed such aesthetics and linguistics.

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6 Trevor's story is about the humiliation of an elderly scholar, Professor Flacks, during an international academic conference. He is duped into thinking that he has discovered the model for the ill-used servant maid in Joyce's "Two Gallants". The intrigue is prepared by Flacks's ex-student, who pays an old miserly kitchen help 1 pound for lying to the professor.

7 It is worth remembering that Kavanagh's poem is itself a derivation, a parody of the nursery rhyme "Who Killed Cock Robin?".

8 Kenneth Goldsmith undermines conventional notions of creativity in his poetic and academic practice, declaring: "The world is full of texts, more or less interesting, I do not wish to add any more" (Goldsmith 2004). Students attending his course on Uncreative Writing at the University of Pennsylvania are asked to produce essays by combining sentences lifted from other texts. See: K. Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in a Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

The main villain of Conlon's narrative, Professor Doyle, has a different method of coping with the demand for originality. He assumes a priestly stance and luxuriates in his high position within Joyce studies, even though his contribution happens to be the ultimate fraud:

> He was pleased with himself. You see he had it figured out. It required a lot of work to do a paper on Joyce. You couldn't just talk about yourself and him, and the effect he'd had on you, or at least the effect you thought he ought to have had on you. All that had been done before, hundreds of times, by people with higher opinions of their own thoughts. But he had it nailed. […] He had paid Lachey to trawl the most obscure papers given in the most obscure places and he had rearranged them to fit into his own experience. (Conlon 2014, 65)

Doyle and his accomplice, who conducts the dubious research in return for promotion in academia, conspire to steal Ruth's work so as to use it for the closing talk. Even though the pompous professor disapproves of women in Joyce studies, he finds it easy to plagiarise them without getting caught. He instructs Lachey about the practicalities of his unfair game: "remember that if you stole from a man chances are someone might have heard it before, but a girl, it's unlikely" (Conlon 2014, 66). Additionally, the lower visibility of female academics makes it easier for men to deny intellectual theft:

> Once [Toby Doyle] had a bit of a scare. Some mad woman claimed that he had taken her essay on the shades of *Yonnondio* in *The Grapes of Wrath* and used the entire premise of it. He laughed it off, of course, snorting; who on earth could think that he'd have even heard of the publication, whatever the name of it was. Everyone believed him of course. (He'd found the obscure review in the sitting room of a woman he'd slept with, he was nearly sure.) (Conlon 2014, 66)

The mention of Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio* (1934) being echoed in Steinbeck's work suggests that the practice of appropriating women's ideas may also be detected in literature, or that female creative genius often passes unnoticed among

the more assertive men. Olsen defined herself as a feminist writer, and in her late book *Silences* (1987) she lashed against the obstacles talented artists may face because of their gender, class or race. By invoking her, Conlon draws attention to silencing forces in patriarchy, with the objective of foregrounding the aspects of female experience left out. Like her protagonist Ruth, she cares "what happened to the girl in the basement" (Conlon 2014, 64) in Joyce's story. Her version of "Two Gallants" is an exercise in hauntology, with its focus on the unsaid, and on the spectral manifestations of unresolved problems.

What is more, ghosts literally make their way into Conlon's narrative in a very Joycean,[9] high modernist fashion. There is a metaphysically charged scene at the beginning of the conference when a mysterious spectre interferes with Ruth and Doyle when they ascend the stairs of Trinity College:

> As he hurried to get closer to her, a shadow from the past walked straight at him, never ducked, straight at him, aiming to go through him. It blacked out the scrap of sun that was trying to blossom. Shivering, he steadied himself, so as not to become mesmerised by the brief bit of dark cast on the stone. At the same moment Ruth felt an invisible breath kiss her face. She touched her cheek. (Conlon 2014, 60)

Conlon does not make clear whose shadow momentarily plunges Toby Doyle into darkness. Is it Joyce himself, symbolically removing the spotlight from the fraudulent scholar? Or perhaps it is the ghost of the cheated servant maid, reconnecting with her academic granddaughter in order to support her in the struggle against gender imbalance.

A kiss bestowed on Ruth's cheek is like a blessing, or a welcome, as she proceeds to room number 1904. It brings associations with the year of Bloomsday,

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9 "Death is the highest form of life" (Joyce 1992, 622), reads one of the paradoxical statements in *Ulysses*. It comes from the *Circe* episode, where the protagonists are confronted by various ghosts from the past: Stephen Dedalus' mother, Bloom's son Rudy, Bloom's parents, Paddy Dingham, Irish national heroes. The idea of absences which are the highest form of presence also informs various stories in *Dubliners*. Eveline does not escape with Frank to Buenos Aires because of a deathbed promise to her mother, to take care of the family home. In "A Painful Case", Mr Duffy is tormented by the memory of Mrs. Sinico whose death he might have indirectly caused. In "The Dead", Gretta Conroy reminisces about her erstwhile lover Michael Furey, which makes her husband ponder upon the role of the countless dead in the living people's lives.

when Joyce first met Nora Barnacle,[10] a chambermaid with whom he eloped to Trieste, to begin a very productive period of his life. At this time he commenced his work on *Dubliners* and thought up the ill-fated "date" between Corley and the servant girl. For the duration of the conference, Ruth travels in her thoughts between past and present, reconstructing Joyce's creative process in a stream of consciousness which runs parallel to the academic shenanigans.[11] She imagines the writer sitting in the Triestine sun when suddenly the pair of deceitful companions, Corley and Lenehan, suggest themselves, demanding that he gives them a fictional existence: "*Go on, write about us, describe us if you can*" (Conlon 2014, 62).

The southern-European context is important for Conlon's story, as it is one which Rosa Maria is native to. She is another conference participant worthy of receiving Joyce's blessing/welcome kiss, and there is a physical resemblance between her and the character of Molly Bloom, or Galway people of Spanish descent, whom Joyce described with admiration in his article for the Italian journal *Piccolo*, referring to the popular belief that "the inhabitants of Galway are descendants of Spanish stock and that you can't go four steps without meeting the true Spanish type, with olive complexion and raven hair" (Joyce 1959, 229ff).

Both Rosa Maria and Ruth arrive at Trinity College to reclaim Joyce studies from patronising, complacent men like Doyle. Gillian Moore emphasises this point in a recent article, remarking on how the authors in the *Dubliners 100* collection make a concerted effort to challenge elitist perceptions of Joyce; hence "the voices that resonate in Conlon's story are multiple, primarily female, and tend to hold emotive, rather than analytical, power" (2019, 128). Partly thanks to a lucky coincidence (a letter handed in by a librarian), and partly thanks to her feminist-oriented, historically focused research, Ruth discovers her personal connection to Joyce's writing, and has something genuinely new to offer to the scholars gathered for the conference. The revelation she has to share cannot really be stolen from her: not only is she immune to plagiarist scheming, but she can also teach Doyle and Lachey a lesson.

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10 16th June 1904 (Bloomsday) is the day on which the action of *Ulysses* takes place. In this way, Joyce commemorated his first date with Nora, a woman of humble origin, but of utmost importance to him – his lifelong partner and the mother of his children.

11 Additionally, this part of the narrative seems to be a riff on some strategies of academic fiction; e.g. attempts at interweaving "authentic" period writing with the contemporary storyline, as it is done, for instance, in A.S. Byatt's *Possession*. The stream of consciousness provides a modernist "feel" to the text; it is a mark of Joyce's ghostly presence.

The motive of revenge is further enhanced by the content of Ruth's grandmother's letter. It undermines the image of the servant maid in "Two Gallants" as a gullible girl who can be easily exploited. Conlon's revision of the character defies class and gender stereotypes: "*I pass the mistress with no sadness in my eyes. They assume that because I'm a maid I was born to be a maid. And that I think like a maid. They love knowing that, although they don't know what a maid thinks like*" (2014, 68). Contrary to everyone's expectations, the servant manages to determine Corley's true identity and, having learnt about his real intentions, vows to punish him and his accomplice at some opportune moment:

> *I would bide my time like an owl, waiting for the night. And when theirs came I would watch them eating their words like they were sand, trying to spit them and I would not help them, maybe pass them a bit of water, but not much. They were blocking my light with gibberish and they would eventually have to pay.* (Conlon 2014, 68-69)

Following the example of her grandmother, Ruth also bides her time before seeing Professor Doyle's reputation destroyed. She knows enough about his *modus operandi* to set a trap and dupe him into a public unmasking of his corruption. Before that happens, she successfully presents her own talk, attracting a large audience and earning a vivid applause, among which she can detect "the wing of the dead writer breath[ing] past her again" (Conlon 2014, 69). The climax of the conference comes too soon: another look at Joyce has been provided and Doyle's self-styled guru manner rendered irrelevant already as he takes the privilege of uttering the last word, which, as a matter of fact, likewise belongs to Ruth. A verdict on his unethical behaviour proves hard to swallow; even a glass of water available at the podium does not alleviate the humiliation of "drink[ing] some darkness from the night" (Conlon 2014, 70).

When Joyce's publisher, Grant Richards refused to bring out *Dubliners*, the writer responded: "I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass" (Joyce 1957, 64). Evelyn Conlon has flashed a somewhat distorting mirror at the Joyce industry (and generally, at academia), and it has reflected a clear change of paradigm. Her story registers an exhaustion with the male bias in both the high modernist canon and scholarship. She seems to advocate a rediscovery of a flip-side to cerebral Joyce – a more

visceral, joyful, anarchic streak in his writing that once proved offensive to middle class sensibilities. Additionally, her tongue-in-cheek portrayal of scholarly circles, ready to split hairs over a "real dilemma" (Conlon 2014, 61) which panel to choose at a conference, and fervently believing in "the teaching of literature as a way to understand science, commerce, politics, war and love" (Conlon 2014, 69), carries a warning against megalomania. A deflation of the heroic was a solution Joyce prescribed to fellow Dubliners a hundred years ago; it appears that the guardians of his literary heritage might benefit from it even now.

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The Two Cultures and Other Dualisms in David Lodge's *Thinks...*

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Abstract: This article discusses several types of dualism in David Lodge's campus novel *Thinks…* (2001). Underlain by a conflict between "the two cultures", the plot and the narrative mode serve to illustrate different approaches to human consciousness, which are grounded in the humanities and the sciences, respectively. The novel brings together a novelist arguing for the uniqueness and opacity of the self and a cognitive scientist who denies the autonomy of the self and rejects the dualism of body and mind. This opposition is dramatised in the debates between the chief antagonists and in the development of their relationship, which constitutes the basis of the plot. It is argued that Lodge's novel points to areas of convergence between the two approaches but ultimately demonstrates their disjunction while arbitrarily making a case for the humanities.

Keywords: academic fiction, David Lodge, dualism, the two cultures

In his introduction to a comparative analysis of the fiction of Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge, *The Dialogic Novels of Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*, Robert A. Morace foregrounds dialogism as the defining quality of their work, which he detects at several levels at once:

> Their novels are truly "double voiced," or, to use a word from Lodge's *Changing Places*, "duplex," which in telegraphic jargon refers to the sending of two messages simultaneously in different directions along the same line. […] Theirs is a fiction of structural, thematic, semantic, and intertextual doublings, echoes, and mirror reflections: a fiction which simultaneously undermines and endorses; a fiction at once academic and accessible, referential and self-reflexive, British and American, Anglo-liberal and postrealist;

> a fiction tentative about its commitments yet increasingly committed to its own tentativeness. (1989, 29)

The notion of novelistic dialogism derives, of course, from the legacy of Bakhtin, identified by Lodge in his collection of critical essays *After Bakhtin* (1990) as a crucial influence on modern literary theory and practice. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin stressed the Russian writer's role in the creation of a novel underlain by genuine polyphony: "What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event" (1999, 6). He further contends that in Dostoevsky's works we are dealing with "an ultimate dialogicality, that is, a dialogicality of the ultimate whole" (18). Dialogic elements, he observes, exist also between elements of structure and are "juxtaposed contrapuntally" (40). Lodge explains that he finds Bakhtin's emphasis on the dialogic nature of language and his approach to discourse in the novel "useful and inspiring" both as a critic and a practising novelist (1990, 89). In an interview with Bernard Bergonzi Lodge commented on how his personal attitudes carried over into his fiction:

> I think I am by temperament tentative, sceptical, ironic, and so that reflects itself in the structure and texture of what I write. I am well aware that I tend to play off different ideological or moral attitudes against each other, and I can see that one could say it is evasive […] I do sheer away from strong resolutions of the narrative line in my novels which would affirm one position rather than another. I tend to balance things against each other; my novels tend towards binary structures – with, for example, opposite characters – and they very much leave the reader to make up his own mind. (Bergonzi 1995, 60-61)

The aim of this article is to analyse David Lodge's *Thinks…* (2001) as a novel constituted by dualism. I shall use the term "dualism" rather than "dialogism" since this is the term used in the novel itself, and also in the philosophical sense (e.g. references to Descartes). Furthermore, "dualism" appears to emphasise splits, divisions and contrasts rather than dialogic interaction − which is more

apposite in the discussion of this book. To modify Bakhtin's formulation, *Thinks…* is not so much about the plurality of consciousnesses but (amongst other things) about the contrast between two different approaches to consciousness.[12]

However, at the start of the discussion it must be pointed out that, as both a creative writer and a literary critic, in this, as in his other academic novels,[13] Lodge is self-conscious about his craft and the overall design of his narratives. As Michiko Kakutani observes, he "has often composed his comic fictions around a lofty literary or philosophical concept" (2001).[14] Written in a realistic mode tinged with metafictional elements, *Thinks…* overtly identifies its main preoccupations. The architecture of the campus on which the action is set serves as a metonymy for the novel's numerous dualisms. The (fictitious) University of Gloucester, established in the 1960s, is located in the countryside, on a campus whose unfinished construction reflects the inner divisions within the academic world. The project had started on opposite ends of the site, with the intention of eventually filling up the entire space by merging the Arts and the Sciences buildings, but the university eventually ran out of money, which effectively left a permanent gap between the two sets of buildings. Consequently, as one staff member explains to the newcomer Helen Reed, the university is "an architectural allegory of the Two Cultures" (Lodge 2001, 11). The analogy is so self-evident that, as Helen notes, his tone betrays an exhausted self-consciousness about the joke: "It wasn't the first time […] that he'd made this observation to visitors. In fact almost everything he says has a faintly used feel to it, like paper that lost its crispness by being handled too frequently. Perhaps that's inevitable if you're a teacher, even a university teacher, having to repeat the same things over and over again" (11).[15] The novel itself, which Kakutani aptly describes as "rather mechanical" (2001), is based on an old concept.

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12 The research that Lodge did during the writing of this novel also gave rise to his collection of critical essays, *Consciousness and the Novel* (2002).

13 Chris Walsh points out that even though the majority of Lodge's novels are not concerned primarily with academia, his fiction is nevertheless regarded as "being *mostly* about academic life" so that it tends to be cited as an example of this genre (2007, 268).

14 With its overall satirical approach to academia, *Thinks…* confirms Bruce Robbins's assertion about the periodisation of the academic novel: in the first half of the twentieth century the genre was dominated by the pastoral mode (e.g. Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* [1945]) whereas in the postwar decades satire prevailed (e.g. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* [1954], David Lodge's *Changing Places* [1975] and *Small World* [1984], Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* [1975]) (Robbins 2006: 251).

15 Writing in the 1980s, Lodge asserted that the campus novel had already become so well established as a genre that readers "relish its familiar and recurrent features almost as much as they enjoy whatever new twist or texture the novelist is able to impart" (1986, 169).

The reference is to the well-established opposition between "the two cultures" as defined by C.P. Snow in a Rede lecture titled "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution", delivered in 1959.[16] Having established his credentials as a scientist by training and a writer by vocation (2012, 1), Snow complains about a split between "literary intellectuals" and "physical scientists", allegedly separated by a gulf of mutual incomprehension (4). Denouncing the old-fashioned, humanities-centred British model of education, he argues that in view of the scientific revolution as well as global social and political developments, the goals of education should be redefined so as to recognise the growing importance and relevance of science. In the conclusion of his essay, Snow argues that "[c]losing the gap between our cultures is a necessity in the most abstract intellectual sense, as well as in the most practical" (50). Stefan Collini remarks that by delivering this lecture and reiterating the notion of an opposition between the sciences and the humanities, Snow "launched a phrase, perhaps even a concept, on an unstoppably successful international career" (Collini 2012, vii).[17]

In Lodge's novel, the opposition between the two cultures is dramatised in the plot primarily as encounters between their chief representatives, the English novelist and temporary creative writing teacher Helen Reed on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the American scientist Ralph Messenger.[18] Their divergent attitudes concern the concept of consciousness, and, related to it, the idea of the existence or non-existence of an individual self. The architecture of the science centre also serves as a visual analogy of the different approaches. As with the overall design of the campus, the symbolism of the architecture is explicated by the characters themselves. The walls of the science centre are made of mirrored glass, which is supposed to represent the workings of the mind: one can look from within one's consciousness but

16 The first section of Lodge's essay on "Consciousness and the Novel", entitled "Consciousness and the Two Cultures", is a deliberate allusion to Snow's concept (Lodge 2002, 16).

17 In "The Two Cultures: A Second Look", published four years after the original lecture, Snow expressed his astonishment at the widespread response to his arguments, suggesting that "a nerve had been touched" (Snow 2012, 54).

18 To some degree, the novel draws on English-American cultural differences – a theme which Lodge fully explores, with comic effect, in *Changing Places* (1975) and *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984). In his overview of Lodge's academic fiction, Chris Walsh describes *Thinks…* as "unambiguously and self-evidently a serious novel" (2007, 279), which is part of the thesis he advances, namely that Lodge should be appreciated as serious rather than merely a comic novelist. However, the comic and satirical dimension in the novel is undeniable and should not be downplayed.

outsiders cannot look inside. This corresponds to Helen's view. However, the architect's conceit contains its own dualism: after dark, with the lights on, the interior of the building is exposed to view, illustrating the idea to which Ralph subscribes, namely that the explanatory power of scientific research may illuminate what goes on inside the mind.

In a playful metafictional gesture, the narrative mode of the novel imitates this architectural conceit: the alternating first person-narratives by Helen and Ralph give the reader access to their thoughts while every third chapter offers an external perspective by employing a conventional third-person narrator.

In his collection of essays *Consciousness and the Novel,* which immediately followed the publication of *Thinks…*, Lodge explains that the idea for this novel emerged from his discovery in the mid-1990s of the renewed concern with the notion of consciousness. In its current revival, the debate took the form of a conflict between recent scientific concepts and assumptions about human nature that stemmed from "religious, humanist, and literary traditions" (2002, x-xi). From their opposed positions, rooted in the humanities and the sciences, respectively, both Helen and Ralph attempt the same: to study human consciousness. Their methods, however, radically differ. Helen believes that consciousness is uniquely subjective and essentially impenetrable to others; nevertheless, she claims that one may try to imaginatively enter another person's mind. Novelists, as she points out, have tried to do so for two hundred years. Her prime example is the master of the modern psychological novel Henry James,[19] whose opaque descriptions of human thoughts and emotions she quotes on a number of occasions. Ironically, Ralph, who does not conceal his contempt and ignorance of literature, records his thoughts in a style which resembles stream of consciousness prose, or the most advanced form of a literary transcription of what goes on in the human mind. From his perspective, his recordings of himself speaking aloud are part of a scientific experiment. Unbeknown to Ralph, his doubts about the validity of this method are in fact shared by writers: "by articulating [your thoughts] … however informally … by articulating them in speech you're already at one remove from the phenomenon of consciousness itself" (57-58).

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19 Henry James is the protagonist of Lodge's novel *Author, Author* (2004). In his book on Lodge, J. Russell Perkin argues that the writer is "fascinated with the idea of passing between different worlds and identities […], for example industry and the university in *Nice Work*, the humanities and science in *Thinks…*, or his recurrent use of the Jamesian international theme to explore the cultural differences between England and the United States" (2014, 51).

Despite having similar objectives, Helen and Ralph jealously lay claim to exclusive access to the phenomenon of consciousness. The writer asserts that "consciousness was the province of the arts, especially literature, and most especially the novel", and calls novels "thought experiments" (61). Taking the concept of consciousness for granted, she considers its representation rather than definition as the main challenge while denying science the right to appropriate "the intangible invisible essential self" (62). Without overtly embracing the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, and admitting that bodily experiences may affect one's mind, Helen nevertheless believes in the autonomy of the mind, which she roughly identifies with unique selfhood. Her example is the case of a Frenchman who, despite being completely paralysed, managed to express his thoughts and feelings by moving his eyelid. The case appears to suggest that consciousness, or the soul, or the spirit, is locked up in the body but independent of it. In other words, Helen's stance obliquely corresponds to the philosophy of substance dualism. Ralph, by contrast, is convinced that body and mind are ontologically the same substance. His arguments, however, are derived from science rather than philosophy. Consciousness, in his view, emerged in the process of evolution as a function of the brain and therefore may be studied as a purely physical phenomenon; hence the ultimate objective of cognitive science is the replication and understanding of the process by the construction of an artificial mind. In philosophical terms, his views represent so-called "physicalism", encapsulated in the thesis that "everything is physical", or "everything supervenes on the physical". Items of a psychological, moral or social nature are believed to be ultimately "either physical or supervene on the physical" (Stoljar 2015).

These conflicting approaches are carried over into the characters' attitudes to religion. Debates on religious issues originate in Helen's grieving for her late husband. His recent and sudden death confronted her yet again with the question of the existence of the soul and its possible survival after the death of the body. Like David Lodge himself, and indeed a number of his characters, Helen is a lapsed Catholic who no longer practises but who has preserved a residue of her religious upbringing. By contrast, Ralph conceives of survival only in a material sense: "The atoms of my body are indestructible" (35), and remains unperturbed by the prospect of individual annihilation. In his view, religion, together with art, literature and the capacity for self-reflection emerged as a response to man's awareness of his mortality.

He broadly dismisses the validity of all the answers provided by culture through according the last word to science: "in the most recent phase of culture […] science suddenly takes off, and starts to tell a different story about how we got here, a much more powerful explanatory story that knocks the religious one for six" (101). Helen finds such ideas both horrifying and reductive, which Ralph again easily dismisses as groundless, culturally-induced sentiments: "You're a machine that's been programmed by culture not to recognize that it's a machine" (102).

Ralph's views echo Gilbert Ryle's notion of the fallacy of the Ghost in the Machine, expounded in his book *The Concept of Mind* (1949). According to this theory, the phenomenon of mind is produced by the human body, which includes the brain. The body is a machine, with no ghost, soul or spirit to be found inside. Invoking Ryle's influential book in *Consciousness and the Novel*, Lodge comments on the consequences of adopting this view: "To distinguish between flesh and spirit, body and soul, the material and the immaterial, the earthly and the transcendent, is to commit the fallacy of dualism, which runs deep through the history of Western culture, but is now dead and buried. Or it ought to be" (2002, 5). However, according to Lodge, this dualism "stubbornly persists", both in everyday speech and in the language of literature (2002, 5).[20]

In his own novel, the dualism of Helen's and Ralph's approaches is enacted in the numerous debates between them, in the course of which familiar arguments are deployed. Reviewing *Thinks…*, Kakutani comments critically on the predictability of the line of reasoning: "the reader can feel the author trying to shoehorn into their talks all sorts of research about cognitive science and familiar humanist arguments about the perils of scientific hubris" (2001). As their professional acquaintance evolves into an erotic relationship,[21] they learn more about each other's views and the limitations of their own attitudes, without, however, any significant modification, let alone abandonment, of their respective approaches. Ironically, their philosophies of consciousness

20 Sally Dalton-Brown observes that a recurrent theme in academic fiction is an academic's dilemma "whether to opt for the life of the mind or the life of desires, whether sexual, status-oriented, or commercial lust" (2008, 592). However, in Lodge's novel, despite the prominence of the body-mind dualism, the conflict between the two manifests itself differently.

21 Discussing Lodge's academic novel *Small World*, Dieter Fuchs detects the tradition of Menippean Satire in the clash between the carnal and the intellectual (2014, 55). To some extent, such elements may also be found in *Thinks…* .

run counter to their private lives. Whereas Ralph, who dismisses the concept of body-mind dualism, can easily separate the life of his body (the short-term relationship with Helen is merely one of his countless extramarital affairs) from his intellectual life, Helen partly loses control over her emotions and lets her mind be affected by her physicality, to the point where she briefly imagines herself to be in love with Ralph.

The novel stages a number of parallels between the antagonists and the rival approaches for which they stand. Both are preoccupied with the problem of consciousness and both keep a record of their thoughts. Both champion the case of their respective field while secretly experiencing doubts about its legitimacy. While creative writing as well as cognitive science appear to be all the rage in the academic world at the turn of the twenty-first century, and therefore the University of Gloucester expects financial benefits from each, the novelist and the scientist are less confident about the long-term success of their disciplines. Helen admits that very few writers make sufficient impact to be read after they are dead. The course she teaches leads to the production of about a dozen new narratives, since each of her students harbours an ambition to be a writer. Without sharing her thoughts with anyone, Helen is made to wonder about "the prolific production of fiction in our culture" (83): "Is it over-production? Are we in danger of accumulating a fiction-mountain – an immense quantity of surplus novels, like the butter mountains and milk lakes of the EEC?" (83). Ralph, for his part, is uncertain about the originality and significance of his own research; also, the unsuccessful experiments staged by his team demonstrate that cognitive science is a very long way from understanding how consciousness functions. The plot of *Thinks…* also attests that in their private lives neither the writer nor the scientist has adequate insight into other people's minds. Helen belatedly learns about her husband's infidelities, which not only changes her perception of him and of their marriage, but also undermines her self-confidence about having a writer's ability to imaginatively enter other people's inner worlds. Ralph arrives at a similar realisation of his own blindness when he learns new facts about his wife and about one of his colleagues. The current complications in his private life affect his confidence as a scientist; in the words of Adam Mars-Jones, "Ralph finally forfeits any authority he might have as an interpreter of life's mysteries" (2001).

The overall drive of Lodge's novel is to intimate the possibility of a reconciliation between the opposing stances, only to eventually dismiss it. In the

academic context, the two cultures are spuriously brought together in a guest lecture given by Robyn Penrose, a character from Lodge's earlier novel, *Nice Work* (1988). By now, Robyn has become a formidably successful professor, who dazzles her audiences with fashionable concepts and maverick combinations of ideas. Robyn's lecture, as summarised by Helen, revolves around the term "subject", which, although used by the lecturer in very diverse contexts, as an individual self, the subject of a sentence, the subject of a political state, the subject of English Literature in the curriculum, invariably comes under attack and is laid open to deconstruction in all these senses. Awed by Robyn's brilliant performance, Helen nevertheless deplores the "dry and barren message" that the lecturer conveys: "Where was the pleasure of reading in all this? Where was personal discovery, self-development?" (225). Robyn's lecture concludes with an analogy drawn between the humanities and the sciences. She suggests that computer software, which enables one to operate in different programs simultaneously, offers a metaphor for the decentred self. At this point, Helen is immediately struck by a correlation between the lecturer's ideas and Ralph's denial of the existence of any fixed identity. A representative of a traditional, liberal-humanist approach, Helen is alarmed at the fact that there should be "so much agreement on this point between the most advanced thinking in the sciences and the humanities" (226).

However, surprisingly for Helen, Ralph remains unimpressed by the lecture and refuses to endorse the convergence intimated by Robyn Penrose. In his view, poststructuralists pick up certain scientific concepts and incorporate them into their theories without proper understanding while falsely asserting that contemporary science has also deconstructed its foundations and claims to adequate knowledge. Hence, paradoxically, the only thing which the writer and the scientist agree upon is their scepticism about attempts to blend the two cultures.

As Lodge explains in his summation of Bakhtin, "In Bakhtin's perspective it is not possible to say 'the last word' about anything in the human sphere" (1990, 94). The denouement of *Thinks…* serves to illustrate yet again and reiterate the idea of dualism. The plot ends with Helen and Ralph's brief affair coming to an end, with neither party harbouring many regrets. They each go their separate way, rejoicing in their moderate success in their chosen field. Helen writes another novel whereas Ralph publishes another book on cognitive science. It does not mean, however, that no one has the last word in the dispute. The end of Helen's contract at the University of Gloucester

coincides with a major scientific conference on consciousness, which she attends without understanding any of the papers. However, she has been asked by Ralph to deliver the final paper, called by the organisers "The Last Word", and it is reasonable to assume that David Lodge himself made the arbitrary decision to let the novelist have the final say.[22] At the core of Helen's speech is a defence of the individual self and the impenetrability of human consciousness. Even though science appears to rule out the separation of body and mind, convincingly demonstrating that the latter is merely a function of the former, Helen, in defiance of scientific arguments, chooses to uphold the idea of the autonomy of the mind, or spirit, or soul, whatever one may call the substance that constitutes our autonomous being. Her position remains unsubstantiated and easy to challenge, being based on intuition and affect alone:

> We are told that [the self] is a fiction, a construction, an illusion, a myth. That each of us is "just a pack of neurons", or just a junction for converging discourses, or just a parallel processing computer running by itself without an operator. As a human being and as a writer, I find that view of consciousness abhorrent – and intuitively unconvincing. I want to hold on to the traditional idea of the autonomous individual self. (319)

Helen's declarative speech, illustrated with literary examples, is well received but fails to convince any of the scientist participants. In his review of *Thinks…*, Mars-Jones reads Lodge's message as the claim that "knowledge of how the universe works is less valuable than the knack of living without any certainty about what goes on in other people's heads" (2001). Ultimately, the dualism of perspectives remains firmly in place but Lodge's novel makes a tentative though unverifiable case for literature as a more adequate way of addressing the dilemmas of existence and conveying "the dense specificity of personal experience" (Lodge 2002, 10).[23]

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22 Rong Ou points out that Helen expresses Lodge's own views. Her arguments correspond to the assertions Lodge made in his Richard Ellman Lectures in Modern Literature at Emory University in 2001 (Ou 2009, 153).

23 In *Consciousness and the Novel* Lodge suggests that the existence and the value of literature may be legitimised by two kinds of connections between literature and science: "One kind of connection emphasises the *differences* between literary and scientific discourse about consciousness. The other emphasises points of agreement" (2002, 10).

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"Engineering the New Male" in James Lasdun's pre-#MeToo Academic Novel *The Horned Man*

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Abstract: James Lasdun's pre-#MeToo novel *The Horned Man* (2002) tells the story of a British academic, Lawrence Miller, teaching Gender Studies at a college in upstate New York, where he is also a member of the Sexual Harassment Committee. Reflecting on sexual politics at a US university campus, and a broader "continental drift of the sexes", involving the "engineering [of] the New Male", Miller's first-person account both chronicles the changing reality in the West at the turn of the 21st century, and departs from reality, as it becomes increasingly unreliable and Kafkaesque. Tracing the novel's intertextual and cultural references, the paper interprets the complicated and confusing tale of confusion, suspected conspiracy, mistaken and appropriated identity, cross-dressing and femicide as a symbolic expression of a struggle between "new" and "old" masculinity. Lasdun's prescient engagement with issues which in the "real world" had to wait almost two decades for the emergence of the #MeToo movement to become widely discussed is read from a feminist perspective as a representation of the ongoing tortuous process of transition towards more equitable gender relations.

Keywords: the #MeToo movement, academic novel, gender, toxic masculinity, crisis of masculinity, sexual harassment

Since the rise of the global #MeToo movement[24] a number of texts of culture, in particular feature films and TV series, as well as non-fiction and literary texts have addressed the problem of sexual harassment and assault of women from

24 The original #MeToo movement was founded by the African American activist Tarana Burke in 2006; however, the movement did not become mainstream until it gained global attention in October 2017, after accusations against the Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein became public (Kantor and Twohey 2019, 2, 185).

a feminist perspective.[25] The aim of this paper is to examine a pre-#MeToo novel in order to analyse an earlier literary representation of sexual harassment, violence against women, and above all depiction of masculinities in the context of gender politics mainly in an academic setting, before the current discourse on the issue developed and reached the mainstream. *The Horned Man*, the debut novel of the poet and writer James Lasdun, is read here as a prescient engagement with one of the most pressing issues of the present cultural moment,[26] providing a symbolic expression of a struggle between "new" and "old" (stereotypical) masculinity. Ultimately, the analysis below demonstrates that the complex social and cultural conflict, as yet without resolution, finds its reflection in the novel's convoluted narrative form and construction of gender.

The Horned Man, published in 2002, is set in the very late 1990s, as we learn from one reference to President Bill Clinton's impeachment proceedings (Lasdun 2002, 123) following the sex scandal involving Monica Lewinsky. This small piece of background information is part of the novel's main general theme of gender and sex politics, which together with the problem of the inability to really know others and one's own self is a combination that has informed most of Lasdun's prose writing, including his 2017 novel *The Fall Guy*, his latest, 2019, novella *Afternoon of a Faun*,[27] and his 2013 memoir *Give Me Everything You Have: On Being Stalked*. In fact, as one critic has observed, *The Horned Man*, *Give Me Everything You Have*, and *Afternoon of a Faun* can be said to form a triptych: "a meditation on being falsely [or not] accused" of sexual harassment (Waldman 2019).

Like the author's other works, the novel contains some small autobiographical elements. Lasdun was born in Britain, but has lived in the US for over three decades, teaching creative writing at several American universities in New York City and in upstate New York. *The Horned Man* tells the story of a white British academic, Lawrence Miller, who teaches Gender Studies at Arthur Clay College in upstate New York. Lawrence lives alone in New York City, since his wife, Carol, has separated from him, but he hopes to restore the marriage. He undergoes

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25 Examples include *The Morning Show* (2019–), *Bombshell* (2019), *Promising Young Woman* (2020), Rose McGowan's *Brave* (2018), Mary Gaitskill's "This Is Pleasure" (2019) and Kristen Roupenian's "Cat Person" (2017).

26 The novel turned out to be prescient for Lasdun himself, in a personal sense, as it preceded (or anticipated?) events later described in his memoir, namely the accusation of sexual harassment and plagiarism, as well as being stalked (see Kowal 2015).

27 My article on the novella is forthcoming.

psychoanalysis – as he tells his psychoanalyst, to address his marital problems, but secretly, as he claims, to conduct an experiment in order "to write a book about gender relations in the evolution of psychoanalytic practice" (Lasdun 2002, 66). In the meantime, he develops an interest in two women, and responds to what he considers a third woman's advances (later, one of these women is killed, while another is probably killed). At work, as a member of the Sexual Harassment Committee, he becomes preoccupied with a case against his colleague and fellow-Brit, Bruno Jackson, accused of harassing a female student. However, most of the story concentrates on Lawrence tackling what he believes is a plot against him. He discovers it after finding out about the previous occupants of his office at the campus (room 106). The latest one, Barbara Hellermann, a young fellow-academic, was brutally murdered. The earlier occupant was a Bulgarian poet and playwright, Bogomil Trumilcik, who was notorious for his mistreatment of women. His satyr-like uncouth lecherousness is seen as stemming from his Eastern European roots (16) – "[p]art of it undoubtedly was that he came from a different culture, […] with a different set of values" (48) – "from Romania or Bulgaria or one of those places" (16). Trumilcik is further "othered" by his probable Jewishness – the only time Lawrence (as he says) meets him, he describes him, possibly in an anti-Semitic tone, as having a "rabbinical beard matted with filth" (125).[28] This takes place in a derelict synagogue, where Trumilcik's play, an adaptation of Kafka's story "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor", is being staged. Interestingly, the main part is played by a woman – one of several instances of cross-dressing in the book.

The story is told through Lawrence's first-person narrative, which gradually becomes increasingly unreliable. His initial memory lapses are explained on the very first page with the concept of "parapraxis – Freud's term for the lapses of memory, slips of the tongue, and other minor suppressions of consciousness that occur in everyday life" (1). However, soon these instances of Lawrence's "forgetfulness" (25, 56, 57, 97, 99, 124, 177) and acting as if "behind [his] own back" (18, 55) become too numerous to be considered mere "everyday" occurrences. Also accumulating beyond any limits of plausibility are the details in Lawrence's conspiracy theory. According to it, Trumilcik still uses his former office at night to – bizarrely – sleep in the space under two desks put together, and, furthermore, involves a network of people known to Lawrence to frame him into his own (Trumilcik's) assaults and murders of women, while being particularly

28 Kimmel lists "sexual predation" among anti-Semitic stereotypes (2017, 262).

malicious.[29] In the process of trying to expose Trumilcik and his accomplices, Lawrence becomes increasingly implicated himself. Rather than being offered evidence helping Lawrence protest his innocence, the readers are given more and more evidence to the contrary, which increasingly suggests that Lawrence becomes Trumilcik himself (i.e. impersonates his [supposed] impersonator) – or may even have always been Trumilcik all along, perhaps suffering from a split personality disorder.[30] This is possible, since even though a number of witnesses from the campus remember personally meeting Trumilcik and tell Lawrence about him, all the details that we are given, including the one about Trumilcik's supposedly objective existence, comes from Lawrence's subjective and untrustworthy account.

By the end of the book the readers are compelled to look with suspicion at Lawrence's every word. This effect, depending on our reading, either undermines or confirms Lawrence's conspiracy theory, or does both things at the same time. The book contains a number of direct intertextual references, especially to Shakespeare and Kafka, but is also indirectly engaged in a dialogue with the hybrid genre of the detective novel/psychological thriller pioneered by Poe. If we read *The Horned Man* through William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, then we distrust its narrator, whom we are likely to equate with Angelo,[31] because Angelo is guilty; the conspiracy to *frame* him is not real, because instead it is a plot that exposes his real guilt. If we read *The Horned Man* through Edgar Alan Poe, then we distrust the narrator because he is evil and guilty of the crime[32] *or* exactly because the conspiracy theory to frame him is so effective, and

29 One time, Lawrence finds human excrement on his desk – "the nastiest gift one person can give another" (Lasdun 2002, 107). In a typical fashion, immediately after getting rid of it, Lawrence says to himself: it was "[a]s good […] as if it *hadn't* occurred at all" (108; original emphasis).

30 Several facts support this hypothesis. Visiting the campus late at night (like Trumilcik), Lawrence finds not only an object resembling the tool used in the murder of Barbara Hellermann, but also Trumilcik's autobiographical fiction saved on an old computer in room 106. The literary work reminds Lawrence so much of his own experiences (it turns out that both men met the same woman who is later murdered) that in one paragraph describing the text, the narrator switches to first person plural by using the pronouns "we" and "our" (Lasdun 2002, 36). Lawrence suspects being watched and suspected of intended plagiarism by Trumilcik, whom he calls "my secret roommate" (33). The "roommate" may be Lawrence's secret psychological projection of his own inferiority complex and self-loathing due to his early experiences (the rejection by his first love object connected with his lower status in the British class system), which may trigger his violence against women.

31 While Lawrence identifies with the innocent and virtuous Isabella, and mentions playing her role in a school production of the play (Lasdun 2002, 80).

32 In her review of *The Horned Man*, Laura Miller called it "Poe for the 21st century, a brainy chiller that finds the most terrifying monsters are those within" (2002).

therefore real. If we read *The Horned Man* through Franz Kafka, then we distrust *and* trust the narrator because the conspiracy theory is real *and* is not real at the same time. All these (and perhaps more) readings are simultaneously possible.

The novel never provides any clear resolution on whether Lawrence is truly guilty of femicide or not. The narrative remains ambiguous, and stops at a point which metatextually takes us to the very beginning – since the novel's opening and ending form a frame and a loop. In the ending, Lawrence, now probably a murder suspect, is "preparing a full and scrupulous account of the events that led to this enforced retirement from the world" (Lasdun 2002, 193). He is on the run and hiding in an abandoned fairground, in a wooden booth (to which he mysteriously had the right key), bearing the inscription "Horned Man" (169). The inscription is at first "in faded circus lettering" (97) but later appears "freshly painted" (169), most probably indicating the old funfair's presumably fake attraction: a man with horns or a horn. At this point, if we are to believe Lawrence, and if he is to believe his own senses, he has a recently grown horn protruding from his own forehead, thus really having become a "horned man" (184).

This one among several other bizarre images in the novel[33] directly reflects the book's title and its possible interpretations. At best, "the Horned Man" could refer to a cuckold, since jealous Lawrence suspects Carol's affair with Bruno (179, 181) and possibly other people. Alternatively, echoing the vulgar slang word, it could refer to a lustful – "horny" – man. In the worst case scenario, it could refer to the devil. Again, all these interpretations are simultaneously possible. However, most importantly, "the Horned Man" is connected with the novel's crucial symbol, the unicorn.

"The creature never lived, […] yet there is an abundance of evidence for it, and for several centuries the leading minds of their day believed in its existence" (120). This quote comes from Lawrence's father's unfinished and unpublished *magnum opus*, "a History of Pharmacology" (113). In the work, the pharmacist with academic ambitions[34] examined, among many other things, the ambiguity of the unicorn. As he wrote, "[o]f all the horns […] the alicorn [the horn of the unicorn] was universally deemed the most powerful" (120):

33 Perhaps the most interesting is the image of the glass eye which Lawrence stole from his cantankerous old neighbour and first lost on his psychoanalyst's sofa and then threw into a lake in Central Park: "[i]nstead of landing in the water, it embedded itself in a floating island of ice, staring skyward" (Lasdun 2002, 69).

34 He died of a brain tumour (Lasdun 2002, 81), which as a potentially hereditary illness may explain Lawrence's acute migraines, mental aberrations, and the "horn".

> 'Two explanations exist,' the footnote continued: 'for the medicinal action of the horn.' […] Depending on whether an authority believed the essence of a unicorn to be benign or evil, its effect would be explained either by the doctrine of allopathy, […], or else by the doctrine of homeopathy […]. Allegorists wishing to see the unicorn as a symbol of Christ, naturally adhered to the allopathic doctrine, which held that the horn was the ultimate pure substance. […] Homeopathists, on the other hand, regard the horn as the ultimate toxic substance. […] Far from Christlike, the unicorn of this school is an aggressive, highly unsociable monster. In pictures of Noah's Ark or Adam naming the Beasts, it usually has the distinction of being the only creature without a mate. (120–122)

According to one description, "*Atrocissimum est Monoceros*" – "the cruellest is the Unicorn, a monster that belloweth horriblie…" (122).

Lawrence is like the unicorn in his own ambiguity. We see him in two contrasting male roles – as if in an allopathic and a homeopathic version of himself. On the one hand, he is the "woke" teacher of Gender Studies and a member of the "purifying" and "healing" Sexual Harassment Committee. With a sense of "martyred righteousness" he endures being "pilloried" by his critics as one of the "fanatics of the new religion of Political Correctness" (12). He considers it his "duty" to "serve" on the Committee (12).[35] As he declares,

> as a teacher of Gender Studies, instructing my students in the science of unscrambling the genetic code of prejudice, false objectivity and pernicious sexual stereotyping that forms the building blocks of so many of our cultural monuments, I had an ethical obligation to follow through on my intellectual principles into the realm of real human relations, where these hidden codes wrought their true, devastating effects – or at any rate not to refuse to do so when asked. Either I believed that what I did for a living had a basis in life itself, or else I was wasting my time. (12)

35 Like all the other members of this academic body, who take seriously their "jobs of protecting the kids" (Lasdun 2002, 71). Ironically, the students consider themselves adults in need of protecting themselves from the puritanical Committee, and organise a protest where they chant "No more harassment! No more abuse! Give us the freedom to fuck who we choose!" (167).

Thinking about Bruno Jackson, he says,

> now, I feel more than ever the rightness of the great repudiation of masculinity that so many of us in academe consider the supreme contribution of the humanities in our time. Masculinity in its old, feral, malevolent guise, that is; unadapted masculinity worthy of nothing more than its own inevitable extinction. (132)

Yet, on the other hand, as his narrative progresses, Lawrence becomes increasingly likely to himself be the embodiment of exactly this toxic masculinity: it turns out that his wife has a Personal Protection Order against him after he had attacked her (about which he is in deep denial), and he may even be a murderer of women.

But this is not the end of Lawrence's unicorn-like ambiguity. In between his shift from one to the other male polar opposite, he even assumes the role of a woman. Most prominently, while in drag, he travels to a secret shelter for victims of domestic abuse and pretends to be a battered woman.[36] Initially, he approaches this plan (meant to locate Trumilcik) with "a certain professional enthusiasm":

> I had told myself that a journey in women's clothing would be a learning – an *empowering* – experience; something I might even ask my male students to try as an exercise. […] Perhaps I would come back […] like Tiresias, with a completed knowledge of what it was to be human. (134)

However, the moment he steps out on to the street in Barbara Hellermann's clothes[37] he experiences an "inward collapse; almost a feeling of shame, as if […] a punishment for some crime I'd committed without knowing it" (135). Far from empowered, presenting as a woman (he calls himself Marlene Winters), he feels immediately "mortified" and "humiliated" (135), his humanity not completed, but clearly diminished by this self-imposed symbolic "castration".

No female character is really empowered in this story. Two are killed, one is probably killed, several are battered. Apart from Carol's post-attack PPO

36 Earlier, he also impersonates his wife, Carol, imitating her voice by leaving loving voice messages for himself on his own phone.

37 The deceased academic had left them behind in what later became Lawrence's office.

(external, legal protection executed by security guards in her workplace), only two female characters are shown as having any power and control: Lawrence's female psychoanalyst, Dr Schrever – possibly owing to being equipped with the professional "phallus" of the phallogocentric "science" of psychoanalysis, and her "double", the similarly named Melody Schroeder – who is the female actor playing Blumfeld, in Trumilcik's adaptation of Kafka's story about the aging sexually repressed bachelor.[38] Both of these women who are granted power in the narrative are associated with masculinity. Femininity is associated with Lawrence's male heterosexual desire (especially his first unrequited love object, Emily Lloyd, and her present incarnation, an intern at the campus, Amber), and vulnerability, physical weakness and exposure to violence (Barbara Hellermann, Elaine Jordan, and Rosa Vasquez, mainly referred to as "the woman with the golden earings"). Strikingly, looking back at his marriage, which he insists was "a blissful, solid relationship" (150), Lawrence reveals that he delighted in his wife's fear of flying, and her suffering – "her phobia had become one of the things I most cherished about our relationship", as "her guard [would be] down so completely I felt as though I had been entrusted with the care of some infinitely vulnerable child" (153). Carol, in Lawrence's words, "playfully accused" him of "making a private cult out of her fear"; he admits: "I was as fascinated in observing every detail of her trauma as I was intent on supporting her" (154). From the wife's perspective, however, her accusation may not have been "playful" at all, and may have addressed a sense of oppression which, possibly, ultimately took *her* to the battered women's shelter, where Lawrence, dressed up as a battered woman, is recognised and exposed as a fraud and an oppressor.

Thus Lawrence's "misappropriation of female suffering" (135) in the women's shelter blurs or even violates the distinction between the victim and the abuser. What is more, the victim status is further problematised when Lawrence's narrative, in contrast to his earlier PC protestations, casts contemporary men as victims of all the recent political correctness. In his account, the "Sexual Harassment Awareness Week" (12) at the campus, and the "Take Back the Nights events, Date Rape seminars, a Speech Code conference, and so on" (13) are piled up on top

38 The potentially non-heteronormative bachelor is initially *op*pressed by two "blue-striped" (Kafka 1971, 185) (or "blue-veined" according to Lasdun [2002, 25]) jumping balls following him around, which he manages to trick and lock in a closet.

of each other as if deliberately to bring to mind Orwellian Hate Week, the Thought Police, and Newspeak. Also piled up are Lawrence's mentions of "the need for constant vigilance and self-scrutiny" (13), "reflexively checking over what [one has] said for any unintended innuendo" (50), and "struggling to correct" "a crude reflex" such as "absent-mindedly eyeing [a woman's] figure" (4–5):

> As a male in a position of power, one ha[s] to be vigilant over the inclination of one's eye to stray […], or the tendency of one's voice to convey impulses unconnected to the ostensible matter at hand. And as a member of the Sexual Harassment Committee, I was doubly aware of the need for this vigilance. (49–50)

Nonetheless, as Lawrence's narrative progresses, he admits "regretting for a moment (even as I acknowledged its importance) this unremitting obligation to hold oneself in check" (110). A very telling encapsulation of this, as it turns out, reluctant effort can be found in the title of Lawrence's paper for a seminar on Gender Studies: "Engineering the New Male" (111). The verb "to engineer" signals an intellectually masterminded scientific design, the difficulty in its implementation, and the artificiality of the result of the clearly forced process. The narrator goes as far as to compare the condition of being "engineered" into this "New Male" to the strange situation of hiding under two desks, which he compares to wearing a veil by a woman:

> What a stupendously odd situation to find myself in! I felt what it must be like to wear a chador, a yashmak; to go about the world revealing nothing of yourself. […] I was struck by the notion that this state of affairs wasn't after all so different from the normal manner in which men like myself were getting accustomed to conducting our relations with other people; either totally concealing ourselves, or else revealing only what we ourselves hadn't yet deemed inadmissible in civilised discourse; an aperture no less narrow than the one I was presently peeping through, and getting thinner by the day. (53–54)

Lawrence's disregard for gender difference in the cultural and historical context encompassing millennia renders his comparison disproportionate, to say

the least. His hyperbole, however, is commensurate with the last view that he presents in his account. In the end, Lawrence as the unicorn sees himself unambiguously as a victim – "calling across a great chasm of misunderstanding […] threatening to separate all men from all women, as if we were experiencing some strange continental drift of the sexes" (190).

The version of the myth of the unicorn as a victim is illustrated with the key non-textual cultural reference in the novel – the late medieval Unicorn Tapestries in the Cloisters Museum in New York. The seven exquisite tapestries visually narrate the seven stages in the hunt of the unicorn – lured by a virgin maiden to be killed by huntsmen and dogs. Yet, in the last tapestry, as we learn from its museum description, "The unicorn lives. He is risen as a Christ in paradise. Within his wooden enclosure the unicorn will allow himself to remain chained forever" ("Hunt of the Unicorn"). The mythical beast with its horn possessing magical powers has been tamed.

In the novel's last scene Lawrence too sits "within his wooden enclosure", the abandoned wooden booth with the inscription "Horned Man". Its carnivalesque surroundings, however, are the opposite of paradise: in the defunct fairground next to a landfill, he cuts a pathetic self-pitying figure, representing not Christ, but yet another crisis of masculinity. "Having absorbed so much hatred from so many sources", he says, "I have begun to wonder whether this is not some primordial, forgotten, but perhaps still useful social function, given to me to perform" (194). In other words, the horned man sees himself as framed – as the scapegoat.

And yet the likeliest realistic reason why Lawrence was recognised in the battered women's shelter was that his wife had sought refuge there in order to escape him. He claims to be looking for Trumilcik, but he is really looking for Carol all along, feeling a possessive sense of entitlement to her and their "blissful" relationship (150). When he (supposedly accidentally) finds her among the Unicorn Tapestries, right next to a museum exhibition on Medieval Mariolatry which Carol curates, he is captured by the security guards, and seemingly hunted down like the unicorn. Somehow he manages to escape – still to end up in a wooden enclosure of his own choosing, to which he alone had the right key. Thus the myth of the unicorn is rewritten in *The Horned Man*, implicating the unicorn in his own imprisonment and scapegoating.

As was mentioned, Lasdun's novel is not a tale with a clear ending – the ending is neither clear, nor even clearly an ending – with the book's very last words sending us straight back to the very first page where these last words

are referred to but not quoted.[39] The lost place in the book read by the narrator back then is found, but by now everything else in *this* book has been lost by the narrator, including himself. Now he has truly "lost [his] place" (195). In the conclusion to my analysis of *The Horned Man*, I suggest that this looped narrative structure corresponds with a much larger cyclical trend, and that through Lawrence's self-scapegoating Lasdun captures a common, and recently reintensified, phenomenon which is part of a recurrent social and cultural pattern.

In his *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*, first published in 2013, Michael Kimmel writes that "Again and again, what the research on rape and on domestic violence finds is that men initiate violence when they feel a loss of power to which they feel entitled" (2017, 186). This, according to Kimmel, is part of a broader problem which he calls "aggrieved entitlement": "that sense that those benefits to which you believed yourself entitled have been snatched away from you" (2017, 18) – in other words, the sense that one has "lost one's place" in the social hierarchy. Kimmel refers to the titular hitherto most privileged group's sense of victimisation due to their increasing loss of privilege in general, as a result of which masculinity is experiencing a crisis,[40] and in the US "scapegoating has become a national pastime" (2017, xviii) – meaning considering oneself unjustly scapegoated, while scapegoating others ("Jews, minorities, immigrants, women, whomever" [24]).

Writing about non-white men, in *Why Young Men: The Dangerous Allure of Violent Movements and What We Can Do about It* (2019) Jamil Jivani addresses the same problem of the recent resurgent wave of mobilisation around the idea of male supremacy which responds to the latest stage in the crisis

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39 The book Lawrence now returns to, after he was "interrupted and lost his place" (Lasdun 2002, 195), and after all the events of the now passing winter, is a translation of Gnostic Gospels, and the particular passage he last saw reads enigmatically: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you" (195).

40 Writing about the British context Więckowska (2014) demonstrates that hardly a decade has gone by since the late 19th century without a "crisis of masculinity". Moreover, the repetitive pattern began as a result of a gradual process of invalidation of medieval ideals of masculinity which intensified from the 17th century onwards (278). Thus, there have been two *fin-de-siècle* crises of masculinity in Britain (220), and in between: the post-WWI crisis (199), the post-WWII Angry Young Men crisis in the 1950s and 1960s (215), as well as the crises of the 1970s and the 1980s, and most recently the 2000s crisis (261), to which we have to add the 2010s crisis of masculinity. As Solomon-Godeau has observed, "masculinity […] is […] *always* in crisis" (1995, 70). Kimmel confirms this in his *Manhood in America* (2018, 59, 67, 219–321).

of masculinity, which coincides with the latest challenge to Western patriarchy in the form of the Fourth Wave of feminism (Rivers 2017). During this wave, over roughly the last decade, the strands of feminism which do not challenge neoliberal capitalism have become popular and in this form mainstream (Banet-Weiser 2018, 95).[41] In *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*, Sarah Banet-Weiser demonstrates exactly how, replicating the pattern of previous feminist waves followed by immediate backlashes,[42] "[t]he relationship between popular feminism and popular misogyny is deeply entwined" (2). While "popular feminism is *active* in shaping culture", "the 'popular' of popular misogyny is *reactive*" (3), struggling to turn the tide. Furthermore, Banet-Weiser points out "the twinned discourses of injury and capacity [which] work as a dynamic between popular feminism and popular misogyny, where the popular feminist claim of gendered injuries such as rape culture[43] is taken up and distorted by popular misogyny, transforming the injury into one that affects men" (120).

James Lasdun's first novel is not a direct engagement with the political and social problem of redressing the unjust patriarchal system and the (sometimes violent) opposition to attempts at dismantling or at least changing it. On the one hand, *The Horned Man* is a metaphorical take on "the continental drift of the sexes", seemingly displacing it into the realm of mythology, which is something Lasdun revisits in his latest book, *Afternoon of a Faun*, with a reference to yet another horned mythical figure – the faun. However, myths too are worth revisiting. As John Rowan, the author of the 1987 book *The Horned God: Feminism and Men as Wounding and Healing* (where he wrote about feeling hurt and punished

41 As Banet-Weiser says about her work, "[t]he popular feminisms I explore in this book are typically those that become visible precisely because they do not challenge deep structures of inequities" (2018, 11).

42 See e.g. Faludi 2000 and Faludi 2006.

43 Rape culture is "a culture in which rape is normalized and rarely punished" (Jensen 2007, 175); it "doesn't command men to rape but does blur the line between consensual sex and non-consensual rape, and also reduces the likelihood that rapists will be identified, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and punished" (Jensen 2018, 84). Furthermore, this culture "endorse[s] a vision of masculinity that makes rape inviting" (Jensen 2007, 48) through (increasingly violent and degrading) mainstream pornography (103). Banet-Weiser points out that recently, "[r]ather than a niche feminist issue, invoking rape culture has become much more normative within the mainstream media, much like popular feminism itself", whose "crucial component" has been to "call attention to rape culture, to reveal its pervasive and normative presence" (2018, 55). Furthermore, the author draws attention to the fact that "[r]ape culture has been seen as rampant on [US] college campuses" (55).

by his wife and all the women engaged in Second Wave Feminism), repeats after Elizabeth Dodson Greyz:[44] "The decisive question is always: 'Who controls the myth system?' – who is in charge of the social and religious construction of reality?" (2013, 6).

On the other hand, Lasdun's debut novel is not completely disengaged from the conflict described above. As Emily Nussbaum writes in her review of the book,

> [o]ther novels have mocked campus gender paranoia. But 'The Horned Man' digs deeper than simple satire, becoming a genuinely moving exploration of the psychology of self-policing. In the narrator's hyperanalytical consciousness, sexual desire has become a bureaucratic maneuver, so that even a casual office query triggers a terror of blushing – a fear that he will 'open the blood-gates.' (2002)

According to the critic, the novel "is also an evocative meditation on the male terror that a misstep might mean being first a creep, and then a criminal" (Nussbaum 2002) – in other words, that the man "lured by the maiden" like the unicorn falls victim to pubic shaming, a moral panic, or even a bloodlust-driven witch-hunt (cf. Kantor and Twohey 2019, 186). In this sense, Lasdun's novel is a presciently pre-#MeToo-era expression of male anxiety in the face of an increasing – and (only) since October 2017 prominent – shift in the Western discourse on sexual harassment. It is currently spreading to other areas, but it began in academia, which, like other institutions, has also been a site of entrenched patriarchal power best reflected in its inflexible hierarchical structures. Lasdun's narrator acknowledges this himself by naming "the great repudiation of [toxic] masculinity" as "the supreme contribution of the humanities in our time" (Lasdun 2002, 132). However, Lawrence declares this with such "newly engineered" zeal as to reveal his true bitterness behind it.

This is the second pre-#MeToo but especially #MeToo-era common response to the barely-begun shift symbolically expressed in *The Horned Man*: hand-in-hand with the anxiety about being framed, wrongly accused, misunderstood in a heterosexual context[45] goes a sense also felt by some men of being hurt and blamed al-

44 The author of *Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap* (1982).

45 This is the context of Lasdun's novel, hence the same narrow focus here.

ready, already (mis)judged and scapegoated.[46] Interestingly, and paradoxically, the two sides of the conflict agree about something, as Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey[47] write in *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement*:

> In a way, those who felt #MeToo had not gone far enough and those who protested that it was going too far were saying some of the same things: There was a lack of process or clear enough rules. The public did not fully agree on the precise meaning of words like *harassment* or *assault*, let alone how businesses or schools should investigate or punish them. Everyone from corporate boards to friends in bars seemed to be struggling to devise their own new guidelines, which made for fascinating conversation but also a kind of overall chaos. It was not clear how the country would ever agree on effective new standards or resolve the ocean of outstanding complaints. Instead, the feelings of unfairness on both sides just continued to mount. (2019, 188)

I propose that even before #MeToo *The Horned Man* captures this chaos in its convoluted narrative mode and frequent blurring of gender borderlines. Voice is given to both sides of the conflict, the "allopathic" and "homeopathic", the "healing" and the "toxic". Both sides need to be heard and understood so that means can be found for any progress to be made. The only figure who remains nearly silent is the battered woman[48] (not to mention the murdered woman), which symbolically reflects the still prevalent silencing of oppressed women in patriarchy.[49] Lasdun does not commit the "misappropriation of female suffer-

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46 False accusations do happen, can have serious consequences, and require attention. They are rare, although, admittedly, in this area, numbers are difficult to obtain and easy to dispute (Young 2014). In the case of the most serious allegations of abuse, "[h]ardly any false rape accusations end with a conviction and prison sentence" (Sanyal 2019: 49). Moreover, "[r]ape is a vastly underreported crime; most women who are raped do not go to law enforcement agencies" (Jensen 2018, 75), and "[w]e are still far from the day when every woman who makes a rape accusation gets a proper police investigation and a fair hearing" (Young 2014). In addition, confidential settlements are a powerful legal tool for silencing allegations and "allowing predators to remain hidden" (Kantor and Twohey 2019, 54, 187, 249).

47 The *New York Times* journalists who, together with Ronan Farrow writing for the *New Yorker*, broke the news about allegations of sexual abuse against Weinstein.

48 She found a powerful voice e.g. in Andrea Dworkin; see her "A Battered Wife Survives, 1978."

49 Mary Beard (2018) demonstrates how Western culture has silenced *all* women for thousands of years. This is very well illustrated by the essays in anthropology, ethnography, history of religions, and theology in Eilberg-Schwartz and Doniger 1995.

ing" (Lasdun 2002, 135) that Lawrence is guilty of while also claiming the victim status. Even though the novel last shows Lawrence in this role it does not condone or affirm it, but rather problematises and challenges it. In general, through Lawrence contemporary Western masculinity is represented as divided and conflicted: new jargon clashes with old habits, alertness to sexism and self-scrutiny clash with obliviousness, denial and self-victimisation. Thus Lasdun's novel invites a scrutiny of stereotypical progressive masculinity, stereotypical toxic masculinity, and stereotypical femininity – and the relations between them. The book is a prescient symbolic depiction of the current struggle for dominance between the still hegemonic "old" masculinity and "new" masculinity – and between views about what these terms mean.[50] It is an expression of great anxiety resulting from the unfinished rewriting of the very old script of patriarchy, with traditional roles becoming blurred or reversed, certainly challenged, and – for many people – confusing. It is a record of a stage in the ongoing tortuous process of transition towards more equitable gender relations. And as such it is a part of an important and much needed conversation.

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50 The schematic division into "old" and "new" masculinities is not intended to deny the fact that many masculinities can be identified. This is only highlighted by the existence of "hegemonic masculinity" – a term introduced by R.W Connell in 1979/1983 (Beasley 2015: 31; for more on the original concept see Connell 1995 and Connell 2009). As Beasley observes quoting Kimmel, "hegemonic masculinity is most importantly a means to recognizing that 'all masculinities are not created equal' […] and invokes a framing that draws attention to the diversity within masculinities, to multiple masculinities" (2015: 31). A position of hegemony means dominance, maintained through male homosociality, which "is about emotional detachment, being highly competitive, and viewing women as sexual objects. These interrelated values perpetuate hegemonic masculinity, suppress subordinate masculinity, and reproduce a pecking order among men" (Collinson and Hearn 2005: 299). For more on this see also Kowal 2019.

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The Romanian Academic Novel and Film through the Postcommunism/Postcolonialism Lens[51]

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Abstract: The last two decades have witnessed an intensified academic interest in a potential rapprochement between Postcolonial Studies and Postcommunist Studies, the former a firmly established discipline in global academia, while the existence of the latter as a discipline in its own right is still debatable. As the possibility of this alliance is – as was to be expected – both contested and supported by various scholars, this article attempts to investigate this issue as illustrated by the postcommunist Romanian academic novel. Aware as it is of contemporary intellectual debates, the genre of the academic (or campus) novel seems particularly suitable for shedding light on the matter: academic fiction frequently engages in a more or less explicit dialogue with academic criticism. A brief overview of the main arguments against and in favor of the Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism juncture will constitute the first part of the article, followed by a survey of Romanian academic novels published and films released after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Finally, the applicability of postcolonial concepts to postcommunist cultural phenomena will form the concluding argument.

Keywords: postcommunism, postcolonialism, Romanian academic/campus fiction, realism, metafiction, magical realism

The last two decades have witnessed an intensified academic interest in a potential rapprochement between Postcolonial Studies and Postcommunist Studies, the former a firmly established discipline in global academia, while the existence of the latter as a discipline in its own right is still debatable. As the possibility of this alliance is – as was to be expected – both contested and supported by var-

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ious scholars, this article attempts to investigate this issue as illustrated by the postcommunist Romanian academic novel. Aware as it is of contemporary intellectual debates, the genre of the academic (or campus) novel seems particularly suitable for shedding light on the matter: academic fiction frequently engages in a more or less explicit dialogue with academic criticism. A brief overview of the main arguments against and in favor of the Postcolonialism/Postcommunism juncture will constitute the first part of the article, followed by a survey of Romanian academic novels published and films released after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Finally, the applicability of postcolonial concepts to postcommunist cultural phenomena will form the concluding argument.

Ever since David Chioni Moore's article "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique" (2001), scholars from various regions of the world, and more particularly from Eastern Europe, have engaged in a heated discussion of the pertinence of subsuming or integrating Postcommunist Studies into Postcolonial Studies. From the vantage point of Eastern European scholars, Western academics have been perceived as reluctant in accepting the juncture and a ready (though perhaps inaccurate and insufficient) explanation has offered itself: in view of the poststructuralist and Marxist bedrock of postcolonialism, Western postcolonialists were unwilling to acknowledge an analogy with a phenomenon engendered by leftist politics: "For how would it benefit a postcolonialist critic to acknowledge the possibility that the colonized might be Caucasian, that the colonizers might not be capitalists, and that the ideological indoctrination forced by the colonists on the colonized might be Marxism?" (Ştefănescu 2013, 22). Moreover, suspicion of Marxism permeates Eastern European intelligentsia, especially the generations that have experienced the traumatic communist period. There are Eastern European scholars who express doubts about (though not an unwillingness to critically engage with) the applicability of postcolonial concepts in postcommunist contexts: like Andrei Terian, who argues "against a postcolonialism without shores" (2012, 25), Liviu Andreescu claims that "the Soviet Union has not been investigated in this [i.e. postcolonial] context because in many respects it does not fit the postcolonialist paradigm" (2011, 59) and that a dilution of postcolonialism into a mere ethical attitude would also deplete it of its explanatory power (2011, 61) and render it useless. A distinction needs to be made at this point: while some scholars are keen on pointing out the many differences between the situation of African and Asian colonies

of Western powers and the condition of Eastern European countries as satellites of the USSR (e.g. native governments, no loss of native languages in spite of intense Russification, the same treatment of people in the center/metropolis and in the peripheries, etc.), others highlight the fact that former communist countries in Eastern Europe are now colonized by the West, in its many institutional, cultural and economic guises (EU, NATO, IMF, U.S. culture etc.) Nataša Kovačević, for instance, advocates the existence of a colonial or "proto--colonial" (2008, 2) relationship between Eastern Europe and "the West", which is mostly epitomized by the European Union. Eastern European countries negotiating their admission to the EU must conform to externally imposed criteria and in this they are relegated to a subaltern status. Drawing on Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994) and on Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), Kovačević furthermore claims that there is

> …a long history of Western attempts to identify Western Europe as enlightened, developed, and civilized in distinction to Eastern Europe and, as a result, to intellectually master Eastern Europe through description and classification, fixing it into stereotypes of lamentable cultural, political, and economic backwardness (e.g. agrarian, old-fashioned, despotic, totalitarian, obedient, abnormally violent, bloodthirsty), or, alternately, praiseworthy conservation of its "noble savages" (here, pallid Western city-dwellers, enervated by industrial fumes or corporate discipline, are contrasted with big, healthy, lazy, and gregarious Eastern Europeans). (2008, 2)

Bogdan Ştefănescu and Maria Todorova elaborate on the trope of the lag, i.e. on the need of Eastern Europe to catch up with the developed West, as Eastern European countries are described in terms of "lack, absences, what one is not, incompleteness, backwardness, catching up, failure, self-exclusion, negative consciousness, and so on" (Todorova qtd. in Ştefănescu 2013, 142). In this context, the "self-colonizing" tendency (Kovačević 4) of marginal cultures which "import alien values and civilizational models by themselves and … lovingly colonize their own authenticity through these foreign models" (Kiossev qtd. in Ştefănescu 2013, 132) is pervasive. However, as Ştefănescu shows, self-colonization is not a new phenomenon in Romanian culture, as "[e]mbracing and rejecting foreign

standards became, at least since the early nineteenth century, the systole and diastole of Romania's cultural pulse" (2013, 153). It does seem indeed as if the communist period of Soviet domination was merely an interlude in Romania's West-facing mimetic strive. Ştefănescu goes further in his analysis of colonization to argue that

> the capitalist West colonized the very concepts of time and historical progress as templates for positioning and evaluating any culture as either modern (civilized) or pre-modern (primitive), while the Soviet East counter-colonized the discourse of temporality with its own version of utopian futurism. (2014, 355)

The result is, as might be expected, cultural trauma and a sense of the acceleration of time, as one needs to catch up with the elusive West in the race towards "progress", as well as a ready acceptance of (mainly economic) Western neocolonialism.

All these issues come to bear on the genre subjected to scrutiny in this article. The genre of the academic novel is traditionally thought to have emerged in postwar Anglo-American literature (i.e. in "the West"), a fact which would position its Romanian counterpart in a relationship of mimicry (to use Homi Bhabha's term). Whether or not this is the case, the following readings will show. The novels and films to be discussed here were published or released between 1992 (three years after the revolution) and 2018, spanning a quarter of a century. Without attempting to construct a linear progression of the genre, three periods or phases nevertheless emerge, in terms of the dominant aesthetic: the realist phase (early 1990s – mid-2000s), the metafictional phase (mid-2000s – early 2010s), and the magical realist phase (from the early 2010s to the present). Given the occasional overlaps of these intervals, this tentative periodization will be taken with a grain of salt in the following. In view of the postcolonial interest of the present analysis, I will therefore refrain from reading too much into the seemingly non-arbitrary development of the Romanian genre from an apparently innocent realism through a self-aware and self-doubting metafictional phase to magical realism (the mere mention of which triggers postcolonial associations).

The Romanian academic novel genre was practically nonexistent before the fall of the Iron Curtain; an explanation of this is the fact that the older generation of academics and therefore potential academic novelists had been either collab-

orationists with the communist regime and therefore not enthusiastic about exploring their intellectual lives or, if they were anti-communists, they were most certainly persecuted and either ended up in exile (e.g. Norman Manea) or died as political prisoners in one of Romania's communist extermination-camp-like prisons. Communist Romanian academic realities are fictionally depicted from without, e.g. in Patrick McGuinnes's novel *The Last Hundred Days* (2011) or in Saul Bellow's *The Dean's December* (1982). McGuinness's comments on the fate of many Romanian intellectuals under communism are telling:

> Ex-professors haunted the university buildings, minimum-wage ghosts who dusted their old lecture rooms or polished floorboards on all fours as their ex-colleagues stepped over them. The old joke, that it was in the janitorial strata of Romania's universities that you found the real intellectuals, was, like all good communist bloc jokes, less an exaggeration of reality than a shortcut to it. (2012, 31)

After the 1989 revolution, the silenced Romanian academic voices become audible, with a vengeance. Thus, the first post-communist Romanian academic novel, Max Torpedo's *Ghici cine trage în tine?* (Guess Who Is Shooting at You?, 1992), reads like a loud, strong parody of another genre which flourished during communism, i.e. the mystery novel. Communism is regarded as the 'golden age' of the mystery novel in Romania, as it was actively encouraged by the State due to its ideological brainwashing potential (Iovănel 2017, 178), constructing as it did a heroic image of the *miliţian* (policeman) and the *Securitate* (secret service) agent – the most hated figures in communist societies – and encouraging suspicion against any foreign (cultural) elements. Torpedo's novel is a relentless parody of these communist conventions. The English pseudonym stands for three academics from Transylvania University in Braşov, all of whom will later on also publish their own, individual academic novels: Caius Dobrescu, Alexandru Muşina and Andrei Bodiu. The pseudonym, as well as the fact that the novel masquerades as a translation from English, are symptomatic of Romanian culture's West-facing attitude: at the time, Romanian audiences avidly consumed Western cultural products, American ones in particular. Given the fact that the illusion of the novel's Western origin is "torpedoed" by the novel's first three words ("Major Eugen Simion") and that the translation is ostensibly the work of Vitoria Lipan (the well-known protagonist of another Romanian

crime novel), Torpedo's novel parodies Romanian readerships and their uncritical, wholesale consumption of American crime novels. The novel's plot itself seemingly encourages a postcolonial reading, as it is constructed around a *fatwa* and Salman Rushdie (occasionally spelled incorrectly as "Rushdi") is repeatedly mentioned. However, the fatwa-ed character is the fictional Romanian poet Cosmin Trunchilă, who in communist times used to write regime-approved patriotic poetry and who abruptly veered into hermeticism after the revolution. The fatwa turns out to be an unoriginal concoction of the poet himself, whose waning popularity drove him to construct a self-image as "the first writer from the East condemned by Islamic fundamentalists. Neither Kundera, nor Solzhenitsyn, nor Czeslav Milosz were thus honored…" (Torpedo 1992, 130).[52] "The East" here clearly means "Eastern Europe" and all the enumerated writers were dissidents under communism. This early fictional parallelism between postcolonialism and postcommunism is ambiguous: as the fatwa turns out to be nonexistent, it might suggest that the analogy is far-fetched, forced and ultimately counter-productive. The main target of the novel's parodying strategy is the host of "recycled" members of the Romanian police and secret service, formerly members of the *miliția* and *Securitate* respectively, yet the name of the protagonist (police major Eugen Simion) and his counterpart (Securitate colonel Eugen Simion) is the name of a prolific Romanian literary critic. This extends the parody to encompass Romanian literature and criticism as well and turns Torpedo's novel into a veiled metafiction and *roman à clef*, thus anticipating the Romanian academic novel's following stage.

By contrast, Andrei Bodiu's *Bulevardul Eroilor* (Heroes' Boulevard, 2004) reads like a dismal "condition-of-Romania" *cum* campus novel, as it centers on the drab post-communist experiences of academics, students and their extended families. This *roman à clef*'s central theme is what is known in Eastern Europe as the "transition", i.e. the painful macro- and micro-economic, social and political process of transition from a state-controlled economy to free-market capitalism, from totalitarianism to democracy, and the emerging brain drain phenomenon, as it is felt in the newly founded Faculty of Philology of Braşov. The university, like any institution recovering from decades of communism, employs educational methods which are "a mockery typical of *transitional* Roma-

52 In the original: "…primul scriitor din Est condamnat de fundamentaliştii islamici. Nici Kundera, nici Soljeniţîn, nici Czeslav Milosz n-au fost onoraţi…"

nia, with barely recycled old farts humiliating confused youths who indeed pay them for it" (Bodiu 2004, 214, my emphasis).[53] University professors of the older generation exhibit *comprador*, but also pre-modern, indeed feudal behavior: "The university chairs were like small enfeoffments, in which the thane led as he saw fit. The thane and the vassals" (2004, 246).[54] Bodiu's terms are redolent of Ştefănescu's: "[T[he reality of communism displayed […] a *feudal* mentality at best"; he goes on to enumerate its pre-modern features: "gerontocratic organization of decision-making", "use of forced labor", "nepotism and vassalage, personality cults and courtly fawning" (Ştefănescu 2013, 137, emphasis in the original). The political amnesia affecting the whole country is denounced in no uncertain terms: "In Romania there is nothing but "the short past". In 1990, some people were born a second time" (2004, 238).[55] There are no attempts at anything like *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Also, importantly, the complicity between the "recycled" or neo-/post-communists and the EU is hinted at (2004, 188).

Oana Tănase's *Filo, meserie!* (Philo, Nice Work!, 2005)[56] reads like the students' reply to Max Torpedo's novel. Both are collaborative works, as Oana Tănase is the pseudonym employed by eight students who attended creative writing classes with Alexandru Muşina and Andrei Bodiu, two of the authors of *Guess Who*. This campus novel is a light-hearted, comic Bildungsroman, a stylistically heterogeneous first-person account of student life written in a colloquial style. The pervasive presence of student dorms as spaces of student life invites a comparison between the novel and Cristian Mungiu's film *4 luni, 3 săptămâni şi 2 zile* (4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days), winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2007. However, the contrast in the student dorm atmosphere could not be more salient: published/ released only two years apart, the events narrated by the two fictional texts are set almost two decades apart – two very significant decades which have brought on massive changes in Romanian society. The pervasive oppressiveness of Mungiu's film, set in 1987, is absent from Tănase's novel, though the living conditions in the dorms have hardly changed; in other words, "transition" is slow when it comes to the material lives of ordinary people. However, the thematic

53 In the original: "…o bătaie de joc tipică pentru România tranziţiei, cu boşorogi nici măcar reciclaţi, umilind nişte juni derutaţi, care-i şi plăteau pentru asta".

54 In the original: "Catedrele erau nişte mici feude, în care nobilul conducea cum vroia el. Nobilul şi vasalii".

55 In the original: "În România nu există decât 'trecutul scurt'. În 1990 unii s-au născut a doua oară."

56 The novel's title alludes to David Lodge's academic novel *Nice Work* (1988).

focus of the two texts is very different: Tănase's novel focuses on exams, student elections, parties and falling in love, whereas Mungiu's film is full of trauma, as protagonist Otilia organizes an illegal abortion for her roommate Gabriela, a crime punishable by up to ten years of imprisonment under communist law. Moreover, Otilia is blackmailed into having sex with the abortionist. The film is representative of Romanian New Wave Cinema, a cinematic movement which advocates a minimalist, observational style redolent of André Bazin's aesthetic and restraint in passing political or moral judgement on its characters. The literary equivalent of this cinematic movement in Romanian literature at large would be what Mihai Iovănel terms the "miserabilist realism" of the 1990s, characterized by a primitive anti-communism (2017, 142).

The last novel to be mentioned as pertaining to the realist phase of the Romanian academic novel is Domnica Rădulescu's *Train to Trieste* (2008), written in English by a diasporic writer, a novel which traces the heroine's flight from totalitarian Romania to the United States. Significantly, the protagonist Mona Maria Manoliu, daughter of two academics and later an academic herself, alludes to what has come to be known as "resistance through culture", a withdrawal from public into private life, from the material into the spiritual. Mona and her father – who owns a typewriter, a forbidden object under communism – preserve their sanity by reading forbidden, i.e. foreign books (it is telling that they are English and German, i.e. Western books). However, her father's lectures are under permanent surveillance – he is not allowed to talk about "*metaphysical ideas and forbidden authors*" (57, italics in the original). Mona will herself become an academic in the United States, where she will experience other forms of inequality.

Bodiu's, Tănase's and Rădulescu's novels share a distinctly "documentary" quality: they seem to be chronicles of Romanian postcommunism (and in Rădulescu's case, communism), explanatory analyses of Romanian society at large, marked by linearity of plot and an intensely representationalist impulse. The effervescence of Max Torpedo's early postcommunist novel seems, in this context, to have been an elated, enthusiastic reaction to the rapid changes taking place after the revolution, soon to be dampened by the new social realities of the transition.

The metafictional phase of Romanian academic fiction debuts with Florin Piersic Jr.'s film *Eminescu versus Eminem* (2005), which marks a departure from Mungiu's representational style towards a self-reflexive mode. As a black and white feature, filmed with a handheld camera, it immediately flaunts its "uncon-

ventionality". The film's plot does not boast exciting events; instead, it is driven by the discussions between three film students, mostly revolving around American popular movies (*Matrix, The Silence of the Lambs, Hannibal, Terminator, Jaws, The Godfather, Alien, Chucky, Rocky*). The obtrusively discontinuous style of Piersic's film makes a point of violating every aesthetic convention of classical Hollywood cinema, also known as continuity or invisible editing or style. Rapid and blurred zooms to extreme close-ups of parts of the students' faces or hand gestures, the blatant disregard of eye-line matching and of the shot/reverse-shot pattern evince the film's intention of questioning mainstream cinema. Cinematic style is complemented by content, i.e. by the metaphorical and symbolic interpretations with which the students choose to endow American movies. These are highly parodic, though delivered in a very serious manner: *The Godfather* is seen as a sequel to *Jaws* expounding on American greediness and consumerism, while *Chucky* is read as a coded message to the Soviet bloc, a call to arms which has brought about the fall of communism. As the film's title intimates, it is concerned with (autochthonous) high culture and (Western) popular culture: Eminescu, the Romanian national poet, versus Eminem, an American rap artist. Thus, the film is a comment on the (self-) colonization of Romanian culture by Western culture, American culture in particular.

The metafictional novels of the second phase are remarkable for their (postmodern) playfulness: Caius Dobrescu's *Teză de doctorat* (Doctoral Thesis, 2007) and *Minoic* (Minoan, 2011), and Lucian Bâgiu's *Bestiar: Salată orientală cu universitari închipuiți* (Bestiary: Oriental Salad with Peacock/Imagined Academics, 2008). Dobrescu's *Teză de doctorat* bears all of the formal features of a doctoral thesis, one which claims to tackle transition in the context of globalization, but which apart from titles, subtitles and the bolded phrases which dapple the text itself (meant to catch the eye of the examiners), is a loose narrative of episodes in the life of Gică Ludu, an academic fraud who wants to pass off his graphorrhea as scientific work. The imposture inherent in post-communist "transition" is thus alluded to. *Minoic* reads like an academic thriller set at Shebango University (a thinly veiled fictional version of the University of Chicago), where the protagonist arrives on a research scholarship. References to communism and post-communist transition abound, for instance in the protagonist's comment on Romanian academics' skepticism in referring to the fall of communism in Romania as the "Revolution of 1989", as they prefer to employ the phrase "the events of 1989", thus positing an unwelcome continuity between communism

and post-communism, between totalitarianism and corrupt post-communist "democracy", between West and East.

Bâgiu, a younger novelist who was only ten years old at the time of the 1989 Revolution, relentlessly employs the conventions of postmodernist metafiction and consistently alludes to canonical academic novels such as David Lodge's campus trilogy. Thus, the novel's style is as eclectic as that of *Changing Places* (1975), and David Lodge makes an appearance as a character in the novel. Postcolonial (rather than postcommunist) references abound, as the novel's action takes place mainly in Alba Iulia, the mainstay of Habsburg hegemony in Transylvania, with short episodes set elsewhere, e.g. at an academic conference set in Vienna in the twenty-first century. An elusive, almost mythical book, which bears the value of the Graal in the novel's economy, is at the heart of the academics' search: the Hermannstadt Catechism, allegedly the first book printed in Romanian, in the sixteenth century, of which no copy has come down to us. In Transylvania's troubled colonial history, Romanian ethnics have been denied the civil, linguistic and religious rights of German (Saxon and Swabian), Hungarian or Szekely settlers. It is this colonial history Bâgiu alludes to, thus complicating a potential postcolonial reading of the novel by adding another center or metropolis to the already mentioned ones. This, in turn, gestures towards Romania's long colonial history, dating back to the Roman invasion and colonization of Dacia, as well as to other colonial powers which colonized Romania to different extents and degrees later on (e.g. the Ottoman Empire, the German Empire, etc.). Bâgiu's allusions to (post) colonialism are not confined to Romania. His various narrators find frequent occasions to comment (usually via footnotes) on former British colonies in the Pacific, from Australia to the obscurest of islands, which are relentlessly brought to the attention of the reader, thus reinforcing the idea of postcolonialism.

Bâgiu's novel and, to a lesser degree, Dobrescu's novels as well, are marked by frequent frame-breaks, authorial intrusions (e.g. via footnotes), collages, fragmentariness, the alternative construction and deconstruction of realist illusion, ostentatious instances of "baring the device", the playful subversion of narrative, in short, all the paraphernalia of (postmodern) metafiction. The global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and its sobering effects may or may not have had something to do with the change in mode which the next three novels substantiate.

Anton Marin's *Eu, gândacul* (I, the Bug, 2009), Alexandru Muşina's *Nepotul lui Dracula* (Dracula's Nephew/Descendant, 2012) and Radu Vancu's *Transparența* (Transparency, 2018) mark a departure from metafiction towards magical

realism and make up the third phase in the development of the Romanian academic novel identified above. The metafictional element is much less prominent in these novels of remarkable hybridity and irony.

Anton Marin's novel is an ironic, postcommunist take on Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915). Its protagonist, a young lecturer in organic chemistry named Dan C. Mihăilescu, bears the name of a real Romanian literary critic, whose connection to the novel is openly disavowed. The protagonist's metamorphosis into a cockroach enables him to witness and narrate events which constitute a panorama of Romanian society in the 2000s: discussions between his department chair and a corrupt professor, between the equally corrupt University administrative staff and the Minister of Education, doctors who discuss abusive organ transplants, watchmen who steal, a philistine newspaper editor and her real estate agent boyfriend, both exponents of Romanian "corporatists" obsessed with money, greedy church representatives, etc. Colonial undertones dapple the novel: Dan learns to "speak cockroach" and manages to save not only the twenty-million cockroach population of the university building, thus becoming the "Great Civilizing Hero" (Marin 2009, 65) of cockroachhood, but also to rid Romanian academia of its most corrupt elements, human relics of communist times, who, like Bodiu's "old farts", would not retire to make room for their younger and more motivated and capable peers. Of all the novels included in this discussion, Marin's novel most faithfully mimics street language and therefore exhibits a vulgarity of language which the other novels lack (though Vancu does not shy away from rough language either). Including street language in literature is one of the so-called "points of resistance" identified by Iovănel, who borrows the concept from Stanisław Lem: it refers to writers who have published under a totalitarian regime and have sought to transcend its censure-imposed limitations, seeking new limitations, new prohibitions which would have to be transgressed in post-totalitarian periods. One such point of resistance is street language, which pervades Romanian culture via hip-hop, an American popular music genre (Iovănel 2017, 35-8). However, hip-hop itself is the product of African American communities, as well as Latin American or Caribbean immigrants to the U.S.

Muşina's novel *Dracula's Grandson* or *Dracula's Descendant* claims that its protagonist, a Proust scholar at a university in Braşov, is the direct descendant of the fifteenth-century Wallachian voivode Vlad Ţepeş, also known as Vlad Drăculea, an object of Romanian nostalgia since the mid-19th century, due to both his anti-corruption reputation and his struggle against Ottoman occupation.

Additionally, this historical figure was Bram Stoker's source of inspiration when he invented Dracula. Academic dishonesty and corruption in the university are constant concerns in Muşina's relentlessly parodic novel. The "Pentagon" (a self-appointed elite group consisting of five male professors of literature) maintains a patriarchal academic dominance which frees them from bureaucratic burdens and enables some of them to under-perform. However, the school's chief secretary, Enikö Trăistaru, a former *Securitate* member who is also a woman, an ethnic Hungarian and a Protestant in a predominantly Orthodox country – apparently, the quintessence of the minority status – is revealed to be the school's true director, exceeding the Dean in power. The continuity between communism and postcommunism is again suggested, but then again so is the continuity between Transylvania's colonial past (Hungarian settlers had civil, linguistic and religious rights that the native Romanian population lacked) and its more recent communist past. The Dracula myth is playfully deconstructed from several critical perspectives by the said "Pentagon". From a postcolonial perspective, "Dracula is their [i.e. the West's] cultural product, not ours… Anthropologically, it's a common occurrence: you project the evil in yourself into the Other, the foreigner" (Muşina 2012, 149).[57] He is also construed as a "blood terrorist" and a "terrorist avant la lettre" (140),[58] whom Western culture insists on endowing with a human face, just as leftist intellectuals from the West supposedly wanted to humanize communism. The European Union's vampirism towards countries rich in natural resources is obliquely pointed out, as is the economic neo-colonialism of multinational corporations, and the increasing emigration and brain drain which plagues contemporary Romania: Romanians have become stateless "neo-Jews".[59] From "the darkness of communism and the fog of post-communism", the "communist Red Plague" followed by "the Yellow Plague of generalized theft and reckless consumption",[60] every politically corrupt fact about contemporary Romania is relentlessly foregrounded. Muşina's text is keen on flaunting its politically incorrect stance. It openly pokes excruciating fun at Cultural Studies, which comes to the rescue of contemporary vampires, a "new minority to be acknowledged,

57 In the original: "Dracula e produsul lor cultural, nu al nostru… Antropologic, e ceva obişnuit: proiectezi răul din tine în Celălalt, în strain" (149).

58 In the original: "terorist sangvinic", "terorist avant la lettre" (140).

59 In the original: "neoevrei" (155).

60 In the original: "bezna comunismului şi ceaţa postcomunismului", "Ciuma Roşie … Ciuma Galbenă, a furtului generalizat, a consumului nesăbuit" (408).

to be protected, positive discrimination, special parking lots, [admission quotas] in universities, not too strong a light in the lecture or seminar room, because their eyes might hurt … the whole thing"[61] – even Vampire Protection Services. The Romani minority looms large in Muşina's novel, but not as exponents of "internal colonization" (Ştefănescu 2013, 54). Instead, they are empowered, highly prosperous "Gypsies" who resent being called "Romani" (Muşina 2012, 173) and who earn their great fortunes by donating blood, a business which originated in their giving blood to the protagonist's vampire forebears. The novel is unambiguous in rejecting several key paradigms of contemporary intellectual thought: postmodernism (the category that is most relentlessly subjected to irony), cultural studies, political correctness, the myth of Western progress, etc.

Radu Vancu's *Transparența* is the most recent academic novel under scrutiny, a novel which traces two love stories: the overly sexualized love story between the male protagonist R. and Mega, both philology students in Sibiu, and the love story between R./Radu Vancu and the city of Sibiu, whose history the novel reconstructs in mythical, magical realist and postcolonial terms. R.'s political vehemence, his ferocious disgust with politically motivated evil and with the "Westerners' atrocities [which] made Eastern communism's atrocities look innocent" (Vancu 2018, 85)[62] result in an obsessive inventory of atrocities within the novel's pages (e.g. the charred body of a child found in a mother's suitcase after the bombings of Hamburg in the Second World War). The suicides of R.'s father and of Vancu–the–character's father occur during and due to post-communism and communism, respectively, a fact which suggests a continuity between communism and post-communism (like Muşina's and Dobrescu's novels). R. denounces the West's superiority in its "better" administration of memory, i.e. its superior metabolization of evil (Vancu 2018, 53-4). Romania's communist past looms large in Mega's father, a character who epitomizes all the crimes which were committed in the name of an ideology. R.'s traumatic (and surreal) post-communist legacy is his propensity to become literally transparent[63] every time he feels extreme fear or pleasure.

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61 In the original: "O nouă minoritate de recunoscut, de protejat, discriminare pozitivă, locuri speciale în parcări, în universități, să nu fie lumina prea tare în sala de curs sau de seminar, că-i deranjează la ochi… tot tacâmul" (143).

62 In the original: "atrocitățile occidentalilor le inocentau pe cele ale comunismului estic" (85).

63 This ability could be read in connection to what Ştefănescu, drawing on Zygmunt Bauman, calls the "regenerative void" (2013, 190).

The most consistently academic Romanian film is *Q.E.D.*, released in 2013, an award-winning black and white film of formal perfection and exquisite set design which strongly resembles Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen* (The Lives of Others, 2006), a drama set in communist Eastern Germany also concerned with surveillance and the way it destroyed human relationships and lives. The plot of *Q.E.D.* seemingly revolves around thirty-five-year-old mathematician Sorin Pârvu, who refuses to join the communist party and can therefore neither publish his theorems, nor obtain his PhD. To circumvent the oppressive system, he smuggles a paper outside the country and manages to have it published by an American university's academic journal, which will complicate the lives of all those close to him: fellow academics, friends and family. However, the film's true protagonist is Elena Buciuman, who is overwhelmed by her many responsibilities: she is the wife of an academic who managed to escape to France, which puts her in a difficult position with the *Securitate*, the mother of a boy who blames her for having urged his father to make a change for the better, the daughter of an elderly and sick father, and the friend of a scholar who wants her to smuggle an article to France. The moral dilemmas faced by the characters take center stage, as do their traumas, in this deliberately slow-paced film which flaunts its artificiality and its status as a work of art.

In conclusion, the wealth of references to communism evinces just how much the "life of the mind" (which is what academic novels are mostly concerned with) was colonized by communism (just as Romanian art was colonized by the Soviet "socialist realism" in the 1950s and 1960s, when control and censure were at their worst). However, as we have seen, the situation of Romania in particular is a complicated one, deriving from the many "centers" to which Romanian culture relates, one way or another, throughout its history: ancient Rome, the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, the USSR, the "West". The very hybridity of Romanian culture, which boasts Latin (linguistic) origins, but is a Christian Orthodox country (as opposed to Slavic Poland, which is Roman Catholic in its religious denomination), marks the uneasy ambivalence of its (Balkan?) identity. As the survey above has shown, postcolonial and postcommunist readings are frequently intertwined, though they are not necessarily interchangeable. The fictional texts invite postcolonial readings of themselves, but it does seem as if they are meant to complement, not to replace readings in postcommunist terms. The move towards magical realism and the employment of autochthonous myths

is a symptom of an increasing critical distance from Western cultural influence, but it can equally be viewed as an attempt to work through communist trauma, to perform a sort of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* with regard to our own responsibility for what happened during communism. Ironically, this move towards magical realism also mirrors a tendency in the American academic novel itself, as epitomized by James Hynes's *The Lecturer's Tale* (2001). However, viewed in the larger cultural context which goes beyond the confines of the genre, the Romanian novels undoubtedly (and, in part, overtly) react against Western cultural colonization. In employing a mode which is also used in the "West", academic fiction itself enacts the somewhat paradoxical move of that part of Romanian academia which attempts to appropriate the largely Western terminology of postcolonialism in its investigation of postcommunism.

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Anger, Fear, Depression, and Passion: Approaches to Teaching in Selected Academic Novels

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Abstract: The article discusses selected academic novels (*Lucky Jim, The History Man, Changing Places, The Professor of Desire, Disgrace, Submission*) from the perspective of more recent pedagogic literature (Tompkins, Palmer, Brookfield, Showalter). It focuses on approaches to teaching, roughly dividing them into fear-driven, anger-driven and passion-driven (problems with this typology are noted), both in the relevant literary works and in theoretical literature. The main question is how academic teachers relate to their students and how this affects the teaching/learning process. Special emphasis is placed on problems related to teaching literature.

Keywords: academic novel, teaching literature, image of the teacher, teacher--student relations

Introduction: reading academic fiction from the perspective of pedagogic literature

The present article is an attempt to look at academic novels from the perspective of pedagogic literature (Tompkins, Palmer, Brookfield, Showalter) in order to demonstrate its relevance to the problems faced by such literary characters as Jim Dixon, Howard Kirk, Morris Zapp, David Lurie or David Kepesh, which are no different from the problems that academic teachers face in real life. In particular I am going to focus on how those characters relate as teachers to their students and how this affects the teaching/learning process. Although pedagogic literature is not the most obvious context against which academic fiction is read, the main reason being that academic novels often seem to devote surprisingly little attention to teaching, focusing instead on love-life difficulties or struggle for power within academe, I believe that this approach might render valuable insights both into the genre and into teaching itself. In other words, pedagogic literature can enrich our understanding of academic fiction, and academic fiction could enrich our understanding of pedagogy.

It may be argued that insofar as academic fiction is about teachers, it *is* implicitly about teaching even when it does not seem to be about teaching. Parker J. Palmer, whose ideas I will frequently refer to, emphasizes that the ultimate success in teaching does not depend on technique but on the teacher's integrity and identity, which is sadly neglected in the public debate:

> The question we most commonly ask is the "what" question − what subjects shall we teach? When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the "how" question − what methods and techniques are required to teach well? Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the "why" question − for what purpose and to what ends do we teach? But seldom, if ever, do we ask the "who" question − who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form − or deform − the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? (Introduction)[64]

Interestingly enough, academic fiction has always explored the problem of teaching from this angle. It has delved deep into the teachers' hearts and minds, endeavoring to ascertain the reasons of the characters' success or, more often, failure both as teachers and human beings.

Reflection on teaching: fear-driven vs. anger-driven teaching

What deforms the way teachers relate to their students, their subjects, or their colleagues? Elaine Showalter, following Paul Ramsden,[65] answers: first it's fear, then anger:

> "When people believe they cannot make a favorable impression on an audience, social anxiety is felt," he [Paul Ramsden] writes.

64 This approach is not new; Parker's words echo Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous statement from "The Oversoul": "That which we are, we shall teach, not voluntarily but involuntarily" (1985, 217), but in the current technocratic era which attempts to reduce the complexities of teaching to easily quantifiable data and the simple correct-incorrect opposition, they may come as a revelation.

65 Showalter refers to Paul Ramsden's *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*. I have checked both editions of Ramsden's book and the passage which Showalter marks as a quotation from Ramsden is in neither of them.

> He goes on to note, however, "On the other hand, when people are confident in their ability to make the right impression but see their audience as unappreciative, anger will be felt.... For college teachers, these theories predict that over their professional lives, they will be inclined to fear students early in their careers and despise them later in their careers." (Showalter 1999)

Jane Tompkins associates fear-driven teaching with the dominant performance model, which she denounces in her article "Pedagogy of the Distressed":

> Whereas, for my entire teaching life, I had always thought that what I was doing was helping my students to understand the material we were studying − Melville or deconstruction or whatever − I had finally realized that what I was actually concerned with and focused on most of the time were three things: a) to show the students how smart I was, b) to show them how knowledgeable I was, and c) to show them how well-prepared I was for class. I had been putting on a performance whose true goal was not to help the students learn but to perform before them in such a way that they would have a good opinion of me. I think that this essentially, and more than anything else, is what we teach our students: how to perform within an institutional academic setting in such a way that they will be thought highly of by their colleagues and instructors. (1990, 654)

Tompkins indicates that the performance model is based on the fear that one is not smart enough, knowledgeable enough, or well-prepared enough. Naturally, these fears are much more intense in the case of inexperienced teachers who have just entered adult life.

Jim Dixon as an example of fear-driven teaching

The archetypal example of fear-driven teaching is Jim Dixon from *Lucky Jim.* His extreme anxiety as a college instructor, however, is not only a result of his seeming lack of academic or teaching skills. It is part of a larger problem which has to do with his social background and the educational and economic system;

he is a lower-middle class man confused and annoyed by the intricate rites of upper-middle class academe. The fact that he has to pretend to be someone that he is not makes it impossible for him to develop a meaningful and constructive relationship with his students. He either fears them (Michie) or desires them (Miss O'Shaughnessy, Miss McCorquodale, and Miss ap Rhys Williams). His very survival at the university depends on the whim of Professor Welch, so pleasing the Professor is much more important than succeeding as a teacher. Kingsley Amis's novel is a powerful indictment of this pathological quasi-feudal arrangement which deforms the individual and makes authentic teaching, or even authentic conversation, virtually impossible.

When Welch mentions a book by a friend of his, Jim needs to respond in a way that will not reveal his ignorance but at the same time will not suggest that he has anything interesting to say regarding this publication:

> Dixon said 'Oh yes' in a different tone, but still guardedly. He wanted to indicate eager and devout recognition that should not at the same time imply first-hand knowledge of the work in question, in case Welch should demand an epitome of its argument. (Amis 1961, 81)

A similar communication failure is described in Jane Smiley's novel *Moo*:

> When the teacher tried to widen the discussion by asking what the others thought about the difference between "students" and "customers," Sherri had maintained the same appearance of benign ignorance and noncommittal good will that the other freshmen had. (Smiley 2009, chap. 35)

In a system in which maintaining face is paramount, people will refuse to engage in a dialogue so as not to expose themselves.

A specific product of the fear-driven teaching is the phenomenon described by Palmer as the student from hell. Jim Dixon meets his in the form of Michie:

> Michie knew a lot, or seemed to, which was as bad. One of the things he knew, or seemed to, was what scholasticism was. Dixon read, heard, and even used the word a dozen times a day without knowing, though he seemed to. But he saw clearly that he wouldn't

> be able to go on seeming to know the meaning of this and a hundred such words while Michie was there questioning, discussing, and arguing about them. Michie was, or seemed, able to make a fool of him again and again without warning. (Amis 1961, 28-29)

The student from hell personifies the teacher's deepest fears. In Dixon's case it is the fear of not being able to pretend to be somebody that he is not – a knowledgeable scholar, an expert on medieval philosophy – and, as a result, of being publicly humiliated.

The motif of the student from hell in academic fiction

The student from hell happens to be a popular topos in academic fiction, both new and old. Its popularity is further proof that fear-driven teaching is a widespread phenomenon. As a literary device the student from hell is used to engineer a form of anagnorisis, although the actual recognition may be delayed. Typically, the protagonist finds a particular student problematic; during the inevitable confrontation the protagonist learns something important about himself/herself, or the reader learns something important about the protagonist.

Chip Lambert from Jonathan Franzen's *Corrections* (2001) meets his student from hell in Melissa Pacquette (who will be the reason why he will have to leave academe in disgrace). Lambert insists that he teaches his students not his personal opinions but methods of objective analysis of textual artefacts; however, Melissa accuses him of teaching them to hate the things that he hates (Franzen 2002, 48).

Howard Kirk from Malcolm Bradbury's *History Man*, who for my purposes is a more interesting character to discuss, meets his nemesis in the person of George Carmody. Kirk, who is in fact a Professor from Hell, hates George, a perfectly ordinary student, because he is so ordinary, does not want to experiment, does not want to change. George testifies to Kirk's failure as a pedagogue as Kirk takes special pride in his ability to transform most ordinary "anal" (1985, 132) students into revolutionaries and anarchists, who would "march down the street […], and sign […] petitions, and hit policemen on […] demos" (134). But George resists the professor's magic. What exasperates the progressive professor is that George does not seem even to make an effort to look like a revolutionary, which is reflected in his physical appearance: neat haircut, perfectly clean shave,

a university blazer with a badge, a university tie, white shirt, brightly polished shoes, and a shining briefcase to top everything. Every social radical is bound to find such a sight truly despicable.

> He is an item, preserved in some extraordinary historical pickle, from the nineteen-fifties or before; he comes out of some strange fold in time. He has always been like this, and at first his style was a credit; wasn't it just a mock-style to go with all the other mock-styles in the social parody? But this is the third year; he has been out of sight for months, and here he is again, and he has renewed the commitment; the terrible truth seems clear. It is no joke; Carmody wants to be what he says he is. (Bradbury 1985, 131)

To add insult to injury, Carmody keeps addressing Professor Kirk as "sir". For Howard Kirk all this is very personal – a form of the return of the repressed. George reminds Kirk of his own humble beginnings, his own struggle with his social background, everything that he managed to free himself from in order to become a liberated thinker and that he now yearns to destroy for good – in short, the false consciousness of the petty bourgeoise.

These two examples might throw some light on the function of the motif of the student from hell in academic fiction and further demonstrate how personal bias deforms the teacher's relation both to his students and his subject. However, the decision to include fearless Professor Kirk, a seasoned veteran of many university battles, in the category of fear-driven teaching is highly controversial. To justify it I would like to reexamine the concept of the student from hell and the typical development of the career of a college teacher.

Teaching anxiety

Palmer relates the encounter with his Student from Hell in the following, highly amusing manner:

> The Student from Hell is a universal archetype that can take male or female form; mine happened to be male. His cap was pulled down over his eyes so that I could not tell whether they were open or shut. His notebooks and writing instruments were nowhere

> to be seen. It was a fine spring day, but his jacket was buttoned tight, signifying readiness to bolt at any moment.
> What I remember most vividly is his posture. Though he sat in one of those sadistic classroom chairs with a rigidly attached desk, he had achieved a position that I know to be anatomically impossible: despite the interposed desk, his body was parallel to the floor. Seeking desperately to find even one redeeming feature in the specter before me, I seized on the idea that he must practice the discipline of hatha yoga to be able to distort his body so completely. (Palmer 2007, chap. 2)

Since Palmer relied in his teaching on the feedback from students, his student from hell was a student who refused to participate. But Palmer's story had a happy ending. After the class he accidentally met the boy, talked to him, learned about the boy's problems and put things in perspective. More importantly, he learned something about himself; he realized what he was afraid of. He had two fears: the fear that he would not be popular with the young, and the fear that he would not be able to communicate successfully with them. Parker writes,

> Day after day, year after year, we walk into classrooms and look into younger faces that seem to signal, in ways crude and subtle, "You're history. Whatever you value, we don't − and since you couldn't possibly understand the things we value, we won't even bother to try to tell you what they are. We are here only because we are forced to be here. So whatever you have to do, get it over with, and let us get on with our lives." (Palmer 2007, chap. 2)

It may be worth indicating that Palmer's encounter with the student from hell took place when Palmer was in his fifties; he was not a novice but an academic teacher with an established reputation, acknowledged and respected by his peers. This shows that a certain form of fear is bound to accompany teachers till the end of their professional careers, no matter how experienced or successful they are. Palmer calls the first fear "pathological" and hopes to be able to get rid of it as it leads him to lose his dignity and pander to students, instead of serving them well. The other fear is, however, a natural anxiety that his job as a teacher should be meaningful. He wants to keep it. Getting rid of it would mean giving up (Palmer 2007, chap. 2).

The fact that the experience of fear is not a stage that one outgrows during one's development as a teacher is also confirmed by Elaine Showalter's *Teaching Literature*. In the opening chapter Showalter relates various anxiety dreams of academic teachers of international renown. Apparently, Wayne Booth was haunted by a dream in which he, browsing through a catalogue, realized that he was supposed to teach in Latin. He was devastated. "I cannot teach in Latin," he thought. "Now, they would discover that I am a fraud" (Showalter 2003, 2). Jane Tompkins (the author of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" and *A Life in School*) dreamt that her students walked out on her (Showalter 2003, 2). Showalter herself had a nightmare about having forgotten to teach one of her assigned classes. In her dream, it's the middle of the semester. She panics and rushes to teach the forgotten class. The students miraculously are still waiting in the room but she has no idea how to excuse herself or what to teach them (Showalter 2003, 1). Showalter's husband, who taught French literature, had a recurrent dream in which he lectured very confidently until he discovered that there was another lecturer in the same room and that all the students completely ignored him and focused on the other guy (Showalter 2003, 1).

It may be interesting to note that in some of those dreams (Booth, Showalter) typical teaching anxieties (the desire to perform well in the classroom) are combined with "organizational" anxieties, which reveal that university is not a smoothly running institution. In Booth's and Showalter's dreams the university acquires a Kafkaesque quality: courses are assigned arbitrarily, the teaching schedule is not transparent, nobody seems to be interested whether a given course is taught or not. Those dreams could be treated as reminders that teaching does not take place in a void but in a certain system, which, as *Lucky Jim* indicates, could be seriously flawed. And the system in which one functions is bound to affect one's performance.

In light of the fact that some kind of fear is always there, it remains problematic whether the neat opposition between fear-driven and anger-driven teaching may be maintained. Anger could be viewed as a coping mechanism, a means to displace fear, with anger-driven teaching being a variant of fear-driven teaching.

Morris Zapp – the problem of the choice between students and subject

Morris Zapp in David Lodge's *Changing Places* is probably the best-known literature professor in fiction. I would like to apply the theory of fear-driven teaching to him to see what it will tell us about his persona.

Professor Zapp is a successful scholar, an authority on Jane Austen, and a popular teacher, at least at the State University of Euphoria. One student made the following comment about his course on *Jane Austen and the Theory of Fiction*: "He makes Austen swing" (Lodge 2011, chap. 2). He teaches in a manner which suggests that he is "confident in [his] ability to make the right impression" (Showalter 1999). When he finds his audience unappreciative or unresponsive, which when he moves to England seems to be the rule, he is eager to blame them for his own failure. These characteristics meet the definition of anger-driven teaching. But Morris Zapp, despite all his apparent successes, is not free from anxiety:

> Jane Austen was certainly not the writer to win the hearts of the new generation. Sometimes Morris woke sweating from nightmares in which students paraded round the campus carrying placards that declared KNIGHTLEY SUCKS and FANNY PRICE IS A FINK. (Lodge 2011, chap. 1)

Similarly to Palmer, being an ambitious teacher, he takes it badly when students do not reciprocate his passion for literature. He is genuinely frightened that students might consider his cherished author completely irrelevant to their lives, which would mean that teaching Austen is a waste of time. Hence his insistence that "liking" and "not liking" have nothing to do with the proper study of literature. He constantly reminds his students that such "whimsicalities" are "of no conceivable interest to anyone except themselves" (Lodge 2011, chap. 1). This may be interpreted as an attempt to forestall the dreaded comments that "KNIGHTLEY SUCKS and FANNY PRICE IS A FINK". In the eyes of Professor Zapp, such comments are a result of a fairly typical misunderstanding, the naïve assumption that one should like the literary works that one studies.

Zapp's case indicates a problem that many literature teachers face. In a sense they have to choose between their subject and their students. Either they prioritize the interests of their students, slow down and simplify the material in order to teach what they think their students may understand, or they follow the curriculum and their intellectual ambitions irrespective of whether the students are still with them or not. Unfortunately, the first option, which seems to make more sense as literature courses arguably focus on developing soft skills rather than

conveying hard knowledge that students absolutely need to master, might also mean doing violence to the teacher's self – the teacher may be forced to teach a course that does not give him or her any intellectual satisfaction.

Zapp chooses his subject and the integrity of his self, and has little patience with his students, to whose level he will not stoop. Similarly to Howard Kirk, he wants to break them and remold after his own image, which is evidenced by the following classroom interaction. Zapp asks,

> "What was the topic?"
> "I've done it on Jane Austen's moral awareness."
> "That doesn't sound like my style."
> "I couldn't understand the title you gave me, Professor Zapp."
> "Eros and Agape in the later novels, wasn't it? What was the problem?"
> The student hung his head. Morris felt in the mood for a little display of high-powered exposition. Agape, he explained, was a feast through which the early Christians expressed their love for one another, it symbolized non-sexual, non-individualized love, it was represented in Jane Austen's novels by social events that confirmed the solidarity of middle-class agrarian capitalist communities or welcomed new members into those communities − balls and dinner parties and sightseeing expeditions and so on. (Lodge 2011, chap. 5)

This is a tutorial where only three students are present. They listen "flabbergasted" to the lecturing professor, who only succeeds in intimidating them and ruins his chances of ever engaging them in a discussion. In England Zapp encounters additional culture and language barriers, separating him from his students, so this attitude is bound to lead to a teaching failure. This is how Zapp describes his typical seminar:

> I'm listening like hell but can't understand a word because of the guy's limey accent. All too soon, he stops. "Thank you," I say, flashing him an appreciative smile. He looks at me reproachfully as he blows his nose, then carries on from where he paused, in mid-sentence. The other two students wake up briefly, exchange glances and snigger. That's the most animation they ever show.

> When the guy reading the paper finally winds it up, I ask for comments. Silence. They avoid my eye. I volunteer a comment myself. Silence falls again. It's so quiet you can hear the guy's beard growing. Desperately I ask one of them a direct question. "And what did you think of the text, Miss Archer?" Miss Archer falls off her chair in a swoon. (Lodge 2011, chap. 3)

Depressed professors

It may be contended that all these different approaches (Dixon's, Kirk's, Zapp's) are underlined by some anxiety, which the teachers manage to control better (Kirk, Zapp) or worse (Dixon). The teachers who do not experience anxiety are those who have already given up. This is what happens to some academics at the end of their careers. Their teaching is usually marked not by outright anger but by simmering resentment. Frequently they have given up not only on teaching but also on life. To use Thoreau's words, they "lead lives of quiet desperation". They despise their students, secretly or openly, see their numerous shortcomings but make no attempt to lessen them. Academic fiction knows this type very well. Arguably, nowadays this is the prevalent type.

I will restrict my discussion to two relatively recent examples. Professor David Lurie from J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* "has long ceased to be surprised at the range of ignorance of his students" (Coetzee 2000, 32). He does not feel any connection to them: "Post-Christian, posthistorical, postliterate, they might as well have been hatched from eggs yesterday" (Coetzee 2000, 32). They are part of the new world which has no appreciation for the things that he loves: Wordsworth, Byron, opera. He tries to do his job as best as he can, to perform his duties diligently, but

> He has never been much of a teacher; in this transformed and, to his mind, emasculated institution of learning he is more out of place than ever. But then, so are other of his colleagues from the old days, burdened with upbringings inappropriate to the tasks they are set to perform; clerks in a post-religious age. Because he has no respect for the material he teaches, he makes no impression on his students. They look through him when he speaks, forget his name. (Coetzee 2000, 4)

Whenever he asks a question a long silence falls; invariably he has to answer it himself. He feels ignored, rejected ("he has published three books, none of which has caused a stir or even a ripple" [Coetzee 2000, 4]). His unfortunate sexual liaison with one of his students, Melanie, may be construed as a misguided attempt to overcome his isolation (now when he teaches there is at least this one person to whom he has something meaningful to say, to whom he can relate).

The other famous depressed professor is François from Michel Houellebecq's *Submission*. He shows little interest in his work:

> My afternoon seminar was exhausting. Doctoral students tended to be exhausting. For them it was all just starting to mean something, and for me nothing mattered except which Indian dinner I'd microwave (Chicken Biryani? Chicken Tikka Masala? Chicken Rogan Josh?) while I watched the political talk shows on France 2. (Houellebecq 2015, chap. 1)

He has no illusions about the importance of the subject that he teaches (French literature):

> The academic study of literature leads basically nowhere, as we all know, unless you happen to be an especially gifted student, in which case it prepares you for a career teaching the academic study of literature – it is, in other words, a rather farcical system that exists solely to replicate itself and yet manages to fail more than 95 per cent of the time. Still, it's harmless, and can even have a certain marginal value. A young woman applying for a sales job at Céline or Hermès should naturally attend to her appearance above all; but a degree in literature can constitute a secondary asset, since it guarantees the employer, in the absence of any useful skills, a certain intellectual agility that could lead to professional development – besides which, literature has always carried positive connotations in the world of luxury goods. (Houellebecq 2015, chap. 1)

He is a leading expert on Huysmans, but that does not seem to matter to him much, either. Now that he considers his sex life over, he wonders how he shall spend his remaining days:

> You have to take an interest in something in life, I told myself. I wondered what could interest me, now that I was finished with love. I could take a course in wine tasting, maybe, or start collecting model aeroplanes. (Houellebecq 2015, chap. 1)

David Kepesh – a passionate professor

A potential alternative to both fear-driven and depression-driven teaching could be passion-driven teaching demonstrated by young David Kepesh in Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire*. Professor Kepesh eventually emerges triumphant from his personal ordeals (an unhappy marriage ending in divorce), meets the love of his life and with renewed energy plans his next year's seminar. In a hotel lounge in Prague Kepesh, eyed by local prostitutes, sketches his opening lecture. He does not want to teach his students about "narrative devices, metaphorical motifs, and mythical archetypes" (Roth 1994, 183); he wants to teach them "something of value about life" (Roth 1994, 184). Unlike Morris Zapp, who does not want the closed system of literature to be contaminated with "an open-ended system (life)" (Lodge 2011, chap. 1) and is determined to make the study of literature an exact science, purged of the element of the personal, Kepesh yearns to annihilate the difference separating literature from real life.

This has already been seen on the exam which he gave students at the end of the previous semester. In one of the exam tasks he asked his students to become "the writer's friend and biographer" and to describe "Kafka's moral isolation" and "his peculiarities of perspective and temperament" (Roth 1994, 166). Kepesh wanted his students to feel Kafka's "everyday struggles", and not to stray "into ingenious metaphysical exegesis" (Roth 1994, 166). He was pleased by the fact that many students chose this particular task and produced an essay free of standard literary terminology (Roth 1994, 166).

In his opening lecture Kepesh makes the following plea to his prospective students:

> I am going to request nonetheless that you restrain yourselves from talking about "structure," "form," and "symbols" in my presence. It seems to me that many of you have been intimidated sufficiently by your junior year of college and should

> be allowed to recover and restore to respectability those interests and enthusiasms that more than likely drew you to reading fiction to begin with and which you oughtn't to be ashamed of now. As an experiment you might even want during the course of this year to try living without any classroom terminology at all, to relinquish "plot" and "character" right along with those very exalted words with which not a few of you like to solemnize your observations, such as "epiphany," "persona," and, of course, "existential" as a modifier of everything existing under the sun, I suggest this in the hope that if you talk about Madame Bovary in more or less the same tongue you use with the grocer, or your lover, you may be placed in a more intimate, a more interesting, in what might even be called a more referential relationship with Flaubert and his heroine. (Roth 1994, 183)

This time, however, Professor Kepesh intends to go one step further. He wants to present himself, his former love life difficulties, as the first text to study in his seminar on erotic desire. He announces,

> Indiscreet, unprofessional, unsavory as portions of these disclosures will surely strike some of you, I nonetheless would like, with your permission, to go ahead now and give an open account to you of the life I formerly led as a human being. (Roth 1994, 185)

Yet the novel ends before Professor Kepesh gets a chance to implement this wild plan, so we never learn how his students would react. In fact, we cannot know for sure whether he really means it; it could be his private fantasy or a thought experiment conducted to probe his inner feelings, something that is not supposed to be checked against the reality principle. What we do know, however, is that teaching literature constitutes the very purpose of Kepesh's life. He confesses,

> I love teaching literature. I am rarely ever so contented as when I am here with my pages of notes, and my marked-up texts, and with people like yourselves. To my mind there is nothing quite like the classroom in all of life. (Roth 1994, 184)

Still, the passion-driven approach represented by Kepesh may be criticized for being too self-indulgent. Even Palmer, who is all in favor of making teaching more personal, notices the problem. He sums it up sententiously, "Reduce teaching to intellect, and it becomes a cold abstraction; reduce it to emotions, and it becomes narcissistic; reduce it to the spiritual, and it loses its anchor to the world" (Palmer 2007, Introduction). It may be symptomatic that Roth's novel does not describe Kepesh teaching in the actual classroom but imagining himself teaching.

Stephen D. Brookfield's much more level-headed book *Becoming a Self--Reflecting Teacher* indicates that students do not feel comfortable when the teacher attempts to shorten the distance too abruptly. This may be perceived both as an invasion of privacy and manipulation. The problem is particularly acute when the teacher is white and the students black, or the teacher is male and the students female (Brookfield 2017, 15). The teacher needs to accept, at least at the beginning, the status of "the other" and work slowly to get the group's trust and acceptance rather than act on the wrong assumption that the classroom is a fully democratic place where everybody can freely share their stories and there is absolutely no need to feel any inhibitions. Brookfield notices that democracy in the classroom is at best a pleasant fiction and at worst a blatant lie, used to manipulate students and to disguise the real power structure.[66] He confesses,

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66 How seemingly democratic, liberating techniques turn out to be highly oppressive is masterfully shown in Bradbury's *History Man*:

> Watermouth makes students nervous; you never know quite what to expect. There are classes where you have, on arrival, to eat something, or touch each other, or recount last night's dreams, or undress, in order to induce that strange secular community that is, in Watermouth terms, the essence of a good class, a class that is interesting. There are others where you have to sit and listen to tutors in self-therapy, talking about their problems or their wives or their need to relate; there are other classes where almost the reverse happens, and the students become objects of therapy, problem-bearers, and where an apparently casual remark about one's schoolboy stamp collection, or a literary reference to the metaphoric significance of colour, will lead to a sudden psychic foray from a teacher who will dive down into your unconscious with three shrewd enquiries and come up clutching something in you called 'bourgeois materialism' or 'racism'. […] There are classes where the teacher, not wanting to direct the movement of mind unduly, will remain silent throughout the class, awaiting spontaneous explosions of intelligence from his students; there are classes, indeed, where the silence never gets broken. (Bradbury 1985, 128)

> When power is concerned I've become aware of many instances in which I thought I was working in ways that students found empowering and supportive only to discover the opposite was the case. Actions and practices I believed to be unequivocally democratizing were experienced as manipulative surveillance. (Brookfield 2017, 28)

In reality, no matter whether the chairs are arranged in a circle or not, power always resides in the teacher, who will eventually grade students. In reality, usually it is the teacher who speaks freely whereas the students are forced to listen, whether they want it or not. If students dare to speak out they will feel upon themselves the teacher's censorious gaze. In this respect Kepesh, preoccupied with his own self, may be making the same mistake as Morris Zapp or Howard Kirk, that is, he fails to recognize his students as individuals who have their own needs and problems. The − most likely − predominately female students of Kepesh's seminar on erotic desire in literature could be genuinely terrified by the strange professor, who, in complete disregard of social and academic conventions, on their very first meeting forces upon them a story of his sexual frustrations.

Conclusion

The characters discussed above illustrate a number of important truths about teaching. They show how teachers disguise and displace their anxieties, and how it affects the way they relate to their students. Many of those anxieties cannot be helped by better professional training as they are directly connected to who a given individual is and what he or she believes, or does not believe (as Palmer argues, "We teach what we are"). Professional training certainly will not help David Lurie or François, who showcase what dangers academics confront at the end of their careers. As they struggle against old age, boredom and ennui, their situation is further exacerbated by the seeming crisis of the humanities and the gradual loss of prestige of literary studies. The latter is important as anxieties felt by teachers are also related to the socioeconomic problems of the big world. Economic insecurity (Dixon) or certain class anxiety (Dixon, Kirk) could be important factors affecting teaching.

Relating to students is never easy. Both lack of confidence, a typical affliction of beginning teachers (Dixon, Lambert), and overconfidence (Kirk, Zapp,

Kepesh) can be a problem. Teachers need to respect both their own and their students' boundaries.

Finally, as has been seen, there is no consensus among literary characters as to what end literature should be taught, which reflects a similar lack of consensus in real life. Morris Zapp teaches literature for the sake of literature, whereas David Kepesh wants the study of literature to make a difference in his students' lives.

To conclude, academic fiction shows us complicated lives of academic teachers in different stages of their careers; it does not give us a straightforward answer to the question how to teach but it certainly offers very rich material for pedagogic reflection.

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Book Review

Scott Johnson, *Campusland* (St. Martin's Press, 2019)

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The front cover of this new college novel blazons a blurb from *Kirkus Reviews* calling it not just "smart and hilarious" but "high-spirited, richly imagined, and brave". That last adjective is the key. It credits Johnson as the author brave enough to publish the truth about American higher education today. It is not clear that it takes courage to espouse right-wing opinions in the United States of 2019, but Johnson clearly means to be the man who reveals the dark truths that universities—at least the elite universities outside the South—hope you won't discover.

Johnson sets his story at fictional northeastern Devon University, presented as one of the very elite private universities in the country, a rival to Harvard. Devon's tuition is $75,000 a year (the real-life Harvard charged $46,000 in 2019-20). Devon's endowment falls short of Harvard's, which is the largest in the US, though at $28 billion it is roughly equal to Yale's.

What is it like at Devon University? Johnson's book differs from most academic novels, which are usually, in Elaine Showalter's terms, primarily *Student-romane* or primarily *Professorromane*. *Campusland* divides its focus and even has some time for the administrators.

The main professor (actually an untenured assistant professor) is Eph Russell, who has risen from very humble origins in Alabama to become a specialist in 19th Century American literature teaching at Devon and hopeful of earning tenure. Chief among the students is Lulu Harris, rich, bored, entitled, sexually reckless, uninterested in education yet still enrolled in this exclusive university. A student in Russell's class, she makes a surprise visit to his office late on a Friday afternoon and tries to seduce him. When he rejects her attentions she takes offense.

That night she attends a fraternity party, has drunken sex with a stranger, falls on her face and blacks her eye. This gives her a chance to accuse Eph Russell of rape. He is already on shaky ground because of an earlier classroom controversy

over the lack of diversity in his assigned texts which has led to demonstrations by African American students.

This is the main plot—the undeserved persecution of nice, well-intentioned, slightly naive Eph Russell—though there are other strands intertwined with it, including a radical child of wealth who is in his seventh year of making trouble at Devon; the Beta Psi fraternity and its quite bestial members; a preposterous group of Anglophile poseurs called the Society of Fellingham; and the thinly sketched English Department, chiefly the other candidate for tenure, who wears neoprene shoes with separate toes and speaks Esperanto, and LGBTQ activist Sophie Blue Feather.

The author comes from the business world and though he is a university graduate (Yale), his outsiderness, his ignorance of university life, is a flaw. He believes that a department chair can unilaterally anoint a candidate with tenure; he believes that a newly tenured professor is likely to be handed an endowed chair. He believes that there genuinely is no 19th century American literature by minority authors and has Eph Russell explain this as the result of most of the black people being illiterate. I'm not sure how to explain his presentation of a university building as "one of the largest freestanding stone structures in the world".

In short, *Campusland* reads like the transcript of a conservative, non-academic white man's fever dream of all that has gone wrong in American higher education since the nineteen-sixties. What are some of the issues that outrage him?

—Radical minority students. The Afro-American Cultural Center organizes an occupation of the President's office and presents him with a list of outrageous demands. He ends the occupation by buying the black students off with $50 million in new initiatives.

—Presidents without principle or courage. Milton Strauss likes to be liked. He initially welcomes the occupiers, or pretends to, choosing to get them out of the administration building only when a wealthy board member insists, and he bribes them to go away. He is complicit in the persecution of Eph Russell in part because he is intimidated by the forceful Dean of Diversity and Inclusion.

—Ruthless diversity initiatives. That dean, Martika Malik-Adams, seeks to have Russell punished for the early row about his class, then goes for him again for his supposed assault on Lulu. She calls him before a stacked tribunal. Much worse, when Lulu withdraws her accusation, admitting she made it all up, Malik-Adams refuses to believe her, suppresses her recantation, and continues the prosecution. When the case against him falls apart, Malik-Adams

leaves to take up a much better position with the entire University of California system, on $850,000 a year. In pursuit of Russell she is supported by another fanatic, equally unscrupulous, Yolanda Perez. In Johnson's campusland, African--American and Latina folks are the most dangerous mischief-makers (though Eph is supplied with a black girlfriend to show that he is innocent of racial prejudice). The one student shown as working really hard, in good stereotypical fashion, is Lulu's roommate, an Asian named Song.

Other conservative talking points pulled into the mix include the threat to prevent a conservative speaker's appearance on campus; trigger warnings about potentially troubling reading assignments; the failure of any Devon faculty to contribute money to the Donald Trump campaign; and a powerful hostility to fraternities, as exclusive single-sex organizations. (The suggested solution is for one member to "identify as" female.) Even the Palestinians fall under Johnson's critique: "Why do you think the Palestinians don't have a state?" the leader of the campus leftists asks; "Everyone since Jimmy Carter has offered them one, but they just move the goalposts".

Eph Russell survives the attempted railroading and is offered a tenured position at Devon which he refuses in favor of going to work at Samford University—a real institution located in Birmingham, Alabama. Already he can feel a difference. His students are eager and speak up in class, discussing *Huckleberry Finn* without any irritating questions about slavery or objections to Twain's racial epithets. Why, when he holds the door open for a young woman, far from objecting to the act as sexist, she smiles, thanks him, and calls him "Sir". This chapter is called "Where the Skies Are Blue", repurposing a line from Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama".

It is an odd resolution. *Lucky Jim* famously ends with Jim Dixon escaping university life for something better, and other academic novels show their protagonists either leaving the university or being dismissed from employment, but this is different. Johnson's improbable Candide escapes the world—a sophisticated, toxic university in New England—to cultivate his garden in Alabama, where students are "nice" and unchallenging, he and his crusty, salt-of-the-earth father can sip beer and take in God's universe, and the peach crumble is reported to be tasty.

I don't claim that everything is as it should be at America's universities, that there are not excesses resulting from a heightened sensitivity to previously underrepresented populations, that students, even at the most famous colleges, are

all as serious about their educations as they should be. It is not as frictionless to be a heterosexual white male instructor in 2019 as it was for the first four hundred years of higher education in North America. But Johnson's cautionary exhortation relies on a crude psychodrama in which every single character save the protagonist is devious, venal, unscrupulous, or (at best) passively complicit with the worst elements in the university.

When Eph Russell tells his Alabama students that Mark Twain is the fountainhead of the American realistic tradition that runs through Hemingway to "modern writers like Tom Wolfe", they are all too polite to make the obvious response, "Tom Wolfe! How does *he* come into this?" But Wolfe comes into it as another self-consciously "brave" outsider whose 2004 novel *I Am Charlotte Simmons* was another "exposé" of higher education, another white man's peevish account of how political correctness and sexual license have made colleges so awful.

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