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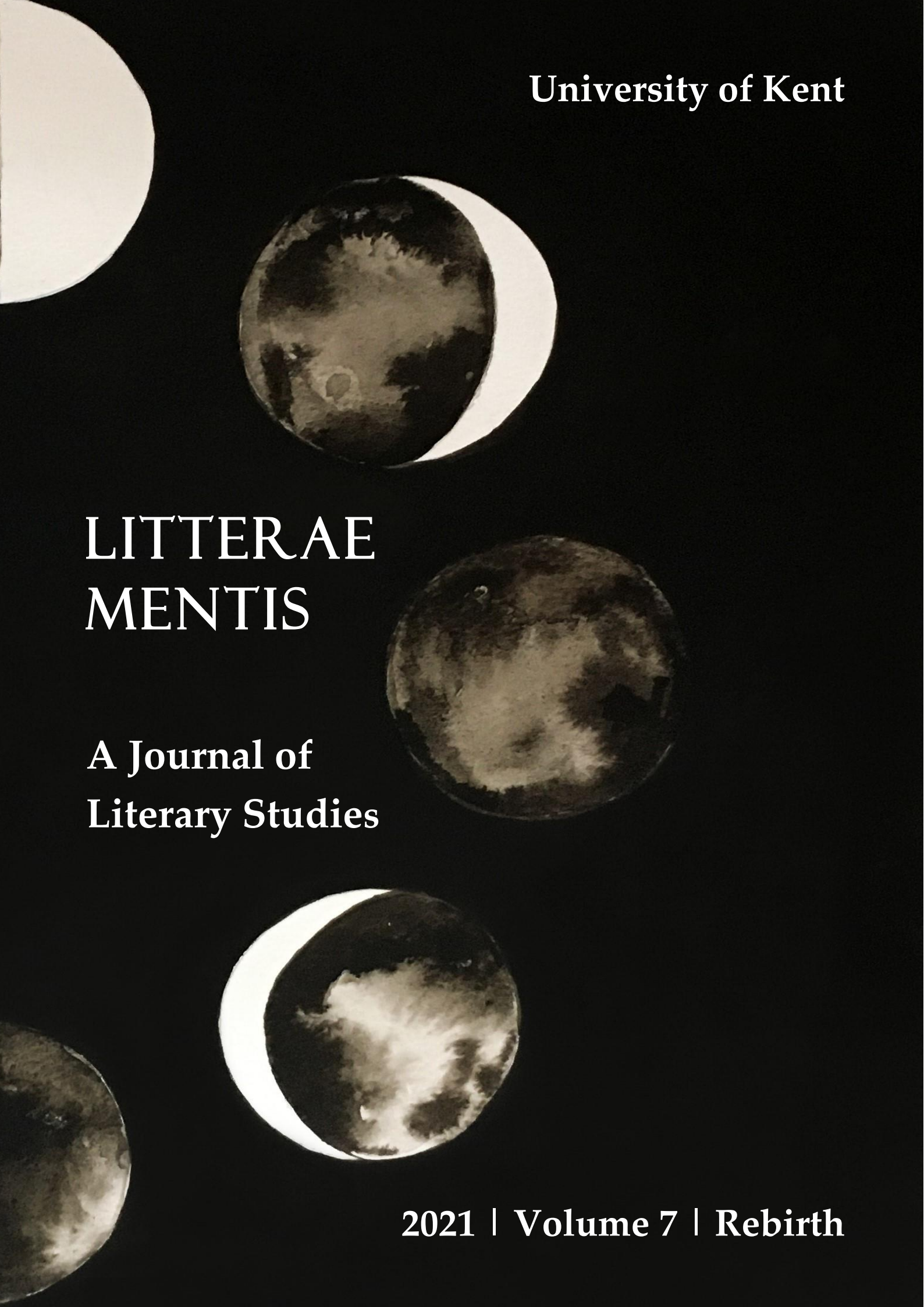

LITTERAE MENTIS

A Journal of Literary Studies

2021 | Volume 7 | Rebirth

LITTERAE MENTIS

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY STUDIES

Volume 7: Rebirth

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the seventh issue of *Litterae Mentis: A Journal of Literary Studies*, the University of Kent's postgraduate journal of literary criticism. Compiled and edited by postgraduate students from the School of English (which funds the journal), *Litterae Mentis* provides a platform for both MA and PhD students to publish papers about areas of literature they have a passion for. The journal aims to encourage unique research from new voices that echo the varied interdisciplinary interests of the academic community at the University of Kent.

When selecting the theme for this issue, we wished to reflect on our contemporary moment, and found ourselves confronted with a year darkened by uncertainty, grief, and anger. The COVID-19 pandemic, social injustice, the climate emergency, and a seemingly never-ending refugee crisis dominated the news cycle and our thoughts throughout this year. Yet, at the same time, these crises kindled an empowering of individuals as political actors and a renewed awareness that what we do every day matters. We came to realize that what we wanted to perpetuate and remember from this time, more than anything, was this desire to mobilize, evolve, and reinvent ourselves in the face of adversity.

In light of our experiences this year, we invited postgraduate students to reflect on the theme of 'Rebirth' and the variety of ways in which fiction captures humanity's extraordinary capacity to suffer, adapt, and emerge different, and perhaps better than we were before. We hope that our readers will find inspiration and comfort, as we have, in our contributors' different explorations of Rebirth in literature. All our editors have thoroughly enjoyed putting this journal together. We have been lucky to work with diligent and enthusiastic contributors who, despite the challenges of working remotely, have produced engaging academic research and thought-provoking creative pieces.

We would like to thank the School of English for their guidance throughout the process. In particular, we are extremely grateful to Dr Matthew Whittle and Dr Clare Wright for their advice and support. We would also like to thank Dr Stella Bolaki for her beautiful and thoughtful introduction to this issue. Additionally, we wish to extend our gratitude to

Dr Michael Docherty, Dr Claire Hurley, Dr Declan Kavanagh, Caroline Millar, and Dr Juha Virtanen for their insightful and constructive peer reviews. Finally, we would like to thank all the contributors, without whom this issue could not have come to life.

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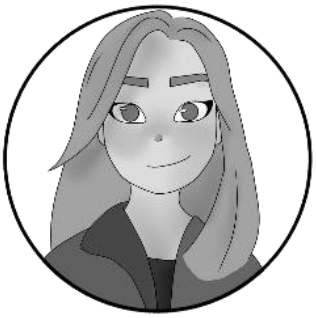

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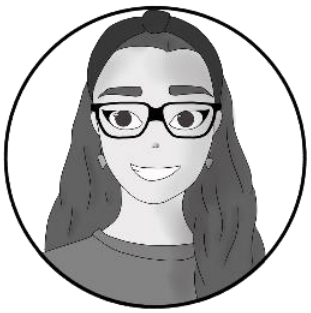

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INTRODUCTION

On Rebirth

Dr Stella Bolaki

The story of death and rebirth that captured my imagination as a child was the Greek myth of Persephone, who was the daughter of Demeter, goddess of agriculture. When Persephone is seized by Hades, King of the Underworld, her mother's grief causes the seasons to stop and all living things to wither. A compromise is reached when Zeus intervenes; Persephone is released, but only for six months of each year. Each spring, she returns to her mother, and the greening of the earth begins anew.

I thought of that myth again last year when I saw David Hockney's reminder that 'they can't cancel the spring' that accompanied the release of his iPad paintings of daffodils and fruit trees in blossom at his Normandy home.[1] Despite this message of hope, for many, the arrival of spring didn't feel the same under lockdown. I was strangely comforted by another season, captured lyrically in Katherine May's memoir *Wintering*. Though not a lockdown book strictly speaking as it was conceived before the pandemic, May's voice struck a chord with many as its publication coincided with the first lockdown in the UK. The memoir is structured through monthly headings moving from October to March, but May's winter is figurative, a central analogy through which she understands the process of 'wintering'. As she defines it, 'wintering is a season in the cold. It is a fallow period in life when you're cut off from the world, feeling rejected, sidelined, blocked from progress, or cast into the role of an outsider.'[2] Its onset, she tells us, can be marked by an illness, a life event like a bereavement or the birth of the child, and it can creep upon us slowly or arrive suddenly. Drawing inspiration from nature's cycles and its intricate system of survival, May's memoir invites us to

[1] 'A Message from … David Hockney: "Do remember they can't cancel the spring",' *The Art Newspaper*, 18 March 2020, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/comment/a-message-from-david-hockney-do-remember-they-can-t-cancel-the-spring> [accessed 14 May 2021].
[2] Katherine May, *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* (London: Rider, 2020), p. 9.

embrace wintering and learn from it. She compares the process to 'shedding a skin'.[3] In the Epilogue, 'Thaw', she conjures an image of emerging slowly from our wintering, which is perhaps how many of us feel now as restrictions are being eased in some places: '[W]e must gradually unfurl our new leaves. There will still often be the debris to shift of a long, disordered season . . . But we are brave, and the new world awaits us, gleaming and green, alive with the beat of wings.'[4]

A message of renewal and rebirth, certainly. But is this rebirth as miraculous as Persephone's return from the Underworld? Is it a return to some kind of normality or a break with the past? This question is echoed in the Tibetan Buddhist belief that death offers every person the opportunity for liberation from the cycles of rebirth, or failing that, the opportunity to choose a good birth.[5] Writing in a different context about the historical rupture brought by any pandemic, Arundhati Roy expressed vividly the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead:

> [I]n the midst of this terrible despair, [the pandemic] offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. . . . It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.[6]

Walking through lightly, with little luggage, brings to mind another story of death and rebirth which gained renewed popularity in 2020, especially among those committed to social justice work: Octavia Butler's speculative novel *Parable of the Sower*, first published in 1993. In a near-future apocalyptic California where investments in public goods have disappeared, Lauren Oya Olamina, the young Black protagonist of the book, embarks on a journey of survival with her emergency pack that contains among other things 'a lot of plantable raw seed' and her 'Earthseed notebook', a fusion of

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[3] May, p. 9.
[4] May, p. 273.
[5] Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (London: Rider, 2002).
[6] Arundhati Roy, 'The Pandemic is a Portal,' *Financial Times*, 3 April 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca> [accessed 14 May 2021].

spiritual and social consciousness teaching.[7] At the end of a perilous walk North, Lauren and her trusted few companions (who form a new community in the sequel to this novel) 'bury [their] dead and plant oak trees.'[8]

If Butler imagines a new world and offers a blueprint for collective survival in her novel, the events of this last year have provided many examples of fighting for social transformation and justice. The concept of rebirth has not merely recurred in relation to the pandemic but also in headlines covering the most recent Black Lives Matter demonstrations that erupted across the United States and other parts of the world in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020. The BLM protests have been described as 'the rebirth of the civil rights movement.'[9] Similarly, the ongoing conversation about white supremacist monuments and symbols of a colonial past has been viewed as proof of 'the rebirth of the civic imagination.'[10] Loss and renewal are interconnected in these stories. However, as one of this volume's contributions argues in a different context, it is important to recognise the longue durée and ongoing work of resistance that may be eclipsed by metaphors of (re)birth, awakening and renaissance.

There are many more ways we can think about the theme of rebirth in literary studies, as the essays gathered in this volume demonstrate. A few of them consider rebirth in terms of the acts of (re)writing a character into existence and of transforming an existing narrative. In the metafictional short story 'Being Written', Salamis Aysegul Sentug weaves together a physical and an internal journey of a character traveling through time — from 1880s Cyprus to 2020 Canterbury — to meet her author. Canterbury Cathedral, the meeting place between the two becomes another portal in this short story; 'I wonder what it would feel like to live in the times when this cathedral was the centre of pilgrimage . . . You can write me again. Make me medieval,' is the character's unvoiced wish in the story. Yet the author is able to hear it and when the character exits the Cathedral, we marvel with her at her

[7] Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (London: Headline, 1993), p. 76.
[8] Butler, p. 311.
[9] Abbe Sparks, 'Rebirth of the Civil Rights Movement in 2020,' *Socially Sparked News*, <https://sociallysparkednews.com/rebirth-of-the-civil-rights-movement/> [accessed 14 May 2021].
[10] Siddhartha Mitter, 'Toppling of 2020 and the Rebirth of the Civic Imagination,' *The Intercept*, 19 July 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/07/19/confederate-statues-monuments-local/> [accessed 14 May 2021].

miraculous new birth: 'There was nothing left to do but enjoy my new world, the old world.'

Adrienne Rich famously described 're-vision — the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction' — as 'an act of survival' for women.[11] In Kieran Blewitt's and Lilith Cooper's contributions, these imaginative acts are considered in relation to queer and trans identities, texts and reading communities. In 'Rebirth and Homosexuality in Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*', Blewitt assesses the successes and limitations of the ways Miller transforms the original narrative of the *Iliad* into a gay coming-of-age story that is accessible to a modern audience. In this version told through the first-person perspective of Patroclus, there is overt sexual attraction and love between Patroclus and Achilles. Blewitt considers rebirth in relation to the particular mode of retelling deployed in Miller's novel but also addresses the broader interest in the reimagination of Greek heroes and myths in contemporary literature and film.

Lilith Cooper takes a creative approach to the trope of rebirth but moves beyond text in 'A Prolonged Labour: Transition, Liminality and Work in Harry Josephine Giles' *Wages for Transition* and "Some Definitions"'. Cooper uses zine making as a research method and their zine is about two other zines by writer and performer Harry Josephine Giles. Change, rupture, and transition, referred to in my vignettes above, reappear here in relation to gender transition, liminality and the materiality of zines. Cooper's zine *A Prolonged Labour* is multi-layered, as zines typically are. Its text is a palimpsest of other texts that we are invited to explore (Giles' texts and Silvia Federici's *Wages Against Housework* as well as Audre Lorde's essay 'Poetry is Not a Luxury'). Digital collages created from original drawings and images from the Wellcome Collection's online catalogue accompany the words on the pages. More importantly, the instructions on how to unfold and refold the zine to read it fully invite readers to perform or reassemble it — as Cooper describes it in the reflections that accompany the zine, 'the moment between the two folded forms is one of transition, of potential . . . of material liminality.' The zine therefore embodies the multiple ways in which we can think about ideas of transition and rebirth. However, as Cooper notes in their reflections, rather than rebirth they took 'labour' as the starting point for

[11] Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision,' *College English*, 34.1 (1972), 18-30 (18).

their enquiry. Whilst gender transition is often presented as a 'rebirth' — a fixed moment of becoming another gender — Cooper's zine approaches ideas of transition as a prolonged labour in many different senses. Like Giles' zines that serve as its inspiration, 'A Prolonged Labour' conceives of transition as a 'liminal space of becoming and resistance.'

The remaining essays by Dorota Horvath and Marsha Tiffany Messer-Bass return to questions of character identity development and reinvention in fiction but do so through different perspectives. Horvath's 'The Identity Transformations of Jesse in *Wonderland'* focuses on the orphaned protagonist Jesse Harte in the novel *Wonderland* by Joyce Carol Oates, the last narrative in her Wonderland Quartet. Horvath examines the philosophical influence of Nietzsche upon Oates, approaching rebirth in terms of Jesse's 'symbolic progress into Nietzsche's higher man.' The essay synthesises different critical frameworks, including spatial analysis, historical and transatlantic readings, and thematic parallels with Lewis Carroll's Wonderland texts, to trace the 'metamorphic transitions' undergone by this character to reach equilibrium. The essay reflects on the role of physical, mental and psychical change on the quest for self-creation, different models of fatherhood and control, and on the way Oates' work epitomises historical change in the United States from the Second World War to the 1960s.

The relationship between the self and the environment in which it grows is also central to Marsha Tiffany Messer-Bass' contribution '"A Woman's Lot Is to Suffer": Regenerations of Immigrant Women in Modern Contemporary Literature', which explores rebirth in relation to the changes and adaptations to identity that arise from experiences of migration and displacement across different geographical and cultural contexts. In *Notes of a Native Son*, James Baldwin observed that in Paris he was described as *who* he was — an American when in New York he would have been described as *what* he was — 'a despised black man'.[12] Messer-Bass' essay, which focuses on female experiences of migration in contemporary fiction, offers another example taken from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's main character in the novel *Americanah:* 'I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America.' In addition to *Americanah*, the essay draws on *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid and *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee. It offers a comparative analysis that examines

[12] James Baldwin, 'Equal in Paris', in *Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 101-117 (106-7).

the characters' multiple regenerations that are linked to familial and romantic relationships, the trials of studying and working in a foreign country, and their distinct motivations for migration.

All contributions to this volume of *Litterae Mentis* demonstrate how flexible and generative the concept of rebirth is. They showcase different ways in which it can be studied, as well as complicated, thorough academic scholarship, personal reflections, and creative and sensory research methods.

Rebirth in Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*

Kieran Blewitt

Despite being the eponymous character of Madeline Miller's novel *The Song of Achilles* (2011), Achilles is not the character who is reborn. Instead, it is Patroclus' identity that is transformed from Achilles' companion in the *Iliad* to a character who possesses a strong moral compass and performs a spiritual role as a gentle but intelligent healer. Patroclus' relationship to Achilles, as his lover, may not be a new idea, but Miller transmutes their relationship into a homoerotic one, thus rebirthing Achilles and Patroclus for a modern audience. Whilst still set in ancient Greece, Achilles and Patroclus are established as having a romantic relationship which they ultimately struggle to reconcile with anachronistic elements of shame, such as masturbation and keeping their relationship a secret. Miller's novel is, however, successful at rebirthing Patroclus, providing detailed characterisation and an accessible and modernised interpretation of Patroclus and his relationship with Achilles.

In ancient Greek, the terms 'homosexual', 'gay' and 'bisexual' did not exist; yet attitudes to sexual attraction were perspicuous. For men, desiring the same sex was considered a personal choice (as more a matter of taste) and therefore did not preclude attraction to women. The nature of the sexual act — and how one acted upon one's desire for same-sex attraction — mattered more than desire itself. Sexual acts were gendered. Men who partook in the penetrative act were seen as masculine; those who were penetrated, taking on the passive role, were seen as feminine. Greek words such as *katapugōn* and *euruprōktos* were used as insults for men who were penetrated (both words' etymology has ties to the passive role in anal sex).[1] From the Archaic period in Greece, *paiderastia* — the erotic relationship between an older man (*erastês*) and a youthful, usually beardless boy (*erômenos*) — was widespread amongst the upper classes.[2] It was expected that the relationship between the

[1] S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003), p. 720.

[2] This is subject to debate — Plutarch (149-159) does attest to all social classes partaking in *paiderastia* but this claim is not testified by other sources, such as Aristotle.

erastês and *erômenos* would have ended by the time the boy had reached sexual maturation (i.e. had a full beard and body hair).[3] During this period, it was expected that the *erastês* would teach the *erômenos* as a social good for the next generation.

In the *Iliad*, Patroclus and Achilles are never explicitly described as having a sexual or romantic relationship. Hanna Roisman focuses on the Greek term *pistos hetaîros* in the *Iliad* to help explain this absence.[4] *Pistos* can be translated approximately as loyalty, and as such *pistos hetaîros* would translate as 'loyal companion'. This epithet is not commonly used by Homer; it is only afforded to a limited number of heroes who die in the events of the Trojan War. Patroclus — who perishes at the hands of Hektor — is described by Homer after these events as Achilles' loyal companion.[5] This relationship is inherently one-sided. Achilles is never described as *pistos hetaîros*; only Patroclus is. Achilles is the son of the sea nymph — Thetis — the prince of Phthia and considered *Aristos Achaion* (the best of all Greeks). Patroclus is lower in social status: following Patroclus' accidental killing of Clysonymus, he ceases to be a prince and is exiled to Pythia — where he meets Achilles. Achilles' confidence, substantiated by the knowledge that he is 'the best of the Achaeans', leads Achilles to abstain from fighting for the Greeks at Troy following Agamemnon's confiscation of the slave-girl Briseis from him. His legitimate prize of war being taken from him in Homeric Greece would undoubtedly have been an insult for any warrior, but for Homer it becomes the central theme of the *Iliad*. The hubris of Achilles leads not only to the tide of war turning against the Greeks, but also to the death of Patroclus. Achilles' subsequent wrath culminates in the death of Hektor, with his father — King Priam — begging Achilles to return his son's body. Only at the end of the epic does Achilles realise the consequences and the tragedy of his anger.

It is this intense rage at the death of Achilles' companion, Patroclus, which has fuelled a long-standing debate amongst scholars regarding Book 16 of the *Iliad*. Gregory Nagy first put forward the idea that Patroclus is the alter ego of Achilles.[6] It is undeniable that Patroclus is referred to by the epithet of 'the best of the Achaeans' upon donning Achilles' armour. Both Brock and

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[3] Plato's *Symposium (*184A) demonstrates that not all relationships seemed to have ended by the time the *erômenos* was no longer youthful in appearance.
[4] Hanna Roisman, '"Pistos Hetairos" In The "Iliad" And The "Odyssey"', *Acta Classica*, 26 (1983), p. 17.
[5] Homer, *Iliad*, trans. by Martin Hammond (Penguin: London, 1987), 16.3.
[6] Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (The Johns Hopkins University Press: London, 1979), p. 292.

Nagy do provide compelling linguistic evidence to suggest that Patroclus' death is indeed ritualistic in intent,[7] but Patroclus' role in the *Iliad* is not one of pure metaphor. Patroclus does provide balance to Achilles' characteristics, notably when Patroclus weeps for the deaths of lost Greeks owing to Achilles' refusal to fight. Achilles, however, is deeply upset by the loss of Patroclus. At first, Achilles is enraged upon learning of his death (banging the floor) and his sleeplessness afterwards cannot entirely be attributed to Achilles' loss of alter ego.[8] Instead, viewing Patroclus' death as a reminder of the futility of going against the will of the gods reinforces Patroclus' identity as *pistos hetaîros*. This epithet, only received upon his death, reinforces the idea that Achilles and Patroclus' relationship was meant to at the very least reflect the tragic nature of war. This loss of friendship is never expressed as the loss or tragedy felt between lovers; instead, this ambiguity inspired later writers of Classical and Hellenistic Greece to interpret Achilles and Patroclus' relationship as one of star-crossed lovers. Aeschylus' fragmentary play *Myrmidons* portrays Achilles' grief as a lover mourning the loss of Patroclus. Sources portraying Achilles and Patroclus as lovers conformed to contemporary ideas of how men should act on sexual urges with other men. One had to be the *erômenos* and the other the *erastês*. In Plato's *Symposium*, Phaedrus argues that Achilles was the *erômenos* in his relationship with Patroclus. However, this reception was not universal; Xenophon was adamant that their relationship was platonic.[9]

It is lastly important to introduce some innovations made to the characterisation of Achilles and Patroclus by later Hellenistic writers who treat Achilles and Patroclus' relationship as explicitly romantic, as Miller utilises both of these episodes in her novel. The two lost epics — Stasinus' *Cyrpia* and Arctinus of Miletus' *Aethiopis* — introduce two alterations to the epic cycle. The first centres around Achilles being raised not by his father — the King of Pythia — but by the centaur Chiron on Mt. Pelion. The second transformation concerns Achilles' mother — the goddess Thetis — hiding Achilles at the court of King Lycomedes on the remote island of Skyros dressed as a dancing girl. The disguise is necessary to prevent the Greeks, who are looking for Achilles to join them in their conquest of Troy, from finding

[7] 'Therapon' may derive from the Anatolian to mean 'ritual substitute' (Nagy and Van Brock).
[8] Homer, *Iliad*, 16.3.
[9] In modern English, a loyal companion during a time of war — such as the well-known phrase 'brothers in arms' — evokes a platonic relationship. This is similar to Xenophon's attitude.

him. This is due to a prophecy of which Thetis had learned, whereby it had been foretold that following the death of Hektor, Achilles would die at Troy. This episode is important as not only does Achilles fall in love with Deidamia (leading to the birth of his son Neoptolemus) but he is also outsmarted by the ever-wily Odysseus, who uncovers the secret identity of Achilles. Miller's use of this version of the myth is not surprising, as her novel attempts to transform ancient expectations of gender and gender performance for a modern audience.

The expectation that sexual acts were directly related to gender is paramount to ancient Greek understanding of sex. Classical writers — such as Plato — made Patroclus older in order to cast him as the *erastês* and therefore the 'male', and Achilles as the younger, passive *erômenos*, taking on the 'female' role in the relationship. Conversely, Miller moves away from the pederastic perspective, as whilst Patroclus remains the elder of the two in the novel, Patroclus does not conform to stereotypical masculine traits — being the strong and unemotional warrior. Instead, considerable time is spent on the adolescence of and burgeoning relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. Patroclus is vulnerable, and initially struggles with the trauma of having killed Clysonymus, but meeting Achilles changes this; Patroclus slowly becomes more confident, ultimately fighting at Troy in Achilles' absence. Providing a lengthier and more detailed characterisation of the myth of Achilles and Patroclus allows Miller to rebirth the myth as a coming-of-age story. This is not entirely successful. Removing Achilles and Patroclus from the constraints of ancient thinking on male attraction simultaneously introduces a problematic representation of gay characters.

Miller's novel does not exist in a vacuum. The reception and tradition of retelling of myth continues to exist in pop culture in numerous other forms of media. Recent adaptations involving the heroes of the Trojan cycle have retold the story of the *Iliad* with a considerable range of interpretation. The film *Troy* (2004) eradicates any implication of a sexual relationship between Patroclus and Achilles, going as far as to make Patroclus Achilles' cousin. The film also removes the gods and their divine intervention, instead portraying the heroes as simply extraordinary men. Not all recent reimaginations have been as sterile though. The BBC's *Troy: Fall of a City* (2018) interprets Achilles and Patroclus as bisexuals who have a threesome with Briseis. Unfortunately, the series is limited in its ability to compellingly retell the *Iliad*, and this stems from its poor characterisation of Achilles and Patroclus as heroes. It fundamentally misplaces Achilles' infamous wrath as a product of genuine

sympathy for Briseis. By contrast, *The Song of Achilles* reimagines the *Iliad* from an entirely new perspective. Patroclus, in the first person, is the character through whom we experience the majority of the novel. Moving away from the third-person perspective of the *Iliad*, Miller utilises the first-person perspective to deliver a personal and introspective internal monologue, which is not possible in the original source material. Patroclus' perspective is first established through his dysfunctional relationship with his father, King Menoetius. His father is both brash and quick to view his son as a disappointment. Or rather, this is how Patroclus describes his father's opinion of him: how he 'quickly … became a disappointment' as a small and slight boy.[10]

This is contrasted with the introduction of Achilles at the Olympic Games held by King Menoetius. Athletic and admired, Achilles wins a laurel wreath following his success at the games. Patroclus can only sit by his father's side, not trustworthy enough to give the prize to Achilles. This is further emphasised with the introduction of Patroclus' mother, who is described as 'simple'.[11] She is detested by the King, who views her with contempt for being 'quite stupid'.[12] Patroclus, like his mother, is viewed with suspicion by his father. Patroclus understands that his father suspects him of being 'simple' like his mother.[13] The fact that Patroclus never falls ill — unlike all the other children — further adds to his father's suspicion. This culminates in Patroclus feeling worthless in the eyes of this father, describing how he feels 'inhuman'.[14] Patroclus' alienation from his father and palace life is best shown in chapter three. The boy Clysonymus finds Patroclus, who had escaped from his palace tutor, playing with dice. Patroclus refuses to hand over the dice to Clysonymus, who demands them from the young prince. Patroclus is acutely aware that even though he is a prince, his father 'would not intervene' and Clysonymus taunts Patroclus by jeering that his father thinks he is 'simple' — like his mother.[15] This results in Patroclus shoving Clysonymus to the ground, which accidentally kills him. Miller emphasises the importance of familial love, or rather its absence. Whilst conjectural, if Patroclus had the support of his father, it is less likely that he would have been bullied by Clysonymus, who had preyed on the commonly held knowledge that Patroclus was a

[10] Madeline Miller, *The Song of Achilles* (Bloomsbury: London, 2011), p. 1.
[11] Miller, p. 1.
[12] Miller, p. 1.
[13] Miller, p. 3.
[14] Miller, p. 2.
[15] Miller, p. 16.

disappointment to his father, and thus an easy target to bully. In more certain terms, Patroclus' fall from prince to exile is an important theme of the novel: Patroclus as an exile has the opportunity to re-start his life in a new kingdom. He can not only rebuild his identity, but also receive an opportunity to move on from the accidental death he had caused.

Achilles, unlike Patroclus, has a good relationship with his father, King Peleus of Pythia. Achilles is confident, a fact which is reflected in his aloofness around the royal court and his popularity with the other boys. This is further supported by Achilles' reputation as one of the greatest warriors of the Greeks — even by the age of thirteen. Whilst Achilles does not initially appear to have to go through a rebirth to find his identity as part of a coming-of-age narrative, Achilles displays remarkable vulnerability, which is only exposed through his relationship with Patroclus. Achilles and Patroclus' friendship is at first uncertain and tense. Patroclus — as an exile who had killed Clysonymus — is ostracised by the other boys. Achilles' decision to approach Patroclus is likely not motivated by the pursuit of fame or glory — which Achilles seeks desperately in the *Iliad* — as it would not have been expected of such a popular prince to befriend an exile, and a killer. Their friendship develops quickly, moving past an awkward and uncertain relationship, following an episode where Patroclus exhorts Achilles to fight him. Achilles refuses, but Patroclus nonetheless pushes Achilles to the ground. Achilles, as the stronger of the two, rolls Patroclus over and pins him to the floor. In this moment, Patroclus confesses to Achilles that he has 'never seen anyone fight the way you do'.[16] Whilst Achilles initially views this as a naive statement, Patroclus continues to exhort his admiration for Achilles. All Achilles can reply with is a simple, 'so?'.[17] Miller reveals the significance of these events, describing how Achilles and Patroclus' 'friendship came all at once' afterwards.[18]

Following this moment, Miller constructs an increasing sexual tension between Achilles and Patroclus. This first occurs through the lens of friendship, and second through the navigation of their romantic and sexual desire for each other. Achilles' father — King Peleus — repeatedly references slave and servant girls' interest in sleeping with Achilles.[19] Whilst the other boys had started to make these girls pregnant upon hitting pubescence,

[16] Miller, p. 44.
[17] Miller, p. 45.
[18] Miller, p. 46.
[19] Miller, p. 57.

neither Achilles nor Patroclus takes a direct interest in this. This becomes a contentious issue for Achilles and Patroclus' friendship. Returning from a long evening, Patroclus reticently asks Achilles if he is interested in the light-haired girl about whom Peleus had questioned Achilles earlier. Curiously, Achilles' flustered response leads him to run at Patroclus and push him down onto his bed. With Achilles once again on top of Patroclus, he whispers that he is 'sick of talking about her'.[20] This sexual tension culminates in Achilles and Patroclus' first kiss, although it takes several months after this moment for them to do so. The kiss is not cathartic. Instead, Achilles literally runs away, leaving Patroclus so deeply ashamed that he calls upon the gods for Achilles to not hate him.

Whilst Miller seeks to transform the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus to be explicitly gay, the utilisation of shame is anachronistic. This is also seen when Miller claims that masturbation for Patroclus is shameful — an eighteenth-century idea, not a specific issue in classical Greece.[21] Whilst this is certainly anachronistic, it is also problematic for a contemporary audience. Proliferating the idea that it is perfectly ordinary to feel shame about homosexual attraction — whether it is kissing someone of the same sex or masturbating — is problematic. Coming to terms with shame is commonplace in LGBT novels. For example, in Andre Aciman's *Call Me By Your Name* (2007), the protagonists — Elio and Oliver — struggle to attune their religious shame and attraction to each other. Nevertheless, Aciman provides closure to this shame through a conversation between Elio and his father; the loss of friendship — or perhaps something more in the words of Elio's father — is not something to be ashamed or sad about, but instead something to remember fondly. Miller utilises shame as an obstacle between Achilles and Patroclus' attraction, but both characters keep their relationship a secret and never discuss the implications behind this.

In order to examine this, it is important to explore Victorian attitudes to Hellenism, and the subsequent criticism of Greek ideas on sex between men who had romantic relationships with men. Richard von Krafft-Ebing highlights that the issue was moralistic.[22] Acceptance of Greek ideas on male attraction was seen as regressive, being represented as a savage vice which travelled from Crete to Asia and then to mainland Greece. Men who had sex

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[20] Miller, p. 58.
[21] Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (Zone books: Oxford, 1990).
[22] Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathic Sexualis* (Arcade: New York, 1886).

with men in Classical and Hellenistic Greece were viewed by the Victorians as Oriental Others.[23] This aspect of Greek culture was not deemed truly 'Western', and therefore not foundationally a part of Western values. Otherwise, the achievements of the ancient Greeks, both intellectually and militaristically, were seen as analogous to the imperialism of the British empire. However, men who had sex with men were excluded from this. Whilst the Greek invention of democracy was held up as a valuable pillar of Western civilisation, Greek social attitudes towards men who had sex with men were viewed as morally incompatible with contemporary Victorian Britain. *The Song of Achilles* does not depict men who have sex with men as morally wrong — or as Oriental Others. But Miller's attempt to construct a coming-of-age narrative, whereby Achilles and Patroclus learn and subsequently come to terms with their identities, uses ideas of shame to moralise their relationship. The deep shame that both characters experience is never resolved in the novel. Unlike other contemporary gay coming-of-age novels, the characters do not 'come out' or accept their sexualities. Whilst Achilles and Patroclus accept their attraction for each other in private, they hide their affection from the majority of the other characters. This does not provide a positive representation of gay characters for a modern audience — where same-sex attraction must be hidden for fear of the consequences of others finding out. Whilst Patroclus and Achilles are reborn as having a legitimate erotic and romantic desire for each other, this rebirth — as a period of new life or growth — is greatly undermined by the fact that the heroes are content to hide their sexualities and ultimately give in to shame.[24]

This is best exemplified during the events of the Trojan War. The leader of the Greek forces, Agamemnon, takes Chryseis, the priestess of Apollo, as his slave-girl. This subsequently offends the god Apollo, and a plague descends upon the Greek forces. Achilles helps persuade Agamemnon to return Chryseis to the Trojans. In retribution, Agamemnon takes the slave-girl Briseis, whom Achilles has already selected as his own war prize. This greatly offends Achilles, and results in him abstaining from fighting for the Greeks — hence the wrath of Achilles, who remains a recluse dwelling in his own hubris.[25] Broadly, Miller follows the same narrative as the *Iliad*. However, Patroclus features far more prominently. Instead of Achilles being offended

[23] Daniel Orrells, 'Greek Love, Orientalism And Race: Intersections In Classical Reception', *The Cambridge Classical Journal*, 58 (2012), 199.
[24] Heroes are defined as individuals characterised for their courage and achievements.
[25] Grant Farred, 'Achilles, Celebrity Recluse', *PMLA*, 126 (2011), 1102-7.

that his slave-girl has been taken from him, in *The Song of Achilles*, Patroclus takes on the role of a selfless hero who saves the slave-girl from being raped and abused by Agamemnon.[26] Patroclus is not motivated by fame; in saving Briseis, the pair become good friends and quickly establish a good rapport. Patroclus' rebirth, from a young prince who has killed another boy to a principled hero, is best highlighted by Patroclus' strong moral compass. This is best demonstrated by Patroclus' interest in medicine. When Achilles and Patroclus spend a number of years of their youth living with the centaur Chiron, he teaches Patroclus extensively in the ways of medicine. Curiously enough, the term 'medicine' is not even known to Patroclus before he meets Chiron, but this does not stop him from becoming a proficient healer. This episode helps establish the dynamic between Patroclus and Achilles. Achilles is the warrior, but Patroclus, who is perfectly capable of becoming a warrior of standard merit — according to Chiron — is instead better as a healer. Throughout the Trojan War, Patroclus spends most of his time in the camp of the Myrmidons, leaving the fighting to Achilles.

Patroclus and Achilles nevertheless continue to sleep together, from the moment they first kiss until the prophetic death of Patroclus. Straton, whilst writing in the 1st century CE, outlines that the ideal age of pederastic love between the active, older *erastês* and the younger, passive *erômenos* is 14 years old for a mortal and 17 for the gods.[27] Both Achilles and Patroclus are deemed too old by the events of the Trojan War to still be pursuing the love of another boy, rather than that of a woman. Regardless of Patroclus' position as the *erastês* (as the elder of the two), Achilles is too old to be considered an *erômenos*. Miller seeks to rectify this by contending that Achilles and Patroclus take the proactive decision to hide their love. Whilst they do not go out of their way to deny their love for each other, they do not actively display affection for each other in front of any of the other Greek heroes. The only characters who are explicitly aware of their love are Achilles' mother Thetis — the primary antagonist of the novel — and the slave-girl Briseis. Briseis is told to alleviate her terror following Achilles' very public request for her to be taken to his tent as a prize of war. As readers, we are acutely aware that Achilles and Patroclus' intentions are good, but Briseis is initially and understandably distrustful.

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[26] Miller, p. 219.
[27] Straton, *The Greek Anthology* Book 10-12, trans. by William Paton (Harvard University Press: London, 1918), 12.4.

Most telling, however, is an interaction Achilles and Patroclus have with the ever-wily Odysseus. Upon sailing with the King of Ithaka to Troy, Odysseus warns Achilles that 'our men liked conquest; they did not trust a man who was conquered himself'.[28] Miller emphasises that Odysseus, often portrayed as quite literally the smartest man in the room, easily can see that Achilles and Patroclus love each other. This interaction proves important to understanding the characterisation of Achilles in Miller's novel. Whilst Odysseus appears to be genuinely concerned for Achilles' honour, Achilles himself, with an uncharacteristic lack of care or consideration for his honour, replies to Odysseus that men 'are fools if they let my glory rise or fall on this'.[29] Miller attempts to argue that Achilles cares more for Patroclus than his own honour, as Achilles is willing to sacrifice his prestige for the man he loves. This, however, is incongruent with Miller's own characterisation of Achilles, and indeed the Achilles of the *Iliad*. Achilles' motivation is driven by the desire to be remembered, culminating in his apotheosis — akin to heroes, like Herakles before him.

In the *Iliad*, this desire is instrumental in the machinations of the gods. Achilles' anger stems from the fact that being denied his war prize (Briseis) is, for him, the ultimate insult. The blind arrogance of Achilles leads to Patroclus' death, and in turn the death of Hektor. Only when King Priam, Hektor's father, begs Achilles to return his son's body for inhumation and emotional closure does Achilles finally understand the error of his hubris. Unfortunately, Patroclus must suffer death in order for Achilles to understand this. Achilles' motivation remains the same in *The Song of Achilles*. This drives Achilles' motivation when Agamemnon takes Briseis. Even though its subtext concerns Briseis' welfare and Achilles' knowledge that Patroclus cares for her, Achilles' refusal to fight is ultimately selfish — Achilles' reputation has been damaged by Agamemnon. Patroclus, as Achilles' *hetaîros*, is irreconcilable with Patroclus as Achilles' romantic interest.

Miller's subsequent rebirthing of Achilles is not entirely reconcilable with Achilles' central and most important characteristic — his anger. Achilles' wrath is connected to his obsession with pride and image — hence his immense frustration with Agamemnon — but Miller contends that Achilles is willing to give this up for Patroclus when speaking to Odysseus.

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[28] Miller, p. 165.
[29] Miller, p. 166.

Achilles' rebirth — as a more sensitive character towards Patroclus — undermines the blind rage that Achilles otherwise exudes. In this manner, Miller's rebirth of Patroclus is far more successful. Patroclus' exile, and his subsequent opportunity to become a healer — ultimately saving more lives than he has taken — helps to mend the trauma that Patroclus experienced as a child. His relationship with Achilles also does much the same. Miller notes that Patroclus' nightmares following Clysonymus' death end when he moves to sleep in Achilles' room. Throughout the novel, Patrcolus acts — in much the way Nagy suggests in the *Iliad* — as the calming force to Achilles' intense anger. But unlike in the *Iliad*, Patroclus has significantly more depth as a character, and in this Miller provides an important voice to a character who has historically been side-lined for the more famous Achilles. Patroclus' qualities as a gentle but intelligent healer are presented as admirable and worthy. His redemption and rebirth as a morally excellent person stand in contrast to the confused characterisation of Achilles.

The Song of Achilles is not a perfect retelling of the *Iliad*. Madeline Miller was inspired by writers such as Plato who believed Achilles and Patroclus to be lovers, and therefore adapted the *Iliad* with this in mind. Patroclus — as a minor character in the *Iliad* — is constructed as a child with a flawed past (having been exiled) who ultimately overcomes this through his love and companionship with Achilles, thus becoming a healer and moral compass for Achilles. However, Miller's novel does introduce anachronistic ideas of shame regarding masturbation, and Achilles' inconsistent attitude towards glory and his subsequent anger are incongruent with the text's ancient Greek setting. This highlights the difficult task of modernising a complex story such as that of the *Iliad*, but Miller is nonetheless successful at rebirthing Patroclus as an intricate and compelling character who overcomes childhood trauma through his relationship with Achilles.

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Being Written in Canterbury

Salamis Aysegul Sentug

'Being Written in Canterbury' is a creative piece narrating the journey of a Victorian woman time-travelling from Cyprus in the year 1886 to modern-day Canterbury to meet someone who has the power to change her life.

I rose before the sun on a very damp morning. There is supposed to be a unique scent of grass belonging to a spring day. It is meant to be one of the finest delights that a traveller can ever feel to linger in the morning moisture that mingles with the steam of a train nearing a station. I have learnt from great authors that the smell of the rising sun adds fire to the enchanted passion of the intrepid traveller, yet I cannot relish this notion since I am burdened with an inborn deficit: an illness from which only a few people on earth suffer that causes a dearth of the olfactory faculties. This is one of the things that I will ask my creator to remedy when we encounter each other. Yet the smell of morning moisture mingling with the steam of a train was not the cause of my predicament as this train did not work on steam, and what it ran on was perhaps the very least of my concerns compared to the presence of a long-haired man sitting next to me with strings all around him, dark spectacles and horrendous Medusa-like paintings on both his arms.

It was the most silent journey I had ever experienced, with no one interested in anyone else, no one talking and no one looking around or even outside. The passengers were too concentrated on whatever they were doing with the small, thin, rectangular boxes in their hands; it seemed that touching the reflective sides of these boxes was the most important thing to do during this beautiful daybreak fringed with flaming amber. Reading on a train still seemed to be a favourable pastime, yet there were only two passengers reading from an actual book; the rest were using slightly bigger versions of their reflective boxes.

People change, as do trains and books. If they had been interested in me, how dreadful I must have looked to them, with a tremulous terror on my face as I tried to make sense of the new colours, materials and all that I could see. As I was in a highly embroidered village dress from nineteenth-century

Cyprus, I must certainly have appeared extraordinary to them. The pace of the train made me feel nauseous. I tried to open a window for some fresh air; the painted man told me that the windows were sealed. I then sat down and tried to force myself to think about other things instead of the pace of the train, such as how the pace of time exhibits changes in people.

The morning broke, and the violence of the wind travelling across time and space abated. I heard people asking if this was Canterbury West, and, yes, it was Canterbury West, at last. Shockingly, there was no train whistle; instead, there was something quieter than an ant, the most silent machine I had ever heard. I caught an early glimpse of the misty platform, where people were waiting in a queue to get on. They were mostly dressed in black, the men wearing plain neck ties and suits and no hats, and the women wearing trousers—yes, trousers!—stretched short skirts and, again, no hats. Interestingly enough, they were also wearing strings springing out of their ears, or from round-edged headband things covering their ears.

It left me with mixed feelings to see some people laughing at a young man who tumbled over as he got off in a rush; I felt contented and then guilty for feeling contented, and yet this was the first moment that I felt less foreign, when I saw that some complexities in moral values still exist, that some people laugh even now when someone falls down and that some people still share a condemning look towards those who are laughing slyly.

It was a very ordinary morning on an early spring Monday in Canterbury in 2019. There was no town map in the station shop, so I had to ask about the closest gate to the walled city. I had been told that after exiting the station, I should go right, then turn left at the oriental food store, pass the traffic lights and see Westgate on the right. I did not feel comfortable asking about everything I did not understand; the last thing I wanted to do was look like a forlorn fool, so I had to make some guesses about the terms I did not know. Such guesses have always heightened the entertaining singularity of my solo travelling life. What could a 'traffic light' possibly mean?

I am adept at making correct guesses pragmatically but not always morphologically. Contemporary inventions surely surpassed the limits of my imagination; everything seemed to be rather ridiculous. Horseless vehicles like rapid colourful insects! Rectangular bags carried on wheels! Men riding bicycles with stretch blouses and tights! It was colourful to the extreme, and almost everywhere I looked, I saw a piece of writing, which made me feel like a zealous little girl who is just learning to read.

The journey had been on every account stimulating, but most especially because I was then of an excitable temper with clamorous questions in my mind. I needed to find a peaceful spot to repose, and I had two more hours before meeting her—the author who had arranged our rendezvous in the cathedral—so Westgate Gardens was the place.

Having read that Kent has a reputation for being the garden of England, I was expecting its capital to be as flourishing as Eden. But nothing can be more piteous than the true connection of man to nature in cities, which has been left only to parks and small gardens, and a farm girl's eye, gifted with offerings of spring with lush wilderness beyond the assiduously arranged flowers of a park, experiences a proud sadness. There were a couple of monumental trees, such as an oriental plane tree, but the rest consisted only of very overrated landscape tricks. It was, of course, conceivable that a highly preserved historic city must compromise between historic architecture and the freedom of nature. Nonetheless, Canterbury has another natural gift, a river called Great Stour, on whose vivid mossy face the sunbeams play on joyful mornings amid the songs of ducklings. After a stroll around the gardens, whose silence was broken only by the morning birds, I was ready to pass beyond the walls.

A Victorian traveller, devoted to the romantic, would cling to the gates of the medieval city, which would entertain him with its history of awe and terror, becoming more and more stupendous as he approached its entrance. Why enlarge on tangible beauty, on fortresses, citadels, walls, bastions and towers? Was it only me seeing the scarlet shadows of time's arrow athwart this scene? Westgate, being the largest surviving city gate in England, had left me—a traveller coming from another walled city, where again the passers-by are forced to live in the moment environed with the walls of the past that shine in their glory and decadence—speechless. It was because I had entered into the contemplation of something beyond myself, meditating on the colossal relics of power refined by clashes of civilisation.

The setting of the city walls was picturesque, with timber defences of the eleventh, square towers of the twelfth and round towers of the thirteenth centuries. Immediately after I entered the gate, the bustle of the city assumed its great power. People going to work, students going to school, tourists with maps planning their tours all unrolled before me like a vast painting at a time of day when everything is in preparation.

On the outside of the walls, remnants of the ecclesiastic history were visible to some degree, but inside it was, indeed, in many respects, a pilgrimage city, simply magical with the splendour of its medieval architecture. Not all the buildings were exhibited for their archaic qualities; some ordinary shops and rafter-roofed restaurants interspersed among the buildings dating back to the year fifteen hundred had caught my eye. In a window display, I saw a summer bonnet and a crimson-coloured nightgown like the one my aunt used to wear, and the immediate familiarity I felt made me enter the shop, which was just opening its doors. An old lady with a long chequered skirt welcomed me with warm, approving eyes; first I asked permission to try on the bonnet, and then I asked the location of the cathedral.

'Oh, they just moved it yesterday, and its new location is even closer!'

I was unsure if her answer was a joke—it made me colour a little, but it made the man who was helping her hang hats on the wall laugh aloud. He rigorously examined me, and it seemed to take longer for his eyes to look me over than the time I had spent coming here from 1886.

'Nice outfit; you going anywhere nice?' he asked.

'To the cathedral,' I said. Giving the details of my journey was out of the question. It seemed utterly inappropriate to say that I had travelled through time to meet the author who was writing me, as she was struggling to create a real character.

'Oh, to the cathedral, yes, it's a nice place to dress up for,' said the lady, adding, 'Now, you should go left, continue straight on and turn left at Mercery Lane. At the end of that narrow road, you will see it. You can't miss it.'

'Definitely, you can't!' said the man, with a big smile.

I thanked her, but as soon as I put the bonnet on the counter and headed on my way, a dreadful noise coming from outside petrified me and I hit the hat-stand on the corner. 'Pray, forgive me. What is that noise?' I asked, without thinking that I might look very queer.

'Oh, don't be scared, darling, it's only an ambulance.'

'Oh, an ambulance?'

Finding I had been serious about worrying about the sound of an ambulance, she was silent for a minute or two. Shades of sympathy flitted across their faces and once more, I felt that I should not ask questions. I thanked them and left the shop as quietly as I could.

Ascending towards the city from the west along the high street, following the footsteps of cobbled Roman roads, and passing a picturesque bridge, I came to Beaney House of Art and Knowledge, such a charming spot, a library and a museum where a group of Asian travellers had gathered to listen to their guide at the entrance.

'The first city wall was built by the Romans, but very little of this has survived, and the walls you see now belong to the medieval period.'

The guide was shouting to make her voice audible. I walked through their curious looks. As I said, I perhaps appeared very theatrical to them. Nonetheless, no judgemental gaze was cast upon me from any of the people I met. Perhaps the unease I felt was only a reflection of my own self-doubt. One of the young girls from the group came closer to me and gave me a compliment about my costume, asking if I was a re-enactor for some kind of history tour. When I said that I was not an actor at all, she apologised, then politely asked if we could take a 'selfie' together anyway. She was holding one of those reflective boxes. I said yes, without hesitation, in the manner of an adventurous traveller.

'But I don't know what I am supposed to do,' I said quietly.

Raising the reflective box in the air, she said, 'Just smile,' with a timid but rather enthusiastic air. In that box, I saw for two seconds the girl, myself, the historical bridge, the people from far-off lands, the great spirit of Great Stour, the House of Art and Knowledge, and all the mesmerising temporal delights of a sunny spring morning. For the first time in that city, I felt connected to the present. The eye, which is a window of the world to the self, is able to see everything but itself, and yet the people of these times have apparently found a way to mirror the sense of reality of the immediate self, naming it 'selfie'. With these reflective boxes, everyone had the power to capture reflections of reality. These youths were lucky to know that luxury.

As I left the group behind, the crowded face of the city seemed to vanish. I passed the bronze statue of Chaucer, saluting him with all my admiration and respect, and walked among houses built partly of wood and partly of sandstone, where the ground floors were shops and the upper stories no

longer seemed to be habitable. One could see the impregnable will of civilisation in the medieval walls supported by wooden sticks. Everything can change in a city, but the main purpose of people coming to the town centre seemed to have remained. It would have felt almost the same had I been walking in medieval times, since people would still have come inside the walls to buy things, sell things, and run errands. This was the real tale of Canterbury written by its people and its passers-by. This place was a pilgrimage site, and it could be romantically said that the ancient laws of hospitality were still in the air. Every turn of its streets had a delightful unexpectedness of its own. I even saw a shop where a dancing doll with a Queen's head was on display, and I felt myself less fictional than ever.

On the left, there was a long-haired young man playing a rhythmic song, on the right an old man playing weary tunes, and with unalloyed pleasure, I passed between the two guitarists towards the uncrowded narrow street that would lead me to the cathedral built fourteen hundred and twenty years ago. Right before the cathedral entrance, a luxurious cake shop adorned with Great Britain flags and 'the best French macarons' written everywhere on its window display caught my eye. I spent some time at Butter Market Square, found a charming spot under the War Memorial with a view of the cathedral gate, arrangements of coats of arms and angels adorning its façade, and tried to imagine how life would have looked at that exact point a century, two centuries, five centuries or eight centuries ago.

At the entrance of the cathedral, in which there seemed to be a renovation taking place as half of the building was surrounded with scaffolding, I saw a woman wearing a very bright—indeed, sulphur green—vest, who was carrying bricks in a trolley to a place where dozens of men were scrutinising a piece of paper. A woman as a construction worker was the last thing I expected to see. In my times, it is believed that women of the West are treated as delicate flowers, whereas the women of my land, who work hard in the fields, are treated as thorns.

The first aspect of the cathedral was unquestionably astonishing, and I was mesmerised like a child seeing a turning carousel for the first time. I held my breath and entered, with an attachment to the first thing I felt, a sense of the sublime, since I was raised in a place in which nothing could be more awe-inspiring than the higher orders of sacred architecture. The scenery, though neither crowded nor still, was very pleasing in the golden haze of the air. Whilst surveying the interwoven ceiling, which was like the ribcage of a

giant mammal, I felt engulfed by its beauty. Everywhere I looked, there were signs of profound workmanship, creating a tangible awe, an atmosphere which all the sacred places share, and yet there was something else that filled me with admiration.

The dancing flits of dust particles through stained-glass windows turned my head, and I found myself in a little garden. Dandelion, marjoram, mint, wild thyme, cowslip, caraway. . . . Reading all the labels, I realised that it was a medicinal herb garden.

I saw a young lady dressed all in black holding a leather-bound notebook. I didn't know what the author would look like, but I justifiably assumed that she would know who I was.

'No, this is not going to work. I can't grasp "the soul of past" sitting here like this,' she said in a pensive tone, staring at her notes.

The soul of past? Maybe it was her! I looked at her long, thin fingers. How I desired to be written by those delicate hands!

'You can write me again. Make me medieval this time,' I wanted to say, but I dared not.

I was not sure if it was her because we were meant to meet in the cloisters at noon. The time was wrong; the place was wrong. Perhaps she was an actress working on her part in a medieval play—how could I know? I kept my silence.

She abruptly disappeared while I was reading the label of a poetic statue erected in the middle of the garden, and I found myself left there all by myself. Time had come, time had passed. I strolled inside the chapterhouse, passed the Martyrdom twice, went back to the nave, walked among the chairs of the quire, turned back to the crypt and sat under the statue made of iron nails hanging from the ceiling. There was no one around when the bell rang at four o'clock. It was getting towards the chilliest moment of the afternoon, and I felt extremely frustrated and nearly dead with fatigue. I tried to find the cathedral shop as it was shown on the map on the way out, and yet I could not. When I finally exited the cathedral, I saw a horse-drawn wagon waiting at the entrance, and I felt an immense nausea which I had never felt before. I tried walking towards the wagon, but the more I walked, the sicker I felt.

'I can smell!' I shouted while I was vomiting.

A man dressed in a burgundy velvet gown who seemed to be in a great rush looked in shock when he saw me. He was the first man who had looked terrified to see me, but surely not the last. I tried to explain myself to the driver of the wagon in such a futile way. In a very little while, I discovered that my inner voice had been heard by the author in the herb garden. There was nothing left to do but enjoy my new world, the old world.

If I ever see her again, no doubt I will tell her I loathed the fact that the first thing I ever smelt in my entire life happened to be horse faeces.

Identity Transformations as a 'Superman' Rebirth in Joyce Carol Oates' *Wonderland*

Dorota Horvath

Joyce Carol Oates' *Wonderland* (1971) is the last novel in her Wonderland Quartet. The Wonderland Quartet consists of *A Garden of Earthly Delights* (1967), *Expensive People* (1968), the National Book Award-winning *Them* (1969) and *Wonderland*. The characters within it epitomise the American cultural margins, and push their boundaries, testing their limitations and striving to go beyond them. The characters' resentment and materialistic obsessions lead to violence and destruction, while the notion of power develops from a cruel external alternative to an inner virtue within Oates' stronger protagonists.

In *Wonderland*, the author explores the complex character of the novel's orphaned protagonist Jesse Harte, who confronts his identity crises in the United States of America in the 1950s and 1960s. The author reflects on the American cultural reception of Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas marked by the emerging scholarship on Nietzsche by the scholar Walter Arnold Kaufmann in 1950 about the excellence of a 'superman' or a 'higher man'.[1] Kaufmann's ideas were influential in the subsequent decades. While the protagonists from the first three novels of the Quartet correspond to the postmodern appropriation of Nietzsche's ideas, in the last text Jesse achieves integrity, fashioning Kaufmann's model of Nietzsche.

In her interviews, Oates acknowledges Lewis Carroll's Wonderland texts *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass*

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated and edited by W. A. Kaufmann (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1954), p. 124. Nietzsche's term *Übermensch* is translated from his native German into the English language as a *higher man*, *overman*, or *superman*.

and What Alice Found There (1871) as her inspiration for the Quartet.[2] By advancing hallucinatory visions of American culture in her Wonderland Quartet, Oates reconciles the significant influences of both Nietzsche and Carroll to dramatise the philosophical transition of American cultural forms in the 1960s.[3] Kaufmann's interpretation of Nietzsche is succeeded by postmodern theories that include some ideas of Nietzsche to promote confident attitudes of pluralistic opinions and decentralised positions in American society.

I will present my empirical claim that Oates was influenced by the ideas of Nietzsche supported by her direct references to Nietzsche in *Wonderland*. I will analyse Oates' employment of terminology of a 'higher man' or 'superior' that refers to Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and the depicted ability of humanity ‚displac[ing] God' in *Wonderland*.[4,5] Oates depicts multiple supermen figures in the text, starting with the grotesque superman of Dr Pedersen, which differs from the positive model of a superman that Jesse achieves to overcome his identity crises. I base my argument on the scholarship of Joanne V. Creighton and Ellen G. Friedman, who address the images of physical transformations of the protagonists by further relating them to Jesse's personal transformation, establishing the link between Oates' Jesse and Carroll's Alice. Further, in her interpretation of *Wonderland*, Friedman concisely relates the image of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* to two characters: Jesse and his adoptive father Dr Karl Pedersen.[6] I elaborate on a non-linear development of the protagonist from a Nietzschean perspective which both reflects Oates' own exposure to Nietzsche and also certain trends in the general culture of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. In my analysis, I refer to the concept of rebirth as a personal transformation of a 'superman' by Nietzsche in the text *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883).[7]

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[2] Joanne V. Creighton, 'The Phantasmagoria of Personality: The Liberation through Love', in *Joyce Carol Oates* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p. 82.
[3] Joyce Carol Oates and Julie Vadnal, 'Joyce Carol Oates on the Enduring Influence of *Alice In Wonderland*', 4 February 2010, *Elle*, < https://www.elle.com/culture/movies-tv/news/a3498/joyce-carol-oates-on-the-enduring-influence-of-alice-in-wonderland-4680/ > [accessed 19 April 2019].
[4] Joyce Carol Oates, *Wonderland,* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2006), paperback edition originally published in 1972, pp. 101-102.
[5] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 194.
[6] Ellen G. Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates* (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1980), pp. 96, 105.
[7] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 124.

I also draw on the work of Irwin Halfond, who engages with the identity metamorphosis of Jesse. Halfond's particular spatial analysis of Jesse's homes and integrity progress represents a novel aspect of transatlantic study, one that underpins my argument concerning Jesse's symbolic progress into Nietzsche's 'higher man'.

Oates' narrative introduces Jesse at the age of fourteen, a time when his family is facing economic hardship after the Depression era. His father shoots his family of seven after failing to earn enough to support them. Jesse is the only survivor, and after two foster care arrangements, Jesse's luck changes when Dr Pedersen, who is a privileged surgeon, decides to adopt him. However, Pedersen represents a grotesque superman figure in the text and later estranges Jesse. Abandoned, Jesse Pedersen becomes Jesse Vogel and pursues his medical studies and, despite financial hardship, graduates. He marries Helene Cady, the daughter of Nobel Prize laureate Dr Benjamin Cady. Under the prominent Dr Roderick Perrault's leadership, Jesse gains a distinguished reputation as a neurosurgeon. Both Dr Cady and Dr Perrault are leading professionals and become Jesse's surrogate fathers in his ambitious career.

The process of Jesse's rebirth as a superman occurs by conquering his identity crises. His non-linear progression is initially influenced by authoritative fatherly figures, who threaten his life: a physical assault on Jesse by his biological father and the severe estrangement of his adoptive father later in the text. I argue that Oates depicts the identity progression of the protagonist through images of physical and psychological metamorphosis that allude to the surreal depictions of Carroll's Alice, who resiliently combats threats of beheading from the Red Queen in Carroll's Wonderland. From a philosophical perspective, I also argue that Jesse's rebirth avenues correspond to the American cultural reflections of Nietzsche's ideas about superman during the 1950s and 1960s.

In her conversations with Dale Boesky, Oates explains that her 'superior' characters must have 'room to grow'.[8] In her work, images of changing physical proportions manifest as mental and psychical progression. In her study of Oates' Wonderland Quartet, Friedman argues that 'Jesse Harte, the novel's protagonist, undergoes a series of metamorphic transitions

[8] Greg Johnson, *Joyce Carol Oates: Conversations 1970-2006* (Princeton, NJ: Ontario Review Press, 2006), p. 52.

in which he grows larger and larger.'[9] Friedman further elaborates that changing bodily proportions in *Wonderland* additionally evolve through three levels: physical (Jesse as an obese adolescent), mental (Jesse as a successful scientist), and psychical (Jesse as a possessive husband and father), in this state defining him as a Nietzschean *Übermensch*.[10] In this context, I relate Friedman's argument to the findings of Irwin Halfond, who interlinks Jesse's pursuit of his 'true identity and place' in Oates' *Wonderland*.[11]

The first physical change occurs in the initial part of the book. After the fatal shooting of Willard, Jesse loses 15 pounds and 'his ribs showed. His wrists were bony. His upper arms were too thin for a boy.'[12] Orphaned Jesse doubts his identity, which is depicted by the image of shrinking, and he questions his existence. Oates' images of Jesse's changing bodily proportions recall Carroll's texts where Alice's changing physical proportions depict her identity crises and correspond with her losing (shrinking) or gaining (growing) a sense of the self and her power when continuously threatened and ridiculed for her aspiring sense of order. What Alice seeks is order and safety, yet in Wonderland she finds only unfair domination. The Red Queen represents the highest authority in the novel and her cruel order 'Off with her head!' becomes a recurring trope in the text.[13] In Oates' *Wonderland*, the highest authority is represented by fathers who threaten the existence of children.

Following the physical aggression of Willard, Dr Pedersen *mentally* exercises coercive control over Jesse. He expects Jesse to develop a personality designed by Pedersen. Pedersen's dominating behaviour is manifested in his corrections of Jesse's casual responses, and Pedersen demands that Jesse speaks in complete sentences.[14] In reference to a microscope, the author explains that Jesse '*worked* — for the word "played" was not used in the Pedersen home.'[15] Echoing Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God in the succession of human autonomy represented by a superman, Pedersen says:

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[9] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 95.
[10] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 95.
[11] Irwin Halfond, 'Wonderland', *Cyclopedia of Literary Places* (Pasaden, CA: Salem Press, 2016), p. 1128.
[12] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 65.
[13] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) in *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition*, edited by Martin Gardner (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 129.
[14] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 84.
[15] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 75.

> To displace God is not easy. To be higher, a higher man, that is not an easy fate. And I believe you will share this fate with me, Jesse. I am certain of it. Once you become the man you are, Jesse, you cannot ever rest, but must prove yourself continually. Again and again. It is the fate of the higher man.[16]

To chart the flow of Nietzsche's thought: in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (1882), the death of God was proclaimed, while in Nietzsche's work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, following the proclamation of the death of God, the autonomy of a superman was established. It is Pedersen's notion of a higher man that recalls Nietzsche's language register of 'a higher man [...] to displace God', yet aspects of Nietzsche's ideas are considerably limited by Pedersen's view.[17] According to Nietzsche, to become a higher person one passes through three psychological transformations: the camel, the lion, and the child stages.

The initial conversion into the camel stage requires 'the strong reverent spirit'.[18] There is an emphasis on obedience and learning, and it is a time to feed 'on the acorns and grass of knowledge'.[19] In Pedersen's home, Jesse is expected to develop himself merely by transforming into a camel state of mind. Following Pedersen's vision, Jesse says that he plans 'to go as far as [his] abilities will take [him]'.[20] To obey Pedersen, Jesse strives to be 'more obedient than [his adoptive siblings Hilda and Frederich], more docile, more eager to please' his adoptive parents.[21] Jesse prepares for the nightly quizzes at the dinner table in order to showcase his intellectual progress of the day. At the adoption interview with Pedersen, Jesse lies about his lack of interest in school, but later memorises whole passages of science textbooks to satisfy Pedersen.

However, the doctor emphasises his belief in the dominant position of knowledge as the only means of accessing a higher state to exercise external control. Therefore, in this matter, his understanding of a higher man significantly differs from the modern reading of Nietzsche, which emphasises the *internal* control. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche elaborates on the relation between the logical and unconscious aspects, i.e. the Apollonian

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[16] Oates, *Wonderland*, pp. 101-102.
[17] Oates, *Wonderland*, pp. 101-102.
[18] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 137.
[19] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 138.
[20] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 69.
[21] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 77.

element referring to rationality and the Dionysian element referring to unconscious passion. In his work, Nietzsche does not mention knowledge or external control as a key technique to accessing a higher state of mind.[22] The postmodern naturalisation of Nietzsche is opposed by many for promoting Dionysian decentralised illogic and desire. Nevertheless, it is endorsed by the philosophers David Kolb and Jean-François Lyotard, among others.[23]

On the other hand, for Kaufmann, Nietzsche calls for the integrity of the character that is achieved by non-violent harmony of the Apollonian and Dionysian elements.[24] His interpretation of Nietzsche can be concisely characterised as a model for non-violent psychological mastery that is achieved by Dionysian enlightenment, the unity of the Apollonian *ratio* and Dionysian desire, and leads to the integrity of the character, that Nietzsche calls 'higher'.[25] Kaufmann rejected the interpretation that tyranny over others was part of Nietzsche's mission.[26]

Jesse lives in the Pedersens' mansion in the 1940s. Pedersen's vision of Nietzsche's ideas recalls the misconceptions that prevailed in the same historical period, clashing with modern interpretations. His understanding corresponds to H. L. Mencken's (1880–1956) interpretation of Nietzsche.[27] The scholarship on Nietzsche by Mencken remains under modern criticism; nevertheless, it impacted culture more generally in the United States until Kaufmann's intellectual rehabilitation of Nietzsche in 1950. Friedman describes Pedersen in the following manner:

> A grotesque embodiment of Nietzsche's Superman, Dr. Pedersen is a figure in whom Nazism found its justification. He is one of a series of *uebermesch* [sic] figure in Oates's fiction, all of whom believe in the self as the final authority.[28]

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[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy (1872)* in *Basic Writing of Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Arnold Kaufmann (The Modern Library: New York, NY, 1966), pp. 1-145.
[23] Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 134.
[24] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), translated and edited by Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House, 1974), p. 111.
[25] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1954), p. 286.
[26] Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 316.
[27] Lucio Angelo Privitello, 'Josiah Royce on Nietzsche's Couch', *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society*, 52, 2 (2016), pp. 179-200, p. 186.
[28] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 101.

Friedman's application of Nietzsche's scholarship is valid because she interprets Pedersen's self-delusion as a corrupt articulation of Nietzsche's vision. Pedersen does not have control over himself, but rather claims superior manipulation over his environment. He says to his daughter:

> You and Frederich are supernaturally gifted but you lack courage, you lack direction, you must become more obedient. [...] You must allow me to interpret everything for you, as Jesse does.[29]

Thus, Pedersen demands his family's obedience in order to re-invent them. After the earlier violence of Willard, Jesse is thankful for some direction in his life, yet Jesse's autonomy does not yet become manifested at this stage. Pedersen represents the highest authority figure in this part of the text. Nevertheless, as a result of Pedersen's eventual rejection of Jesse, the latter's identity is threatened. After assisting Pedersen's wife Mary to escape her husband, Jesse receives a note from Pedersen saying:

> I pronounce you dead to me. You have no existence. You are nothing. You have betrayed the Pedersen family, which accepted and loved you as a son, and now you are eradicated by the family. Never try to contact us again. You are dead. You do not exist.
>
> Karl Pedersen,
> M.D.[30]

Pedersen's existential rejection recalls Willard's physical attempt to kill Jesse, triggering Jesse's trauma of abandonment. The identity of Jesse Pedersen is terminated by Dr Pedersen, who is depicted both as the author and the finisher of Jesse Pedersen. His parental authority over Jesse's life is indicated by Dr Pedersen's signature, which accompanies his note to Jesse. Oates emphasises Jesse Pedersen's finality by closing the first part of *Wonderland* with Dr Pedersen's note. In the first chapter of the following part of *Wonderland*, Jesse Vogel is introduced.

Entering the gluttonous Pedersen family as a thin boy, Jesse leaves as a fat teenager. A sudden adoption from Dr Pedersen becomes an opportunity for Jesse to establish his new identity. This shift in identity is externally marked by the change of his surname from Harte to Pedersen. Internally, the image of physical enlargement symbolises Jesse's psychological and

[29] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 120.
[30] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 176.

intellectual advancement while living with the Pedersens. Questioning the metaphysical aspect, Jesse thinks that he:

> seemed to belong to another boy, another Jesse, and he didn't know how to get back to being that person, that self. Sometimes he felt a flurry of panic, to think that he was nothing at all, that he did not exist. What did that mean — *to exist*?[31]

It is Dr Pedersen who first confronts Jesse with his 'riddle of existence', which the latter then sets out to explore.[32] In search of his selfhood, Jesse personalises his past identities and thinks about them:

> Now he was never alone. Never by himself. He was not Jesse, but *Jesse Pedersen*. Even when he went to bed at night in his own room he was not really alone. Out there, on the bridge, he was not really alone. They were present, watching him. Grave and patient and kindly.[33]

The preoccupation of Jesse's mind contests physical solitude. The personal pronoun 'they' indicates the identity of Jesse Harte, living with his family and the identity of consequently abandoned Jesse staying with his grandfather on the farm after Willard's shooting. Not in control, Jesse is conscious of the external circumstances impacting his identity crises. Therefore, Jesse Pedersen agrees with Dr Pedersen to strive to achieve external order.

To elaborate on the link between spatiality and the character progression of Jesse, an analysis of Jesse's first home is of use. Jesse is born into a small family house with five children, and his mother's new pregnancy distresses him. He is 'stung' by his sister's happy response, thinking instead, '*His mother is going to have another baby. In this little house, all of them crowded together*'.[34] After Willard slaughters the family, Jesse experiences the comfort of his own room for the first time in the Pedersens' mansion.[35] Therefore, this physical space symbolises new conditions for Jesse that he adapts to physically, mentally, and psychically. Jesse enlarges his body and also mentally progresses in his studies. However, during this process of self-development, he is exiled by Pedersen at the end of the first book. Jesse's first rebirth as Pedersen's son is cancelled by Pederson's exile. Reborn twice, once

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[31] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 64.
[32] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 69.
[33] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 76.
[34] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 9, emphasis original.
[35] Halfond, p. 1128.

as a Pederson and once more as an exile, Jesse eventually achieves his personal integrity of a 'higher man'.

In the second part of *Wonderland*, after graduating from the University of Michigan, Jesse starts off in a basement flat in a three-storey building but eventually moves up to the top floor.[36] His initial basement dwelling symbolises a modest start after being proclaimed dead by Pedersen, but as the plot unfolds, Jesse develops into a 'superior' personality.[37] His mental progress is manifested in his promising medical career, which is mirrored by his physical rise up the building. Thus, his mental and psychical progression is symbolically depicted in the context of his spatial progression.

I argue that Jesse's identity progression in the second book corresponds to the second level of identity transformation that Nietzsche calls the lion stage. According to Nietzsche, 'the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert.'[38] After initial obedience that corresponds to a camel stage, according to Nietzsche, Jesse follows his conscience for the first time and helps Mary to escape. As a punishment, Jesse loses the safety of home and becomes more self-reliant. Later in the text, Jesse's authority increases, as he gains power both over his patients and his own family.

In this section, Jesse is described as 'superior' by his friend, Dr Talbot Waller Monk, who is nicknamed Trick and has a 'natural interest in superior personalities'.[39] At one stage, Trick writes a note to Jesse's wife, Helene, saying that Jesse 'is an exceptional young man, far superior to me'.[40] However, Jesse is not yet able to detach from Dr Perrault, while being aware of his own reliance upon the doctor. Jesse observes that Dr Perrault 'keeps me going at a pace I couldn't maintain by myself'.[41] This reliance stems from Jesse's inability to create new values. At this stage of his life, he remains faithful to the attitudes he learned from Dr Pedersen and later Dr Perrault. Friedman says, 'Thereafter, he [Jesse] nurtures his own autonomy rather than depending on the nurture of the world outside. As a result, his becomes a

[36] Halfond, p. 1128.
[37] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 194.
[38] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 138.
[39] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 194.
[40] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 243.
[41] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 342.

quest for self-creation.'[42] However, it is merely external control that Jesse exercises at this point.

According to Nietzsche, 'to create new values — that even the lion cannot do.'[43] I argue that it is only in the last part of the book that Jesse is able to establish new values and affirm his personal integrity. In Oates' text, Jesse's stage in the second book is transitory, which is signified by Jesse's lack of homeownership. His move to the top floor represents his empowerment, yet as a tenant he does not own either the floor or the building. Therefore, he has not obtained the ultimate affirmation of his autonomy. Jesse manages his external power as a neurosurgeon and an authoritative father; yet at this stage, he struggles to cultivate his healthy internal control.

By juggling between his dreaming about an extramarital affair with Reva and his family commitments, Jesse ultimately manages to progress in the last part of the book. Creighton says:

> Finally, though, just as Alice {in Wonderland texts by Lewis Carroll} flees from 'the frightening anarchy of the world underneath the ground of common consciousness' and wakes up, Jesse rejects the alternate dream-vision of Reva, who represents the chaotic, uncontrolled world of the unconscious, and who might have opened him to the 'elusive Jesse' within.[44]

However, the internal victory of Jesse's consciousness is preceded by his passionate decision to have an affair with Reva. First, Jesse intends to clean himself in a bath; however, instead of shaving, he cuts himself with a blade and observes his bleeding:

> He held the razor in place against his left cheek, and felt up and down the length of his body a sharp thrill of lust, so keen that he nearly doubled over. [...] He started at his own blood. Then, again, as if hypnotized, he drew the blade against the other side of his face. More blood.[45]

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[42] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 97.
[43] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 139.
[44] Joanne V. Creighton, 'The Phantasmagoria of Personality: The Liberation through Love', in *Joyce Carol Oates* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p. 85.
[45] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 376.

For his planned intercourse with Reva, Jesse wants to wash away 'the monstrous part of him he half-admired and half-loathed'.[46] However, the consequent image of blood recalls the effects of Willard's chaotic murder, the tragedy Jesse has contested ever since it occurred. In *Wonderland*, the images of blood symbolise uncontrolled chaos representing Dionysian consciousness. Being a doctor, Jesse is confronted with blood in the hospital. By stopping the bleeding, he saves the lives of his patients and manifests his external control over their lives. However, once his passion for Reva is symbolically released through this act of self-mutilation, Jesse is unable to stop his own bleeding:

> He [Jesse] waited but the bleeding did not stop. He tried to blot it with the old paper towels, but it did not stop. The scratches stung. In the end, impatiently, he decided to put his clothes back on over the bleeding. He drove back to Chicago that way.[47]

Instead of pursuing an affair with Reva, he returns home. Covering himself with clothes over his wounded body symbolises the act of surrendering his passion to orderly consciousness represented by the firmness of fabric that blots out his bleeding. The scene occurs at the end of the second book of *Wonderland*, after which Jesse proceeds with a consequent shift of perspective while trying to save his daughter Shelley in the final book of *Wonderland*. In the final book, Shelley runs away from the authoritative order of the 1960s that Jesse represents in the text.

After Perrault's retirement, Jesse finally runs his own clinic, and purchases a mansion with forty-eight windows in Winnetka, a town in Illinois.[48] Jesse's financial breakthrough symbolises his economic victory, something his own father was unable to achieve. However, Friedman asserts that at this point in his life, Jesse is psychically enlarged as 'an *uebermensch* [sic]', one who acts 'as a vampirish husband and father', and thus he resembles Pedersen.[49] The latter represents a cruel oppressor, one who thirsts to exercise control over others, and despite Jesse's decision to rebel by helping Mary escape, he ultimately develops into Pedersen's image. Recalling Mary, Shelley is assisted by her boyfriend Noel in her escape from Jesse at this point in the text.

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[46] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 375.
[47] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 376.
[48] Halfond, 'Wonderland', p. 1128.
[49] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 95.

Echoing Pedersen, before her escape, Jesse demands that Shelley organises her speech. Shelley remembers Jesse saying to her, '*Don't speak that way, Shelley. Speak only in complete sentences. Give us your complete thought*.'[50] In her afterword, Oates asserts that Jesse becomes obsessed with 'demonic-paternal control', the very model of fatherhood that 'he has been fleeing since boyhood'.[51] It is at this stage in Jesse's life when Shelley flees home, and the third part of the book is predominantly narrated from her point of view.

In *Wonderland*, Shelley comments on her parents in her letters to Jesse. Helene feels emotionally destroyed by her marriage to Jesse and is depicted as a passive character without a voice of her own. Therefore, Shelley dismisses Helene in her letters, and accuses Jesse of neglect. She complains that Jesse either works at the clinic or, when present, is emotionally unavailable. She recalls the times that, when crying, she demanded her father's attention but he isolated himself from the family in his study.[52] Halfond elaborates on the development of Jesse's 'self-directed life of his own', which is not achieved prior to saving Shelley. Only after her escape, when Jesse searches for her in the third book of *Wonderland*, does he finally choose his daughter over his career at the clinic. According to Nietzsche, to enter the third transformation, one must conquer 'his last god', as to achieve the 'ultimate victory' it is necessary 'to fight with the great dragon'.[53]

Following Jesse's economic victory, triumph over repeated fatherly rejection, and passionate feelings for Reva, his last struggle is against violence. Nietzsche describes the third level of the spirit as 'a child', and it is through his child, Shelley, that Jesse enters a symbolic rebirth after evaluating his prior paternal influences. Nietzsche defines the stage as follows:

> The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning [...]. For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed [...] he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.[54]

Shelley's innocence parallels Jesse's own childhood innocence at the time of his family's massacre. Recalling the traumatic event from the position of being a father himself, however, Jesse decides to spare Noel's life. By making

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[50] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 402, emphasis original.
[51] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 479.
[52] Oates, *Wonderland*, pp. 403-404.
[53] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 138.
[54] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 139.

that decision, he refrains from following Willard's destructive pattern and creates something new. The identity of Jesse Harte, which is lost in the violent act of his father, is constructively reborn through his saving act in the identity of Jesse Vogel.

Read through the latter's lens, Jesse internalises the contest of his instincts with his conscience in the moment of his identity rebirth. Friedman argues that it is at this stage that Jesse psychologically 'shrinks from [the obsessive model of] *ubermensch* to an ordinary, self-questioning being'.[55] However, in her analysis, Friedman appears to link the Nietzschean *Űbermensch* with the image of a cruel dominator when interpreting the manipulative Pedersen. Modern readings emphasise the Nietzschean idea of overcoming Dionysian chaos by using a creative life force to define the attribute of a superman described by Nietzsche. In my reading of *Wonderland*, I argue that Jesse accomplishes his eventual excellence of a superman that springs from the harmony between the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements corresponding to Oates' depiction of personal homeostasis in *Wonderland*.

Earlier in the text, Pedersen asks Jesse to explain the scientific definition of homeostasis that Jesse sets out to achieve.[56] Jesse briefly charts the historical development of the definition and clarifies:

> Each disturbing influence induces by itself the calling forth of compensatory activity to neutralize or repair the disturbance. The higher in the scale of living beings, the more perfect and the more complicated the regulatory agencies become. They tend to free the organism completely from the unfavourable influences and changes occurring in the environment.[57]

In the second part of *Wonderland*, Jesse relates homeostasis to internal control while pursuing his medical degree. Among scientific arguments, he prioritises the concept of homeostasis by saying:

> The lessons of homeostasis and cybernetics: *control*? What else mattered? If he had control of himself, Jesse Vogel, then nothing else mattered in the universe.[58]

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[55] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 96.
[56] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 99.
[57] Oates, *Wonderland*, pp. 99-100.
[58] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 186, emphasis original.

Initially influenced by his surrogate fathers, Jesse eventually develops his own voice. I argue that by resisting violence, Jesse confronts his deepest self, conquers his 'darkness', and accomplishes his personal equilibrium.[59] Friedman argues that equilibrium, or 'homeostasis', is the controlling metaphor of this narrative.[60] According to her, a balance of proportions concerns Oates' texts, and not only an individual symmetry, but additionally the desired harmony between a self and the environment that Jesse achieves at the end of *Wonderland*.[61] I argue that the equilibrium that Oates depicts in *Wonderland* and that Jesse achieves corresponds to Kaufmann's model of Nietzsche that advances 'Dionysian enlightenment'.[62] Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen's argument about the Dionysian enlightenment in Kaufmann's reading of Nietzsche is confirmed by Stanley Corngold, who explains the internal organisation of the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements as proposed by sublimation of Dionysian values in Kaufmann's interpretation of Nietzsche.[63]

Recalling Carroll's symbolism in his Alice texts, which became a literary inspiration for Oates' *Wonderland*, Creighton says:[64]

> As Alice {in Lewis Carroll's Wonderland texts} dismisses the 'insoluble problems of meaning in a meaningless world' with her waking-world resumption of insight, logic, and control: 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!', so too Jesse awakens, dismissing Noel, Shelley's lover, and resuming control of his daughter and himself.[65]

In the process of waking into an authentic world, Alice's real-world vision interferes with the fantasy dream. Thus, Alice connects with the logic of the real world that interrupts the dream. On the other hand, Jesse exists in a real-life setting in *Wonderland*. His new perspective becomes a symbolic alternative to a new realm into which he progresses by overcoming the temptation of Dionysian chaos. Jesse's internal insight, which he gains from

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[59] Oates, *Wonderland*, p. 393.
[60] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 103.
[61] Friedman, *Joyce Carol Oates*, p. 103.
[62] Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, '"Dionysian Enlightment": Walter Kaufmann's *Nietzsche* in Historical Perspective', *Modern Intellectual History*, 3, 2 (2006), pp. 239-269, [accessed 01-05-2020], p. 243.
[62] Stanley Corngold, *Walter Kaufmann: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic (*Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 35-36.
[63] Corngold, pp. 35-36.
[64] Oates and Julie Vadnal, 'Joyce Carol Oates on the Enduring Influence of *Alice In Wonderland*'.
[65] Creighton, 'The Phantasmagoria of Personality: The Liberation through Love', p. 85.

harmonising his Dionysian and Apollonian elements, sparks optimistic hope for his daughter. His constructive mental transformation is consequently externalised as the physical survival of Shelley and Noel.

Conclusion

Creighton asserts that Jesse 'has no choice but to try to construct an identity within his horrific milieu'.[66] In this pursuit, Jesse discovers his academic capacity and accepts responsibility for his life. In the process of self-improvement, he exhausts his present chances and orients himself towards future accomplishments. A constant desire for control characterises this text, yet Jesse's attitude to power significantly alters towards the end of the text. Jesse's development is initially characterised by the influence of his surrogate fathers. He is exposed to the concept of chaos and the violent articulation of disorder by Willard, while Pedersen symbolises obsession for external control.

Oates reflects on Nietzsche's ideas in a distinctive manner in each text of her Quartet. In *Wonderland*, she reflects on the Nietzschean imperative to become what one is, and blends it with the parody of human superiority and cruelty. Oates engages her characters with the exploration of the metaphysics of human identity, by depicting the unconscious patterns of a traumatised mind. Combating family trauma, the author dynamically portrays Jesse's identity progress.

[66] Creighton, 'The Phantasmagoria of Personality: The Liberation through Love', p. 110.

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A Prolonged Labour: Transition, Liminality and Work in Harry Josephine Giles' *Wages for Transition* and 'Some Definitions'

Lilith Cooper

Zines are, broadly speaking, DIY, self-published, not-for-profit booklets, pamphlets, or magazines. Defining zines solely by their materiality is challenging given the diversity of physical and digital forms they take. Instead, zines can be considered as the result or 'trace' of some or all of a set of practices including but not limited to: 'cut and paste' or the decontextualization and recontextualization of images and writing from mainstream media or other zines; the valuing of 'third-space epistemologies', those knowledges that come from lived experience; autobiographical writing; practices identifiable as archival practices such as the collection and curation of ephemera from activist or DIY spaces; and practices identifiable as research practices such as citation (although rarely following established academic guidelines).[1] Zines are often described in terms of the spaces they occupy — they are 'marginal', from a 'strange subterranean world', produced on the 'fringes'.[2] This is mirrored in the spaces they emerge from: spend long enough

[1] Jessie Lymn, Queering Archives The Practices of Zines (University of Technology, Sydney, 2014), p. 169; Adela C. Licona, *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderland Rhetorics* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), p. 138.

[2] Anita Harris, 'GURL Scenes and Grrrl Zines: The Regulation and Resistance of Girls in Late Modernity', (*Feminist Review*, 75, 2003) 38–56, p.39; Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Verso, 1997), p.16; Red Chidgey, 'Developing Communities of Resistance? Maker Pedagogies, Do-It-Yourself Feminism and DIY Citizenship' in *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media,* ed. By Matt Ratto and Megan Boler (MIT Press, 2014), 101–115, p.101.

in scholarship around zines and you wander into bedrooms as sites of cultural production or archival practices.[3]

Zine scholarship, emerging in the 1990s, is a rapidly growing field of study including work in library science, feminist studies, education and media studies.[4] Significant attention has been paid to the relationship between zines and archives or libraries, particularly within the context of a broader 'archival turn' in feminism.[5] Riot Grrl zines, often described as ephemeral, were part of a movement 'that had been collecting, preserving and preparing itself for the archive all along', with archival practices central to Riot Grrl cultural production.[6] The overlap between zine and archival practices can been seen explicitly in contemporary zines such as *It's Radical to Exist*, *Document It Yourself: A Zine About Queer(ing) Archives* and *archive it ourselves, strategies and tips for documenting and archiving DIY histories*.[7]

Although a single method or methodology has not emerged within zine studies, zines seem to speak to research methods that are like them, such as (auto)ethnography.[8] Zine making itself has been used as a creative research method within the social sciences to produce participatory research with disabled young women or to explore Nova Scotian women's experiences of depression. Zine making has been explored as an approach to visual ethnography, and as a way of facilitating a reflective research practice. [9] Yet it has not been explored as a method of researching zines in archives or collections. In creating the zine *A Prolonged Labour*, I wanted to investigate

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[3] Anna Poletti, *Intimate Ephemera: Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (Academic Monographs, 2008); Alison Piepmeier, *Grrl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism,* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Lymn, 2014.
[4] Anne Hays, 'A Citation Analysis about Scholarship on Zines', *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication,* 8 (General Issue), (2020), eP2341, p.10.
[5] Piepmeier, 2009; Kate Eichorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Temple University Press, 2013).
[6] Eichorn, p.IX
[7] Mel Reeve, *It's Radical to Exist* (2020); Junie Latte, *Document It Yourself: A Zine About Queer(ing) Archives* (2018); Kirsty Fife, *archive it ourselves, strategies and tips for documenting and archiving DIY histories* (2019).
[8] Hays, 2020.
[9] Paula Cameron, 'Seamfulness: Nova Scotian Women Witness Depression through Zines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2012); Amanda Ptolomey, '"It Made Us All Kind of Feel like We Were on the Same Level and That If We're Sharing Stuff You're Sharing Stuff Too": Exploring Zine-Making as a Creative Feminist Research Method' (University of Glasgow Sociology Seminar Series, 23rd April 2020); Silvia Vong, 'Reporting or Reconstructing? The Zine as a Medium for Reflecting on Research Experiences', *Communications in Information Literacy*, 10.1 (2016).

the possibilities of zine making as a creative and sensory approach to the study of zines themselves, works that are simultaneously textual and material, embodied and situated in communities of practice. In ekphrastic poetry, the imaginative act of writing about a piece of art generates new meaning. Similarly, I wondered if creating a zine about Harry Josephine Giles' *Wages for Transition* and *'Some Definitions'* would create new meanings as well as bring my academic research into conversation with zine practices.[10]

A Prolonged Labour was created on Adobe InDesign and Procreate.[11] It is a combination of text, original digital drawings, and digital collages created from images from the Wellcome Collection's online catalogue. It was then risoprinted in two colours, red and black, at Sunday's Print in Glasgow. Risoprinting works similarly to screenprinting, in that each colour is a separate layer, creating a distinctive effect. Risoprinting is a popular technology for zine reproduction because it is relatively inexpensive to print at high volumes and is environmentally conscious, using non-toxic soy-based inks and compostable screens.

Rather than (re)birth, I took labour as the starting point for my enquiry as 'I'm trans and the discordance between the collective work of transition and the idea of individual trans people being reborn (whole and new) rang loud'.[12] I decided to use liminality as a heuristic tool to explore Giles' zines, broadly approaching them in the context of my PhD research into liminality and zines.

Liminality was first characterised in anthropology as the in-between period of a social transition.[13] Its original description, shaped by the specific (neo)colonial and ethnographic context it emerged from, has since been developed, expanded upon or appropriated by queer, trans, feminist and postcolonial approaches which shift focus to the everyday lived experience of the liminal, and account for liminal bodies, geographies, temporalities, affect

[10] Lilith Cooper, *A Prolonged Labour* (Fife: 2021); Harry Josephine Giles, *Wages for Transition* (Edinburgh: Easter Road Press, 2019); Harry Josephine Giles, *'Some Definitions'* (Edinburgh: Easter Road Press, 2019).
[11] Cooper, 2021.
[12] Cooper, p.11.
[13] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: 1977); Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage', in *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).

and emotion.[14] In their discussion of liminality and text studies, Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton propose working with the concept of liminality as opposed to marginality.[15] Whilst I disagree with some of their reasoning for eschewing the margin, I agree that, even as a site of resistance or a productive, intentionally occupied location, the margin presupposes and orientates us towards a centre. In the context of social media and the growth of 'participatory culture', it is less clear how useful understandings of zines as being produced in or occupying the margins of a central media are.[16] Additionally, as zines are brought into libraries and archives, understanding them as marginal to a central collection risks limiting our understanding of the complex and productive ways zines can act on the archive. Liminality offers a re-orientation away from a central text and looking beyond the page, turning what were margins into thresholds or spaces of change and transition. Returning to the characterisation of zines in my introduction, what implications does this re-orientation have when considering contemporary zines not as marginal, but as liminal?

In approaching 1970s rock narratives (rock operas and concept albums), Aguirre, Quance and Sutton propose that liminal texts exist on three interrelated planes. The fictional plane concerns the narrative. The equivocal plane concerns the liminal attributes discernible when the narrative is performed, where performer is 'simultaneously a person and a persona'. [17] Finally, the social plane concerns the reception of the performed narrative, and the relationship between the story, personae and performers in wider culture. Each of these could be much more extensively explored with reference to both Giles' zines and my own; however, looking at zines as text-objects highlights something missing in this framework.[18] I will now briefly explore how consideration of *A Prolonged Labour* suggests a further liminal

[14] See for example Lauren March, 'Queer and trans* geographies of liminality: A literature review', *Progress in Human Geography,* 45(3), (2020), 455-471; Todd R. Ramlow, Bodies in the Borderlands: Gloria Anzaldúa's and David Wojnarowicz's Mobility Machines, MELUS, Vol. 31, No. 3, Race, Ethnicity, Disability, and Literature (Fall, 2006), 169-187.
[15] Manuel Aguirre, Roberta A. Quance and Philip Sutton, *Margins and Thresholds: An Enquiry into the Concept of Liminality in Text Studies*, (Madrid: The Gateway Press, 2000).
[16] Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
[17] Aguirre, Quance and Sutton, p.57.
[18] Anna Poletti, 'AUTO/ASSEMBLAGE: Reading the Zine'. *Biography* 31 (1), (2008), 85–102.

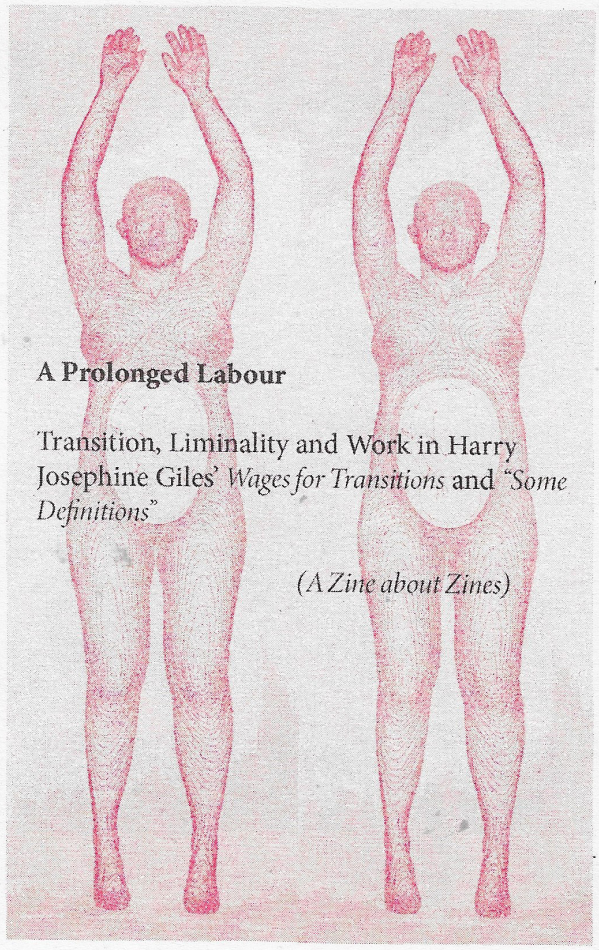
plane — the material — and the ways zines are able to illuminate aspects of it.[19]

Just as Giles' *Wages for Transition,* available free to download on her website, implicates the reader in materialising the zine, I too invite the reader of *A Prolonged Labour* to perform the unfolding/refolding of a zine.[20] The back page is text instructions on how to unfold and refold the zine in order to read the other side of the paper. The instructions are accompanied by images of the process, as well as collaged images of an early printing press. Jen and Carly Bagelman, in recounting and reflecting on a zine workshop held with geography students, pay close attention to the process of taking apart and (re)assembling books and media, observing that 'concretely revealing how anyone can make a book seems to democratise the practice of authorship'.[21] In my own practice facilitating zine workshops, I am aware of the repeated ritual of demonstrating, or performing, folding a one-page zine and have observed this reflected in the practice of other facilitators. In inviting you, the reader, to unfold *A Prolonged Labour*, I am inviting you to take apart a zine and then reassemble, or reconstruct it. You can of course choose not to. This is not just performance but a tangible, material deconstruction. This moment between the two folded forms is one of transition, of potential, in which the taken-for-granted object of the zine and the broader norms around cultural production, around expertise, around who can make media, are called into question. It is a moment of material liminality.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank the anonymous peer reviewer whose comments helped improve this writing.

[19] Cooper, 2021.
[20] Giles, *Wages,* 2019; Cooper, p.7.
[21] Jennifer Jean Bagelman and Carly Bagelman, 'Zines: Crafting Change and Repurposing the Neoliberal University', *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 15.2 (2016), 365–392, p.376.



A Prolonged Labour

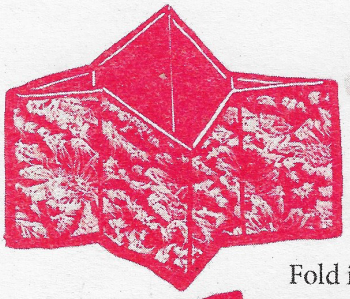
Transition, Liminality and Work in Harry Josephine Giles' *Wages for Transitions* and *"Some Definitions"*

(A Zine about Zines)

front cover

This is a zine. Turn it inside out.

Open it up and turn it over.



Fold it in half length ways, take either end and bring your hands together, creating a gap in the middle where the page is cut which expands, and then collapses.

Flattern and fold over. Resume reading.

pg. 7

@HarryJosieGiles
idk if this is what you meant?

pgs 1 & 2

"

They say it is gender. We say it is unwaged work.

They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work.

They call it perversion. We call it absenteeism.

They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism.

Every murder is a work accident.

Every suicide is a work accident.

Transsexuality and cissexuality are both working conditions... but transition is workers' control of production, not the end of work.

Homosexuality and Heterosexuality are both working conditions... but homosexuality is workers' control of production, not the end of work.

More gender? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying the healing virtues of transition.

Neuroses, suicides, desexualisation: occupational diseases of the tran.

Neuroses, suicides, desexualisation: occupational diseases of the housewife.

Wages Against Housework, 1975, Silvia Federici

"

Wages for Transition, 2019, Harry Josephine Giles

I bought *"Some Definitions"* (2019) from Easter Roads Press before Christmas 2020. *Wages for Transition* (2019) I print out at home from the PDF available on Giles' website. I don't know where my stapler is so it's just folded sheets. *"Some Definitions"* feels crafted with intention: the colour of paper, the typeset. It is poetry I guess. So is *Wages for Transition* not poetry?

Giles' puts the printing into the hands of the reader, a lot of settings to get right to materialize the zine as intended. The first time I print it, I try and use my browser – it comes out totally squint. I open adobe instead (thank you student discount) and print it that way. I fold the pages into a booklet. It's not perfect but it will do, its zine enough, it holds its own form. It probably won't last but an archivist would remove the corrosive metal staples if I used those to secure it.

I could bind it with thread?

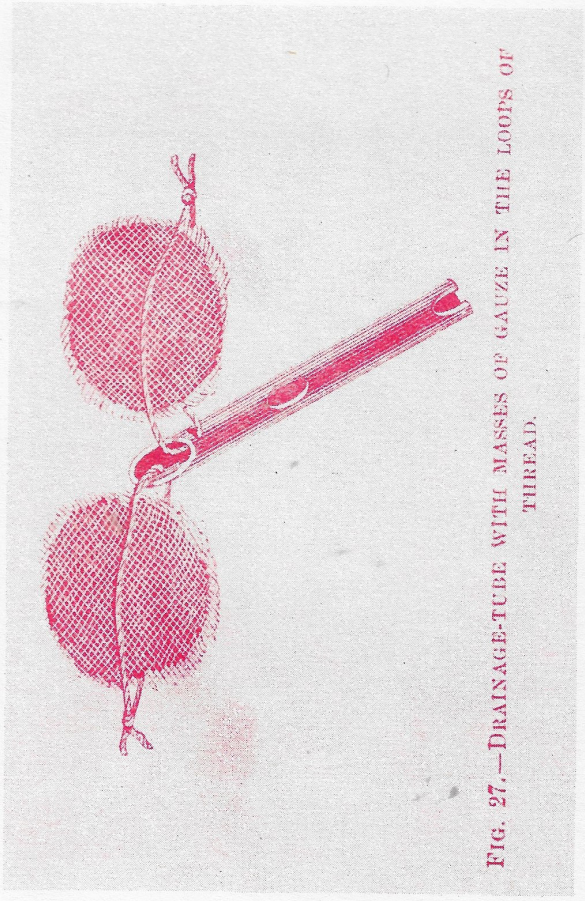


FIG. 27.—DRAINAGE-TUBE WITH MASSES OF GAUZE IN THE LOOPS OF THREAD.

pgs 3 & 4

- VIII -

'To view wages for housework as a thing rather than a perspective is to detach the end result of our struggle from the struggle itself' (Federici, 1975).

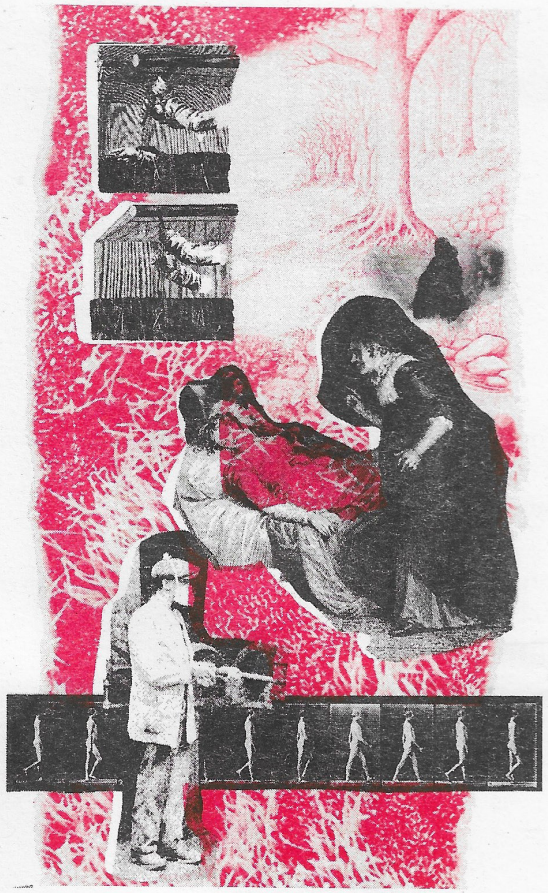
Wages for Transition cannot be reduced to an end goal of payment. It is a transitional demand. Seeing transition as work, and trans people as workers, enables the organising needed to abolish both gender and capitalism: 'we now demand wages for the work of transition, so that transitions can escalate until work itself is no more'. (Giles, 2019a, 16)

'Wages for transition is not the universal perspective under which all transitions must be subsumed, but a revolutionary perspective for the expansion of transition as a category for the revolutionary flourishing of us all.' (Giles, 2019a, 13)

It's not clear whether this is a murder or a rescue.

", TRANSSEXUAL, Harry Josephine Giles, "Some Definitions"

pgs 5 & 6



I can't be bothered to bind it with thread. I'm so tired. I'm trying to make this some kind of smart academic zine about zines and it just feels, not me speaking? The reason I wanted to make this zine was because on a call for papers I saw this theme of rebirth, and this suggestion of gender transition as rebirth, and I thought of Harry Josephine Giles' zines and in particular, Giles' opening to Wages for Transition: 'Transition is the labour that continually gives birth to gender' (2019a, 5). I'm trans, and the discordance between the collective work of transition and the idea of individual trans people being reborn (whole and new) rang loud. Labour is both a word for work under capitalism, and a word for the process of giving birth (and as we'll see, giving birth is also work under capitalism). My PhD research is on (health) zines and liminality, and I have been considering how and why liminality could be a useful concept for those zines in the Wellcome library that write of and from transition. I search out the Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv's Turn Illness Into a Weapon and find K.D's 2013 unauthorized translation online. The problem I'm having is that its March 2021, and I'm moving through a viscous liquid to get anything done, to think any thought in words. K.D writes of the dialectical process of translation: 'I felt my own illness turning into a force as I persisted'.

pgs 9 & 10

'To transition is not to cross from one fixed point to another, nor to become the gender that one always was, but rather to engage with dubious agency and fraught embodiment the ongoing work of being gendered.' (Giles, 2019a, 12-13)

The word 'liminality' has its own specific history, but you'll know what I mean or you won't, when I say it is the in-between. The forth bridge crosses between Fife and Lothian (I can see it from my window on the fife coast). It is a third, in-between, space that you can travel over, or (if like now, since I cannot leave fife) you can just walk to, and stand on. *What tier is the Firth of Forth in?* I joked pre-national lockdown to my pals across the water in Edinburgh. The bridge is both a liminal metaphor (a stand in for something I cannot describe in words) and materially liminal.

Let's extend the metaphor, briefly. Let's think of the bridge as the constructed route through the between space. The water is the between space too, but not a straight line through. Because the word 'liminality' is grounded in anthropology (Arnold van Gennep in 1909, and then Victor Turner in 1967), it is first imagined in a linear narrative of moving between two 'states'. The anthropological writing of liminality doesn't allow for different co-existing ontologies, framing the rituals of the Ndembu people of what we now call north western Zambia through a white Western ontology, invested in the colonial project. The spiritual is for the maintenance of social order. The threat, risk, danger of liminal spaces is social. More space for multiple ontologies is made in writings from Borderlands (see Gloria Anzaldua, 1987). It is here that we can start to find the potential of the liminal to deconstruct, to be generative. What does it mean to say something, like a text, like Giles' zines, like this zine, is liminal? Is it the water or the bridge?

Transition as (re)birth is part of a discourse that naturalises trans-ness and turns medicine into the mothers that bear us into the world, made anew. Transition as work rejects this. There is nothing natural about capitalism, nothing natural about gender. '[S]ome transitions under capitalism are valorised as expression of individual self-realisation in order to obscure the trans person's role as labourer in the workplace of capitalist gender.' (11) Liminality is not necessarily an individual transition, but has been used to describe wider processes of change, rupture, transition. So it is maybe a way of thinking about the space from which the demand for wages for transition emerges?

Why is this zine about poetry too?! I don't understand poetry. Its dense, to me; and my like/dislike feels like a blunt tool for a delicate thing.

Audre Lorde tells us poetry is not luxury, that the ideas, radical and different, necessary for change, and taking action are 'not idle fantasy, but the true meaning of "it feels right to me." We can train ourselves to respect our feelings, and to discipline (transpose) them into a language that matches those feelings so they can be shared. And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it.'

You can go hear Giles reading "Some Definitions" aloud on the Queer Zine Library website.

pgs11 & 12

“

They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work.

They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism.

Every miscarriage is a work accident.
Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both working conditions ...

but homosexuality is workers' control of production, not the end of work.

More smiles? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying the healing virtues of a smile.

Neuroses, suicides, desexualisation: occupational diseases of the housewife.

”

Wages Against Housework, Silvia Federici, 1975

pg. 8

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back cover

Transition is not an individual birthing themselves. It is not to be (re)born. What the collective work of transition will (eventually) birth to is the abolition of gender, the abolition of work. It is a prolonged labour.

'Wages for transition is every moment when trans people seize and share resources, when collective responsibility is taken for the reproduction of trans life, when transition is communised.' (Giles, 2019a, 16)

https://paypal.me/pools/c/8nwkSOqDCS

pgs 13 & 14

‘A Woman’s Lot Is to Suffer’: Regenerations of Immigrant Women in Modern Contemporary Literature

Tiffany Messer-Bass

Introduction

The theme of being reborn as an outsider in another culture is one that is becoming more common in popular fiction surrounding themes of migration, especially where women are centered as protagonists. According to Agnes Woolley in *Contemporary Asylum Narratives* (2014), only recently has the world of humanities begun to explore migration as a study area. The migrating woman goes through many phases during her lifetime in which she must be reborn. This article will provide a comparative literary analysis of three novels: *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid (2017), *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee (2017), and *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013). With these titles in mind, this essay will first define key terms to do with migration and regeneration and provide brief summaries of each of the three texts. It will then explore the identities of the texts’ protagonists, their regenerations, and how these regenerations shaped their futures, both in the short and long term. The writer of this paper hopes that the reader will take away a better understanding of migration, why it occurs, and how it is represented in literature.

Regeneration and Migration

In the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, ‘regenerate’ is defined in a medical or biological way and is quoted as ‘[a]n umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a

person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.'[1] The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.[2]

However, as a word 'regeneration' has meaning far beyond biological science.[3] It is a form of rebirth that deserves to be written about and recognised. Compared to women who never live outside of their native countries, migrating women go through rebirths more frequently because, in addition to the changes of status and perspective that come with ageing for everyone, they also have to adjust to new sets of circumstances in their new countries. As readers will see in the texts chosen for this research, child rearing, a woman's political place (dependent upon the time the story was written in), and further factors can increase the burden of each regeneration. Three contemporary texts will prove how migrant women in literature are put into positions where they must adapt, change, and continually grow in roles and situations that non-migrating women seldom experience. It is proposed that regenerations occur not only because situations change, but also because feelings change. A person may be stepping into a new role or responsibility, but it is how they feel that determines how it will mould the individual parts of their identity.

Castelli outlines three categories that drive the decision to choose to migrate:

1) Macro-factors: These are major events, such as wars, dictatorships, environmental changes, and any other situation that constitutes inadequate

[1] Cambridge University Press, 'Regenerate', in *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary* <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/regeneration> [accessed 03 March 2021].

[2] At the international level, no universally accepted definition for 'migrant' exists. The present definition was developed by the International Organization for Migration for its own purposes and it is not meant to imply or create any new legal category. International Organization for Migration, 2019.

[3] This article takes creative liberties with that definition and reimagines it to mean a person's growth or moments when they must adapt and change their identity.

human and economic development that makes living in one's origin country hostile. This results in forced migration.

2) Meso-factors: Exploitation of natural and social resources of low-income countries in favour of large-scale intensive cultivation by private entities or even foreign governments. This is often detrimental to the poorest populations, who are compensated or forced (or both) to leave the area they inhabit and relocate. This also leads to environmental damages due to climate change that can further factor into one's decision to move. Migrants influenced by these factors have more agency to make a decision to move than those influenced by macro-factors.

3) Micro-factors: These are generally associated with one's physical and social attributes such as age, sex, ethnicity, religion, education, wealth, language, or marital status.[4] These factors will be explored throughout the three chosen texts, beginning with *Americanah*.

The American and Nigerian Perspectives

In her novel *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes the main character, Ifemelu, as saying 'I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as Black and I only became Black when I came to America.'[5] The juxtaposition of cultures in Nigeria and the United States is prevalent in Ifemelu's experiences of employment, romantic relationships, and racism.[6] Her experiences are so pronounced that she is compelled to create a blog viewing racial topics and issues in America through the lens of a non-American perspective. Though she has had her own trials and successes, it is evident from early on in Adichie's work that Ifemelu has already straddled the line of regeneration and has played many roles. It is learned that she is taking the taxi to a hair braiding salon to get her hair braided before she moves back to her native country, Nigeria. These first few pages set up the rest of the story well with regard to Ifemelu's regenerations.

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[4] Francesco Castelli, 'Drivers of Migration: Why Do People Move?' *Journal of Travel Medicine,* 25 (2018), 1-7.
[5] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (London: 4th Estate, 2013), p. 290.
[6] 'Racism' includes any theory, doctrine, ideology, or sets of ideas that assert a causal link between the phenotypic or genotypic characteristics of individuals or groups and their intellectual, cultural, and personality traits, including the false concept of racial superiority. International Organization for Migration, 2019.

All of these regenerations originate back to her relationship with her teenage love, Obinze. He was the driving force behind her relocation to America and becoming an 'Americanah'. America was Obinze's dream. Ifemelu and Obinze base their university decisions upon one another and intend to stay in Nigeria. However, university lecturers begin to strike and university life becomes unstable. This prompts the couple to look to the United States for opportunity. Ifemelu is accepted for a visa and rapidly relocates.[7] Unfortunately, Obinze's application is rejected and so he makes his way to the United Kingdom instead, where he overstays his visa and becomes undocumented.[8] As Ifemelu finds herself in Philadelphia, she realizes quickly that she is regenerating. She is no longer Ifemelu from Lagos. She is an immigrant who enters a university in a large American city. The most significant regeneration occurs when she registers for her classes, as outlined in this exchange with university staff that encourages Ifemelu to begin practicing her American accent.

> Cristina Tomas said, 'I. Need. You. To. Fill. Out. A. Couple. Of. Forms. Do. You. Understand. How. To. Fill. These. Out?' and she realized that Cristina Tomas was speaking like that because of *her,* her foreign accent, and she felt for a moment like a small child, lazy-limbed and drooling.[9]

Jack Taylor (2019) points to this moment in Adichie's novel as the moment of assimilation in his article on language, race, and identity in *Americanah*. When Ifemelu begins to adopt an American accent, she begins to understand and assimilate the unspoken policies of language faced by migrants, where an accent can dictate the amount of hospitality to be granted

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[7] A 'visa' is defined as an endorsement by the competent authorities of a State in a passport or a certificate of identity of a non-national who wishes to enter, leave, or transit through the territory of the State that indicates that the authority, at the time of issuance, considers the holder to fall within a category of non-nationals who can enter, leave or transit the State under the State's laws. A visa establishes the criteria of admission into, transit through or exit from a State. International Organization for Migration, 2019; Adichie, p. 98-99.

[8] The term 'undocumented' is used to refer to a non-national who enters or stays in a country without the appropriate documentation. International Organization for Migration, 2019; Adichie, p. 233-235.

[9] Adichie, p. 133.

by natives of the host country.[10] While there are small hints that this will be one of Ifemelu's regenerations, the moment with Cristina Tomas is where that regeneration fully takes effect and sets Ifemelu's course in America for the rest of the novel. This is the point where she becomes an 'Americanah'.

The Regenerations of Ifemelu

Ifemelu's identities include daughter, cousin, niece, and student. Her identities are tied to her Lagos community and her family. Before she embarks for the United States, these titles are the most significant to her. Had she remained in Nigeria for her studies, she may not have had many major regenerations. She may have become a writer still, of course. However, without the drastic change that came with her rapid move to another country, she would not have become the strong character we see through her regenerations, where she is forced to assimilate the intricacies of American culture and principles without compromising her own. Due to her relocation to Philadelphia, she transforms into her own identity and becomes less engaged with her familial titles. This is why the moment that she registers for her classes becomes significant. It is the moment that Nigerian Ifemelu shifts to make room for the growth of American Ifemelu.

Ifemelu's title as a daughter never changes throughout the story, but her role as daughter does rework itself due to her migratory status, as her parents do not appear often in the story. They have a larger role in her earlier life, but after migrating to the United States, they are only mentioned in brief phone calls and one visit to see her despite her being in the U.S. for many years. Ifemelu does not visit Nigeria during this time, either. This does not mean that she has been absent from her family, however. She lives on the East Coast and initially lives with her Auntie Uju and cousin Dike until she leaves to attend university in Philadelphia. As Auntie Uju works her way through medical school and Dike struggles in his childhood and teen years, Ifemelu remains close with them and visits them frequently throughout the novel. She steps in as caretaker when Auntie Uju needs to focus on her studies or her work. As a result, Dike confides in her and their bond is tight. The 'cousin' identity for Ifemelu is strengthened when Dike attempts suicide and

[10] Jack Taylor, 'Language, Race, and Identity in Adichie's 'Americanah' and Bulowayo's 'We Need New Names' *Research in African Literatures,* 50 (2), (2019), 72-76.

she drops everything to go be with him and Auntie Uju before she moves to Nigeria. She even takes him to Miami to get him out of town for a short while. Although being a cousin is not technically a regeneration for most people, it becomes one for Ifemelu as she transitions from being a distant relative to one of the most important caretakers in Dike's life. She has been present for all of Dike's regenerations through boyhood and adolescence so her title never changes, but her impact on him does. This impact on him would not be as strong if she had not migrated to the U.S. In this instance, Ifemelu's migratory experience has a positive impact on Dike as he struggles to grow up in America because she is someone he can confide in.

In terms of non-familial regenerations, Ifemelu sees her largest growth come from her migratory experience. *Americanah* is a story of reinvention through migration, after all.[11] Ifemelu comes to America as a student and her life as a student is riddled with the struggle to find work, becoming a nanny, and finding a romantic relationship again after Obinze. She starts a successful blog titled *Raceteeth, Or Various Observations About American Blacks*.[12] Through her blog, Ifemelu becomes a metaphorical teacher (after spending years being the metaphorical student) of American practices, customs, rights, and wrongs in regards to race. Ndaka (2017) wrote an article on *Americanah* focusing on Ifemelu's blog. Ndaka says it best:

> In the novel, the various forms of silencing the black female migrant is subjected to go hand in hand with the conflation of the female, migrant and black voice with aggression and 'noise,' the latter a threshold to chaos because of the threat it presents to mainstream epistemological certainties and securities.[13]

Readers must recognize this and view Ifemelu as an agent of change even when she herself is amidst constant personal change. She becomes a voice of Blackness and migration and brings racial and social issues into the spotlight, where they belong.

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[11] The term 'migration' refers to the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state. International Organization for Migration, 2019.

[12] Adichie, p. 298.

[13] Felix Mutunga Ndaka, 'Rupturing the Genre: Un-Writing Silence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah.' Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies,* Winter 2017, vol. 18, pp. 101-123.

Ifemelu becomes political and gets emotionally involved with Barack Obama's first campaign for presidency.[14] Her blog becomes a hit and soon she is being asked to speak at events, finds people wanting to support her blog, and becomes financially sustained by her writing. These regenerations, of foreigner(s) to Americanah, metaphorical student to teacher, struggling to thriving, and politically passive to active, complete the form of Ifemelu we see towards the end of her time in the United States.[15]

In Chinenye Amonyeze's 2017 article *Writing a New Reputation: Liminality and Bicultural Identity in Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah*, the term 'adaptive biculturalism' is utilised to describe when an individual experiences discrimination through the act of taking pride in their own heritage and holding onto the legacy. During the time of Ifemelu's blog success, she comes into her own in terms of her biculturalism by adapting a natural hairstyle, dropping her American accent and making no apologies about her Nigerian roots.

When she returns to Nigeria, she reconnects with family and friends. She finds she has drastically changed and, in her absence, Nigeria has changed too. Ifemelu is surprised to discover it is not the same place that she left behind. The end of the novel allows readers to see how Ifemelu has grown as a migrant. When she reunites with Obinze and their love is rekindled, she has not settled back into her old ways. She has found confidence and comfort in her identity through the trials she has had to overcome throughout her story. Her regenerations are difficult, but they ultimately make her a stronger, successful woman.

Historical Migration: A Look at Japan and Korea

Pachinko is a very convoluted generational story spanning from 1911 to 1989. Sunja, the daughter of boarding house keepers, falls in love with a wealthy man, Hansu, at the fish market. At seventeen, Sunja finds herself pregnant and then learns that Hansu is already married and has a family in Japan. He offers to make Sunja his mistress and support her financially, but she refuses, despite the risk of disgracing her family as an unwed mother. Sunja lives with her mother, Yangjin, at their boarding house, a business that her parents ran

[14] Adichie, p. 355-359.
[15] Adichie, p. 385-390.

together before her father died of tuberculosis. One of their boarders at the time of Sunja's pregnancy is also confirmed to have tuberculosis. Recognising the signs from her father's experience with the disease, Sunja and Yangjin nurse the man back to health. Yangjin reveals Sunja's pregnancy to the boarder, who we come to know is named Isak. He offers to marry Sunja and give his name to her and the unborn child. Sunja agrees and thus the story unfolds with Isak, Sunja, and the future generations that will be impacted by this moment.[16] The story runs parallel with the major historical moment of the annexation of Korea by Japan, when tensions were high and economic hardships are rampant. Many Korean families, even those amongst the working population, were forced into poverty.

This story follows the maternal line of Sunja's mother, Yangjin. The theme of women suffering is noted early in the novel and continues as a theme with Yangjin, Sunja, and other female characters.[17] People migrate because they are in search of other, hopefully better, opportunities. Yangjin's story begins with her marrying a disabled man, suffering through several miscarriages, losing her husband to tuberculosis, running a boarding house and raising her daughter alone.[18] While Sunja does not believe that the phrase 'a woman's lot is to suffer' is a self-fulfilling prophecy, readers see how she suffers in her own way when Isak dies in prison. Sunja is fortunately not alone with her two young children (Noa, Hansu's son, and Mozasu, Isak's son) and finds assistance through Isak's brother Yoseb and his wife Kyunghee. The couple graciously house the family when they migrate from Korea to Japan.[19] Sunja does not realize it at the time, but Hansu is always in the shadows helping the family out as well. For example, when World War II heightens in 1945 and the United States begins bombing Japan, it is Hansu who relocates the family and Sunja's mother to a sweet potato farm outside of the cities and out of harm's way. He always seems to have insider knowledge of business and politics. Therefore he knows what is happening with the war and continually has a plan for protecting Sunja and Noa. The rest of the family is protected as a result. His distant care for Sunja and Noa is key in Sunja's migration journey throughout Japan and the success of her kimchi business with Kyunghee. Every good thing that happens to the family is revealed to be

[16] Min Jin Lee, *Pachinko* (London: Head of Zeus, London), pp. 3-57.

[17] Lee, p. 30.

[18] Lee, pp. 3-57.

[19] Lee, pp. 165-214.

guided by Hansu's influence.[20] In effect, this could sway Sunja's belief that a woman's lot is to suffer because she has always had someone in the background taking care of her needs.

The Regenerations of Sunja

Despite Sunja's efforts, most of her regenerations are driven by Hansu. With her mother's words 'a woman's lot is to suffer' ringing in her mind, Sunja is not sure that she believes that prophecy. Here is what readers learn about Sunja: her regenerations are entirely centred around keeping her family alive and healthy. She has several familial title regenerations: daughter to mother when she gives birth to Noa; carefree to caretaker when her father gets tuberculosis and she quickly lets go of her childhood to care for him and, further, work in the boarding house after his death; and unwed pregnant daughter to honourable wife as Isak marries her to prevent her from the shame of being an unwed mother. Another identity regeneration is only child to sister-in-law as she begins her close, sisterly relationship with Kyunghee. Finally, she graduates from mother to grandmother with the birth of Mozasu's son Solomon. These duties alone can be a strain within her story.

Her role as a migrant adds extra stress when she and Isak migrate to Osaka. Sunja is surprised to learn that Koreans are looked down upon in Osaka and the jobs that are obtainable for Koreans are menial at best. They are forced to live in a ghetto.[21] The weight of her migrant status is heavier after Isak's death. Because he refuses to recant his religion, he is arrested, making Sunja a single parent. This is yet another regeneration she must grow into and adapt to quickly. After Isak's imprisonment and death, Sunja and her sister-in-law sell kimchi from a cart in the open market in Osaka.[22] She does this against Yoseb's wishes, but since Isak is unable to contribute, she takes matters into her own hands and becomes financially independent. Japanese vendors keep displacing her from their spaces until she finds a place to sell her wares in the worst-smelling part of the market. Due to Hansu's influence, she later begins making kimchi with Kyunghee in a restaurant where they remain employed for some time.[23] This moment elevates that

[20] Lee, pp. 215-237.
[21] Lee, pp. 106-116.
[22] Lee, p. 175.
[23] Lee, pp. 175-193.

status of the sisters-in-law and together they regenerate from 'dirty' street sellers to working inside a clean restaurant with added security from Hansu's status.

As the story progresses, *Pachinko* begins to focus on Noa and Mozasu's generation. After many failed attempts at working as a bookkeeper, Noa finally passes his exam to enter Waseda University. He chooses the path of Japanese naturalization and works towards it.[24] Hansu insists on being Noa's benefactor, which Noa perceives to be nothing more than a kind gesture from a family friend. During his time there, he discovers that Hansu is his biological father and this sets forth his disappearance from his family for sixteen years, leaving Sunja to a long, mournful depression. She contacts Hansu and begs him to locate Noa. He is eventually found in Nagano working as a bookkeeper in a pachinko parlour, married to a Japanese wife with four children. He lives with a Japanese identity as Nobuo. Hansu tries to convince Sunja not to make contact with Noa, but she does anyway. She makes him promise to reunite with the family he has disconnected himself from. Noa agrees, then returns home to commit suicide.[25] Despite the devastation this brings to Sunja, she continues to work for her family and act as a strong matriarch for her remaining descendants.

This is when Yangjin's phrase 'a woman's lot is to suffer' comes to light again. Sunja has been the one to suffer for her children, her mother, her in-laws, and her late husband. Sunja's migrant regenerations have been a result of grief after grief. If she had not migrated with Isak, where would she be? Shamed as an unwed mother with Noa, most likely, but would Sunja and Yangjin have survived if they had remained at the boarding house during World War II? Her regenerations have been difficult and full of hard work. However, they may be the reason that she lives into old age. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to find supporting scholarship relating to aspects of Sunja's identities, which leads to a speculative conclusion for this section of the article. This is a failure of the writer in part because there do appear to be some items in languages other than English that go untranslated due to fear of mistranslation. Nevertheless, *Pachinko* is a novel that is rich enough to garner an article of its own. It would be an oversight to not include it in this article.

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[24] Lee, p. 289.
[25] Lee, pp. 419-426.

A Glimpse of the Future: The Middle East

Exit West by Mohsin Hamid begins with a close look at the meeting of Saeed and Nadia. Hamid does not tell us which country this is and suggests that this is a near-future dystopian world. This makes *Exit West* an interesting addition to this article because, where *Pachinko* focused on a story of historical migration and *Americanah* is close to present-day, *Exit West* is a potential view of the future of migration and readers follow Nadia and Saeed blindly through doors to their destinations and attempts at finding home.

Nadia is portrayed as an independent woman in an unnamed country that is harsh on women's rights. After briefly informing readers about Nadia's family life, the author quickly moves on to Nadia's decision to move into a flat of her own after graduating from university. Her family does not approve because in their culture it is improper for an unmarried woman to live on her own. Nadia stands her ground and, from that moment forward, she considers herself without family and her family feels the same.[26] Due to the impending war and tensions of their surroundings, Saeed and Nadia do not get to meet often, but they are magnetized to one another regardless, always keeping in touch through text messages and rare encounters.[27] At this part of the story, we learn about Saeed's family and his upbringing. He still lives with his parents and has a much closer relationship with them than Nadia does with her family. Suddenly, the government cuts off cellular and wi-fi access in an attempt to curb the rising terrorism in the city and country. The only way that Saeed can visit Nadia is by dressing as a woman, thereby avoiding raising any religious suspicions. Fearing for her, he asks her to move in with him and his parents. At first, Nadia refuses, but when Saeed's mother is killed by stray gunfire, she agrees to move in with him and his father.[28] Militant tensions continue brewing and surveillance on everyone in the country is enforced to ensure that the strict rules imposed are being followed. The couple begins to hear rumours of others fleeing to other countries, but they don't believe them at first. As public executions begin, they start searching for a way to escape.

[26] Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2017), pp. 21-22.
[27] Hamid, pp. 22-25.
[28] Hamid, pp. 57-75.

They find a way out to Mykonos, Greece, but Saeed's father stays behind. Thus begins their life story as refugees.[29]

The Regenerations of Nadia

Nadia does not have many familial regenerations due to her estrangement from her biological family, but she does have a brief, respectful relationship with her father-in-law and cares for him. She gives up her independence for safety reasons in her war-ridden country and becomes Saeed's wife and therefore a daughter-in-law, the only two significant family identities she has.

Her non-familial regenerations are much richer and more defining of her migrant makeup. She leaves her country and ends up in a tent city in Mykonos as a displaced person.[30] Eventually, Nadia befriends a local girl who helps Saeed and Nadia make their way to a luxury home in London that they share with other refugees. Unfortunately, as more refugees make their way into the city, tensions between London locals and the migrants rise. Tension between Nadia and Saeed also begins to rise as Nadia looks toward the future and Saeed finds comfort in finding people that match his past. When Saeed approaches Nadia about shared housing, the rift begins to take shape. Nadia asks, 'Why would we want to move?' and insists on growing anew rather than looking for what is familiar.[31]

This exchange is understandable; readers know about Nadia's difficult past. Her family does not accept her for who she truly is. Her country made her environment unsafe and uninhabitable. It is easy to see why she feels this way and feels spurned when Saeed wants to bring her back into the things that he finds comfort in. These are the exact things that she wants to escape

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[29] As defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention, a 'refugee' is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. Geneva Convention, 1951; Hamid, pp. 104-106.

[30] 'Displaced persons' are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, either across an international border or within a state, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters. International Organization For Migration, 2019; Hamid, p. 106.

[31] Hamid, pp. 152-153.

from. This is Nadia's first regeneration into a life without Saeed where she is once again independent and free to do as she pleases. She aspires to have her freedoms but without being tied to Saeed and without having to remember the country that suppressed her.

Nadia continues to be the decision-maker for the couple and grows more into her headstrong and confident ways. She and Saeed stay to help build homes in Halo London, a futuristic section of London that is overtaken by refugees, for the promise of a home and land. Just as they get on the list, she convinces Saeed that they should take their chances in the United States and they find themselves in California, near the San Francisco area. Her reasoning is that they can do better. She sees something in herself and Saeed that is deserving of a better life, so they migrate once again. This creates Nadia's regeneration as a risk-taker. After all the migrating they have done already, she feels it is worthwhile to try again.[32]

This move proves to be the fateful end of their relationship. Nadia is employed at a food co-op and leaves Saeed to live in an empty room there. She begins a relationship with a cook, another woman working and living in the cooperative, revealing to readers that she is bisexual. This is suggested earlier with the girl from Mykonos, but it is never made apparent until nearly the end of the book.[33] From the reader's perspective, this is another regeneration. It takes great courage for Nadia to live life with a same-sex partner, something that would not have been possible in her native country. Nadia finally finds her happiness and wholeness. She and Saeed naturally drift apart, meeting up again in their home country fifty years later to talk about the stars in the sky.

Comparative Analysis

There are many regenerations that women go through in a lifetime: Daughter, Sister, Mother, Aunt, Grandmother, and so on. These regenerations are arguably normal and are even expected identity markers for women, just as Son, Brother, Father, Uncle, and Grandfather are for men. Unfortunately for many women, we are aware that our place in the world still

[32] Hamid, pp. 188-189.
[33] Hamid, pp. 216-219.

needs improvement. We live in a world where there is a 'glass ceiling',[34] pregnancy discrimination,[35] and an expectation to be the primary caregivers in our families.[36] Imagine experiencing all of that while being a woman of colour, a woman who does not speak the language of the country she inhabits, a woman who wears different fashion than those around her. Even if she is a white woman, from the moment she speaks and someone else hears her accent, there is the immediate mark of 'you are not from around here. You are an outsider.' Fortunately, literature in the last decade has put a spotlight on the trials of migration, particularly immigrating women, as evidenced in the texts written about in this article.

When we look at all three women — Ifemelu, Sunja, and Nadia — there may not be much with which to compare them. They all reside in different countries, have different migration experiences, and even live in different timelines. Ifemelu and Nadia do not have the strong family ties to their migration journey that Sunja has. There are still plenty of points of comparison between the women though.

First, all three women relocate to another country because of a male romantic partner in their life. Ifemelu relocates to the United States, which is Obinze's dream. Sunja must join Isak on his journey to Japan because her only other choice is to stay behind and be shamed for being an unwed mother. Nadia and Saeed migrate to Greece together. Although their migration is a necessity due to war, the reasoning gains new meaning because Nadia's father-in-law makes her promise not to leave Saeed until they are settled. That is a promise she keeps. She feels compelled to be tied to Saeed.

Second, all three women work. For Ifemelu and Sunja, it is a financial necessity. The same can be assumed for Nadia, but her work is highlighted as more of an emotional necessity to avoid tension with Saeed. This is a direct disagreement with harmful stereotypes of immigrants throughout the world.

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[34] According to Merriam-Webster, the glass ceiling is defined as an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions (2021).

[35] American Civil Liberties Union (2021), https://www.aclu.org/issues/womens-rights.

[36] Sharma, N., Chakrabarti, S., & Grover, S. (2016). Gender differences in caregiving among family - caregivers of people with mental illnesses. *World journal of psychiatry*, *6*(1), 7–17. https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v6.i1.7.

Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2018) state two stereotypes.[37] The first is that immigrants are to blame for higher crime rates, a belief that initiated former president Donald Trump to halt the United States' refugee program and put a 'Muslim ban' in place to disallow immigration from some Middle Eastern countries. This is a sentiment echoed in parts of Europe following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels on November 13, 2014, that left 130 dead and injured hundreds, as well as a growth in refugee numbers (Tayler, 2016).[38] The second stereotype is that immigrants are an economic burden. They are seen as receiving free benefits and welfare from the countries they migrate to and not contributing to society. These three novels prove those stereotypes as a myth and portray a more realistic account of the lives of people who come to another country to better themselves. They do this as honestly as possible. There is a moment where Ifemelu considers using someone else's social security card to secure work for herself, but it is out of desperation and fear of eviction or losing her place at university. Ifemelu's job search alone proves that she wants to put in the work to pay her bills and earn her keep in the United States. Sunja chooses to go against Yoseb's demands and strike out on her own to make money for the family. Nadia throws herself into work to avoid Saeed, but her hardworking nature is still proven when they relocate to California and drift apart. None of these women fit the hurtful labels often attached to immigrants in twenty-first century U.S. society.

Finally, all three women are risk-takers. Ifemelu leaves for Philadelphia alone despite not being accompanied by Obinze. She could have returned home at any time, but she chooses to stay and create a successful life as a blogger for over a decade. Sunja is motivated by shame, but still takes the chance on marrying Isak even though he is in poor health and she knows she could be widowed at any moment. The decision to marry him secures a name for her baby and the possibility of prosperity in Osaka. That does not happen the way she envisioned, but her sacrifices and blatant defiance of her brother-in-law to open a kimchi stand and later work in a restaurant are admirable. Nadia takes risks with her life several times by networking and finding the

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[37] Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, 'Bias, Stereotypes, and Our Views of Immigrants.' *Sudikoff Institute Public Forum.* https://sudikoff.gseis.ucla.edu/bias-stereotypes-and-our-views-of-immigrants/.

[38] Jack Taylor, 'Language, Race, and Identity in Adichie's "Americanah" and Bulowayo's "We Need New Names."' *Research in African Literatures,* 50 (2), (2019), 72-76.

girl in Mykonos to get the couple to London. Then she stands her ground to leave her native culture and country behind and focus on the future. Following that, she convinces Saeed to give up their chance of a secure home to go to California and try to better themselves again.

All three women take on the harsh reality of what migrating means for themselves and their families. The most important part of all three of these women is that their stories would be non-existent without them. Obinze would still have never made it to America and he would never have felt the love and passion that he felt with Ifemelu. Without Sunja, her parents would have been destined to never have a child, as their other children died shortly after childbirth, if they even made it to birth at all. Without Sunja to pull the threads of the lives of the Baek family, Hansu would have never continually gotten them out of trouble and they may have died long before their legacy could be sealed. Without Nadia, Saeed may have stayed and died with his father. If he did leave, he would have remained in his conservative ways and found a home similar to the one he left behind. He would not have been challenged to grow, change, and travel to better possibilities. Nadia did not want them to have a comfortable life. She wanted them to have the best life. These women are necessary to the lives of the people they touch.

Concluding Thoughts

To bring this paper to a close, I would like to draw attention to the aforementioned article from Francesco Castelli (2018) that asks the question: Why do people move? That is to say, why do people migrate? In my comparison of the three novels, I came to many of the same conclusions as Jack Taylor (2019). Beginning with Ifemelu, she was not forced to migrate. She could have attended university in Nigeria, but with the continuous professor strikes, she would not have a clear graduation date. Therefore, her reasoning to relocate to the United States would be due to a micro-factor specifically relating to education, as she had hoped to attend school with Obinze and America was his dream.

Sunja's story is a bit trickier as the earlier time period could change the intensity of which factor best suits her. To follow Castelli's definitions, Sunja relocates because of a micro-factor because this helps her marital status and overall well-being. Had she not left Korea with Isak, she would have later

been forced to move during World War II, meaning that she would fall under the macro-factor category.

Nadia falls under the macro-factor category. She lives in an oppressive country under extreme religious rule. With people all around her being killed due to war, her country was too hostile to remain in and would have shortened her life if she had not migrated to Greece.

Stories of migration are continuing to be written and shed light on what it means to be an immigrant, deal with race issues, and start over in a foreign land. It is my hope that this article has aided in helping readers envision the lives of migrants and the struggles they go through. Reading about immigration helps us be sympathetic and empathetic to those going through similar situations in our real world. I want to share these stories and I want readers to have an understanding that our lives may be comfortable, but the lives of others are not. If you migrate in your lifetime (as I have) I hope you are welcomed with kindness. And should you meet migrants, hopefully you will reflect on Ifemelu, Sunja, and Nadia, and welcome them as people possibly undergoing regeneration.

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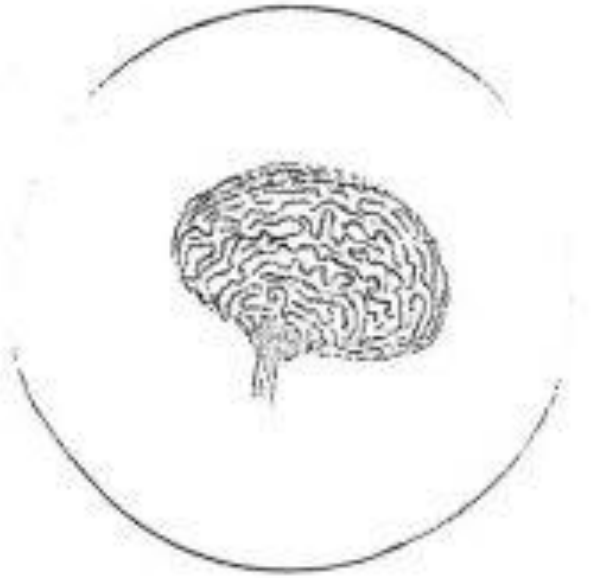

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