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Literature as a Political Tool: Whig Efforts to Prevent the Election of Martin Van Buren

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Abstract
Starting with Andrew Jackson, presidential candidates in the United States used campaign biographies as useful political tools, and since 1824 no presidential election year has passed without a campaign biography. Martin Van Buren, President Jackson's successor in the White House, became a target of a vicious campaign intended to prevent his election. His Whig opponents used a number of literary genres to slander him, including a mock campaign biography and a novel. The article focuses on the portrayal of Martin Van Buren in *The Life of Martin Van Buren*, allegedly written by Davy Crockett in 1835, and a novel named *The Partisan Leader; A Tale of the Future*, written by Nathaniel Beverley Tucker in 1836. Though being of different genres, these curious and obscure works have certain things in common - they were written under pseudonyms, their main goal was to prevent the election of Martin Van Buren and both of them failed in their goal.

Keywords
Martin Van Buren, campaign biography, Whigs, Davy Crockett, Beverley Tucker

Introduction

In the 1830s, the United States was still a young nation. The political crisis and the bloody Civil War were 30 years away and the country was experiencing an economic boom, urban growth and transportation revolution. It was in this period when the so-called Second Party System emerged, in which two parties, the Democrats and the Whigs, were engaged in a fierce struggle for political influence. For the first time in American history, the parties courted their voters on a large scale, mobilizing different types of political tools. In my article, I want to focus on the Whig efforts to prevent the election of Democratic candidate Martin Van Buren during the presidential election of 1836. Besides political cartoons and articles in the press, Van Buren's opponents turned to other genres to slander the presidential candidate. A mock campaign biography called *The Life of Martin Van Buren*, allegedly written by a frontiersman, bear hunter and U.S. congressman David Crockett, was published in 1835 and a year later, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker wrote a novel titled *The Partisan Leader.* Their only aim was to smear as much dirt as possible on their political enemy and it is these two obscure works that I want to discuss in my paper. Neither of them can be considered a great literature, but they deserve scholarly attention as historical and cultural artifacts from one particular era of the history of the antebellum United States.

Campaign biographies are a peculiarly American genre. They are usually printed about the time of presidential election, with a chief purpose of getting a candidate elected. They usually tell the story of a stubborn, determined individual born into simple conditions (preferably a log cabin) working his way up to the presidency through hard work and perseverance (Lepore). Biographies explain who the candidates are, what they believe in and what they would do if they were elected. For decades, they have been an important part of every presidential election in the United States and most of them have fallen to obscurity with the election that spawned them (Steel).

The genre dates back to the presidential election of 1824 when General Andrew Jackson, the hero of the War of 1812, stood against John Quincy Adams. Previous presidential candidates, the Founding

Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison or James Monroe considered campaigning to be beneath their dignity and campaign biographies useless. Already in 1817, General Jackson authorized John Eaton, his friend from Tennessee, to write an account of his career in the War of 1812. In 1824, just before the election, Eaton revised this account and published it as *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, thus becoming the founder of the genre. The purpose of the biography was purely political, Jackson hoped that it would help him to win the election and therefore, from a fairly accurate account of the general's military career, it was changed into an "utterly uncritical campaign biography of little merit" (Owsley v) and set the trend for virtually all campaign biographies of presidential candidates in the following 150 years. Andrew Jackson lost the election but he was elected president in 1828. Seven years later, his successor, Martin Van Buren, the subject of my paper, had his own campaign biography named *The Life and Political Opinions of Martin Van Buren, Vice President of the United States* written by Professor William M. Holland.

During the 1850s some of the best-known 19th century American authors became involved in writing campaign biographies. In 1852, at the height of his literary career, Nathaniel Hawthorne volunteered to write a biography of his college friend Franklin Pierce, a Democratic nominee. His *The Life of Franklin Pierce* helped Pierce to win the election and Hawthorne was awarded a position of U.S. Consul in Liverpool, though one review called it "a venal homage to ambitious mediocrity" (Lundberg). Nicknamed "the hero of many a well-fought bottle", Pierce is generally ranked as one of the worst presidents the country ever had. Another well-known author who wrote a campaign biography was William Dean Howells, the future "Dean of American letters". In 1860, at the age of 23, he authored a biography of Abraham Lincoln which won him a consulship in Venice, where he spent the entire Civil War (Pecina, *The Representation* 73).

In the past few decades, campaign biographies have been gradually disappearing from American political milieu. With the advance of the internet, voters no longer need to rely on printed books to get their share of candidates' past and political program. Already in 1984 an article called "The Vanishing Campaign Biography" published in the *New York Times* complained that "campaign biographies seem to have fallen on hard times" and "few candidates are writing books anymore, nor are their admirers writing books about them" (Steel). One of the last campaign biographies appeared in 2008, shortly before Sarah Palin, Alaska's Republican governor, was nominated for a Vice-President. Called *Sarah: How a Hockey Mom Turned Alaska's Political Establishment Upside Down* and written by Kaley Johnson, it became a bestseller. Before the most recent presidential election both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton published books that were handed out to their supporters during their campaigns, but neither *Great Again: How to Fix Our Crippled America* by Donald J. Trump nor *Strong Together: A Blueprint for America's Future* by Hillary Clinton can be considered proper campaign biographies.

As to the subject of my paper, Martin Van Buren was a New York politician, lawyer, U.S. senator and the eight President of the United States. He was born in Kinderhook, a small Dutch town near Albany, New York, in the same Dutch region that inspired Washington Irving as a setting for his famous stories, such as "Rip van Winkle" or "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow". He was a son of a tavern-keeper and his only schooling was a village academy, which was a major difference between him and other political elites of the 1820s and 1830s. During his political career, he was a bit insecure about his middle-class origin and a lack of formal education (Cole 14). He was admitted to the bar in 1803 and became a skilful lawyer. Donald Cole claims that Van Buren was "one of the most competent lawyers to reach the White House" (25). Van Buren's career of a politician began at the age of twenty nine, when in 1812 he was elected as a member of New York State Senate. Over the next two decades Van Buren's rise to the U.S. Senate and his political skills, flexibility and pragmatic approach, earned him a nickname "the Magician." He almost single-handedly rebuilt the national Democratic Party and supported Andrew Jackson during the 1828 election, which earned him the position of the Secretary of State in Jackson's first administration.

During Jackson's second term, Van Buren served as the vice-president. Virtually all his political enemies labeled him as Jackson's heir-apparent. Their ranks included Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, the three giants of antebellum politics, but also Congressman David Crockett from Tennessee (Kincade 49). Andrew Jackson's approach towards states' rights, Indian removal and Federal

Bank angered many, and most of his opponents were drawn into newly-created Whig Party. According to Cole, it was more of an anti-Jacksonian federation than a unified party, but it posed a serious obstacle to Van Buren's election as a president in 1836 (259). As the election year neared, the attacks on Van Buren became so frequent that Senator Benton from Missouri wrote: "No public man, since the days of Mr. Jefferson, has been pursued with more bitterness than Mr. Van Buren, none, not excepting to Mr. Jefferson himself, has ever had to withstand the combined assaults of so many, and such formidable powers" (Kincade 53). Both *The Life of Martin Van Buren* and *The Partisan Leader* were a part of these "combined assaults."

In 1835, a mock biography named *The Life of Martin Van Buren, Heir Apparent to the "Government" and the Appointed Successor of General Andrew Jackson Containing Every Authentic Particular by which his Extraordinary Character has been Formed with a Concise History of the Events that Have Occasioned His Unparalleled Elevation; Together with a Review of his Policy as a Statesman* and allegedly written by David Crockett was published in Philadelphia. The personality of its alleged author is as important as the fact that it is probably the only mock campaign biography ever published in the country, since David Crockett is one of the most legendary figures of American history. Thanks to his almost mythical status, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish legend from fact. Colonel Crockett was a backwoodsman and hunter from Tennessee and a U.S. congressman who perished at the Alamo in 1836. The heroic death at the Alamo elevated his already legendary status to truly gigantic proportions and Crockett eventually became a protagonist of countless songs, plays and tall-tales published in the so-called Crockett Almanacs, the longest running series of comic almanacs in the antebellum era.

As far as his political career is concerned, he won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1827 and was re-elected in 1829 and 1833. He originally sided with his fellow Tennessean Andrew Jackson, but in 1829 he split with him and the Tennessee delegation on variety of issues, including the infamous Indian Removal Bill (Lofaro XX). Throughout his career, he carefully crafted an image of honest, unschooled backwoodsman and bear hunter with a common sense, a self-made man opposed to the rich, educated politicians from the East. In the early 1830s, Crockett was a celebrity and by this time legends started circulating about him. In 1834, partly designed to dispel the growing myths circulating about him and partly as a campaign autobiography, Crockett published *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee,* which today remains the most accurate source of information about him and has been in print ever since. Hutton claims that Crockett was one of the first Americans to make a living off his celebrity status, but, at the same time, he was very ineffective as a politician, too honest and too independent, unable to compromise (xxi). During his three terms in Congress, he failed to have one single piece of legislation passed.

However, the newly formed Whig party saw a great opportunity to include such a celebrity within their ranks. Though their political beliefs representing the interests of planters and merchants had little to do with Crockett philosophy, he came to believe that they were running him for president in 1836. The Whigs began "vigorously and shamelessly exploiting Crockett's fame" (Hauck 10-11) and in 1835, two works ghost-written by Whig party hacks but naming Crockett as an author were published. One was the previously mentioned mock biography of Martin Van Buren, the other an account of his tour of Eastern cities called *An Account of Colonel Crockett's Tour to the North and Down East*. But despite all the publicity Crockett was receiving, the Whigs found him uncontrollable and they began to distance themselves from him. In August 1835, Crockett's political career was over.

The Life of Martin Van Buren has been variously described as "scurrilous" (Cole 264), "satirical" (Hauck 11), or "bitter" (Hutton xxv). The most probable author of the biography was a Whig Congressman from Georgia named Augustin Smith Clayton (Hauck 19). By using Crockett's well-known name, Van Buren's Whig enemies wanted to exploit the backwoodsman's fame and add credibility to the biography. However, large parts of this "biography" do not concern Van Buren's life at all and consist mostly of a Whig harangue about the politics of Jacksonian Democrats.

The biography is written in the first person, as if Crockett really wrote it himself and the narrator often compares Van Buren's past with Crockett's own with sentences like "we both came from nothing" (24), "I, too, have been nominated for president" (25), "he is only three years older than I am" (25). The biography's Crockett even finds parallels between his own upbringing and Van Buren's: "Mr. Van

Buren's parents were humble, plain and not much troubled with book knowledge; and so were mine . . . He has become a great man without any good reason for it and so did I. He has been nominated for president without the least pretensions; and so have I" (27). But here the parallels end and the image of Van Buren the biography presents is not pleasing for the presidential candidate at all. It is not surprising that it has earned monikers like satirical or bitter since it paints Van Buren in the worst light possible. It mocks his appearance ("his face is a good deal shriveled, and he looks sorry, not for anything he has gained, but what he may lose"[26]), education ("at six years old, he could actually tell when his book was wrong and upwards"[29]) and character ("Jackson is open, bold, warm-hearted, confiding and passionate to a fault. Van Buren is secret, sly, selfish, cold, calculating, distrustful, treacherous" [13]). Image of Van Buren as a sly fox was very popular among his political enemies during the campaign.

Interestingly, for real-life Martin Van Buren appearance played an important role. Since his young age, he loved fancy dress, with his ties, vests and coats always in matching colors. This is how he was described in 1828:

> His complexion was a bright blond and he dressed accordingly. On this occasion, he wore an elegant snuff-colored broadcloth coat, with velvet collar to match; his cravat was orange tinted silk with modest lace tips; his vest was of pearl hue; his trousers were white duck; his silk hose corresponded to his vest, his shoes were Morocco; his fitting gloves were yellow kid; his hat, a long-furred beaver, with broad brim, was of Quaker color. (Cole 172-3)

Simply put, Van Buren dressed like a dandy. Though when he was running for a president he was much older and he began to dress more formally, his image of a dandy was well-known around the nation's capital. His Whig opponents were well aware of that and used it against him. *The Life of Martin Van Buren* presents what Cole calls "a devastating caricature" (265): "When he enters the senate-chamber in the morning, he struts and swaggers like a crow in a gutter. He is laced up in corsets such as women in a town wear, and, if possible, tighter than the best of them. It would be difficult to say, from his personal appearance, whether he was man or woman, but for his large red and grey whiskers" (Crockett 80-81). Cole asserts that in antebellum America where masculinity was glorified and women were assigned domestic roles, this feminine image hurt (265).

Starting with opening sentences, the author tries to convince his readers that Van Buren is totally incompetent and not entitled to be the nation's president. He claims that Van Buren achieved his position in the government only through luck and intrigue and that President Jackson personally groomed him to be his successor. This suggestion is not entirely wrong since, according to Kincade, for most of the Americans Van Buren, though less known than the war hero Jackson, was not a problem, but they objected to President Jackson being personally involved in choosing his successor (51). The author concludes the biography with a belief that he presented a sufficient amount of useful information about Van Buren, but he is probably aware of its poor quality when he claims that "there are many persons who will call my book perfect trash; will wonder how people of sense can read such nonsense" (Crockett 206).

The Partisan Leader, the second discussed work of my paper, is not a campaign biography, but a novel. However, it fits the scope of my article since it had the same purpose as *The Life of Martin Van Buren*. Besides being an anti-Van Buren work, there are other parallels with the mock biography – it is similarly obscure and it was not published under the author's real name. *The Partisan Leader* was written by Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, a Virginia judge and law professor at the College of William and Mary. Labelled "Virginia fire-eater" (Parrington 35), he was one of the most zealous defenders of the South and the doctrine of states' rights during the antebellum era. He believed that during Jackson's two terms in office, the federal government had assumed despotic powers and intended to destroy the South politically and economically (Wrobel 327). Tucker used the novel with Van Buren as an arch-villain to warn the readers that his election would so threaten the rights of southern states that they would eventually secede (Cole 266).

The Partisan Leader was "secretly" published in late 1836 by Duff Green, an editor of the *United States Telegraph* and a supporter of John C. Calhoun and states' rights. The title page of the novel is

wholly fictitious. It claims that the author is Edward William Sidney and the publication year is 1856, which was a part of the gimmick suggested by the novel's subtitle *A Tale of the Future.* (Brugger 122) The novel was described by Vernon Parrington as "a romantically extravagant book, quite the absurdest in the library of the old South" (37). Since Tucker was neither Hawthorne nor Melville and lacked both originality and talent, it is not a well-written novel. He took inspiration from both James Fenimore Cooper and Walter Scott. His characters are flat, the plot is chaotic and the novel remains curiously unfinished since Tucker never wrote the intended sequel (Pecina, "Nathaniel Beverely Tucker" 65).

It is set in the future, in 1849. Martin Van Buren is the president of the country and he is seeking re-election for a fourth time. Because of his despotic rule, Southern states seceded and formed a Confederacy. Virginia is still under the control of Van Buren's forces, but there are guerrilla bands waging a partisan war against them. The name of the novel refers to Douglas Trevor, one of the main protagonists who commands these bands against Van Buren's corrupt government. However, it might also refer to Van Buren himself, who during the 1820s formed the national Democratic Party and became its de facto leader.

Van Buren is the arch-villain of the novel. He is a master of intrigue, rules the country as a dictator and has turned the White House to a palace where he occupies "a presidential throne" (Tucker 40). Interestingly, when describing Van Buren's appearance, Tucker plays on the same "dandy" theme as the mock biography: "Though far advanced in life, he was tastily even daintily dressed, his whole costume being exactly adapted to a diminutive and dapper person, a fair complexion, a light and brilliant eye, and a head which might have formed a study for the phrenologist" (133). Again, Van Buren is portrayed as an effeminate fop. As mentioned before, Tucker never concluded the narrative and the present-day importance of the novel lies in the fact that he was the first author in the country who predicted a military conflict between the North and the South.

Conclusion

There is no evidence that the authors of the two discussed works coordinated their literary attempts to prevent Van Buren's election. While Tucker was a legal scholar and self-proclaimed champion of the South acting on his own, the mock autobiography was written by Whig party hacks. But both the biography and the novel were a part of the above mentioned "combined assaults" from all sides of anti-Jacksonian political spectrum and both of them failed in their goal. *The Partisan Leader* was published too late to influence the election and people probably did not believe that it was the real David Crockett who wrote *The Life of Martin Van Buren*. In 1836 presidential election, Van Buren carried fifteen states and won 170 electoral votes which was enough to defeat his Whig opponents. However, these two works of different genres remain very unique attempts of using literature as a political tool, probably unparalleled in the history of American presidential elections.

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Gender, the Nigerian Civil War and Hard Choices: Nihilism or Absurdism (?) in Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty*

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Abstract

This paper entitled "Gender, the Nigerian Civil War and Hard Choices: Nihilism or Absurdism(?) in Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty"* evinces an evaluative excursion into the author's delineation of gender in war and its concomitants regarding actions, inactions, and the mindset of the actors and the acted-upon (victims) of the fratricidal Nigerian conflict within a designated theatre. We demonstrated that the quantum impact of the war engages some near-totally nihilistic imperatives of the war. Nevertheless, we surmised, at the final count, that the war results in high-wire tension rather than erode the indices for hope regarding the war victims and victimizers alike; and by dangerous extension, the Nigerian nation. Although we conceded the presence of dystopia which is life-threatening and socially destabilizing, our calculation in the final analysis, is that the tensions generated against both genders in the war are essentially absurdist, not nihilist. In this vein of analysis, we concluded that Okpewho's delineation retains deliberately enough rays for reconstructive, rehabilitative, regenerative and cohesive engagements that will pave the way for societal survival and continuity.

Keywords

war, victims, gender, humanity, nihilism, Nigeria

Introduction: Text as Context

Chidi Amuta in his article "History of the Dialectics of Violence in African Literature" has posited that the imperatives of history engage the dialectics of violence in African literature. This is true not on the ground that African imagination is innately violent or prone to the discourse of violence (Amuta 132). On the contrary, Amuta demonstrates that African Literature "has consistently appropriated the violence which is integral to its historical determination," and has gone ahead to reproduce this violence imaginatively, giving it aesthetic appeal (132). Further to this, Africans objectify the concept of violence in their literature so as to understand, appraise, recycle, most importantly decry the various epochs of violence in African history. Amuta traces the episodes of this violence from slavery to colonialism, to what Emmanuel Obiechina calls "post independence disillusionment," (Obiechina 121) down to the internecine civil wars that dot post-independence African space; and to military dictatorships. Amuta scores the point that Soyinka's depiction of violence in *Madmen and Specialists* is the "most excruciating objectification of violence as a constituent of Nigerian history", with the likes of *The Last Duty* representing variations in the cycle of this great metaphor (153).

Okpewho like several other African creative writers has responded to Soyinka's clarion call to shift from cultural nationalism, take a break from the past and focus attention rather on those forces that "threaten the disintegration of the African society" (Palmer 240). Okpewho's is a "last duty" in an Urukpe at war where scheming for sex, vindictiveness, and personal greed thrive with the throbs of uncanny appetite among men and women. To Okpewho, Nigeria's Mid-West was the beautiful bride sought after by the belligerents. Hence, the fictional mid-western Urukpe is first "liberated" (occupied) by Simbian forces and later by Igabo. Both sides woo Urukpe in turn and try to win her favour during each occupation. Urukpe's dilemma inheres in the fact that "it is a border town harbouring two tribes and perhaps two sympathies" (Okpewho 95).

So the author seeks to show that the Mid-West was like the proverbial farmland ripe with palm fruits where two aliens scramble for possession and do each other great harm. However, in the scuffle the people are perpetually wary of their movements lest they should fall foul of the emergency regulations. Human rights abuse and witch-hunting are routine in the war. Innocent people are harassed, hounded into jail on mere suspicion either as enemy collaborators (the case of Mukoro) or security risks (Agbeyegbe for a count). Soldiers easily patronize civilian informants without cross-checking facts to sift errors. Thus, Major Akuya Bello easily hounds Oshevire into jail on trumped up charges as enemy collaborator and sympathizer. Okpewho equally underscores the criminal complicity of several civilians whose motive is selfish and vindictive in the perpetration of injustice against the innocent consequent upon the state of war.

The War, Its Saints, Idiots and the Helpless

Toje Onovwakpo and Omonigho Rukeme represent this crop of dark-minded persons who capitalize on the soldiers' eagerness to curry favour and maintain security to give false information and false witness against a victim. It is an indictment of the intellectual as well as administrative capacity of soldiers who "officer" the war and administer the people, as represented by the illogic of Akuya Bello. Okpewho's craft in this regard is equally a disavowal of war, a sick polity where innocents suffer and criminals continue to scheme.

The Simbians are obviously a protest force. They are not on ground and do not deploy good military equipment in their incursion in Urukpe. They merely engage in guerrilla attacks, which is subtle, roguish and mainly intended to discomfit Igabo. This is the tactic of the weaker adversary. Pockets of gunshots are therefore heard now and again in the streets of Urukpe and these signify guerrilla insurgency and Igabo's counter insurgency moves. Had the Simbian rebels of Okpewho's imagination the craft and mien of the Boko Haram degenerates of today, or a modicum of the criminal ferocity of the Syrian ISIS rebels, the war would be a different ball-game.

There are air-raids too. Simbians deploy their "moths", which have "to fly so low, to achieve anything like a hit" (Okpewho 94). In one of their combined air-raids and guerrilla operations, a record number of 207 people are killed including 72 civilians. Okpewho thus underscores the state of chaos, fear and foreboding that grip the Mid-west of the civil war years. The town is equally, hostile to Aku, a Simbian married to Mukoro Oshevire. This hostility underscores by extension the insecurity suffered by Igbos trapped in parts of Nigeria, in this case the Mid-west, during the civil war. It is Aku's sense of insecurity that first of all debars her from resisting Toje's initial advances. Aku and her husband are victims of the cross current of a war they did not initiate.

Oshevire is in jail on trumped-up charge thereby exposing his wife to the whims and caprices of the times, symbolized by Toje. To this extent, Okpewho shows that war does not know the innocent. This is why the innocents of the Daesh or ISIS expansionism and religious war suffer through no fault of theirs. Again, the starving victims of the intractable Syrian war are mainly those who have no say in the matter. These are integral to the fact of the psychological torture suffered by victims of the Korean war during which close relations were separated from one another. War only respects the strong and sometimes the lucky. Oshevire and his family suffer the greatest ravages of the war. This is made more annoying by the fact that it is the sins of others that are visited on the innocent. But this is to be expected. For Okpewho seeks to show that war is a diseased state and activities that surround it are diseased too.

In the novel, the war is not as pictorial, as ferocious, and as involving as we find it in, say, Aniebo's *Anonymity of Sacrifice* or Nwagboso's *The Road to Damnation* or Iroh's *Toads of War*. This is deliberate. Okpewho's intention, as observed by Onyemaechi Udumukwu ("Federal Voices"), is to take us behind the scene of war and place us in a vantage position to appraise "how people have used the war as a cover in order to execute their own selfish war" (108). Toje Onovwapo is emblematic of the cult of greed, opportunism and war profiteering. He is a hawk who does not wish the war to end. His greed, pretence and criminal scheming betray Okpewho's implicit cynicism against self-important members of the upper strata of society mainly responsible for the fratricidal war. It is no wonder that Toje should

urge Oshevire's incarceration and turn round to "protect" Oshevire's wife! Toje is a villain. He equates his personal survival, safety, and happiness with the survival of Urukpe in totality: "If therefore anything happens to me that might detract from the position in which we are held, no sacrifice should be too great from anybody in this town to ensure that we keep our place, that we maintain our position. Every citizen has to pay . . . Great names are rare, and must not be wasted" (Okpewho 5).

To this extent, Okpewho clinically satirizes the hubristic disposition of self-important middle and upper strata of the society whose arrogance and sense of self-worth becloud their reasoning and are only matched by their intellectual emptiness. It is integral to the fact that the ego of uppish villains often leads to skirmishes which enable the social dislocation that gives rise to lawlessness which in turn necessitates the suffering of the weak. Several schools have made the assertion that the Nigerian Civil War was fought to massage the ego of the two war lords: Ojukwu and Gowon who could not agree on points of who was superior to the other. Toje seizes the war as a chance to not only scheme Oshevire out of the rubber business but more annoyingly have him collared on trumped-up charges. His reason is that

> Before long, Oshevire was already attracting labourers away from me because he paid better . . . not much later the government came up with all that nonsense about unadulterated latex and in no time the buying agents began to turn their focus away from me . . . and Oshevire began to enjoy increasing attention. Oshevire began to grow bigger and bigger, and even throw his weight about. (Okpewho 122)

Thus, Toje pays 150 pounds to Omonigho Rukeme to bear false witness against the embattled detainee. Rukeme and Toje are representatives of the dark and murky waters of competitive economy made more palpable by a state of war which is quite partial in its conviction or intimidation of the citizenry. Okpewho shows that the war time Nigerian society is sickened by greed and criminal acquisition. Only scheming criminals survive easily in that war. As Udumukwu observes,

> When we place the activities of Toje in a broader perspective – the war, the struggle for Nigerian unity - we will be shocked . . . Okpewho confronts us with the startling fact that it is not the actual battle in the war front that will be used to keep the nation one. There is also the need to affect the consciousness of individuals and groups in the nation who are represented here by Toje (108).

Aku is a survival case that borders on the "acted upon", the "enjoyed", the victim whose hourly life depends on the largesse of her worst enemy. This spells out the moral predicament of the helpless woman in the war. Aku is a reminder on Chinua Achebe's war-time reaction to one of Nigeria's propaganda. In his article "In Reply to Margery Perham", Achebe wondered whether Dame Margery was able to ask "what happened to their men folk," when in her tour of Lagos, she "inspected a large structure near the road (and) found it full of 'Ibo' women complete with beds cooking for their reasonably healthy children" (*Morning Yet* 86). These women found near the road cooking for their children are obviously in Aku's situation. They were provided bed and board convenient enough for daily or nightly visits by those who killed or collared their husbands. Aku represents the defoliation of the polity which survival is tied to the whims and caprices of the greedy and the conscienceless. Like the disturbed and traduced polity, she does not lift a finger but wallows in her lot, in self-pity guided by a cautionary survival instinct, which does not earn her any lasting but pyrrhic survival.

Aku is cast in the mould of Rose Adaure Njoku in her autobiographical war memoir: *Withstand the Storm* (1986). Both the historical Njoku and the fictive Aku suffer a similar fate as their husbands are jailed on charges of sabotage; being treated as pariahs by the rustics of society, suffering insecurity emanating from communal suspicion and hatred. But whereas Njoku rises to the occasion and manages to withstand the storm without losing her dignity, the fictional Aku merely resigns to fate and quickly submits to the chance for survival, that of her defoliation and the emasculation of her matrimonial home. Aku is not even able for once to visit her incarcerated husband at Iddu. The man ironically draws

strength from the hoped-for fidelity of his wife for whom he is determined to survive his poor state and return; this would inevitably sharpen his nihilistic tempo when he returns to face the easiest reality of the situation.

Gender, War and Tension: Nihilist or Absurdist?

Aku's disposition is Okpewho's fulfilment of the Freudian psycho-analysis paradigm of the unconscious even if Aku negates the "reality principle", viewed from the prism of the factual Rose Njoku. She could not apply the principle of "repression of desire". Her super-ego is called to question (see Selden and Widdowson 138, Lynn 15-16). Okpewho's goal is to ridicule a society that has gone hay-wire, where all or most of the actors are mad and vicious. After all, "a desire or a fear too powerful to be confronted directly can be disguised by the unconscious and expressed by the author or dreamer" (Lynn 15). Though Okpewho demonstrates deep psychological understanding in handling the "traumatic effects of war on human lives and minds as demonstrated in the married lives of Oshevire and Aku", as Obafemi observes (61) this researcher is inclined to the view that Aku herself like Toje is an anti-person (an anti-heroine). She merely is a vegetable; no self-asserting fire of the modern female. Okpewho paints Aku with the absurdist tint or tinge.

Let us examine Aku's reasoning on her "predicament": "what would I lose if I did? What wouldn't I lose if I didn't? . . . and so let discretion get the better of tired conscience" (Okpewho 68). But what she achieves by "succumbing to tired conscience", is the final destruction of the home Aku thinks that she is being careful to protect. And like Sisyphus, she ends up carrying her cyclic boulder, being left in the hands of soldiers who help her husband to self-destruction (see Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*). Okpewho would have done better to invest Aku with strength of character to stand out where immoral, greedy and profiteering men scheme to destroy society, the innocent, and themselves in the process. But then, that might have undermined Okpewho's vision to portray men and women conditioned by the ravages of war who throw morality to the winds; a view which yields us the surmise that war is a diseased state that infects man and woman without exception. It is equally a strong contention that Okpewho's delineation is more realistic than utopian.

Like in Amadi's Estrangement, Okpewho articulates the effect of war on the human psyche. The total effect of the war in *Last Duty* is traumatic and tragic. Okpewho tilts dangerously towards nihilism but swivels away with nuggets of hope through the death of Toje in addition to Major Ali's iron resolve to live on principles even if it will always discomfit him. On his perceived humane actions in Urukpe which seemingly caused his reposting, Ali quips: "if I had the same chance, if I was to hold this bloody post again, Allah, I'd make the same mistakes all over!" (Okpewho 243). This is in contradiction with Oshevire's disposition towards nihilism. Through Mukoro Oshevire, Okpewho demonstrates his advocacy for truth. Oshevire remains the voice of truth, conscience, morality and humanity in the work. Through Toje and Oshevire himself, we are confronted with the injustice that is meted out to the innocent in the war. Oshevire is wrongfully imprisoned and his traducers aim at double gain from his incarceration. He is charged with sabotage and collaboration with the enemy. Mukoro does not know his real traducers but Okpewho gives us that benefit of knowledge to sharpen our critical interest in the question of the wrong war.

Oshevire gives insight into his wonderment at the ostensible reason for his incarceration. Again, Oshevire wonders why his wife is treated with suspicion having demonstrated her solidarity with Igabo: "If my wife did not consider herself Simba enough then to want to run away from the town like all the others – if it did not matter at that time that she was a Simba, why should it matter now just because someone suddenly remembered that one inconsequential little soldier paid us a handful of visits?" (Okpewho 183).

Under cross-examination by the jury that he "helped a number of rebel soldiers escape from Urukpe at the entry of Federal soldiers", Oshevire explains: "I saved the life of one helpless little boy . . . And if I had the same opportunity, I'd gladly do it again" (my emphasis, Okpewho 191). This echoes Major Ali's position earlier mentioned, and describes a mind made towards what is correct and morally sound. Of course, we know that Mukoro is incarcerated not because of any crime. He was roped in. He must remain in detention as Okpewho's point of contact with our judgmental turn. Like Dr Kanu in

Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*, Oshevire is the innocent victim. Even the judge at Iddu admits that "You cannot silence the truth" (Okpewho 188).

Of Oshevire's position as a dialogic metaphor on the questions of conscience and justice, Chinyere Nwahunanya observes that this is a major thematic concern since it borders on those issues that strained human relationships and negated the goals of the war. He further points out that "although it provides us a 'Nigerian' picture of a chunk of war time history of Nigeria, it shows too that the pattern of power-profiteering, witch-hunting and the exploration (sic) of the weak by the strong that we see in the Biafran accounts took almost the same form in Nigeria" (Nwahunanya 32-3).

One is discomfited that Oshevire fails to survive to the last. His iron determination in prison gives way to a gradual degeneration consequent upon his psychological turn of mind. His inner rhythm is unable to match his outer rhythm. Nwachukwu has noted that "When there is a contradiction between the ego and the superego, between the individual and the society (or between one social strata (sic) or segment and another), the result is a searing asynchronism, leading to impatience and restlessness" (12).

Olu Obafemi is of the view that by thus portraying the character Oshevire, Okpewho tries to judge whether or not life is worth living in relation to what Camus calls "the fundamental question" (Obafemi 62). Oshevire and Aku are cast closely in the mould of Idemudia and Adisa in Iyayi's *Violence*. Both are victims of a diseased condition which they did not cause. But whereas Idemudia reaches an understanding with his wife Adisa, that they have a common enemy and resolve to fight it and forge ahead, Mukoro Oshevire is unable to rise to that lofty height. According to Nietzsche, nihilism is "the belief in valuelessness as a consequence of moral valuation" (11-12). Nietzsche claims that the state of nihilist tendencies is reached in the individual when "the highest values devaluate themselves" (12). Has Mukoro Oshevire reached that psychological state, a point of no return where he could no longer rise higher than his emotions? Mukoro Oshevire is not allowed to grow into a gigantic hero like Idemudia in *Violence*. He is a decadent hero operating at the level of withdrawal. Confronted with the disarray in his home caused by his long absence, he empties into hopelessness, burns his house and literally commits suicide.

Because Oshevire bottles up his "manly emotions", he is unable to achieve catharsis. He is unable to reconcile both his inner and outer rhythms. This betrays a confirmation of Pleck in "Prisoners of Manliness" that "The conventional expectations of what it means to be a man are difficult to live up to for all but a lucky few and lead to unnecessary self-depression on the rest when they do not measure up. Even for those who do, there is a price; they may be forced for example to inhibit the expression of many emotions" (130).

Oshevire becomes a demented case and is destroyed by the passion he could not express. Mukoro Oshevire should have wept! Like Idemudia manages to speak to Adisa (Violence 305-8) and even weep, Oshevire should have spoken with Aku, and possibly achieve a disembowelling, and save his home. Rather, he reminisces: "What else can a man do but that which his mind urges him to do and he is genuinely convinced he should do, whatever the consequences are? To do otherwise would be to betray his honest manhood. And I would be the last to allow myself to fall under the pressure of fear" (Okpewho 236).

This kind of stance is akin to Okonkwo's fear of being thought weak which leads him to kill Ikemefuna, in spite of Ogbuefi Ezeudu's advice to the contrary (Achebe 45-49). Thus, though Oshevire knows that "the dishonour brought on (his) household is unjust", he sticks to the fact that "the stain remains. The smear is there, clear in the air as a hangman's rope, the noose through which the head must pass" (Okpewho 237). Having made up his mind towards nihilism, he sets his house ablaze. Mukoro's turn makes him a commoner. Perhaps, commoners are incapable of rising to great occasions!

Okpewho lampoons the concept of witch doctors who administer the wrong remedies and also cannot cure themselves. These constitute part of the total problem. Emuakpor alias Godinheaven is symbolic of that dark portrait. Godinheaven tries to survive through a facetious self-effacement and denigrating eye service. Major Ali is not impressed by Emuakpor's quackery, just as his soldiers engage in clandestine visits to Emuakpor for "protection" behind their façade of braggadocio and pretended bravery. Emuakpor, interestingly is a good match to Toje Onovwakpo. A master crook who has

perfected the art of quackery, Emuakpor brow-beats Toje into submission and fraudulently obtains a lot of cash to cure him of his syphilis. In fact, Godinheaven actually administers defective poultice on his clients.

Therefore, despite Emuakpor`s boasts that "It was I who circumcised the tortoise; it was I who scaled the elephant`s rump to scoop the curative flea from his crotch," and this other "It was I who caused the mad dog to stray to damnation . . . ," we discover that he is not only fake to his clients (victims) but quite ironically to himself. He has boasted that his long practice and efficiency had ensured that "no one has had either the cause or the courage to question the efficacy of my medicines" (Okpewho 164). The fact that Godinheaven is destroyed by the same war against which he gives protection to his clients proves that men who lay claim to empty power would not be lions if people around them were not hinds, to paraphrase William Shakespeare. Emuakpor represents national witchdoctors who pretend to parade solutions but always administer fake remedies.

Okpewho's art equally encapsulates a preoccupation on the question of greed, war-profiteering, vindictiveness, and witch-hunting. These are the deplorable fall-outs of the war some of which directly helped to prolong the conflict. War profiteering in fact is at the centre of the rest of the vices that accrue from the war. War contractors are rich and influential. Toje submits: "I have been able to secure this contract to supply the troops in this sector with food. Nobody can deny that a sizeable income comes to me, and I can boast that if today a count was ordered I would have the whole town and even the wretched chief prostrating before me. If that is not enough power and appeal, what is?" (Okpewho 26).

This situation makes Toje oppose any kind of dialogue with the "rebels". He rails at the vocal press for urging dialogue:

> Only last week they were urging the federal government to agree to meet the rebels anywhere if those people showed any genuine willingness for negotiations. Negotiations! What kind of negotiations? . . . I think those bastards should be left to receive a good pounding . . . I don't blame those boys. They are sure of their daily keep, earned from a wicked distortion of facts and misguided presumption at judgment. Little do they know the hazards involved in a change of business (Okpewho 30).

Finally, we notice that the urge to witch-hunt the innocent is driven by both vendetta and selfish greed. Rukeme represents un-called for vendetta while Toje is the hall-mark of vindictive selfishness. The message that is central is that the war throws up dark dealings and often the cruel and evil seize the chaotic space to unleash evil machinations on the just, the humane, the innocent, and the helpless. Ingrained in Okpewho's craft is a distillable harvest of absurdist, not nihilist tension where the question of existence is answered with undertones of the kind of purposefulness that we distil from Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*. There, the world of Azaro is a cyclic maze of imperfections but the maze actually sustains the man-essence. With the death of the likes of Toje and Emuakpor, and with the latter volte-face enacted by Rukeme, coupled with Major Ali's iron resolve to hold onto correct principles, hope for humanity is restored. These are able to offset Oshevire's nihilism. Even though Aku is left in a condition of helplessness in which we originally find her, there is hope for her; who knows but she may learn a lesson from her other easy option, and choose an honourable option, a new site, a defiant slant that may offset her earlier complacent acquiescence. Hers too is absurdist, not nihilist tension.

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The Real, Imaginary and Possible in Robert Coover's Short Story "Stick Man" (2005)

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Abstract

In the context of Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, this paper analyzes Robert Coover's depiction of different versions of "reality" as manifested in his short story "Stick Man". The paper argues that through the depiction of transworld characters oscillating between different ontological levels and modes of representation, Coover
1) treats the relation between fiction and reality,
2) deals, in the context of some post-structuralist theories, with a question of representation connected especially with the relation between language and reality,
3) parodies celebrity culture, mass media manipulation of the audience and consumerism as important aspects of contemporary (American) culture, and points out the replacement of the representation by "simulation" in the contemporary technologically advanced world.

Keywords

postmodern literature, metafiction, intertextuality, simulation and simulacra, parody

Introduction

In the past decades, literary discourse and its relation to both language and the real, physical world represented by it were studied in the context of literary theory and philosophy such as, for example, the theory of the possible worlds. In connection with philosophy, literary theory studied such aspects of literary texts as possibility, truth and reference that are rather ontological aspects of these texts and thus close to the postmodernist discourse.[1] Several critics, for example, Lubomír Dolezel, Thomas Pavel, Benjamin Harsaw Hrushovski or Ruth Ronen, point out a difference between literary fictional and real worlds. In her seminal study *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, Ruth Ronen argues that "A fictional world can be described as a unique system separate from, although dependent on cultural-historical reality in which it is created and with which it holds more or less obvious affinities" (15). In Ronen's view, "Literary worlds are possible not in the sense they can be viewed as possible alternatives to the actual state of affairs, but in the sense that they 'actualize a world' we live in" (50) . . . Literary theorists have adopted the possible worlds frame by arguing that, being non-actual states of affairs, fictional worlds form a subset of possible worlds" (51). And further she claims that

> . . . literary theorists treat fictional worlds as possible worlds in the sense that fictional worlds are concrete constellations of states of states of affairs which, like possible worlds, are non-actualized in the world. Yet, it is obvious that possible worlds are indeed non-actualized but 'actualizable'…whereas fictional worlds aren non-actualized in the world but also 'non-actualizable', belonging to a different sphere of possibility and impossibility altogether. (51)

[1]In his *Postmodern Fiction*, Brian Mc Hale speaks about "ontological dominant" as typical of postmodern literary texts by which he means a dominance of ontological questions postmodern literary texts generate, p. 10.

Giving examples from several novels, Ronen further separates the real, actual world and the world of fiction and argues that *"fictional worlds are not possible: they are not alternative ways the world might have been"* (51-52). She thus finally concludes that "A fictional world forms an independent modal system, and is, in this respect, less directly linked to the actual world than possible worlds" (52).

Also Benjamin Harsaw (Hrushovski) deals with a relation between fiction and reality, but especially with the representation of the actual world in fiction. To emphasize the separateness of the world of fiction from the physical world, he introduces such terms as field of reference, frame of reference, internal and external fields of reference and other terms (3). In this respect, especially Internal Field of Reference (IFR) is important to understand his definition of the specificity of a literary discourse. He understands internal field of reference as "a whole network of interrelated referents of various kinds: characters, events, situations, ideas, dialogues . . . The language of the text contributes to the establishment of this Internal Field and refers to it at the same time" (230). Harsaw (Hrushovski) further comments on the ontological specificity of literature and gives its definition based on these characteristics.

This separateness and uniqueness of the world of fiction is further confirmed by Lubomir Dolezel who speaks about its ontological homogeneity (483). Dolezel also suggests that a semantic complexity is "a prime manifestation of the structural self-sufficiency of fictional worlds" (488). This semantic complexity manifests itself, in my view, especially in postmodern fiction in which various modes of representation, "fictional agents and events" (Dolezel, Ronen, Harsaw (Hrushovski)), transworld identities of characters (Mc Hale) and other "mixed fictional elements" create a complex fictional world that problematizes a meaning and a relation between the real (actual) and fictional worlds. At the same time, this semantic complexity can point out the process of the construction of fictional world(s) as one of its themes, mostly, in my view, on the allegorical level. In the above-mentioned article, "Mimesis and Possible World," Dolezel not only speaks about the unity and separateness of fictional worlds, but also points out the heterogeneity of fictional worlds within their ontological framework.

In a similar vein, Ruth Ronen speaks about a trans-world identity as being "another aspect of the possible world framework that welcomes and at the same time problematizes an analogy with the notion of fictionality" (57). In her view, "Trans-world identity involves criteria for identifying the same individual across world boundaries" (57). Ronen further asks the question "is Nixon who is both a person and a president in a past state of the actual world the same Nixon as the one in an alternative course of events who retains only his personhood? By what criteria can different occurences of a name in different worlds with the same entity be identified?" (57-58).

Thus each literary character taking name of a real or historical personality of the past or present creates a complicated semantic transworld identity across different ontological levels. For example, a real President Nixon creates an ontological level of physical, actual world; within fictional worlds, literary representation in a mimetic fashion creates a mimetic/realistic fictional world; all non-realistic deviations in a representation of this person/character in a literary work (alternative, fantastic, self-reflexive, for example) form other ontological levels. All these levels can produce a complicated chain of relationships generating a complex meaning.

In his short story "Stick Man" from his short story collection *A Child Again*, Robert Coover creates a seemingly fantastic, imaginary world of Stick Man who breaks, however, this world's homogeneity by his invasion into a real, physical world and in the meta-world of film (through the character from a cartoon). This creates a transworld identity (Eco) of characters that causes an ontological scandal (Mc Hale 6) through which Robert Coover deals with ontological questions such as 1) the relation between fiction and reality, 2) representation connected especially with the relation between language and reality and between various modes of fictionality and existence, in the context of some post-structuralist theories.

In this way, through a construction of transworld identities of characters, he parodies a celebrity culture, mass media manipulation of the audience and consumerism as important aspects of contemporary (American) culture; and, in keeping with Jean Baudrillard's simulation theory, he points out the replacement of the representation by "simulation" in the contemporary world of advanced technologies.

From a perspective of a reader, an idealized fantastic world reminiscent of a fairy tale genre (the Garden of Paradise, Stick Man and the Stick Woman) is constantly challenged by different worlds and ontological levels. This creates an ontological tension achieved by Coover's depiction of qualities typical of characters from the real world for the characters living in an imaginary, fantastic world. Thus, the Stick Man lives as a real human being (which is the strategy of a fairy tale because a reader accepts human qualities of a fantastic being within this genre); he talks, he has "imagination" and performs other human activities. He becomes a hybrid character typical of a fantastic or a fairy tale world. This fantastic world is an ideal(istic) world with fantastic occurrences that is supported by a metaphor of the Garden of Paradise the Stick Man is situated in and which symbolically implies an idealized world. This seemingly unproblematic status of the Stick Man (unproblematic because, from the reader's perspective, he can be understood as generically coherent fantastic character within his fantastic world) is, however, problematized by Coover's juxtaposition of the high and the low and by his parody of this world. A juxtaposition of the high (philosophy) and the low (simple fairy tale) manifests itself in a status of the Stick Man as fairy tale, flat, wooden (and thus logically artificial, dead) character and in his thinking, that is a high and abstract activity requiring the involvement of reason. This manifests itself in Stick Man's philosophical meditations "on the ontology of being" (Coover 216), for example. In addition, Stick Man's meditation creates another, metafictional framework based on self-reflexivity (meditations on the ontology of being). This metafictional framework thus further problematizes seemingly unproblematic fantastic world and points out one of the possible themes of this short story — a meditation on different modes of being/existence represented by both reality and fictional texts which is a theme and narrative strategy typical of postmodern literature. Rather than being an unproblematic and predictable fairy tale character, Stick Man thus becomes a complex postmodern character acquiring various modes of existence in different worlds and ontological levels. This complexity further manifests itself in Coover's use of parody evoked by the misapplication of qualities typical of living beings to artificial things like these stick man represents. Parody manifests itself, for example, in Coover's depiction of a sexual act between two "stick characters", Stick Man and a Stick Woman:

> She is identical to him in every way—the same empty circle for a head, the same straight spine, crossed by a shoulder bar and a hip bar at the base, with the four trisected limbs hanging off the bar ends—except that she has a notch in the bottom of the hip bar where he has a tab, which is something like a comma except when making love. Even then, actually[...]When their sticks are heaped together, they make a pretty picture, as of secret hieroglyphs. (Coover 218).

As can be seen in this extract, Coover brings physicality and sexuality into inadequate world, that is a world of artificiality represented by the stick characters. Human activities such as sex are thus used in a constructed fantastic world to which they do not fit and which consequently produces a parodic effect. Thus, both physicality (sexuality) and thinking (mental activity) invade fantastic (imaginary) world in Coover' short story and make the characters not only more lively, but especially parodic.

Coover further develops an "ontological scandal" (Mc Hale) by making the Stick Man's fantastic world, a Cartoon Man film metaworld and the people's world ontologically homogenous. Both the connection and transition between different worlds (fantastic, human, film) are unproblematic and fluent in the story which makes all these worlds equal. The narrator ambiguously suggests that Stick Man has visited the human world several times before (Coover 218) and that "The horizon line has vanished and all visible space in all possible directions is filled with human activity" (219). When endangered by real, physical beings in Coover's world of fiction, a Cartoon Man, a representative of the film world, comes to save the Stick Man out of nowhere, out of indefinite space and he directly influences (even attacks) human characters*:* "Just when all seems lost, a Cartoon Man flies in from overhead and the humans fall back" (Coover 219). Thus, it also seems that all characters are ontologically equal as if existing in a certain rather indefinite common framework or the world reminiscent of a film scene. The above extract also symbolically suggests another important issue related to this, that is the power of images represented by film conquering the human world as represented by the characters from the real world knocked by the Cartoon Man. Another world, the

world of mediated reality (film) is defined by The Cartoon Cartoon Man himself in the following way: "We are not very big on taste and smell in the cartoon world. Mostly we're into low comedy and killing people. A lot of people. Fighting evil, man, it's fucking endless" (Coover 221).

This suggests it is a world of sterility, violence and cliché typical of popular culture including popular literary and film genres. These characters from different worlds (fantastic and film), however, miss some phenomena (sex, physicality, drinks, pleasure) from the actual, physical world and they want to "tear up the fucking frame" (222), that is symbolically the limitations of their worlds (flatness, stereotypicality, boredom) and, having experienced it, only to come back to their own worlds enriched by the experience from this different, physical world and thus to justify the superiority of their own worlds. As the Cartoon Man says, "We got the best of their world in ours, all the sex and violence, tears and laughter" (221). In this context then, human characters consider their world superior to other worlds and accept the other worlds (imaginary, fantastic as represented by the stick man) only if they imitate, simulate (imaginary) or simplify and thus also idealize their world (the cartoons).

Thus it seems what Coover emphasizes here is the idea of simulation manifesting in all above worlds. The Stick Man can fully enjoy his world by experiencing the real, actual world and by simulating his experience from this world in his imagination and actions; the Cartoon Man by simulating human activities and world; and the characters from the real world, the human beings, by enjoying the simulation itself that seems to precede their value judgement and their formation of a mental picture of reality derived not from the real, physical, but a mediated experience (the cartoon, television, and film). In this context then, human beings emphasize and thus tend to enjoy a realistic representation of reality and thus, on the allegorical level, realistic writing by having both the stick and their world simulated by a Stick Man. They are even referred to as realists (227), but their realistic status and appreciation of realism based on representation in Jean Baudrillard's understanding is further extended to their simulation status as understood by him. Simulation becomes a dominant force shaping the characters' vision of the world preceding a mental picture of it. The perception of the world is thus based on the infinite chain of signifiers that do not refer to physical reality but to themselves and thus create, understood in Jean Baudrillard's terms, simulation. In Baudrillard's view,

> All of Western faith and good faith was engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could exchange for meaning and that something could guarantee this Exchange. God, of course. But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say, reduced to the signs which attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless; it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum: not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an interrupted circuit without reference or circumference.
>
> So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum. (Baudrillard)

Through emphasizing the idea of simulation, Coover emphasizes "a simulative" character of the contemporary culture and world as well as consumerist character of the contemporary society. As early as during a friendly dialogue between the humans and the Stick Man in the bar leading finally to an agreement that the Stick Man will be imitating his world, after a bartender asks who will pay for the broken glasses, the leader of the humans says: "History has been made in here today. By next week, this will be a famous tourist attraction. You can sell the broken glass as souvenirs. In fact, you'd be doing yourself a favor to smash a few more things" (225).

The situation, as perceived by the humans, seems to anticipate a possible source of profit and becomes a simulation (of the situation to be further simulated by possible museum or TV shows)

preceding reality and initiating an endless chain of simulation processes. Thus, this connection of consumerism and simulation is close to Jean Baudrillard's understanding of Disneyland representing a significant aspect of contemporary American culture. In Baudrillard's view,

> "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation. To begin with it is a play of illusions and phantasms: pirates, the frontier, future world, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But, what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the social microcosm, the miniaturized and religious revelling in real America, in its delights and drawbacks. You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit. In this imaginary world the only phantasmagoria is in the inherent warmth and affection of the crowd, and in that aufficiently excessive number of gadgets used there to specifically maintain the multitudinous affect. The contrast with the absolute solitude of the parking lot — a veritable concentration camp — is total. Or rather: inside, a whole range of gadgets magnetize the crowd into direct flows; outside, solitude is directed onto a single gadget: the automobile[...]The objective picture of the United States then may be traced throughout Disneyland, even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are exalted here in miniature and comic-strip form . . . But this conceals something else, and that "ideological" blanket exactly serves to cover over a third-order simulation: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. ...It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle . . . The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. (Baudrillard)

In this short story, The Stick Man thus becomes a celebrity in the human world by imitating both his and human world and thus he becomes an iconic simulator demanded and promoted by commercial televisions. In his shows, "The Stick Man laughs at adversity. The Stick Man goes shopping. He takes up positions reflecting grand themes like good and evil, illusion and reality, money . . . religion, politics, work, and the arts of success, but also lesser elements of the human condition like desire, knowledge, manners, the digestive processes, fine arts" (Coover 228).

When his success and fame start to diminish by exhaustion of themes, new themes such as sexuality, death, perversity and violence are introduced to stimulate not only the re-acquisition of his fame, but especially the commercial profit which manifests itself also in the introduction of the critical discourse about the show as the theme of the show itself. This can be seen in the following extract describing Stick Man's simulating activities: "The Stick Man attempts an act of autofellatio. The Stick Man suffers from castration anxiety . . . The Stick Man scratches his hemorrhoids . . . (230) . . . Rape. Whips. Bondage. Torture. Disfigurement. Hammers and nails" (232).

So thus both the world of fiction (TV shows, the Stick Man's acting) and physical reality merge and create a metaworld of simulation dominating the world of physical reality and representation. This can be seen in one of the final scenes of the short story in which the Human Committee, to innovate and refresh the Stick Man show, suggests and plots killing of the Stick Man and his lover, a Stick Woman, themselves by the audience as a theme meant to initiate his own killing. So the Committee prepares this plot in the following way:

> First, they must begin a rumor campaign against them. They must utterly reviled. Later, it will be seen that they were only misunderstood, but only after they no longer exist. Then it will be a sad story. Songs will be written and so on. There will edited returns. For now, by way of letters to the editor, graffiti, anonymous advertisement, phone calls pretending to be from poll takers, dirty

> jokes, leaked 'disclosures,' they are decried as deserters, traitors, perverts, racketeers, revolutionary anarchists, scofflaws, thieves, sex fiends, mercenaries, atheists, dangerous aliens. The crowds begin to gather once more. They are increasingly hostile. Weapons appear...The gathered multitudes shout out positions the Stick Man and Stick Woman are to take, but they have stopped performing and simply cling to one another...They watch the proceedings from the safety of a television studio....they tell themselves they are not responsible for what happens next. (232-233)

Thus through this extract it seems Coover shows the simulation of reality even precedes and influences it, which manifests itself in the literal invasion of people during the show to kill the Stick Man and Woman who are, finally, saved again by the Cartoon Man. Since the Cartoon Man, however, becomes both a savior and a hero again, this can symbolically point out Coover's symbolic depiction of the dominance of the popular and simulation culture as represented by the Cartoon Man.

Conclusion

In his short story Stick Man, as can be seen above, Coover depicts various modes of reality and worlds, especially of physical reality, fantasy and film as equal and as each which undermines its own ontological status and traditional generic conventions associated with them. This is achieved especially by his use of parody, recontextualization of the characters from one world to different worlds that are unacceptable for their own world and by emphasizing the idea of simulation common for all worlds, and as understood by Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation. At the same time, Coover points out the transition and inadequacy of realism and realistic representation of reality in both contemporary world and fiction and its transition to the simulation culture of the postmodern period characterized by a growing dominance of mass media, popular culture and consumerism. Through emphasizing the imagery of simulation and popular culture, Coover also emphasizes a close connection between simulation and consumerism as some of the most important aspects of the contemporary culture.

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Yahya Kemal and Nizar Qabbani: Two Poet-Diplomats in Spain and "Andalus" in their Poems

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Abstract

Yahya Kemal and Nizar Qabbani were two poets who served as diplomats in Spain in the past century on behalf of the governments of Turkey and Syria. Yahya Kemal wrote two poems about Spain, "Dance in Andalusia" and "Coffee Shop in Madrid". "Dance in Andalusia," a poem written about the Flamenco dance, has become very famous. In this poem, he described the traditional dance of the Spanish people and emphasized the place of this dance in their lives and the fun-loving lives of the people of Spain. In almost all of the poems which Nizar Qabbani wrote about Spain, on the other hand, a feeling of sadness rather than joy prevails. He gives a deep sigh in his poems as he regards Andalusia as the one-time land of his ancestors. His most important poem with respect to Spain is the poem entitled "Granada". This poem is considered to be one of the most significant odes in the Arab literature describing Granada, the pearl of Andalusia, Arab influences there, the Alhambra palace and the sadness felt due to the loss of the city by Arabs. This study analyzes the two most important poems written by Yahya Kemal and Nizar Qabbani concerning Spain, namely "Dance in Andalusia" and "Granada". Whenever it is deemed appropriate, other poems of the two poets regarding Spain will be dwelt upon and what kind of an influence Andalusia left in their emotional world will be revealed.

Keywords

Andalusia, Dance in Andalusia, Granada, Nizar Qabbani, Yahya Kemal

Introduction: Text as Context

Yahya Kemal and Nizar Qabbani were two talented poets who broke ground in the Turkish and Arab poetry. These two poets, who did not confine themselves to the traditional and old forms of poetry, possessed unique styles that were hard to imitate. According to the official documents, Yahya Kemal was appointed as Ambassador to Madrid on 6 February 1929 (Kahraman 361), and was sent to Madrid where he was to stay for three years (Ertop 109). Nizar Qabbani, on the other hand, served as a diplomat in Cairo, Turkey, London, Beirut, China and Spain and then resigned in 1966 to devote his time to poetry (al-Fâkhûrî 686). Nizar Qabbani wrote ample amounts of poems whereas Yahya Kemal was discreet with regard to writing poems. Although both poets are known for their famous women and love poems, they also wrote poems about national historical and social issues. Some poems of both poets were set to music. Tülücü states that more than twenty of Nizar Qabbani's poems were set to music and they were sung by Umm Qulsum, Mâcide Rûmî and many others (28). Many poems of Yahya Kemal were also set to music by different composers in the course of time. Ömürlü included in his book a hundred and seven different compositions for Yahya Kemal's fifty-six poems, along with their lyrics and notes (13).

These two poets, who were among the most-talked about poets of the Turkish and Arab literatures of the 20th century, deeply influenced several generations in their time. Not only did they affect their time but they also managed to become poets who were widely read by generations after them. Although their poems about Andalusia do not, in terms of quantity, occupy a significant place in their collected poems, they are the ones that need to be dwelt on seriously owing to their contents. Qabbani's poem "Granada" is a precious piece of poetry that will immortalize the name of its poet. Yahya Kemal's poem, too, is an important poem that describes the Andalusian culture, the Flamenco dance and the Spanish

joy.

A common point in Yahya Kemal and Nizar Qabbani is that they wrote poems for cities and places. In one of his odes, Nizar Qabbani addresses "Beirut" as ''Oh You Miss World, oh Beirut'' (577), he eulogizes Beirut in his ode entitled "To Female Beirut with Apologies'' and speaks to those who destroyed it in the following words: "If Lebanon dies, you will, too, die along with it / Anyone that kills it is himself dead'' (628).

For Yahya Kemal, on the other hand, miss world is İstanbul. His prose writings about İstanbul which were published in different places were compiled in a book called *Aziz İstanbul*. There are odes he wrote for Göztepe, Çamlıca and Çubuklu (Beyatlı, *Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* 63-68). The poet speaks of İstanbul in the following terms: " . . . I would say they have lived in the longest and best dream / Who have lived long in you, died in you and rests in you" (Beyatlı, *Azîz İstanbul* 7).

The beauty of Granada and Alhambra deeply affected Yahya Kemal. He describes in a letter an unforgettable night he spent at a hotel called Alhambra Palace located on the hill where Alhambra is situated in the following words:

> It is very difficult to squeeze Alhambra and Granada into a letter. The hill where this palace is located is probably one of the most beautiful visiting sites of the globe. I stayed at a hotel on this hill that was named Alhambra Palace overlooking the plain. The one night I spent there will be one of the most prized stays of my life. The hotel had a long terrace that faced the plain, the city and the snowy peaks of Sierra Nevada. I felt, till late at night, the color, peace and music of a Granada night on this terrace. (Kahraman 369)

Yahya Kemal went on a weekly tour of Andalusia in May 1929 and visited Granada, Seville and Cordoba (Banarlı 132). It is understood, from his memoirs, that he did not spend much time in Andalusia. However, this does not mean that he did not find anything that struck one as attractive. On the contrary, the poet expresses in the following terms the fact that Granada is a city that cannot be forgotten after it has been seen once:

> I went from Seville to Granada. It is a place that one will remember forever after seeing it once. Granada is a final commemorative site that the Arabs created with the force of all of their art and their last artists after they were driven out of everywhere and took refuge in a corner in the South of Spain. The city is located on a large plain that is surrounded by snow-clad mountains. The Alhambra is on a hill behind the city. It is on this hill that the Arab, or to put it more accurately, the Andalusian civilization of mixed Arab and Berber origin gave its final feast before fully withdrawing from the Spanish soil. (Kahraman 369)

Methodology

The poetry anthologies and poetry books of these two poets where their poems were collected were surveyed and those about Andalusia were brought together to be analyzed. It was found that nineteen poems of Nizar Qabbani and two poems of Yahya Kemal were about Andalusia and Spain. Moreover, their prose writings about Andalusia were also reviewed. Their poems "Dance in Andalusia" and "Granada" were used as a base and while lines belonging to these poems were being analyzed, other poems related to these lines were also referred to. Different sources were searched with regard to Spanish culture, the Flamenco dance and Andalusia and the accuracy of the information concerning these topics given in the two poems was checked.

Literary Review

Nowadays, the name Andalusia reminds us first of the Alhambra Palace, that pearl of the Andalusian civilization, and the Flamenco dance. Words fail to describe the unequalled beauty of the Alhambra Palace. Sâmi Paşazâde Sezâi, who served as an ambassador (like Yahya Kemal) in Spain used, in his travel notes about the Alhambra palace, the phrase " . . . its mihrab, or altar, at which even non-Muslims would prostrate themselves for worship," for altar of the palace which he praised (qtd. in Gündoğdu

319). Andalusia has been, undoubtedly, a land of hand bells, or castanets, shawls and dances, though there has never been a shortage of wars there. According to Erkoçoğlu and Arslan, the golden age of hand bells, music and dance was experienced in Andalusia eleven centuries before Yahya Kemal wrote his poem "Dance in Andalusia" (Erkoçoğlu and Arslan 261). Naturally, one has difficulty imagining a palace that lacks poets and musicians. Throughout history, music and poetry held a special place in the palatial circles during the Abbasid, Umayyad and Andalusian Umayyad eras.

In the first line of his poem "Granada", Nizar Qabbani makes mention of the Alhambra Palace and states that the event that he had experienced took place there. Yahya Kemal, on the other hand, cites Andalusia and Granada in the first and fifth lines of his poem "Dance in Andalusia". Kahraman maintains that the dance was watched by the poet in the Xerez district of Andalusia [Jerez in Cadiz] (376). Yahya Kemal mentions "three reds" in the first couplet of his poem. If these reds were the colors that caught the poet's eyes while he was watching the dance, then one can conclude, on the basis of Gürsel's comment below concerning the first couplet of the poet, that the dance was watched in Granada:

> The first red must have been the amber-colored sight of Alhambra on the fountain of the Lion Garden, wet with the tears of Boabdil, the last ruler of the palace; the second red must have been "the most beautiful rose of hussy Granada" on the breast of the dark-skinned gypsy doing Flamenco dance; well, then what about the third red? It must of course have been the shawl of the Andalusian dancer that seduced our ambassador in Madrid "with their sudden spins like the turning of a fan, their whirling, opening and covering themselves"; The last Ottoman poet who said "Not all colors do our eyes desire, our eyes are on red; Spain, with all its existence is at this shawl this evening" cannot have thought of the blood of the Spanish poet executed by firing squad in the same city during the civil war! He saw three times red in an Andalusian evening but he did not want to see blood. Yet, I knew from Machado's lines that the murder had been committed in Granada, that Granada of Lorca's. In my eyes, Andalusia was red by the blood of the poet who wrote Gypsy romances. (qtd. in Özmen 57)

When we think of the dominant color in Granada, we immediately remember the red-colored Alhambra palace and the striking green of the trees surrounding the hill upon which it sits like a crown. It is fine that the first red brings to Gürsel's mind the Alhambra palace. However, if the dance was watched in Serez, as Kahraman maintains, instead of Granada, then the first red might have been the red dress of the dancing girl. Since the poet indicated the time of the dance as "evening time" in the first couple of the poem, what is meant by the first red might also have been the crimson horizon that arises at sunset.

Özmen disagrees with the aforementioned criticism by Gürsel with regard to Lorca stating that the poem "Dance in Andalusia" was completed in 1933 but that the execution of Lorca by firing squad took place in 1936 (58). Gürsel imagines Andalusia as being painted with the blood of the poet due to his keen interest in Lorca. If Lorca had died before the time Yahya Kemal had written this poem, and if the poet had meant a blood with the color red, this blood could have been the blood of people who had been tortured to death during the Inquisition as well as Lorca's blood.

In this poem, Yahya Kemal deals with the traditional Andalusian dance. This type of dance which he calls the "Spanish dance" is known as Flamenco, a fast-running dance unique to Spain. Fakhruddin contends that the word Flamenco is generally associated with dance but this is wrong because it is composed of a combination of dances, songs and musical performances. He believes that it was born in Andalusia in the 18th century out of Andalusian music and dance; he argues that there are various theories regarding its origin but that the strongest thesis in this context is that Flamenco belongs to Maghreb (Fakhruddin).

In the letters he sent to his friends, Yahya Kemal came with interesting findings about the "Spanish dance":

> What I most dreamed of seeing in Seville was the Spanish dance. Unfortunately, I was told that the best of this dance could be seen in Paris at Opera-Comique! This miracle of shawl, rose and

> bell and the storm of ecstasy, which we deem to be Spanish, is in fact an Arab dance in origin, but it was kept alive by Gypsies, who remind one of Arabs, and spread across Europe as a Spanish dance. This dance, despite all its beauty and fame, was not adopted by the Spanishness and was even disdained. Here, people regard foreigners seeking Spanish dance in the way we regard Europeans who want to see harem in Turkey. (Ertop 109-112)

Ertop states that Yahya Kemal laid the foundation of this poem, which he would complete years later, on the words "bell, shawl and rose" (115). When we look at the manuscript of the "Dance in Andalusia" poem belonging to Yahya Kemal, which he shared in his book, we see that the words bell, shawl and rose were written more than ten times in Ottoman Turkish and Latin alphabets (Ertop 116). Almost the whole sketch is composed of these words. The pioneer couplet of this poem is the couplet where these words are used. The verse was completed with the addition of the other couplets afterwards. Just as there are advance guards in a warring army, so there is certainly a guiding couplet in a poem and that couplet drags the other couplets behind it. The couplet where the words bell, shawl and rose are used is the pioneering couplet of the poem "Dance in Andalusia" and drags the others behind it.

Nizar Qabbani, on the other hand, who is known as the poet of women and love, states in an interview held with him that the most successful deed he did in the name of women exploited by men was probably his removing the name of women from "the foods menu" and adding it to the "list of flowers" (Qabbani 533). He complains that the epithet "Poet of the Woman" was etched in his skin by the press and that he suffered due to being labelled in this way and he adds that he is a poet of men, women and human relations, that is, he is a poet of all of these (540-541).

The poem "Granada" is, in my opinion, Nizar Qabbani's best political-historical poem. It is flawless in terms of both form and content. The ode drags the reader into an atmosphere of grief from the very beginning to the end. In his "Little Ballad of Three Rivers", Federico García Lorca lets grief flow in the waters of Granada, saying ". . . Two rivers of Granada / One weeps, and one is bloody . . . and . . . But for Granada water / only the sighs growing . . .'' (Lorca). Nizar Qabbani, too, lets a similar grief seep into us in this poem of his. Most Arabs who are interested in Andalusia remember the couplets in the ode because they express the grief felt over the loss of Andalusia.

Nizar Qabbani and His Poem "Granada"

Nizar Qabbani wrote nineteen poems in total with respect to Andalusia, six in "Muzakkarat Andalusia", eleven in "Awraq İsbâniyye", one in "Ahzânun fi al-Andalus" together with this poem called "Granada". Of these, he wrote the poem "Granada" in the Kamil meter of the Aruz prosody, while the others in prosodic *tef'iles* without sticking to a specific prosody. Nizar Qabbani managed to squeeze into this twenty-couplet ode the history of Andalusia, the glorious past of the Arabs, the architecture of the palace and the wailing for the loss of those lands, in short everything. He is extremely successful in expressing his emotions. Nizar Qabbânî wrote this ode in Granada in 1965:

> Our meeting was at the entrance of Alhambra
> how nice it was to meet without making an arrangement!
> Two pitch black eyes. In their sockets
> Dimensions are being born out of dimensions!
> I inquired, ''Are you Spanish?''
> [Yes] my birthplace is Granada, she said.
> Granada? And seven centuries were born (again)
> in those two eyes, after a sound sleep
> The flags of the Umayyads were hoisted high
> and their horses were lined in rows.
> How strange history is, look how it has taken me back
> to a dark-skinned female grandchild from my grandchildren
> A Damascene face, I saw through it
> the eyelids of Bathsheba and the double chin of Su'ad

And I saw our old house. and a room
Where my mother used to spread my cushions.
And the Jasmin flower decorated with its petals
and the pool with a golden sound
What about Damascus? Where is it? You will see it, I said
In your cascading hair, a black river
And in your face unique to the Arab, and in your mouth
still harboring the suns of my country
In the smell and water of Jannat al-Areef
In the Arabian jasmine, in the basil and in the citrus
She walked with me, and her hair running breathlessly behind her
like wheat spikes left without being reaped
The long earring in her ear glimmers
Like Christmas candles on a New Year night
I trailed behind my guide like a child
and behind me, the history: a heap of ashes …
Decorations, I will almost hear its heartbeats
Embroideries, call out from the ceilings
Here is Alhambra, she said, the source of pride of my forefathers
Read my glories on its walls
Her glory? (Upon hearing this) I rubbed salt into a bleeding wound
Then in a second wound in my heart...
If only my beautiful heiress knew
the people she mentioned were my ancestors
When I bade farewell to her, I embraced in her
Someone by the name of Tariq bin Ziyad.
(Qabbani 569-574)

The poet begins his ode with the entrance of the Alhambra Palace, the most beautiful sight of Granada. He makes his entrance as if into a dream world through the gates of the palace, which is an unequalled structure with its ornamentations, architecture, garden, fountain and flowers. Here, the fact that the beginning of the poem and the beginning of his visit coincides to be the same place adds a special beauty to the poem. Another nice thing about this meeting is that the poet met the girl who was to serve him as a guide coincidentally without making an arrangement beforehand. The moment of meeting of two acquaintances, a grandfather and a grandchild, who, as if have not seen each for years and awaited eagerly to meet, takes place in front of the Alhambra palace.

"Two pitch black eyes.. In their sockets / Dimensions are being born out of dimensions!" What first attracts the attention of the poet in the meeting is the jet black eyes of the girl who is going to serve him as a guide. When the poet catches the girl's eyes, the blackness of her eyelashes draws his attention. According to Spanish people, three black things that make women beautiful are eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows and three thin things are fingers, lips and hair (Mérimée 42). With the blackness of her eyes, the poet here made reference to the first black limb of the Andalusian beauties. When the poet looks at those black eyes, he moves from one dimension to another: through the beauty of the eyes, he begins a journey from the real world into a world of dreams, and from the moment he is in to the past.

"I inquired, 'Are you Spanish?' / [Yes] my birthplace is Granada, she said." As is the custom, the poet wants to initiate a conversation by asking the girl where she is from. Here, the poet's asking "Are you Spanish?" rather than "Where are you from?" brings to mind the possibility that he thought she was Spanish because he had seen a face that was typically Andalusian. The Spanish girl responds to the question saying that she is Spanish and that she was born in Granada, where they set foot, not in any other place.

"Granada? And seven centuries were born (again) / In those two eyes, after a sound sleep". At the mention of the word Granada by the Spanish girl, the poet dives into deep thoughts, going back to

distant times, seven centuries before. Those two eyes shake off the veil of oblivion on the glorious soil of his ancestors and reanimate him; he witnesses the rebirth of a gold-gilded past in those two black eyes. The past of his forebears begin to flash before his eyes. This couplet marks the transition to that gorgeous history; with this couplet, the poet announces that he will take his readers on a journey through history and draws their attention here".

"The flags of the Umayyads were hoisted high / And their horses were lined in rows." Centuries after they were brought down, the poet imagines the Umayyad flags to be flying on the towers of the Alhambra palace. He dreams that thoroughbred Arab are everywhere in the now-empty palace. In those eyes, he embarks on a journey in the past and takes a walk in that palace, where there was constant activity in the glorious period of seven centuries ago.

"How strange history is, look how it has taken me back / To a dark-skinned female grandchild from my grandchildren". The poet is astonished to have met once again a dark-skinned girl of his own lineage who remained from the Umayyads after they had left Andalusia to the Spanish centuries ago, and feelings of affection arise. The poet of love does not now look the girl he has met from the perspective of material beauty; instead, he puts her in place of his granddaughter. The fact that the girl is dark-skinned reinforces his belief that she is of his own blood or ancestry.

"A Damascene face, I saw through it / The eyelids of Bathsheba and the double chin of Su'ad". When the poet looks at the Spanish girl, her face reminds him of the face of Bathsheba and double chin of Suad. Bathsheba is the queen of Sheba, whose parable is mentioned in conjunction with Solomon in the Holy Quran. Upon Prophet Solomon's invitation, she professed her belief in God, and stopped worshipping the sun (Quran, Surah al-Naml 23-44). Nizar Qabbani's second wife, Belkis al-Râvî of Iraqi origin who he had married in 1970, was killed in a bomb blast when Iraq's embassy came under attack in 1981 and this loss caused unspeakable grief to the poet (Zubaydah 30). However, Qabbani wrote his ode entitled Granada in 1965 before he had married Belkis. It is possible that the poet may have known Belkis before their marriage.

The name *Su'ad*, on the other hand, is one of the female names that have been used in Arab poetry since the period of Jahiliyya (pre-Muhammadan era). In his work "Alfiya", Ibn Mâlik includes the name *Su'ad* as a proper name in a section called "alem" (proper name), stating that it was *murtejel* (used originally as a proper name, not for any other purpose) (Ibn Mâlik 80). Some poets use this name when they refer to their beloved but whether their beloved is named *Su'ad* or not is a debatable topic. In the annotation he wrote to an ode entitled *Banat Su'ad*, Ibn Hucce el-Hamevî indicates that the name *Su'ad* might be the true love of Ka'b bin Zuheyr or it could just be an allegation (al-Hamevî 27-28). Although we are not Arabs and our beloved's name is not Leila, we sometimes use that name to refer to our beloved. In a way, some names have replaced the word beloved. Ka'b bin Zuheyr's ode (109) 'Banat *Su'ad*'-'*Su'ad Left'*, which he wrote to apologize to Prophet Muhammad and to praise him, is known by the name of *Qasîda al- Burda* and the name *Su'ad* is used in three couplets including the first couplet. Although al-'Aşâ (241) and Jahiliyya poet al-Dhubyani (101) had two odes whose first couplets begin with 'Banat *Su'ad'*, *Su'ad* has been associated with the name Ka'b bin Zuheyr due to the ode he wrote to the Prophet just as Leila is associated with Qays.

"And I saw our old house... and a room / Where my mother used to spread my cushions." Some events, persons and things that we encounter in our lives take us back to our childhood; sometimes, an silverberry tree that we come across on our way takes us back to the past, to a silverberry tree which we climbed to pick silverberries but fell off. Nizar Qabbani, too, remembers the house where he spent his childhood in Damascus and the room in which his mother made his bed, his cushions, while he was taking a tour of the Alhambra.

This situation naturally brings to mind the similarity between the Andalusian architecture and the architecture in Syria. Undoubtedly, traces of Arab architecture are observed in the buildings in Andalusia. For example, Sâlim argues while referring to the Cordoba Mosque that it is impossible to deny existence of traces of Syrian art in architectural decorations and in some parts of the building and adds that many buildings and palaces constructed by Abdurrahman ed-Dâhil in Cordoba, Rusâfe and Dimashk resemble similar buildings in Syria (209). The situation is the same not only in Cordoba but also in other cities. Le Bon states that the Alhambra palace, like many Arab palaces, does not at all

resemble European palaces and adds that Arab poets describe Granada as "the brightest city that sun beams have ever seen" and as "Dimashk of Andalusia" (306-308). The poet may have spent his childhood in building constructed in an ancient style. While he is going through the rooms of the Alhambra palace, the poet feels as if he has entered the room where he entered to sleep when he was a child. In this way, he seems to have returned to the family home he left yesterday.

"And the Jasmin flower decorated with its petals / And the pool with a golden sound". Today, the Jasmin flower can be seen in the gardens of apartment blocks, overflowing into streets over garden walls in Granada. Its fine smell in the morning and milk white petals attract people. This plant is a common and much loved flower in Syria. While Nizar Qabbani is rambling through the corridors of the Alhambra in admiration, this flower attracts him to itself and the pool with a fountain, the garden and the palace enable him to travel in a dream World depicted in the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*.

What about Damascus? Where is it? You will see it, I said
In your cascading hair, a black river
And in your face unique to the Arab, and in your mouth
Still harboring the suns of my country

It is understood that Nizar Qabbani gets into a conversation while he is touring with the tour guide. The tour guide asks him about his country. It is not known whether or not this conversation took place in the said manner. Sometimes, a poet constructs beautiful things that he cannot have the opportunity tell his beloved when they are together and expresses them in his poems. One who spends invaluable time with the beloved in a dream may not have this opportunity in real life. With such a method of construction or fiction, the poet puts in lines the sufferings of reality in a dream-like manner. During the conversation, the girl asks him about his hometown and where it is. The poet, in his turn, means to say, in a way that seems to tell her that she too is an Arab girl, "My city (Damascus) is in you, within you", indicating her black hair and black face unique Arabs. Continuing the Arab tradition of likening their beloved's face to the moon or the sun and their teeth to pearls and other bright objects when they describe their beauty, Nizar Qabbani emphasizes the Spanish girl's face unique to Arabs which reminds one of the sun, and brilliance of her teeth. He points out the harmonious beauty created by black hair and white teeth despite the apparent contrast between them.

"In the smell and water of Jannat al-Areef [Generalife] / In the Arabian jasmine, in the basil and in the citrus". He continues to cite the similarities between Granada and Damascus, as trying to say that his city is not far away and that he has carried here the city in the Orient with all of its beauty. He wants to say to the tour guide girl that the smell of his city is in the smell of here, and that its water is in the city of this city; he adds that jasmines, basils and citrus fruit, in other words everything has brought his own city Damascus to Granada. The fact that the poet mentions the jasmine flower which he has already referred to in previous couplets leads one to think that he has a special interest in this flower.

She walked with me, and her hair running breathlessly behind her
Like wheat spikes left without being reaped
The long earring in her ear glimmers
Like Christmas candles on a New Year night

While he is walking behind the guide, the poet's eyes focus on her long hair. Her moves while she walks just like ears of wheat left unreaped sway from one side to the other in the wind. The poet runs after her, her hair out of breath. Here, he uses the figure of speech of personification to add variety and vitality to description. Then, her shiny earrings draw attention. He likens the golden earrings to candles radiating yellow flames on a New Year' night. In this couplet, too, he uses the art of metaphor (tashbih) to lend vivacity to the color of the earrings.

I trailed behind my guide like a child
And behind me, the history: a heap of ashes . . .

Decorations, I will almost hear its heartbeats
Embroideries, call out from the ceilings

They continue to walk around the Alhambra. The poet obeys his guide with full devotion and follows her like a child. While he introduces parts of the palace one by one, the poet reminisces how the magnificent history of his ancestors came to an end here, how they were driven away from this wonderful building and the civilization here and is overwhelmed with grief. The decorations seem as if they were living beings and he imagines he hears their heartbeats; the poet begins a journey through the past and re-experience those times as if the masters engraving those decorations on the walls during the construction of the palace were working right beside him, as if the construction of the palace had been completed just yesterday. The ornaments on the ceiling call him, as if to say "you are not a stranger here; this is your homeland and just yesterday your ancestors were walking here".

Here is Alhambra, she said, the source of pride of my forefathers
Read my glories on its walls
Her glory? (Upon hearing this) I rubbed salt into a bleeding wound
Then in a second wound in my heart . . .

After their tour of the palace finished, the Spanish girl tells the poet, who is dazzled by this beauty, that those who built all this beauty were ancestors, feeling the pride of showing him the magnificent heritage of her forebears. This statement by the tour guide girl opens a deep wound in the poet's heart. He feels sorry that the splendid civilization built by his ancestors is denied. The second wound comes when the girl, who he thinks is Arab, believes she is Spanish. The poet's sorrow doubles due to the fact that the girl is unaware of both the civilization his ancestors built and her own origins.

If only my beautiful heiress knew
The people she mentioned were my ancestors
When I bade farewell to her, I embraced in her
Someone by the name of Tariq bin Ziyad.

Having completed the tour in sorrow, the poet feels time has come to say goodbye to the Spanish girl, who is his tour guide. It is not understood from the last two couplets whether or not the poet has told the Spanish girl anything about her origin. However, the poet wishes that the girl knew who her ancestors were. While he is bidding farewell to her, he hugs the girl as if he were hugging Tariq bin Ziyad, his ancestor who had conquered Andalusia, and leaves there.

Yahya Kemal and His Poem "Dance in Andalusia"

The poem "Dance in Andalusia" is one of Yahya Kemal's poems that were made into music. Ömürlü included in his book the notes of the composition made by M. Nurettin Selçuk in the Kürdî'liHicâzkâr maqam (Ömürlü 94-98).

Bell, shawl and rose. All the speed of dance is in this garden
Andalusia is three times red at a night of zest
The magic song of love is on hundreds of tongues.
With all of its joy, Spain is at this bell.
Their sudden spins like the turning of a fan,
Their whirling, opening and covering themselves …
Not all colors do our eyes desire, they are on red now;
Spain is at this shawl wave after wave this evening.
Her lustful fringes are in ringlets on her forehead,
And the most beautiful rose of hussy Granada is on her breast …
There is a golden chalice in every hand and the sun is in every heart;

Spain, with all its existence, is at this rose this evening.
She stops in the middle of the dance and dances as if she walks;
She looks with a turning of the head, as if she kills …
She has a rosy skin, ember lips, and smutty eyes …
Devil tells me I should hug and kiss her a hundred times …
To the shawl that dazzles the eyes, to the rose that enchants,
And to the bell that fills every heart, an "Ole!" from all chests''.
(Beyatlı, *Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* 102)

The poem is written in the Mefûlu/fâilâtu/mefâîlu/fâilun meter of the Turkish Aruz prosody. It is one of the frequently used prosodies by Yahya Kemal.

"Bell, shawl and dance. All the speed of dance is in this garden / Andalusia is three times red at a night of zest". The poet begins his poem by citing bell. All of the first three words in Turkish (zil, şal and gül/bell, shawl and rose) are closed syllables involving one consonant, one vowel an done consonant have the same value in prosody; despite this, the poet begins the poem with word *zil* (bell), which implies that the sound made by the bell first rang his ear while he was watching the dance and that was why he began the poem with this striking bell. Today, this dance is associated with the guitar. Nevertheless, the poet does not refer to the guitar or any other musical instrument but instead emphasizes the sound of the bell. Today, a small wooden base is placed in squares in Granada and a dancer, getting onto this platform, performs his/her dance. In some cases, this dance is also performed without accompanying music. High-heeled shoes worn by dancers may produce the rhythmical sounds that can be generated by any musical instrument. Dancers seem to maintain a fast tempo with their feet during their performance, as though playing a musical instrument. However, since the dance is very fast and vigorous, the feet need to be moved very fast, which renders the performance of this dance quite challenging compared with the other types of dance.

Ertop reports that the poet watched three female dancers' dance (115). Yahya Kemal is engrossed in the dance and has sets his eyes on the dancers. The dancing girl's shawl and red rose draws his attention. Dancing girls occasionally attach these roses to their hair, take a fan in their hands to add an aesthetic beauty and wave it. Sometimes, their hands are empty, so they hold their skirts and move them, which adds a special beauty to the dance. That the shawl is red is understood from the next couplet.

Nizar Qabbani, on the other hand, writes the following lines in his poem "Bayt al-'Asafîr" about Spanish girls and their connection with roses:

In Seville
Every beautiful girl wears
A red rose in her hair.
In the evening, falls on that rose
All the sparrows of Spain
(548)

Irving makes mention of a girl named Jacinta in his tale "The Rose of the Alhambra" in his book *Tales from The Alhambra*, indicating that Andalusian women traditionally embellish themselves with roses: ''…Her glossy hair was parted on her forehead and decorated with a fresh plucked rose, according to the custom of Spain…'' (171).

Nizar Qabbani, too, watched this dance but what draws his attention is the ''symphony of the fingers'. He writes the following lines in the third poem of "Muzakkarat Andalusia":

A Spanish dancer,
Tells everything with her fingers.
The Spanish dance is the only dance,
Where the finger replaces the mouth.

A fervent invitation. Thirsty rendezvous
Consent. Wrath.. Lust. Wishes.
All are uttered with the sigh of a single finger,
With the tapping of a finger
I am at my place
And so is the symphony of the fingers
It reaps me
It carries me (to other realms)
It places me on the Andalusian dance garment,
That which has stolen all flowers of Andalusia,, without caring for anybody
That which has stolen the light in my eyes,
With reckless abandon.
. . . (Qabbani 531-533)

Yahya Kemal's ode and the lines in Nizar Qabbani's poems together seem to complement the elements of the Flamenco dance. For example, Yahya Kemal does not make mention of a dancer tapping out by clapping hand, Nizar Qabbani does this and names this at as the "symphony of fingers". Perhaps, the dancers in the show that Yahya Kemal watched did not tap out with their fingers and that's why he may not have mentioned this subject in his poem. Yahya Kemal writes his poem as if writing a letter to a friend in distant lands like someone introducing this dance to him so describing everything in detail; anyone who has not watched this dance before can create a mental picture of the dance and the dancers when they read this poem. In Nizar Qabbani, too, one cannot see a troubled person's lack of interest towards their environment in his poems about Spain; in spite of his grief, he directs his attention to his environment and expresses what he has seen in detail.

"The magic song of love is on hundreds of tongues. / With all of its joy, Spain is at this bell." In this couplet, Yahya Kemal tells us about the Spanish people's custom of accompanying songs. Moreover, with the phrase "With all of its joy, Spain", he emphasizes the Spanish people's characteristic nature, i.e. their disposition to laugh and have fun together. On the other hand, in his short poem entitled "Sonata", which he included in "Awraq İsbaniyya", Nizar Qabbani states that the guitar fills one with grief but at the same time it also gives joy: ''In the body of a wailing guitar / Spain dies… and is born'' (Qabbani 546).

"Their sudden spins like the turning of a fan, / Their flirtatious whirling, opening and covering themselves . . ." In this couplet, Yahya Kemal indicates, while the dance is being performed, the dancer's rapid and lithe movements, their sudden turns to the right or left, their bending down and then up in a flirtatious manner, their swaying their skirts with their hands and their pulling them to themselves. He describes us in such details the movements of the dancers in these words as if we were watching it, not skipping anything.

"Not all colors do our eyes desire, they are on red now; / Spain is at this shawl wave after wave this evening." The color red, which is the symbol of love, is a striking color. The poet does not see the other colors, or he does not want to see them; he does not take his eyes off the red color, that is the shawl of the dancer. The Spaniards, too, have engrossed themselves, like the poet, in the dance and focused their eyes on the colorful shawl. In this couplet, the poet employs assonance in the Turkish poem for the purpose of adding harmony to the couplet. While he uses, of the other vowels, the letter "e" four times, "I" five times, "I" three times, "u" and "ü" twice, he uses the letter "a" twelve times. Moreover, his use of *bronze rhyme* with *–al* and *şal* and the repeated phrases of "*-dadır*" have enriched the harmony in the poem.

"Her lustful fringes are in ringlets on her forehead, / And the most beautiful rose of hussy Granada is on her breast . . ." Here, the poet turns his gaze towards the dancer's face and the rose she wears on her chest. He likens her fringes to the fringes of hussies and attributes attractiveness to Granada that is typical of a hussy beauty. Here, he uses the figure of speech of simile (tashbih baligh) where the city is likened to a seductive beauty. The artistic merit of this simile is that an inanimate being is attributed to a quality that is specific to human beings, that is Granada is ascribed the beauty of a woman through

personification (tashkhis). Yahya Kemal does not look at the city the way Nizar Qabbani sees it. He voices the beauties the city brings to mind and wants to see its beauty, rather than the sorrows. When he watches the dance, he does not, like Nizar Qabbani, acts with a sense of belonging there historically.

"There is a golden chalice in every hand and the sun is in every heart; / Spain, with all its existence, is at this rose this evening." It is understood from this couplet that those watching the dance spend the evening drinking. He describes the wine glass, which has turned yellow due to the color of the wine, as a golden glass. Here, too, he emphasizes the sharpness of the color of the wine by using the art of simile (tashbih baligh). He finds the effect left by the attractive color of gold in the wine glass. By citing the sun, gold and wine glass in this line, the poet highlights the bright color common to them. These three beings are believed to provide happiness; by choosing these words, the poet seems to announce that he is one of them. With the phrase "the sun is in every heart", the happiness of those present there is emphasized. Since he uses the word the sun in place of happiness, he has made use of simile (istiara tasrikhiyya). The artistic beauty of this simile is that an abstract concept has been concretized, i.e. the art of personification (tashkhis) has been used. He states that the present company has spent a fine night and forgotten about themselves among the elements that have rendered the environment beautiful. In addition, these couplets provide some clues as to the socio-cultural life of the Spanish people. It is emphasized that the Spanish people are gregarious society that loves eating and drinking together. The poet deals with this issue, which he sees and takes seriously, in passing.

Nizar Qabbani, too, has watched this same dance in a pub. However, he is busy reminiscing his ancestors rather than the joy of the Spanish people. He is sad rather than happy in his poem "Bakâya al-'Arap" in "Awraq İsbaniyya":

Flamenco..
Flamenco..
And the slumbering pub awakens
With the laughter of the bells of its wooden tambourine.
And with a sad sound going shrill,
Flowing like a golden fountain.
And I am sitting at a corner.
Wiping my tears,
And gathering the remains of the Arabs.
(Qabbani 556)

In these lines of his, Qabbani attaches the ability of laughing, which is unique to human kind, to the bell of the tambourine. This line contains the art of metaphor (istiara makniyya). The poet has strengthened the meaning by using the art of personification.

Whereas Nizar Qabbani is filled with sadness which he is watching the Flamenco dance, Yahya Kemal loses the joy that he feels in his poem "Dance in Andalusia" in still another poem entitled "Coffee Shop in Madrid". In this poem, he seems to envy the joy of the Spanish people. He feels sorry about his being away from his country and voices his longing for it:

I saw a cafe in Madrid, which is a synagogue,
We are somewhere where remarks are palavers.
Hundreds of bigmouths lost in laughter and talk,
This clamor still lingering in my tired ears
I paused, sadly pitying my situation
Remembering for a moment Café Çınaraltı in serene Emirgan,
And the sound of the leaves in northerly winds.
Sometimes, one's heart drifts into the music of the waters
Sometimes into the most beautiful of Yesâri's calligraphies.
(Beyatlı, *Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* 109)

Indeed, as two grandchildren of two conquering nations, Yahya Kemal and Nizar Qabbani share similar feelings. But, the objects of love in the hearts of the two are different cities. While Nizar Qabbani, a grandchild of Arabs, yearns for Granada of unequalled beauty, which his ancestors had once conquered, Yahya Kemal, the grandson of that glorious nation who conquered Istanbul, the pearl of the world, longs for it. If there is one city left to be loved in the world, it has to be Istanbul. The poet never fails to mention Istanbul, in which he lives wherever he goes and cannot wait to meet again.

"She stops in the middle of the dance and dances as if she walks; / She looks with a turning of the head, as if she kills . . ." In this couplet, the poet returns to the dance after three couplets. He continues to describe in detail the dancers' movements specific to Flamenco, their stopping for a moment and then resuming the dance, their turning their heads to the viewers sharply and casting a glance, the effect of these looks on the viewers and the dancers' actions. Again, he uses metaphors (tashbih) in both lines, creating a vivid image of the dance in the readers' eyes.

"She has a rosy, ember lips, and smutty eyes . . . / Devil tells me I should hug and kiss her a hundred times". The poet states, from the bare parts of the dancer's body that it has a pinkish color. The fact that her lips are red with lipstick, her eyes are jet black and her eyelashes are smutty make the dancer even lovelier for the poet and he wants to embrace her, kissing profusely. It is seen that the poet has deliberately used the phrases "a rosy", "ember lips", and "smutty eyes" to reflect the riot of colors. The art of metaphor (tashbih baligh) has again been used three times in these phrases. Yahya Kemal describes, using these adjectives, how the great differences between colors exist harmoniously in the same single face. Frequent reference to these different colors in this and other couplets indicates us that a riot of colors is prevalent in the environment.

"To the shawl that dazzles the eyes, to the rose that enchants, / And to the bell that fills every heart, an 'Ole!' from all chests". While concluding his poem, the poet returns to the shawl, rose and bell. Just as he has begun the poem with the bell, shawl and rose, so he bids his farewell with bell, shawl and rose. The sound of the bell, the dancer's shawl and the rose have impressed everyone and they all encourage the dancer shouting 'Ole!'. 'Ole' is defined as ''an exclamation of approval or encouragement customary at bullfights, flamenco dancing, and other Spanish or Latin American events'' (Dictionary.com n.d.). It is rumored that the origin of the word 'Ole' is Arabic 'Allah' but in time its pronunciation has changed into 'Ole' in Spanish and is used to express approval and like (Fakhruddin).

As can be seen in all of his couplets, the poet went there that evening to have fun and watch their dance, so he does not want bitter memories to sour the entertainment. He desires to spend a good evening with the people there, get to know their culture and take part in their joy. He observes the people, and envies their happy state. When we hear the poem, the lines that voice excitement, joy and love do not take us to realms of sadness.

Conclusion

Nizar Qabbani and Yahya Kemal served as diplomats in Spain and breathed the same air there. Yahya Kemal wrote two poems about Spain entitled "Dance in Andalusia" and "Coffee Shop in Madrid". The poet's longing for his motherland is in the foreground in 'Coffee Shop in Madrid'. He is sad while the Spanish talk and laugh in joy. The themes dealt with in the two poets' poems "Dance in Andalusia" and ''Granada'' are different. While one is concerned with weeping and yearning, the other describes dance and joy. Whereas Yahya Kemal's poem deals with a crowd that has fun and is rapturous with the dance of the dancer, the environment where the dance is performed, and the Spanish joy, and makes happiness into music, Nizar Qabbani's poem is a sad symphony, a yearning and an elegy. Each couplet is like a sorrowful sound emanating from an instrument where sorrows are played with different notes. Just like music played with sadness touches sensitive parts of our hearts, so do the couplets of the ode trickle into us suffering and grief slowly and drop by drop. This is so much so that when the poet hugs the girl for farewell in the final couplet, we feel a need in us to embrace the poet to console him. The poem is rare compared with similar ones in terms of its form and content. Emotions, sadness, yearning and admiration have all mingled with one another with all their shades on the pallet the poet holds in his hand and the poet has managed to produce an unequalled painting by distributing that mixture across that canvas of poetry.

The quantity and the quality of the poems indicate that Nizar Qabbani is devoted to Andalusia with closer bonds, the bond of Arabness, than Yahya Kemal. It is observed that in comparison with him, Yahya Kemal did not establish a spiritual connection with Andalusia. Since there was not a relationship of belonging between Andalusia and his ancestors, Yahya Kemal acted as an observer and took part in their joy. In his poems about Spain, Yahya Kemal does not share Nizar Qabbani's suffering in Andalusia but the same is also true for Nizar Qabbani; he, too, is far from feeling Yahya Kemal's suffering in connection with the Balkans in his other poems. Yahya Kemal lives the moment in Spain and takes part in the joy of the Spanish people whereas Nizar Qabbani seems to want his ancestors to rise from their graves and hug him. He wishes to roam the narrow streets of Andalusia with his forefathers once again.

Both poets employed descriptions in their poems and made an effort describe to the smallest detail whatever they have seen. The poems "Dance in Andalusia" and "Granada" will remain on top of the Turkish literature and the Arab literature respectively as two exquisite poems until better and newer ones are written.

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Teaching with New Critics

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Abstract
Anglo-American New Criticism was one of the most important movements in the twentieth century literary theories. It stressed the objectivity of a literary work of art and claimed that literary critics as well as teachers should concentrate, primarily, on the text, its linguistic structures and the ambiguities of meaning resulting from them, and only secondarily on the text´s extraliterary relationships. After the New Critics´ popularity in the early decades of the last century, in its second part they were refused as pure formalists, supposedly unable to see the real nature of a literary work in its social circumstances. The article attempts to reassess New Criticism as a movement which contributed significantly to the reading and teaching literature and claims that their importance has not diminished even in the twenty-first century.

Keywords
New Criticism, teaching literature, literary theory, close reading, formalism

Introduction

The twentieth century saw an unprecedented upsurge of literary theorizing. It was one of the results of the shift of paradigm in the perception of the study and teaching of literature in academic space – from the nineteenth century´s understanding of literary studies as just one, not necessarily the most important, part of a more general philological context, to its establishment as an independent academic discipline. The post-Victorian decades, in case of English literature, brought a realisation that the ethical, biographical or generally cultural reading and teaching was not enough. There emerged a need to study and teach literature "scientifically", which has continued to be perceived as a necessity by many literary scholars up to the present time. Many manifestations of that "perception", embodied in various attempts to make the literary process (i.e. the interaction between the writer, text, reader – their conceptualisation itself being a result of the mentioned paradigmatic shift) formalised and objectivised, resulted in the numerous theories of literature, or, at the level of analysis and interpretation, various critical approaches to the study of literary texts. However, alongside the rise of literary theories, the teaching of literature has not been given the amount of attention it deserves, although it has always been an important and indispensable part of the new approaches to the literary process. One of a few of these theoretical approaches which considered the teaching worth mentioning was the American New Criticism, and, partially, also deconstruction, which may be considered a continuation of some of the New Critical methods. One could, of course, find also other instances of the conscious links between the theory and practical academic teaching of literature in other twentieth century theories, but they would be out of the scope of these considerations, since the aim of this paper is to concentrate primarily on Anglophone theoretical and academic milieu, drawing on the authors´ higher education experience with teaching in literary courses, which, among other things, shows that there is something wrong with reading, discussing and understanding literature these days.

The issues have been treated at length in numerous articles of which many point to the decreasing interest of students in mechanically ideological interpretations, in the unbelievable "theoretical" tricky plays with language of literary works, as well as, in general, and consequently, in the reading as such. To confront this state of affairs in literary education, researchers, and especially teachers at HEIs, should therefore depart from a mechanical re-working of a set of didactic rules or methodological procedures

for the teaching, and, instead, attempt a more serious re-thinking of the concept and role of literature, especially in the fast-changing contexts of the twenty-first century. I believe that the best starting point for this "rethinking" would be the "forgotten" or "hated" New Criticism. Naturally, speaking and writing about New Criticism in contemporary ideological climate is not an easy path to step on, since current literary studies is not favourable to the work of New Critics. But the times are changing fast and I hope that also in this field there will be a change of emphasis, from the ideologically enforced contexts to the text, only from which one can proceed to such other phenomena as community, culture, religion, with which literature is inextricably interwoven. One of the most important signs of this change is a relatively recent collection of essays entitled *Rereading the New Criticism* (Hickman and McIntyre) in which the contributors attempted to re-assess the place of New Criticism in contemporary literary theories. Of course, one should not forget one of its "predecessors", *The New Criticism and Contemporary Literary Theory: Connections and Continuities* (Spurlin), which juxtaposed some of the essays originally written by the New Critics with their later re-positioning. Some pedagogical aspects of New Criticism have also been touched upon in *The New Criticism: Formalist Literary Theory in America* published by Cambridge Scholars in 2013.

Reading and Teaching with New Critics

The first real effort to make the study and teaching of literature based on scientific criteria,[1] and thus different from the then prevailing impressionistic, biographical and ethical approaches, was made by John Crowe Ransom, a professor at Vanderbilt University and a leading figure in the crystallisation of a group of scholars that later became New Critics. in 1937 he published an article called "Criticism, Inc." in which he maintained that criticism of literature at that time was very poor. Reflecting on how it could be improved, he claimed that it is the responsibility of the university teacher of literature (not the poet or philosopher), "who is styled professor, and who should be the very professional we need to take charge of the critical activity" (Ransom "Criticism Inc."). Professors should stop just "compiling data" and, instead, employ "intelligent standards of criticism" through literary judgements, while "the students of the future must be permitted to study literature, and not merely about literature" (Ransom "Criticism Inc."). What it means to study literature for Ransom can also be guessed from what he excludes from such study, that is, "Personal registrations, which are declarations of the effect of the art-work upon the critic as reader", and later synopsis and paraphrase, historical studies, linguistic studies, moral studies, as well as all "other special studies which deal with some abstract or prose content taken out of the work" (Ransom "Criticism Inc."). Poetry for Ransom represents natural beauty, the world of things, Dinglichkeit, something objective. It is in no way the expression of the poet´s personality. Although he wished to elevate literary criticism to the level of scientific inquiry, he sees the difference between science and art. Science reduces the world to types and forms, while art gives it a "body" (see his *World´s Body*).

A very similar topic was addressed by another member of the group, Allen Tate, who in his famous essay "Miss Emily and the Bibliographer" reflects on the ways the study of literature was practiced at his time. First, he criticises the prevailing practices, saying that if a person eager to study literary criticism "goes to a graduate school he comes out incapacitated for criticism; if he tries to be a critic he is not unlike the ignorant impressionist who did not go to the graduate school. He cannot discuss the literary object in terms of its specific form; all that he can do is to give you its history or tell you how he feels about it" (455). But real literary criticism must start from attributing specific objectivity to a literary work of art, because if it is denied this, "then not only is criticism impossible but literature also" (456).

Giving credit to the above theoretical attempts, one must say, however, that perhaps the best way to get the clearest picture of New Critical methods of reading literary texts would be through the analysis of the work of Cleanth Brooks, one of the movement´s most prominent representatives. Since his critical

[1] It must be realized, however, that the New Critics never claimed that the interpretation of a literary work should be based on the application of the methodology from hard sciences, though their methods cannot be considered "unscientific" either. As Amiran maintains, "New Criticism simultaneously internalized a scientific agenda, developing a critical system whose claims aped those of science, as it understood them, while using those very claims to dislodge the aging English department scientists barring its way." (6).

work, however, partakes of the unfavourable tint New Critics have been given in American society after the demise of structuralism, which, in my opinion, has been the result of, among other things, a gross misunderstanding of their critical intentions, we could start the discussion of Brooks´ critical practices through his reminiscences published posthumously in 1995 in the collection of his essays under the title *Community, Religion, and Literature* (1995). The title itself is quite symptomatic, since it refutes the long-accepted misconception that the New Critics are were the naïve purists not seeing the relation of literature to other social phenomena. In its introductory article "In Search of the New Criticism," Brooks returns to the beginning of the "movement" and provides us with valuable information about its origin, members, etc. One of the things he explains is the fact that New Criticism was not a homogeneous movement, but that the name was just a label given to various critics because they somehow differed from what was at that time understood as a proper way of studying and writing about literature. He essentially confirmed what René Wellek (1986) had said a few years earlier about the nature of New Criticism in his monumental history of western literary criticism, that its members were very heterogeneous, though connected by their refusal of the status quo in literary studies.

Community, Religion, and Literature is important for our purposes also because of another of its author´s reflections on the beginning of his literary career. He says that when in the early 1930s he and Warren "became members of the faculty of a rapidly expanding state university in the Deep South . . . [their] students were bright enough young men and women, but very few of them had the slightest conception of how to read a short story, let alone a poem" (3). He goes on explaining that the problem was also caused by the textbooks which the students were using and which "did not address themselves to the real issues. They printed the texts, gave some brief account of the poet´s life, supplied notes for allusions or difficult words, and usually topped it all off with a dollop of impressionistic criticism" (3). That situation was the reason why they had decided to write a new book on how to teach poetry, *Understanding Poetry*, of which later became a manifesto of a new approach to not only teaching literature, but literary studies in general – the New Criticism. Although Brooks speaks about the 1930s, and we are aware of the fact that the textbooks used in literary courses at the beginning of the twenty-first century are no longer that simple, his description is almost a perfect characterisation of what many students still expect from reading literary works anyway. More details will be illustrated through the following analysis of the above-mentioned textbook, which demonstrated its continuing relevance even nowadays.

Understanding Poetry is not just a textbook, but also an anthology. Since its first publication in 1938 it has gone through several editions in which the authors changed the texts and added new commentary on the nature of poetry and its interpretation, not betraying, naturally, their own initial intention of close reading, which has earned them an undeserved label of "formalists" unable to see the meaning of a literary work in context. Brooks explains the text-context dialectic as follows:

> In the first edition of *Understanding Poetry* we deliberately left out most (though not all) biographical and historical material, for we were hard pressed for space and we believed that, since the graduate schools of the day taught little else, the average college instructor could and would supply any necessary biographical-historical material. When the outcry came, as it soon did, that we disparaged such helps, in later editions we supplied them in abundance. But it was too late. The dog had been given a bad name that he was never able to shake off. (4)

The first edition of *Understanding Poetry* begins with a "Letter to the Teacher" in which the authors clarified, in a nutshell, what they consider important for the teaching and reading of literature:

> This book has been conceived on the assumption that if poetry is worth teaching at all it is worth teaching as poetry. The temptation to make a substitute for the poem as the object of study is usually overpowering. The substitutes are various, but the most common ones are:
> 1. Paraphrase of logical and narrative content.
> 2. Study of biographical and historical materials.
> 3. Inspirational and didactic interpretation. (Brooks and Warren iv)

Paraphrasing the content, or re-telling the story, is usually one of the first impulses a student has when asked to analyse a literary work. This is quite natural, since it does not require any great effort, almost no critical or creative thinking. And it can be learned from works´ synopses abundant on various internet pages, even without having to read the work itself. So, it is the first task of the teacher to show that "paraphrase may be necessary as a preliminary step in the reading of a poem," (iv) that it is not a proper analysis or interpretation. The same holds true for the second "substitute". Reading students´ term essays and diploma works, a teacher is frequently confronted with much space devoted to historical and biographical context. Again, quite naturally, since they do not require any reading or creative skills, just an ability to summarise well-known facts. The case is the same as with the paraphrase, since "a study of the biographical and historical background may do much to clarify interpretation; but these things should be considered as means and not as ends" (iv).

It may seem that this mistake is (can be) made just by students, and that contemporary theory has progressed much beyond that naïve assumption. However, what certain current scholars do not realise is the fact that what was for the past scholars the biographical and historical context is for the current ones the ideological context, which is also based on extra-literary, or, as Wellek would have it, extrinsic factors. Thus today´s postcolonial literary studies is just very slightly different from the biographical and historical criticism of the past, since it forces the reader to look primarily behind the literary text itself, using it not as an end, by a means of other interests and ambitions.

The third substitution, "inspirational and didactic interpretation," has much to do with the emergence of literary studies as an academic subject and a need to provide it with a certain methodological outfit, as all proper academic subjects should have. It was not possible to aspire for the scientific universality, if basic tools of evaluation were, for example, the scholar's impressions. New Criticism in this departure from the impressionistic methods of the 19th century´s Victorian trends falls into a more general European shift towards what was later labelled as formalism and structuralism. As with other principles, however, also impressions are not something one should completely avoid in the analysis of a literary work. Guerin, for example, says that impressions even form a natural part of the appreciation of a poem or a short story, constituting its "pre-critical" phase (1). Thus, when one is faced with a student´s question of whether he/she can express his/her own opinion, impression, one should probably say yes, but not "*in isolation from other aspects and from the total intention*" (Brooks and Warren iv, emphasis in the original).

All in all, as the first product of the New Critical approach to literary studies, *Understanding Poetry* can be summarised as a search for a complexity of literary meaning which does not result just from one aspect of an analysed literary work, but from the interaction of its several constitutive parts, from "the relations of the various aspects of a poem to each other and to the total communication intended (ix). A literary work is not seen here to exist in isolation from its surroundings, as it was later claimed by their opponents, but as "a literary construct before it can offer any real illumination as a document" (iv). And this seems to be forgotten by current literary scholarship, of which one group as if almost lost common sense either by looking for literary signification in non-literary phenomena and thus stressing a general relativity, or, by not being able to discriminate between the kind of reality produced by art and the everyday, pragmatic, lived reality.

The complexity of the New Critical literary meaning can also be illustrated on the division of the book into several parts, each as if dealing with one aspect of it: narrative poems, implied narrative, objective description, metrics, tone and attitude, imagery, theme. The authors take pains to stress that each of these aspects has sense only in relation with the totality of other aspects. They also stress that their organisation and model readings of poems should not imply any kind of prescribed procedure for teaching, since "even if a teacher disagrees with an individual analysis, an explanation of that disagreement should dramatize for the student the basic issues involved. And in fact, the editors feel that disagreement is to be encouraged rather than discouraged in so far as pure impressionism can be eliminated from the debate" (xiii). This could answer another most frequent question of students, asking if they can express their own opinion. Yes, but that opinion should be an informed, justified one, a result of the previous critical thinking, of wondering why and how, of trying to induce the general from the relationship of particulars. This is the way of engaging with poems (and, by extension, literary works) the

authors wanted their interpretational anthology to achieve. They summarised it once again for the prospective teachers, claiming that

> a satisfactory method of teaching poetry should embody the following principles.
> 1. Emphasis should be kept on the poem as a poem.
> 2. The treatment should be concrete and inductive.
> 3. A poem should always be treated as an organic system of relationships, and the poetic quality should never be understood as inhering in one or more factors taken in isolation. (ix)

Another important, though frequently misunderstood, concept associated with New Criticism is that of "close reading". Although it was not invented by New Critics, they elevated it to an important critical principle. It was successfully used in another Brooks´s book *The Well Wrought Urn*, published in 1947, which continues the most important principle emphasised in *Understanding Poetry*, i.e. that poems should be read as poems, and not as something else. Brooks offered his reading of several poems, past and present, with the aim of finding some common denominator for all poetry, a structural feature which would apply to past or present poems, or, as he put it, some residuum which would be left "after we have referred the poem to its cultural matrix" (x). He further justifies this aim as follows:

> We tend to say that every poem is an expression of its age; that we must be careful to ask of it only what its own age asked; that we must judge it only by the canons of its age. Any attempt to view it *sub specie aeternitatis*, we feel, must result in illusion. Perhaps it must. Yet, if poetry exists as poetry in any meaningful sense, the attempt must be made. Otherwise the poetry of the past becomes significant merely as cultural anthropology, and the poetry of the present, merely as a political, or religious, or moral instrument. (x)

What Brooks unknowingly says poetry could become if it is stripped of its universality, actually begins to materialize in the following years when in English departments anthropology, politics, religion and ethics, were really given more space than poetry or literature, which, in turn, really served as an instrument in culture wars. Brooks´s readings here, however, were different, both in its choice of the authors as well as in method of interpretation. As in *Understanding Poetry,* in *The Well Wrought Urn* he concentrates on the language and poetic effects created through the interrelationship of its elements. He does not say anything about the life of the authors or a period in which they lived and worked, nor does he reflect on his feelings and impressions, but, on the contrary, takes up words, phrases or lines and analyses their meanings, literal and metaphorical or symbolic. What he is especially after is ambiguity, paradox and irony, for they create the complexity of poetic statement. His first essay is even called "The Langue of Paradox", and says bluntly that "the language of poetry is the language of paradox" (3). It is necessary to analyse the language, images, tone and theme, but they are only component parts of the ultimate paradox through which the poem says what cannot be said straight. In case of the Wordsworth´s sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" it is that, Brooks claims, "only when the poet sees the city under the semblance of death that he can see it actually alive" (7), or, as in the analysis of Donne´s "Canonization", when "lovers in rejecting life actually win to the most intense life" (15).

In addition to language, what is usually very intriguing about poetry for students is that they always try to find out what the poem is about, to paraphrase its meaning. Brooks pays close attention to it in his essay "The Heresy of Paraphrase", saying that it is not possible to judge a poem either by its content or form. It is a confusing and false duality always reducing the poem´s meaning which does not "reside" in one or the other, but emerges through a dramatization, "the working out of the various tensions" (207).

While *Understanding Poetry* and *The Well Wrought Urn* are rather practical examples of the New Critical methodology of (close) reading, *The Verbal Icon* has become the most sophisticated elaboration of its theoretical principles. It is a collection of essays by William K. Wimsatt (1954, two in collaboration with Monroe Beardsley, as the title page indicates) originally written for various literary magazines and later put together and published as a monographic work studying the "meaning of poetry". It has become famous especially for the two first essays – "The Intentional Fallacy" and the "Affective Fallacy", adding

to the repertoire of the sticky New Critical "catchwords". Naturally, also these two principles were later supposedly "disparaged" by (mostly) post-structural critical approaches, such as the Geneva School (critics of consciousness) or various forms of reader-response critics. What the "disparagers" did not realise (or did not want to?) was the fact that Wimsatt (as well New Critics in general) never claimed that works of art are totally stripped of any relationship to an author´s subjective imagination, or to a reader´s personal impression. As most other misunderstandings of the New Critical "close reading", also this is thus a result of a pitiful misreading of Wimsatt´s "intention".

Conclusion

As I have already indicated, one of the most characteristic features of the present is the role theory plays in our everyday life. In the field of sciences new theories usually result in the introduction of new or improved technology - mobile phones, tablets, PC´s, new models of cars, planes or even spaceships. No one can deny this, though one can argue whether new technology is always for the good, or for the worse. However, despite the questionable pragmatic or ethical values of many new technological instruments or machines, they are undoubtedly almost always undeniable manifestations of an increased sophistication of human thinking. But new theories in literary studies may not always be demonstrations of such thinking. Some scholars claim that they may rather be damaging for their main object – literature.

If New Critics are then blamed for the unnatural objectification of a literary work, for the alleged cutting it off of its social and cultural milieu, one can blame many contemporary movements in literary studies for the exact opposite - for the forgetting that social, political, cultural, gender, ideological, sexual, postcolonial, and what not, effects should only be literature´s secondary role or effect, since "A poet must take as his material his own language as it is actually spoken around him", and the poet´s duty "is only indirectly to the people: his direct duty is to his language, first to preserve, and second to extend and improve" (Eliot). Teaching literature with New Critics shows us what such care for one´s language really is.

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