Universität Rostock Traditio et Innovatio

The Polyphonic Novel in Contemporary British Fiction: Neoliberal Individualism and Collective Narratives

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Emre Yeşilbaş
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The Polyphonic Novel in Contemporary British Fiction: Neoliberal Individualism and Collective Narratives

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Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die eingereichte Dissertation mit dem Titel

The Polyphonic Novel in Contemporary British Fiction: Neoliberal Individualism and Collective Narratives

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Rostock, ... …… ……

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6. ‘Gece ve Gündüz & Doğu ve Batı: Tanpınar’ın Işığında Modernleşme Sancıları’, [Night and Day & East and West: The Pain of Turkish Modernisation in Tanpinar’s Works] METU History Students Congress, 2008.

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Abstract

This thesis offers an alternative history of contemporary British fiction with a focus on the polyphonic novel by centralizing the conception of genre as a 'way of seeing and conceptualizing the world.' Polyphony denotes the coexistence of multiple narratives, protagonists, and perspectives or focalisers that are represented as (partly) incompatible, yet equally valid and unreconciled by the text (cf. Bakhtin). Hitherto, polyphonic novels have either been interpreted to lack a shared ethical stance and therefore as incapable of adequately engaging with broader political, societal or collective problems (cf. Bradford, Head, Hutchinson), or they have been disregarded entirely. By recontextualizing and reintroducing the polyphonic novel as a distinctive, emergent (cf. Williams) genre that mediates the contradictions of neoliberal individualism and its cultural manifestation, postmodernism, this thesis offers a distinctive perspective on cultural diversity and social fragmentation in contemporary Britain and aims to complement aesthetic and postmodernist literary histories that prioritize diversity. The dissertation focuses on elucidating the relationship between the relatively common trend of polyphony, and the historical development of neoliberal individualism and postmodernism in contemporary Britain: does the polyphonic novel appear as an emancipatory negotiation of the conflicts of neoliberal individualism and postmodernism with regards to, for instance, cultural diversity and social fragmentation; or, does polyphony appear to be mainly symptomatic and mimetic of the social fragmentation caused by neoliberalism and postmodernism?

The thesis demonstrates that contemporary polyphony is better comprehended in relation to the contradiction between these two tendencies. To this end, the dissertation questions whether paradigmatic polyphonic novels represent the individual as capable of transcending the social in terms of overcoming the contradictions of neoliberalism and postmodernism. The central aim, therefore, is to document polyphonic novel's formulation of its historically contingent 'way of seeing and conceptualizing the world.' The central methodology to elucidate these questions is derived from Fredric Jameson's 'ideology critique,' in which the 'absences' and 'limits' in the form of the novel, such as the plot structure, are systematically analyzed to unmask the underlying assumptions about the

relationship between the individual and society. To this end, this thesis prioritizes a meta-historical analysis of academic responses to the polyphonic novel and contextualizes the aforementioned 'absences' and 'structural limits' by literary, sociological and philosophical secondary sources. The aim of this methodology is to explicate the mutually contingent relationship between the increasing popularity of the polyphonic novel, and contemporary British society and culture in the context of neoliberalism and postmodernism.

Predominantly, polyphony appears as a genre that comprehends the individual as capable of transcending the social background of neoliberalism and postmodernism, and related issues such as racism and multiculturalism (Smith's *White Teeth*), the neoliberal financial system and family (Lanchester's *Capital*), the 'new global and neoliberal world order,' social Darwinism and environmental collapse (Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*). Exceptionally, Robertson's *And the Land Lay Still* comprehends the social, historical, and cultural as constitutive of Scottish contemporaneity and emphasizes that no meaningful resolution or change is possible without engaging with the social whole. The polyphonic novel, then, not only represents a critical reaction to neoliberalism by challenging central neoliberal issues but also embraces a relatively common trope in neoliberalism and postmodernism, i.e., 'the individual transcending the social and historical background,' thereby offering a narrative of 'surviving neoliberalism,' which leads to unmasking the ways in which the genre negotiates the social issues of British contemporaneity.

List of Abbreviations

Primary Sources

1	*ATLLS*	*And the Land Lay Still*
2	*C*	*Capital*
3	*CA*	*Cloud Atlas*
4	*WT*	*White Teeth*

Secondary Sources

1	*ABHON*	*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*
2	*ACC*	*A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*
3	*BFOT*	*British Fiction of the 1990s*
4	*CBF*	*Contemporary British Fiction*
5	*CBL*	*Contemporary British Literature and Urban Space: After Thatcher*
6	*MBAD*	*Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*
7	*Prosaics*	*Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*
8	*MB*	*Mikhail Bakhtin: The Word in the World*
9	*ND*	*Narrative Discourse*
10	*Narratology*	*Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*
11	*Postmodernism*	*Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*
12	*PDP*	*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*
13	*English Fiction*	*English Fiction since 1984: Narrating a Nation*
14	*The 2000s*	*The 2000s. A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*
15	*The Cambridge Introduction*	*The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*
16	*TCOP*	*The Condition of Postmodernity*
17	*TCBN*	*The Contemporary British Novel*
18	*TFHY*	*The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*
19	*The Novel Now*	*The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction*
20	*TPU*	*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*
21	*TSOTN*	*The State of the Novel: Britain and Beyond*

Berlin, November 10, [1837]

There are life-moments that, like border markers, stand before an expiring time while at the same time clearly pointing out a new direction.

In such transitional moments we feel ourselves compelled to observe the past and the future with eagle-eyes of thought, in order to attain consciousness of our actual position. Indeed, world history itself loves such looking back and inspection, which often impresses it with the appearance of retrogression and stagnation, while it is really only sitting back in the easy chair, in order to comprehend itself and to intellectually penetrate its own activity, the act of spirit.

[…]

As I left you a new world was born for me, a world of love, and, indeed, in the beginning a love intoxicated with longing and empty of hope. The trip to Berlin, which otherwise would delight me in the highest degree, would excite in me the appreciation of nature, would fire up a love of life, left me cold. Indeed it put me in a noticeably bad humor, for the rocks which I saw were neither steeper nor more intimidating than the feelings of my soul, the wide cities were not more lively than my own blood, the tavern tables no more filled or indigestible than the packets of fantasy I carried with me, and finally, the art not so beautiful as Jenny.

[…]

Having arrived in Berlin, I broke off all previous relationships, made only few visits and those without joy, and sought to lose myself in science and art.

[…]

From irritation I couldn't think at all for a few days, walked around like mad in the garden by the dirty water of the Spree, which "washes the soul and dilutes the tea." I even joined a hunting party with my landlord, and then rushed off to Berlin, where I wanted to embrace every person standing on the street – corner.

Excerpts from "Letter From Marx to His Father in Trier"
The First Writings of Karl Marx (1963), edited by Paul M. Schafer
Karl Marx in seinem Briefen, Ed. Saul K. Padover;
Published: in German by Verlag C.H. Beck;
Translation: Paul M. Schafer.

Introduction

The Contemporary Polyphonic Novel as the Narrative Aesthetics of a Neoliberal Britain

Polyphony, as far as Mikhail Bakhtin describes it, indicates the coexistence of multiple perspectives and focalisers whose perspectives are represented as (partly or fully) incompatible, yet equally valid and unreconciled by the text. Polyphony differs from traditional understandings of the novel in the ways in which it formulates collective narratives. These collective narratives are composed of several equally important protagonists, individually significant plots, and distinct "ways of seeing the world," the contradictions of which are not resolved with the help of an authorial and dominant narrative perspective. The reception of Bakhtin's polyphony in contemporary criticism exhibits two distinct tendencies in comprehending the implications of narrative multiplicity. On the one hand, Bakhtin's polyphony is employed to celebrate epistemological and ideological diversity with an emphasis on its emancipatory discourse of community making or its capacity to grant voice to underrepresented groups. On the other hand, polyphony is criticised to lack any sense of cohesion and social character because of its representation of the fractured and fragmented reality of our times.

This thesis, however, does not aim to concentrate exclusively on the celebration of diversity in polyphony. Nor does it disregard polyphony entirely as a problematic concept that is, at least to a certain extent, reduced to criticisms directed at postmodernism with a disproportionate attention on individual perspectives and fragments that disregards its social meanings and emancipatory possibilities. On the contrary, this thesis aims to comprehend contemporary polyphony in relation to the contradiction between these two tendencies.

Polyphony functions particularly well as an interpretive tool in understanding the relationship between different and often conflicting narratives in the text. However, Bakhtin's equivocal and at times incongruous conceptualization of polyphony restricts its application to such an extent that it becomes nearly impossible to recognize the social functions of polyphony. Bakhtin himself sees polyphony as a historical phenomenon and

capitalism as its precondition, but nevertheless he limits the function of polyphony to representation in the way in which it focuses on how the social influences the aesthetic without investigating the ways in which polyphony shapes the social, thereby missing the opportunity to elaborate on its social functions in capitalism. Therefore, in order to formulate a critical understanding of Bakhtin's concept and its social meanings and functions, this thesis aims to investigate the relationship between contemporary polyphony and neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism appears as a contradiction-laden concept. On the one hand, to the extent that it ascribes value to individual freedoms, it has been extensively employed as a powerful discourse in its opposition to oppressive social structures and in its capacity to identify itself as the precondition of individual liberties. At the same time, however, neoliberalism reflects an insistent enmity towards any other form of collective category other than itself in the way in which it envisions the market as the most efficient category to organize social life. While appealing to individual liberties and the right of the individual subject to determine their own life according to their own choices, neoliberalism proposes the vision of a society that is severely fragmented and yet is consolidated by the market itself, which, in turn, paradoxically determines both the characteristics of the individual subject and the social. Market, as a result, appears as the untranscendable category according to which all other concepts are defined and comprehended. This specific reasoning of neoliberalism finds its cultural manifestation in the shape of postmodernism, which, to a certain extent, has the function of legitimizing the contradictions of neoliberal individualism.

Although it is feasible to grasp postmodernism as a stylistic concept, for the purposes of this study it is necessary to comprehend it as a historical phenomenon. Postmodernism, to the extent that it opposes collective and transcendental categories, not only manifests the contradictions of neoliberalism but also actively legitimizes them. Postmodernism implies, among many other things, that everything is relative and therefore equally valid, which naturally resists any form of ethical judgement. It does so by appealing to value relativism and its suggested emancipatory promise of vanquishing the dominance of one culture over another, or one cultural practice over another. If the argument that everything is relative and equally valid holds true, postmodernism projects an inherently

paradoxical logic due to its prevalence in contemporary culture. In other words, if everything appears to be equally valid, there appears to be no explanation as to why postmodernism projects a consistent resistance to, for instance, value judgement, which should, according to postmodernist criteria, appear as an equally valid practice. This, of course, exemplifies some of the paradoxical features of postmodernism, but more essentially it aids the comprehension of postmodernism as the cultural dominant of neoliberalism in the way in which it legitimizes the latter's incongruities. This process becomes intelligible through the analysis of some of the fundamental characteristics of postmodernism in relation to neoliberalism.

One central example is the relatively common –and necessarily postmodern– tendency in contemporary criticism to disregard or misjudge polyphony as a distinct genre. Contemporary criticism, at least in its investigation of polyphony, replicates the postmodern tendency to circumvent transcendental interpretive categories, which comprehends narrative multiplicity as *sheer diversity* rather than aspiring to discern the implications that may arise out of such a multiplicity. It follows, then, to claim that the identification of contemporary polyphony as a distinct genre fills a necessary gap in contemporary criticism by rejecting to evade overarching interpretative categories, which is, more often than not, symptomatic of postmodernism in the way in which the social character, meanings and functions of a relatively common trend are misconstrued.

This thesis therefore maintains that the contemporary uses and considerations of polyphony are predicated on the link between neoliberalism and postmodernism. As postmodernism has the function of legitimizing the paradoxes of neoliberalism, it appears as the cultural manifestation of the latter and, as such, helps to elucidate the social functions of contemporary polyphony. Accordingly, the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction should be grasped as an emergent genre that mediates the social conflicts of neoliberalism in a way that contains them, at least in most cases, through reproducing distinctly postmodern characteristics while simultaneously demonstrating a critical stance against neoliberalism. The dichotomy between these two positions is not only constitutive of contemporary polyphony, but it also appears as an aesthetic manifestation and narrative negotiation of the conflicts of neoliberalism and postmodernism.

Accordingly, this thesis offers an alternative account of contemporary British fiction by re-introducing the grand narrative of literary history, not as a teleological conviction but rather as a methodological tool. Such a methodological move is crucial first and foremost to resist the temptation to comprehend postmodern literature in an exclusively postmodern way, which could be tentatively related to the celebration of diversity at the expense of circumventing the analysis of overarching frameworks.

The study of postmodern literature with a focus on the celebration of diversity is of utmost value as the majority of literary histories convincingly illustrate. Nonetheless, comprehending the larger, social and historical characteristics, functions and meanings of diversity in postmodern literature requires an overarching methodology in order to comprehend the general framework of literary patterns and trends in contemporary British fiction. Another reason why such a move is required is the aim to fill the gap of sustained political analysis in order to understand the social characteristics, functions and meanings of literary trends and patterns, specifically narrative diversity and multiplicity. The political shift is relevant and crucial not because it necessarily provides qualitatively better or more interesting results than an aesthetic approach, which is usually the dominant approach in current literary histories, but primarily because it aims to fill the gap of political analysis of literary trends in contemporary British fiction. The general framework of this thesis, therefore, aims to complement aesthetic and postmodernist literary histories by offering an alternative account of the diversity in contemporary British fiction.

Overview and Methodology

The polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction is the narrative aesthetics of neoliberalism. In order to test and prove this claim, this thesis will start, in the first chapter, with a historical meta-analysis of Bakhtinian polyphony with the general purpose of re-centralizing the ideological and political focus of Bakhtin's concept. To this end, I will first introduce the polyphonic novel as an emergent genre in contemporary British fiction with the help of Raymond Williams' conception of emergent cultural forms as socially significant objects through which specific notions of *being a human* are negotiated. In addition, comprehending the polyphonic novel as an emergent genre requires the analysis and differentiation of contemporary polyphony from other narratives of multiplicity such

as short story cycles and multiperspectival novels while also sustaining a focus on social meanings of such genres. The contemporary polyphonic novel differs from other narratives of multiplicity in the way in which different "ways of seeing the world" become manifest as ideological contradictions rather than epistemological variety. This will be followed, in the context of ideological contradiction, by the analysis of postmodernism as a historical condition and the cultural manifestation of neoliberalism. Accordingly, I will develop the understanding of contemporary polyphony as the manifestation of the ideological contradiction that is prevalent in postmodernism due to the latter's insistence on cultural and ethical relativism. In other words, this thesis comprehends the contemporary polyphonic novel as a central genre in which the contradictions and meanings of postmodernism as well as neoliberalism are negotiated, challenged, legitimized or resisted. As such, the polyphonic novel appears as an emergent genre of postmodern and neoliberal British contemporariness.

The second part of re-conceptualizing Bakhtin's concept requires the analysis and critical comprehension of polyphony in contemporary British fiction. The second chapter will therefore provide a historical meta-analysis of the ways in which contemporary literature is predominantly studied. To this end, I will first explore what British contemporaneity and contemporary Britishness denote, reformulating these concepts in order to provide an alternative history of contemporary British fiction. Comprehending the meanings of such a periodization is essential for both British contemporaneity and contemporary Britishness appear as constitutive elements of the polyphonic novel as a genre. This will be followed by a historical meta-analysis of academic responses to, first, the post-Thatcher novel, and second, the polyphonic novel. As the analysis will later demonstrate, although polyphony is omnipresent in the study of contemporary British novel, its emergence as a central trend is often unexplored and its social meanings are commonly misconstrued. In order to fill this gap and provide an alternative history of contemporary British fiction, and because the academic response to the polyphonic novel reveals once again that the study of postmodern literature is predominantly dependent on postmodern approaches, this thesis will re-centralize genre as an overarching framework to offer an alternative, non-postmodernist literary history of contemporary British fiction.

In addition, chapter two will maintain that genre can be comprehended as a way of knowing and conceptualizing the world. Accordingly, the polyphonic novel appears as the specific 'common sense' or the aesthetics of neoliberalism. This will be followed by a detailed analysis and reformulation of the characteristics of the polyphonic novel as a contemporary emergent genre. This move redirects the attention to literary and cultural characteristics of polyphony by providing a detailed account of the aesthetic and formal qualities of the genre, which will be utilized as the central methodology for the analysis of four central and paradigmatic polyphonic novels that are chosen for this study. Employing Fredric Jameson's "ideology critique," which analyzes the *absences* in the plot and how the plot is *limited* and *structured* in relation to the social and historical context, the following chapters will investigate simultaneously how the literary, aesthetic and formal characteristics of the genre shape British contemporaneity as well as contemporary Britishness. In short, this thesis will illustrate how formal, aesthetic, structural and literary characteristics of the polyphonic novel negotiate postmodernism and neoliberalism while also explicating how they appear as a 'force field' through which such structural and literary elements manifest themselves. To this end, I will employ literary, sociological and philosophical secondary sources to contextualize the analysis at the conjuncture of postmodernism and neoliberalism.

The following chapters will focus on close-readings of paradigmatic polyphonic novels that are representative of central issues in contemporary Britain. In the close-readings of the selected novels, the aforementioned methodology translates into comprehending the polyphonic novel as an inherently contradictory genre with two levels of interpretation: on the first and overt level, the multiplicity of postmodern polyphony is comprehended as a symbolic resolution to specific social conflicts of neoliberal individualism, thereby exploring the emancipatory and critical potential of the genre. On the second and covert level, the analysis shifts to uncovering and identifying the 'form-shaping monology,' or in other words, the dominant and authoritative "way of seeing the world," that appears to contradict the critical position of the first level, unmasking the potential social function, if there is any, of the polyphonic novel as the narrativization and legitimization of social conflicts that are predicated on neoliberal individualism. The overall aim of each chapter, therefore, is to comprehend these two contradictory levels as

constitutive elements of the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction. The final interpretive task that follows is to question to what extent a given narrative's polyphony challenges or embraces neoliberalism, thereby answering the question as to whether certain literary and formal characteristics can be comprehended as political manifestations of neoliberalism. Each chapter centralizes the question of whether the polyphonic novel in question, with its specific form and plot structure, comprehends a *separation* between the individual and society or whether it portrays collective narratives that predominantly conceive the social as constitutive of the individual subject. In other words, the exploration of the relationship between plot structure, literary form and the socio-historical context of neoliberalism and postmodernism will aim to answer the question of whether the individual is constructed and represented to transcend the social and historical background or whether they appear in a symbiotic and mutually contingent relationship. As one of the central aspects of neoliberal individualism, the question of atomic and isolated individual and their relation to the social provides a shortcut to comprehending the social meanings, functions and characteristics of the polyphonic novel in the context of a neoliberal and postmodern Britain.

On the Selection of Novels

The selected novels in this study are representative of some of the central issues that are prevalent in the comprehension of British contemporaneity in the context of neoliberal individualism. However, this is different than saying that the selection is conclusive and exhaustive enough to put forward absolute claims. On the contrary, this study is based on the close reading of four novels because of the need to generate a new interpretive category for the study of contemporary British novel. Because of theoretical limitations, as will be explained in the sections later on British contemporariness and contemporary Britishness, this study focuses on novels at the turn of the millennium. All four novels in this study are critically acclaimed and recipients of some literary accolades, a categorical quality, which, I suggest, are representative of the genre and its academic as well as public perception. While some of them are more popular than others, the novels are selected with a special attention to texts that depict diverse social issues in the context of neoliberalism.

The first three novels in this study, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), John Lanchester's *Capital* (2012) and David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004) are both financially and critically successful examples of the polyphonic novel as a central genre of neoliberalism and centralize certain aspects of British contemporaneity in the following order: racism and multiculturalism; the neoliberal financial system, family and familialism; the "new global and neoliberal world order", social Darwinism and environmental collapse. The analysis will demonstrate that these three novels appear as 'negative' examples in the ways in which they fall short of dismantling neoliberal assumptions by their literary characteristics while simultaneously proving their literary value in negotiating the contradictions and social problems of neoliberalism. In other words, they acknowledge both the *separation* and the intricate relationship between the individual and society. The last novel that is selected for this study, James Robertson's *And the Land Lay Still* (2010) illustrates how structural and literary elements can rather challenge the contradictions and social problems of neoliberalism without necessarily legitimizing them, and focuses on the problem of the atomized and isolated individual in neoliberalism, and collectivization and re-socialization as its resolution. As such, the first three novels illustrate the extent to which the polyphonic novel should be comprehended as the narrative aesthetics of neoliberalism while the last novel demonstrates that the genre has also the capacity to resist and challenge neoliberalism by rejecting the common trope of the individual transcending the social and historical background completely.

This thesis, then, argues that polyphony appears as a useful genre and methodology as it offers an alternative history of contemporary British fiction, and complements previous survey studies that focus on postmodern diversity and change by framing genre as a way of seeing, knowing and conceptualizing the world. This understanding of genre aims to comprehend the social functions of narrative multiplicity in contemporary fiction by comprehending the necessary relationship between postmodernism and neoliberalism, thereby offering the opportunity to approach contemporary fiction with a sustained focus on historical, social and political analysis. Analyzing the polyphonic novel in its social and historical context has the general aim of questioning to what extent contemporary Britishness is informed by the relatively common trope of "the individual transcending the social and historical background:" the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction

tends to appear both as a *rejection* and *valorization* of this trope, emphasizing the extent to which the genre negotiates the social and historical issues of British contemporaneity. The polyphonic novel, then, appears both as a critical reaction to neoliberalism by challenging central neoliberal issues but it also embraces the trope of the individual surpassing social and historical context as a way of *surviving* the contemporary world, thereby exposing its "way of seeing the world."

Chapter One

A Historical Meta-Analysis of Bakhtinian Polyphony: Reconceptualizing the Polyphonic Novel as an Emergent Genre (Literature Review I)

Comprehending the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction as an emergent genre requires at first the exploration of Bakhtin's original description and its reception. In the following sections, I will develop a critical reconceptualization of polyphony that corresponds better to the analysis of contemporary polyphonic novels. To this end, I will first conceptualize polyphony as an emergent genre, which will be followed by an exploration of the differences between the contemporary polyphonic novel and earlier forms that employ narrative multiplicity, such as the short story cycle and the high modernist, multiperspectival novels. Another aim of this analysis is to identify, first, why Bakhtin's polyphony is more expedient in the investigation of narrative multiplicity in contemporary fiction before complementing his original description with certain connotations and functions, which will, at the end of this chapter, relocate Bakhtin's polyphony into the contexts of postmodernism and neoliberalism.

Comprehending the polyphonic novel as an emergent genre is problematic. Indeed, it is easy to refute this claim for Bakhtin identified it as a new genre as early as in the 1920s although it took several decades, and of course the translation into English, for polyphony to develop into an important concept in the study of narrative multiplicity in the West.[1] Besides, polyphony was already "a widely acknowledged phenomenon in fiction"[2] even before Bakhtin (Townsend 15). Bakhtin's later argument in the *Dialogic Imagination* that the novel is inherently a polyphonic genre (326, 332-3) further complicates this drawback, which, at a later period, leads Bakhtin to reframe Dostoevsky not as the unprecedented

[1] Arguably, it is possible that Bakhtin's conception of polyphony and dialogism is not necessarily unique or without a precedent. See Viacheslav V. Ivanov "The Dominant of Bakhtin's Philosophy: Dialogue and Carnival" p.3 (in *Bakhtin Carnival and Other Subjects* ed. by David Shepherd), in which he refers to Martin Buber's "Dialogue" in *Between Man and Man* [1929] as one of the first to have put forward the dialogical principle. However, Buber's conception is closer to dialectics than dialogue.

[2] It is possible to track the emergence of multiple narrators in British literature back to the 18th Century. Some prominent examples are Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8) and Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) (Mullan 56).

inventor of the genre, as is usually falsely assumed, but as "the purest expression of what had always been implicitly present" (Clark and Holquist 276). It is therefore necessary to approach Bakhtin's concept critically. To this end, Bakhtin's polyphony, as well as being useful and widely prevalent in contemporary criticism, should be grasped in relation to its specific historical conditions. Particularly, although employing polyphony in the ways in which Bakhtin originally demarcated the concept is feasible, it is more productive to revise the concept and identify its contemporary characteristics rather than uncritically applying a concept from a different historical period. The central support to this proposition can be identified in Bakhtin's argument that polyphony is a distinctly historical phenomenon to the extent that it could only be realized under capitalism (*PDP* 19-20). Through this historical perspective, it becomes possible to grasp contemporary polyphony as an emergent genre rather than the continuation of an older and static form. This perspective additionally helps to elucidate the disparities between older forms of narrative multiplicity and contemporary polyphony, which requires first the analysis of what emergent here denotes.

Raymond Williams, in *Marxism and Literature* (1977), asserts that while it is conceivable to identify the dominant cultural mode of a historical epoch, it is nevertheless crucial to further analyze the interaction between dominant, residual and emergent cultural forms. Williams' claim is linked to the conjecture that at any given period dominant cultural forms exist alongside residual and emergent ones and have a dialectical relationship with one another. Redirecting the emphasis to the intersection between dominant, residual and emergent forms helps to elucidate the implications and functions of alternative, oppositional or subversive cultural forms that have not yet been fully co-opted by the dominant. While residual denotes older forms that still have meaning and value in relation to the dominant, emergent develops in relation to the dominant in the way in which it acknowledges and recognizes parts of the social that the dominant fails to incorporate or recognize.

It is not always simple to distinguish the disparities between dominant, residual and emergent cultural forms. Indeed, Williams contends that "no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention" (125). In

other words, the concepts of dominant, residual and emergent forms are valuable apparatuses in understanding cultural forms that are either alternative or oppositional to the dominant, and provide the methodological perspective to investigate culture in a more dialectical manner rather than identifying each and every cultural form as complicit with the dominant. This, however, does not mean that residual or emergent forms are essentially oppositional: they can also be merely alternative or they can ultimately be incorporated to the dominant.[3]

Whether an emergent cultural form is exclusively alternative or oppositional is, of course, challenging to identify, but the relationship between these cultural forms is the object of Williams' analysis to the extent that it aims to comprehend the social nature of cultural forms, which is conceptualized with the phrase 'structure of feeling'. Following Fredric Jameson's interpretation of the concept, postmodernism can also be perceived as a specific structure of feeling in the way in which it coordinates "new forms of practice and social and mental habits […] with the new forms of economic production and organization thrown up by the modification of capitalism -- the new global division of labor -- in recent years" (*Postmodernism* xiv). Contemporary polyphony is distinctively postmodern. Identifying it as an emergent genre leads to comprehending it as a historical phenomenon that emerges within and in relation to the 'cultural revolution' of neoliberalism, which will be explained in detail later. At this stage, however, it is necessary to limit the discussion to Williams' structures of feeling and how it relates to his concepts of dominant, emergent and residual cultural forms.

At the core of Williams' conceptualization are two central propositions: first, the concepts of dominant, residual and emergent generate the comprehension of culture as a process that defines what social is, and necessarily what is excluded from the dominant definitions of the social, thereby providing a key to analyzing what the structure of feeling

[3] Williams states that a new class is always a source of emergent cultural forms. This perhaps clarifies why the polyphonic novel in contemporary fiction has been disregarded as a distinct genre because of the complexities in defining the new classes of neoliberalism. Indeed, this can be linked to Fredric Jameson's identification of and appeal for "the need for class-consciousness of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind" in the global market of neoliberalism that is dominated by multinational corporations (*Postmodernism* 418). The polyphonic novel, however, can be correlated to a new class when such a conceptualization develops into a historical possibility, which, as the inability to conceptualize a new understanding of class indicates, is currently not probable. Furthermore, a new class and by extension its emergent cultural practices are relatively subordinate to the dominant and might eventually be assimilated into the dominant, specifically if they are oppositional rather than alternative.

of a given historical period is. Second, the analysis of emergent forms can lead to the exploration of the social basis of alternative and oppositional elements in a given culture.

In the light of Williams' concepts of the dominant, residual and emergent, this thesis understands the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction as an emergent genre that manifests both alternative and oppositional characteristics against the dominant. However, the fact that polyphony has become a relatively common phenomenon in contemporary British fiction instigates the argument that it should be comprehended as part of the dominant. Polyphony is therefore an ambivalent form to the extent that it manifests residual, emergent and dominant characteristics. The dominant characteristics relate largely to the postmodern qualities that the polyphonic novel exhibits. Yet, to the extent that the polyphonic novel demonstrates an opposition to social fragmentation in the way in which it envisions different types of collectives in order to unify the apparent fragmentation in the text, it is essential to frame it as an oppositional and emergent form before investigating its dominant characteristics.

The degree to which the polyphonic novel aspires to construct some form of coherence in its apparently fragmented and often conflicting multiplicity is, to a certain extent, evidence for its alternative and oppositional characteristics. Indeed, the attempt to unify a multiplicity of epistemologically and ideologically conflicting perspectives is, in the first instance, a form of redefining what social is. Polyphony is therefore particularly crucial because the novel, "whatever Bakhtin means by that, summons up not persons but entire social groups" (Hirschkop, "Is Dialogism for Real?" 188). In contrast to the conception of society as a multiplicity of conflicting and competitive individuals under the neoliberal market, the polyphonic novel establishes collective categories, at least symbolically, to replace the market. This is perhaps better understood by Bakhtin's own conception of the polyphonic novel. Hirschkop argues that for Bakhtin:

> What appeared to be a novel is in fact something between a bazaar and a political meeting, and it can be so because the novelist is able to double-voice his or her language, to make it serve both aesthetic intentions of the novel itself and those embedded in the social speech-types or languages of society. Surely at this point one is entitled to believe dialogism recreates a kind of linguistic interchange, that it embodies language as "social life" – interaction linguistic exchange, verbal to and fro – in opposition to the isolation of the individual. (ibid.)

Based on this specific understanding of polyphony, it is possible to identify the oppositional and emancipatory meanings of the polyphonic form. The diversity of the polyphonic novel, be it related to perspective, character or plot, appears as a cause for celebration in its capacity to transcend the individual perspective and translate the particular to the social. Comprehending the polyphonic novel as an emergent genre, however, necessarily requires the task to differentiate it from other genres that demonstrate similar characteristics such as the short story cycle or the multiperspectival novel.

Part I: Short Story Cycles and Polyphony

The polyphonic novel, to the extent that it envisions fictional communities, manifests certain qualities with another emergent (and also partly residual) genre, the short story cycle. The study of short story cycles reveals that the contradiction between fragmentation and narrative unity is a central issue in defining the genre. Indeed, several scholars have studied the short story cycle in relation to how unity in the text is achieved in order to delineate it as a distinct genre, which needs to be examined to differentiate the polyphonic novel from the short story cycle.

Alternatively called 'short story sequence', 'short story composite' or 'composite novel', short story cycle as a genre was first identified and defined by Forrest Ingram in 1971. Ingram describes short story cycle as "a set of stories so linked to one another that the reader's experience of each one is modified by the experience of the others" (13). Several scholars identify James Joyce's *Dubliners* as a prominent, but erroneously as the first, illustration of this definition.[4]

Further developments in the study of short story cycles are generally based on this original definition, often with a focus on US American examples, and ultimately attempt to establish a working definition to expound the contradiction between the fragmentation of several stories and the overall unity of the whole text. S. Mann, for instance, explores to what extent literary elements, such as characterization, setting and theme, are employed to generate unity in the text without limiting her selection to the US. Alternatively, R. Lundén

[4] Roxanne Harde, in *Narratives of Community: Women's Short Story Sequences*, argues that even though James Joyce's *Dubliners* is widely considered to be the first example of the genre, short story sequences by women writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell and Sarah Orne Jewett appear much earlier than *Dubliners* (1).

describes ‘short story composite’ as a form that interconnects autonomous stories into a unity, focusing more on the tension between unity and fragmentation rather than the strategies used by authors to construct unity out of disparate stories while also aspiring to establish the short story cycle as a distinctly US American genre (12).

More recent studies indicate that unity in short story cycles, especially in contemporary ethnic and women’s writing, can be defined in its capacity to imagine and create communities. J. Nagel, for instance, analyzes a certain selection of US American short story cycles in relation to ethnic perspectives and defines the genre roughly as “the linked set of short narratives” (3). Similarly, Harde argues that short story cycles are employed by woman writers from different countries "to negotiate the tensions between individual identity and community" (2). Harde follows Zagarell's argument that short story cycles should be grasped "as a tradition of coherent response to social and cultural changes, although these coherent responses come out of the texts that are often fragmented or episodic" (ibid.).

Other investigations of the genre demonstrate an analogous inclination to understand short story cycle in relation to the conflict between fragmentation and unity while relating this contradiction to the differentiation between the private and the social. Davis, for instance, frames the genre as a magnification of the relationship "among the separate stories to create a larger whole, without destroying the specificities of each individual story" (4). Comparably, Pacht focuses on the genre’s capacity to "express both the plight of an individual and the fate of a community through its very structure" in spite of using disparate thematic and structural elements (1). She further argues that short story cycles reflect "a struggle to define and understand the always-changing world in which the characters-and their creators- live” but nevertheless directs the analysis towards identifying elements that create unity such as the existence of a preface, the overall arrangement or shared themes (ibid.). As such, definitions and analyses of the short story cycle manifest an apparent obstacle in distinguishing it from the polyphonic novel as they fail to conceptualize a coherent definition of the genre.

As a contested genre, the short story cycle evades easy classification. However, J. G. Kennedy, in *Modern American Short Story Sequences* (1995), resolves this problem by expanding the formal characteristics of short story cycles in order to differentiate it from

novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). Kennedy maintains that the problems with the definitions of the short story cycle are related to the genre's ambiguous place between the short story and the novel (vii). Rather than merely identifying how distinctive narratives are unified, a task that has not been fully realized by others, Kennedy extends the definition of the genre to include "all collections of three or more stories written and arranged by a single author" (ix). Unlike others who apparently struggle to comprehend the relationship between different narratives, Kennedy, similar to the aforementioned scholars, resolves the problem between fragmentation and unity by reading the short story cycles as fictive communities. Kennedy's conception of short story cycles is particularly useful as it facilitates the differentiation between Joyce's *Dubliners* and high modernist multiperspectival novels, especially in comparison to Dunn and Morris who identify *Dubliners* as a composite novel (1). Dunn and Morris' definition replicates the predisposition as explicated above: defining the composite novel as a collection of individually autonomous narratives that are unified by one or more organizing principles, which ultimately put such distinct works as *Dubliners, The Sound and The Fury* and *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* under the same category.

As the investigation of the genre reveals, however, the challenge to demarcate the short story cycle in its ambiguous relation to the novel does not yield conclusive arguments. As Kennedy asserts, the search for formal unity in the short story cycle is predominantly a projection of the categories of the novel onto the short story because unity in short story cycles "lies mainly in the eyes of the beholding reader" unlike high modernist multiperspectival novels that have an unchallenged claim to textual unity (ix). Indeed, Kennedy identifies the pattern in novels such as *The Sound and The Fury* or *To the Lighthouse* as the renouncement of "the organizing authority of an omniscient narrator, asserting instead a variety of voices or perspectives reflective of the radical subjectivity of modern experience" rather than seeing it as an element of the short story cycle (x).

The polyphonic novel, in contrast to short story cycles yet similar to the multiperspectival novel, has a relatively uncontested claim for narrative unity. Indeed, R. M. Luscher maintains that labels including short story novel, paranovel, quasi-novel, composite novel, and novel in stories "may indicate somewhat the generic paradox and affinity with the novel's unity (and carry some of the genre's marketing strength), yet they

become problematic by generating expectations about coherence that independent stories will ultimately fail to satisfy" (359). This can be illuminated by the inclination of several scholars to trace the beginnings of short story cycles in older forms such as "the epic cycle, the framed collection of tales, and the sonnet sequence" (Luscher 357) or "the loosely connected framed tales of the medieval and Renaissance periods" (Dunn and Morris 1), effectively tracing the origins of the genre from "*The Thousand and One Arabian Nights* to Chaucer and Boccaccio and even further to classical antiquity itself" (Kennedy vii). This leads to the argument that short story cycle additionally appears as a residual form, without going into detail whether it exhibits alternative, oppositional or dominant characteristics. More crucially, however, the fact that short story cycle is associated with such older forms reveals its differentiation from the novel, more specifically from the apparent unity in the novel. Therefore, polyphony can be differentiated from short story cycles such as *The Dubliners* in relation to the degree to which narrative unity is exhibited in the text. As mentioned above, however, textual unity can help to distinguish polyphony only from short story cycles but not from multiperspectival novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* or *The Waves*, which compels the discussion of multiperspectivity, or multifocalization, in its relation to epistemological multiplicity.

Part II: Multiperspectivity and Multifocalization as Epistemological Plurality

Bakhtin's conceptualization of the polyphonic novel is drawn from his analysis of Dostoevsky's works. Bakhtin's theorization, however, does not discriminate between point of view and focalization. Given the fact that focalization is an applicable term to understand polyphony in Dostoevsky[5], it is indispensable to examine what focalization denotes and why Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is more useful in the analysis of contemporary narrative multiplicity rather than narratology, or narratological tools such as multifocalization. Additionally, focalization helps to elucidate the difference between short story cycles and multiperspectival novels.

[5] Natalia Reed, in "The Philosophical Roots of Polyphony", argues that Bakhtin mainly focuses on "Dostoevsky's first-person narratives or fragments from his major novels narrated in the first person" and "tends to avoid analysis of Dostoevsky's mature novels narrated in the third person" even though he would claim that all of Dostoevsky's narratives could be seen as dialogic and polyphonic, thereby attracting the criticism "for providing insufficient textual evidence for his theoretical formulation" (148).

The question of narrative unity, or in other words the problem of how disparate narratives relate to each other, is also a predominant issue in multiperspectival novels. Unlike the short story cycle, which, as indicated above, prompts inconsistent claims about the meaning of the relationship between disparate narratives, multiperspectivity and multifocalization help to expound the implication of this relationship relatively convincingly. This is related to the fact that multiperspectivity is comprehended more as a historical phenomenon that is directly connected to modernism, or one of the central concerns of modernism, the subjective experience of the individual self in contrast to others.

If *The Sound and the Fury* or *The Waves* cannot be classified as short story cycles, this is because there is some consensus regarding the meaning of narrative multiplicity in these texts unlike the short story cycle. Multiperspectivity in high modernism is linked to the problematization of the distinctly modern issues of subjectivity and epistemological diversity. Specifically, focalization helps to elucidate multiperspectivity in relation to a specific historical period. To this effect, perhaps, Franco Moretti demarcates such multiperspectivity as 'cacophonic polyphony' rather than dialogic polyphony as it changes the meaning of the relationship between different narrative perspectives and focalizations (59). The meaning that Moretti refers to could be reframed as an information-model, or as the focus on knowability as specifically modern issues. Indeed, in "the expanding universe of modernity, many things are as yet unclear; and it is necessary to learn to live with noise: to represent it - and, indeed, hear it - without too many embellishments" (ibid.). As the relationship between distinctive voices has a singular meaning in comparison to Bakhtin, Moretti's assertion of multiperspectivity as cacophonic polyphony appears comprehensible to the extent that it directs the discussion to epistemological diversity rather than ideological conflict, the latter of which is the central quality of Bakhtin's polyphony. Consequently, it is necessary to comprehend focalization with a specific focus on what narratology argues about the possible meanings of multifocalization in relation epistemological diversity and polyphony.

Gerard Genette, in *Narrative Discourse* (1979), coins the term focalization in order to expand the understandings of point of view in narrative. Genette's analysis of focalization as the "focus of narration" leads to three categories: (1) Nonfocalized

narrative, or narrative with zero focalization, (2) Internal Focalization, with three subtypes of (a) fixed, as restriction of focalization to a single character, (b) variable, as the change in focalization from character a to b and then a again, and (c) multiple focalizations, as the multiplicity of point of view of several characters regarding the same event such as in the epistolary novel; and lastly (3) External Focalization, in which the character's inner world is not revealed while there is an external focus on the character (189-90). As such, focalization helps to identify different and diverse perspectives even in texts with a single, authoritative and omniscient narrator, which is also applicable to the analysis of polyphony.

Genette admits that focalization does not always function in clearly distinguishable ways but proposes the term as a tool to describe the content of what the character 'sees' in the narrative (ibid. 191-2). Focalization is an indispensable tool to primarily recognize "those openings onto the psychology of characters other than the hero which the narrative takes care to make in a more or less hypothetical form" (ibid. 202). Genette refers here to the differentiation between point of view and focalization with the implications that first person narrative voice does not necessarily mean internal focalization of the narrator, or that the omniscient narrative can lack focalization, or employ internal or external focalizations, effectively distinguishing the perspective of the narrator and the character.

Later in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988), Genette puts forward clearly and directly that focalization for him is "a restriction of 'field'" which denotes "a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called omniscience" or in Genette's revision of the term, as "the completeness of information-which, when supplied to a reader, makes him [sic] 'omniscient'" (74). Focalization, then, denotes the level of information that is available to the reader through the character, which, while having its interpretive benefits, remains on the level of mimesis and focuses on the text in terms of knowability and the scope of information.

Narratology demonstrates that focalization is directly related to point of view and narrative perspective, the variations of which could also be listed as narrative situation, narrative viewpoint, and narrative manner. Several other scholars of narratology have explored further developments in the concept of focalization without reaching a consensus except for the central differentiation of focalization as a type of restriction of information, which this thesis also highlights. Mieke Bal, for instance, further develops the information-

based model and identifies the discrepancy between the questions of 'who sees?' and 'who speaks?' as the constitutive feature of focalization (*Narratology* 143). In addition to proposing certain modifications, which do not have direct relevance to the analysis here, Nelles, similar to Bal and several others, maintains that the use of focalization is useful in understanding the distinction between the subjects 'who see' and 'who speak' (Bal, *Narratology* 143, Rimmon-Kenan 73, O'Neill 349, Nieragden 688). Or specifically, in Nelles's words, focalization "literally addresses matters of cognition alone" (366).

Yet, as a recent large-scale publication on the topics of point of view, perspective and focalization reveals (Hühn et al.), there is still hardly a consensus as to how to better delineate and employ these terms. Margolin's article in this collection is a relatively convincing analysis of why the attempt to reach cohesion in the definitions and applications of these terms will be a taxing job. Margolin states that the use of focalization is necessary for several reasons but one of them is of particular interest to reveal a central concern in delineating the difference between multiperspectivity and polyphony.

Margolin, based on Bal, claims that "narrative has the unique capability to map differently positioned subjects in their relation to knowledge and to each other" (41). Indeed, narrative can easily be reframed as a type of cognitive mapping as Jameson also argues in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (1992). The distinction, however, is related to the inclination to evade how and why narratives help subjects to position themselves in relation to each other. Specifically, narratology tends to emphasize more the fragmented individual perspective, how it is produced and the accurate ways to describe it, yet rarely explains how fragmented narratives relate to each other, let alone explore this particular phenomenon in relation to its social functions, which is related to issues about mimesis.

The central setback with Genette's comprehension of focalization, and others who follow the central difference of 'who sees' and 'who speaks', is the overemphasis on its mimetic quality or "novelistic mimesis" as Genette puts it (*ND* 210). However, Genette's own remarks explicate why contemporary polyphony may be better comprehended in relation to Bakhtin's definition rather than by the utilization of narratological tools such as (multi)-focalization or multiperspectivity. Indeed, Genette sees "the concurrence of theoretically incompatible focalizations" as that "which shakes the whole logic of narrative

representation" (ibid. 211). It is through this rupture that polyphony becomes a valuable apparatus to grasp the relationship between theoretically incompatible focalizations.

Relatedly, S. Lonoff provides a coherent perspective in understanding multifocalization. She maintains that multiperspectivity, "at once diverse and unified," provides the writer with the tool to seek "a structural solution to a problem in epistemology" by showing "that a method of telling could disclose or even generate several kinds of knowledge, above all, a knowledge of 'the Truth'" (144). Indeed, this model of multifocalization and multiperspectivity helps to reveal the meaning of texts such as *The Sound and The Fury* or *The Waves*, in which the focus could be comprehended more as epistemological multiplicity.[6]

Multifocalization therefore elucidates the relationship between diverse narratives in high modernist novels in a better way than the concept of polyphony in the way in which it comprehends perspective and focalization in the process of producing and representing the subjective experience of a character. The probable implication of such a focus is necessarily related to discussions on epistemological multiplicity, or different ways of perceiving the (single) world that are portrayed in a text. Furthermore, narratological tools such as multifocalization are better suited to the debates of how to discuss certain qualities in the narrative. This is because narratology aims to define and comprehend the nature of the fragmentation itself, not necessarily the relationship between fragmentation and unity. The perspective that attempts to understand the relationship between different narratives could be designated as the information model. This approach is limited to epistemological multiplicity unlike Bakhtin's concept of polyphony, which focuses on ideological conflict –and multiple 'realities' or 'truths'.[7]

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[6] To explore "the potential of narrative as epistemology" see Bal "Narrative as Epistemology" p. 299.

[7] However, it is categorically impossible and incorrect to limit the uses of focalization or narratological tools to the analysis of cognition or epistemology. Even though the majority of narratological studies focuses on epistemology, a 2001 collection points at a different direction by suggesting to read perspective in social terms. Adamson's article "The Rise and Fall of Emphatic Narrative: A Historical Perspective on Perspective", in *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective* (2001 ed. Peer and Chatman), for instance, analyses the connection between perspective and the utilization of emotions such as sympathy and empathy in the reader, thereby extending the epistemological focus of narratology. It follows then to acknowledge that narratology can also be utilized to examine the social and political meanings and functions of literary forms as well. However, as Willi van Peer contends, such an endeavour requires "much more fine-grained linguistic analyses of texts" if we aim to identify the "ideological implications or political effects" of perspective ("Justice in Perspective" 335). As this study derives its methodological rationale from Fredric Jameson's ideology critique in *The Political Unconscious*, which focuses more on plot structure rather than individual

Contemporary polyphony is relatively easy to distinguish from high modernist multiperspectival novels due to Bakhtin's central concern of ideological conflict in the polyphonic novel. While narratology can still be productive to comprehend the contemporary polyphonic novel, because of helping with the identification of distinctive character positions regardless of the point of view of the narrator (Toolan 62-3, 87), it is less effective in grasping the relationship between conflicting ideological positions in the text, let alone the meanings and social functions of this relationship. In other words, narratology is partly limited to the extent that it recognizes and comprehends dissimilar perspectives with a clear emphasis on the disparity among them, rather than elaborating on what that variation amounts to other than epistemological diversity.[8] As this study aims to comprehend polyphony as ideological contradiction, focalization is helpful to the degree to which it acknowledges the construction of worldviews without a clearly distinguishable point of view, as will be the case later in the analysis of *White Teeth* and *Capital*. It would therefore be an error to consider a text monological because of the existence of an exclusive narrator (Teranishi 81) such as the narrators in *White Teeth* or *Capital*. The ideological aspect in focalization as part of the discussion of polyphony is crucial as "the number of focalizers, and the extent to which each focalizer produces a significant world-view" (ibid. 59) can be perceived as constitutive of polyphony. In order to comprehend the difference between epistemological diversity and ideological conflict, or the difference between multiperspectival novels and the polyphonic novel, it is now necessary to examine what Bakhtin's conception of polyphony denotes in more detail.

Part III: Ideological Contradiction in the Polyphonic Novel

Polyphony is an ambivalent term. Despite introducing the term and devoting a book-length study to the topic, Bakhtin does not appear to have described the concept conclusively, at least not clear enough to comprehend it as a relatively unchallenged

analyses of linguistic data, Bakhtin's concept of polyphony as ideological contradiction is more relevant to the purposes of this study. For an analysis on the relationship between focalization and polyphony from a linguistic, stylistic, and narratological point of view, see Masayuki Teranishi's *Polyphony in Fiction,* p.50.

[8] For an interesting attempt at combining narratology with Bakhtin's polyphony see Don H. Bialostosky's "Dialogics, Narratology, and the Virtual Space of Discourse" in which he aims to identify polyphony as a virtual space for conflicting discourses.

methodological tool. This is partly related to the fact that Bakhtin does not coherently distinguish between polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia. Even though he introduces the polyphonic novel as a new genre, he does not substantiate this argument with a well-defined description. Besides, Bakhtin asserts that capitalism is the precondition for the polyphonic novel but refuses to further elaborate on the social functions of the genre. Moreover, Dostoevsky appears, at least initially, as the pioneer of the polyphonic novel but Bakhtin rejects to discuss the content of Dostoevsky's novels, further complicating the comprehension of a term that has, nevertheless, become a relatively common tool in literary analysis.

Scholarly work on Bakhtin's polyphony reveals three analogous problems: (1) the absence of an agreed-upon definition of polyphony in relation to dialogism and heteroglossia, that is, whether they are used interchangeably or distinguished from one another; (2) the tendency to avoid discussions about the social functions and the historical specificity of the genre; and (3) the impracticality of employing polyphony as a methodological tool to analyze works other than Dostoevsky's novels. It is therefore necessary to elaborate on these central problems in the reception of Bakhtin's work before formulating a working definition of the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction.

There is hardly a consensus as to how polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia should be defined. While some scholars employ them interchangeably, others contend that they refer to different concepts. The problem with both sides, however, is the refusal to relate these concepts to each other in a way that makes it probable to utilize them consistently as methodological tools. Regarding this problem, I argue that polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia should be comprehended as three distinct terms that make it possible to approach the same phenomenon from different perspectives; namely, ideological contradiction. This argument is derived from David Lodge's prominent analysis that the polyphonic novel should be comprehended as a "novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (86). The term's application in this sense is not without a precedent (Teranishi 59). Before that, however, it is necessary to look at the ways in which polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia appear in critical discourse as I aim to demonstrate

that the critical discourse itself appears as a space where conflicting ideological positions clash in the reception of Bakhtin.

Bakhtin's polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia acquire distinct connotations each time they are (re-)defined. It is, however, possible to categorize the conceptions of dialogism into two groups: dialogism as a 'timeless' and 'universal' principle in contrast to dialogism as a historical phenomenon. The former perspective seems to be relatively common even when there are differences in the description of polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia (de Man 104; Kristeva 67; Emerson, *TFHY* 155; Lodge 86; Jung 116; Shukman 140; Pechey, *MB* 143; Booth, "Introduction" xxi; Zavala 86) and even when the historicity of the concept is concomitantly emphasized (Bruhn and Lundquist 27). Therefore, it follows to explore this specific conception of dialogism before moving to the discussion of dialogism as a historical phenomenon.

According to Clark and Holquist's formative book *Mikhail Bakhtin* (1984), polyphony simply denotes the unobstructed dialogue between unrelated and often contradictory voices without any synthesis or reconciliation. Meaning, they maintain, emerges through dialogue: "To be is to communicate. When the dialogue is finished, everything is finished" (251). This central quality manifests itself in the novel as the absence of an authorial narrative voice that resolves the conflicts between different voices and ends with a fixed meaning. In doing so, they do not distinguish between polyphony and dialogism: "The phenomenon that Bakhtin calls "polyphony" is simply another name for dialogism" (242), a perspective that is noticeable in others (Danow 25, Lodge 86).

In direct opposition to Clark and Holquist, another influential book on Bakhtin asserts that polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia should be distinguished from each other. Indeed, Morson and Emerson in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990), claim that "polyphony is not even roughly synonymous with heteroglossia" by identifying polyphony in terms of the position of the author in the text –the absence of authorial narrative voice- and heteroglossia "as the diversity of speech styles in a language" (232). Added to this discussion is the differentiation between polyphony and dialogism: they assert that dialogism and heteroglossia, are constitutive of polyphony and should therefore be distinguished from the latter (ibid.). Admitting that Bakhtin does not define or use these terms consistently, they strive to establish what dialogue or dialogism denote in relation to

polyphony. Because Bakhtin, according to them, "rarely tells us which sense of dialogue he has in mind" (232), they aim to define the sense of dialogue that is allegedly inherent in Bakhtin's discussions.

Dialogue, or dialogism, as far as Morson and Emerson argue, refers to Bakhtin's rejection of monological understandings of truth, the primary example of which is dialectics, be it Hegelian or Marxist: the Dostoevsky book, they contend, "is itself a metaphilosophical work that challenges all of theoretism and semiotic totalitarianism by proposing a non-monologic, antisystemic conception of truth" (234).[9] Dialogism, it seems, denotes a specific form of epistemology that aims to surmount "the tradition of monologic thought" as demonstrated by the "the opposition of Marxist and non-Marxist ideologies" (235). Monologism equals to synthesis, they reckon, in the way in which it envisions a "coherent, all-encompassing system" by bringing together "apparently disparate insights and propositions" (236). Dialogism is thus better understood in terms of how it deals with these apparently disparate insights and propositions, which can also be defined as the "form-shaping ideology" of the polyphonic novel.

Dialogism, in other words, refers to the rejection of a single form-shaping ideology that informs the organization of the polyphonic novel. Be it the relationship between the author and the protagonist, or the relationship between characters, the polyphonic novel is based on the rejection of a synthesis between different ideological positions. The author, according to this sense of dialogism, "necessarily plays two roles in the work: he creates a world in which many disparate points of view enter into dialogue, and, in quite a distinct role, he himself participates in that dialogue. He is one of the interlocutors in the "great dialogue" that he himself has created" (ibid. 239). The polyphonic organization of a novel, then, excludes finalization by evading a clear narrative closure. In other words, taken as evidence to monologism, narrative closure and finalization are dismissed in the discussion of the polyphonic novel as a result of this understanding of dialogism (Hutcheon, "Modern Parody and Bakhtin" 102, Steinby 39-40).

[9] It should be noted that there is at least one instance, to my knowledge, where Bakhtin's dialogism is equated with dialectics (Viacheslav V. Ivanov "The Dominant of Bakhtin's Philosophy: Dialogue and Carnival" p.3 in *Bakhtin Carnival and Other Subjects* ed. by David Shepherd). However, such an understanding of dialogism is marginal, especially in relation to the reception of Bakhtin in the West.

It is not difficult to identify the enthusiasm in Morson and Emerson's conception of the polyphonic novel as the genre that defies monologisms or 'semiotic totalitarianism.' What remains to be relatively difficult to detect, however, is what the 'great dialogue' of the polyphonic novel amounts to. This problem is exacerbated by the impossibility of objectively identifying the dialogic quality in a given narrative even though Bakhtin claimed to have done so (Hale 178). Indeed, this problem becomes more comprehensible in the way in which Morson and Emerson painstakingly struggle to purge any sense of finalization, or monologism, from Dostoevsky's works by revising him as an author who does not subject his characters to "genetic or causal categories" (*Prosaics* 262). Dialogue, after all, relates not only to epistemology but also to ethics and moral responsibility. Even though they admit that Dostoevsky's journalism comprehends some crime as "the result of social, and even biological, causes; he even argued for the acquittal of a pregnant woman whose crime could be explained through the psychological stress of her pregnancy," Morson and Emerson nevertheless conclude that reliance on genetic or causal categories would make "moral responsibility impossible and crime nothing but the sign of social inequity" unlike in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels in which characters are supposedly portrayed "as completely beyond genetic approaches and as ultimately capable of remaking everything about themselves" (ibid.), delineating the image of the individual who can surpass the historical and social background. Similar to Bakhtin, Morson and Emerson achieve this conception of dialogism and polyphony without engaging with Dostoevsky's novels in a consistent manner. The content of Dostoevsky's novels is rendered curiously superfluous and remains outside of the discussion even though Dostoevsky is undisputedly presented as one of pioneers the genre.

It is therefore necessary to comprehend this central contradiction: why do Bakhtin, and other scholars in the West, consistently refuse to engage with the content of Dostoevsky's novels while simultaneously delineating him as the creator of a new genre and the paradigmatic example of the virtues of dialogism? Identifying the answer, first and foremost, depends on acknowledging what Bakhtin, as well as others, consistently exclude in their discussions of Dostoevsky's polyphonic works and how this exclusion shapes the comprehension of dialogism.

Natalia Reed helps to elucidate the meaning of this central contradiction in Bakhtinian scholarship. Reed's article "The Philosophical Roots of Polyphony: A Dostoevskian Reading" appears in a collection edited by Emerson herself but differs radically from others in the way in which it problematizes Dostoevsky and the content of his works more directly than Morson and Emerson, and Bakhtin himself. The missing element, according to Reed, is related to Bakhtin's disregard of the plot in Dostoevsky:

> Bakhtin minimizes the significance of plot in Dostoevsky's novels and declares it "nonessential" on the grounds that plot remains unabsorbed by the consciousness of Dostoevsky's protagonists (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 53). Second, he imputes to Dostoevsky a "distrust" of his Christian convictions and replaces them with a "form-shaping" –or rather a "content-circumventing"- ideology (98) that only plays with ideas: "As an artist Dostoevsky often divined how a given idea would *develop and function* under certain changed conditions [plot], what *unexpected directions* it would take in its further *development and transformation*." Clearly, for the polyphonic artist, the function of idea-protagonist takes precedence over their content. (142)

Bakhtin's, and others', disregard of the plot becomes a valuable tool to comprehend polyphony as it reveals the postmodern tendency of 'ahistorical' literary analysis by rejecting the analysis of plot because plot ultimately reveals the (social and historical) conditions under which such a plot becomes possible or comprehensible.

Reed agrees with others in identifying Bakhtin's study of polyphony as an attack on different forms of monologisms (133). However, she differs from others radically in the way in which she frames Dostoevsky's apparently polyphonic works as covert monologisms. To this end, she criticizes the conception of polyphony as an "internal dialogue" between form and content with the implication that it cannot be comprehended as a type of "interpersonal communication" (140). Indeed, as Hirschkop also maintains "[m]uch of what currently passes for Bakhtinian analysis would have us believe that novels are for all intents and purposes dialogues, despite the rather obvious fact that a single person composes them" ("Is Dialogism for Real?" 184).

Emerson argues that Reed's analysis of Bakhtin's polyphony in her earlier (unpublished) thesis at Harvard University frames "polyphony as a rapid, profound, and profoundly selfish *internalization of relationships*– a removal of human relations from the realm of responsible outer actions (or *interactions*), involving unpredictable unmanageable others, into the safer realm of inner words and domesticated verbal images of the other"

(*TFHY* 141).[10] Reed's argument is not without a precedent. Paul de Man's article, "Dialogue and Dialogics", formulates a similar understanding of dialogue as detached from real human interaction (104). W. Smith, for instance, contends that de Man reformulates a conception of dialogue, that "amounts to nothing more than an abstract, "metalinguistic" (DD, 108) structure, devoid of concrete dialogue or actual "recognition of the other" (DD, 110)" (23).

Later and in more clear terms, Reed rephrases her criticism on Bakhtin and claims that "Bakhtin's is a philosophy that has no place for a real personal other and therefore for a theory of obligation suitable for discussion of interpersonal relations or, for that matter, verbal communication between genuinely independent and separate consciousnesses" (138). Reed's argument, thus, provides a particularly crucial perspective, unlike Bakhtin's conception of dialogue, because Dostoevsky appears to be deeply occupied with interpersonal relationships. The engagement with plot would therefore reveal Dostoevsky's focus on historically determined generic causalities rather than supporting the 'ahistorical' analysis by disregarding the plot.

Reed, in other words, suggests that Bakhtin erases the content of Dostoevsky's novels in order to render his work as dialogic and non-monologic, because Dostoevsky's "criticism and portrayal of social existence in his journalism and in his fiction demonstrate that he was centrally concerned with interpersonal relationships, and particularly with the relationships that produce victims (including victims of suicide, since Dostoevsky always depicts suicide as an outcome of a relationship)" (124-5). This argument is at odds with what Morson and Emerson define as the unfinalizability of the polyphonic novel in the shape of rejecting causal categories, and appear as the fundamental reason why Reed frames Dostoevsky's, and Bakhtin's polyphony, as a type of monologism. Even though Dostoevsky's characters are free to 'speak' for themselves, there is nevertheless a covert monologism that informs the plot structure of his novels, which for Dostoevsky appears to be 'Christian love' and its redemptive power in contrast to different monologisms:

[10] Emerson maintains, highly problematically and in a paradoxically authoritative tone, that "Reed would sympathize (although for very different reasons) with those early Bolshevik reviewers of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* who insisted that Bakhtin's polyphony, designed to absorb every significant thing into consciousness, is at base idealist, asocial, and fundamentally immoral. For the refusal to finalize any judgement is an escape from the consequences of authentic residence in the world." (*TFHY* 143).

Dostoevsky, according to Reed, refrains from presenting his 'finalizing' view of Christian love as a solution to violence by making use of an apparently polyphonic and dialogical narrative organization in which different ideological positions are presented equally (131). Therefore, Reed convincingly claims that:

> Bakhtin substitutes his own theory of the polyphonic creative act for the actual content of Dostoevsky's novels. This act of substitution should be recognized as "violent" because it expels the content of Dostoevsky's works and their meaning as the author himself intended it. […] instead of conversing with Dostoevsky, Bakhtin engages in the "dialogue" with a proxy of his own making –the content-circumventing "form-shaping ideology" of the polyphonic author. (118)

Although the reliance on authorial intention is disputable, Reed's identification of polyphony as an obscured monology is significant and one of the most essential criticisms directed at Bakhtin's theory.[11]

More crucially, Reed's revision renders Bakhtin's polyphony more remarkable as a concept in the way in which it enables the analysis of a distinct type of contradiction or duality inherent in the polyphonic novel. Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising to find accounts of Bakhtin and Dostoevsky that indirectly affirm Reed's argument even in the work of a scholar who is apparently following Morson and Emerson's account of Bakhtin and Dostoevsky. One clear example of this can be found in *Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Talent,* in which Barnhart presents Dostoevsky's 'polyphonic personality' as the dilemma between Dostoevsky's Christian faith and his equally persistent doubt and disbelief (xii-xiii). Dostoevsky, Barnhart asserts, believed "morality would collapse" without a commitment to the Christian faith (xiii). It follows then to comprehend polyphony in Dostoevsky as the embodiment of the contradiction between a commitment to 'manifest' dialogism -unfinalizability and lack of moral evaluation- and 'covert' monologism -Christian love.

This thesis therefore follows Reed's notion that the polyphonic novel should be understood in its capacity to present itself as non-monologic while simultaneously contradicting itself with at least some form of monologic thinking embedded in the organization of the novel. To this end, plot is prioritized as an essential tool to enable a

[11] Even Emerson maintains that Reed's analysis of Bakhtin's polyphony in relation to Dostoevsky is "the most sustained criticism yet raised against Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky and against polyphony in general" (*TFHY* 138).

historical analysis rather than formulating an ahistorical and supposedly universal dialogism that is based on the individual perspective, or the equal validity and truth of each individual perspective.

Even though Reed's article improves the understanding of the polyphonic novel, it does not directly comment on why in, for example, Morson and Emerson, dialogism appears as a revolutionary and celebratory concept that could oppose all forms of monologisms such as dialectics, and takes the form of a "fetish" in postmodernism (Witoszek 117). In order to comprehend the allure of dialogism as the opposite of monologic thought systems in the West, and by extension the tendency to disregard the plot of a polyphonic text, it is necessary to examine another seminal study on Bakhtin, Ken Hirschkop's *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy* (1999).

Unlike Clark and Holquist, and Morson and Emerson, Hirschkop's study of Bakhtin does not simply celebrate Bakhtin as a revolutionary. Neither does he deride Bakhtin, as he might be expected to do so, by Morson and Emerson at least, as an author that employs a dialectical approach in comprehending Bakhtin. On the contrary, in an intellectually vigorous account of Bakhtin's life and theories, Hirschkop reveals that it is possible to appreciate Bakhtin's ideas while also being critical of some of them. Furthermore, his historical analysis of Bakhtin's concepts and their reception in the West leads to critical insights that are of particular importance to comprehending the contemporary polyphonic novel in relation to neoliberalism by uncovering the attractiveness of Bakhtin's dialogism specifically for liberalism.

Hirschkop starts by exploring what dialogue means for critics like Morson and Emerson. Partly similar to Reed, he identifies the tendency to reduce Bakhtin's dialogism to an understanding of dialogue as a variation of the local and immediate conversation, or in other words, as dialogue between people. "If the model for dialogue is the local," Hirschkop states, "then the 'dialogism' which gives it force is merely the playing out of this conversation on ever larger stages- a work of literature, a culture, a political system" (*MBAD* 8). Hirschkop's statement does not differ from other critics in delineating polyphony and dialogism as an opposition to monologism, and its larger implications.

The difference in Hirschkop's analysis, however, is related to his exploration as to why dialogism as such is attractive for critics like Morson and Emerson "who espouse a

familiar right-liberal belief in the overarching importance of personal responsibility" (ibid. 8), by avoiding plot elements in their analysis. Or from another perspective, understanding what dialogue denotes for these scholars amounts to the critical perception of dialogism in its relation to what it envisions as possible in social life. Hirschkop contends that while polyphony is presented as an endless social dialogue, "further scrutiny reveals an unstated reliance on the project of Western liberalism" ("Is Dialogism for Real?" 186-7). The reliance on Western liberalism therefore appears as a framework to comprehend the social, and the possible relations and structures in the social: "In American public life dialogue stands for that scene of negotiative give-and-take, of debate aimed at compromise, so central to the identity of liberal democracy" (*MBAD* 8-9).[12] Hirschkop, as such, relates this celebratory understanding of dialogism to an unstated commitment to Western liberalism, which implies specific liberal characteristics such as the "recognition of the private nature of many social interests" ("Is Dialogism for Real?" 184), or the *separation* of the individual from the social.

A clear example of the affinity between the private and individual nature of social interests and polyphony can be identified in the correlation between difference, dialogue and development. Bandlamudi, for instance, proposes to equate Bakhtinian dialogue with development, will to power and freedom to choose, inadvertently readjusting the concept to accommodate neoliberal conceptions of individual development and freedom in relation to choice (1, 121), and further claims that "dialogic vision […] is in fact closer to the truth about the human world and hence unarguably scientific" (134) and emphasizes Bakhtin's emphasis on personal responsibility in developing his dialogism and polyphony (124). Bialostosky also argues that the dialogic self and Bakhtinian conception of dialogue is the precondition of individual ideological development, which he reframes as "liberal education" (158).

[12] "In conflicts of varying scale [...] a commitment to dialogue means more than an interest in speaking; it signifies an agreement to observe certain procedures when resolving disputes. One talks with colleagues, friends, taxi drivers; one engages in dialogue with the police, elements of the welfare state, schools, or government agencies. And dialogue is not an innocent or open procedure, either: it is the search for that great white whale of the liberal imagination, compromise, a search which rules out certain kinds of solution in advance. Like the term 'democracy' itself, 'dialogue' sanctions a strategic call for specific procedures under the rubric of abstract principle." (*MBAD* 8-9)

Relatedly, Hirschkop argues that the attractiveness of Bakhtin and dialogism for the West is hardly extraordinary when one considers that dialogism makes it possible to transfer the language of European and North American liberalism to the analysis of culture and literature. This is directly related to the fascination with the European novel, a genre "whose historical rise and plateau, of course, is linked with the fortunes of European and North American liberalism" (*MBAD* 9). For instance, Kristeva's 'appropriation' of Bakhtin in an article from 1970, in which she frames polyphony and dialogue as anti-totalitarian and plural, is informative to the extent that it reveals "the ideological agenda of (post)modernity," which distorts Bakhtin's concept and adapts Bakhtin's thought "to current ideological needs and discursive fashions of the academia" (Witoszek 122).

Dialogism, at least in Morson and Emerson, then, could be comprehended as the concept that helps to legitimize "existing structures of power" as well as "ornament them with the fine drapery of the aesthetic" (Hirschkop, *MBAD* 9). For dialogue is proposed as "the essence of language itself and the defining characteristic of the aesthetic masterworks of Western culture," Hirschkop maintains that the political substance of this move should be seen as "no more than the reflected image of the self-understanding of American liberalism" (*MBAD* 9). This is because "[d]ialogue is so powerful a value in a liberal democratic culture, so evident a political virtue, that the invitation to find it in literary works may prove impossible to refuse" (Hirschkop, "Is Dialogism for Real?" 183-4). The unfinalizability of dialogism is thus particularly attractive for Emerson and others because, as Emerson herself argues, "in ethical life, an *un*finalized thing cannot be tested or put on trial" (*TFHY* 141), rendering discussions about such an understanding of dialogism superior to all other definitions and thereby delineating Western liberalism as an undisputable and untranscendable category as well as rejecting to make ethical claims.

Obviously, Hirschkop rejects the celebratory stance of finding dialogue "in the recesses of every utterance" because it amounts to "little more than wish-fulfillment in pseudo-philosophical form when the substance of that dialogue turns out to be the unfulfilled norms of American liberalism" (*MBAD* 9). Rejecting dialogism, for these scholars and Bakhtin, automatically leads to monologism, i.e., authoritarianism. Therefore, "the absence of pure dialogue, so the argument would go, leads inevitably to authoritarianism, monologism, oppression, inequality" (Hirschkop, "Is Dialogism for

Real?" 192). Hirschkop, however, disagrees because he rejects the idea that "dialogue represents all we should hope for in the political and social life of language" (ibid.). In other words, it is implied that liberalism cannot and should not be the untranscendable horizon according to which polyphony is defined.

Besides, the focus on the affirmative qualities of dialogism glosses over Bakhtin's consistent emphasis on "the 'generic', as the textual form in which the dialogical is embodied" because "it is within these forms that intersubjectivity finds itself worked out in historically concrete shapes" (Hirschkop, *MBAD* 9). The generic, unlike suggested by Morson and Emerson, appears as a fundamental category for Bakhtin: The generic conventions, or specifically genres in Bakhtin, are "historical forms which discourse assumes, and the novel is the form which marks the shift to European modernity" (ibid. 10). The refusal to acknowledge this fundamental quality, as seen in several scholars, leads to the conception of dialogue as a 'metaphysical' substance, and the loss of its historicalness, which, in turn, leads to the transformation of "historical insights into eternal verities" (ibid.). According to Hirschkop, the importance of history, in addition to dialogue, is evident in Bakhtin's focus on the historical meaning of the novel, the genre of modernity:

> For with the triumph of the novel and 'novelization', history has become an internal rather than merely external fact of genre. [...] the novel, as the genre embodying modernity itself, replaces the very idea of fate with the modern 'tendency to become', that is, with a self-consciously historical culture. (ibid. 13)

Commentary on Bakhtin exhibits, however, a refusal to "entertain the philosophical questions raised by what appears to be a chronology of literary styles and genres" (ibid.). In short, dialogism "is supposed to be modern but beyond or above politics, yet the 'contemporaneity' it outlines is obviously and inescapably coloured by the political facts of modern Europe" (ibid. 16).

Following Hirschkop's argumentation, it should be argued that the tendency to avoid the historical in understanding Bakhtin and dialogism, which materializes by avoiding the analysis of the plot and generic conventions, could be comprehended as another historical phenomenon. If modernity embodies the ideas of 'becoming' and 'historicalness', the absence of them can characterize the postmodern. On the one hand, the tendency to present Bakhtin's dialogism, and possibly other concepts, as universal and timeless verities should be comprehended in the context of postmodernism, which, perhaps

predictably, marks a clear break from the historicity of modernity. On the other hand, understanding Bakhtin's dialogism in relation to its historical conjuncture also helps to reveal the difference between Bakhtin's modernist polyphony and the postmodern version in contemporary fiction. Specifically, neoliberalism should be comprehended as the precondition of the contemporary polyphonic novel, following Bakhtin's own perspective of delineating capitalism as the precondition of modern polyphony. Unlike Bakhtin, however, this thesis aims to move beyond this initial argument and reveal the mutual relationship between neoliberalism and the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction. In other words, unlike Bakhtin's original methodology, this thesis has the general purpose to explore the social functions of contemporary polyphony. Therefore, the ahistorical perspective and the avoidance of ethical judgement should be understood in the context of postmodernism as a historical and cultural manifestation of neoliberalism.

Part IV: Postmodernism as a Historical Condition and Cultural Manifestation of Neoliberalism

Postmodernism can be comprehended as a stylistic concept or an aesthetic movement. Indeed, postmodernism marks a departure from modernism in the way in which it rejects certain modernist characteristics that appear to relate to mainly aesthetics. Central to this departure, however, is a radical change in the understanding of history and historical time. Unlike modernism, in which the idea of 'becoming' marks a clear sense of a chronological and 'inner' sense of historical time, postmodernism embodies an 'ahistorical' sense of time that evades a coherent comprehension of history. On the contrary, history in postmodernism is reduced to a static image of itself, which has the implication of detaching cultural production from its historical context while simultaneously blurring its social meanings and functions. Therefore, comprehending postmodernism as an exclusively stylistic concept amounts to a type of interpretive activity that hardly surpasses mirroring the central characteristics of postmodernism itself. However, comprehending postmodernism as a historical condition, by resisting the postmodern tenet of 'ahistoricity', can lead to critical insights in terms of understanding its underlying social meanings, characteristics and functions.

This thesis therefore comprehends postmodernism as a historical condition. Comprehending postmodernism as a historical condition necessitates a certain type of historical periodization that can, on the one hand, distinguish it from earlier historical periods, and on the other, locate it in the context of late capitalism as its cultural dominant. Jameson, in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1989), provides the required model for such an understanding: Based on Ernest Mandel's three stages of capitalism –(1) market capitalism, limited to national borders, (2) the stage of imperialism and monopoly, (3) multinational and global capital, or the stage of neoliberal capitalism–, Jameson identifies three corresponding cultural dominants that elucidate the historical developments of such stylistic movements: (1) realism, (2) modernism, and (3) postmodernism (35-36). Jameson argues that such a periodization helps to resist the postmodern temptation to comprehend history "as sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of distinct forces whose effectivity is undecidable" (ibid. 6).

Indeed, identifying postmodernism as the cultural dominant, or the hegemonic norm, of late capitalism, leads to a more productive differentiation between non-dominant cultural forms such as the residual and emergent in Williams, which nevertheless must appear in relation to the dominant, namely the postmodern itself (ibid.). Therefore, grasping postmodernism as a historical condition leads to recognizing it as 'the force field' that informs all cultural production. It goes without saying that this perspective also functions as the rationale behind such a periodization in the way in which it relates the specific shape of capitalism at a certain time to a specific cultural dominant. In other words, Jameson provides the rationale and the methodology to analyze the relationship between postmodernism and neoliberalism, or more specifically the postmodern polyphonic novel and neoliberalism, by his assertion that every attitude towards postmodern culture "is also at one and the same time, and *necessarily*, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today" (ibid. 3).

It follows, then, to explore, first, the relationship between neoliberalism and postmodernism. David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), asserts that there is a necessary relationship between (a) "the rise of postmodernist cultural forms," (b) "the emergence of more flexible modes of capital accumulation," and (c) "a new round of 'time-space compression' in the organization of capitalism" (vii). By following the

corresponding transitions from (a) modernism to postmodernism, (b) Fordism-Keynesianism to flexible capital accumulation in neoliberalism, and (c) the further compression of 'time-space' leading to ephemerality in the conception of time (ibid. 292) and the "annihilation of space through time" in an increasingly globalized world (ibid. 293), he identifies flexibilization as a central characteristic of present-day capitalism as well as postmodernism.

At the core of Harvey's account of the postmodern condition is the conception of capital as a process, rather than an object, which denotes the "reproduction of social life through commodity production" (ibid. 343); a process which is marked with an unprecedented level of flexibilization in capital accumulation and that which maps this neoliberal flexibilization onto the ephemerality and volatility evident both in postmodernist culture and the conception of space-time in contemporary world.

Flexibilization in neoliberalism has two separate implications: the flexible specialization of the labour force and the flexible means of capital accumulation. The relationship between the two, however, is that the former "can be seized on by the capital as a handy way to procure" more of the latter (Harvey, *ABHON* 76). In other words, flexible specialization and flexible means of accumulation both lead to the same outcome of "lower wages, increasing job insecurity, and in many instances loss of benefits and of job protections," elements which are easy to identify in countries "that have taken the neoliberal road" (ibid.).

Another implication of the flexibilization in neoliberalism, in contrast to the rigidity of Fordism, is the change in consumerism in the way in which it also embodies ephemerality and volatility. Postmodernism has to be understood at this conjuncture as well as in its capacity to replace the "relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism" with the "ferment instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of all cultural forms" (Harvey, *TCOP* 156). Furthermore, postmodernism's "total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity, and the chaotic" and its resistance to "transcend it, counteract it, or even to define the 'eternal and immutable' elements that might lie within it" can be comprehended as the expression of neoliberal flexibilization

because postmodernity "swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is" (ibid. 44).

It follows then to comprehend postmodernism (1) as the "logical extension of the power of the market over the whole range of cultural production" in the ways in which it legitimizes the flexible accumulation of capital, or the specific historical conditions of late capitalism (Harvey, *TCOP* 62); (2) as the cultural logic (of late capitalism) that is "the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xii); and finally (3) as a cultural revolution that aims to produce "postmodern people capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomic world" (ibid. xv). Postmodernism, in other words, is a cultural response to neoliberalism and appears as a historical phenomenon rather than merely an aesthetic one, which in turn necessitates exploring its characteristics from a historical perspective in order to identify their relation to neoliberalism. This is because the study of postmodernism and its characteristics reveals why neoliberalism should be comprehended (1) as the dominant culture that defines what social is (Williams), (2) not only as an economic theory but also as "powerful pedagogy and cultural politics" as neoliberalism reshapes "the totality of social life in the image of the market" (Giroux; xxv, 79), and (3) as a type of 'common sense' that reshapes people's day-to-day living, and interpretation and understanding of the world they live in (Harvey, *ABHON* 3).

Common sense, however, "always has a structure, a set of histories which are traces of the past as well as intimations of a future philosophy" and as such affects moral conduct and agency (Hall 9). The success of neoliberalism relies on its capacity to provide "the organizing nucleus of a wide-ranging set of new conceptions" (ibid. 10). As an ideology, neoliberalism has become successful and as Hall argues, organic, to the extent of acquiring legitimacy "which is psychological" by organizing "human masses" and creating "the terrain on which men [sic] move" (ibid.). Margaret Thatcher's sense-making and strategies to manufacture consent refer to the transformation of common sense in Britain. Thatcherism, as a specific variant of neoliberalism, Hall contends, is about reshaping common sense:

> Common sense shapes out ordinary, practical, everyday calculation and appears as natural as the air we breathe. It is simply 'taken for granted' in practice and thought, and forms the starting-point (never examined or questioned) from which every

> conversation begins, the premises on which every television programme is predicated. The hope of every ideology is to naturalize itself out of History into Nature, and thus to become invisible, to operate unconsciously. (ibid. 9)

Postmodernism, as the common sense and pedagogy of neoliberalism, becomes a valuable tool to also comprehend the social meanings, characteristics and functions of contemporary polyphony. This is of course different than claiming that the polyphonic novel is exclusively postmodern or that postmodernism is always complicit. Indeed, there are other scholars who identify certain postmodern characteristics as emancipatory and radical unlike Jameson, Harvey and others. Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* (1988), for instance, in which she explores the emancipatory potential of postmodern techniques such as parody in providing the reader with a heightened sense of power relations, has appeared in direct contrast to Jameson's interpretation of postmodernism. However, it would be erroneous to comprehend Jameson's claims to render postmodernism as exclusively complicit with oppression. Indeed, what I take Jameson to claim is that even our conceptions of emancipatory or radical pass through the postmodern. In other words, only in postmodernism it becomes possible to identify the existence of multiple individual perspectives in a given narrative as a form of "writing-back" that is perceived to be oppositional to the dominant discourse. Relatedly, it is also in postmodernism that it becomes feasible to rely on the supposedly undeniable differentiation between the individual and society, which is a categorically challenging, if not impossible, task. In this sense, it becomes improbable to utilize "old-fashioned ideological critique" because we are deeply immersed in the postmodern space (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 46).

Therefore, as also argued above, the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction should be comprehended as an emergent genre, which, despite being emergent – and potentially alternative and oppositional–, nevertheless passes through the postmodern and exhibits distinctively postmodern characteristics; the analysis of these characteristics can provide a better understanding of the polyphonic novel from a historical perspective. As W. Smith argues, dialogism, as first established in France and later in US American scholarship, is redefined and reformulated several times to the extent of appearing as an element of the postmodern, delineating it "indistinct from post-structural concepts such as

intertextuality or *écriture*" (23). It is therefore necessary to explore what postmodernism denotes in more detail.

Based on Jameson's *Postmodernism*, it is possible to list several characteristics of the postmodern condition that are closely related to the purposes of this study: (1) ahistoricalness, or the weakening of the linear, chronological understanding of time, which is replaced with "a series of pure and unrelated presents in time" both in the perception of public history and in the inner conception of time (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 6-27); (2) depthlessness, or, as Jameson puts it, "a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense," which refers to the postmodern resistance to fixed meanings and the rejection of the kind of hermeneutic activity that can relate the cultural product to the world with a focus on its underlying historical and social meanings, or in short, the resistance to transcendental interpretive categories and grand narratives, for which history appears as another grand narrative and is reduced to an image of itself (ibid. 9); (3) affectlessness, or the waning of affect, which refers to "the end of the psychopathologies of that ego" in postmodernism, or in other words, the end of the self that feels emotions rather than schizophrenic bursts of 'intensities,' which can alternatively be seen as depthlessness in the perception of selfhood that leads to the fragmented and incoherent postmodern self (ibid. 15); (4) the end of the distinction between "high" and "low" culture, which is identifiable in the postmodern fascination with the "landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Reader's Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery, and the science fiction or fantasy novel," which is ultimately a sign of the commodification of culture as well as everything else (ibid. 2-3); (5) the necessary and constitutive relationship between these characteristics and the emergence of "a whole new technology [such as computers, automation, new media: internet and film, military technology etc.], which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system," (ibid. 6); and lastly (6) the dominance of the categories of space –instead of time such as in high modernism– in defining "our psychic experience, our cultural languages" (ibid.16).

Jameson's characterizations help to define 'pastiche' as the dominant form of cultural production under neoliberalism, which has three distinct qualities: (1) bricolage:

"the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion" (ibid. 18), or "metabooks which cannibalize other books, metatexts which collate bits of other texts" (ibid. 96), which is manifest in the stylistic variety of postmodernism and its inability of creating a new form and meaning thereof; (2) nostalgia: the representation of the historical past or present as an aesthetic image, or in other words, as Jameson puts it, the "insensible colonization of the present by the nostalgia mode" (ibid. 19), through which the "real" past or present is replaced with the image, the stylistic connotations and the aesthetic, ultimately weakening historical meanings and connotations; and lastly (3) pop history, which denotes that with the loss of the historical perspective, the representation of history becomes an impossibility and "can only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes "pop history")" (ibid. 25), which also ultimately represents more a type of "degraded collective 'objective spirit'" rather than "the old monadic subject" and further distances history to the extent of rendering it out of reach (ibid.). The identification of a collective 'objective spirit' in postmodernism is, at first instance, striking to the degree that it contradicts the pluralistic and fragmented stance of postmodernism itself.

Indeed, the necessary addition to Jameson's characterization of the postmodern condition that locates the polyphonic novel in its postmodern context is defined by Harvey: one of the essential characteristics of postmodernism is the "idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate" (Harvey, *TCOP* 48). The pluralistic stance that is inherent in postmodernism is a constitutive feature of the polyphonic novel as well as being its generic quality that makes it possible to define it as a genre, which will be elaborated on later. More crucially, however, this pluralistic stance is what I suggest Jameson to refer to as the collective 'objective spirit' of postmodernism. In other words, the attitude that every individual and group have a right to speak for themselves and appear as equally valid and legitimate is itself the collective 'objective spirit' of postmodernism rather than it becoming a historical reality. For even with the neoliberal and postmodern attitude of unobstructed relativism, it is hardly probable to identify such pluralism in existence: neoliberalism, on the one hand, envisions everything in the image of the free market, while postmodernism resists any cultural attitude other than comprehending everything as relative and equally

valid. This is because the logical conclusion of postmodernism, as well as neoliberalism, should be identified as an "ontological issue", which appears as the constitutive feature of the contemporary polyphony, rather than an "epistemological" one such as in high modernism. Indeed, the turn of events that followed Bakhtin's time do not direct the West's attention towards the possibility of totalitarianism or monologic political systems anymore but rather to the unreal, irrelevant and chaotic multiplicity of distractions[13], which also manifests itself in the form of postmodern cynicism, an element that will be analyzed in detail in relation to *White Teeth*.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, it is necessary to evaluate the reactions to this development in contemporary British fiction. This approach helps to identify postmodernism even in the analysis of postmodern culture and the polyphonic novel – generally in the shape of a resistance to collective categories, transcendental interpretative activity, and underlying social reasons, functions and meanings of culture. However, before analyzing the scholarly responses to the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction, it is necessary to explain the type of periodization that I employ in this analysis.

Chapter Two

A Historical Meta-Analysis of the Polyphonic Novel in Contemporary British Fiction (Literature Review 2)

Part I: The Question of Periodization: British Contemporaneity and Contemporary Britishness

British Contemporaneity

It is now commonplace to trace the beginning of contemporary British literature back to the 1970s as the period that marks the beginning of a historical break, specifically to Margaret Thatcher's election either as the Tory leader in 1975 (Bentley, *CBF* 2) or as the Prime Minister in 1979 (Bradford, *The Novel Now* 38; Duff, *CBL* 1; English, *ACC* 4; English "The Literary Prize Phenomenon in Context" 172; Head, *The State of the Novel* 10; Hutchinson 1; Lane et al. 11; Lea 70; Scanlan 145; Tew, *TCBN* 16). Indeed, Thatcher's

[13] For an interesting exploration of how the pluralist stance of postmodernism has a necessary relationship with the growing depoliticization in the contemporary world in the context of television as an outlet of public discourse, see Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985).

ascent to power marks a historical shift in British politics and culture, an issue that is rarely contradicted even in studies that are less focused on historical or political analysis (Acheson and Ross 1; Rennison viii).

However, although this perspective has partially proved to be methodologically helpful, it has two central limitations. Firstly, the preposition that Thatcher marks the beginning of British contemporaneity is partially myopic to the larger global and historical events that had paved the way for the figures such as Thatcher and Reagan. This is because Thatcher and the Thatcherite revolution can be comprehended better in relation to the rise of neoliberalism, which traces the beginning of neoliberal contemporaneity back to the early 1970s, specifically to the OPEC crises of 1973 as Harvey argues in his account of the neoliberal revolution (*ABHON* 12). Therefore, my perspective is based on the argument that British contemporaneity should be understood to begin with the rise of neoliberalism in the mid-1970s, which later corresponds to Thatcher's consecutive election in 1979 and the Thatcherite revolution in the 1980s. This is a particularly necessary perspective as it helps to contextualize British contemporaneity in the then newly-developing neoliberal globalism and cosmopolitanism, which also correlates to the rise of the 'British' novel in opposition to the demise of the 'English' novel. The consequential expansion of British literature, which will be elaborated on later, hints at the second limitation of defining the contemporary.

Taking 1970s as the beginning of contemporary British literature, either by focusing on the rise of neoliberalism or the election of Thatcher, corresponds to such a large number of novels that it defies most systemic efforts to comprehend and analyse the contemporary British novel. Indeed, this problem is exacerbated by the clearly perceptible dissimilarities between two periods of literary production during and after Thatcher. It goes without saying that, parallel to the Thatcherite revolution, British literature went through radical changes. However, while the 1980s saw a relative focus on the emancipatory politics of postmodern literature, the 1990s and beyond are marked with an inclination towards a type of postmodernism that appears to be less radical and emancipatory than earlier examples. This argument follows from the common assertion that postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon is comprised of two distinct phases, the first of which refers to its "oppositional, anticapitalist, and antiestablishment" qualities that are ultimately co-

opted by the cultural industry, leading to a more problematic second stage (Sheppard, *Modernism, Dada and Postmodernism*, qtd. in Bentley, *BFOT* 4). Bentley suggests that the first phase of postmodernism coincides with the 1960s and 1970s, while the second phase corresponds to the 1980s (ibid.). Bentley's account, however, focuses on the literary and cultural theories of postmodernism rather than literary productions. This links to the contradiction between two conceptions of postmodernism: either as an aesthetic movement or as a historical condition that roughly corresponds to my periodization of postmodernism. If we consider, for instance, the work of canonical writers such as Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson from the 1980s, their postmodern techniques can be comprehended as more radical and emancipatory because of their critical stance. It is arguably easier to identify postmodernism after the 1990s as a historical condition in the way in which postmodern techniques were more often than not reduced to playful gimmicks without offering alternative and resistant perspectives unlike their original emancipatory connotations in the literature of the 1980s. Or in other words, as Head concludes, "it is true that by the end of Thatcher's lengthy period of government, some of her most articulate opponents had established themselves in such a way as to make them the beneficiaries of the very policies they had decried" (*The Cambridge Introduction* 45). Bentley equally acknowledges this shift by calling the 1990s the period of popular postmodernism "in that its fascination with parody, pastiche, retroism, a knowing self-awareness of previous forms and its general scepticism towards grand narratives seemed to become the prevailing attitude in the popular culture of the period" (*BFOT* 4). What is more, as another defining feature of the 1990s, identity politics takes centre stage both in cultural theory and the novel (ibid. 8), delineating the 1990s and beyond fundamentally distinct from the earlier stage of postmodernism.

There are of course exceptions to this categorization. Yet, periodization is almost always a provisional act as it is virtually improbable to clearly demarcate the transition from one movement to another, let alone the tenuous attempt to map literary production onto the clear separation of decades. Nevertheless, certain historical markers, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, help to formulate a working periodization in order to sustain a focused analysis.

The more problematic stage of postmodernism is perhaps better understood in relation to the end of the Cold War, which corresponds both to the end of Thatcher's political power –in the sense that the effects of the Thatcherite politics became more pronounced and persistent even in the aftermath of the New Labour– and the transformation of neoliberalism to a worldwide phenomenon that acquired an unchallenged status, or becoming the "common sense" as put by Hall (9-10). It is therefore necessary to recognize 1989 as one of the determinants of a new type of contemporaneity because, as Hubble et al. maintain, the 1990s saw "the seeming advent of a 'new world order' (*The 2000s* 1).

Berthold Schoene, in *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009) provides a comprehensive rationale for demarcating 1989 as the beginning of a new type of British contemporaneity that is affected by globalism and cosmopolitanism. His account identifies two other historical events that have had an equal impact on this new sense of contemporaneity: the Scottish devolution in 1997 and the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001 (6). Schoene convincingly uses these three events as historical markers and actual determinants of British contemporaneity. However, his account replicates the problem of putting too much emphasis on events that are better understood in relation to the rise of neoliberalism –more specifically neoliberal globalisation and cosmopolitanism. This is most clear in his rebuttal of English's focus on the Thatcherite revolution of the 1980s in defining the historical determinants of British contemporaneity (Schoene 8). As much as Schoene's argument provides a more focused perspective about defining the contemporary, it overemphasizes the aforementioned events and risks isolating them from Thatcher and larger global and social issues.

In contrast, Emily Horton, in *Contemporary Crises Fictions* (2014), convincingly rejects Schoene's focus by following Harvey's suggestion that the 1970s should be seen as the beginning of neoliberal globalisation and indirectly the beginning of British contemporaneity. Yet, Horton creates the problem of overlooking the specific impacts of such historical events on this new sense of British contemporaneity by devoting disproportionate attention to the general or replacing the focus of Thatcherite revolution or the subsequent historical events with the rise of neoliberalism.

In order to bridge the gap between these accounts and formulate a new definition of the contemporary, this study employs two different understandings of contemporaneity simultaneously: on the one hand, I follow the general assumption of tracing the beginnings of contemporary literature back to Thatcher's ascent to power with the added perspective that Thatcher and her politics should be perceived as part of the larger and global neoliberal revolution that had initially preceded but ultimately converged with her premiership.

However, as Bentley, following Tew, also acknowledges, it is not only that the mid-1970s and the later period are easily distinguishable from earlier post-war years but there are also significant "differences in British society and culture between the 1980s and 1990s that are reflected in the fiction of the period" by listing the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and finally the 9/11 attacks in order to emphasize their symbolic power (Bentley, *BFOT* 2-3; Hubble et al. *The 2000s* 3). Parallel to this and in contrast to the first periodization I suggested above, I am also interested in acknowledging these critical historical events as determinants of British contemporaneity. This necessitates relating the larger contemporaneity, first, to the end of the Cold War –or alternatively the end of Thatcher's premiership while simultaneously acknowledging that this second phase of postmodernism and contemporaneity in British literature follows from the neoliberal revolution of the 1970s and 1980s.

My second focus on defining the contemporary follows Schoene's account of the new British contemporaneity that is marked by the aforementioned historical events. My formulation, however, adds a fourth crucial historical event in this list: the global financial crises of 2007-8. Hubble et al., in *The 2000s,* have already emphasized the importance of the financial crises as a historical marker (4); however, their account of the contemporary is limited to the 2000s –in the sense that it does not look at literary production from before or beyond the 2000s, and does not establish a link between neoliberalism in general –other than shortly tracing it back to the Thatcher government in the 1980s– and the financial crises (4-5). This follows from my assumption that this addition corrects the disproportionate focus on either neoliberalism as an abstract concept or the more local and immediate events such as the 9/11 attacks or Scottish devolution as the exclusive determinants of this new British contemporaneity.

Indeed, the financial crises of 2007-8 marks not only another crucial historical shift but also helps to emphasize the necessary relationship between the rise of neoliberalism in a more general and global sense, and such events as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, the end of Thatcher's premiership, the Scottish devolution, and the terrorist attacks of 2001; or in other words, the emergence and saturation of a new world order. Even after a decade, the financial crisis maintains its central force in affecting social, economic and political policy. Furthermore, its suggested correlation with the rise of the New Right (Hubble et al. T*he 2000s* 5; Funke et al.) exposes its critical effects in defining the contemporary.[14]

Based on this new formulation, my selection of novels for close reading in the subsequent chapters is limited roughly to the beginning of the millennium. This follows from the preconception that the inclusion of the financial crises of 2007-8 helps to formulate the neoliberal contemporaneity in British literature as informed not only by the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s followed by Thatcher's premiership, but also by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, the Scottish devolution, and the 9/11 attacks. While the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union culminating into the end of the Cold War can be comprehended to represent the end of the dialectical opposition between late capitalism and communism; 9/11 attacks identify Islamic fundamentalism as the new opponent of neoliberalism instead of Marxism (Bentley, *1990s* 3). Therefore, the addition of the financial crisis of 2007-8 reveals the core problems of Western capitalism not in relation to Islamic fundamentalism, which appears "in an often highly manipulated and mediatized way" (ibid.), but in relation to the core contradictions of neoliberalism itself. Indeed, the 1990s experiences the emergence of "a global imaginary of threat," leading to the correlation of liberal forms of governance with less planetary endangerment, which is followed by "an unrivalled moment of liberal expansionism" (Evans 61). However, this expansion is not predicated on a "commitment to embrace liberal ideals" (ibid.). As a consequence, it is vital to comprehend 9/11 attacks and its aftermath as part of this neoliberal expansionism.

[14] In parallel, Elliott and Harkins note that "[a]fter the explicit imperial resurgence of the post-9/11 world and the international economic recession of the 2010s, neoliberalism as a seemingly hegemonic entity is faced with its own critical crises and/or recasting into new formations of interests and allegiances" (7).

British contemporaneity, then, should be comprehended in the light of these historical changes because "the 'contemporary' denotes not just every present but the particular present of the early twenty-first century" which is marked by an inability to see the future (Hubble et al., *The 2000s* 9). Following Jameson, this inability, Hubble et al. argue, relates to the reification of the present as history and in turn an acceptance of the inability to change it (ibid. 10). Specifically, this new contemporaneity is marked with a clear sense of multiple coexisting presents that appear in the form of histories, which appear immutable. It follows then to trace the origins and development of such a sense of contemporaneity back to neoliberal flexibilization (as already argued before) with the addition of the financial crisis of 2007-8.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the 2000s and beyond add another debate into this new sense of contemporaneity: for instance, according to Hubble et al. the 2000s appear as a time "in which novelists and cultural critics examine the end, or indeed, ends of postmodernism" (ibid. 14). Despite being partially accurate, this argument relies on problematic and unconvincing premises. Firstly, their argument is based on taking 9/11 as a historical marker that represents the end of postmodernism, which tends to overemphasize Islamic fundamentalism as the predominant problem of Western societies. Secondly, even though they refer to the limits of postmodernism as a philosophy in the way in which it rejects totalizing narratives, they provide aesthetic and stylistic examples for such an argument, which replicates the problem of comprehending postmodernism more as aesthetics rather than a historical condition. For instance, the claim that some writers returned "to work in a broadly realist mode as an implicit rejection of postmodernism" or "those who self-consciously returned to modernist techniques as a way of return to a pre-postmodern aesthetics" (ibid. 17) do not necessarily correlate with the end of postmodernism as a historical condition but as an aesthetic movement. Besides, their claim that several writers from the 2000s are distinguishable "with a sense of a break with dominant literary and cultural forms of the previous decade" (16) contradicts their own acknowledgment that novelists continued "to use narrative techniques associated with postmodernism" but they "have reintroduced a set of grounded ethical positions" (17): grounded ethical positions can hardly be identified as literary forms. One example they provide is David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* as a novel with postmodern techniques, but also

as a novel "that attempts to arrive at some defined and concrete sense of human values that ties periods and forms together" (ibid.). The problem with this argument is the failure to comprehend the specific and concrete human values that *Cloud Atlas* attempts to generate. As it will be analysed in more detail later, it suffices now to add that a collection of specific human values can very well be utilised to legitimize the very inability to comprehend the future. In other words, predatory behaviour in *Cloud Atlas* as a universal, concrete and specific characteristic of all human beings reifies the very sense of contemporaneity explained above: as immutable and as already history, which in turn masks the contradictions of neoliberalism as a global force in enforcing the primacy of the free market and individualism as a concrete human value.

Consequently, one of the overall purposes of my research is to support the argument that postmodernism as a historical condition remains to be a cultural force-field, which becomes clear and pronounced in the contemporary polyphonic novel in British fiction when we grasp genre as a way of seeing and knowing the world. This is clear in the fact that most of the novels that Hubble et al. select to support their claim of the end(s) of postmodernism are distinguishably polyphonic in narrative structure, style and content (*The 2000s* 17-19). Before that, however, we also need to explore what Britishness denotes, as a necessary element of the aforementioned contemporaneity.

Contemporary Britishness

If contemporaneity proves to be a slippery concept, Britishness appears as another term that needs some level of explanation. While it should be admitted that the term British has at times been used to mask over English hegemony over the whole of Britain (Finney 8) and blur England's responsibility in issues such as colonialism (Tew, *TCBN* 35), this study employs the term British as it leads to covering a wide-ranging selection of novels with a focus on genre. My argument follows Finney, Tew and Bentley's use of the term as an inclusive and methodologically relevant category rather than some who identify it as an exclusively and implicitly racist and colonial term (Tew, *TCBN* 35).[15]

[15] Or unlike Rennison, for instance, who conflates the British novel with the English novel to ultimately suggest that "in 2004 there is no such strange creature as the British Novel (or English Novel)" (xi).

The use of the term British, as Finney argues, is more inclusive than using the category of the English Novel as the latter often comes with the connotation of middle-class white men more often than the former (8). Parallel to this is Tew's assertion that Britishness can be understood as diverse "in a regional and class sense, to which progressively one can add gender and ethnicity" (*TCBN* 35), an argument that fails when we apply it to the English Novel. Perhaps, Britishness refers to a less problematic definition if we focus on Schoene's argument:

> Whereas traditionally the rise of the novel has been studied in intimate association with the rise of the nation state, might increasing globalisation currently be prompting the development of a less homebound and territorialist sub-genre of the novel, more adept than its national and postcolonial counterparts at imagining global community? (12)

Even though Schoene uses this argument to support his claim of the British cosmopolitan novel, it is nevertheless helpful in identifying a more diverse and inclusive definition of Britishness. Horton argues that Schoene's perspective provides the formulation of a global and cosmopolitan understanding of the contemporary British novel (218). My argument follows from this global and cosmopolitan focus in defining Britishness in order to include literary categories such as Black British fiction, queer fiction, or women's fiction in the analysis of the polyphonic novel.

In perhaps an unsurprisingly paradoxical way, while Thatcher's policies directed the society towards individualism, the literary canon as well as the scholarly response in that period expanded to include the often-marginalized groups in literary production. There are several reasons for such a shift. First of all, the rising popularity and critical success of novels that focus on marginalized identities started to claim more attention. The emergence of new literary categories such as postcolonial fiction, Black British fiction and queer fiction, exemplifies the suggested proliferation based on identity markers. This is followed by the emergence of entertainment genres that are based on life-style choices as demonstrated in the categories of chick-lit and lad-lit. Simultaneously, the developments in Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish literatures delineated them ever more central to the literary canon. This, however, occurred in more fragmented categorizations: While the categories of postcolonial, women's, queer and Black fiction were once ideologically affirmative terms (Tew, *TCBN* 15), it is now also necessary to formulate categories in which such genres could be analyzed comparatively. Parallel to this is the

acknowledgement that such categories were partly used "for reasons of commercial and curricular convenience" (English, *ACC* 4). In addition, following Tew, because these novels "constitute a significant contribution to mainstream literary culture," my thesis prioritizes the term British novel as to avoid marginalization of such categories in contrast to the English novel (*TCBN* 15).

All of these elements render the term British more indispensable so as to avoid a relapse to the central rejection of overarching categories in postmodernism. In addition, it helps the differentiation between categories such as Anglophone literature or literature(s) in English. My argument of using the term British as inclusive of all identities follows from my interest in formulating a working category that would make it possible to identify the formal patterns rather than focus on common themes, issues and debates as seen in the vast majority of the survey studies of the contemporary novel. In other words, by assuming that Britishness includes all of the aforementioned literary categories based on identity markers, it becomes feasible to formulate a different type of categorization that focuses on formal literary trends and patterns, creating the possibility to provide an alternative history of contemporary British fiction.

Part II: A Historical Meta-Analysis of Academic Responses to the Contemporary Novel

Academic Responses to the post-Thatcher Novel

As mentioned before, the literature after the mid-1970s is easily distinguishable from the earlier period of post-war years. The same period has also recognizable differences in terms of the scholarly responses to the developments in British fiction. Head, for instance, acknowledges that not only the fiction of the 1980s is easily distinguishable from the 1950s and 1960s but also the academic response to the novels of that period (*The Cambridge Introduction* 1). Several scholars, however, evade the analysis of the patterns of the academic responses to the contemporary British Novel.

The academic responses to the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s represent fundamentally parallel attitudes. Other than Andrzej Gasiorek's study *Postwar British Fiction: Realism*

and After (1995), in which he analyses the postwar novel with the unifying perspective of the contradiction between realism and experimentalism, the majority of survey studies on contemporary British fiction replicates the characteristically postmodern tenet of overemphasizing variety, diversity and identity rather than attempting to comprehend these trends from a broader, social perspective. The extreme example of this attitude is clearly identifiable in Rennison's argument that "Britain in the last twenty years of the twentieth century and the first few years of a new millennium has shown itself too diverse, too protean to fit within the straitjackets of fictional forms that have outlived their usefulness" (ix). The disproportionate focus on diversity and variety is also evident in Rennison's untenable claim that "[t]here is no great tradition of the English novel any longer. There are only individual novels" (xi), which, of course, unsurprisingly appears as reminiscent of Thatcher's infamous statement of a similar nature. Rennison's attitude is symptomatic of the postmodern condition in the way in which he rejects any transcendental category and suggests that unrelenting variety is all that there is, which necessarily annuls any attempt to make sense of the contemporary British novel from a broader perspective.

Other survey studies exemplify the limits of solely relying on diversity, variety and identity as meaningful interpretive categories as shown in the inconsistent reversals of focus from common themes, issues and debates to identity politics and vice versa. *British Fiction of the 1990s* (ed. Nick Bentley) (2005), for example, reflects this problematic classification: one chapter is devoted to identity markers while another focuses on historical fictions, and another on narrative geographies while the collection in general does not offer a consistent categorical principle. Bentley's answer to this interrogation comes in the form of a focus on diversity: "The second main characteristic of 1990s fiction is its sheer diversity" (1). Bentley later admits that such categories should not be seen as final and that there are of course overlaps between them, and the solution to this problem is suggested to be resolved by looking at repeated themes (6).[16]

[16] Similar attitudes are identifiable in several survey studies. For instance, *The 1990s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* (eds. Hubble, Tew, Wilson) (2005) divides the collection into thematic and author-based categories. Likewise, Nick Rennison's *Contemporary British Novelists* (2005) devotes each chapter to a specific novelist. *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel 1945-2000* (2005) replicates the same pattern of having, on the one hand, thematic categories such as feminism and black fiction, and on the other, dividing the rest of the book according to specific authors. James F. English's *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (2006) is correspondingly divided into three general categories based on common issues, themes and debates: institutions of commerce (the relationship between the novel and the

Unlike others, Head's *The State of the Novel: Britain and Beyond* (2008) offers a focused analysis on the novel from a broader historical perspective and convincingly argues:

> novelists can no longer appeal to shared conceptions of typicality in the way that they once did. A consequence of social experience through the twentieth century and beyond is that there is no agreed moral stance, and this makes it difficult to deploy the old-style omniscient narrator, or to embed the experiences of a character in the landscape of shared values. Yet this is also an inevitable consequence of an increasingly pluralistic society, in which previously unheard or silenced voices are expressed. From another perspective, then, the loss of agreed values opens up the possibility of fresh social and cultural exploration. (36)

The problem, however, is that he does not conceptualize a category that is based on this very insight, which, to a certain extent, defines a central characteristic of postmodern polyphony. A similar insight is discernible in *Contemporary British Fiction* (eds. Lane, Mengham, Tew) (2003), in which the contemporary is linked "to a sense of endless change, to the rapid turnover of novelties, to the commodification of artistic experiment; attitudes to the past have been influenced by marketing, by a consumer demand for the retro, by an investment in history reproducible as style" (Mengham, "General Introduction" 1). As in Head's account of the contemporary, Mengham misses the chance to conceptualize a category of the novel that makes sense of his convincing characterization from a larger perspective.

Relatedly, Bentley misjudges the postmodern focus on variety and diversity by further arguing that there are many postmodernisms and thus postmodernism "does not relate to a fixed set of characteristics or criteria, but is a rather fluid term that takes on different aspects when used by different critics and different social commentators" (Bentley, *CBF* 33). Despite being partially true, the problem with this perspective is the replication of postmodern responses to literary production, which creates a circular and limited space for interpretive activity. The limits of such a method are evident in Bentley's confession that "[i]n keeping with its embrace of multiplicity it is more accurate to talk in

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publication industry, celebrity culture and the film), elaborations of empire (national and ethnic identities), mutations of form (historical fiction, feminist writing, queer fiction as a genre, the demise of class fiction, the academic novel). Parallel to these, Finney's *English Fiction since 1984: Narrating a Nation* (2006) is divided into three categories based on themes, issues and topics, as well as having references to form, all of which have author-based or a specific novel-based sub-chapters.

terms of postmodernisms rather than a clearly defined theoretical discourse" (*CBF* 33).

Another clear example is *The Contemporary British Novel* (eds. Acheson and Ross) (2005). Acheson and Ross inadvertently exemplify the difficulty in categories based on '–isms' by admitting that "novels often embody combinations of realism, postcolonialism, feminism and postmodernism, and include other '-isms' as well" (1). The solution they propose, however, is problematic: "the collection is divided into four parts, each devoted to one of the four major '-isms', yet each admitting other '-isms' into the discussion of the novelists concerned" (ibid.). Even when we comprehend one of these '-isms' as the dominant, we still cannot provide a comprehensive category. There are several authors whose novels could easily fit into several of these categories without much difficulty. When we consider, for instance, Angela Carter, we have the options of comprehending her as Carter the Magic Realist, Carter the Feminist, and Carter the Postmodernist. This problem is caused by the inconsistency in categorizing such novels: while realism gives the impression of taking narrative tone or mode as the categorical element, feminism could be seen as a thematic issue, and postmodernism can be both. The problem with such categorical choices is the failure to comprehend such variety and increase in '-isms', which should be the very object of a historically focused analysis. This, of course, does not mean that such categories are not useful. On the contrary, the productive abundance of these categories makes it possible and necessary to introduce other interpretive categories to the analysis of the novel, such as using a renewed sense of genre.

These tendencies are therefore related to contrasting understandings of genre, which will be clarified later in more detail. But more crucially, this is what I take Jameson to indicate in his claim that every cultural production passes through the postmodern. Specifically, even the academic response seems to function, at least to a certain extent, through the postmodern evasion of unifying perspectives, totalizing narratives or meaningful categories in contrast to sheer diversity, constant change and resistance to fixed meanings.

In short, the academic response to the British Novel of the last couple of decades has extensively explored common issues, themes and debates of postmodernism such as identity and history. It should also be acknowledged that such works provide vital insights on the contemporary novel. However, as the majority of contemporary survey studies

focuses consistently on the issues of identity markers, history, and common themes and debates, my research aims to complement these works by prioritizing genre as a fundamental literary category. In addition, following Head's plea for academics to focus on "broader cultural debates" to reinvigorate the state of academic criticism (*TSOTN* 3-4), and to shift the focus on "concerns that have a general social application" (ibid. 6), I argue that genre is a methodologically efficient way of comprehending the underlying social meanings of the contemporary novel and its variety. The study of the contemporary polyphonic novel in British fiction therefore complements these survey studies in the tradition of genre-focused analyses such as Horton's *Contemporary Crisis Fictions* (2014), Hutchinson's *Reaganism, Thatcherism and the Social Novel* (2008), Duff's *Contemporary British Literature and Urban Space* and Head's *the State of the Novel: Britain and Beyond* (2008).

It is possibly postmodernism itself that renders the polyphonic novel problematic to identify as a common genre in British fiction even though it comprises a considerable part of the contemporary canon. Employing genre as an interpretive category responds to the need to systematically analyse a variety of novels, which appear in several different categories in the aforementioned survey studies. This necessitates, then, a specific exploration at the academic response to the polyphonic novel.

Academic Responses to the Polyphonic Novel in British Fiction

The majority of the survey studies on contemporary British novel focuses on several polyphonic novels without directly naming them as such even though narrative multiplicity appears as a common element in such discussions. As these studies do not employ genre as an overarching literary category, each critic interprets narrative multiplicity in two distinct ways.

One the one hand, narrative multiplicity is interpreted to reflect neoliberal individualism in the way in which it prioritizes individual perspectives and voices without a unifying social or ethical perspective (Bedggood 209-10; Bentley, *BFOT* 5; Bentley, *CBF* 187; Finney, *English Fiction* 13; Head, *The Cambridge Introduction* 10-12-44; Hutchinson 35).

On the other hand, narrative multiplicity appears as a form of ideological affirmation: Several critics, directly or indirectly, argue that narrative multiplicity can be comprehended as a form of symbolic resolution to neoliberal individualism in the ways in which it (1) creates symbolic communities (Hutchinson 183; Moore-Gilbert 109-10); (2) represents sub-cultures or oppressed communities (Head, *The Cambridge Introduction* 45), (3) suggests a universal humanism (Hubble et al., *The 2000s* 17; Head, *The Cambridge Introduction* 45, 228-9; Sceats 166), (4) provides a form of "writing back" (Colebrook 52; Lee 102); (5) presents a variety of, often oppressed, histories by giving them a voice (Connor 30; Mengham "General Introduction" 7; Rubinson 165).

Mark Stein, unlike in other survey studies, presents polyphony as a problematic but productive approach to the contemporary British novel. In *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*, he highlights heterogeneity and polyphony in Black British literature as the possible difficulty for critics to map a black British history. However, he also points out that "[t]he image of a concert of voices, which is polyphonic (with distinct melodies side by side; contrapuntal) and not homophonic (subordinate to a dominant melody)" helps us to "formalize the notion of connecting and shifting cultural territories" (173). While Stein acknowledges the trend towards polyphony and sheds light on Black British literature, his focus does not take polyphony as a broader trend.

These two paradoxical and conflicting strands of interpretation of the polyphonic novel is one of the reasons that construed it less visible to critics. However, it is this very paradox and contradiction between two different implications of the polyphonic novel that constitutes a central characteristic of the genre. In other words, these studies and critics, inadvertently, have already identified the social meanings and functions of polyphony but due to the absence of a unifying category, these interpretations have not been negotiated. My research aims to fill this gap of systematic analysis of the polyphonic novel by consolidating these two different understandings and by utilizing genre as an essential literary category. Yet, genre is another contested term that needs further elaboration.

PART III: Genre as a Way of Knowing and Conceptualizing the World

Even though the contemporary British novel has seen the emergence of several distinct genres, no scholar, to my knowledge, has identified the polyphonic novel as a

distinct genre. One of the reasons of this gap has to be related to divergent understandings of genre. Indeed, genres that are identified as emergent appear to be based on specific senses of the term. For instance, the new genres of contemporary British fiction such as Black British fiction, New Historical fiction, women's fiction, queer fiction, postcolonial fiction (English, "Introduction" 13), contemporary ecological novel (Bentley, *CBF* 195), the seaside novel (Head, *TSOT* 36) appear to be largely based on either the understanding of genre as a classificatory 'box' or as 'family resemblance.' Added to this is the understanding of genre that is based on prototype theory, which is clear in the identification of new genres such as Chick-Lit or Lad-Lit (Ferris and Young, "Introduction" 4; Head, *The Cambridge Introduction* 248). In contrast to these understandings of genre, my analysis prioritizes a different approach, which necessitates the explanation of some of the most crucial senses of genre.

Carol A. Newsom, in an informative article titled "Pairing Research Questions and Theories of Genre: A Case Study of the Hodayot," provides a succinct summary of some of the most essential genre models. Even though her focus is on an entirely different field, her summary of the various uses of genre is of utmost value and needs to be explored here.

The first model that Newsom identifies is the classificatory 'box' model, which denotes "the larger cultural practice of classification" based on the identification of "a list of distinguishing characteristics" (272). This model of genre, even though it can yield valuable analysis, "is a tool of the critic, not an inherent property of the text" (ibid. 273). The second model is the Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance', in which genre is understood in relation to "criss-crossing and overlapping networks of similarity" (ibid.).

The third model comprehends genre as 'a mode of comprehension': genre in this model appears as an active form of "intertextuality that helps us locate this text in relation to others with which we are already familiar" (ibid.). The fourth model that Newsom explores is genre "as a kind of cultural-linguistic template, a social contract between speakers or writers and their recipients", which sometimes also appears as the 'prototype theory' of genre (274). This model refers to "a mental prototype of a genre" that is later used to "recognize other examples or to create examples by reference to the prototype" (275).

The fifth model, genre as a way of knowing the world, grasps genres as "distinct modes of perception or even of ways of constructing meaningful worlds," which refers to the capacity of the genre as "a form of knowing and conceptualizing the world" (ibid.). The sixth and last model –genre as genre systems– comprehends genre both diachronically and synchronically –"the ecology of genres or genre systems at a given point in time and across periods of time"– in order to identify its social functions (ibid.). Newsom cautiously and convincingly adds that these six models are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive (276). Nevertheless, her summary of some of the most common understandings of genre is particularly informative in the way in which it provides the model of genre that is better suited to the analysis of the polyphonic novel.

In the light of the differentiation above, this study comprehends genre as "a way of knowing and conceptualising the world." Such an understanding of genre is not without precedents. For instance, based on Williams's conception of genre, Mulhern argues, in *Figures of Catastrophe: The Condition of Culture Novel* (2016), that genre is less a matter of formal classification or "force of literary production" ("Introduction to a Genre"). Rather, it is 'a way of seeing' the world (ibid.). Mulhern's interpretation of genre is specifically interesting in the way in which it acknowledges two distinct elements in understanding genre as a way of knowing: Firstly, identifying a novel's genre does not refer to "an essence that saturates" the novel but rather to "its generic dominant." Secondly, many novels, including the ones in this study, can "belong to more than one genre" (ibid.).

This understanding of genre is directly linked to the focus and methodology in this study as well as appearing as another possible reason why the polyphonic novel persists to be difficult to identify. Given the fact that Bakhtin identifies the polyphonic novel as a new genre, it is necessary to explore Bakhtin's own understanding of the term. Bakhtin appears to have a closer affinity to the sense of genre as a way of knowing rather than other models; at least at the period he wrote the Dostoevsky book (Renfrew 110). This is because with genre "Bakhtin emphasizes ideology, differentiation and polyphony (or multi-voicedness)" rather than formalist typologies or prototypical classifications (Thomson 31).

Bakhtin's specific focus on ideology renders his theory of genres, despite never being conclusively formulized (Thomson 33) and despite showing easily distinguishable differences in his later works, as one of his most valuable contributions to literary studies.

As Thomson argues, genre for Bakhtin (as well as for P. M. Medvedev, with whom Bakhtin wrote *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*) "belongs rather to the collective and the social" and thus "the transformations in generic forms must be seen in relation to social change" (33). Medvedev's conception of genre defines it "primarily in terms of seeing or conceptualization" (Renfrew 110). For Bakhtin, even when his perception of genre changed at a later stage, "the predominating tendency […] is to view genre as a mediating entity" (Thomson 34). Indeed, as Clark and Holquist succinctly summarise, genre for Bakhtin means the formulation of a historically specific worldview:

> [Bakhtin] looks at genres […] as icons that fix the world view of the ages from which they spring. Genre is to him an X-ray of a specific world view, a crystallization of the concepts particular to a given time and to a given social stratum in a specific society. A genre, therefore, embodies a historically specific idea of what it means to be a human. (275)[17]

The problem, however, is that Bakhtin did not formulate a systematic methodology in order to instigate the analysis of genre from this perspective.

Thomson, in "Bakhtin's "Theory" of Genre", argues that it is possible to comprehend Jameson's take on genre in *The Political Unconscious* as an extension of Bakhtin's sense of genre as a mediatory unit, which provides a "methodological construct" unlike Bakhtin's non-systematic and equivocal conception of genre (38). Indeed, Jameson provides the necessary methodological standard of correlating genres to historical forces by reading them in their relation to dominant ideologies. It is, however, equally important to note that Jameson builds on not only on Bakhtin but also Lukács' conception of genres as mediations. As such, according to Jameson, the understanding of genre as mediation leads to the unmasking of the allegorical articulation of a given historical moment through the identification of generic messages (*TPU* 85).

In other words, genre has strategic value in relation to its mediatory functions "which allows the coordination of immanent formal analysis of the individual text with the twin diachronic perspective of the history of forms and the evolution of social life" (ibid. 92). Furthermore, comprehending genre with the focus of generic problems leads to comprehending genre "in its emergent, strong form" as "a socio-symbolic message" or "an

[17] Bakhtin's focus on genre, as the context through which a specific understanding of being human emerges, demonstrates similarities to Williams' structure of feeling in terms of how it defines what social is.

ideology in its own right" (ibid. 126-7). Similarly, such an understanding of genre echoes Williams' conception of the term to a large extent because for Williams genre "is neither an ideal type nor a traditional order nor a set of technical rules" but rather a specific historical constellation of ideas about what it means to be human and what social denotes (*Marxism and Literature,* 185). As a result, this study takes genre as a way of knowing and seeing the world, whose specific constellations in the polyphonic novel can be interpreted to appear as specific ideological messages in their own right. In this context, the polyphonic novel can be comprehended to formulate the neoliberal understandings of what being a human denotes.[18] If the polyphonic novel is to be comprehended as a specific way of knowing and seeing the world, if its form is to be seen as an ideological and symbolic message, it is necessary to finally conclude this chapter by explaining the characteristics of contemporary polyphony.

Part IV: The Contemporary Polyphonic Novel as the Narrative Aesthetics of Neoliberal Individualism

The polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction has the following constitutive formal characteristics that delineate the genre as a way of knowing the world and what it means to be a human being in that world:

a. Multiple Protagonists: The coexistence of equally important (and to a certain extent, apparently unrelated) protagonists (types or stock characters, static or

[18] By following Jameson's conception of genre, my research assumes that all such generic categories including "the polyphonic novel" need to be seen as "experimental constructs, devised for a specific textual occasion" which will be later abandoned (*TPU* 131-2). Even for Bakhtin, this understanding of genre was crucial as he "questions the value of typology […] by defining them as necessarily provisional, as necessarily produced by and evolving in intimate connection with the full range of ideological, social, formal, and thematic factors it is their function to record and make manifest" (Renfrew 169). The construction and identification of the polyphonic novel as a genre, then, can prove productive only when the arbitrariness of such critical and classificatory acts are acknowledged so as to avoid rendering such genres as "natural". This is because my argument relies on the assumption that comprehending such genres as "natural" forms would inevitably lead them to lose vitality (Jameson, *TPU* 131-2). Central to these arguments is the assumption that it is not possible to formulate an "exhaustive system of generic classification" and that each way of conceptualizing a genre is itself not "immune to re-evaluate the process of its own evolution" (Renfrew 168). This is the sense why Jameson's conception of genre is directly related to Lukács' sense of the term: Jameson refers to Lukács' "creative construction of experimental entities" such as his reading of "Solzhenitsyn in terms of an invented "genre" that might be termed the "closed laboratory situation" (*TPU* 131-2). This, Jameson concludes, is the very element that makes it conceivable to interpret such novels as symbolic acts in their specific historical situation (ibid.), which also forms the core of my understanding of the polyphonic novel as a genre.

dynamic characters, flat or round characters) who do not necessarily interact with one another.

b. Multiple Plot Lines: The coexistence of equally important plot lines that do not necessarily converge and that, as a result, produce temporal and spatial variety, the result of which appears as an understanding of historical time as coexisting multiple presents and the compression of space to the extent of rendering geographical differences and spatial distances irrelevant.[19]
c. Multiple Language Styles (Heteroglossia): Vernacular, professional, colloquial, journalistic, (in)formal.
d. Multiple Literary Modes: Autobiographical, satiric, comic, confessional, introspective, ironic, pastoral, didactic, allegorical, realist, fantastic, melodramatic.
e. Multiple Perspectives: Variety of point of view and/or focalization.
f. Multiple Genres and Genre Elements: Pastiche and/or bricolage of a variety of genres and genre elements.
g. Textual Endings: Experimentations with narrative closure.

These characteristics do not always exist together in a given novel, or they appear in different combinations and formations. However, this exploratory list suffices to invoke the understanding of the polyphonic novel as a central genre of postmodernism in its capacity to aestheticize the pluralist and relativist stance of postmodernism. The term polyphony, therefore, appears as a possible synthesis of these characteristics because, as per Bakhtin's definition, polyphony denotes the coexistence of equally valid voices – perspectives and focalizations– that are ideologically incompatible, and yet equally valid and unreconciled by the text. In other words, polyphony denotes the coexistence of a multiplicity of conflicting ideological positions –in the limited sense of Bakhtin's use as

[19] For a symptomatic example of delineating polyphony's suspicion of diachrony and association with synchrony, see Graham Pechey, *The Word in the World*, p. 28. The idea of coexisting multiple presents in contrast to a chronological sense of time also appears as one of the constitutive characteristics of the polyphonic novel as neatly explained, for different purposes, by Graham Pechey: "Polyphony's association with synchrony is to be explained by its suspicion of diachrony as a dimension compromised by the latter's association with the classical dialectic" (Pechey, *The Word in the World* 28), which for Bakhtin, according to some scholars, is a form of monology.

worldview– that are not resolved by the text, thereby inevitably leading to a form of relativity, and sometimes cynicism.

The relativization of ideological positions in the polyphonic novel, or the absence of reconciliation, may be better comprehended as the ontologization of ideological conflict. In order to substantiate this argument, however, it is crucial to add another constitutive characteristic of the polyphonic novel. As explored in detail above, Reed's suggestion that Bakhtin's polyphony should be comprehended on two separate but related levels informs my understanding of the polyphonic novel as a genre.

Polyphony has, firstly, the surface level of the aforementioned multiplicity, and thus a variety of conflicting ideological positions that are equally valid and unreconciled by the text. Bakhtin defines this quality as the absence of a singular 'form-shaping ideology', which is a form of monologism, or monological thinking. The second level that appears through Reed's critical analysis can be named as the symbolic or allegorical level, the identification of which marks the forceful and yet hidden existence of one or more monologisms at work:

> Dostoevsky's Christian ideal of nonviolent love is the principle that controls and directs his creative energy and determines the two structural peculiarities of his narratives, neatly summarized by Bakhtin as (1) the equality of all represented points of view and (2) the absence of the author's "finalizing" judgement in the text. (130)

In Reed's analysis, then, polyphony in Dostoevsky, and by extension in Bakhtin, acquires a double character that is contradictory –surface polyphony versus symbolic monology. Even though scholars who identify freedom and unfinalizability in Bakhtin's polyphony would reject it, in "Discourse in the Novel", Bakhtin clearly and explicitly confirms such an understanding of polyphony: "heteroglot voices […] create the background necessary for [the author's] own voice" (*Dialogic Imagination* 278). In other words, the "author's perspective always looms 'behind' that of the narrator and other narrative elements, which […] implies that the author's experience finds indirect expression through that of a character" (W. Smith 37). Or, as I argue, this contradictions manifests in the plot structure and narrative closure in the ways in which they project the limits of what social is, and the structural limits that challenge a character's agency. In other words, centralizing the plot and its generic characteristics enables the historical analysis of the polyphonic novel rather than prioritizing an ahistorical analysis by purposefully avoiding the plot and generic

conventions. The analysis of the plot structure therefore leads to the identification of the symbolic monology in the novel.

The identification of the symbolic monology, however, is not necessarily simple. As Reed explains, even Dostoevsky felt the need to "adjust to the reality of his contemporaries' perception of the Christian ideal," which Reed describes as "too obvious, naïve, simplistic, and trite" (131).[20] It follows then to argue that the symbolic monology, which appears in opposition to the surface polyphony, needs to be unmasked.

This understanding of polyphony reframes the genre as the contradiction between two levels: while the surface appearance of polyphony denies the predominance of a single ideological position, the symbolic level appears in stark contrast to this initial proposition and possibly remains not clearly visible because of its inherently conflicting nature. My reasoning follows from Jameson's argument that ideology is not always transparent and that the mystification of ideology –in the sense of appearing in symbolic and allegorical forms– is one of the very elements that renders it as ideology (*TPU* 46), which in turn marks the indispensability of ideological critique as part of hermeneutic activity.[21]

It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that this study follows the definition of ideology not as one of 'false consciousness' but rather as limiting structures, following Jameson's take on Marx, Althusser and Lukács. According to Jameson, Marx's conception

[20] It has also been argued that Bakhtin's own conception of Self as well as his own self should be understood "essentially, a Christian Self," (Witoszek 127) which may, to a certain extent, add to the understanding of polyphony in its double character described here.

[21] It should nevertheless be noted that there has been a resurgence of "surface reading" recently in opposition to Jameson's symptomatic reading. Susan Sontag's famous essay "Against Interpretation" (1978) could be identified as an earlier attempt to undervalue symptomatic reading. From a historical perspective, however, her plea for "an erotics of art" instead of hermeneutics can be understood as a form of mystification in which the transcendental quality and romanticization of art, and hence literary texts, mask the historical and material conditions of any given "surface" meaning; that is, it is an attempt to valorise art as above and beyond the petty and mundane realities of life, ascribing it transcendence and rejecting to delve into its deeper layers of meanings, that is, its social meanings and functions. Recently, such valorisation of descriptive reading in opposition to symptomatic reading can be located in the widely cited "Surface Reading: An Introduction" (2009) by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus. Best and Marcus present a case against symptomatic reading by claiming that in contemporary world, ideology is hardly veiled –especially due to the rapid circulation of imagery– and that "literary criticism alone is not sufficient to effect change" (2). They also offer to replace ideology critique and symptomatic reading with (1) Attention to surface as a practice of critical description, (2) Surface as the location of patterns that exist within and across texts, and (3) Surface as literal meaning. Their insistence to go beyond the analysis of what a text represses or masks –that is, the interpretation of absence- echoes the postmodern depthlessness to a certain extent. If we were to ignore "absences" in a narrative, the now famous interpretations of classics such as *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights* should become obsolete and effectively close the way to the discussion of topics such as gender, class and colonialism.

of ideology, firstly, does not understand ideology, as is widely thought, as one of 'false consciousness', "but rather one of structural limitation and ideological closure"; and secondly, it is not "predicated on class affiliation or origins" but rather again on structural limitation that projects an inability to move beyond such limits (*TPU* 37).[22] The analysis of plot in this study employs this understanding of ideology as the context through which the plot of a novel becomes possible and comprehensible.

Moreover, ideology as structural limitation can be better understood in relation to Althusser's account of the term. Jameson argues that Althusser's definition of ideology denotes "a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities such as the social structure or the collective logic of History" (ibid. 14-15). Added to this is Jameson's understanding of Lukács' use of 'social totality', not as a concept with totalitarian connotations but in the limited sense of using it as a methodological standard for "an essentially critical and negative, demystifying operation" (ibid. 37). Social totality in this instance, then, refers to how structural limits and ideological closures are produced, legitimized and valorized. Therefore, and in short, ideology in this study refers to the specific structural limitations of neoliberalism, or how the social and the individual human are defined, or simple the specific way of seeing and conceptualizing the world in the context of neoliberalism and postmodernism.

The polyphonic novel, as a symbolic mediation of such structural limitations, manifests this conception of ideology in the contradiction between its surface polyphony and its symbolic monology. As the surface meaning of the text is more accessible –as evident in the unproblematic identification of celebratory multiplicity in the polyphonic novel-, the symbolic meaning necessitates the form of interpretive activity that Jameson calls demystification, which aims to comprehend the symbolic monology as a form of ideological closure that is implied to respond to the apparent polyphony of conflicting and equally valid ideological positions.

[22] "What makes [petty-bourgeois intellectuals] the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter politically. This is, in general, the relationship between the political and literary representatives of a class and the class they represent." (Marx qtd. in Jameson, *TPU* 37).

The Ontologization of Ideological Conflict

In order to comprehend the polyphonic novel as an allegory of neoliberal individualism, it is likewise necessary to add that the surface polyphony should be thought of as the ontologization of ideological conflict. As the polyphonic novel presents a variety of equally valid voices that are contradictory but unreconciled by the text, in its specific postmodern valorization of relativism, differs unambiguously from earlier forms of narrative multiplicity in the way in which it shifts the epistemological focus of modernism to an ontological focus in postmodernism.

If high modernist multiperspectival novels such as *The Waves* and *The Sound and the Fury* can be comprehended better in relation to their focus on epistemological multiplicity, the polyphonic novel in contemporary fiction can be understood better in its focus on narrative multiplicity as an 'ontological' one. Indeed, postmodern fiction, as McHale maintains, differs from modernist novels in the way in which the epistemological focus of modernism is replaced with the ontological perspective of postmodernism: "the dominant of postmodernist fiction is ontological" in its capacity to explore the "postcognitive" (10).

If multiperspectival novels explore the issues of cognition, as mentioned before in the discussion of multifocalization, the polyphonic novel in contemporary fiction should be grasped as the genre that focuses on the ontological, that is, the multiplicity of individual worlds and realities rather than merely the multiplicity of individual perceptions of a single reality, ultimately leading to questions such as:

> What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? (McHale 10).

These questions become comprehensible with the identification of postmodernist narrative characteristics "as strategies for foregrounding ontological issues" because the ontological dominant appears as "the principle of systematicity underlying" the otherwise heterogeneous categories of postmodernism (ibid.). McHale's argument is valuable in the way in which it identifies a central characteristic in postmodern fiction, especially in relation to modernism.

Consequently, the polyphonic novel in contemporary fiction is the genre that comprehends each individual experience as an ontological claim, which relates to McHale's argument that "epistemological uncertainty becomes at a certain point ontological plurality or instability" in postmodernist fiction (ibid. 11).[23] A clear example to this is how the polyphonic novel, rather than offering a complete and comprehensive understanding of history through diverse perspectives, can sometimes collapse into sheer chaos. For instance, Renger interprets polyphony as a form of "resistance to the "master discourse" of history"; however, she also adds that the polyphonic narrative (in the sense of combining different genre elements such as documents, poems and letters) does not utilize its polyphonic structure to insist on "a complete history, but reveal opposing views, possible falsifications and fragmented histories" (245), thereby emphasizing a form of ontological instability. Similarly, Tyagi interprets that multiple narrators lead to, among others, a lack of chronological time through which "the present and past merge", thereby adding to the understanding of polyphony in its relation to ontological instability (98). Bakhtin's own avoidance of defining "any clear ontological distinction between" the author and the characters (Witoszek 126), adds to the ontological instability arising from this understanding of polyphony.

Polyphony as the ontologization of ideological conflict is an often unstated but clear implication of the central reception of Bakhtin's theory in the West. Emerson, for example, connects polyphony and dialogism to ontological plurality in an undisputable manner in the following quotation:

> If there existed a single unitary standard by which all acts could be judged, it would be easy to chart the moral (or immoral) life. But since there is no such single standard, every individual consciousness must define for itself local constraints; it must pass its own judgement, take a stand even when blinkered, seek out and defend the truth as he or she sees it. Much more inner discipline and active articulation is required in an Einsteinian universe than in the more stable, straightforwardly anchored models of cosmos that preceded it. […] because God might well be dead

[23] This argument can be easily expanded to include the self itself as plural as well. For such an understanding of the self in postmodernism, see *The Plural Self: Multiplicity in Everyday Life* ed. by Rowan and Cooper, especially John Shotter's chapter, "Life inside dialogically structured mentalities", and Hubert J.M. Hermans's chapter "The polyphony of the mind: A multi-voiced and dialogical self" on how Bakhtin's dialogism leads to the conception of the self as a multifarious entity, which necessarily invokes questions of coherence and stability for the self. An interesting perspective on the connection between the polyphonic novel and "multiple selves" as one of its preconditions can be found in Alex Townsend's *Autonomous Voices*, p. 26-29.

> […] Now I must decide for myself what to forbid and what to permit, and the burden of a discriminating personal decision weighs much more heavily than any penalty for disobedience to a known law. […] Bakhtin sketches such an individualized cosmos in this way: "Rays of light, as it were, fan out from my unique singularity, which, passing through time, confirm the human way of history. (*TFHY* 154-5)

In other words, if there is no God, then each perspective, each person becomes the God (or a God) in generating their own world, rendering any discussion between different worlds obsolete and creating a theoretical impossibility for there is an undeniable need for some level of shared ontological perspective in order to interact with others. As Emerson puts it, the individual becomes the locus of existence and polyphony denotes "a confirmation of the human way that relies on nothing more grand or authoritative than my own singular, tiny, local dialogic gestures, which may or may not be registered and elicit a response" (ibid. 155). Such a perspective, by virtue of being a very postmodern attitude, summarizes the solipsism that challenges any form of political activity because this "collapses the disjunction between aspiration and reality; it annihilates the difference between the possible and 'reaching out for the impossible' - the very locality, that is to say, of politics itself" (Bewes 5-6).[24]

Furthermore, the ontologization of dialogical conflict may also be identified in the unclear affinity between Bakhtin's dialogism and quantum theory. W. Smith, for instance, argues that Bakhtin was aware of Einstein's struggle to correlate quantum physics with traditional causal explanations, indicating that dialogism therefore is similar to quantum physics in the ways in which both emphasize unfinalizability and the limits of causal explanations (25-26). What this entails, apart from being a categorical mistake, is the argument that dialogism as a theory of social relations is similar to quantum physics as a theory of reality, thereby leading to the conception of polyphony more as a form of relativization more than anything else.

The rejection of relativism in Bakhtin's concept, then, is untenable. As Hale suggests in *Social Formalism* "[i]f in fact we can't agree about which values are universal,

[24] This is perhaps best understood in in Bewes's reference to Arendt's essay Eichmann in Jerusalem: "the case of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann (the subject of Hannah Arendt's essay Eichmann in Jerusalem), whose defense at his trial in 1961 rested on the substance of his belief in the purity of his motivations; who cited Kant's categorical imperative as a justification for his having obeyed the orders of the Führer; and whose apparent failure to comprehend the devastating consequences of his 'diligence' prompted Arendt's notorious phrase 'the banality of evil'" (Bewes 11).

then we can, it seems, turn instead to the representation of moral difference as perspectival relativism" (119). Contemporary polyphony takes this moral difference as perspectival relativism and transforms it into ideological difference as perspectival relativism.

Ontological instability in postmodern polyphony is the expression of neoliberal flexibilization. Seen from the perspective of ideology as structural limitation, the ontological instability and chaos presented in contemporary polyphony, then, is a form of mystification of the existing power structures that is predicated on the unchallenged validity of postmodern relativism. But, as with any other narrative, the symbolic level of the polyphonic novel reveals other forms of structural limitations that render the surface meaning of polyphony unavoidable or favorable. This is the sense in which I propose to identify the polyphonic novel as an allegory of neoliberalism: the contemporary polyphony mediates the central contradictions of neoliberal individualism. On the one hand, it appears as a critical and negative reaction to hyper-individualism. On the other, it, more often than not, fails to move beyond the ideological limits of neoliberalism itself. In total, however, it masks the neoliberal approach "to political economy that enacts radical redistributions of capital upward through radical redistributions of development downward" (Elliott and Harkins 6). Specifically, postmodern polyphony, as much as postmodernism itself, can be understood in a similar way that Bewes comprehends politics in postmodernism, as "an ontological declaration of the state of objective reality (the dissolution of metanarratives) rather than a strategy of conceptual interrogation towards objective reality (an 'incredulity toward metanarratives')" (2).

This also reveals a necessary relationship between the polyphonic novel and neoliberal individualism in the ways in which such narratives aestheticize the contradictions of neoliberal individualism. 'Individuation paradox', which is coined by Hutchinson in his analysis of the relationship between neoliberalism and contemporary fiction, is one such central contradiction. The term denotes "the way in which capitalism, while claiming that individualistic economic and social activity is the basis of a healthy and prosperous society, seems to many to represent only the erosion of individual sovereignty and selfhood" (11). The polyphonic novel has already acknowledged this problem as suggested earlier in the interpretation of narrative multiplicity as political affirmations of communities who suffer more from this contradiction.

Similarly, Hutchinson argues that in the aftermath of Thatcher, as well as Reagan, the left-liberal camp has experienced a 'communitarian turn', which denotes the appropriation of elements that are traditionally associated with conservatism such as "community, tradition, history, the family" (ibid.). The communitarian turn, therefore, represents another contradiction of neoliberal individualism in the way in which it reshuffles the connotations and meanings of certain terms. It also partially explains the appearance of the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction as a relatively common trend. At a time when hyper-individualism renders several subjects vulnerable to social and structural problems, the communitarian perspective that sometimes arises from the coexistence of mutually valid voices can be understood as a critical reaction to neoliberal individualism in the way in which it ameliorates the effects of the individuation paradox of late capitalism. Therefore, the polyphonic novel represents a reaction to neoliberalism and a call to resolve its problems by the suggested ontologization of ideological conflict. What this means is that the polyphonic novel, by ontologizing ideological conflict, has the implication of reframing this new world order as untenable. At the same time, however, the polyphonic novel mostly fails to think and imagine beyond the structural limits of neoliberalism itself, which only appears through the identification of the symbolic message that the novel emits. In this sense, the ontologization of ideological conflict signifies a form of reification in the way in which it renders political and social change untenable. Consequently, the contradiction between the emancipatory drive of this genre and its complicity with neoliberal forms of ideological closure is the element that identifies contemporary polyphony as an allegory and negotiation of the contradictions of neoliberalism. Plot appears as the ultimate negotiation of such structural limits.

The definition of contemporary polyphony in British fiction, in the light of the discussion above, necessarily formulates the required methodology to analyze this genre. Following Reed's identification of the contradiction between surface polyphony and covert monology, it is vital to utilize Jameson's ideology critique in order to identify the covert monologisms at work. This methodology entails the identification of covert monologies in the polyphonic novel by a sustained focus on the plot structure in order to avoid an 'ahistorical' analysis, as explained above through Reed's re-introduction of plot as a tool to comprehend polyphony, and the identification of 'absences' and ideological limits with

the analysis of narrative closure. Or, in other words, my analysis aims to identify the implied 'winner' of the ideological conflict in the polyphonic novel by analyzing the extent to which the ideological conflicts are resolved or implied to be resolved through structural limits, which become manifest in the ways the plot is structured. The underlying central question, then, appears as follows: can the hyper-individual of neoliberalism surpass the structural and historical conditions to reach a self-sustained definition of what it means to be a human being in contemporary Britain? Or in other words, can the individual simply surpass the social in the process of negotiating the conflicts of neoliberalism? The following chapters will answer these central questions.

Chapter Three

The 'Mongrel' Nation that is Britain: *White Teeth* as a Narrative Negotiation of a Multicultural and Fragmented Britain

Introduction

> For eighteen years Mo [...] had been a victim of serious physical attacks and robbery, without fail, three times a year. Now, that figure doesn't include the numerous punches to the head, quick smacks with a crowbar, shifty kicks in the groin or anything else that failed to draw blood. [...] Mo had been knifed a total of five times (*Ah*), lost the tips of three fingers (*Eeeesh*), had both legs and arms broken (*Oaooow*), his feet set on fire (*jiii*), his teeth kicked out (*ka-tooof*) and an air-gun bullet (*ping*) embedded in his thankfully fleshy posterior. *Boof.* [...] But this was one man against an army. There was nobody who could help. [...] Violence and theft. The culprits ranged from secondary-school children [...] [to] decrepit drunks, teenage thugs, the parents of teenage thugs, general fascists, specific neo-Nazis, the local snooker team, the darts team, the football team and huge posses of mouthy, white-skirted secretaries in deadly heels. These various people had various objections to him: […] But they all had one thing in common, these people. They were all white. […] The last straw, if it could be called that, came a month before joining KEVIN, when three white 'youths' tied him up, kicked him down the cellar steps, stole all his money and set fire to his shop. (Smith 472-3)

In an early review of *White Teeth* in 2000, Caryl Phillips defines the rich mixture of *White Teeth* as a truthful representation of "the 'mongrel' nation that is Britain" whose "helpless heterogeneity" is suggested to be still struggling to face its not-so-new cultural hybridity. Phillips' review belongs to the early reviews that welcomed the novel as a successful and optimistic account of cultural hybridity, which parallels with the hopeful

and enthusiastic reception of the novel among scholars, evident, for example, in the claim that *WT* "celebrated a new hybridity" (King 289) and in others (Tabuteau 82-87).

Added to this celebratory rupture is the meticulously designed and instigated marketing campaign that employed Smith's "youth, ethnicity and intelligence" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 20) not only as the first literary sensation of the millennium but also as a celebration of her "rags to riches" narrative (ibid.). Phillip Tew, drawing on Joe Moran, emphasizes how such a narrative identifies Smith "as an individual of superior talent or even genius, free of external determination" (Moran 9). Although Moran defines this attitude as "the charismatic illusion," Smith's public persona and her novel appeared at the same crossroads with Blair's 'Cool Britannia' (Tancke 27), blurring at least some sense of illusion attached to it. In a rare overlap between state discourse, marketing campaigns, celebrity culture, neoliberal celebration of individual talent and work, optimistic and hopeful –and yet partly elusive– rendition of cultural hybridity in Britain, *White Teeth* has been hailed as the hallmark of the *Zeitgeist* (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 20), or as an "an attempt to construct a new model of Englishness that is suited to the country's multicultural make-up at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Bentley, "Re-writing Englishness" 501).

However, Junot Diaz, a Dominican writer, clarifies why, at least to a certain extent, the celebratory rhetoric is problematic:

> The European press and the U.S. press are far more eager to welcome a riotous book about immigrants than they are the immigrants themselves. . . . I believe that Ms. Smith's book is being viewed in much the same way as certain desirable immigrants are being viewed by the country in which they have arrived . . . as a welcome addition--just don't cause any trouble. (qtd. in George)

The scholarly work that appeared later, more analogous to Diaz's interpretation, reacted to this celebratory notion of a 'happy multicultural land' by proposing alternative ways of reading in order to examine the deeply layered social problems in Britain. This second group of responses emphasized the fact that Smith's novel is tragic rather than celebratory in its criticism of multiculturalism (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 17-18). For this very reason, they praised Smith as a great author just like the first wave of criticisms.

The above quotation from *WT* is therefore helpful in comprehending these two groups of criticisms: corresponding to the first group of celebratory reception, it starts with a clearly identifiable comic ironic narrative voice –as seen in the parenthetical interventions of the narrator– and ends with a more solemn consideration of the racism and xenophobia

that characterizes British contemporaneity, substantiating the concerns of the second group of criticisms that accentuate the tragedy inherent in the failure of multiculturalism.

It is not surprising to identify such opposing interpretations because *White Teeth* is full of such instances of a clearly identifiable conflict between the tragedy of the plot (the violence against immigrants as detailed in the above quotation), and the entertaining, light-hearted comic irony of the form (manifest in the slapstick and cartoon-style parenthetical exclamations in the quote above: Ah, Eeeesh, Oaooow, jiii, ka-tooof etc.). Less surprising is the inattentiveness to this very contradiction among reviewers and scholars, which should be identified as the very reason why they both disproportionately re-directed the reader's attention to one side of this duality rather than aiming to comprehend this very ambiguity.

Jakubiak, for instance, proposes to read *WT* "without the comic elements that cushion the effect of disturbing messages" (203). Furthermore, she advocates grasping the quotation above without the parenthetical interventions, such as 'Ah', 'Eeeesh', and by partially overlooking the form: "A simple act of removing the parenthetical parts reveals the meaning of the account in its full horror" (207). Similarly, Tancke finds it "hard to understand why many critics have fallen prey to the politically correct, jargonistic celebration of multiculturalism that the novel may seem to invoke" (33) as she underestimates the significance of the form in conveying this overall utopian message of the narrative.[25]

The following analysis assumes that both of these criticisms failed to live up to the complexities of the novel while simultaneously providing valuable, but unmistakably one-sided, insights and readings. Further, I argue, this very contradiction is characteristic of contemporary polyphony to the extent that it reveals the surface polyphony, or the "surface comedy" (Tancke 30), as a celebratory element; and the covert monology, which functions as the form-shaping ideology of the novel, that is not necessarily celebratory. Identifying *White Teeth* as a paradigmatic polyphonic novel is helpful as this perspective provides the method to comprehend varying accounts of the novel while also enabling a more holistic

[25] It must be noted here that 'utopian' in this study refers to the general sense of the prospect of comprehending a social collective without conflict and the inclination to imagine a social collective as relatively harmonious despite certain social conflicts. The use of utopia and utopian is therefore limited to this specific understanding.

approach to the analysis, which starts with rejecting the assumption that form and content are two separate levels of interpretation. Rather, the comic ironic tone of *White Teeth* is better comprehended with a sustained relation to its tragic content. This overall element is therefore the object of my analysis. To this end, I will first analyse the elements in the novel which encourage such contradictory readings, in order to affirm the argument that the polyphonic and multicultural utopia of *White Teeth* should be comprehended as a symbolic resolution to the racist, violent, and painful social fragmentation of contemporary Britain. Its form-shaping monology, however, can be identified as cultural relativism, which will be explored later, and which appears as a response to its own surface polyphony in the ways in which it challenges the novel's utopian potential.

Part I: Happy Multicultural Land: *White Teeth* as a Symbolic Resolution to the Problem of Social Fragmentation

> In January 2012, a 61-year-old taxi driver in Bedford, Mehar Dhariwal, was viciously beaten to the ground by a customer who kicked and punched him as he screamed racist abuse. Covered in blood, Mr Dhariwal was taken to a hospital but no scan was carried out and his broken ribs went undetected. A few days later he was dead. In July 2012, after moving to Barnsley, south Yorkshire, just six weeks before, a family of asylum seekers had to be rehoused. Youths had been throwing stones at the property, showering the family with glass. The mother, four months pregnant, had to be taken to hospital and later reported that her 3-year-old daughter was so traumatised that she barely ate. In November 2012, a father of a Muslim family who had just moved into their new home in Nottingham answered a knock at the door, to find a burning crucifix wrapped in ham on the doorstep. The fear and insecurity has forced the family to move. (Burnett 5)
>
> Racism as everyday violence is a common occurrence. In 2011/12, police forces recorded over 37,000 racially or religiously aggravated crimes, over 100 per day, in England and Wales. The Crime Survey for England and Wales suggests that this is just a fraction of the actual number. Even taking into account the limitations of 'official' statistics, the figures give some indication of the extent of the humiliating verbal abuse, taunts, harassment and assaults that form the backdrop to so many people's lives. Yet this is not reflected in the general perception of the issue, nor is such violence usually deemed newsworthy. (ibid. 6)

If, as Burnett puts forward, racially or religiously motivated everyday violence is a common occurrence in contemporary Britain, it is not coincidental that Smith's optimistic

and comic ironic narrative on almost identical issues, violent racist attacks, appears in direct contrast to the tragedy of Burnett's description. This very tragedy is not merely missing in Smith's account. On the contrary, it is presented in a fundamentally different form that transforms its meaning so much so that it leads to appreciating and comprehending the literary merit of the novel in its capacity as "an epochal novel celebrating the heterogeneity of British urban society around the millennium" (Tancke 27), which necessitates the analysis of comedy, humour and laughter in relation to their social and literary functions.

Humour and Laughter: Functions of Literary Comedy

There seems to be some consensus that comedy is ultimately difficult to conceptualize and define clearly (Roston 1, Horlacher 20-1, Apte 14, Haig 9). This difficulty is related to three central problems in the study of comedy: firstly, comedy is often used interchangeably with laughter and humour (Horlacher 21); secondly, "no transhistorical cause for laughter, no transhistorical definition for a joke has been found" yet (Brosch 158), and lastly, "in scholarly literature about humour, the comic, and laughter these terms are either used without clear definitions or the definitions given are contradictory" (Horlacher 20). There is nevertheless an agreement regarding the fact that comedy is historically, socially and psychologically contingent although it is accepted as a central and universal human characteristic.

Murray Roston, in his book *The Comedic Mode in English Literature*, provides a convincing typology of the theories regarding comedy and categorizes them into three central groups: comedy as (1) Superiority, (2) Incongruity, and (3) Relief (2). Superiority, as the name suggests, relates to Thomas Hobbes's explanation of comedy as that quality which identifies the person laughing as entertaining a patronising superiority over the person that is being laughed at, or as Henri Bergson's emphasis on "humiliation" as part of comedy (ibid. 2). Even though the cruelty and inconsistency of such a conceptualisation is challenged and not anymore accepted -humiliating someone's weaknesses, for example, is seen more as a cruel act than comedy-, this perspective encapsulates nevertheless a central characteristic in comedy, namely its destructive and anarchic elements (ibid. 4), which will

be central in the discussion below about the contingency of comedy, specifically in the context of Freud and Bakhtin's theories.

Roston defines the second category, Incongruity, the major proponents of which are Kant and Schopenhauer, as "an element of mismatching or incompatibility" that is to be found in a given situation (ibid.). Although this conception of comedy is still widely accepted and seen as an all-inclusive definition by some, it fails to provide a comprehensive definition as there are certainly incongruous situations in which laughter is not warranted, such as in Salvador Dali's painting *The Persistence of Memory,* in which the melting clock over a tree appears as a serious incongruity that defines the subjectivity of time rather than appearing as humorous (ibid.). Roston therefore suggests another central characteristic to be derived from incongruency, the fact that humour is often related to disappointed expectations. The final category of Relief denotes "the idea that laughter serves as a safety valve, offering a release of excessive or suppressed energy", which has also been challenged as inconsistent due the fact that the person laughing does not necessarily share the repression at question (ibid. 5). As is obvious, the release of excessive or suppressed energy, especially in Freud's analysis of laughter, is as crucial as the destructive and anarchic power of comedy and its relation to disappointed expectations for comprehending its historical contingency.

As the above typology fails to formulate a comprehensive analysis of comedy, Roston provides instead a consistent and largely applicable conceptualisation of humour, as well as literary comedy, as the deflation of authority, or in his own words as "a sudden delight in perceiving the vulnerability either of individual pretension or of authoritative principles that society attempts to impose" (ibid. 31-2). Humour is largely related to "the process of deflating pretensions or elevated ideals" (ibid. 35) and as such it also reveals why, as stated above, comedy, humour and laughter are psychologically, historically and socially contingent. For Roston, then, humour has the central function of deflating lofty ideals and elevated principles, which cannot always be preserved when confronted with everyday realities of life. The analysis of comedy and its subversive power in *WT* provides thereby "substantial insights into the nature of the contemporary philosophical, moral or sociological values being targeted" (ibid. 35).

The Subversive Power of Comedy

Regarding the contingency of comedy, it is necessary to shortly examine Freud and Bakhtin's conceptualisations as they represent convincingly the affirmative, subversive and emancipatory characteristics of comedy, which are central to understanding the literary achievement and merit of *WT* in identifying and deflating social, historical and psychological assumptions that are prevalent in British contemporaneity. Concerning Freud in the context of *WT*, the affirmative, emancipatory and subversive power of comedy lies mostly in its capacity to render the comedic situation socially more palatable and psychologically more affirmative. In Freud's own words, we "are no longer inclined to find anything wrong that has given us enjoyment and so to spoil the source of a pleasure" (162). Combined with Roston's definition of comedy as the occasional deflation of lofty ideals and pretentious principles, the inclination to overlook any socially conflicting meanings of comedy ameliorates the difficulty of confronting certain issues. The central problem of racism in *WT* is a telling example in the way in which humour enables the exploration of a deeply conflicting and troubled reality. This element is clear in the comparison between the above quotations on racism from *WT* and the non-humorous and factual description of racism in Burnett. In parallel, this also explains why for Freud a joke "partially reverses the work of repression imposed on us by culture" (Horlacher 35). Narrativizing racism and racial relations is a clear example of this affirmative power that is prevalent in *WT*'s comedy.

In addition, as Roston notes, Freud relates the prevalence of punning, as a prevalent element of comedy, among adolescents, for instance, to "an instinctive resistance to the logical framework being imposed upon them as they move into the adult world" (23). Recalling Roston's definition of comedy as the deflation of rigid and lofty ideals, Freud's conceptualisation of comedy becomes more comprehensible as a subversive and challenging strategy in which a clear resistance "lies behind the wordplay of adults" which Roston explains as "the pleasure of demonstrating that language is not as rigidly definitive and logically precise as had been imagined, the exposed ambiguity producing a sense of momentary victory over its tyranny" (ibid.). The same resistance is easy to identify in indecent jokes as, according to Roston, they create "a comforting sense of camaraderie, of

living in the real world rather than pursuing the ‘unfeasible purity’ that society attempts to impose upon them, and whose imposition they resent" (ibid. 24).

The resistance to the tyranny of social codes, the creation of a sense of collective and belonging, the subversion of rigid expectations imposed by the society are clear elements that define the emancipatory and affirmative power of comedy, which necessarily directs the discussion to Bakhtin’s carnivalesque laughter. For Bakhtin, laughter and the carnivalesque, in the context of medieval parody, have "not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one" (*Rabelais and His World* 21). Bakhtin's theorisation of the carnivalesque and humour, which he specifies as "full laughter", is "universal, liberating, and revitalizing," and it "entails plurality and ignores interdictions. It is the enemy of censorship and allows mankind to temporarily enter the utopian realm of universality, liberty, equality, and abundance" (Horlacher 25). In this sense, Bakhtin's carnivalesque is "characterized by a positive, life-embracing, and elevating concept of the comic, which does not laugh with someone at something but supposedly functions without comparison, exclusion, or denigration" (ibid. 38-9). The comedic mode in *WT*, in this sense, easily leads to the utopian image depicted in the novel.

Comedy as Symbolic Subversion

However, as Roston, among others, convincingly notes, Bakhtin's valorisation of laughter and the carnivalesque as a substantial opposition and resistance to the dominant ideology and by extension as an affirmative and emancipatory strategy needs to be problematized as Bakhtin's own conception is historically and socially contingent. This is because Bakhtin's theory "arose out of his own animosity towards the Soviet regime":

> His account of carnival was a thinly veiled version of the kind of uprising he would dearly have liked to see taking place in Russia. Instead of regarding carnival as a safety valve, releasing passions that might otherwise explode into revolution, Bakhtin argued that it actually constituted a form of insurrection. (Roston 24).

Indeed, Bakhtin aimed to challenge and destroy "the dominant authority or repressive mode” of the Soviet regime (ibid.) with this conceptualisation of the carnivalesque, the degradation of high culture and "full laughter". However, as Roston notes, medieval carnivals did not have such a clear social function as demonstrated by the fact that such degradation or anarchic behaviour in carnivals "were not only tolerated by

the church but had the clerics themselves participating enthusiastically" (ibid. 25). Carnival, as Terry Eagleton maintains, "is a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art" (*Walter Benjami*n 148). Similarly, as Žižek notes, "in contemporary societies, democratic or totalitarian, that cynical distance, laughter, irony, are, so to speak, part of the game. The ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally (24).

Consequently, as much as comedy is affirmative, subversive, and challenging against dominant ideologies, it is necessary to limit the applicability of such characteristics to actual politics.[26] In parallel, the central issue with Bakhtinian carnivalesque and its valorisation of laughter as a subversive and revolutionary act is the inevitable repercussion of contentment and inactivity. In other words, if laughter, as per Bakhtin and several others, promises the rejection of censure, limits, fixed borders and meanings and if this act itself is seen as revolutionary and subversive, there would not be a need for redemption because the laughter itself appears as the redemption and the resolution of the conflicts, limits and hierarchies that led to the carnivalesque and the humorous in the first place. This, however, denies the fact that the carnivalesque, or the laughter, is limited to isolated acts. The day after the carnival, life continues without a significant change. In the same way, racism remains a central, if not an ever-growing, problem, for example in the context of Brexit, even when we consider the ending of *WT* in which Archie's 'inactive contentment' represents some elements of Bakhtinian carnivalesque laughter.

Another problem with the conception of laughter as more subversive is the tendency to comprehend the individual reactions and valorisations as insurmountable. Because for Bakhtin "[l]aughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth" and "it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils" (*Rabelais and his World* 94). In a sense, Bakhtin's theory is more similar to Freud's in the way in which it marks the individual perspective as

[26] This is of course different than saying that comedy is exclusively complicit with dominant cultural practices because of ameliorating social conflicts through narrative symbols. On the contrary, comedy appears to have both functions. For an interesting analysis of the subversive and satirical characteristics of humour and laughter in postcolonial literature, see: Reichl, Susanne, and Mark Stein, eds. *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial*. Vol. 91. Rodopi, 2005.

taking precedence over social structures. In short, it is crucial to follow Roston's argument that "[l]ike most humour, then, these activities were intended not to annihilate authority but to provide a temporary respite from discipline before resubmission to the framework of religious obedience" (26). This is the sense in which I suggest to comprehend the comedic mode in *WT.* This is however different than saying that comedy in *WT* should be completely disregarded as complacent. On the contrary, the literary merit and success of the comedy in *WT* is an invaluable source of analysis to comprehend contemporary social issues in the UK. This argument is also an academic necessity as literary merit, affirmative and emancipatory power of comedy, subversion of stereotypes, clichés and assumptions in *WT* have been extensively and convincingly analysed by other scholars. This chapter therefore complements these studies by providing an analysis that focuses more on the exploration of social problems that are successfully ameliorated by Smith's brilliant polyphonic voice. As a result, the contradiction between Burnett's description of 'cultural hybridity' and Smith's representation of multiculturalism redirects the discussion towards the analysis of its polyphonic form.

White Teeth as a Polyphonic Novel

White Teeth is a paradigmatic contemporary polyphonic novel in terms of its content, form, style, historical relevance and reception. It is paradigmatic in the way in which it elaborates on London and its multiplicity of individual voices, backgrounds, and worldviews without resorting to focus on a single voice or an individual worldview. Formally and stylistically, it is a representative polyphonic novel in the ways in which it incorporates various narrative choices such as individual focalizations, abundant instances of free indirect speech, an omniscient and subjective narrative voice and "lists, tables and diagrams" (Bentley, "Re-writing Englishness" 17), in addition to making use of "several traditional forms [such as] the comic picaresque interfused with a family saga, adding narratives of identity and authenticity" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 13) as well as "other quasi-Dickensian qualities, both structurally and stylistically" (ibid. 14). Polyphony also manifests itself in the language with a combination of "Cockney and Creole, Bengali, and the King's English" in portraying contemporary London (Watts 4).

Stylistic polyphony, including linguistic multiplicity, is crucial as it illustrates the disparities between different individuals and groups by "vocabulary and speech-mannerisms of [Smith's] characters [which] show events from their perspective" (Childs 209) even though there is a clearly distinguishable omniscient narrative voice. Language in *WT*, for example, "serves as a type of characterisation, showing the ways in which the characters either identify with – or disassociate from – particular ethnic groups" (Watts 4). The individuals and families in *WT* create a London "hodgepodge of workers of all colors and classes, a brave new multicultural world where little Iqbals play with Joneses" (Nichols 2). Ethnicity, however, is not the only group association even though the majority of scholarly work has consistently focused on *WT* as a postcolonial text.

White Teeth is crucial in terms of its critical, popular and journalistic reception. From the initial sensation it caused when it was revealed that Zadie Smith was paid an advance of a quarter of a million pounds for an excerpt from the novel to its skyrocketing sales, from the critical legitimacy it garnered through Salman Rushdie's praise of the book to all the literary prizes it won (Guardian First Book Award, James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction, Commonwealth Writers First Book Prize, and Betty Trask Award, to name a few), *White Teeth* garnered attention from culturally distinct groups of people such as the specialised literary establishment and the broader population. One probable explanation is the perception of Zadie Smith as a celebratory figure in the perception of contemporary and multicultural London. Another explanation is her mature voice as a young author. Both arguments have already been widely discussed by scholars and reviewers.

More crucial than these, however, is Smith's confrontation of issues related to class, ethnicity, religion, gender and family with an unequivocally comic ironic tone. Even though political, social and cultural issues lead to pronounced ideological conflicts, *White Teeth* nevertheless "does aim for an underlying cohesion" (Pope 170). The utopian tone therefore guarantees narrative cohesion by relocating such politically charged issues into the realm of its polyphonic comedy and irony.

WT generates an entertaining account of London that is predicated on its polyphony of ethnic, religious, gender and class positions. Predicated on its polyphonic comic irony, Smith's novel functions as a fictional and symbolic response to the existing dissonance of

the increasingly segregated London society and the failure of multiculturalism. In other words, *White Teeth* appears to resolve the problem of imagining a diverse group of people from different ideological backgrounds and comprehends them as a collective rather than unrelated individuals and families who lead parallel and unrelated lives. *White Teeth* imagines ideological diversity in a relatively cohesive and homogenised manner. Relatedly, it has been argued before that *WT* represents several moments "of 'overcoming' difference" (Knauer 183). While the novel predominantly focuses on cultural differences and hybridity, it appears inadvertently as a comment on the discourses of multiculturalism itself.

Polyphony as a Response to the Failure of Multiculturalism

At a time when cultural diversity is increasingly being debated as either an ideal or a social problem, for instance in the context of multiculturalism, *White Teeth* constitutes an expression of and a reaction to these debates. On the one hand, the concept of multiculturalism functions “as a political response to cultural diversity” in that it encourages “intercultural dialogue and remove[s] the discrimination and exclusion that cultural minorities suffer” (Uberoi and Modood 24). On the other hand, diversity also attracts criticism because of undermining social cohesion. As much as being reductionist and populist, for instance in the case of Thatcher who proposed that diversity undermines Britishness (Gamble 198), such criticisms are nevertheless vital in fully comprehending diversity and what it signifies in contemporary Britain. Some on the political right, for instance, see “multiculturalism as a foremost contributor to social breakdown, ethnic tension and the growth of extremism and terrorism” (Vertovec 83). Rather than commenting on the validity of such criticisms, it is necessary to comprehend that these debates refer to a central problem that appears as “the clash between the cultural practices of the majority and various immigrant and religious minorities” in Britain (Kenny 3). It is therefore essential to comprehend cultural diversity and multiculturalism as concepts through which social conflicts become manifest. *White Teeth* is an example of this in so far as it incorporates a multiplicity of distinctive voices while simultaneously aiming for narrative cohesion in the context of an increasingly neoliberal, socially fragmented Britain.

Within the frame of neoliberalism, such discussions imply that cultural diversity relies on the differentiation between different groups rather than the establishment of a shared group identity which functions on a larger social level. As Gayil Talshir notes, in neoliberalism "methodological individualism is crucial: each person is a pursuer of interests, whether he [sic] is an immigrant, a foreign worker, an employer, or unemployed," which leads to the implication that "[t]here is no room for cultural communities besides the civic space operating on market demand" (217). *White Teeth* clearly reflects this difficulty of envisioning a shared cultural community on the face of an increasingly segregated society. In doing so, it proposes its own resolution to this problem with its form.

White Teeth is a fantasy that breaks down the barriers between different ethnic, religious, gender and class positions in order to create a community. As a symbolic resolution to the difficulty of imagining such conflicted communities together, the novel mediates between the multiplicity of individuals and worldviews, and the reader in order to render this multiplicity coherent and comprehensible from a social perspective by transforming it into a collective narrative. Mediation, in this instance, refers to the fact that the polyphonic narrative structure renders the multiplicity of individual voices comprehensible to the reader by revealing and creating the interconnection between seemingly disparate individual narratives. As such, *White Teeth* functions as a collective narrative in contrast to its persistent focus on the heterogeneity of individual voices and worldviews. This element is evident both from the very beginning of the novel as well as from its overall structure. The way it achieves this cohesion, equal (in)validation of each character's worldview through a modern omniscient narrator, needs, however, further exploration, which will be the focus of the second part of this chapter.

White Teeth as a Collective and Utopian Narrative

White Teeth begins with the image of Archie Jones in a derelict London neighbourhood on 1 January 1975. The focus is on Archie the "incomplete individual" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 45) and his forthcoming suicide attempt that he had decided by flipping a coin. Archie Jones, an Englishman, a divorcee, a failed individual, or a loser in the eyes of society, who sees death as the only way out of his misery, is sitting in his car and waiting

for his imminent death. This initial focalisation is in direct contrast to what follows next: the description of a complex web of social relationships.

Even though the novel has a decisive focus on a single character at the beginning, the narrative later changes focus several times both in terms of character and setting, and necessarily cultures and ideologies. It spans a time period between the years of 1857 and 2000 as well as offering a glimpse of what happens afterwards, travels to various geographic locations from Jamaica to Bangladesh through the steps of its carefully selected protagonists. As Tew adds, *WT* is a novel in which "private and public are intimately interrelated" (*Zadie Smith* 45) and in which "various multi-chronic and shifting viewpoints […] become centripetal" (ibid. 46). Throughout the text, the narrator focalizes on several characters while also interposing the narrative with letters and signposts and even letting a subjective narrative voice intervene to comment on various ideological positions.

The heterogeneity of ideologies in *White Teeth* is crucial as it is one of the elements that substantiate the celebratory readings of it. The protagonists of *White Teeth* are four families from English, Jamaican, Bangladeshi and Jewish backgrounds. The extended families, friends and acquaintance also come from various social backgrounds but the focus here is on the four primary families with different ethnic, religious, gender and class markers, which correspond to specific worldviews or ideological positions. Four distinct cultural codes and ways of seeing the world (essentially many more if we consider that each family in itself is also ideologically conflicted) are actively interacting with one another. The initial example of these is Hortense and her identification as a devout Jehovah's Witness (30-1) in contrast to her daughter Clara's ultimate religious obliviousness (45) and Archie's "biblical literalism" (46). After exploring Christian faith to a certain degree, the narrative switches to Samad and then to Islam (125). Later in the plot, several contradictions arise in the Iqbal family as Millat seems to be getting more radical (237) and as Alsana rejects to side with Millat when he reacts aggressively to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses.* Added to Christianity and Islam is the secular and pseudo-scientific radicalism of the Jewish-English Chalfens who appear as another conflicting collection of worldviews (365).

In addition to religion, ethnicity is portrayed as another issue through which different worldviews and ways of seeing the world start clashing. The Jones and Iqbal

families are portrayed to be suspicious of each other due their ethnicities: “Samad and Alsana Iqbal, who were not those kind of Indians (as, in Archie’s mind, Clara was not that kind of black), who were, in fact, not Indian at all but Bangladeshi” (54). When gender is added to the discussion through Alsana’s lesbian niece, she is presented as the “Niece-of-Shame” in Alsana’s eyes (63), creating another possible contradiction between characters. Alsana’s work, which requires her to sew fetish gear for a gay sex shop (55), is also an added instance of the collection of diverse worldviews juxtaposing or clashing at times.

Since the novel travels between places, times and characters, creating a vast panorama out of a certain selection of seemingly unrelated individuals, it ultimately channels into a collective narrative that binds and connects every thread, creating “a visceral topography of communities” (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 23). Therefore, the polyphonic structure unites every character into an intricate web of social relationships by allowing for several conflicting ideological positions and value systems.

The contradiction between an emphasis on a certain character and the omniscience that jolts from one character to another through various time periods and geographies as a way of portraying the contradictory collection of worldviews is reflected in the general outline of the novel as well. *White Teeth* is divided into four chapters that borrow their titles from its central characters, “Archie”, “Samad”, “Irie”, and “Magid, Millat and Marcus”. The narrative, however, from the very beginning, discloses the stories of all of these characters, and naturally many more, rather than merely portraying one character at a time. As such, this central divergence between the titles of the chapters and the contents renounces a focus on the individual by setting up a plot structure that expresses and retells everything in relation to one another. As this characteristic is not specific to *WT* in general, it is necessary to add that its identification is crucial insofar as establishing the consistency and coherence of the narrator’s attitude. This is because unlike a singular and authoritative narrative voice that focuses on a single worldview, *White Teeth* extends and complicates social relationships to their fullest extent by giving equal (in)validity to each, which will be discussed in detail later. This element manifests itself through certain references in the text but more directly through its overall plot structure, which takes an individual family as its focus and switches to another one. In other words, it connects through “the narrative itself” or through “the multiple stories told” that “overlap and intermingle” (Pope 170).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that Smith herself appears to favour such an interpretation by acknowledging the symbolic capacity of her narrative when she states that *White Teeth* is "a Utopian view of race relations. It's what might be, and what it should be and maybe what it will be" (Lyall, "A Good Start"). What is more, the narrative perspective can be described as more modern due its coherent and consistent omniscient narrator, in contrast to the inconsistent and unreliable narrators prevalent in postmodernist literature. However, the novel is generally perceived as a postmodern text, emphasizing a crucial formal duality (modern omniscient narrator with a postmodern, cynical narrative tone) that many critics have not examined. This contradiction hints at the possibility of comprehending *WT* as a text in which the postmodern tone is unified with a modern form, the functions and meanings of which will be discussed later.

Based on the utopian vision mentioned above, it is possible to comprehend the reasons why the initial, and perhaps still persistent, reception appears predominantly optimistic. *White Teeth*, by emphasizing the interconnection between several conflicting ideologies or worldviews, exercises a more social perspective rather than an individualistic one. Although the meaning of this interconnection is vague, it nevertheless functions as a cohesive element unlike the fragmentation that characterizes London's multi-ethnic and multi-faith communities. Tew calls it a "radical view of belonging" which is comprised of "mostly unspoken network of interconnectivities" (*Zadie Smith* 26).

Society as an Enormous Web You Spin to Catch Yourself: Narrativizing Collectivity

Several characters awaken to this concept of a web of social relationships throughout the novel. Alsana, in her involuntary interaction with Joyce Chalfen, reflects on this issue by comprehending life as an "enormous web you spin to catch yourself" (440). Earlier when Alsana and Clara were pregnant, Alsana emphasizes the same concept by referring to their children as those whose "roots will always be tangled" (80), creating the affinity between the metaphors of an enormous web with that of tangled roots. Similarly, Irie, upon realizing her mother's false teeth for the first time, ruminates on "what a tangled web we weave" (440). This is also linked to why Irie naively finds solace in imagining her 'homeland' Jamaica as the space where there are "[n]o fictions, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs" (402). In addition, Samad, when he approaches Hortense who does not

recognize him at the end of the narrative, "felt bound to delve deeper into the intricate web of their relations" (529). These references to social webs or tangled roots that the characters are part of are crucial insofar as they make it probable to envision a coherent community rather than a chaotic group of people who are defined by differentiation and fragmentation. It is this utopian and symbolic element, the idea that even in the midst of unresolvable conflicts these ideologies and worldviews can coexist, that identifies *White Teeth* as an account of an imagined happy multicultural land. *WT* is perceived as utopian and celebratory because it concomitantly, as well as retrospectively, imagines a Britain that is detached from racism or other social conflicts that characterize it. The polyphonic structure of *White Teeth* is a tool to reflect and establish this utopian coexistence between different individuals, communities and worldviews.

In other words, the novel, by using a polyphonic narrative structure, resolves the social fragmentation and division between different groups of people. The English Jones, the Jamaican Bowdens, the Bangladeshi Iqbals, all working class, and the English-Jewish Chalfens, middle class, – as well as many other culturally distinct groups of people – are assembled together to create a community of their own. London is of course a truly diverse city. According to data from 2011, less than 60 per cent of London identifies as 'white'; around 45 per cent identify as 'white British', while 'mixed race' comprising the fastest growing ethnic group (Perfect 4). However, as noted as early as the 1990s, London is also a city where "there is little cross-fertilization of cultures taking place" (Dabydeen 104). *White Teeth*'s cohesive polyphony responds to this social problem.

Narrative Voice as a Tool for Social Cohesion

In addition to emphasizing the conception of an "enormous web" of social relationships, the novel relies on formal elements in creating this cohesion. While the reader experiences a variety of points of view through character focalizations, and free indirect speech, that is, while the novel is on the one hand characterised with a rich heterogeneity of worldviews suggesting an incoherent and conflicted world, the omniscient narrative voice appears as a perspective which generates a cohesive and unified portrayal of the characters and their worldviews.

The omniscient narrator is coherent because it exercises the same attitude towards almost all characters and, necessarily, all worldviews, except for Irie and Archie, the significance of which will be discussed at the end. It is through the partly judgemental, all knowing, even arrogant but most importantly entertaining and light-hearted attitude of the omniscient narrative voice that the heterogeneity of the novel partly evades incoherence. The nature of the narrator is essential because it has such distinct characteristics that it should be comprehended as a character in its own right. The extensive quote at the beginning of this chapter about Mo is a clear example insofar as it establishes the ironic detachment of the omniscient narrator. This is, however, omnipresent from the beginning of the narrative. Hortense, for instance, appears only through the lens of the omniscient narrator that consistently portrays her as delusional because of her conviction about the impending end of the world: "she had wept like a baby when she awoke to find — instead of hail and brimstone and universal destruction — the continuance of daily life, the regular running of the buses and trains" (32). Hortense's expectation of the end of the world is crucial as it is one of the very first and clear instances in which the attitude, or subjectivity, of the narrator becomes manifest: as the narrator contends, the "principles of Christianity and Sod's Law (also known as Murphy's Law) are the same: Everything happens to me, for me" (44). The fact that the anticipated apocalypse and the subsequent recalculations lend themselves easily to mockery, however, is irrelevant because the same attitude of the narrator is replicated in other instances in which such mockery is unwarranted as exemplified best in the scene that trivializes racial violence that Mo has to face.

In other instances, the narrator is consistent in presenting characters, worldviews, or problems with the same comic ironic voice that invites the reader to replicate an analogous ironic detachment. Samad, for instance, a devout Muslim whose religious conviction has the function of mirroring Hortense to a certain extent, is depicted to give up "masturbation so that he might drink. It was a deal, a business proposition, that he had made with God" (139). Just like in the case of Hortense, another belief system, or worldview, is presented to be invalid due to the narrator's consistent ironic detachment and trivialization.

Similarly, FATE, the animal-rights group, is portrayed with a parallel disbelief in any genuine political conviction. The de facto leaders of the group Joely and Crispin are

portrayed as “two young student radicals, with Che Guevara on their walls, idealism in their hearts and a mutual passion for all the creatures that fly, trot, crawl and slime across the earth” (478). Their political convictions are trivialized with the same ironic detachment in an attempt to render them as equally preposterous as the never-to-arrive apocalypse or as the act of bartering with God: Joely and Crispin were “active members of a great variety of far-left groups, but political in-fighting, back-stabbing and endless factionalizing soon disillusioned them as far as the fate of homo erectus was concerned” (478).

Disillusionment is central to comprehending the subjectivity of the narrator as it reveals the narrative function of its consistent ironic detachment: religion, political activism, or even racism are phenomena that lend themselves easily to disillusionment. It seems that every radical political conviction is invalid insofar as they reveal the individualistic and selfish perspective of the characters through the lens of the omniscient narrator. Later when Joshua joins FATE, for instance, his engagement with a political conviction is portrayed as equally hypocritical and ludicrous. In one of the meetings in which they discuss what kind of activism they should plan, Joshua can only think about how pleasurable it is to watch Joely: “Ah, Joely. Joely, Joely, Joely. Joshua knew he should be listening, but looking was so good. Looking at Joely was great.” (477). Joely, in Joshua’s eyes, replicates the same voyeuristic attitude of the narrator: “Long in all its lines, muscular in the thigh and soft in the stomach, with breasts that had never known a bra but were an utter delight, and a bottom which was the platonic ideal of all English bottomrey, flat yet peachy, wide but welcoming” (ibid.).

It is not only religion as the source of a worldview that is trivialised but also any type of political conviction that is narrativized not only through FATE but also the radical Islamic group KEVIN. For instance, this is evident, among others, when Shiva, one of Samad’s colleagues, joins KEVIN, Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation. The reason why he joins a radical religious group, however, is no less ludicrous than the aforementioned instances of hysterical triviality and self-regard. Shiva joins KEVIN for he was “getting more pussy than he ever had as a kaffir” (502). The women who rejected him before “were now hugely impressed by his new asceticism. They loved the beard, they dug the hat, and told Shiva that at thirty-eight he had finally ceased to be a boy” (ibid.). As the narrator emphasizes, women “were massively attracted by the fact that he had renounced

women and the more he renounced them, the more successful he became" (ibid.). It is necessary to note that it is not only Shiva's reasoning but also the attitude of the narrator that trivializes his membership to KEVIN. More crucially, however, the aforementioned attitude of the women, whom the narrator also characterizes with a similar ironic detachment, is not coincidental insofar as establishing and legitimizing the overall characteristic of the narrator.

Millat appears as another example of narrator's rendition of any political or collective engagement as ludicrous, hypocritical and fundamentally selfish. As a member of KEVIN, Millat is depicted to struggle with his newfound Muslim identity in contrast to his habitual drinking, smoking and having sex. The narrator adds that although Millat was doing well in terms of leading an ascetic life, as expected by KEVIN, he nonetheless "smoked the odd fag and put away a Guinness on occasion (can't say fairer than that)" as well as establishing an arrangement with Tanya Chapman-Jones, "a very small redhead who understood the delicate nature of his dilemma and would give him a thorough blow job without requiring Millat to touch her at all" (444). Millat's membership in KEVIN is no less hypocritical than the previously mentioned characters from different belief or political systems. The narrator's ironic detachment and trivializing tone is consistent here, too. When the narrator mentions the "unorthodox programmes of direct action" planned by KEVIN, referring to more violent measures here, the tone defies any seriousness because of the way Millat's thoughts are portrayed: Millat was "first into battle come jihad, cool as fuck in a crises, a man of action, like Brando, like Pacino, like Liotta" while simultaneously feeling the need to purge himself "of the West," and necessarily Hollywood references (445). As the narrator unswervingly belittles any sense of genuine conviction or worldview, it emphasises its own disbelief in any coherent worldview since Millat, like others, does not genuinely have a coherent and consistent worldview but rather he is "a juvenile delinquent, determined to prove himself, determined to run the clan, determined to beat the rest" (ibid.) in the narrator's eyes.

Postmodern Cynicism as the End of History

Consequently, the omniscient narrator of *White Teeth* approaches almost every character and every worldview, or ideology for that matter, with an easily distinguishable

postmodern cynicism. If we were to try to identify the historical context of this narrative voice, as the novel itself clearly references in one of its subheadings “The End of History versus The Last Man”, it is easy to see the affinity to Francis Fukuyama’s conception of the End of History in the way in which all other forms of social organisations compared to liberalism are seen as failures, a reference which has attracted disproportionally less attention other than by a few critics. For instance, Brad Buchanan explores what he describes as "the novel's remarkable and explicit invocation of Fukuyama's examination of liberal democracy and its humanistic underpinnings" (13-4) although his interest lies more on the exploration of the concept of post-human in relation to the Nietzschean 'Last Man' (15-17). Nevertheless, Buchanan’s analysis convincingly establishes the connection between *WT* and Fukuyama’s conception of the End of History: "there is little in any of [Smith's] work to suggest that she prefers any other form of government to liberal democracy" (17). The explicit and direct evocation of Fukuyama, then, points at the covert, and form-shaping, monology of *WT*.

It is through the conviction that every possible ideology has been tested and failed to answer to the needs of people that the narrator manifests a singular coherence. The narrator in *White Teeth*, just like Fukuyama’s valorisation of liberalism, exercises an equal cynicism and disbelief towards all other forms of ideologies from a point where liberalism reigns supreme. This is manifest in the fact that "the novel is carefully crafted to make us believe certain things very strongly" (Paproth 21), some of which are a belief in the end of history, erosion of historical certainties, and rejecting causalities. Fukuyama’s concept is however better understood with the analysis of postmodern cynicism as a central characteristic of British contemporaneity because cynicism appears as an unavoidable effect of the belief in the End of History as a way of seeing the world.

Postmodern Cynicism and Its Social, Political and Literary Functions

The cynic, Timothy Bewes in his *Cynicism and Postmodernity* notes, “is apathetic and introspective, resigned to, rather than revelling in his or her experience of alienation” (1). As such, cynicism “denotes a refusal to engage with the world as much as a disposition of antagonism towards it, a flight into solitude and interiority and an abnegation of politics on the basis of its inauthenticity” (ibid.). Bewes adds that cynicism “betrays an elevated

and sublimated scale of values, therefore, for which the abstractions of truth and integrity are of far greater consequence than the political virtues of action and imagination" (1-2).

The relationship between cynicism and postmodernism is intelligible from a political perspective because the cynic, as Bewes notes, is "the typical 'postmodern' character, a figure alienated from society and from his or her subjectivity" (2). It is in this sense cynicism and postmodernism are used interchangeably in political discussions (ibid.). Therefore, Bewes's central thesis in his book, that cynicism "is symptomatic of a crisis in the constitution and practice of the political itself" and that it is "evidence of a displacement in the concerns of the political realm" (ibid.) is the sense this thesis comprehends cynicism in the context of postmodernism. In other words, cynicism is here used to refer to the postmodern tenet "of the impossibility of political or *ideological* conviction" which also manifests itself in the "collective retreat from political engagement signalled by the postmodern political rhetoric of collective insecurity" (Bewes 3). The collective insecurity that Bewes mentions identifies the link between postmodern cynicism and neoliberalism for collective insecurity appears as a manifestation of neoliberal flexibilization and precarity. In the specific context of the UK, the connection between postmodern cynicism and neoliberalism is clearly identifiable: "the Conservative privatisation of public utilities, or the ideological promotion of 'self-interest' in the Thatcherite Eighties, or the apparent failure of the economic 'trickle-down' theory" are closely related to the development of postmodern cynicism (Bewes 16).

Bewes notes that the "excessive self-consciousness regarding what politics is, or what politics should be, is a legacy of the transportation of postmodern anxieties into the political sphere" which "can only conclude with the impoverishment of the political process" (3). Since cynicism is to be located in the space from which mass cultural politics retreated, the end result of cynicism appears as the conviction that "political engagement has no option, apparently, but to *be* cynical in such a society" (Bewes 3). In turn, politics in postmodernity "is reconceptualised as a realm of metaphysical harmony and personal integrity, rather than a sphere of tension generated by the projection of itself beyond existing limits, a necessarily violent procedure" (Bewes 7-8). It is in this sense that this thesis comprehends postmodern cynicism as a type of ideologeme to the degree to which it accepts the social and political limits and rather retreats to an inner, metaphysical

integrity. The interiorization and individualisation of political convictions and formulating a corresponding metaphysical integrity appear therefore as fundamental qualities of postmodern cynicism. In this specific context, postmodernism is “a monstrous hybrid aesthetic, a decadent self-indulgent apoliticism and an élitist, ironical nihilism” which is “cynically destructive, the perpetrator of a sinister assault on cognitive, aesthetic and moral certainties” (Bewes 26). Therefore, this chapter comprehends the cynical and ironic narrative voice of *WT* in relationship to this specific notion and exploration of postmodern cynicism.

It is in this context that *WT* should be comprehended to reflect the *Zeitgeist* because, as Squires contends, despite different purposes, Smith's treatment of London from the 1970s to 2000 marks *WT* as "reflective of the zeitgeist" rather than "its portrayal of World War II and Jamaica at the turn of the century" (67). The omniscient narrator has therefore a double character: while having a distinguishably postmodern attitude towards the characters and their beliefs, that is, all of them are rendered equally futile, it nonetheless summons a modernist formal element. Unlike the unreliable and incoherent narrators in postmodern literature, Smith’s narrator is evidently modern in the sense that it is a reliable and coherent narrator although it looks at an incoherent und fragmented reality, perhaps leading to Tew’s rendition of *WT* as “a liberal version of multiculturalism” (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 15). While *WT*, among others, showcases "the failure of various characters to exert their authority and autonomy in a postmodern world, the [narrators are] confident, in total control of their narrative, rarely demonstrating the uncertainty or fracturedness that is common in postmodernist fiction" (Paproth 11).

It should now be possible to argue that this cohesive, reliable, cynical and equally entertaining narrative voice establishes some sort of an order to the chaos of postmodern life. It also explains why *White Teeth* was initially interpreted as a utopian account of contemporary multicultural Britain. By providing a resolution to postmodern relativism through its consistent and coherent narrator, *White Teeth* simultaneously rejects and embraces postmodernism. It rejects it to the extent that it relies on a coherent narrator to valorise its truly relativist and fragmented postmodern world. It also embraces postmodernism by refusing “easy conciliations” or only offering “partial and tentative” ones (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 54). The other group of criticisms, therefore, should be

comprehended in the context of this contradiction. While the narrative form suggests a utopian cohesion, which corresponds to its optimistic interpretations, the plot defies this logic by appearing as a mass of unresolvable conflicts as this reveals the tragic rather than the utopian. When taken as a symbolic resolution to social fragmentation, the utopian polyphony of *WT* helps to elucidate why the tragic elements in the plot appear utopian. This perspective also acknowledges the coexistence of both the utopian and the tragic, both critical accounts of *WT*, and frames the novel as an amalgamation of the two.

Therefore, unlike the aforementioned criticisms that either ignore the formal or minimize it to the degree that it becomes untenable to identify them as literary criticisms, such as Tancke's analysis in which she suggests we read selectively, by ignoring the comic ironic tone and rather focusing on the tragic (35), this analysis redirects the attention back to the form. Contrastingly, this study, rather than stopping at accepting the utopian element in *WT* at face value, further elaborates on the form in order to comprehend the novel's overall success and its conflicting interpretations, which appears through the analysis of the form-shaping monology of *WT*.

Part II: 'Living a Good Life by Accident': Cultural Relativism, Postmodern Detachment and Chance as Form-Shaping Ideologies in *White Teeth*

Even though *WT* is a polyphonic novel with unresolvable conflicts, it nonetheless achieves narrative cohesion through its modern omniscient narrator. The way it achieves this, however, should be problematized as this, I aim to show, challenges its own utopian cohesion with submerged levels of meaning and ways of seeing the world. The omniscient narrative voice of *WT* represents every character and their worldview with an equal perspective. Rather than claiming validity for all in the Bakhtinian sense of polyphony, however, it minimizes and trivializes them to the extent of rendering them meaningless and antiquated ideologies, or as Buchanan puts it "hypocritical or hopelessly naïve" (19). It achieves this reversal of optimistic polyphony by the narrator's consistent cynicism towards -and detachment from- the characters' actions and beliefs. In a sense, the attitude of the narrator could be seen as a form of cultural relativism in the ways in which it evades a hierarchical evaluation of the cultures depicted and in which it treats almost every ideology and worldview as equally futile. In other words, *WT*'s central position of cultural

relativism manifests itself through the postmodern detachment and ironic cynicism of the narrative voice, and its deconstruction of history as a chronological series of causalities.

The Meta-Ethics of *WT*: Cultural Relativism as a way of Knowing and Seeing the World

Primarily using a detached postmodern cynicism, *WT* prioritizes the voyeurism of the narrator (and possibly the reader, too). In contrast to the plot that is rife with unresolvable and bleak social conflicts, the postmodern cynicism of the narrator appears as a refuge through which it becomes conceivable to eschew the tragic. It is because of this attitude of the omniscient narrator, I argue, that James Wood declares *WT* as a primary example of hysterical realism. Although Wood talks from a privileged point of view, as he claims that the characters in *WT*, or people in general, could not "endure the stories that happen to them" (*Irresponsible Self* 180), and although his argument is not tenable as exemplified in the quotations above about Mo and its real counterpart in Burnett's sociological description of racism in contemporary Britain –people indeed experience such horrifying stories–, his interpretation of *WT* is nevertheless crucial as he pays more attention to the function of the form. Wood comprehends *WT* as a novel that lacks ethical seriousness and that minimizes its characters by denying them agency, which ultimately leads to the inhuman treatment of the tragic that is covered up with constant story-telling without much connection to the general point of the narrative, if there is any (*The Irresponsible Self* 148; "Human, All Too Human"). Similarly, Berthold Schoene, criticizes *WT* as "devoid of truth, beauty and community" (184-5). Tew also contends that the "novel's moral centre is evasive" (*Zadie Smith* 49). Likewise, P. Dawson accuses *WT*, among others, with diminishing individual perspectives of the characters (153). As much as providing valuable insights, these critics nevertheless dismiss *WT* outright (except for Tew) because, it seems, either they believe in some form of authorial intention playing some role or they reduce *WT* to reactionary discussions. The reason why they stop at outright dismissal is the inattention to *WT*'s covert monology, which actually defies the argument that *WT* should be dismissed because it lacks a moral centre or minimizes its characters (although it does, to a certain extent, but with a fundamentally different effect) or because it lacks beauty, truth, compassion or community.

WT has a distinctly identifiable ethical seriousness: cultural relativism as a way of knowing and seeing the world. *WT*, in other words, is characterised with a certain meta-ethics: the way it approaches, represents and characterises ethical positions is consistent and coherent, thereby revealing cultural relativism as a serious ethical engagement. Needless to say, every way of seeing the world, just like cultural relativism, is historically contingent and is better understood as a certain ideological position in the Bakhtinian sense. The analysis of the conviction of the narrator and the structural coherence it creates unmasks the meaning of its function in contrast to its postmodern and chaotic plot. Paproth, for instance, maintains compellingly that the reader is encouraged "to look at the structural level to find meaning" as a strategy to "understand fully the various parallels and connections between these sometimes disparate characters" (21). He argues that the reader needs to replicate the perspective of the omniscient narrator in order to "understand the ways that their lives, perspectives, and outlooks mesh together when viewed in the way that Smith presents them to us" (ibid.), which is characterised by its modern and reliable omniscient narrator. The narrator's postmodern detachment and ironic cynicism, however, accentuate its meta-ethics of cultural relativism.

Postmodern Detachment and Ironic Cynicism in *WT*'s Narrative Voice

This single, consistent and unrelenting narrator is neither positively heterogeneous nor negatively obsessed with tragedy. Rather, it is interested in observing the chaos of heterogeneity from a safe distance, unaffected by race, ethnicity, class, gender or animal ethics and has the qualities of "an all-knowing, heterodiegetic narrator who addresses the reader directly [and who] generally asserts a palpable presence within the fictional world" (P. Dawson 143). By doing so, the narrator aims to project a universal claim, a monologic worldview that is able to comprehend the postmodern chaos of difference, constant and rapid change, and the hysterical meaninglessness of the lives of these characters. Only through the postmodern cynical and relativist stance of the narrator it becomes reasonable to frame this mixture of unresolvable social conflicts as a unity. As such, the narrative voice of *WT* has more agency that its characters.

Because of the omniscient narrator, the content of the novel is ephemeral, that is, less central and essential to the position that is predicated on the narrator. The primary and

most evident example of this ephemerality is the final short cuts, reminiscent of kitschy TV dramas, in which the narrator explicitly trivializes the narrative closure. Although Paproth finds different implications in it, his argument that the reader is "being led toward the message that randomness and chaos prevail over resolution and closure" (22) rings mostly true as it also manifests in the narrative switch to Archie at the end, by the novel relocating the moral centre and the actual narrative closure to Archie, which will be examined below. The short scenes that depict what happens to the characters in the future, however, exemplify the fact that the plot is not essential and the characters are not central to the narrative as the plot defies belief and the characters are depicted as lacking true subjectivity in the ways in which they are portrayed as an amalgamation of chaotic and conflicting drives. It is therefore vital to put emphasis on the 'endgames' as portrayed by the narrator:

> But first the endgames. Because it seems no matter what you think of them, they must be played, even if, like the independence of India or Jamaica, like the signing of peace treaties or the docking of passenger boats, the end is simply the beginning of an even longer story. The same focus group who picked out the colour of this room, the carpet, the font for the posters, the height of the table, would no doubt tick the box that asks to see all these things played to their finish […]. (540-1)

The keyword that reveals how the narrator comprehends its characters is "the focus group", which works as a direct reference to both the multifarious marketability of the novel itself and its status as a consumer product. In addition, the implied comparison between the independence of India or Jamaica and the narrative closure of the novel is significant in the ways in which the narrator's comic-ironic detachment and cynicism is to be comprehended to be valid not only for these fictional characters but also for historical events. Indeed, the novel appears to imply that the independence of India or Jamaica is yet another narrative gimmick in the fiction of history, implicating an analogous disbelief, disillusionment and disregard of historical forces. Similarly, the reader is invited to perceive such political and social issues with a clear detachment, an invitation to perceive such historical events rather voyeuristically with a similar attitude to the farcical plot of the novel. What is more, the narrator seems to assume that at least some of the readers would, and possibly should, agree, which is evident in its self-referential cynicism:

> And is it young professional women aged eighteen to thirty-two who would like a snapshot seven years hence of Irie, Joshua and Hortense sitting by a Caribbean sea

> (for Irie and Joshua become lovers in the end; you can only avoid your fate for so long), while Irie's fatherless little girl writes affectionate postcards to Bad Uncle Millat and Good Uncle Magid and feels free as Pinocchio, a puppet clipped of paternal strings? (541)

The focus groups and their depiction, therefore, strengthen the narrator's central task of grasping human actions and desires as fundamentally egotistic and self-focussed, and therefore deceptive and trite. As the narrator generates the affinity between the reader and the consumer, it aims to relocate its cynicism onto the reader's desire of searching for narrative fulfilment by comprehending their own desires as consumers. Unsurprisingly, this continues further with other focus (or consumer) groups:

> And could it be that it is largely the criminal class and the elderly who find themselves wanting to make bets on the winner of a blackjack game, the one played by Alsana and Samad, Archie and Clara, in O'Connell's, 31 December 1999, that historic night when Abdul-Mickey finally opened his doors to women? (541)

The singular and relatively emancipatory possibility of O'Connel's transforming into a space where women can also enter is at once trivialized by the narrator's contextualization of this fact with the desires of the focus groups, that is, readers. Similar to the worldviews of the characters, which are consistently belittled, even the possibility of the text's emancipatory political imagination evades any serious engagement.

Based on the last focus group mentioned above, by making use of kitschy TV aesthetics and cynically depicting partly cliché (Irie's romance) and half-hearted emancipatory elements (O'Connell's opening its doors to women for the first time), the final endgames appear as the moral centre of the novel as a result of projecting a clearly identifiable and coherent subjectivity in contrast to the chaotic, hypocritical, delusional identities of the characters that are depicted to lack agency and any chance of transformation. This is linked to the fact that while the novel comprehends readers in their 'typicality' through focus groups; it implies that the narrator with its distinguishably postmodern ironic detachment and cynicism is more of a true subject than both the characters themselves. The reader, as much as the characters who are presented and perceived through this cynicism, appears almost as a foil to confirm the narrator's own conviction in its postmodern ironic detachment. The function of this final narrative of 'focus groups' is an extension of the novel's overall cynicism, adding to its perpetual irony because, as Bewes convincingly notes, the ironist, and I argue the narrative voice of *WT*,

"has cultivated such a sense of superiority about himself [sic] and his [sic] taste that the mere realities of record production cannot hope to satisfy the complexities of his aesthetic criteria. Any 'legitimate' consumption is impossible, and he [sic] must resort to a strategy of perpetual irony, from which he can delight in his own immense subtlety" (31). Irony is here evidently related to cynicism, as it appears one of its fundamental manifestations in postmodern literary aesthetics. Similarly, irony in this sense appears as the subjectivity that does not have an object anymore, it "exists solely and absurdly as an assertion of superiority over *all* conditions of representation. Since in principle nothing escapes its invective, enlightened cynicism is in effect a disabled critique that mistakes its own absence for a kind of universalized rigour" (Bewes 41). The ideological repercussion of such a move is best described by Slavoj Žižek: "The ruling ideology is no longer even meant to be taken seriously" (Bewes 41).

Based on Žižek's argument, the metaphysical belief of Archie, for instance, and his habit of flipping a coin to make decisions can be better described as a form of pragmatism to ameliorate the complexity of life. In this sense, the image of Archie flipping the coin can be seen as a form of "crude pragmatism", which, according to Bewes, resembles "desperate lunges towards a position of subjective agency" (42-43). This is the sense in which *WT*'s characters seem to lack agency. Rather, the actions that are predicated on subjective agency seem to be attempts for agency, representing a form of pragmatism that the narrative voice and the narrative structure prioritizes as a pre-emptive strategy to survive in a racist, violent, fragmented and uncertain world.

The accusation that Smith makes use of problematic and stereotypical black women that lack development (L. Walters 125), for instance, add to the argument that characters do not appear as true subjects or round and dynamic figures in the narrative –although Walters seems to be convinced that one of the functions of such a move to be challenging racism and sexism (127), which I do not fully agree with. The characters are better understood as foils through which the ironic detachment and cynicism of the narrator could be verified over and over again by trivializing and disabling agency in these characters, which is predicated on clichés and incoherent thought processes that are explored here.

WT, as such, is a narrative on how to exercise the ironic and cynical postmodern detachment from the social and political in order to be able to survive in the crushing

isolation, fragmentation, and precarity of a postmodern and neoliberal world, specifically in the ideologically conflicted space of multiculturalism. In this sense, the omniscient narrator belittles each character and worldview, mocks them with an all-knowing self-righteousness and treats them all as equally meaningless and hollow. The remaining reaction, which can be formulated against the world that is depicted in *WT*, is to look at this "fractured and chaotic world" (Paproth 9) with a self-conscious, unimpressed and finalising judgement because of "the chaotic mixed-up nature" and "uncertainty of life" (ibid.). Such "metaphysical uncertainty" which can be named as 'postmodernism' strengthens "a condition of 'incredulity'" which is best described as a form of "defeatism" (Bewes 5). It is therefore closed to discussion or change. It is a fixed perspective and a form-shaping worldview that has a necessary relation to why several scholar and critics identified *WT* as one of the most successful narratives of the millennium. By depicting a world in which postmodern detachment from the historical, social and political become manifest as a hegemonic and supposedly proper way of seeing and knowing the world (specifically portrayed in O'Connels, the "neutral place" as Paproth calls it (16) where history cannot touch the characters), *WT* surely marks the *Zeitgeist* of a neoliberal world.

It is ironic that *WT* is widely perceived as a celebratory account of multicultural Britain, depicting an optimistic, hopeful and humorous perspective into the world of supposedly post-colonial, post-race, post-gender, post-class, post-political or shortly post-historical British contemporariness. It is a great irony because, as noted before, the characters, apart from rare and half-hearted instances, quite simply and clearly suffer "seeing a world engaging on the tragic" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 48). It is the monologic perspective of the omniscient narrator that coexists with the polyphonic variety of the plot that creates this effect of a happy multicultural land. It is in this sense that the modern omniscient narrator of *WT* is a form of monology that is both in plain sight but also evades identification because it mirrors the core elements of postmodernism in the ways in which it rejects history as a coherent and chronological system of causality. As Žižek maintains "[c]ynical distance is just one way - one of many ways - to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, we are still doing them" (30).

Chance vs. History: A World of Random Incidents

The third element that marks the novel's covert monology, in addition to cultural relativism and postmodern cynicism, has a pronounced relation to its understanding of causality and history. In other words, the central way in which the plot is structured, by indeterminacy or chance, confirms once again the novel's symbolic power to overcome certain social limits that would normally be imposed to its underprivileged characters. Smith's rejection of causality is thereby seen as a celebratory move because of imagining the world as "governed by chance and personalities rather than the abstractions of science, ideologies, and literary criticism" (King 290). Similarly, McLeod contends "Smith's novel offers a version of London in which the depressingly familiar social conflicts of previous decades are no longer primarily determining the formation of character and fortunes of plot" (161). Indeed, this postmodern polyphony is one of the examples why Smith's writing is not exclusively problematic but on the contrary it is also subversive and affirmative because, as Lyotard notes in *The Postmodern Condition,* the author is "working without rules in order to formulate rules of what will have been done (Lyotard 81). However, remembering Burnett's description of racist attacks in the UK becomes once again crucial because it reveals the contrast to *WT*'s evasion of causality or any type of determination related to ethnicity, class, gender or any other social marker that are all intertwined with one another in contemporary Britishness.

By formulating a plot structure in which events and actions take place in a remarkably arbitrary manner, *WT* renders chance and luck as the more prominent explanation in contrast to causalities in comprehending why and how things happen. Unlike Ashley Dawson who claims that Smith satirizes different forms of fundamentalisms to challenge neoliberalism (172), I argue that *WT* trivializes each ideology with the exception of liberalism and its contemporary manifestation of postmodern cynicism because history and the past in *WT* acquire certain postmodern characteristics that mirror neoliberal conceptualisations of social conflicts. The following quotation convincingly summarises how the omniscient narrator and its voyeuristic cynicism is replicated in the novel through TV aesthetics, especially in regards to the conceptualization of history and the past, and necessarily different forms of causalities:

> The fairy tales play, it seems, on the eternal loop of sitcom reruns. And so does the end of history: watched, passively, on TV, where it can be replayed and replayed forever, the collapse of communism and the Berlin Wall is a historic event that can be switched off. The viewers are bored like Fukuyama's last men at the end of history, condemned to a life of consumption that is 'in the end, boring' (Fukuyama 1992: 314). History ends. It goes nowhere. Consumed. (Botting 31)

The implications of such a position is clear in Wood's analysis as mentioned before but it is worth repeating Lea's commentary on Wood, as it reveals why Wood accuses Smith with abandoning "historical roots in social commentary in favour either of ostentatious displays of arcane and localised knowledge of the directly personal and domestic, ascribable only to the private consciousness" (9). Similarly, Sell explains this juncture succinctly:

> No longer are present and future inevitably historically determined; any relationship obtaining between past and present may be simply coincidental, rather than necessarily causal. […] This foregrounding of the present means that the past is rendered as background and stripped of its conventional prerogative to shape the present, while the usual cast-iron sequence from cause to effect melts into a more liquid and arbitrary relationship of analogy or serendipitous contingency. Obviously the past is there, but it has lost the crushing weight […]. (29)

Chance, therefore, has clear implications: it renounces agency[27], valorises a happy ending that is produced by a belief in the random, and ultimately it masks over structural inequalities and social limits that in complex ways define and affect characters' lives. The overall effect of this process is the positive affirmation of current social structures that limit each and every character in the novel and that arise from a variety of intersectional combinations of identity markers such as ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation and religious beliefs.

Chance is another element that unifies the postmodern mixture of *WT* by appearing as an ultimate response to a variety of determinisms and fundamentalisms, which appear in the shape of the final faceoff in the narrative between Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, radical animal rights activism, and scientific determinism. The function of this final faceoff is better understood in the postmodern cynicism inherent in its depiction: Postmodern and cynical temporality is characterized by:

[27] For an interesting analysis of the relationship between contingency and determinism in relation to neoliberalism and the problem of agency, see: Christinidis, Georgia. "Slumdog Millionaire and the Knowledge-Based Economy: Poverty as Ontology." *Cultural Critique* 89 (2015): 38-60.

> a morbid, fearful refusal of antagonism or confrontation in pitiful attempt to preserve the present. The current malaise, characterized by a set of neuroses which are indisputably 'postmodernist' in their provenance, represents an ossification of postmodern preoccupations, amounting to a self-conscious millenarianism, a tendency to see our historical circumstances as unique, in short, rather than as an essentially momentary failure of rational and political nerve. (Bewes 7).

Or in other words, the final scene represents the supposedly ultimate and conclusive meeting where liberalism meets its possible opponents, which are ultimately rejected. Remarkably, this covert monology, or "submerged" level of meaning as Tancke calls it (32), evades sustained analysis in some scholars. While Tancke, for instance, identifies the covert monology of *WT* without being able to name it as such, she ultimately shifts the focus and reveals her own liberal tendencies as universal verities (ibid.) especially by presenting a Darwinist and Nietzschean conception of social structures as "natural" (ibid. 36). Nonetheless, as she compellingly argues, the authoritative omniscient narrator has a monological character because it "asks readers to critically assess one's own, commonly held beliefs and widely accepted convictions" (ibid. 30) such as the ones related to religion, science and animal rights activism, and by extension possibly every political conviction or belief system. While *WT* appears to be deconstructing some of the hegemonic binaries (such as English versus the immigrant, or white versus black), it is nevertheless not completely true to claim that "Smith refuses comfortable binaries" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 56) because the overall structure of *WT* is based on a very crude and unrealistic binary opposition between over-determination and complete indeterminism.

One of the very clear examples of this argument is Irie's indeterminate and never-to-be-determinable pregnancy, effectively rejecting the possibility of any form of determinism or causality. Irie has sex with both Millat and Magid around almost the same time and gets pregnant. This is a clear attempt to create a new form of lineage where roots do not matter anymore (Haschemi Yekani 228-9). However, it is also probable to comprehend this move as a desire to render roots, causalities, historical forces and determinisms as irrelevant and inaccurate. This idea is clearly enticing as it promises a response to the culturalism and its fundamental narrative pattern of "going back to roots," especially in postcolonial writing. At the same time, however, by appearing as the binary opposition of the belief in roots in understanding and exercising identity, *WT* offers a

comparably problematic and simplified solution because neither exclusive denial of roots is tenable nor the belief in the over-determination by roots.

Consequently, Irie's child can neither be a tabula rasa nor exclusively over-determined while the novel clearly presents these two radical opposites as viable. The narrator, for instance, describes Irie's daughter as a "puppet clipped of paternal strings" who "feels free as Pinocchio" (541), depicted in Jamaica, the 'homeland' or as the narrator mockingly puts earlier "The beginningest of beginnings. Like the first morning of Eden and the day after apocalypse. A blank page" (402). The Pinocchio metaphor here is evidently telling in the ways in which it simultaneously dreams the complete freedom from determinants by referring to clipped paternal strings, and acknowledges the over-determination of Pinocchio's subjectivity as a wooden puppet who later transforms into a real person. What this means is that the fact that the daughter's roots cannot be determined with precision does not provide the chance to overcome 'roots' or the social and cultural determinants that will affect her life. The dream of overcoming roots is therefore equally impossible because complete over-determination, as in the case of a puppet, denies any form of agency. What is more, Irie's rootless child can be better comprehended as the narrativization of the postmodern desire of "amnesia as a catalyst of individual volition" (Bewes 10), thereby adding to the argument that *WT* is offering a way of seeing the world best suited to the failure of multiculturalism.

While Irie's pregnancy is telling in the ways in which *WT* rejects all sorts of causalities apart from chance, it is nonetheless not as effective as the continuous focus on the struggle between various deterministic ideologies of the characters and the supposedly indeterministic perspective of the narrative voice. It is in this sense the narrative voice comprehends and portrays each character's worldview as equally invalid, a point that many critics failed to identify. Mirze, for example, points out, that the response of *WT* to extremisms or determinisms "is the plurality of voices in a multicultural society" (200) but refrains from exploring the nature of this plurality or whether that plurality exists cohesively or in a fractured manner.

If cynicism inherent in the narrative voice is taken to be "the most important polemical *vehicle* of [the] dissemination (in such forms as relativism, irony, and even decadence" (Bewes 7-8) of the apolitical, *WT* manifests this notion clearly in the

contradiction and final irrelevance of several political convictions. The focus on Islamic fundamentalism of Millat and some of the Muslim characters in combination with the equally fundamentalist convictions of Hortense, Irie's grandmother as a devout Jehovah's Witness, and Joshua Chalfen's animal rights activist friends who are correspondingly described as fundamentalists, and lastly the scientific determinism of Marcus Chalfen and Magid all add to the belief that such ways of comprehending the world are futile. They are therefore brought together at the final conference as the culmination of unresolvable conflicts in the novel.

It is clear that *WT* does not resolve these conflicts. More specifically, it is not interested in the resolution of these conflicts but rather in their deconstruction. However, deconstruction, as Bewes notes, does not necessarily offer the space or the possibility "for the development of political agenda" and it rather "inhibits a kind of ontological seriousness - a condition of metaphysical necessity which *prohibits* political activity" (11-12). What *WT* suggests with this is, first, the trivialization of all of these conflicts and causalities, and, second, the replacement of them with their binary opposition of complete indeterminism that is most clearly represented in Archie, who is perhaps the hero or the real protagonist of the novel despite the novel's surface polyphony of protagonists. The function of the cynicism inherent in the depiction of these political convictions, which is best described in Bewes's words as "a melancholic, self-pitying reaction to the apparent disintegration of political reality (in the form of 'grand narratives' and 'totalising ideologies')", suggests taking indeterminism as a form of metaphysical insight and as a "declaration of truth about the nature of contemporary political reality" (7). This metaphysical insight is reflected in Archie to the fullest extent.

Archie is depicted as an antihero, not in the sense of the hero that appears in stark contrast to the mainstream conceptions of heroisms, but more in the sense that it is not really possible to speak of any form of heroism in his case (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 23). Archie is a loser, to put it crudely, or simply "banal" (ibid.) in the ways in which the novel portrays him. Unmistakably, he lacks agency and his life is an amalgamation of chance encounters and random decisions, which comprise most of the ways in which the plot is structured. The opening of the narrative, in which Mo inadvertently saves Archie from suicide in an obvious chance encounter, is the initial evidence to the way in which the plot is structured:

> The thinnest covering of luck was on him like fresh dew. Whilst he slipped in and out of consciousness, the position of the planets, the music of the spheres, the flap of a tiger-moth's diaphanous wings in Central Africa, and a whole bunch of other stuff that Makes Shit Happen had decided it was second-chance time for Archie. Somewhere, somehow, by somebody, it had been decided that he would live. (4)

As well as establishing the tone of the narrator, this coincidental element is provided to substantiate how the 'hysterical' plot is predicated on the refusal of a clear causality or determinism. Not only Archie relies on chance to 'survive', his encounter and ultimate marriage to Clara appears to affirm the same conviction in an indeterminate universe where things happen in 'mysterious' and coincidental ways. Archie, whom the narrator describes "[l]ike a dog on a lead round a corner," flips a coin and enjoys the way "Fate was pulling him towards another life" (18) after Mo saves him from suicide. As Archie drives through the streets randomly, he sees a poster that states "WELCOME TO THE 'END OF THE WORLD' PARTY, 1975" (20) and decides to join the party, again, arbitrarily: "I flipped a coin and thought: why not?" (ibid.). Here, Archie meets Clara and they get married later, two significant plot developments, which are unquestionably predicated on chance.

Archie's friendship with Samad, the nature of which is revealed later, portrays the consistency in the ways in which his coincidental 'fate' is determined, or how the plot structure rejects causality. Archie and Samad meet when "they were first assigned to each other" during World War II (83). The narrator leaves no doubts that their friendship is based on an odd chance because it was apparently "the kind of friendship an Englishman makes on holiday, that he can make only on holiday. A friendship that crosses class and colour, a friendship that takes as its basis physical proximity and survives because the Englishman assumes the physical proximity will not continue" (96). Analogous to Archie's survival and his marriage to Clara, his friendship with Samad is portrayed as yet another inexplicable turn of events that shape Archie's life, as well as the way in which the events of the narrative are shaped. As the rest of the plot is based on these two chance encounters, it is fitting to centralize Archie's conviction in chance as the fundamental element that shapes the plot.

In addition to such random developments, the primacy of indeterminism and chance is evident in many instances in the novel: the next significant plot element, for instance, the meeting of Jones and Iqbal families with the Chalfens is also a random occurrence as

it is predicated on the coincidental meeting of Millat, Irie and Joshua when they were smoking marijuana: Millat "had forgotten to take his joint off Irie and was now running over to retrieve it. Irie, about to hand it over to Joshua" (298). As the Jones, Iqbal and Chalfen kids get caught together, the ensuing interaction between all three families is portrayed as yet another coincidental peculiarity.

Undoubtedly, Archie's conviction to flip a coin to make decisions is central to the rejection of determinacy in the plot. When Archie is proved right by the final scene in which the scientifically over-determined mouse escapes determinism, a Nazi war criminal is released free of his crimes and all the characters who have clear deterministic convictions are defeated as a result of Archie's coin, which initiates the sequence of events that cause the mayhem during the conference leading to the escape of the Future Mouse. Islam, Christianity, atheism in combination with scientific determinism, animal rights activism as central political issues and the social conflicts they refer to all lose in the fight against the random and the indeterminable.

As a result, Archie's ending should be comprehended as the real ending of the novel, not the scenes in which trivialised and commercial screenshots of the characters are depicted. It is in this sense that I also follow Bentley's ("Re-writing Englishness" 498) and Sell's (29) perspective that Archie is the actual hero of the narrative. His way of comprehending the world is affirmed, giving the novel the chance to mask this very conviction, which is embedded in its omniscient narrative voice in its creation of the utopian impression that the novel is truly dialogical, polyphonic and optimistic. Because in a world in which the very elements of life are constantly over-determined by the social structures and limits such as racism, the idea that chance can lead to a form of self-realisation or happiness, as Smith frames it, is the ultimate symbolic resolution to a socially conflicted world. Hope, therefore, is a clear implication of the novel as it more or less relies on the conviction of comprehending and accepting life *as it is* without much possibility to change it or the need to do so.

In the larger context of a neoliberal social structure, in which almost all social interactions are defined by and in relation to the market, that is, in a world of market dictatorship in which decisions are made according to the principle of profitability, detachment from the social, political and historical, cynicism about causality and belief

systems and finally the valorisation of chance to achieve these purposes hint at a utopian possibility. The world as seen by Archie and the omniscient narrator is indeed utopian and optimistic because even in a world of complex causalities and determinations, the belief in self-realisation or successful conception of life can only be imagined with the valorisation and complete prioritization of chance and accordingly by the denial of political, social and historical determinants that, to a large extent, deny individual or social agency. Archie's ending that rejects agency and valorizes chance represents best a world in which the "ideals of politics are […] sublimated to a level where they are not only unattainable but categorically incongruous […] the only recourse is that of Dostoevsky's man underground - a relapse into a state of morbid inactivity" (Bewes 48).

When chance is the central way in which the world functions, life becomes free from determinants and appears unexplainable and mystical, metaphysical. This, however, is an equally untenable way of comprehending the world as the novel itself very clearly discerns and acknowledges that ethnicity, class or gender can and will indeed determine certain elements in life. This is evident in Irie's future, the future of a woman of colour, being determined and patronised by a white middle-class English male, Marcus Chalfen. Irie, while working for Marcus, finds a letter written by Marcus in which he talks about Irie as follows:

> she'd make a lab assistant maybe, but she hasn't any head for the concepts, no head at all. She could try medicine, I suppose, but even there you need a little bit more chutzpah than she's got . . . so it might have to be dentistry for our Irie (she could fix her own teeth at least) (368).

Indeed, Irie follows Marcus's lead: she "wanted to study dentistry (white collar! 20k+ !), which everyone was very pleased about" (376). In complex ways, her life is determined to a certain extent, by the supposedly culturally superior and patronizing outlook of a middle-class white male character, thereby paradoxically contradicting the novel's valorisation of freedom from historical or social determinants.

Analogously, Magid and Millat get a curious form of punishment at the end of the novel due to the impossibility of identifying the actual perpetrator among the two who shot the gun at the conference. The judge orders "four hundred hours community service to both twins, which they served, naturally, as gardeners in Joyce's new project, a huge millennial park by the banks of the Thames" (541). Naturally, the adverb that the narrator uses the

argument that it is not chance but rather certain social elements that appear as the more probable form of causality in the plot. For Magid and Millat, becoming subservient to the middle class and acculturating, hopefully, into their ways is almost the only available option, just like Irie's 'only' option of dentistry as a career. These final narrative closures of Irie, Magid and Millat mirror the initial scene in which they, as children, are first exposed to this "liberally inclined punishment" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 58) for the first time by being sent to the Chalfens to improve their behaviour and grades after they were caught while smoking marijuana.

It is also because of this obvious causality that the narrative switches at the end to Archie, the real focus of the narrative. Rather than a depressing and bleak account of how the lives of these characters are structurally determined and how their very social conditions render certain options impossible for them, *WT* prefers to valorise the compensating power of rejecting causality, which Jakubiak describes as "the 'masking' strategy [Smith] employs in the novel to make the immigrant experience "consumable" for the publishers' preferred audience" (209). In the final scene, the Future Mouse, which symbolizes the crucial opposition between determinism and indeterminism because Marcus Chalfen supposedly codifies the mouse's future into its genetics, runs away and Archie happily ruminates: "Go on my son!" (542). By ending the narrative with the image of Archie who is fundamentally gratified about his lack of agency, or whose "vague idealism" projects "much positivity" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 67), inevitably renders the novel as an optimistic account of contemporary Britain.

It is this very element of chance, the belief that chance can and will help one to move beyond their undesired life conditions and away from their hysterical and contradictory lives (as the novel depicts) that marks *WT* as one of the most successful, hopeful and celebratory narratives of British contemporariness. This is because it is deeply, and equally illogically, and absurdly (Paproth 10-12), or "somewhat improbably" (Tew, *Zadie Smith* 46), hopeful about the bleak social conflicts that characterize contemporary Britain, but only by prioritizing untenable conceptions of history and causality and insisting on a debilitating form of postmodern cynicism. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that, unlike Tew who claims that many critiques see the utopian element in *WT* because of their own political agendas (*Zadie Smith* 132), the utopian element *is* constitutive of *WT*

and polyphony as a genre but not as the predominant or the only element, rather as an element that coexists in parallel and in contrast to the tragic. This is clearly evident in the novel's protagonist, Archie.

Conclusion

Archie, as Smith states very clearly, is the character who "lives a good life by accident" (Smith qtd. in Tew, *Zadie Smith* 22), which ultimately reveals the inexorable connection between the utopian potential of its celebratory polyphony and the mystification of social determinants and the preservation of the status quo. The metaphysical uncertainty depicted through Archie and the deconstruction of the aforementioned political convictions, therefore, implies that "the only reasonable political position is one of antagonistic *disregard* for contemporary political culture" (Bewes 13). All the other characters and Archie represent Agnes Heller's formulation of postmodernism as "anything goes": other characters with their specific ideological and political convictions aim at challenging a single target (such as animal cruelty, religious bigotry, or racism) without a "single great target for collective and integrated rebellion", or alternatively, as in the case of Archie, the novel ends with the contentment that comes with an attitude that implies "let me not rebel against anything at all because I feel myself to be completely at ease" (139). That sense of ease is the element that characterizes *WT*'s utopian affirmation of life in contemporary Britain, which is inevitably predicated on masking social conflicts and a disregard for the political as the source of social contradictions.

Chapter Four

"Stuff is not enough": *Capital* and the Separation of Intimacy from Financial Worries as a Moral Resolution to Neoliberal Individualism

Introduction

> The change to their life had sunk in with him. It was sinking in with people everywhere, as it gradually dawned on them that hard times were moving in like a band of rain. He wished it had sunk in with Arabella. Roger had been waiting for a moment when she got it: when she looked around and realised what was happening. He had been hoping that a giant penny would drop, a light bulb would go on, Arabella would have a 'moment of clarity' and see that this just couldn't go on. Not only for economic reasons – for them of course but not only for them – but because this just wasn't enough to live by. You could not spend your entire span of life in thrall to the code of stuff. There was no code of stuff. Stuff was just stuff. You couldn't live by it or for it. Roger's new motto: stuff is not enough. For some months now his deepest wish had been for Arabella to look in the mirror and realise that she had to change. He wanted this more than he wanted his bosses at Pinker Lloyd to be publicly humiliated, more than he wanted his deputy Mark to go to prison, more than he wanted to win the lottery. She couldn't go on like this. (574-5)

In its final chapter, Lanchester's 2012 novel *Capital* focalizes on Roger, the investment banker who loses his job during the financial crisis of 2008. Roger seems to be at a crossroad where he hopes to resolve his despondency by recentralizing intimacy with his wife and children upon being disillusioned with financial affluence. The central premise of *Capital* is summarised in the above quotation for it indicates what Arabella, Roger's wife, fails at in comparison to what Roger has the hopes of achieving: the meaningful separation of intimacy and economic activity. As Roger experiences a drastic transformation, he appears in the last chapter as the epitome of hope against the apparently tedious, manipulative and merciless world of money. The moral lesson is clear: Arabella is unable to differentiate between economic activity, which manifests in her excessive spending behaviour; and intimacy, as demonstrated by her obliviousness to Roger and their kids. She is a convenient foil for the narrative to substantiate its moral lesson that is best represented in Roger's transformation. Roger desires Arabella to ascertain what he has learned and finally realize that intimacy and economic activity should not be conflated but kept separate as they are implied to contaminate each other. The focus on this separation is evident throughout the novel with all the other characters but it is succinctly represented in the above quotation and is telling as it happens at the end of the narrative, where such a narrative resolution can easily translate into a morality tale, or a "Faustian parable" (Di Bernardo 5).

*Capital'*s parable about successful separation of intimacy from financial worries is identifiable in all the different characters and plotlines the novel portrays, all of whom are somehow related to a street in London. Comprised of an omniscient narrator that employs focalisations and free indirect speech in its portrayal of seemingly unrelated characters in separate chapters, *Capital* presents a multitude of different protagonists, worldviews, plots and themes that converge at the end of the narrative to a certain extent. In order to do so, *Capital* directly and undoubtedly problematizes money as a symbolic and concrete object, the culture of finance, and neoliberal individualism by centralizing the Financial Crunch of 2007-8. The critical stance that the novel lucidly demonstrates is simultaneously hopeful in the ways in which it resolves the individual conflicts of each character. By creating a moral parable, *Capital* presents distinctive ways of seeing the world and their allegedly natural consequences. Through the analysis of how the novel comprehends money in

relation to human beings and the society, it becomes clear that the moral lesson of the story dictates the separation of economic activities from intimate relationships. In other words, the emancipatory potential and the utopian hope that is inherent in this parable appear through the analysis of *capital,* both as the capital city of the culture of finance and as the object itself in direct antagonism to intimacy. A loving family is indeed offered as a resolution to the conflicts of a neoliberal society as demonstrated by the comparative polyphony the novel employs.

Unlike *WT*, in which family is offered as the source of social problems rather than a resolution to them, family in *Capital* is offered as a psychological resolution to social conflicts with the help of a diverse set of intimacies.[28] *Capital* should be therefore interpreted in line with its implied resolution to individualism, namely, familialism. The analysis of familialism, however, appears in stark contrast to *Capital*`s surface polyphony and its emancipatory potential as family fails at responding to social problems due its exclusive nature. As such, familialism appears as the form-shaping and monological ideologeme of *Capital*, the analysis of which, in the second part, will reveal how this element challenges *Capital*'s critical rejection of a neoliberal society. Before scrutinising family in detail, however, I will first demonstrate how *Capital* appears as a critical response to neoliberalism, and why it is hopeful for prospective resolutions by examining its surface polyphony in the ways in which the dichotomy of financial worries and intimacy are negotiated with the help of multiple characters and plotlines. To this end, I will, first, explain the theoretical background of the separation between financial worries and intimacy, in other words, the hostile worlds theory; and second, demonstrate how the omniscient polyphony of *Capital* narrativizes this separation by identifying money as a social mediator in contrast to intimacy in the ways in which it portrays its diverse group of characters.

Part I: The Dystopian Public World of Money: *Capital* as a Symbolic Resolution to Neoliberal Financialization

[28] Unlike *White Teeth*, in which family is portrayed more as a class institution and hence from a sociological perspective, *Capital* comprehends family as a psychological concept. However, as the analysis of family in *Capital* will later demonstrate, *Capital*'s psychological focus does not necessarily exclude sociological analysis of the meanings and functions of family.

> It is a powerful ideology of our time that money is a single, interchangeable, absolutely impersonal instrument – the very essence of our rationalizing modern civilization. Money's "colorlessness," as Georg Simmel saw it at the turn of the twentieth century, repainted the modern world into an "evenly flat and gray tone." All meaningful nuances were stamped out by the new quantitative logic that asked only "how much," but not "what and how."
>
> Money, according to this conception, also destroys, necessarily replacing personal bonds with calculative instrumental ties, corrupting cultural meanings with materialist concerns. Indeed, from Karl Marx to Jürgen Habermas, from Georg Simmel to Robert Bellah, observers of commercialization in Western countries have thought they saw devastating consequences of money's irresistible spread: the inexorable homogenization and flattening of social ties. Conservatives have deplored the moral decay brought by prosperity while radicals have condemned capitalism's dehumanization, but both have seen the swelling cash nexus as the source of evil. (Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money* 1-2)

The Ideology of Money and the Hostile Worlds Theory

In line with Zelizer's argument, it should not be difficult to imagine, at least to a certain extent, British contemporaneity to be structured by the fear of the market interfering with non-financial spheres of life such as social ties or intimacy between people, which have been predominantly comprehended in direct opposition to the world of finance. Arguably, the fear manifests itself through the clear but crude belief in the possibility of comprehending the financial market and intimacy as exclusively hostile spheres. However, as Zelizer convincingly argues in *The Social Meaning of Money,* as well as in *The Purchase of Intimacy*, such a separation is indeed an untenable perspective, especially under neoliberalism.

The hostile worlds theory implies that "two incompatible forces clash and wound each other: economic activity—especially the use of money—degrades intimate relationships, while interpersonal intimacy makes economic activity inefficient" (Zelizer, *TPOI* 1). Zelizer, in opposition to Marx, Habermas, or Simmel, rejects the idea that money, or economic activities, can be separated from intimate relations in a meaningful way. Her argument is predicated upon her book-length study of how people, in addition to reshaping and creating nuances as to the meanings of money, consistently "incorporated money into personalized webs of friendship, family relations, interactions with authorities, and forays through shops and businesses" (*TSMOM* 2).

In *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Zelizer further argues and demonstrates that in several instances such as "when someone close to us fails to meet important economic obligations" or when we "complain about proposals to cut funding for day-care centers" we breach the alleged border between intimacy and economic activity (*TPOI* 1). She then rightfully concludes that "routine social life makes us all experts in the purchase of intimacy" (*TPOI* 1), which in turn necessitates to challenge the hostile worlds theory as an ideological discourse. Consequently, this thesis follows Zelizer's argument that the clear and meaningful separation of economic activity and intimacy is not tenable but rather that economic activity and intimacy complement each other in several ways.

Likewise, Eva Illouz's book *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* focuses specifically on romance and convincingly demonstrates how romance has intertwined with consumerism throughout the 20th Century. Similar to Zelizer, Illouz challenges the conception that romance, as a form of intimacy, can be comprehended separately from and in opposition to capitalism. To this end, she illustrates how "romantic love is a collective arena within which the social divisions and the cultural contradictions of capitalism are played out" (2), thereby emphasizing the unfeasibility of hostile worlds theory. For Illouz, unlike Zelizer who has a broader focus on social relations as forms of intimacy, the discourse of romantic love should be comprehended as a form of utopia in the specific sense of providing one with a safe and fulfilling space in contrast to the apparently dreaded social life. She reveals how romantic love should be comprehended as "an intimate, indispensable part of the democratic ideal of affluence", which "has accompanied the emergence of the mass market, thereby offering a collective utopia cutting across and transcending social divisions" (2). *Capital* employs this conception of hostile worlds theory to represent familial intimacy as a utopian potentiality. Yet, this thesis follows Illouz's assertion that romantic love, in its capacity as a constitutive and fundamental element of familial intimacy, should be comprehended in relation to and as part of the neoliberal discourse, not as a separate sphere that exists in direct opposition to economic activity. It follows then to remember Marshall Sahlin's argument that "in Western culture the economy is the main site of symbolic production" (211) and thus economy itself cannot be seen as an abstract or symbolic entity in the way *Capital* envisions it in its focus on hostile worlds theory.

Capital as a Narrative of the Hostile Worlds Theory

It is therefore not a coincidence that *Capital*, as demonstrated by the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, can undoubtedly be comprehended, to a great extent, as the narrativization of the 'hostile worlds' theory that envisages a direct opposition and incompatibility between intimacy and financial worries. By creating a narrative that exemplifies the alleged success or failure of this separation, *Capital* conceives the probability of a sphere of life that is resistant to or separate from neoliberalization. The contradiction between *Capital's* reliance on the hostile worlds theory and the everyday reality of financial worries becoming integral to intimate relationships should therefore be comprehended as the source through which *Capital* aims to resolve the contradictions of neoliberal financialization. In other words, *Capital* employs the hostile worlds theory to alleviate the problems of neoliberalism and offer a symbolic resolution to its social conflicts. The moral narrative of *Capital* implies that the successful separation of the 'calculating' and 'inhumane' world of finance from the 'genuine' and 'endearing' world of intimacy can manifest itself in successful familialization, which, in turn, can function as a refuge in contrast to the bleak and calculating world of capitalism. The way that *Capital* achieves this quality is predicated upon its polyphonic form. By producing a narrative in which the omniscient polyphony is employed to generate a moral narrative of comparisons and contrasts, *Capital* offers a utopian vision as to how individuals could escape the social problems of neoliberalism. It is therefore vital to first comprehend why and how *Capital* can be conceived as a polyphonic novel, especially in the context of neoliberalism.

Capital as a Paradigmatic Polyphonic Novel

John Lanchester`s *Capital* is similar to *White Teeth* in the ways in which it appears as a paradigmatic polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction[29] in terms of its

[29] It should be noted that *Capital* demonstrates substantial similarities to Sebastian Faulks' 2009 novel *A Week in December* in that they both depict a diverse group of characters from London in a similar polyphonic form. Both novels, for instance, have similar characters such as "the obligatory terrorist" and "the greedy banker" in their depiction of diversity. Faulks' narrative, however, does not engage with neoliberalism or the financial crises in the same way *Capital* does: while *Capital* centralizes neoliberalism and the financial crises as a central social problem to which it also offers its own resolutions, *A Week in December* psychologizes these issues and reduces them to individual volition, as well as having a didactic language that contradicts its

thematic variety, structural polyphony and engagement with neoliberalism. Comparable to the thematic polyphony in *WT*, *Capital* observes and explores the diversity and multiplicity of the city. It is expansive in its selection of identities and stories, and creates a snippet of a panoramic polyphony from different social classes, ethnicities, nations and genders. Both novels are attempts at mapping the city life and the place of its inhabitants in a vast system by the use of a polyphonic narrative structure that puts equal emphasis on its carefully selected characters and their worldviews. Comparably, *Capital* is a paradigmatic polyphonic novel because of prioritizing individual voices while also ultimately creating a panoramic view of a selected collective that culminates into a "choral story involving the entwined lives of the characters" (Bernard, "Recent British Fiction" 5).

In addition to its variety of identities and plotlines, *Capital* should be comprehended as a structurally polyphonic novel. Comprising four parts and 107 individual chapters and a prologue, *Capital* focalizes on a select protagonist on each chapter with the exception of transforming into a panoramic narrative in few chapters. The portrayal of individual chapters includes aesthetic choices such as "formal realism, personalisation and moralisation" (Korte 493). More significantly, however, dramatic irony is central to the depiction of diverse characters: each character's plotline is presented to the reader with a comparative tone which grants more knowledge to the reader in terms of how the apparently unrelated characters are interconnected with each other. Each character's plot can be read as a single narrative in its own right. Yet, *Capital* functions as a novel rather than a collection of unrelated individual stories more because of its omniscient polyphonic structure than the existence of organic relations among the characters in the narrative. In other words, *Capital* connects and unifies its diverse content through an analogous polyphonic form.

Relatedly, *Capital's* engagement with neoliberalism cannot be comprehended separately from its thematic and structural polyphony. Not only *Capital* problematizes the focus on individualism by its polyphony of individual plot lines, it also strives to connect each individual story by centralizing the culture of finance as a common theme. The primacy of money as the tool that is represented to create, define and shape the relationships

own polyphony. Nevertheless, the existence of two novels with such fundamental similarities emphasizes the fact that Lanchester's novel should be comprehended as a paradigmatic polyphonic novel.

between different characters functions as this single thematic tool that binds different story lines. Consequently, *Capital* emerges as a direct response to neoliberalism due to its focus on money both as the concrete object and as a symbolic construct that appears as a substantial part of the social whole. Additionally, *Capital* negotiates neoliberalism in the ways in which it replicates and critically observes the neoliberal tenet of taking the free market as the ultimate organizing principle in a given society. *Capital*'s polyphony with consistent dramatic irony has the literary function of rendering this perspective comprehensible. Moreover, and unlike *WT* or other novels in this study, *Capital* problematizes neoliberal individualism more directly by narrativizing the financial crunch of 2007-2008.

Omniscient Polyphony as a Comparative Mediatory Tool to Negotiate Social Problems

While problematizing neoliberalism with a polyphonic narrative, *Capital* distinguishes itself by proposing a distinctive symbolic resolution to neoliberal individualism, or the social problems that stem from it. Indeed, the unified polyphony of *Capital* represents "a desire for a Lukácsian totality, a longing to resist the individualism that the 'age of fracture' has brought about" (Marsh et al. 214). Further, *Capital* can be identified as part of a new literary trend that attempts to comprehend the complex intricacy of the global financial system by its polyphonic structure. Indeed, *Capital* can be argued "to do the work of translation between that thing called financialization and the daily grind of the global economy, or, if not, to at least ironize our ability to do so" (Gajarawala 11).

More specifically, *Capital* responds to neoliberalism critically by offering a moral narrative that attempts to alleviate the social conflicts of a neoliberal society. By employing an omniscient polyphony in order to transcend the individual knowledge of any given character in the novel, *Capital* creates analogous narratives in which individuals are represented to fail or succeed at the task of separating intimacy from financial activities. In other words, by exposing how the primacy of money fails some individuals in contrast to unveiling how the rejection of it enables some individuals to experience some form of emancipation, *Capital*'s omniscient polyphony attempts to resolve the primacy and hegemony of the culture of finance, which it narrativizes through the object of money. The

polyphonic structure, therefore, acquires the function of mediating between individual experiences of the characters and the social whole in order to disseminate this message.

As a result, *Capital* envisions limiting the capacity of money in the ways in which it can affect intimate relations. It does so in order to imagine a replacement of the forms of social relations, which are shaped and informed by money, with certain human needs and relations such as love, solidarity, community, affection, all of which are implied to be concentrated in the heterosexual and reproductive bonding that is represented in the nuclear family. In doing so, *Capital* seems to confirm the argument that "[l]iterature not only imagines and creates worlds, but also works to suture the gaps in the organization of the social […] the literary is not only a source of understanding of the cultural life of money, but has also contributed to shaping it" (Gil 7). It is in this sense that *Capital* has already been identified as a novel that "aims to make its readers understand and evaluate the world in which they live" (Korte 500), which becomes comprehensible through the analysis of money as a social mediator in the narrative.

An Imagined Separation: Money as a Social Mediator in *Capital*

In order to comprehend the application of the hostile worlds theory in the narrative, it is first necessary to look at the ways in which *Capital* structures its plot by conceiving money as a primary mediator between people, the proper use of which is implied to either ameliorate or exacerbate the social problems of neoliberal individualism. Lanchester's novel focuses on a street in the south of London, Pepys Road, centralizing the financial crisis of 2008 both as an explicit theme and as background to the depiction of a carefully selected assortment of individuals. The narrative focuses on the lives of the property owners on Pepys Road as well as the people who are in one way or another related to the people living in that street. However, the nature of these relations is consistently implied to be informed by the single element of money. Pepys Road, therefore, can easily be interpreted as the place where the culture of finance and the role of money as a social mediator crystallize to the extent of framing the rest of the narrative.

In a hasty summary, the narrator in the prologue informs the reader that every resident on Pepys Road at the time of the narrative (2007) was by "global and maybe even by local standards, rich" (4). The prologue is crucial in framing the culture of finance and

the primacy of money as mediator by generating the contrast between the property owners on Pepys Road and people who provide some sort of service to them. What is more, it is suggested that the name Pepys is hardly a coincidence because of its reference to Samuel Pepys, a 17th Century diarist, who had written about money and its power in shaping social relationships (Latham and Matthews).

More crucially, the prologue establishes the fact that the characters in the novel are related to one another through the medium of money but not through direct social relationships. Indeed, *Capital* depicts "fragmentation: we meet isolated individuals in separate sections of the novel and they do not interact" (Pope 170). The residents of Pepys Road are not neighbours in the traditional sense but property owners in the same street who happen to share only the same geographical and temporal position. The people who provide some sort of service to the residents do not have immediate or complex relations to the residents of the street, either. They are hired, or brought into the narrative by the use of money. The third groups of characters, who do not own a property on Pepys Road and who do not provide any service to them, are not dissimilar either. Their function is more to provide the antagonism to the 'winners' of the Pepys Road. In a sense, this categorization validates Di Bernardo's suggestion that *Capital's* characters should be comprehended as "Lukácsian 'typical characters' (Lukács, 1962, p.110), characters which represent specific social statuses" (8). It is consequently possible to perceive these three most prominent character clusters as a network of typical characters whose social statuses are mediated through money. In other words, the characters in the narrative are portrayed to relate to each other more through the medium of money by exchanging goods and services than exercising supposedly non-financial relationships. The prologue emphasises this distinction by reducing people to brand names or service providers:

> As the houses had got more expensive, it was as if they had come alive, and had wishes and needs of their own. Vans from Berry Brothers and Rudd brought wine; there were two or three different vans of dog-walkers; there were florists, Amazon parcels, personal trainers, cleaners, plumbers, yoga teachers, and all day long, all of them going up to the houses like supplicants and then being swallowed up by them. There was laundry, there was dry-cleaning, there were FedEx and UPS, there were dog beds, printer ribbons, garden chairs, vintage film posters, same-day DVD purchases, eBay coups, eBay whims and impulse buys, mail-order bicycles. People came to the houses to beg and to sell things (towels for the homeless, utility company salesmen). The tradesmen and trainers and craftsmen disappeared into the

> buildings and came out when they were finished. The houses were now like people, and rich people at that, imperious, with needs of their own that they were not shy about having serviced. (6)

The houses on Pepys Road are clearly anthropomorphised and their financial value, in relation to other financial value markers such as the brands mentioned above, is personified to the extent of becoming characters in their own right. The personification of the houses, as a central trope, are the primary elements that structure the life of people who are in any way related to that street by defining and affecting the interactions between otherwise unrelated people. Indeed, the personification of the houses demonstrates how human relationships are portrayed through material objects, or in other words, how human interactions are fetishized through the stylistic trope of personification. Fetishisation here denotes "an overdetermination of [the houses'] social value through a discursive negotiation of the capacities of objects that stimulates fantasy and desire for them" (Dant 495). This process demonstrates how the houses, products and services are "not merely consumed (exchanged and used) but in addition [they] can be enjoyed at the level of imagination (fantasy and desire)" (ibid. 512).

It is important to note that the prologue sets up the central mystery of the narrative by portraying a yet unknown character filming the houses on Pepys Road, who then later sends mysterious postcards to the residents with a photograph of their house and the accompanying sentence "We Want What You Have" (14). Although they do not have a substantial force in the narrative and how the characters interact with each other, the postcards emphasize further the fetishization of the houses as objects through which human relationships are understood. It is indeed the houses that are suggested to connect the unrelated characters in the narrative. The houses as such are clearly the crystallization of the idea of the culture of finance and money as the supreme mediator because of its capacity of informing and organizing the relationships between the characters in the narrative. Or in other words, it is money as a social mediator that relates different individual story lines in *Capital,* not the direct, immediate or complex social interactions. The success of such a narrative manoeuvre is predicated upon the hostile world theory, as explained above. Relatedly, *Capital,* to a certain extent, narrativizes the belief "that money is only a meaningless token of no intrinsic worth" while simultaneously depicting the ways in which people "act as if it has a holy value" (Fisher 13). Based on Žižek's *The Sublime Object of*

Ideology, Mark Fisher maintains that this behaviour is predicated on "the prior disavowal - we are able to fetishize money in our actions only because we have already taken an ironic distance towards money in our heads" (ibid.). For Žižek, this contradictory behaviour is central to the capitalist ideology (29-30), thereby revealing *Capital*'s engagement with neoliberalism clearly through the relationship between the postcard and houses because the postcard challenges this ironic distance.

Yet, it is necessary to identify the social implications and literary representations of the hostile worlds theory in the narrative, which manifests itself in the portrayal of money as an invasive and powerful social mediator while denying the fact that social relations can also have financial activities interconnected to them. The focus on money as the element that connects different plot lines is crucial because it also has the function to compare and contrast the allegedly separate financial relations and non-financial interactions. In order to comprehend to what extent *Capital* relies on the 'imagined' separation of money and intimacy, it is necessary first to look at how these three character clusters are portrayed.

As mentioned above, the novel has three important characterization styles that demonstrate the fetishization of the houses: the property owners, the people who provide some sort of service to the property owners, the competition to the property owners. This does not in any way mean that each character group has the same or similar type of characters. On the contrary, the characters are portrayed to be dissimilar to one another but what they have in common is reduced to their relationship to the expensive houses on Pepys Road.

The Property Owners of Pepys Road

The analysis of the character groups in *Capital* reveals the implication that the relationships and indeed the characters themselves can be defined predominantly in relation to money, which testifies to its insistence on delineating money as a social mediator. The first group of characters in *Capital* is the property owners on Pepys Road. These are Petunia Howe, an elderly widow; Roger Yount, a highly paid investment banker and his shopaholic wife, Arabella; the Kamal family, a Pakistani immigrant family who run a shop and live above it on the same street; and Mickey Lipton-Miller, a lawyer working for the football

club who lets Freddy Kamo, a football prodigy imported from Senegal, and his father stay, at his house temporarily on Pepys Road.

The property owners, just like the rest of the characters, are defined less through any identity markers such as nationality, religion or class than how much money they earn. Ethnic, national or religious diversity in such a setting is neither necessary nor detrimental because supposedly the City is a place "where nobody cared what your accent was or where you came from as long as you showed you were up for it and made money for your employer" (16). What people care more, it is implied, is how much money an individual can make. Money, therefore, acquires the distinct role of defining each individual's place in the society and how individuals are related to each other even though it, unrealistically, levels all social markers. The crude description of the contemporary world, which is implied to be shaped predominantly by money, is the manifestation of hostile worlds theory. The narrative therefore posits a clear emphasis on this element by constantly describing how much money each character earns or spends and how, in total, this affects their lives. Roger Yount, for example, has a "basic pay of £150,000" which for Arabella is simply 'frock money' but not even enough "for his two mortgages" (19).

The narrative, as a result, reads frequently like a record of the financial report of the character at focus. As also noted by Perkin, the novel "is saturated with references to money, in the form of salaries and wages, prices of works of art, values of property in desirable locations in London or elsewhere in England, or the prices of clothes, meals, and luxury items such as individually crafted shotguns" (107). This is most clear with the Younts. For instance, the "house in Pepys Road was double-fronted and had cost £2,500,000" (19) or "the Younts' work on their house had cost about £650,000" (20), or another property "had become theirs for a cool £1,000,000. Renovation and general tarting up had cost £250,000" (21) or "The going rate for the sort of villa they had in mind seemed to be £10,000 a week" (ibid.). There were of course other costs too:

> the nanny was £20,000 a year out of net income – more like £35,000 [...] Sheila the weekend nanny was another £200 a time, adding up to about £9,000 [...] Arabella's BMW M3 'for the shops' had been £55,000 and the Lexus S400, the principal family car [...] was £75,000. [...] Other things: £2,000 a month on clothes, about the same on house stuff (shared between the two homes, obviously), tax bill of about £250,000 from last year, [...] £10,000 for their annual summer party. (22)

Perhaps, it is not surprising that the narrative offers a detailed financial account of the Yount family for Roger Yount is an investment banker. However, the same focus is discernible throughout the novel with other characters, albeit in different forms and manifestations. Ahmad Kamal, for example, is represented in his focus on material possession although his focus is less clearly connected to an attachment to money: Ahmad

> loved his shop, loved the profusion of it, the sheer amount of stuff in the narrow space and the sense of security it gave him – [...] the crazy proliferation of print, the dozens of types of industrially manufactured sweets and chocolates, the baked beans and white bread and Marmite and Pot Noodles [...], and the bin-liners and tinfoil and toothpaste and batteries [...] and razor blades and painkillers and the 'No Junk Mail' stickers [...], and the fridge full of soft drinks and the adjacent fridge of alcohol, [...] and the credit card machine [...] – it all felt snug and cosy and safe, his very own space, and never more so than first thing in the morning when the shop was his alone. *Mine, he thought, all mine* [emphasis added]. (30)

Ahmad Kamal is, however, an immigrant who has a slightly, if not drastically, dissimilar social status than a white British individual and, therefore, possibly a distinctive relation to money. The narrative, however, insists on levelling characters in order to substantiate its hostile worlds theory; and represents Kamal as another character who is predominantly portrayed with the help of money relations. Similarly, another property owner from Pepys Road, Mickey with "a BlackBerry held to his right ear, an iPhone vibrating in his left jacket pocket" (55) is described as "fluent in money, who had grown up wanting to make money and thought that everything about making shedloads of money was fine, was admirable, was a high and noble goal" (57).

Petunia is perhaps the only property owner who is not portrayed as someone who is fixated on money as much as others. The absence of money as a primary topic for Petunia is, however, telling because she represents an older era. She is "the last person to have been born in the street and still be resident there" whose narrative will close with her voluntary death by rejecting treatment (11). Nonetheless, Petunia's life, it is implied, is also narrated through a focus on money in contrast to intimacy. Her daughter, for example, "set up a delivery of basics for her, [...] Petunia would much, much rather have had Mary, or Mary's son Graham who lived in London, come and do her shopping with her, and give her some help in person; but that option hadn't been offered" (13). Or the fact that it was Petunia's late husband who was outraged "when the subject was money" (65) aims to indicate to what extent Petunia's life is also narrativized through the object of money. Ironically, these

examples express evidently how even familial ties and interactions are translated into financial transactions easily, even though the narrative consistently strives to create a clear separation between the two.

It is not coincidental that the descriptions and examples above focus more on what money means for each character. The property owners of Pepys Road are not in any meaningful way related one another other than owning properties on the same street. Their connection to one another is mediated through money just like the rest of the characters in the novel. There are of course instances where supposedly purely non-financial relations are introduced and portrayed; however, they take up a much smaller space in the narrative. More crucially, however, they function as the contrast to money relations and to emphasize the hostile worlds theory that the novel relies on. When Petunia, for instance, faints in the Kamal shop, Ahmed helps her; and the narrative clarifies that Ahmed knows her personally and is willing and happy to help her. The whole scene, however, is represented with a certain level of alienation –because of the TV references– which can be comprehended in its capacity to emphasize to what extent the hostile world of finance can shape the reader's perception as well as the narrator's:

> On the CCTV camera underneath the till, Ahmed and Mrs Howe looked strange, like something out of a Crimewatch reconstruction: the Asian man crouched on the floor next to the old white lady, neither of them moving. If it had been a film you would have soon tired of it. (48)

On top of the disassociation, the narrative uses this occasion to emphasize the difference between financial and non-financial interactions: "For the next quarter of an hour Ahmed sat talking to the old lady while Shahid served three customers with a Daily Mirror, an Oyster top-up, and five scratchcards respectively" (48). The customers come and go, finalizing their transactions while Ahmed leaves work aside and exercises an unselfish and a 'non-financial' act. This comparison in the novel has the implication to emphasize the dichotomy between financial and non-financial interactions, revealing the prominence of the former and the rarity of the second.

The Service Providers of Pepys Road

The focus on money as the intermediary tool extends to other characters that do not own a property on Pepys Road. This second set of characters is brought into Pepys Road

and into the lives of property owners through money relations. They are included through their relationships to either the houses on the street or their relationships to the owners, which mostly manifests itself in the form of providing some sort of service to the inhabitants of Pepys Road, such as the traffic warden Quentina Mkfesi, a well-educated Zimbabwean asylum seeker who is working illegally; Zbigniew, a Polish immigrant builder, and Matya, a Hungarian immigrant who works as a nanny for the Younts.

The narrative, however, is consistent in terms of describing how money is affecting each individual's life in order to further emphasize its way of seeing the world through the hostile worlds theory. Quentina, for example, as a traffic warden "was generating revenue of £375,000 per annum. In return for that she was, in theory, paid £12,000, with four weeks' paid holiday and no health or pension benefits" (52). Similarly, Zbigniew is described as having the plan "to make enough money in London to go into the lift-maintenance business with his father" (75). Matya is also described analogously: "She wanted to be happy and loved and she also wanted to marry a rich man and she thought she would be more likely to find one in London than anywhere else" (240). As well as portraying these characters and their relationships to money, the narrative emphasizes interconnecting the first set of characters with this second set purely through transactional terms with the help of the mediatory tool of money. It is money itself that unites these characters and comprehends them as a collective in the narrative. Omniscient polyphony is the structural tool that enables the revelation of this element.

The Competitive Antagonists of Property Owners

The force and influence of money, and thereby the separation of finance and intimacy, is further extended with a third set of characters by portraying other London characters who have a distinctive sort of connection to the Pepys Road characters rather than providing some form of service. The third set includes characters that are, in one way or another, in competition with someone. Roger Yount's deputy, Mark, for example, from the investment bank who schemes and dreams of taking Roger's place, is at one point described as wearing a "£1,500 suit with a very expensive shirt and even more expensive trainers" (193). But more crucially, Mark is the competition to Roger. He sees himself as

> stuck in a job in which his abilities were not acknowledged, working for a boss who, in Mark's considered view, was a throwback or hangover from how things used to be, a pointlessly tall, contentlessly smooth public-school twat, a bluffer and chancer and lightweight, doing a job which Mark could do a thousand times better. (194)

It is important to note that this information, as much as the rest, is only available to the reader, especially not to Roger, which has the function of emphasizing the comparison and contrast between characters in the narrative.

The second example of competition is the young artist assistant Parker French, who feels a strong rivalry against the famous artist Smitty, Petunia Howe's grandson. For Smitty, Parker is reduced to an object because the "more he had to notice his assistants as people, the less well they were doing their job" (222). Upon being fired by Smitty, Parker focuses his energy to obliterate Smitty's reputation, in ways that are similar to Mark's efforts to replace Roger. Once again, this information is only available to the reader at the beginning: "If Parker had known what Smitty thought of him, he would have been shocked and upset" (222). Both Mark's and Parker's conspiracies are revealed to the characters at the end. However, until the moment that they are revealed, the knowledge granted to the reader emphasizes the competitive nature of the relationships these characters form. Therefore, the third set takes competitiveness as the element that links these characters and thereby further supports the novel's claim of the separation of the calculating, cold and financially-driven acts from intimate and genuine interactions.

There are, of course, other types of relationships depicted in the novel but the three main relationship patterns described above are telling in the way in which *Capital* perceives London as a thoroughly neoliberal territory, even though in a remarkably reductive manner. In other words, the suggested relationship patterns, property ownership, providing some type of service to property owners and competitiveness to the 'winners,' are hallmarks of a truly neoliberal society as neoliberalism prioritizes individual ownership, entrepreneurialism and competition under the general perspective of taking the financial market as the guiding principle of structuring the society.

The implication in the narrative is that money, as the direct tool of this ideology, appears as the ultimate mediator between people. It shapes, structures and informs how and in which ways people interact with each other. However, it is not only money that affects the shape of relationships. It is also the goal to attain more in order to gain individual benefit

and have an advantageous position in this system that informs social totality. In a free market system where profit is prioritized more than any other shared goal or value, or in a society where free market is expected to organize the social totality, individualism or in other words a focus on individual benefit takes precedence. By imagining a world where money functions as a leveller of social relations and by replicating the central tenets of neoliberalism, *Capital* simultaneously strives to transcend this perspective by insisting on the alleged purity of intimate relations that are resistant to economic activity through its omniscient polyphony.

Capital as a Morality Narrative

Capital creates a panoramic depiction of a certain collective as explained above. By portraying how each and every person is related to one another through money relations, *Capital* maps the position of the individual in a vast system that, by virtue of being a vast system, escapes definition for the characters themselves in the narrative. The panoramic perspective and the idea of a collective becomes available as a concept only to the reader as it is implicitly and explicitly stated by the narrative that the characters do not have access to the information how their lives are related to one another and why certain actions take place in the first place.

It is of course not only money that affects these characters. For example, it is purely chance that Quentina is eventually denied asylum because the "allocation of judge for an asylum applicant was crucial. So although Quentina Mkfesi didn't know it, her entire future – the next few years of it anyway – hung on the identity of which of two members of HM Government's immigration and asylum service would be assigned to deal with her case" (483-4). However, this type of reasoning or causality does not appear to be central in the narrative. More crucially, such instances of non-financial relations or causalities function to deepen the comparison and contrast between the characters whose lives acquire a certain shape because of the intermediary role of money.

Capital achieves this effect through an omniscient polyphonic narrative structure that relies on dramatic irony. It not only depicts a diverse group of people but also has access to the psychology and mental processes of each character without any limitation. The effect is that the reader awakens to the intricate web of social relationships between people in the narrative to the extent of drawing a causal map of why and how the plot

developments occur. Consequently, the omniscient polyphony of *Capital* can be interpreted as a symbolic resolution to the so-called problem of the primacy of money as a social mediator and the fragmentation that is instigated by neoliberal individualism as it offers a collective perspective into a seemingly unrelated group of people by revealing causalities and comparisons, and ultimately offering certain moral lessons, which are based on the hostile worlds theory.

The function of the omniscient polyphony in *Capital* is primarily creating a collective narrative in order to analyse the structure of a given social group. Or as put by another scholar, "*Capital* examines how the structure of the city affects the lives of its inhabitants" (Shaw 2). By accessing each individual's psychology and mental processes, *Capital* centralizes the comparison of dissimilar ways of seeing the world, or in other words different worldviews. The novel can therefore be comprehended as an exercise in which the narrative structure "relies on an omniscient point of view that constantly pits one character's situation against the others' thus producing powerful ironical counterpoints" (Bernard, "Writing Capital" 148). As each plot line develops and reaches a resolution, the final scenes imply a seemingly detached moral judgement on each person's worldview by the overall comparison that is generated through omniscient polyphony. Some characters' plotlines end somewhat tragically, as in the case of Roger, the banker, because of losing his job, selling his house, and feeling completely dissatisfied with his marriage. Roger, after saying goodbye to the "most expensive and most significant thing [the house on Pepys Road] he had ever owned" (576), is left repeating, "I can change, I can change, I promise I can change change change" (577). Roger, then, can be seen as representative of a certain attitude "of the whole society" in the way in which he is first "seduced by the prospect of quick and easy enrichment and subsequently compelled to pay a high price for it" (Di Bernardo 4).

Others, on the other hand, reflect a sense of purpose and emancipatory potential such as the polish builder Zbigniew, whose decision to return £500,000 back to its rightful owner after coincidentally finding it during a construction work, and whose attachment to Matya signals an emancipatory possibility that can transcend money relations. Zbigniew's choice to return the money he has found in Petunia's flat to Petunia's daughter is implied to instigate a striking contrast to how Roger feels:

> The Sunday on which Zbigniew had taken the money and given it back to Mrs Leatherby had turned into the best day of his life. [...] The main reason was that when he had got back to the train station and found Matya sitting outside the café, he had said, 'What shall we do now?' and she had shrugged and said, 'Let's go to bed.' For a moment he had thought he was undergoing an aural hallucination. But the look she gave him told him he wasn't. That was the single happiest and best and most surprising moment of his entire life to date. (550)

One can argue that Zbigniew is jovial as a result of choosing the 'honourable' thing to do. However, when we comprehend the role of Matya, it becomes clear that the best day of Zbigniew's life relates more to the idyllic bonding he seems sure to have created with Matya. This idyllic happiness of Zbigniew and Matya quickly transforms into their search for a flat, which indicates that they have been able to form a satisfying and rewarding bond and thereby successfully separate intimacy from financial activities.

The contrast to Roger and Arabella is almost comical and clearly satirical. For them, sex is implied to be some sort of an exchange commodity that lacks any sense of emotional fulfilment. On Roger's mind, sex emerges right after one of his daydreams about acquiring more money: "A quarter of the way to ten million pounds. He and Arabella might even have sex!" (138); while for Arabella it is not dissimilar, either: "They might even have sex. When it was a holiday Arabella sometimes let him." (155).

For Zbigniew and Matya, sex offers something else. The narrative adds that "[i]t would be an exaggeration to say that they [Zbigniew and Matya] had been in bed ever since. But it wouldn't be all that much of an exaggeration" (550). The significance of this bond, however, needs to be explored further because of creating a dichotomy between the allegedly individualistic and selfish money relations and collaborative, loving, human interactions. For Zbigniew and Matya, the individualistic and bleak outside world is less relevant and fearsome now, as they seem to have created their personal private haven. The text does not employ successful romantic attachment as the only way through which it disseminates this message. The narrative resolutions of these unrelated characters create extensive possibilities for the reader to compare and contrast the worldviews of each character and how they end up at the end of the narrative, culminating into *Capital'*s constitutive moral lesson as a narrative about neoliberalism. It is worth remembering again that Matya, for instance, after Zbigniew returns the money to Mary, states, "let's go to bed"

(550), emphasizing once again that the rejection of financial worries and its separation from intimacy would be rewarded with emotional fulfilment.

Perhaps, this comparative stance is the very reason why for some reviewers *Capital* reads "less as a novel than as a series of diary entries by thoughtful characters whose lives, together, gave me a picture of contemporary London" (Kois). But more crucially, *Capital*'s omniscient polyphony, by "[e]xploring the various ways in which money flows through London and the lives of the people who pass through it and are affected by it," suggests moral messages out of comparisons (Shaw 6). One clear implication of this comparison is the final happiness of the characters that are successful at choosing to establish non-financial and non-competitive human relationships.

The reader, faced with this comparison and the overall knowledge that comes with an omniscient polyphonic narrative, becomes the target of a certain type of message. Put simply, and clearly reductively, money, competition and individual benefit do not necessarily translate into the individual feeling satisfied or happy with their life. Or in other words, self-realization and life satisfaction are only possible when individuals are able to differentiate between financial transactions and intimate relations. However, as discussed above, such a separation is not meaningfully tenable. It is therefore possible to comprehend *Capital's* use of this narrative element as a symbolic resolution to some of the problems of neoliberalism.

On the other hand, it is necessary to analyse the implied conclusion of the separation of the market and social ties. The omniscient polyphony of *Capital* hints at the possibility of salvation for the characters while indirectly replicating another Thatcherite and neoliberal tenet: namely, the primacy of family as the nucleus of society and a place where the individual finds refuge and collaboration and hence a larger meaning and a shared goal rather than being limited by the utter helplessness of individualism in the outside world that is predicated upon an unsuccessful separation of money relations from intimate ties. In other words, the hostile worlds theory manifests itself in the crude separation and opposition between the utopian domestic life of intimacy and the dystopian public world of money. Therefore, as the manifestation of the utopian domestic life, family, or familialism, works as an implied resolution to the bleak world of neoliberalism. Family, as the suggested binary opposition to the outside world, needs further interpretation in relation

to individualism in order to unmask its characteristic as a monologic form-shaping ideology.

Part II: The Utopian Domestic World of Intimacy: Familialism as a Social Corrective

As explained above, the main premise of *Capital* as a moral narrative is predicated on developing the skill to separate intimacy from financial worries in order to avoid the bleak, calculating and inhumane public world of money. As also mentioned, such a separation itself is a form of ideology and an untenable perspective about social life as people are aware in the ways in which financial calculations merge with non-financial worries reasonably frequently. Nevertheless, *Capital* envisions a narrative where characters are compared to each other in their capacity to make this separation: the successful is rewarded while the unsuccessful is socially ostracized or depicted in fundamentally debilitating states. It is therefore necessary to do a close reading of the type of intimacy that *Capital* posits to exist in direct contrast to the cold and heartless, calculating world of financial worries under neoliberalism.

Family as the Only Viable Form of Intimacy

It is a curious case that *Capital* is very strict in its definition of intimacy or the possible social ties or interactions that can counteract a competitive and neoliberal world. Indeed, *Capital* limits its premise to the dichotomy between greed and competition for money, and the intimacy of selfless and loving family. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse what family means, represents and ultimately reveals in the analysis of the novel especially in relation to its obvious criticism of a merciless neoliberal world.

If *Capital* implies family as a refuge from the outside world, a world that is rendered austere and unforgiving, devoid of satisfaction and belonging as a result of money being the supreme mediator and hence the greed that accompanies it, family, then, must denote a different connotation than is assumed. If money as a primary mediator could be comprehended as an ideology, family should also acquire the same status to the extent that it can challenge the former. Unlike, for instance, Christopher Lasch, who, in *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged*, argues that the separation of family from outside influences is necessary, based on his rejection of comprehending the ideological meanings

of family or familialism which replicates the hostile world theory, this study comprehends family not simply as a social institution but more as an ideology. This is because, as Melinda Cooper, in *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism,* convincingly demonstrates, "neoliberal economists and legal theorists wish to reestablish the private family as the primary source of economic security and a comprehensive alternative to the welfare state" (9). Therefore, familism and familialism (used interchangeably) are employed here to comprehend and explore the ideological side of family in relation to neoliberalism. In order to clarify this perspective, however, we need to define and contextualize what family here means and how a certain definition of it has acquired the status of a hegemonic and normative ideology.

The Histories of *the Family*

Family is an elusive word. As irrelevant as they may be to an academic analysis, dictionary definitions are nonetheless helpful as they help to extend the focus of interpretation to include the diluted and commonly held assumptions about the concept. Some of the OED definitions of family could therefore help to overcome its elusiveness. Family is: (1) “A group consisting of parents and children living together in a household”, (2) “A group of people related to one another by blood or marriage”, (3) “The children of a person or couple”, (4) “All the descendants of a common ancestor” (“family”). These are the most relevant definitions that are found in the OED and as such they help us more in understanding the ambiguity of the term than the meaning thereof. Family, then, is a type of bond, a type of group or collective whose bonding relies on blood or marriage.

The first definition notes “living together in a household” but it is evident that this quality is not decisive in defining the term. There are families whose members live in different households. Similarly, as many people would argue, a family does not necessarily include children. The second definition points at blood and marriage in terms of how the members of a family are related, but again one could argue that there are families where parents are not married or where the children are not the biological descendants of the parents. The third definition, reflecting contemporary social and historical changes, uses gender-neutral nouns and acknowledges the existence of single parents. The fourth one, perhaps the least relevant definition here, shows to what extent the meaning of family is

stretched in terms of describing a certain group. It gets even more unclear when we add that etymologically the word family is derived from the Latin word 'famulus' meaning 'servant', 'familia' as 'household servants' (Weekley 547). These definitions naturally fail to give a conclusive and expansive definition of the term. In doing so, however, they hint at why family has acquired an ideological status as well as exhibiting the concept's historically determined meanings rather than its claim to universality. What is missing, however, in these definitions is the idea of a standard or average family against which all these definitions are reformulated and rewritten. It is thus necessary to identify what this "average family" refers to.

Raymond Williams' *Keywords* acknowledges the ambiguity surrounding the term by describing its social history. Williams focuses on the adjective version, 'familiar', noting that its appearance in English precedes the noun derived from *famulus* around the 15th Century (131). The emphasis on familiar is vital because it indicates that the meanings of familiar, and by extension family, are derived "from the experience of people living together in a household, in close relations with each other and well used to each other's ways" (ibid.). What this means is that these connotations "do not, and familiar still does not, relate to the sense of a blood-group" (ibid.). It is then relevant to note that the idea of family without blood relations is indeed not a contemporary development but rather one of the original senses of the word.

From the meaning of 'household', Williams notes, the meaning of 'house' emerges late in the 15th Century "in the sense of a particular lineage or kin-group, ordinarily by descent from a common ancestor" (ibid.). The biblical definition from the 15th Century also means "either a large kin-group, often virtually equivalent to *tribe* […] or the kin-group of a common father" (ibid. 131-2). The family as it is conceived in its modern sense ("a small group confined to immediate blood relations"), therefore, is a relatively recent development (ibid. 132). This is a crucial point as we will refer to "the appeal to the natural" when it comes to the tendency to delineate family as the principle unit of society. Because of the same reason, it is also necessary to note that the meaning of family, up to the 19th Century and perhaps beyond, includes 'household', for example in the rural sense "with living-in farm servants who ate at the same table" that later required the "later distinction between family and *servants,"* leading to the meaning of 'lineage' "to indicate a distinguishable

upper-class group" separate from the servants (ibid.).

The modern sense of the word, and the ideological connotations of it, could be traced back to the emergence of the bourgeois family with "the sense of the isolated family as a working economic unit" (Williams 132-3). This also brings about class differentiation. Williams suggests that the term family was perhaps the only positive way of describing the social relationships of the near kin-group for "the new working class and lower-middle class who were defined by wage-labour: not family as lineage or property or as including these, and not family as *household* in the older established sense which included servants" (133). For the middle class, on the other hand, family "combined the strong sense of immediate and positive blood-group relationships and the strong implicit sense of property" (ibid.). This is also probably the point where the distinction between nuclear family and extended family became necessary.

Nuclear family or the average family, or "the small kin-group in a single house", is a more helpful definition in tracing the ideology of family (ibid.). Through the emergence of this supposedly minimal unit of society and according to its needs and values, a new set of ideas had become crystallized that easily paved the way for statements such as "the family is the necessary foundation of all order and morality" (qtd. in Williams 134). The words 'order' and 'morality' are telling in the ways in which they suggest an ideological system and thereby how pervasive and dominant the ideology of familism appears.

Family as an Ideological and Historically Contingent Concept

As Max Horkheimer notes; the "family was the "germ cell"[30] of bourgeois culture and it was, like the authority in it, a living reality" (128). Indeed, family appears as a carrier of ideology. A seminal study on this topic, *The Anti-Social Family*, by Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, interprets family both as a social and economic institution, and as an ideology. Ideology takes precedence because of several reasons. Family, they suggest, can be defined as "an institution in which households are assumed to be organized, by and large, on the basis of a division of labour between a primary breadwinner (male) and a

[30] Although the phrase "Keimzelle der Nation" (or also as "Keimzelle des Volkes", "Keimzelle der Gesellschaft") is more specific to the Germany and Austria and although this discourse does not exist in a similar way in British culture, it is nonetheless helpful in comprehending the ideological connotations of family in relation to the bourgeois culture.

primary childrearer (female)" (7). Starting with this definition, however, helps them to identify family as an ideology because of its heterosexist and hegemonic representations in the media even though the "stereotypical nuclear family accounts, roughly, for only a third of households in Britain" (8).

Family as an ideology is suggested to be more pervasive than the institution itself because the "model of family life has pervaded our society in its public institutions to such an extent that, far from speaking of the decline of the family, we should be speaking of the familial character of society" (ibid.). This is demonstrated with both Labour and Conservative politicians' "claim to represent the interests of the family" (ibid. 12). Thatcherism, as well as having conflicting approaches to family, "encodes the ideology that families – for which read 'women' – should be responsible for the day-to-day care of the young, the elderly, the sick and the disabled wherever possible" (ibid.). Similarly, the policies of the first Thatcher ministry (1982), "endorse the view that the family should be a self-sufficient enterprise needing little support from the state" (ibid.).

Therefore, Barrett and McIntosh see familism as "part of a broader political rhetoric" in which family acquires the shape of a "metaphor to endow the government's economic policies with a spurious 'commonsense' legitimacy" (ibid.). In other words, the structural reasons of social problems are masked through the rhetoric of familism. This is more prominent in the USA than in Britain but it helps one to formulate the idea that social responsibilities are relocated to individual families to the extent that some pressing problems such as poverty are argued to be "caused by nonmarital births and that single-parent households are largely responsible for crime, high school dropout rates, and drug use" (Struening 137). This attitude naturally changes the direction of the discussion. Because the average family is taken as the primary unit of society, "much of the family debate is concerned not with how all households can attain an adequate standard of living, health care, and housing, but with how the intact two-parent family can be fortified" (ibid.). But if, as one scholar argues, "the white nuclear family came to be the nation's [Britain's] embodiment of an ideology of individualism founded on liberal notions of democratic citizenship, laissez-faire capitalism and freedom of speech" (Chambers 198), the change in direction assumes a distinctive meaning. The focus on the whiteness of the average family is less relevant here even though one should acknowledge that a nuclear family of colour

could have different connotations and ideological implications. What is more relevant here is the change of direction in the discussion that leads to the tendency to familialize the society while confirming the antisocial nature of the family.

Perhaps, and in direct relation to the previous argument, the most radical and fruitful argument of *The Anti-social Family* is to frame family as a deeply antisocial institution. The writers argue that the "mid-nineteenth-century form of the family […] is the same as the paradigmatic family of contemporary ideology":

> This family of desire and myth is not the brutal rule of a patriarch over an extended household, nor is it an aggregation of faceless and ineffective individuals. It has an orderly division of labour between husband and wife, and a firm but kindly style with the children that will be good for them in the long run. It is today's equivalent of the nineteenth-century bourgeois ideal. It appears in child-care manuals, in advertisements for cars and insurance policies, in the formal and the 'hidden' curricula of schools, in the catalogues of Mothercare and the brochures of travel agents. (28)

As a pervasive ideology, familism is antisocial because it dictates a certain type of family. However, the important argument in *The Anti-Social Family* is not only that this idea of family is hegemonic but the argument that the very existence of family as an institution could be related to individualism because of its exclusion of others from the family and the denial of certain needs to anyone who does not belong to some form of a family.

The idea of family as a warm and welcoming refuge from the bleak and calculating structure of the outside world is the very element that renders family an antisocial institution and does not provide a dissimilar impression from individualism as it privatizes the needs and care of family members to a single institution. The fact that the representation of family in contemporary world has expanded to include individuals beyond heteronormativity and white-centrism does not change the antisocial quality of family, which is perhaps best described in the following quote from the book: "Everything from single-parent families to gay marriages is a family, and so all social issues can be presented in relation to 'the family'. It is not very nice for a family to have its house burgled, [for example] so crime is a problem for families" (16).

Furthermore, the family as a hegemonic ideology privatizes ideals such as "intimacy, commitment, nurturance, collectivity, and individual autonomy" which could as well be framed as social, feminist or Marxist ideals (qtd. in Barrett and McIntosh 41). *The Anti-social Family* provides further striking insights on the concept of family.

However, the average, two-parent, heterosexual and monogamous family with two point something kids in which the male is the primary breadwinner and the female takes over the care of the housework and children is the exact focus we need for the study of *Capital*. Familism, or familialism, refers to this ideal of family.

The Nuclear Family as a Heteronormative Narrative Frame

It is a curios case that *Capital* reflects more the traditional idea of the nuclear family described above which excludes many different forms of family such as same-sex or single-parent families even though it centralizes diverse representation through its polyphony. This exclusion in *Capital* is an ideological act, regardless of the author's motives, for the prominence of the image of the traditional nuclear family, both by its positive and negative examples, renders familism as an ideologeme in *Capital*. This ideologeme emits its own ideological message that is hinted above between the differentiation of the warm and welcoming family and the bleak and calculating outside world. In such a world, which is implied to be driven by selfishness and individualism, family becomes the binary opposition to the heartlessness of the social world.

Family, then, functions as "the primary site of the priority of feeling over calculation, of altruism rather than selfishness" (Barrett and McIntosh 41). Therefore, *Capital* gives the ideological message that the opposition or the solution to individualism lies in the capacity to form an emotionally meaningful and rewarding family. As a solution, however, this is also individualistic and denies the fact that certain social and structural changes are required to oppose or resolve the bleakness of the outside world. As Horkheimer succinctly notes, the focus on family and its improvement to resolve larger, social issues "necessarily betrays, at least at present, a parochial and utopian outlook and simply distracts men [sic] from urgent historical tasks" (102).

Furthermore, it defies logic to conceptualize a separation between the private sphere and the public life so much so that the latter would not interfere with the former. What this untenable dichotomy does in *Capital*, in contrast to its surface polyphony that emits a critical and hopeful message, is to imply that the individualism of the public world could be better counteracted by the individualism of the heteronormative, reproductive and exclusive family.

Capital posits family as a desirable and successfully functioning resolution to the problems of a fragmented society that lacks shared goals and values and creates an invasive individualism leading to personal dissatisfaction. Several characters in *Capital*, either through references to their existing familial ties that provide some sort of protection, affection and meaning or through the nonexistence of such familial ties, signal family as the possible remedy of neoliberal individualism.

The *Colourless* Families of *Capital*

Capital implies a prevalence of successful family ties as a solution to individualism by creating two sets of family relationships and comparing them with the help of dramatic irony, as explained above. The first set of familial relationships could be named as negative. Petunia Howe, for example, the elderly widow living by herself, is almost completely isolated from the society and her family. As described above, she is clearly not gratified with the fact that her daughter arranges an online delivery service to provide some of her shopping needs even though she would prefer if her daughter were there in person. The overall sense of dissatisfaction with her life is, however, very clearly portrayed through her unhappy marriage: "Petunia had always liked colour but she didn't feel she had had much of it in her own life. Or rather she felt she had had all too much of one single colour, grey […] she could look back over her life and see nothing but grey" (67). The reference to colour is important, as it will appear again several times in the narrative only to substantiate what the narrator means by colour in the case of –the happy– Kamal family or Mary's –happy– family.

After Petunia's death, Mary, her daughter, goes back to her own family life that provides some form of protection but remembers how unsatisfied she was with her own family as she was growing up. For Mary "Petunia was a severe disappointment" because after realizing that it was not only Mary's father who created restrictions but also Petunia herself, Mary found Petunia depressing (190). This comparison is also crucial because Mary has her own blissful family that she returns to at the end of the narrative. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mary is also described as someone who "liked change, movement, *colour* [emphasis added]" (190).

Roger Yount, another example, although formerly happy with her wife Arabella, perceives her as a source of dissatisfaction and dreams of running away with Matya, the Hungarian babysitter, or wishes that Arabella modifies her selfish and consumerist lifestyle after Roger losing his job and selling the house. In an unsurprising twist of the narrative, Arabella crystallizes into the heartless consumerist while for Roger the change is imminent:

> Arabella showed no sign of thinking that she couldn't go on like this. On the contrary, she showed every intention of going on as she was for ever. No Plan B. It was labels, logos and conspicuous consumption all the way. If anything, looking after the children so much of the time seemed to have made it worse. (575)

The image of Arabella as someone who spends extravagant amounts of money while not 'even' taking care of her own children is also significant as it will strengthen the contrast to the happy and unselfish mother Rohinka Kamal. Overall, however, this first set of familial relationships is marked with a sense of dissatisfaction and alienation. To a certain extent, these unhappy families lack colour, as the narrator frames it.

Happy and *Colourful* Families

The other set of examples from *Capital*, the ones with supportive and meaningful family ties, makes the idea clear that the existence of family in supportive and collaborative terms could function as a hope for salvation from neoliberal individualism. The Kamal family is a clear example: Rohinka's thoughts about life being black and white without her kids and life acquiring colour and meaning through her family is a case in point:

> Rohinka had a guilty secret: sometimes, out walking or shopping with Fatima and Mohammed, she would look around at people who didn't have children and think: you don't have the faintest idea what life is about. You haven't got a clue. Life with children is life in *colour* [emphasis added], and life without them is black and white. Even when it's hard […] I'm so tired my eyes are stinging and I've got my period and my back hurts from carrying the children and stacking shelves and everyone is looking at me thinking what a bad mum I am, even then, it's better than black and white. (402)

Even though Rohinka might be overworked, tired and depressed, she still finds *colour* and meaning through her family. Unlike Arabella, she is a selfless mother that devotes herself to her family and, as a result, is rewarded with a life full of colour and satisfaction. In light of this comparison, it is perhaps not a coincidence that Arabella is perceived by some reviewers as either the "most repulsive character in the book" (Camp) or as "the nastiest character in the book" (Tomalin), an interpretation that may help to reveal the sexism that

lurks behind the expectation that a woman is to feel satisfaction through childrearing, unconditionally. In relation to this argument, it is necessary to note that Roger, as a white, middle-class male figure, is represented "to redeem masculinity" in order to "re-assume the paternal role that capital has allowed [him] to abandon" (Marsh et al. 8). Relatedly, Roger's narrative can be comprehended as the manifestation of "the discursive construction of crises," with regards to white male masculinity (Haschemi Yekani 9), especially in comparison to other characters in the narrative.[31] Roger's narrative can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to centralize white male heterosexual masculinity as the novel narrativizes the financial crunch through Roger's alleged crisis in, among others, masculinity: Arabella, in this regard, appears as a highly problematic foil to substantiate the narrative's attempt to centralize Roger's experience with regards to their *failed* family.

Similarly, other characters such as Shahid and Usman, Ahmed's brothers, refer to the splendour of the domestic joys of Ahmed and Rohinka's marriage several times by either demonstrating some envy, or considering an arranged marriage in the case of Usman, and the dream of reunion with a former lover in the case of Shahid. Shahid, for instance, while in police custody because of being falsely accused of terrorism, admits to himself "he envied his fat, slow, sedentary, cautious older brother" but only after envisioning them as the happy family of Ahmed, Rohinka, Mohammed and Fatima (499). It is therefore not a coincidence that what Shahid plans to do after being released was to replicate that envy-inducing family and its comforts: "But he knew that when/if he got out, he would like to have A Girlfriend. He didn't have anything more specific in mind than that" (499).

Shahid, occupied with the idea of forming her own family in such a bleak world, does not even consider suing the investigators "for wrongful imprisonment, for abusing his rights, for locking him up for no reason" as "that was one thing he could do. But Shahid knew that he wouldn't" (ibid.). Conveniently, the narrative demonstrates no clear attempt to elucidate why Shahid would not consider such an act. Perhaps, it is simply more comforting to fantasize about finding someone with whom you can create your own heaven rather than dealing with the unfairness and bleakness of the outside world. Or perhaps, the

[31] For an interesting analysis of how narratives of masculinity construct the notion of a crisis and thereby recentralize masculine experience, see Haschemi Yekani, Elahe. *The Privilege of Crisis: Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Photography and Film. Campus Verlag, 2011.

focus on heterosexual bonding has a larger meaning than it is assumed to do, which the text uses here as a foil.

Similarly, Usman's narrative closes with the likelihood of an arranged marriage: "Usman had been in Lahore with their mother [...] very nearly arranging to get married to a lawyer's fourth daughter" (553). It is relevant here to note that it was actually Usman who started the initial mysterious act of taking photographs of the houses and sending them to the residents in an act of political activism before it was taken over by Smitty's assistant Parker to vilify Smitty. For Usman, the postcards were meant to instigate a discussion about the fetishization of the houses on Pepys Road: "You make a point about Western obliviousness and they think it's about property prices. You tell them they're in a condition of complete moral unconsciousness and they worry about whether their house is still worth two million quid! Unbelievable" (554).

As the narrative ends and each character learns their moral lessons, such ideas are put aside and Usman focuses more on the possibility of marriage. One should admit that it is an interesting turn of events that enable the transformation from a character that attentively and cautiously organizes a harmless action in order to cause political discussion into a character whose narrative closes with the possibility of accepting an arranged marriage.

The matriarch Mrs Kamal who visits the Kamal family and helps Shahid to be released out of the jail by successfully communicating with a world-class lawyer, is also employed as a clear reference to the emancipatory power of family, especially in the words of Rohinka, who begins to appreciate Mrs Kamal's resilience and commitment to protect her family. Rohinka, after clearly revealing how exasperated she was by Mrs Kamal in the past, experiences a change of heart as she acquires the moral lesson of her narrative:

> Standing in front of her mother-in-law, Rohinka felt a wave of the very last thing she had expected: affection. She had seen what Mrs Kamal had been like when Shahid was locked up, and would never forget it. She hoped Fatima and Mohammed would never be in trouble of that scale; if they ever were, she hoped she could live up to her mother-in-law's example. But this wasn't easy to put into words, and she made no attempt to begin. Perhaps she didn't have to. (506)

What Rohinka could not put into words is the comfort and safety the Kamal family possesses because of having such a matriarch. Family can of course be a legitimate need and provide comfort when the outside world is only so bleak. However, in comparison to

other family types and the outside world, family necessarily acquires more problematic and normative connotations.

The decisive reference to family as a resolution includes other characters. In the case of the Polish builder, Zbigniew, the narrative constantly refers to his commitment to his family in Poland and his desire to travel back to be with his family after earning some money. Later, the desire to reunite with his family transforms into creating a new family with Matya as described above.

Another evidence that familism is implied as a resolution is the absence of any LGBTQ+ characters in the novel. This does not mean that any attempt to portray a diverse group of people should include LGBTQ+ individuals in its depiction. However, when one considers the commitment of the narrative to portray diversity, with the exception of LGBTQ+ characters and when one remembers that family is implied as a resolution to individualism, it becomes relevant to argue that this cannot be a coincidence as the inclusion of an LGBTQ+ character would categorically make it problematic to frame heteronormative family as an emancipatory possibility. The fact that a scholar, for example, reads *Capital* as a novel "which displays the whole spectrum of English contemporary society as it is embodied itself in half a dozen families or characters each standing for a specific facet of the social mechanism" (Bernard, "Recent British Fiction" 5) is a testament to the normative and hegemonic dichotomy of heterosexual family versus other forms of families. Ironically, the exclusion of LGBTQ+ characters is also evidence to the incapacity of family as a resolution to individualism for familism is implied to work only in a strictly heteronormative sense and functions very exclusively for a limited group of people. In other words, familism relies on biological ties and the connection it creates through either heterosexual intimacy or heterosexual procreation.

Similarly, the absence of any single parent family should be comprehended in the context of familialism with one exception. It is perhaps possible to interpret Patrick Kamo as a single parent as he has to leave his wife and other children in Senegal to accompany his football prodigy son in London. But the narrative is unquestionably clear about Patrick's despondency about being away from his family and his yearning for the time he would return to Senegal, rendering the single parent family also inadequate. After a very long paragraph explaining to what extent Patrick is dissatisfied about London and his life

there, the narrative hints at his possible redemption: "he hated being away from his wife and daughters" and "he thought about them all the time" (228). Patrick "had no idea how he was going to wait that long for the smell of Adede's hair, for the feel of his youngest daughters Malé and Tina crushed and squealing with laughter in his arms" (228).

Family versus Other Forms of Collectives

Capital, on top of portraying a dichotomy of happy and unhappy families, render other forms of collectives as bleak. One case in point is the charity house that Quentina stays in as a 'client': "The atmosphere at the Refuge in Tooting had been low, verging on depressed, with the emphasis on survival and endurance" (526). This is of course different than saying that the narrative should portray possibly positive perspectives about each non-familial social group. The problem is more related to the fact that such descriptions acquire such a specific meaning that they can appear as comparisons to other forms of collectives, family being the fundamental one. More specifically, this depiction acquires such a meaning when we also consider the fact that Quentina has a love interest, which, however, is not realised as she is forwarded to a detention centre at the end of the narrative.

Another very clear example of this outlook is concealed in the portrayals of the mosque that Shahid attends for Friday prayers. Even though it is clear that Shahid enjoys "the sense of continuity within his own life, the ritual stretching into the past and into the future, and the familiar faces and the friendliness" (124) in the mosque as well as his "second-favourite part of the ritual, the milling and chatting afterwards" (125), the mosque is nonetheless rendered as part of the dangerous outside world. Shahid's unlawful and cliché arrest is evidence to this. However, the narrative's consistency in describing any form of collective other than family as suspicious is obvious through Shahid's contemplations about the mosque:

> Shahid couldn't help wondering, at times, just how many of his fellow worshippers were MI5 or Special Branch, operatives or informers or provocateurs or plants. And some of this had been self-inflicted by the community. Having a former worshipper plot to blow up a transatlantic jetliner via an exploding shoe – even if you believed only one word of every ten in the kafr media, this was bad PR. (123)

It is partially relevant to emphasize the fact that the edification narrative here transcends beyond delineating family as a refuge to include and reflect contemporary stereotypes and clichés that are derived from Islamophobia. This case is particularly telling as it represents

one of the very rare instances in which the narrator includes moral lessons other than that are related to the family itself. But more crucially and strikingly, this is the point where the narrative reverses its own moral standard of relocating responsibility for social problems to individuals or individual families. Instead, the narrative implies that the religious community is, at least partially, responsible, rather than the terrorists who undertook the attacks in contrast to depicting a plethora of characters who appear to have self-responsibilization. This can perhaps be comprehended as a convenient narrativization of how Eurocentric and Islamophobic perspectives of British contemporaneity appear in radically distinct contexts in comparison to the family and create a rift in the narrative. *Capital* conveniently ignores the possible intersections at which the debilitating effects of neoliberalism converge with racism and Islamophobia in Britain, possibly because the idea of the family is implied to level out such differences in social status.

Monogamy as a Constitutive Element of Intimacy

Furthermore, it goes without saying that any reference to love or family is assumed or implied to be monogamous. Nevertheless, the narrative insists on the clarification as a non-monogamous conception of intimacy could also challenge the narrative's own normative conception of family. When Mary contemplates about why she found her mother depressing, her observations draw a very clear picture of the heterosexual and monogamous relationship we discuss here: "Mary liked change, movement, colour, walking, sex (*with her husband*) [emphasis added]" (190). The phrase 'with her husband' is immediately inserted right after sex even though it is quite redundant as the novel mostly excludes the possibility of non-monogamous intimacy. As much as having the function of characterising Mary to a certain extent in the novel, monogamy, as an abstract concept and "as practiced in bourgeois male-dominated society" denotes "the devaluation of purely sensuous pleasure" (Horkheimer 120), thereby revealing the moral code that accompanies monogamous marriage. Further, it symbolizes the anxiety behind an apparently unquestioned belief in monogamous sexual intimacy, which inadvertently contradicts the narrative.

Familial Love versus Other Forms of Love

Further evidence of familism appears through the comparison with underdeveloped or pathologized forms of love in contrast to heterosexual and monogamous love. Mickey, initially described as someone who sees "Freddy as a club asset to be exploited and milked and cashed in on to the maximum possible extent" reaches "to the point where he loved Freddy" in the process of defending Freddy against the insurance companies (516). This adjustment occurs at the very end of the narrative and offers some form of hope for Mickey himself but does not necessarily translate into a statement strong enough to be comparable to familial love. Mickey, after all, perceives the case of Freddy as one of the moments "when he felt the cruelty of the game" and this makes him consider a career change because he is not "sure how much more of it he could take" (519). Mickey's love for Freddy is thus left unexplored.

Nevertheless, the fact that Lanchester points at different forms of love is crucial. While Mickey's love for Freddy is prematurely ended, Matya's love towards Joshua, one of the Yount children, is decontextualized and distinguished by relating it to Matya's love to her own parents to the extent of creating the possible interpretation of comprehending love outside one's own family as mostly the representation of one's own family, except for romantic partners. This is clear in the portrayal of Matya's love for Joshua: "Matya was aware that this was connected with her childhood: she was rediscovering her lost parents through the love she was able to express for Joshua. It was a way of getting her parents' love back, of reincarnating them inside herself" (496). Perhaps, it is not conceivable to imagine a caregiver exhibiting affection for one of the children she is taking care of. Or this act of devaluing and delegitimizing different forms of collectives and love should be interpreted as an ideological act in itself only because of the constant comparative stance that is generated by the omniscient polyphony. When we remember that *Capital* posits the happy, nuclear, heterosexual family with kids as the binary opposition to the individualistic and calculating outside world, it is no surprise that it appears challenging to find other sources of emotional and material security and satisfaction outside the suggested family itself.

Conclusion: Familialism as a Covert Discourse of Neoliberalism

Consequently, the ideal of the small, monogamous, heterosexual family with kids, in which the male is the main breadwinner and the female is expected to take care of the children and the housework while feeling particularly satisfied because of rearing children, should be read as an ideologeme. It is not difficult to trace the class discourse implied in the insistence of such a family ideal. In other words, it is fair to claim that *Capital*, to a certain extent, is an elegy to pre-neoliberal capitalism with its focus on the joys of the ideal of the bourgeois family as well as the Thatcherite neoliberalism that replaced social institutions with the ideology of familism. It should also be noted that the often-stated resemblance to Victorian literature stems partially from this nostalgic connection to Victorian ideals:

> The Victorian influence on the present is often established through a core assumption about 'values' that can be ascribed to the nineteenth century. The very concepts that were for much of the twentieth century disparaged as traditional, old-fashioned and outmoded (thrift, self-help, neighbourliness, contribution to the community over the individual) are now held up as worthy of esteem, respect and veneration. (Llewellyn and Hellmann 13)

Capitalism is acceptable, after all. It just needs to withdraw to a certain extent and not invade intimate spheres of life. It only follows that *Capital* is often seen as a Dickensian novel, in the ways in which it narrativizes Victorian 'values'. Familism, however, is the focal point of all of these values and is implied to be constitutive of all others. All of the examples mentioned above portray a society where family becomes the central source of personal salvation and formulating shared goals and values, and as a result, the possible reason of leading a happier and more satisfied life. *Capital* manages to give this impression not necessarily directly but through its attempt of resolving the problems of individualism through the use of an omniscient polyphony that compares how moral edification, and its necessary conclusion life satisfaction, can be achieved by pitting "one character's situation against the others' thus producing powerful ironical counterpoints" (Bernard, "Writing Capital" 148). Although Perkin also notes that the comparisons and contrasts form the implied "moral perspective in *Capital*" (13), his analysis downplays the significance of the form from which this implied moral tale emerges. Omniscient polyphony makes it possible to portray all these character's mental processes and provides the reader with an opportunity to compare and reach a very specific judgement: Family is a viable solution to the problem of an individualistic society because of its capacity to transcend money as the

defining mediator between people. Therefore, *Capital* reiterates the very problem it strives to resolve: a fragmented and disintegrating society that lacks shared goals and values but only finds salvation in private and small groups in the shape of families.

It is worth here remembering, although it is also a worn-out cliché, Thatcher's famous statement in which she declared that there is no society but only individuals and families. Family in such a context is of utmost importance as it is suggested to replace the role of the state or the wider society when it comes to dealing with individual problems and failures. However, family cannot function as a solution to the disintegration and fragmentation of a society as it only works on a micro level and does not necessarily always possess the means to overcome certain problems, as also mentioned in the analysis of *White Teeth*. Korte, for instance, rightfully argues that *Capital* "fails to address the fact that the financial crisis and its aftermath of 'austerity Britain' had consequences for people in all sectors of British society" (501). Likewise, Marsh et al. contend that the novel "denies a systematic critique of the financial crisis" (7).

Familism as an implied ideologeme, then, replicates the very problems *Capital* strives to challenge. Unlike *White Teeth*, where the capacity of the family as a collective is deconstructed, *Capital* relies on the successful functioning of family as a collective in response to individualism. Yet, the idea of family as such only expands the individualism to a small collective and contains the competition between each party, let alone the fact that this very specific idea of family is extremely exclusionary and conservative because of relying on monogamous and heteronormative reproductive relationships. Further, it denies the fact that not each family has the capacity to resolve its problems either because of simply not having the financial means or the necessary set of skills. More fundamentally, it is a clear case, and a confusing one at that, of suggesting to solve large-scale problems by individual solutions, which is itself a powerful rhetoric of a neoliberal world, thereby cancelling the possibility of the narrative's own emancipatory potential of resisting neoliberalism. Yet, it should be acknowledged that *Capital* does nowhere demonstrate clear signs that it is interested in exploring the effects of austerity or the large-scale social problems and conflicts of neoliberalism. On the contrary, *Capital* is more an effortless morality tale that is based on crude resolutions and answers while hiding its neoliberal, heteronormative, Eurocentric and middle-class focussed way of seeing the world.

Furthermore, in parallel to Sahlins' argument that "[e]verything in capitalism conspires to conceal the symbolic ordering of the system - especially those academic theories of praxis by which we conceive ourselves and the rest of the world" (220), it should now be possible to comprehend *Capital* as part of this system, as it conceals its specific way of seeing the world. If economy is the main site of producing symbolic knowledge, as argued by Sahlins (210), then, *Capital*, by identifying heterosexual romantic love and heterosexual and normative family as the possible realm outside economy, creates an illusion. Because even love and family are defined by economically determined symbols such as monogamy, ownership, inheritance, division of labour in the house, leading to the conception of family as an integral part of economic activity, not a realm outside of it.

However, if family cannot accommodate the failures of a neoliberal society, what could be an appropriate answer to familialism that can challenge neoliberal individualism? Although her study focuses on the US, Martha A. Fineman, in *The Autonomy Myth*, convincingly challenges familialism with regards to answering the needs of the society. Instead, she argues that "caretaking relationships" should be central to the organisation of the society because, she points out, we are all "inevitably dependent" and that it is vital for the society to respond and accommodate this lack. Relatedly, as Horkheimer convincingly notes, family exercises "necessary functions in an ever more inadequate way due to increasing contradictions and crises, yet cannot be changed without change in the total social framework" (102). The tentative response, then, could be formulated as an appeal to re-socialize the inherently social problems of neoliberalism, rather than relapsing consistently back to individualistic resolutions. Stuff is not enough, as Roger claims. But, it is necessary to add that family is also not enough.

Chapter Five

"Thus it ever was, so ever shall it be": The Eternal Return of Predacity as the Grand Narrative of Humanity

Introduction: *Cloud Atlas* as a Paradigmatic Polyphonic Novel

David Mitchell's 2004 novel *Cloud Atlas* is similar to both *White Teeth* and *Capital* as a central and paradigmatic polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction. As with *White Teeth* and *Capital*, Mitchell's experimental narrative is truly polyphonic in terms of its style and content. *Cloud Atlas*, as a novel with six interlocking and completely different narratives, revolutionizes the contemporary polyphonic novel while providing Mitchell with the opportunity to further develop his signature of polyphonic narratives after

Ghostwritten (1999) and *number9dream* (2001). Inspired by Italo Calvino's 1979 novel *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* [*If on a winter's night a traveler*] (Mitchell, "Week three: David Mitchell on writing *Cloud Atlas*"), in which individual stories are continuously interrupted without a narrative closure, Mitchell creates his version of a "Russian Doll" with the addition of a mirror chapter (the middle chapter of the novel) that reverses Calvino's narrative process and provides narrative closures for each chapter, thereby creating a more complex polyphony.

Each chapter in Mitchell's text is structurally and thematically distinct and appears in supposedly different narrative worlds. Structurally, each chapter appears to have a predominant genre characteristic (in the following order): a journal, a collection of letters, a mystery/thriller novel, a comedy script, a dystopia, and a post-apocalyptic fiction. In parallel, each chapter portrays various distinct characters (in the following order): Adam Ewing as a naïve and hopeful notary from San Francisco from the mid-nineteenth century, Robert Frobisher as a talented musician and social outcast in the 1930s of Belgium, Luisa Rey as a dedicated journalist in the 1970s in California, Timothy Cavendish as a vanity press publisher whose story is set in present day Britain, Sonmi-451 as a fabricant/clone waitress for a fast food company, which is set in a dystopic future of Korea, and lastly Zachry as a guileless and primitive tribesman from an unspecified post-apocalyptic world where civilization has collapsed.

Necessarily, each chapter reflects a distinct way of seeing and conceptualizing the world: the first chapter is focalized with Adam Ewing's 'humanist' and politically progressive outlook with regards to colonialism and racism; the following chapter is conceptualized through Frobisher's resentful detachment from life, and with a form of existentialist nihilism; in the third chapter, Luisa Rey's dedicated and ethically engaged journalism provides a hopeful challenge to corporate wrongdoings; Timothy Cavendish, in the fourth chapter, which works as comedic relief, experiences the world with a buoyant perspective due the comedic tone of the chapter; the following chapter narrativizes some of the logical conclusions of "corporatocracy", or how a dystopic world of slavery is created by corporations and corporate interests while presenting Sonmi-451 as a revolutionary; in the middle and final chapter, Zachary comprehends the world through

metaphysical, supernatural and spiritual elements and reflects on a world of violence driven by the will to survive.

As each chapter is embedded in another, in the following chapter progression, 1-2-3-4-5-6-5-4-3-2-1, this nested polyphonic form functions as the thread that connects every individual narrative and character, creating a coherent and single narrative form without losing the intricacies of a particular plot or a particular character's worldview. This collective representation of humanity in *CA* can be comprehended as an attempt to create an understanding of humanity as an interconnected web of complex social and historical relationships rather than a collection of isolated and unrelated individuals even when they are from different geographical locations or epochs. The extent to which *Cloud Atl*as imagines a social collective, however, is radically different than *White Teeth* and *Capital.*

In its portrayal of a social collective, *Cloud Atlas* adopts a more complex polyphonic form and multiplicity of content to the extent that it expands its focus from the city or nation to the global. While *White Teeth* and *Capital* focus on the city life and by extension its implications for the nation in general, *Cloud Atlas* expands such geographical limits, surpassing London or any other city in the UK and travelling the world, namely from Chatham Islands (in the first chapter) to somewhere around Hawaii in the distant future. Similarly, *Cloud Atlas* spans a longer period of time (from the 1800s to distant future), overcoming temporal limits unlike the character-specific exploration of different time periods in *White Teeth* or the decisive focus of *Capital* on the 2008 financial crisis. Therefore, polyphony in *Cloud Atlas* expands the temporal limits of the narrative world of contemporaneous or directly related characters as seen in *White Teeth* and *Capital*. In doing so, *Cloud Atlas* enlarges the individual time of a given character and relates it to some form of a historical perspective, without focusing on a single epoch. The polyphony in *Cloud Atlas* is thus both global and historical. These two fundamental differences between *Cloud Atlas* and the other polyphonic novels in this study, global and historical enlargement of the polyphonic form, are crucial flashpoints for the analysis of the novel.

The global polyphony of C*loud Atlas* manifests itself in the novel's reception. As well as being critically acclaimed and widely popular, *Cloud Atlas* is adapted into a Hollywood blockbuster movie. *CA* emerges as an ideal Hollywood franchise that is globally marketable as its polyphony reflects its atypical focus on a social collective in

transcending the limits of a certain nation state and providing a sense of a global social collective. Relatedly, Berthold Schoene, for instance, seems to consider *Cloud Atlas* as a narrative "that imagines community beyond the bounds of the nation" (123). In addition to being obviously and elaborately British at times, *Cloud Atlas* does not envision a narrative world specific to Britain.

In parallel to its global reach, the majority of reviews emphasize the novel's larger, historical perspective, leading to the discussion of grand themes that the novel explores. The same perspective emerges in the scholarly response. There is of course an undisputed consensus that Mitchell's narrative should be comprehended through its polyphonic qualities even though not every scholar employs the same terminology. The focus on thematic variety, structural diversity and the overall cohesion of the novel's heterogeneity are nevertheless central questions. The implications of this focus are, however, divergent. Some scholars, for instance, employ polyphony in order to explore postmodernist literary techniques from an exclusively formal perspective, identifying and analyzing intertextual and aesthetic concerns of the novel.[32] Although such criticism reveals valuable insights, some of which I also reference in this chapter, my analysis is concerned more with the social meanings and functions of polyphony. This perspective is reinforced by several scholars when they seem to agree in their argument that although *Cloud Atlas* is a distinctively postmodernist text, especially due to its formal bricolage, it is nonetheless moored in a sense of continuity (McMorran 169), clearly political (Dunlop 202), or "opposed to postmodernist fragmentation" (Schoene 58). The engagement with politics therefore necessitates a critical re-contextualization of the novel as part of the global contemporaneity.

The majority of work on *Cloud Atlas* reflects a consistent focus on comprehending the novel as a political and philosophical exploration of primary human characteristics and issues such as free will and destiny, linear and cyclical conceptions of time, the question of progress and the rise and fall of civilizations. These qualities reveal another crucial difference of *Cloud Atlas* in comparison to other polyphonic novels: *Cloud Atlas,* by

[32] See, for instance, Will McMorran's "*Cloud Atlas* and *If on a winter's night a traveller*: Fragmentation and Integrity in the Postmodern Novel"; or Courtney Hopf's The Stories We Tell: Discursive Identity Through Narrative Form in *Cloud Atlas*"; or Patrick O'Donnell's book-length study on Mitchell: *The Temporary Future: The Fiction of David Mitchell*.

extending its polyphony to the universal and the historical, attempts to create a commentary on the human species and its past, present and future. As such, *Cloud Atlas* should be comprehended as a grand narrative that is more akin to a religious text than a novel in the traditional sense in the ways in which it maps the position of the individual in the global social totality.[33]

The meaning of this grand narrative can be comprehended through the analysis of the dual endings in relation to the overall structure of the novel. By employing a totalized representation of humanity, *CA* expresses a predominantly hopeful account for the future of humanity in the narrative ending with Adam Ewing, while simultaneously reflecting a regressive conception of humanity in the middle and chronologically last chapter. The analysis of the dual endings of the novel, the chronological and the narrative, reflects a dichotomy of contradictory implications about humanity. The surface polyphony of *CA* is predicated on the narrative closure with Adam Ewing and his hopeful dedication to the abolitionist cause. Yet, as I hope to show below, the analysis of the middle chapter, as the chronological ending of the novel, in addition to its thematic replication in other chapters, reveals the form-shaping and monological discourse of *CA* as the eternal recurrence of predacity (predatory behaviour) as a set human, as well as ontological, characteristic in contrast to its optimism that is predicated on its polyphonic form, which conceives humanity as a global and collective subject. In the following part, I will first analyze the chronological ending of the narrative, the dystopic and pessimistic account of humanity, as it is representative of the general theme of the novel. I will then demonstrate how *CA*'s nested polyphony, as the overall form that creates a totalized representation of humanity, or a cognitive map of the global contemporaneity[34], produces the narrative's hopeful,

[33] Totalizing Representation & Social Totality: Totality has various and at times conflicting uses and connotations both in pre-Marxist and Marxist thought. The focus in this chapter, however, is on a specific, and methodologically relevant, understanding of totality that is described by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*. Totality, in this sense, refers to the overarching system of how human societies are structured, including its contradictions and thereby rejecting the reductive comprehension of totality as a monolithic system. In other words, it is necessary to use totality in the sense of a meaningful and representational totality, which "is inaccessible to us except in textual form" (Jameson, *TPU* 20). Starting in 1850, finalizing in a distant future and taking the contemporary world at its temporal centre, *Cloud Atlas* should be comprehended more as an attempt to formulate the representation of contemporary global totality rather than totality as history itself.

[34] Cognitive Mapping as a Strategy to Comprehend the Global Social Totality: Cognitive mapping, originally conceptualized by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City* to understand urban spaces, is extended by Fredric Jameson to interpret larger systems such as the nation or the global. Jameson develops on the idea that "the

utopian and emancipatory imagination for the future of humanity through the grand narrative of humanity as a collective agent demonstrated to be capable of progressing for a better future. In the second part of this chapter, I will centralize the narrative ending of the novel with a comparative approach and an in-depth textual analysis to explain how the form of the novel, its leitmotif of reincarnation and conception of time in all of its six chapters subsume the hope inherent in Adam Ewing chapter, thereby revealing its covert monological discourse, the eternal recurrence of predacity, in contrast to its surface optimism of a universal humanism.

Part I: Representing Hope: Humanity as a Global and Collective Subject

> I watched clouds awobbly from the floor o' that kayak. Souls cross ages like clouds cross skies, an' tho' a cloud's shape nor hue nor size don't stay the same, it's still a cloud an' so is a soul. Who can say where the cloud's blowed from or who the soul'll be 'morrow? Only Sonmi the east an' the west an' the compass an' the atlas, yay, only the atlas o' clouds. […]
> Yay, my Hole World an' hole life was shrinked 'nuff to fit in the O o' my finger'n'thumb. (324)

In the middle chapter of *Cloud Atlas*, "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After", the chapter in which the chronological time of the narrative ends, Zachry, the oral story-teller from a distant post-apocalyptic world, catches a glimpse of the island that he has lived his whole life until that very moment. Zachry leaves his former life behind because Meronym and her technologically advanced people save him from the savagery and barbarism of the Kona, a tribe who has murdered all the members of Zachary's tribe. Zachry perceives the totality of his life up to that point because of the distance established from his escape. His final words are significant insofar as they refer to the overall shape of the novel as a coherent and totalized narrative. Relatedly, the narrative employs the metaphor of clouds in their capacity to represent humanity as a collection of ever-changing and yet similar formations as a result of inexplicably complex processes.

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alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves" (*Postmodernism* 44). Cognitive mapping refers to thinking "the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" by providing "some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself" (ibid. 36).

As the title of the novel indicates, this conception of humanity and human-life in its total representation is central to *Cloud Atlas*. As a narrative that spans the globe and history, *Cloud Atlas* is clearly an attempt to formulate a totalizing literary representation of British, as well as global, contemporaneity. Zachry's awakening to a totalizing understanding of his life is necessarily a replication of the novel's overall aim to provide the reader with a similar *complete* image of the world. By doing so, *Cloud Atlas* appears as a narrative that formulates a totalized representation in order to comprehend the world and humanity as a collective species: *CA* adopts a sense of a shared and global humanity, which aims to represent 'the global society'. In this capacity, *Cloud Atlas* emerges as a grand narrative that re-identifies the individual's place in the world as part of this global perception of humanity.

This element is predicated upon its polyphonic structure, which embeds each narrative in another to the extent of formulating a closed but infinitely repeating narrative world, thereby creating a continuous narrative world of interconnections that traverse different epochs and geographies. It is in this capacity that the polyphonic form of *Cloud Atlas*, I argue, should be comprehended as a cognitive map, or a totalizing representation, of our contemporaneity in the ways in which it rejects social fragmentation by establishing interconnections and causalities that go beyond the individual, a certain location or a certain time, thereby transcending the individual and the impending post-apocalyptic future it depicts.

Cloud Atlas **as a Cognitive Map of Global Social Totality**

Cognitive mapping and totality have certain problematic and reductive connotations, however, this study applies cognitive mapping as a methodological and representational tool to communicate between the individual and subjective (and hence highly limited) experience with the wider and abstract knowledge of the experience itself. Cognitive mapping, in other words, coordinates "existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 45). Indeed, cognitive mapping refers to both "an individual's 'subjective' attempt to locate her- or himself in a complex social milieu" as well as to a "supra-

individual ('objective') production of space in the multinational, late capitalist world system" (Tally 1-2). Similarly, cognitive mapping appears as "the model for how we might begin to articulate the local and the global" because it "provides a way of linking the most intimately local - our particular path through the world - and the most global - the crucial features of our planet (MacCabe xiv). The cognitive map of *CA* can therefore be comprehended as "a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 44).

CA's narrative appears as a cognitive map in this sense as it provides a symbolic, yet limited, totalized representation of the world by relating the personal and individual experience to the abstract and wider knowledge of the social totality. The gap between the personal experience and the abstract knowledge is essential as it gives ideology the function of "articulating those two distinct dimensions with each other" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 46). *CA* fills this gap for its cognitive map can "endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" which would inherently necessitate "radically new forms" (ibid. 46). The radically experimental polyphony of *Cloud Atlas* acquires more meaning in this light.[35] This is because any such attempt of cognitive mapping, and thereby any form it takes, requires the response to "the truth of Postmodernism" or "its fundamental object – the world space of multinational capital" (ibid.).

CA as a Critical Response to Global, Neoliberal Contemporaneity

There is some consensus with regards to comprehending *Cloud Atlas* and its polyphonic form as a direct response to the contemporary world. Bradford, for instance, in *The Novel Now*, maintains that *Cloud Atlas* reflects a layered response to the contemporary in that it does not only symptomatically replicate it but also engages with it critically in an

[35] The form of *CA* is significant in the ways in which its meanings are predicated on the form. This becomes more comprehensible when we compare *CA* to another polyphonic novel of a similar nature. *Ulverton* (1992) by Adam Thorpe, for instance, portrays several hundreds of year of history while formally employing the stylistic trends in each specific historical era. The difference, however, lies in the chronological structure of *Ulverton*: unlike *CA*, which ends the narrative in the past with the help of a metaphysical superstructure, *Ulverton* follows a historical chronology. Therefore, *CA*'s nested polyphony requires further analysis as part of the overall message of the novel.

attempt to formulate a response to postmodernism –by its self-referential commodification of genre elements-, which, by extension, engages with neoliberalism as well (67). Similarly, Childs and Green identify *Cloud Atlas* as a *planetary* novel, as well as "the 21st Century novel" and agree with Bradford in the argument that Mitchell's narrative crafts "a complex response to the current material conditions of the world", especially in the context of "the global reach of the capital, the possibilities of new political paradigms and the modulating networks of the world market"("The Novels in Nine Parts" 26).

Cognitive mapping in *Cloud Atlas* should therefore be related to the real life problem it responds to: namely, the free market discourse of neoliberalism that works as a force "in its capacity to afford a model of a social totality" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 283). The market is implied to do "the taming and controlling" of "the violence of human nature and competition," revealing its totalizing perspective in the organization of human life (*Postmodernism* 184). Market ideology, Jameson contends, "assures us that human beings make a mess of it when they try to control their destinies ("socialism is impossible") and that we are fortunate in possessing an interpersonal mechanism -- the market -- which can substitute for human hubris and planning and replace human decisions altogether" (ibid. 184-5). However, for the individual to fully comprehend his or her place in the larger system of the market is practically impossible due to the complexity of the world system with its contradictions, variations and non-monolithic structure.

In parallel, *CA* rejects employing the free market discourse and its implication that the market would be able to tame violence or predacity. On the contrary, neoliberalism itself appears as a manifestation, rather than the cause, of violence and predacity in Mitchell's narrative especially in the fifth chapter, through a totalized representation of a world that is ruled mainly by corporations, and the sixth chapter, as the possible outcome of the previous chapter, which depicts a post-apocalyptic world in which humanity collapses into tribalism. The novel, by rejecting to comprehend neoliberalism or the market as a principle of totalization, produces its totalized representation of humanity and global contemporaneity through its form. If totalization "means to unify with an eye to power and control; and as such, [if] this term points to the hidden power relations behind our humanist and positivist systems of unifying disparate materials, be they aesthetic or scientific"

(Hutcheon xi), Mitchell's narrative, arguably, is nothing less than a grand figuration of the power relations between the strong and the weak.

The focus on how power functions or 'hidden power relations' appears through the interconnected fragments of narratives in which the power struggle between the strong and the weak acquires a different narrative representation in each chapter. Even though each chapter is distinct in terms of style and content, the form emphasizes the similarities between each narrative with an insistent and repeated focus on several different forms of oppression or imprisonment, which will be analyzed in detail below. The continuous study of predacity as a central theme in parallel to its polyphonic form responds to "the postmodern resignation to the impossibility of any transcendental category of thought" (Ferretter 8), by comprehending six distinct stories as constitutive parts of a single narrative. As such, *Cloud Atlas* is a form of grand narrative, and necessarily a transcendental category, that is reminiscent of a religious text[36] in the way in which it creates a coherent and unified story of epic proportions, commenting on the deeds and sins of the human kind as well as envisioning its fate and future.

The Grand Narrative of the Human-Species in *CA*

CA offers, through its polyphonic form, a universal and timeless conception of humanity. In its attempt of formulating a globally valid and universally comprehensible grand narrative, *CA* centralizes an affirmative conception of humanity as a global, collective subject. As such, *Cloud Atlas* symbolizes an emancipatory possibility, or a utopian hope in overcoming social fragmentation and ahistorical relativism. The human 'soul', accordingly, in its transterritorial and transhistorical journeys in each chapter symbolizes the unification of hope against the looming catastrophes of a fragmented and bleak world. This is evident in the progression from Ewing to Zachry in terms of a continuous narrative of predacity and oppression, as well as the double ending that the narrative offers: the chronological ending of Zachry, as explained above, and the narrative ending of the novel that travels back in time to complete the narrative of Adam Ewing. The

[36] "Religious" here refers to the metaphysical superstructure of *CA* –especially in relation to its conception of cyclical time, and its supernatural elements such as reincarnation, which will be analyzed in more detail in the second part of the analysis.

two narratives are representative of the dystopia/utopia duality in *Cloud Atlas*: While the middle chapter ends with a dystopic conception of humanity as such (total collapse of the world civilizations), the final chapter reverses the dystopian and ends with the affirmation of hope and change through Adam Ewing (his decision to join the Abolitionist cause), effectively revealing the importance of the specific form of *CA*. The Adam Ewing chapter, as the narrative world that contains and subsumes all other narrative worlds, ends with a utopian potential. The emancipatory and hopeful representation of humanity in *CA* is therefore predicated on its nested polyphony that closes the narrative, unconventionally, in the past rather than the present or the future, while paradoxically reflecting hope for the present and future.

Nested Genres of *Cloud Atlas*

The Matryoshka structure of *CA* comprehends humanity as a single and continuous protagonist, and all of the chapters as a unified narrative about humanity as a collective subject. In other words, the whole novel appears as a single and continuous narrative whose protagonist should be grasped as the human subject, or humanity per se. Such interpretation enables the comprehension of the acts of fragmentation and unification that are at the core of the novel's form. What is more, this perspective explains why the novel appears as a cognitive map, or a grand narrative, of the global totality by relating each individual narrative to the whole and vice versa.

The grand narrative of humanity is predicated on how each chapter is interconnected to others. The first chapter, "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing" from 1850, is revealed to be a journal (65), in which the first person narrative voice depicts a colonial adventure plot. The first chapter is interrupted in mid-sentence (39) and the novel continues with the second narrative in which the first chapter is revealed to be a text read by the protagonist in the second chapter (66). The second chapter, as a result, contains its predecessor, subsuming it as a part of its own narrative world.

This nested polyphonic form is repeated until the narrative reaches the chronologically final (textually in the middle) chapter, "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After" (249-325). The second chapter, "Letters from Zedelghem", for instance, is comprised of letters written by an English musician, Robert Frobisher, to his friend and

lover Rufus Sixsmith. Frobisher's letters appear as part of an investigation in the third chapter, "Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery" (112), in which the protagonist starts reading them as a result of a chance encounter with Rufus Sixsmith (117). The fourth chapter, "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish", is in the form of a comedy in which a publisher is revealed to be reading the previous chapter as a thriller manuscript (157-8). In the following chapter, "An Orison of Sonmi-451", Cavendish's story is revealed to be a comedy movie that is watched by a genetically engineered clone called Sonmi-451 in a dystopian science fiction (243). And lastly, Sonmi-451's story appears to be a recording of an interview, which is watched by the protagonist in the last chapter (290-1), Zachry, whose narrative oscillates between post-apocalyptic drama and oral story telling, portraying myths and legends. In order to achieve the continuity of six distinct narratives, Mitchell initially interrupts each narrative to continue with another narrative except for the central narrative of "Slosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After", which works as a mirror. The central chapter helps to frame the overall narrative and leads to the resolution and narrative closure of the initially interrupted narratives one by one until the novel as a whole concludes with the same story it started, namely the chapter of "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing".

Yet, in contrast to its stylistic polyphony and narrative multiplicity, chapters collectively follow a chronological pattern (from the past (Adam Ewing) to the distant future (Zachry); and a narrative pattern (from the central conflict of the power struggle between the weak and the strong (with Adam Ewing's foundational self-reflection on whether humanity will progress into a utopian future to the clear rejection of this with the dystopian post-apocalyptic world of Zachry). As such, the novel is representative of a multiplicity of characters and worlds in its creation of a chronological narrative about humanity. The initial narrative of Adam Ewing starts in 1850 in Chatham Islands, detailing the liberation of Adam Ewing from a conniving and predatory character. Adam Ewing's naivety is abused by Dr. Goose who poisons him to steal his possessions. This is the chapter that establishes the novel's central question: Will humanity develop into a utopian coexistence or usher the dystopian collapse of civilizations through predatory behaviour? Each following chapter is a study of this central question. The second chapter, Robert Frobisher's personal letters from Brussels in 1931, references the same central question established in the previous chapter through the exploitative relationship between Frobisher

and his mentor: Frobisher's social precarity and poverty is abused by Ayrs, a composer who attempts to appropriate Frobisher's musical creation. The next chapter is set in California in 1975, detailing a journalist's fight against corporate wrongdoings and thereby again examining the same question: Luisa Rey is almost murdered by the gunman of an evil corporation. In the following chapter, the narrative travels to present day Britain and details the life of a publisher, whose 'light' power struggle with a criminal and his brother continues the exploration of the same question: Cavendish is put into a senile home against his will, experiencing a form of imprisonment. Later, the novel moves further into a dystopian future where environmental catastrophes and technological developments have changed the world and portrays the story of a clone called Sonmi-451: the strong seems to be 'winning' and the central question is almost fully answered. Sonmi-451 is a fabricant/clone who escapes imprisonment as a form of labour. The novel ends in a post-apocalyptic distant future where world civilizations have collapsed, the environment is irreversibly annihilated, and a primitive and tribal life survived in odd places around the world: ultimately, Zachry's peaceful tribe is murdered by the violent and cannibalistic Kona tribe. As the chronological ending, this chapter answers the question whether there is hope for humanity or not, clearly and depressingly, in the negative: Humanity is, inadvertently but necessarily and rapidly, "progressing" into its own annihilation. Zachry's totalized perception of his life, as the triple loss of civilization, environment and his own tribe, is therefore representative of the whole novel as the chapter that answers the novel's central question.

Contrastingly, the narrative does not end with Zachry's post-apocalyptic world. Since this chapter stands in the middle through which all the previous chapters reach their narrative closures in the reverse order (1-2-3-4-5-6-5-4-3-2-1), the novel answers the same question with a different answer: Utopia is possible because Adam Ewing's narrative, with his dedication to the Abolitionist cause and his hopeful stance, rejects Zachry's post-apocalyptic world. The polyphonic nested structure is therefore the stylistic tool that connects the apparently unrelated narratives and characters and brings about a utopian narrative closure. The interpretation of this form, especially regarding genre and media variations, are convincingly analyzed by Fredric Jameson in the *Antinomies of Realism,* in which he relates such variations to the novel's capacity to historicize and totalize its content

(303). It would be redundant to repeat some of Jameson's arguments here. However, employing his central argument of framing *Cloud Atlas* as a historical novel and relating it to the novel's capacity to imagine and comprehend the future as part of the history of now (*The Antimonies of Realism*, 313), enables the compression of the specific literary function of Mitchell's form: the post-apocalyptic future is, inevitably, part of our contemporaneity as much as the racist and oppressive history of colonialism.

Cloud Atlas, through its nested and recurrent polyphonic form, achieves at once three critical tasks that gives the novel its specific form as a cognitive map aiming to comprehend the global totality: contain the particularities of each narrative (equal emphasis on different worldviews and experiences), transcend spatial and temporal limits of each narrative (transcending the individual experience by multiplicity), and bringing the two together to create a coherent and unified narrative about humanity. In other words, as Schoene neatly puts it, *Cloud Atlas* "respects yet does not single out or fetishize the individual; it accommodates the self and to a certain degree assimilates it within a larger whole, yet it never sets it to work: neither the individual, nor the community of which it partakes, ever assumes a position of totality" (123). Yet, the form of the novel has a clearly identifiable totalizing principle: the utopian conception of humanity as a single, continuous and coherent subject and the world as a unified social entity, which necessitates the analysis of their literary functions.

The Utopian Potential: The Discourse of "One Humanity, One World"

CA's form portrays a totalized representation of humanity and the world that cognitively maps global contemporaneity and the individual's place and tasks in it: the grand narrative of humanity is portrayed to be a form of universal humanism, whose central implication is for the individual to fight oppression and predacity in order to create a better world and save humanity from societal collapse and possibly extinction. The narrative ending of Ewing therefore rejects Zachry's post-apocalyptic world and reinstates the utopian vision. *CA,* as a grand narrative of humanity, is hopeful and optimistic about the future.

Comprehending *Cloud Atlas* as a hopeful narrative about humanity is not without precedents. On the contrary, a substantial number of scholars praise how the narrative creates and reflects a positive global humanity in contrast to postmodern fragmentation. Schoene's enthusiastic appraisal of *Cloud Atlas* attests to the narrative's hopeful and positive effect on the reader: "Mitchell's fiction summons humanity's world-creative potential as well as its tragic (self-) destructiveness into a kind of literary communality which his readers are not only invited to relate to, but must partake of as inhabitants of one and the same world" (98). Although he uses a different terminology, Schoene seems to confirm that Mitchell's novel should be comprehended as a cognitive map of the global totality in its capacity to create "a sense of affinity" through its nested polyphony, which, he argues, translates "our experiential alienation into a sense of affinity" (99). Similarly, Childs and Green argue, the "networked quality of Mitchell's fiction creates a form appropriate for the interconnected, globalized times in which we live, buffeted among billions by the flows of the world market" (*Aesthetics* 157).

Others comprehend *Cloud Atlas* with an analogous optimism. On the one hand, the majority emphasizes the emancipatory, curative and hopeful implications of the novel. Schoene is a dominant example in that he frames Mitchell's narratives as the amalgamation of the global human and its communal potential (*The Cosmopolitan Novel*). Edwards, similarly, labels Mitchell's aesthetic as optimistic and humanistic, emphasizing that its nested polyphony creates "the continuation of some form of utopian alternative to our globalized, neoliberal present" (179). Dunlop also underlines how Mitchell's postmodern bricolage represents a hopeful and "oppositional politicized engagement" with postcoloniality (202). Following others, Machinal argues that one of the elements that links Mitchell's polyphonic narratives, and also which entails a utopian potential in the novel, is "the essence of humanity", which she argues to be the resistance to "any mode of power" (138). Others also agree with comprehending the novel as either potentially emancipatory or directly hopeful about humanity (O'Donnell, McCulloch, Hicks).

It is inherently explicable to reach such optimistic readings of *Cloud Atlas,* which I fully agree with as the analysis above shows. Indeed, the novel ends with the hopeful stance towards the future of humanity in the image of the naïve yet politically engaged character of Adam Ewing. What is perplexing, however, is the tendency for some scholars

to comprehend this optimism at face value while sidelining the chronological ending of the novel, in which all hope about humanity, and the utopian potential of the novel in general, is reduced to an individual's joy in telling stories in a collective dystopia.

There are of course several scholars, Edwards, McMorran, Ng, Clayton, Wiemann, to name a few, who divert the attention to the dystopian elements, most of which I will explore in the second part of the analysis, as their focus is not the novel's positive outlook. The criticism here is rather about how such dystopian elements are employed to still reach exclusively positive and hopeful readings about this grand narrative. Even with the dystopian and post-apocalyptic future in mind, some scholars maintain that Mitchell's novel is ultimately about how narratives and stories help us overcome the destructive forces of history, rendering it yet optimistic and curative (O'Donnell, McCulloch, Schoene) because, as a scholar asserts, it spares the reader from "the terror of history" (Hicks 55).

The potential of progressive political engagement, the curative effects of storytelling, the comprehension of the novel as a warning and a reminder of the global humanity whose members are connected through a vague and inexplicable communal feeling all lead to the fact that it is necessary, and indeed indispensable, to centralize these elements in the analysis. The experimental narrative form of *Cloud Atlas*, then, is an attempt to totalize a world system by relativizing different genres, different media, and different individual experiences of the world at a given time and location, to create a unified message.[37]

Yet, the overall structure of *Cloud Atlas* as a grand narrative about humanity is not the only element that unifies distinct narratives. Reincarnation, as another literary device that connects narratives, represents "the return not only of the individual but of historical epochs" (Clayton 57). Analyzing reincarnation, as a literary device, is necessary in order to fully comprehend the totalizing or historicizing perspective that *Cloud Atlas* seems to strive for. While each narrative has its individual characteristics and ideological implications, it is the device of reincarnation, in addition to its nested polyphony, that enables a meaningful interpretation of the novel as a whole. First, reincarnation is vital as

[37] The three elements, it should be noted, are fully integrated with each other in each given narrative as well as being a clear implication of the final interconnection of different narratives. This is most clear in the way in which each chapter is structurally interconnected: each chapter, as McMorran argues, is consumed by the following one (165).

it is representative of the idea of a religious or spiritual totality with regards to comprehending human existence. As a result of this quality, it appears as the narrative device that relativizes each individual experience by suggesting an immaterial continuity of the soul, which should be taken as the symbol of the personal experience of an individual subject. In other words, because the soul is suggested to migrate from one character to another -and in doing so, moving from one generic genre to another, and even from one medium to another- reincarnation epitomizes the attempt to totalize and relate individual and personal experience as well as different forms of individual and conflicting abstract knowledge of the global totality. The narrative, therefore, appears as the narrative of the human-subject traversing and experiencing different territories and historical times.

The overall form of *Cloud Atlas*, as the aesthetic of "networking between globally and historically dispersed characters" (Edwards 197), strives to conceptualize and comprehend a vast web of social relationships from different historical eras and locations into a single whole, which is why this section has put less focus on the details of individual chapters than the overall structure. The nested and recurrent polyphony of *Cloud Atlas* can be comprehended as a symbolic response to the postmodern and neoliberal suspicion of any universal, transcendent and totalizing perspective in understanding human life. At the same time, however, analyzing other literary elements, such as reincarnation, provides a new level of interpretation. In this regard, reincarnation and transmigrating souls seem to refer to a spiritual totalization. Further analysis of this element in connection with the novel's conception of time and its overall form, however, reveals the dominant ideologeme that informs the novel: the eternal recurrence of predacity, or the cyclical nature of predatory behavior of human beings and its timeless omnipresence, which indirectly implies an ideologically opposing statement to the novel's progressive attempt of transcending individualistic perspectives through the discourse of "one humanity and one world."

Part II: To Whom Does the Apocalypse Belong? Individualizing Utopia at the Expanse of Collectivizing Dystopia

The recursive and nested polyphonic structure of *Cloud Atlas* offers a symbolic resolution to the incomprehensibility of the global social totality. It concludes with a

correspondingly hopeful attitude as demonstrated by the last sentences of the novel, “Yet, what is any ocean but a multitude of drops?”, in response to the criticism from Ewing’s father-in-law that as an individual Ewing could not affect any change when he decides to commit to the Abolitionist cause (529). Even though the reader has already seen the imagined consequences of any attempt for social cohesion, or the future of humanity in the shape of the total collapse of the world in the middle chapter, the nested polyphonic structure enables a narrative closure with a symbolic hope. One scholar maintains that this final hope creates "a sharp sense of ethical clarity about the individual's obligations to a global totality" and that "[t]o self-identify as a part of a multitude is not to resign oneself to anonymous inaction. Rather, the novel's point is to do something in spite of being such a small part of the whole" (Mezey 12). On top of giving this message, another constitutive element of the novel, I argue, is that such individual acts are represented to be individual efforts that cannot transcend the collective dystopia of the middle chapter. In other words, Mitchell’s narrative should be comprehended as a figuration of, one and at the same time, the collectivization of dystopia, in the limited sense of the collapse of the world civilizations, and the individualization of utopia, referring to the possibility of social cohesion and rigorous moral obligations for the individual as a response to dystopia.

Correspondingly, some scholars, in contrast to optimistic readings, focus on the pessimism and the dystopian potential in *Cloud Atlas*. Although several scholars identify the bleak characteristics of the narrative, they nevertheless do not comprehend the pessimism in relation to the optimism. The fundamental problem, which perhaps excludes the possibility of understanding this contradictoriness of Mitchell’s narrative, is the omission of the target of the alleged optimism or pessimism. In other words, while scholars separately identify the utopian and dystopian elements in the novel, and furthermore, while some emphasize the pessimism that emerges even in contrast to the novel’s clear optimism, the majority misjudges the contradictory relationship between these elements in that they do not identify the implied agents and targets of utopia or dystopia.

The exception to such accounts is rare but still crucial. Wiemann, for instance, fleshes out the chasm between Mitchell’s “anti-historical-essentialism” and his hopeful cosmopolitanism by insisting on reading the utopian potential of a hopeful cosmopolitanism as a covert message that bypasses historical readings and as that which

leads to optimistic and universalistic perspectives (515). It would be redundant to repeat to what extent scholars responded to these debates in detail as Wiemann's article achieves this task concisely. However, it is worth noting that, according to Wiemann, it is this specific contradiction that produced the optimistic readings while leading other scholars, such as Bruce Robbins and Fredric Jameson, to question the overt optimism by relating it to the novel's fatalistic implications about human nature. In this regard, my analysis follows Robbins ("Cosmopolitanism in Time"), Jameson (*Antinomies* 313), Shoop and Ryan, as well as Wiemann in that the dystopian potentiality should be re-centralized to reveal the social meanings of the novel. Accordingly, the dichotomy between hopeful cosmopolitanism and essentialist fatalism becomes comprehensible, I argue, only when we identify the target or the source of the utopian and dystopian elements: while *Cloud Atlas* depicts a collective world where dystopia is suggested to be the inevitable and ultimate conclusion, the narrative's focus on individuals as the precursor of utopian potential creates a chasm. In other words, *Cloud Atlas* individualizes utopia at the expense of collectivizing dystopia.

As a result, it is necessary to answer why Ewing's final optimism, which contains the future of the narrative in itself, is contradictory at worst and perfunctory at best when it is related to the prospective future depicted in the novel. *Cloud Atlas* imagines optimism by acknowledging the fictionality and impossibility of such a hope because its nested and recurrent polyphonic structure concludes with the implication that under all circumstances and at all times predacity triumphs. If, as Robbins maintains, "the moral dilemmas [in *CA*] are always pretty much the same in every period" ("Cosmopolitanism in Time" 11), predacity emerges either as the underlying force behind the main conflicts in each chapter or directly through the statements of characters, always centralizing moral questions. In either case, predacity is the most dominant plotting device in *Cloud Atlas*, rendering it relevant for analysis. The analysis of predacity is predicated on the exploration of reincarnation as a narrative device in combination with the cyclical conception of time that the novel employs. Consequently, this part argues that even though the surface polyphony of the narrative seems optimistic, the framing device of reincarnation in combination with the recurrent conception of non-linear time renders *Cloud Atlas* as a radically fatalistic text, thereby unmasking the novel's covert monological discourse of the Eternal Return of

Predatory Behaviour as a central and predominant way of seeing and comprehending the world.

The Reincarnation of Predacity

Reincarnation, in addition to the nested and recurrent polyphony, is a narrative device that enables the transcendence of each individual narrative's or character's perspective. As such, reincarnation replicates the function of the overall form by unifying different narratives as a continuous story. Yet, unlike the form, which enables a hopeful narrative closure in the past with Ewing, reincarnation, as a chronological process, recentralizes Zachry's post-apocalyptic ending. With the help of the idea of a universal 'soul' migrating through time and space, reincarnation implies that there exists a universal human nature, which is reduced to a struggle between the altruistic and the predatory. Mitchell himself, in a BBC Radio 4 interview, states that "all of the main characters, except one, are reincarnations of the same soul in different bodies throughout the novel identified by a birthmark...that's just a symbol really of the universality of human nature" (Mitchell, "David Mitchell"). Relatedly, the *cloud* in the title of the novel "refers to the ever-changing manifestations of the Atlas, which is the fixed human nature which is always thus and ever shall be" (ibid.). For Mitchell, as he explicitly maintains in the interview, each chapter is the reincarnation of the same theme in a different context (ibid.). The novel develops this pattern by the comet shaped birthmark that all protagonists in the book appear to have, marking them as the continuous manifestations of a single soul – possibly starts with Adam Ewing, as he is the only protagonist who lacks the birthmark, and continues with Robert Frobisher (85), Luisa Rey (122), Timothy Cavendish (373), Sonmi-451 (451), Meronym (324).[38]

As explained in the first part, each chapter in *Cloud Atlas* depicts the ways in which the powerful preys on the powerless.[39] The literary device of reincarnation unifies these

[38] This study uses the British version of *CA,* in which Adam Ewing appears as the "original soul" without a birthmark. The US American version, as well as diverging from the British one in several other ways, contradicts this by referencing a birthmark in Adam Ewing. Ewing appears to have a birthmark in the movie adaption, too.

[39] For instance, Adam Ewing, from the first chapter, depicts the racial conflict between the Maori and Moriori (14) as well as the personal conflict between Adam Ewing and Dr. Goose who tries to poison him. Other chapters in *Cloud Atlas* include several instances of power struggle and abuse such as the tension between a

individual narratives of predacity as a single story. Since predacity is implied to be universal and timeless through the device of reincarnation, social Darwinism, or biological determinism, seems to be the philosophical source of the novel's unified narrative. The 'villains' of *Cloud Atlas* are cases in point. Henry Goose from the first chapter, for example, a clear villain type, one of whose 'Two Laws of Survival' is as follows: "The weak are meat the strong do eat" (508). The second Law of Survival, Goose says, is that "there is no second law. Eat or be eaten. That's it" (509). The same law is repeated by Goose when he finally intoxicates Adam Ewing enough to reach for his keys to steal Ewing's possession:

> To us, people aren't sacred beings crafted in the Almighty's image, no, people are joints of meat; diseased, leathery meat, yes, but meat ready for the skewer & the spit." He mimicked my usual voice, very well. " 'But why me, Henry, are we not friends?' Well, Adam, even friends are made of meat. 'Tis absurdly simple. I need money & in your trunk, I am told, is an entire estate, so I have killed you for it. Where is the mystery? […] the world is wicked. Maoris prey on Moriori, Whites prey on darker-hued cousins, fleas prey on mice, cats prey on rats, Christians on infidels, first mates on cabin boys, Death on the Living. 'The weak are meat, the strong do eat.' (523)

Even though such a drastically Darwinian perspective is purported to be limited to Goose, and as such to a clearly drawn villain type, the references to biological determinism and by extension to social Darwinism are not limited to the villains in the text. Other characters such as the protagonists, or heroes and heroines of each narrative, confirm the Darwinist perspective in conceptualizing life and the world even when they do pledge to act against it. Zachary, for example, believes "Sonmi'd been birthed by a god o' Smart named Darwin" (291), exemplifying to what extent Darwin's conceptualization of evolution remains to be persistent even in a mythical form. Or a minor character who is having a discussion with Robert Frobisher from the second chapter concludes decisively that some form of a social Darwinist understanding of life is prevalent in the novel:

> Another war is always coming, Robert. They are never properly extinguished. What sparks wars? The will to power, the backbone of human nature. The threat of violence, the fear of violence, or actual violence is the instrument of this dreadful

young artist and an established artist in the second chapter, or the conspiracies of an energy corporation to hide its illegal and catastrophic activities in the third chapter. The theme of predacity is particularly prevalent in the final chapters because they conclude with the portrayal of a dystopian future. In the chronologically last, structurally middle, chapter of *Cloud Atlas*, for instance, the theme of predacity reaches a conclusive point where humanity is reduced to primitivism through which predacity prevails in an ever more intense form in a post-apocalyptic world.

> will. You can see the will to power in bedrooms, kitchens, factories, unions, and the borders of states. Listen to this and remember it. […] *Thus it ever was, so ever shall it be* [emphasis added]. War, Robert, is one of humanity's two eternal companions [the other being diamonds]." (462)

Frobisher's stance on the same topic is not dissimilar, and most likely corresponds to the overall perspective of the narrative, by emphasizing the perils of such a supposedly 'natural' will to power that is easily translated into predacity or violent competition. Frobisher declares that science (or, scientific progress) is creating more ways to destroy one another, thereby instigating a process that will culminate into the extinction of the species, the answer to which, from the character quoted above, is as follows:

> Precisely. Our will to power, our science, and those v. faculties that elevated us from apes, to savages, to modern man, are the same faculties that'll snuff out Homo sapiens before this century is out! You'll probably live to see it happen, you fortunate son. What a symphonic crescendo that'll be, eh? (462)

Even the hopeful Ewing, before declaring his commitment to the abolitionist cause, confirms that the human nature is inherently predatory but that we can fight against this natural and inherent drive (529). Since protagonists of the novel seem to have the same "soul", and thereby represent a single subjectivity, all chapters must comprehend the world in a similar manner. Each chapter, in the light of this central element, could easily be interpreted as a thought experiment on how different groups of people or individuals prey on others at different times and under various circumstances. The result is persistently the same: there is always an individual or a group of people who prey on a less powerful individual or group, a message that is clear enough to contradict the novel's optimistic polyphony.

Predacity in *Cloud Atlas* is suggested to be human nature or simply a natural and inherent quality of life in general. As such, predacity should be comprehended as the organizational principle of the narrative totality of *Cloud Atlas*. One scholar proposes that the "different forms of global organization [in *Cloud Atlas*] depend not on a single variable, such as the Marxian stages of labor relations, but rather on a variety of forms of knowledge production, labor relations, state organization, and more" (Selisker 454). While it is possible to identify a different form of organization in each chapter, predacity helps to frame all of these different forms of organizations as distinctive expressions of a single category, thereby rendering the totalization of *Cloud Atlas* more comprehensible.

From a broader perspective, the novel implies that biological determinism transcends any universal category or perspective. Six completely different time periods and locations with completely different people, dissimilar backgrounds and cultures and with distinctive goals and values all revolve into a biblical struggle between the powerful and the powerless, or the 'good' and the 'bad'. This fight is dramatized in such diverse contexts that the result indicates a shared quality that is hinted to transcend specific historical or cultural conditions. As such, the implication that predacity is human nature and universal renders biological determinism as an ideologeme that informs *Cloud Atlas*, revealing the novel's central way of comprehending the world.

Neoliberalism as a Manifestation of Human Nature

The implication that predacity is human nature and universal reveals how *Cloud Atlas* replicates some of the discourse of neoliberal individualism in the way in which it suggests that competition is universal. It is thus not a coincidence that some of the proponents of social Darwinism, in quite a similar way, if not the same, to the proponents of neoliberalism, would, for example, suggest that "governments should not interfere with human competition by attempting to regulate the economy or cure social ills such as poverty" (Carlisle 611): the suggestion is instead to "advocate a laissez-faire political and economic system that favors competition and self-interest in social and business affairs" (ibid.). Mirroring the discourse of neoliberalism and social Darwinism, *Cloud Atlas* is deeply affected with the deterministic view of comprehending competition as a natural law, albeit without making a direct ethical judgement unlike the former two. In doing so, it denies its own attempt to symbolically offer hope in the last paragraph of the novel because, rather than problematizing neoliberalism as such, it reduces it to a symbol and time-specific manifestation of the human nature, which is depicted as predatory and competitive.

Contrastingly, *Cloud Atlas* does not glorify social Darwinism. Yet, by taking competition as a primary human quality and a universally constitutive element of humanity, it nevertheless replicates a biologically deterministic perspective. Such a perspective becomes more comprehensible when social Darwinism is comprehended as a collection of

"norms of human conduct [deduced] directly from evolutionary biology" which in turn lead to ethical, political and philosophical implications based on "the assumption that society is a competitive arena and that the evolution of society fits the Darwinian paradigm in its most individualistic form" (Bunnin and Yu 646). Although it is generally assumed that social Darwinism has a waning effect in comprehending social structures, the neoliberal focus on the individual and competitiveness, however, can be easily comprehended as an extension of some social Darwinist ideas. For instance, proponents of social Darwinism would oppose "any plan of social reform or welfare system to protect the weak or poor by claiming that such measures disturbed the natural order and hindered the progress of the human species," (ibid.), which easily corresponds to the individualistic and competitive neoliberal discourse that favours the free market to organize its own 'natural' order. Consequently, it is not implausible to relate the primacy of the free market and competitiveness in the neoliberal discourse to a reformed understanding of social Darwinism. As put by one scholar, for example, "social Darwinism relates closely with neoliberalism because of the confidence in the unrestrained free market to choose winners and losers and to determine value" (Tienken 305).

The difference between biological determinism and neoliberalism perhaps lies on the omission of the focus on humanity as a species in neoliberalism as postmodern discourse rejects the suggested teleology in biological determinism, and on the tendency to disregard individual experience as irrelevant in social Darwinism as biological determinism circumvents individuality with a species-focus. However, the fact that neoliberalism focuses on the individual and does not necessarily project an evolutionary and species-focused perspective does not diminish the affinity between neoliberalism and social Darwinism because of the shared prioritization of competitiveness as a universal and fundamental human quality in the organization of social life. The examples given above both from 'villains' and 'heroes/heroines' of *Cloud Atlas* are a testament to this argument because it identifies competitiveness both as the precursor of progress and the implied reason of the collapse of the 'civilized' world.

In so doing, Mitchell's ambitious narrative articulates the message that it is beyond our capacity to imagine a salvation for the human kind. The mirage that everything is connected is shattered by the preposition that every story is a repetition of one single story,

as a result of which the dystopian distant future becomes the only possible outcome. In other words, *Cloud Atlas* employs "a 'totalizing retrospect' which can resurrect the present as history via the invention of a future" (Deckard 24). As such, it is fitting to end the story with what the novel originally starts with, the Adam Ewing narrative, in that the hope is contained and suggested as a salvation, a symbolic hope, with the confident assumption that, in the end, humanity will not be able to resolve its social conflicts and continue to prey on each other, which will naturally, logically and appropriately lead to the destruction of the environment and the collapse of world civilizations. Consequently, the cognitive map of late capitalism entails comprehending the contemporary social totality of neoliberalism as an inherent implication of human nature. This is why Jameson argues that such a cognitive mapping is predicated on comprehending the global totality as a manifestation of human nature: "the system (now grasped as the free market)" is part of human nature" ("Politics of Utopia" 35). The addition of the cyclical conception of time in *CA* emboldens this perspective as an ontological claim.

Cyclical Time and the Omnipresence of Predacity as The Will to Power

The fact that Mitchell's narrative proposes predacity as the precursor of neoliberalism, as well as the total destruction of the world, appears through two central elements in the novel: the cyclical conceptualization of time through a nested polyphonic form and references to the Nietzschean idea of the Eternal Recurrence. As analyzed in detail before, the individual chapters of *Cloud Atlas* are interconnected to one another through a nested structure, that is, each narrative is contained in another, rendering a clearly identifiable cyclical conception of time as several other scholars also argue (Jameson, Wiemann, Ng, Childs and Green, Shoop and Ryan). When we take the subsequent temporal structure of the novel into account, the relapse back to the original story in Adam Ewing, time should be comprehended more as a circle rather than chronological as would be the case if we take the mirror chapter of "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After" as the succession of different periods after one another.

The cyclical time becomes more relevant when it is related to the plot device of reincarnation and transmigrating souls as they have affinities with each other in some forms of the eastern philosophies of Buddhism and Hinduism, concentrated in the concept of

'samsara', as "the endless cycle of birth and rebirth" (Blackburn 50). Metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul, "whereby upon death the soul takes up residence in a new body […] embedded in the Indian notion of samsara," (ibid. 241) therefore strengthens the conception of cyclical time in *Cloud Atlas.*

It is not only in the eastern philosophies that *Cloud Atlas* identifies its source and support of a cyclical conception of time. The Nietzschean idea of the Eternal Recurrence is another element that emboldens the idea of recurrent time in the narrative. Eternal Recurrence (or Return) refers to the "image of cycles in which the universe returns to re-enact exactly the same course of events," an idea common to many religions as well as ancient Greeks including the Stoics (ibid. 157). The central importance of the concept, however, is derived from Nietzsche, who conceptualized it in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883). Although it is beyond the scope of this study to analyze Nietzsche's philosophy thoroughly, it suffices here to note that there are certain, and relevant, implications of the concept of the eternal recurrence: on the one hand, eternal recurrence is predicated upon the idea that existence is an incessant repetition of the same processes ad infinitum. On the other hand, this conception perceives linear progress as part of the cyclical transformation of barbarism to civilization, and to barbarism again, repeating to infinity. As such, Nietzschean eternal recurrence is both a cosmological theory, a grand narrative to reframe human life and history, and also an antiteleological system as it rejects the idea of linear development "toward some final and perfect end" (Bunnin and Yu 224). Such claims necessitate the implication that "all purposes, aims, and means are only different modes expressing a single principle inherent in the world, that is, the will to power" (ibid.). In other words, the will to power, "an insatiable desire to manifest power and a drive to employ and exercise power" which is "characterized by self-overcoming and sublimation", is the organizing principle of the totality of life that Nietzsche envisions (ibid. 744).

Although it can be argued that Nietzsche's idea of the will to power does not necessarily translate to an urge to enslave others, at the core of the concept lies an acceptance and appreciation of the conflicting forces such as harmony and destruction in attributing meaning to existence. For Nietzsche, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, for instance, "life cannot function without destruction, without death" (Halpern 205). This Dionysian world, as Nietzsche comprehends it, is "eternally self-creating and eternally self-

destroying, that is, a world characterized by the process of eternal recurrence" (Bunnin and Yu 184).

As well as mirroring a similar understanding of cyclical time through its nested and recurrent form, *Cloud Atlas* directly reflects on this conception of time through its characters. Sachs, a scientist who is planning to reveal the illegal and destructive secrets of a corporation in the thriller section of the novel, "Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery", imagines a model of time as "an infinite matryoshka doll of painted moments, each "shell" (the present) encased inside a nest of "shells" (previous presents)" (409). *Cloud Atlas* does not have an infinite matryoshka doll structure, but by having six narratives that are interconnected with each other temporally, it nonetheless reflects this very conception of time.

The questionable connotation inherent in both the concepts of samsara and eternal recurrence is a tendency to disregard the possibility of any kind of progress, thereby devaluing and delegitimizing any attempt to better human life collectively rather than individually. In Nietzsche's philosophy, this takes the shape of rejecting egalitarianism as for him such a system would render humans insipid because "societies in which egalitarian value systems predominate thwart the creation of the kind of people Nietzsche is interested in" (Wilson 216) unlike "societies in which aristocratic value systems hold sway are necessary for the flourishing of the kind of people he is interested in (those of higher rank)" (ibid. 215). Individual self-betterment is valorized while collective-betterment is rendered a fallacy. In other words, "human beings can only reach their highest potential in highly stratified societies which bow before order of rank; and on the other egalitarian values have a deadening effect on life when they come to have precedence" (ibid. 216). It is beyond the scope of this analysis to further analyze the details of these arguments, however, it is necessary to identify the prioritization of individual self-betterment in contrast to collective progress as part of the constitutive elements of the eternal recurrence. That is to say, the idea of eternal recurrence at once legitimizes the so-called cycle of stratified social structures developing to a certain extent, that is, civilization, and reverting back to simpler forms, that is, barbarism. This cyclical understanding of change is at the core of *Cloud Atlas* both in its structure and thematic focus.

It is therefore not surprising to identify direct references to the Nietzschean Eternal Recurrence in *Cloud Atlas*. Ayrs, for instance, Robert Frobisher's mentor, is portrayed as working on a symphony that is "named Eternal Recurrence in honor of his beloved Nietzsche" (84). Frobisher himself, before his death, also reflects a similar affinity with the eternal recurrence and the cyclical nature of time:

> Rome'll decline and fall again, Cortés'll lay Tenochtitlán to waste again, and later, Ewing will sail again, Adrian'll be blown to pieces again, you and I'll sleep under Corsican stars again, I'll come to Bruges again, fall in and out of love with Eva again, you'll read this letter again, the sun'll grow cold again. Nietzsche's gramophone record. When it ends, the Old One plays it again, for an eternity of eternities. (490)

Nietzsche's gramophone is a direct reference to the novel itself, as Frobisher's own musical composition has the title of "Cloud Atlas Sextet". As mentioned before, it is again not the villains or a certain type of exploitative character who centralizes Nietzschean will to power. In the above example, both Ayrs, as the predatory character, and Frobisher, as the character who becomes the target of predacity and abuse –and necessarily as the common "soul" of the protagonists of the other chapters, centralize the conception of cyclical time. Such an understanding of time contains in itself both the past and the future. It appoints meaning to the rise and fall of civilizations. More crucially though, just as it is implied in the quote above, it comforts the 'soul' to know that suffering and pain are part of the same endless cycle of existence, sidelining the specific anguish of individual experience.

The Eternal Recurrence of Predacity as the Grand Narrative of Humanity

It should now be possible to frame the ensuing ideologeme that is dominant in *Cloud Atlas* as The Eternal Recurrence of Predacity. Supported and formed by its nested and recurrent polyphonic structure, and exploring predacity as a common plotting device in each chapter, *Cloud Atlas* envisions its own version of a social totality in the shape of comprehending predacity as the natural and universal quality of human beings. As McMorran contends, the nested structure which leads to a "metaphor of narratological consumption and predacity fits the themes as well as the structure of *Cloud Atlas*" (165). To a certain extent, while each genre consumes the other, people prey on other people, repeatedly telling the same story of the alleged human nature both thematically and formally.

Such a view leads directly to a deterministic and fatalistic view of human life that is best reflected in the middle chapter, “Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After”, in the shape of the total collapse of the civilization and a revert back to ‘simpler’ forms of social organization, as demonstrated by the tribal life of the characters as well as the narrative’s switch to oral story telling as its literary form. Therefore, it is appropriate that this final post-apocalyptic narrative remains as the mirror chapter in the structure of the overall novel, enabling the narrative to circumvent its directly depressing and dystopian connotations for the reader. *Cloud Atlas*, as a form of “cultural cannibalism” (Knepper 99), is highly self-referential about its false hope reflected in the last words of Adam Ewing chapter that is quoted at the beginning of this section. Ewing’s final hope of seeing himself as part of a multitude of drops in the ocean of society is a response to his imagined correspondence with his father in law, who insists that whoever challenges “the many-headed hydra of human nature must pay a world of pain & his family must pay it along with him! & only as you gasp your dying breath shall you understand, your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean!” (529). The naturalness, or the biological determinism and social fatalism, is emboldened first by the following question: ““Why fight the “natural” (oh, weaselly word!) order of things?”, and then by Ewing’s response: because “one fine day, a purely predatory world shall consume itself” (528). Ewing’s following remark bolsters the dystopian: “Is this the doom written within our nature?” (ibid.).

What Ewing, and through Ewing the narrative, admits here is that predacity is a natural and universal quality of life against which we can fight as individuals, or maybe as groups, or against which we must fight if we want our species not to go extinct. Why there is a focus and worry about the destruction of the human species, especially coming from a very devoted Christian, is not clarified in the narrative as this is an inevitable outcome prophesied in several religions in the form of an apocalypse. What is clarified here is the ingenuous predisposition that we have already read in the form of the post-apocalyptic world of Zachry in the middle chapter. The species will probably not go extinct, but the cycle of the rise and fall, the greatness and the pettiness of the human species will continue ad infinitum:

> If we believe that humanity may transcend tooth & claw, if we believe divers races & creeds can share this world as peaceably as the orphans share their candlenut tree, if we believe leaders must be just, violence muzzled, power accountable & the riches of the Earth & its Oceans shared equitably, such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived. (528)

Consequently, the nested and recurrent polyphonic form of *Cloud Atlas* creates a grand narrative aiming to cognitively map the global totality. A totality, whose organizing principle is predacity in human beings as a natural and universal quality, that projects a fatalistic and deterministic projection for both the now and the future of the human kind, rather manifestly comprehending dystopia as a collective category.

Utopia as an Individual Experience: The Ideology of the "One Humanity and One World" Discourse

At the end of the narrative, Ewing admits to himself and his father-in-law that even when every emancipatory possibility fails, "the moneyed, the privileged, the fortunate, shall not fare so badly in this world" (528). Ewing, in the context of this fatalistic way of comprehending the world, is nevertheless a hopeful figure because he chooses to fight social equity rather than dwell on the "natural" progression of humanity into destruction. Yet, Ewing's hope and individual utopia is comprehensible better now in relation to the first part of this analysis and novel's discourse of "one humanity and one world." The questions remain: Is it possible to define this conception of humanity? Or In light of the fatalistic discourse of the eternal recurrence of predacity, how can one comprehend Ewing's hope in relation to Zachry's world of destruction?

Schoene, in his enthusiastic analysis of *Cloud Atlas* and why it appears as a positive literary sample of our times, contends that Mitchell's goal "is not to project a particular destiny for the whole of humanity; rather, he does his best to open his work up to the structure of the world as he finds it, capturing its existential exposure and finitude" (98). Schoene's analysis needs further deciphering. The contradiction that lies at the heart of his argument is the irreconcilability of a hopeful future, which is predicated on the individual, with the collectivization of dystopia in the distant future. Accordingly, several questions remain unanswered: if there are shared qualities that define the global human, and if, as Schoene and others argue, these qualities can be summarized as the humanity's creative potential as well as its self-destructive drive, how can we comprehend the chronological

time of the narrative? If the dystopian future is predicated on the self-destructive drive of humanity, is the hope simply a manifestation of its creative potential? How do we then reconcile the fact that the worlds depicted in the narrative are radically different while similar in certain ways?

As much as it is hopeful and promising, the idea of comprehending the world as one and the same for all is an ideological construct that denies and masks the intricacies of social inequity and levels out uneven power relations between the privileged few and the dispossessed majority. Relatedly, Schoene, for instance, puts forward that in "Mitchell's representation human history emerges as riven by recurrent mutual exploitation, be it in the form of conquest accompanied by genocide and enslavement, colonization, and the building of Empire, or the threat of ever-increasing glomicity and corporatization" (117). Notice how his interpretation trivializes the still-current and globally destructive repercussions of the Empire with the help of even more, but imaginary, destructive elements of a dystopian future. The only one and the same world that we can reasonably talk about in Schoene's terms is either the world of the Western bourgeois intellectual (not excluding this study) who finds solace in vague hopes about overcoming their inherent complicity with the global system that is predicated on the very existence of radically dissimilar worlds, that is, dissimilar material conditions for various people. Or, to extend the category, it is the world of the Western literary consumer who voyeuristically awakens to the injustices of this world by acknowledging that the world has always been unjust and will remain to be so for infinity. It is in this sense, the discourse of "one humanity and one world," or cosmopolitanism as Schoene argues, emboldens the eternal recurrence of predacity by comfortably leveling out the sources of contemporary forms of power abuses such as colonialism and racism.

For Schoene, "[a]ll individuality [in *Cloud Atlas*] amounts to is the production of different variations on one and the same theme of contemporary human existence" (99). Further, even though Mitchell explicitly emphasizes the recurrent comet-shaped birthmark as the symbol of human nature, Schoene suggests comprehending it as a "general rather than specific symbol of humanity's potential for communal affiliation across the generations" (116). Schoene, however, does not clarify the nature and details of this argument. What exactly is meant by this communal affiliation? How does this communal

affiliation occur? What is meant by the same theme of contemporary human existence? Sufficiently vague, these statements demonstrate the fact that the grand narrative of *Cloud Atlas* should be comprehended as a cognitive map for the Western consumer in the ways in which it removes the associated burden of awakening to the realization that they are part of uneven and fundamentally different worlds. What this means is that Mitchell's narrative, and Schoene's analysis, by insisting on the idea of a human nature that is repeating itself, levels out the atrocities of, say, British colonial history with the dystopian horrors of a distant future. In other words, the ideologeme of the eternal recurrence appears as a cognitive map, and necessarily as a form of class-consciousness, whose function is to alleviate the problems of global capitalism for the benefit of the privileged consumer. Furthermore, Schoene misjudges how reincarnation, and the idea of one soul transmigrating through centuries, individualizes the possibility of change and therefore the optimism that might arise out of utopian elements while rejecting any collective potential. Mitchell, and Schoene in this sense, only reflects the *Zeitgeist* of neoliberalism: the individualization of utopia and the collectivization of dystopia.

Whose World is the "One World," Who is the "One Human"?

In direct contrast to the globality and the oneness of humanity, in the sense Schoene uses and Mitchell implies, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that we, as the human kind, do not possess a "being-in-common" (Schoene 116) meaningful enough to offer any solace to social inequity. Schoene's conception is not dissimilar to Mitchell's fatalistic and biological determinism in that the vague idea of communal affiliation that emerges through polyphony is an ideological construct to remedy the guilt and anxiety instigated by the reality of the conflict between us (Western bourgeois academics, specifically, or the cultured consumer in general) and the less privileged (such as the factory workers who, under conditions not dissimilar to slavery[40], produce our laptops with which we write our academic articles, or the child labour that provides the batteries of our electronic devices[41], as elements that are ushering the real environmental collapse that is fictionalized in *CA*). If

[40] See *Modern Slavery: A Global Perspective* (2017) by Sidharth Kara.

[41] For more, see "Supply and demand: Human trafficking in the global economy" by Sidharth Kara.

the cognitive map of the global totality can be comprehended as a form of class-consciousness, it is relevant to identify a matching correspondence between Mitchell's narrative and Schoene's academic legitimization. While Schoene does this on the academic level, Mitchell's narrative does it on the aesthetic realm. This is, however, different than saying *CA* is a conclusively dystopian and complicit text. On the contrary, hope and utopian potential do indeed exist in the narrative. The only difference is that the narrative, just like our neoliberal world, collectivizes dystopia while individualizing utopia, which is very different than reflecting a positive future for the humanity as a collective being.

Utopia in this sense can be better comprehended as the "exoneration of entrenched power, the red lines of which are not to be crossed" (Mieville, "Introduction"). Mitchell's narrative and the exclusively positive reception of some scholars, like Schoene and others, should therefore be re-contextualized as the valorization of a certain way of seeing the world, whose primary, and perhaps inadvertent, implication is to accept the status quo. It is therefore necessary to reject this vague and ideologically problematic conception of "togetherness". Instead, as China Mieville aptly puts forward, we must accept that there are 'sides' and struggle in our "non-togetherness" (ibid.), which creates the possibility of challenging the prevalence of individualized utopias. Indeed, we do live in the dual existence of utopia and dystopia: under neoliberalism, utopia is, for instance, for the corporations, which blatantly abuse democracy and accelerate the destruction of the environment, reduce the poor and the disenfranchised to dispensable objects while being subsidized for their losses by the masses. The dystopia of the collective is indispensable to the global totality of neoliberalism in that the utopia of the few is predicated on the dystopia of the collective.[42] Utopia is therefore always limited, and a mirage that includes in itself the dystopia just like in Mitchell's narrative. It is detrimental, therefore, that we remind ourselves that "we live in utopia; it just isn't ours" (ibid.) and Mitchell's novel can help us,

[42] A clear manifestation of this process is becoming evermore visible in relation to environmental changes. A relevant study by Oxfam, presented in the media briefing titled "EXTREME CARBON INEQUALITY: Why the Paris climate deal must put the poorest, lowest emitting and most vulnerable people first" states that "the poorest half of the global population – around 3.5 billion people – are responsible for only around 10% of total global emissions attributed to individual consumption, yet live overwhelmingly in the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Around 50% of these emissions meanwhile can be attributed to the richest 10% of people around the world, who have average carbon footprints 11 times as high as the poorest half of the population, and 60 times as high as the poorest 10%. The average footprint of the richest
1% of people globally could be 175 times that of the poorest 10%". For more, see <https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/mb-extreme-carbon-inequality-021215-en.pdf>.

inadvertently, to awaken to this realization rather than vague, and complicit, conceptualizations of the future of the human kind and the hope for a better future than our current global nightmare of environmental destruction.

Chapter Six

"A story is a whole mass": The Spectrum of Socialization, Scottish Nation-ness and Historical Loneliness in *And The Land Lay Still* as Narrative Negotiations of Neoliberal Individualism

Introduction

> How do you introduce someone who never knew her father to her grandfather? How do you make the connections between Don and Marjory and Ellen and Kirsty that must be made, that will be made? He doesn't yet know. But the connections, more of them even than he can know or imagine at this moment – with Catriona and Billy and beyond, with the wife and daughter Jack had – the connections will be made, and he understands that it has fallen to him to make them. (671)
>
> A story is a whole mass of details that come together and form a narrative. Without that coming together they're just a lot of wee pieces. So what happens if you take a story and break it into its wee pieces? When you put it back together again, will it turn out the same way? (40)

At the end of the novel, Mike Pendreich, whose perspective ends the narrative during the photographic exhibition of Mike's father, ruminates on the complexity of social connections that many characters in the novel are not aware of (the first quotation above). Reflecting his late father's exhibition, and the novel itself, both of which portray a panorama of diverse characters from the second half of the 20th Century in Scotland, Mike appears to have acquired the role of unifying a vast collection of characters in order to generate a coherent social whole. Mike's role, as it is revealed at the end, mirrors the overall premise of the novel: unifying a large set of characters and plotlines into a meaningful narrative totality. Mike's subjectivity parallels the novel for they are both predicated on a revived sense of re-socialization and a return to the community after a long period of relative social detachment and fragmentation.

This final paragraph of the novel, therefore, succinctly summarizes the novel's ultimate message: the rejection of the understanding of the self as isolated and atomized, and the need to embrace the social as constitutive of the self. Mike's re-socialization and

task of connecting all these people who appear in his father's photographs is a testament to the narrative's attempt to transcend the isolated individual, thereby identifying Robertson's narrative as the only novel in this study that clearly challenges neoliberal individualism. To this end, Robertson's narrative re-imagines Scotland in its revived nation-ness that has the ultimate purpose of concretizing and diversifying Scottish nation-ness as a collective. This is linked to the novel's overall polyphonic form that connects the ordinary, private and individual with the largely social, political and cultural issues and developments. The second quotation above, from the first chapter of the novel, is a testament to this claim.

By re-imagining Scotland, in other words, *ATLLS* reveals the conviction that the social collective, including other people, and political and social issues, is a constitutive element of the self. While clearly polyphonic both in content and form, the novel centralizes two strands of narrative that simultaneously explore two opposite ends of the spectrum of socialization in the context of Scottish nation-ness: on the one hand, Mike's story narrativizes the development of the self through socialization with a clear emphasis on his transition from living a relatively isolated and detached life to re-socializing with his community that is predicated on a concrete and diverse sense of Scottish nation-ness.

On the other hand, Jack Gordon's desocialization narrative, which is based on a character who represents the opposite side of the socialization spectrum, narrativizes the logical conclusion of the idea of atomized and isolated individual that is prevalent in neoliberalism and that which symbolizes the spectre of monolithic, exclusive and abstract nationalism. While Mike's narrative closes with a revived sense of belonging and subjectivity, Jack is portrayed to reach a communion with nature and exit the space of the social. The dichotomous quality between these two narratives is fundamental in understanding Robertson's narrative in the ways in which it problematizes the relationship between the individual and society. Consequently, this chapter will first focus on how the narrative re-imagines Scottish nation-ness in its attempt to transcend the individualized focus of neoliberalism by juxtaposing the individual with the social and historical. Building up on the first, the second part will demonstrate how even the alleged inevitability of Jack's isolation and communion with nature is fundamentally presented as a social issue, or as the symbolic negotiation of the neoliberal understanding of the isolated self by narrativizing its logical conclusion of self-inflicted death. Indeed, *ATLLS* implies that social isolation

that is predicated on an absolute understanding of individualism equals the annihilation of subjectivity while re-socialization provides the vitality for the individual self to thrive, thereby clearly rejecting the atomized individual of neoliberalism.

Part I: Re-imagining Scotland: *And The Land Lay Still* as a Reconfiguration of Scottish Nation-ness

ATLLS as a Paradigmatic Polyphonic Novel

If *White Teeth* appears as the subversion of family as a collective, *Capital* as the denaturalization of the conception of society merely in its relation to the economy, and *Cloud Atlas* as the emergence of a global totality, James Robertson's 2010 novel *And The Land Lay Still* is essentially the novel that both subverts and re-imagines the idea of nation-ness. Central to the collective of the nation is the exploration of equally valid voices that the novel portrays and consistently reconnects in increasingly intricate ways. In a similar fashion to *White Teeth*, *Capital*, and *Cloud Atlas,* Robertson's text is comprised of a multiplicity of equally valid voices, a diversity of plots and stylistic devices and formal qualities in its portrayal of a complex polyphony. Unlike previous novels, however, it moves freely from the city to the nation, to the larger collective of the United Kingdom and its relation to the world more directly, and by juxtaposing these different levels of focus. Amid its polyphony is a clear attention to the political life of private individuals, and the larger political history of Scotland, the UK and the world, a quality that historicizes the rise of neoliberal individualism through multiple strands of political narratives.

ATLLS is a paradigmatic polyphonic novel in terms of its content, form, style, and historicizing focus on both private individuals and the changing political and cultural landscape of Scotland. In terms of its content, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that polyphony in *ATLLS* is encyclopedic: it not only explores largely and directly political issues such as the struggle for Scottish independence and the economic imperatives that inform the political landscape from a global perspective, it also has a diverse collection of protagonists from different social backgrounds, classes, nationalities, genders, whose narratives delve into the most private and mundane details of the novel's protagonists.

In addition to its multiplicity of voices and worldviews, the novel has a rich variety of stylistic devices and forms. It employs first, second and third-person narrative voices,

the language of folk tales, and variations of various novel genres among others. It is comprised of six main chapters preceded with six intermediary short ruminations on an enigmatic character's journey, the social outcast Jack Gordon. The first three chapters have the capacity to appear as, in the following order, a *Bildungsroman*, a spy fiction, and a social problem novel while the following chapters have more internal variety both in terms of content and form, bringing together the first three chapters and following up with their narrative strands.

It is therefore feasible to categorize it as a state of the nation novel that holds Scotland as its object, or alternatively as a historical novel depicting the period after the Second World War to present day. However, due to its encyclopedic intricacy, Robertson's novel is better defined as a polyphonic novel, which translates the private to the public, juxtaposes the political with the mundane, and locates the national in the global and vice versa. The panoramic polyphony of the narrative links its diverse protagonists and plots easily and directly to the problematization of social, political and historical changes. Neoliberal individualism, as both a national and a global force, is one of the central issues of Robertson's narrative, not only through the narrativization of Thatcher's policies, although she appears almost as a protagonist in her own right, but also through several other directly political actors and issues.

Scotland as the Protagonist of *ATLLS*

And the Land Lay Still is a novel of many faces but it is clearly a critical reaction to the social, political and historical changes in the post-war period through the lens of Scotland more than anything else. The nation in the novel manifests itself in diverse forms but more crucially it appears as the collective that the narrative both creates and subverts at the same time. Nation, as an imagined, exclusive, monolithic and abstract collective, is the opposite of the collective the novel itself reimagines in its diversity, complexity and concreteness. In subverting one of the central relational concepts of neoliberalism, *ATLLS* is a symbolic, though limited to the aesthetic realm, resolution to the incapacity of nation as a functioning collective. What is more, not only its protagonists but also its plots are matters of the social because of consistently interconnecting each and every protagonist's narrative with others, thereby emphasizing the social nature of human life. More

specifically, Robertson's text envisions the transcendence of the atomized and neoliberal understanding of subjectivity by re-imagining the nation retrospectively and by consistently translating the private to the public, the collective to the individual.

In order to comprehend Robertson's narrative as the transcendence of the isolated conception of the self, it is first necessary to explore the comprehension of nation-ness as a collective because the novel, first, concretizes Scottish nation-ness by comprehending the private and the political as inseparable and inherently co-dependent, thereby strengthening it in contrast to abstract understanding of the nation. Second, Robertson envisions the diversification of Scottish nation-ness through incorporating Scottish folkloric elements on par with older heroic and exclusive understandings of Scottishness by replacing them with a diverse set of non-heroic, or *ordinary*, characters.

Nation as an Imagined, Abstract, Exclusive and Monolithic Collective

One of the most relevant ways of analyzing nation in *ATLLS* is to centralize the main framing device of the photographic exhibition, with which the narrative commences. The reader is informed at the beginning that the protagonist of the novel, Michael Pendreich, is given the apparently daunting task of writing an introduction for the catalogue of his father's posthumous exhibition. The exhibition, The Angus Angle: Fifty Years of Scottish Life, 1947-1997, includes 200 photographs selected by Mike, comprising an "astonishing record of life –mostly Scottish life – in the second half of the century" (27). The narrative hints at several reasons why Mike is struggling to pen an introduction, including the frustration of being nowhere near as successful a photographer as his father. This task, however and more crucially, is not radically different than what Robertson aims to achieve in the novel: How does one connect the individual stories of the figures that appear in late Pendreich's photographs to Scotland, to the period starting after the end of the Second World War and ending more or less with the establishment of the Scottish Parliament? Similarly, how can a novel translate the stories of private individuals to the public or is it possible to juxtapose the collective social, political, cultural histories with the immediate and limited experience of individuals? While Mike strives to create a coherent and collective narrative of the photographs he selects for the exhibition, the narrative itself introduces several characters that are later revealed to be the very subjects

in the aforementioned photographs. In a way, the exhibition, as much as the novel, convenes all the other protagonists and minor characters with a clear resistance to fragmentation, attempting to comprehend the diversity of Scotland in a coherent and interconnected manner.

Mike, at the very end of the narrative, manages to write the introduction, and apparently succeeds at it, too by historicizing the question through the lens of the Scottish people. The novel itself as a whole, however, is as much of an answer to that question in the ways in which it reimagines the nation retrospectively that accommodates a more progressive and emancipatory perspective. The final scene unmasks the novel as the introduction itself: Robertson employs this postmodern playfulness to reconstruct and authenticate rather than deconstruct or relativize the social and the historical. In other words, by rejecting the perception of literary history as a supermarket of various literary forms that are merely deconstructed or played with, *ATLLS* historicizes its postmodernism, thereby strengthening the present as a social and historical phenomenon. Similar to Homi K. Bhabha's comprehension of nation as a cultural construction and "as a form of social and textual affiliation" (292), nation in *ATLLS* appears as a "narrative strategy" or as a revived narration and dissemination (ibid.). In order to explore Robertson's reconfiguration of the Scottish nation-ness, it is necessary to comprehend the problematic connotations of nation-ness that the novel appears to oppose symbolically.

Nation, both as the abstract concept and the concrete collective, is the protagonist of *ATLLS*. This double character of nation manifests itself in the novel as the interplay between the two central strands of the narrative. The narrative on Mike, on the one hand, with all of its interconnected protagonists, portrays a concrete web of relationships, a socially realist account of what comprises a nation. On the other hand, the elusive and short intermediary chapters that portray Jack Gordon, a figure that has some form of an elusive connection with a lot of the characters in the novel, manifests the abstractness of the nation, if we, as Irvine Welsh suggests, comprehend those elusive chapters about Jack Gordon as "the spectre of nationalism".

There is an undeniable conflict between these two narratives in the ways in which they represent the two extreme poles of the spectrum of socialization as well as two opposing views of nation-ness. As Mike's narrative identifies him increasingly in relation

to others and everything else, Jack disappears from the world of human beings and reaches a communion with the non-human, the nature. But even his de-socialization is revealed to be, though not as explicitly and as directly, a matter of the social, which will be discussed more in detail in the second part. This central differentiation plays a key role in analyzing different understandings of nation in *ATLLS*.

Nation is, on the one hand, abstract, monolithic and exclusive, and on the other, if we understand it to represent the people of a given country in the larger sense of a society, can be instrumentalized to comprehend a form of collective that is more concrete, non-monolithic and inclusive, as is the case in the novel. The panoramic polyphony of the novel, construed as a social, political and cultural history of its protagonists, and necessarily of Scotland, is the form that negotiates the abstract, monolithic and exclusive understanding of nation. It not only relates seemingly unconnected characters to one another, but also juxtaposes the private with the collective, the personal with the largely political, the local with the global. In reimagining a socially realist understanding of nation as a collective, *ATLLS* manifests an opposition to the understanding of the self as isolated and free from social and historical factors, even in the extreme isolation of Jack. The collective polyphony therefore replaces the relationality of the nation and identifies a form of the social, or the national for that matter, that is reimagined in a relatively concrete, non-monolithic and inclusive manner. *ATLLS* at once subverts the nation as a collective and recreates a symbolic resolution by reimagining a nation in flux with different characteristics than it is assumed to have. Nation, however, is an elusive concept, which requires the analysis of the ways in which they are used here.

Definitions of Nation

If, as Paul James in *Nation Formation* claims, nation in the late twentieth century "is lived as a series of remarkable contradictions," (xi) *ATLLS* appears as an emancipatory negotiation of these conflicts. As the 20th century went through unprecedented levels of social fragmentation, nation has remained to be a central concept in understanding the social. In Benedict Anderson's words, it is perhaps still "the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (3), albeit with contradictions. At the core of these conflicts are the so-called slow death of nationalism as opposed to its revival at times of

social fragmentation; or nation as both a concrete relationship between compatriots in contrast to its abstraction of people beyond immediate and direct associations and nationally public figures (James xi). The concept of nation as an abstract community, 'nation of strangers', emerges from such contradictions in Jason's exploration for people experience the interrelation of nation "more through the abstracting mediations of mass communications and the commodity market than" on the level of direct and face-to-face encounters (ibid. xii).

On a broader level and much earlier than Jason, Anderson emphasizes the contradictions of nation-ness, a broader term incorporating nation, nationalism and nationality, at several instances in *Imagined Communities*, which are helpful in defining nation as abstract, monolithic and exclusive. The first of these contradictions refers to the recent development of nations in contrast to their perception as ancient, which helps us to understand its abstractness and separation from material conditions of its existence. The second is the tendency to take nationality as universal in contrast to framing its individual manifestation as unique, which also partially explains its exclusive character in its inability to claim exclusivity while simultaneously appearing as a universal category.

The monolithic character of nation is perhaps better delineated with its affinity with religious cultural systems in imagining a single linguistic system. The national language as an extension of the national culture grasps nation as a monolithic community. However, as Anderson's analysis of the rise of national print-languages shows, details of which are not relevant to this analysis, national language projects another conflict surrounding nation-ness: "almost all modern self-conceived nations - and also nation-states - have 'national print-languages', many of them have these languages in common, and in others only a tiny fraction of the population 'uses' the national language in conversation or on paper" (46). It goes without saying that the idea of a nation based on a monolithic culture fails to include the real pluralism of a given nation, thereby rendering it exclusive. Language as part of this process is symptomatic of the problematic relationality of nation itself.

The abstract, limited and monolithic nation, therefore, is inherently problematic and burdened with conflicts. This convolution, however, is the key to comprehending the concept of nation, which crystallizes in yet another contradictory account of nation-ness as elaborated upon in Anderson's analysis. The conflict between the political power of

nationalisms and "their philosophical poverty and even incoherence" (5) is a central issue in understanding its (dis-)functionality because one can find self-contradictory remarks even from nationalists themselves as Anderson puts it. Tom Nairn, who Anderson describes as sympathetic to nationalism, states, for instance:

> 'Nationalism' is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as 'neurosis' in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable. (346)

Nairn's statement is of particular importance here as he is a Scottish scholar who has extensively written on nationalism. More crucially, he is a proponent of nationalism as a democratic right, which necessitates the exploration of the context of this quotation.

While Anderson uses the quotation to emphasize another conflict regarding the concept of nationalism, by framing Nairn as sympathetic to nationalism and his negative descriptions of it, he does not include the following two sentences that follow the quotation above: "Socialism over a sufficiently large part of the world may represent the necessary condition for a cure one day. But that is hazardous speculation" (ibid.). The addition of these two sentences does not in any way refute Anderson's claims or the soundness of his arguments. However, by remembering this connection, it becomes possible to claim that Nairn's reading of nationalism as neurosis should be linked to what Anderson means by "imagined" nations, thereby also creating the affinity to Fredric Jameson's reading of narrative as a socially symbolic act. Both Nairn and Jameson, unsurprisingly, use Freudian metaphors and the methodology, borrowed from psychoanalysis, of taking one supposedly unrelated apparition as the manifestation of a repressed and often subconscious problem.

Nairn's speculative offer of socialism as the condition for a possible remedy for the neurosis of nationalism necessitates comprehending nation as another narrative fiction that emerges as a socially symbolic act in response to social conflicts. In Nairn's case, the conflicts refer to more or less the spread of capitalism, neo-imperialism and growing global social inequality. Based on this argument, *ATLLS* appears as a negotiation of the failure of the specific understanding of nation as described above. This also links directly to Anderson's identification of the novel and newspaper as forms that spread and imagine the idea of a community, specifically the nation as well (25-36) in the ways in which it makes it conceivable to read *ATLLS* as an act of re-imagining the nation. The influence of these

forms persists in relation to their capacity for comprehending the social. This suggests that imagining the nation is an ongoing process, hardly reaching a definite state of clarity, which, however, does not invalidate the attempts to define it for the purposes of analysis.

Nation, a thoroughly conflicted and elusive collective, becomes more comprehensible with Anderson's formulation of it as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). As the predecessor to Jason's conception of nation as an abstract community, Anderson refers to the fact that most of the members of a given nation "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them" while simultaneously forming a symbolic communion with them in their minds (ibid.). Nation is imagined as limited because it is not envisioned to include every human being; as sovereign, because it dreams of "being free"; and lastly as a community, because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (ibid. 7).

More crucially though, Anderson proposes this as a tentative definition based on the argument that a concept of community should be analyzed not in relation to its authenticity or falsity but "by the style in which they are imagined" (ibid. 6). The value of this argument becomes clear in the analysis of *ATLLS*. Once we comprehend nation as an imagined community it becomes possible to argue that it can be re-imagined, and *ATLLS* appears exactly as the narrativization of this re-imagination: the Scottish nation with additional conditions that ameliorate the concept's conventional shortcomings.

Nation Re-imagined as a Concrete and Diverse Collective

Following from the aforementioned narrative device of framing the narrative with a photographic exhibition, it becomes now possible to add the additional qualities to this imagined community. *ATLLS* reimagines Scottish people as a political community that is relatively concrete, non-monolithic and inclusive but still in flux. The concretization appears through its constant juxtaposition of the private with the political through its socially realist character depictions, be it fictional or symbolic of real life persons. Even at times when the characters do not associate directly or horizontally, the panoramic polyphony establishes the connections between them. By utilizing a rich variety of style

and form, the novel also projects a non-monolithic culture, most specifically illuminated through language variety and use of Scottish folkloric elements. Specifically, literary forms in *ATLLS,* as discursive strategies, have the role of "constituting the nation" (Helgerson 6). Further, Scottish nation-ness is portrayed to be more inclusive for it acknowledges both the ambivalent relationship between Scotland and England and the eventual, yet disappointingly limited, visibility of immigrants, let alone the subtle but consistent exploration of sexual politics, for instance, through Mike's homosexuality. All of these elements necessarily relate to the novel's consistent focus on creating a totalized narrative by juxtaposing the private with the public.

Transcending the Self, Concretizing the Social: Juxtaposing the Private and the Public

No other novel in this study has probably attracted the label of 'political' in reviews and public perception as much as *ATLLS*. This is hardly surprising given that the novel easily maneuvers through the then-contemporary issues such as Thatcherism, the destruction of old industries and the Welfare State, let alone the more immediate and local political struggle for Scottish independence. Yet, it is surprising to see that there is a disproportionate focus on the political, in the sense of day-to-day public and national politics, that is, politics as inevitably detached from the private and the mundane. *ATLLS*, of course, accounts for a political history as well, but not so much as a separate field or an isolated sphere from the supposedly 'non-political' and private lives of its protagonists.

Saturated with narratives that appear in a historical vacuum, that is, not directly mentioning any day-to-day political issues, the reviewer, as much as the general reader, notices the political in the novel first and foremost as a novelty. *ATLLS*, however, defies this kind of perception for it does not portray an exclusive political history per se: this is not a history text chronologically documenting the political upheavals in Scotland; neither does it merely focus on the ventures of powerful political actors. It is also not a political or a historical novel in the fullest sense as its focus on 'non-political' private individuals attests to.

On the contrary, the novel's strength lies in its portrayal of a political, social and cultural history in complete osmosis with the private and mundane details of ordinary and

non-heroic characters, which is better comprehended through its polyphony. In Robertson's narrative, the social whole is comprised of the private seeping into to the public, and the collective crawling into the crevices of the private. A structurally challenging task, yet Robertson orchestrates it through a narrative continuum, a mutual dance of two supposedly separate spheres, and a reverberation of the private realm into the public one, and vice versa. It is thus necessary to understand its portrayal as more holistic, or totalizing, than political.

In several instances, while a protagonist is ruminating on a personal, private and immediate issue, mainly irrelevant to the collective of the town, let alone the city or the country, the larger issues of day-to-day politics and collective problems seep through the narrative into the private. In a structured stream of consciousness, for instance, the 1970s appear both as the "decade when the world changed" and the years that Mike "himself changed, came to know who he was" (101). What follows is several paragraphs describing the 1970s as the time when people realized that "oil […] would not last forever," because of its transformation into something "more than just fuel" in the Middle East, the Americas or the North Sea, to be followed with the detection of oil in Scottish waters, its importance for the United Kingdom, the devolution, Harold Wilson stepping down as Prime Minister and Jim Callaghan succeeding him, and Thatcher becoming the Conservative leader (101-3). All of this political, social and cultural perspective is immediately followed by an abrupt change into the private, explaining the last cheque that Mike receives from his father, and his decision to travel to Paris. The lack of any attempt to provide a transition between the two, apart from identifying change as a general thematic thread, is significant as it clearly rejects an easy separation of the individual from the social background.

In the second part, as another example, Don reminds himself to be more courageous as "he needed to be a good husband and father," a sentiment that is immediately followed by the following sentences:

> The country had changed and it needed to go on changing. The Labour government was still there, but only just. At the election in February its majority had been cut to single figures, and it had watered down or abandoned its plans for taking more key industries into public ownership. People were tired of austerity and blamed it on the government. (162)

This quotation is followed by a lengthy and detailed account of the political panorama of the time; and then the narrative, right after the sentence "Even Churchill wouldn't dare turn

the clock back," focuses back on Don and his pregnant wife: "The bairn inside Liz kicked again, and Don wondered who they would be bringing into the world" (163). Apart from all of its directly political, social and cultural discussions, *ATLLS* is at the same time attempting to create a totalized social picture by consistently juxtaposing the public with the private, as seen in the jump from minute details of election results to Don's unborn daughter kicking in the womb.

This is a pattern repeated all throughout the narrative, augmented, if not made possible, with a rich variety of form, narrative voice, and stylistic devices. For only through a transformation from first-person narrative voice to an omniscient one, or from the paradigm of a *Bildungsroman* to the pattern of a spy fiction, the narrative gets closer to portraying a complete picture of its subject matter, which is the social organism situated in Scotland, or the Scottish nation-ness in yet closer proximity to its real and lived complexity. Constant references to the political underline the emergence of the social whole, not the political in the limited connotation of the term referring to politicians, policy makers and day-to-day political events, but the social organism, and the place of the private and the self in the constitution of this totality.

It is worth here remembering Slavoj Žižek's interpretation of the movie *Children of Men*, in which he details the relationship between the individual and their capacity to transcend the background as a narrative trope of capitalism (Žižek and Cuarón). *Children of Men,* Žižek maintains, represents the "ideological despair of late capitalism, of a society without history" or "the very lack of meaningful historical experience" which becomes manifest in the absolute separation of subjectivity from the social and historical background. The details of the movie are not relevant but it suffices here to note that, according to Žižek, *Children of Men* has a clear realism and mimetic power in the ways in which it depicts the impossibility of its protagonist to transcend the *background* for the individual is not free from the social or the historical.

In this light, *ATLLS* demonstrates an analogous realistic perspective by rejecting the possibility of the individual to transcend the background, or specifically the social and the historical conditions that are intertwined with the individual. *ATLLS* juxtaposes many different literary forms, characters, and worldviews to emphasize the fact that the background is constitutive of the individual and rejects the neoliberal conception of

subjectivity that conceives the possibility of the individual to transcend the social and historical. In doing so, *ATLLS* can easily be comprehended as the concretization of Scottish nation-ness in contrast to its abstract understandings, while also leading to the reimagination of the nation as more diverse as these are represented to be constitutive elements of the self.

The Social in the Private: Polyphony as a Totalizing and Diversifying Narrative Device

In addition to the concretization of the nation, Robertson's narrative reimagines the nation as more diverse and pluralistic rather than monolithic. Analogous to this characteristic is its polyphonic structure, which therefore necessitates a closer analysis of the overall panoramic polyphony although the complexity of the novel defies easy descriptions. One practical perspective, however, appears through centralizing the first three chapters, as they are mostly focused on individual protagonists, in contrast to the remaining chapters, which employ an internally pluralistic and polyphonic structure and content.

The first three parts of the novel introduce three protagonists separately in their own right. Each part has a distinct narrative structure, as much as being comprised of a specific language, stylistic devices, and an individual narrative mode that stands on its own. In other words, the first three parts of the novel are self-contained narratives with distinct structural characteristics while all three portray more or less the same time period and related, if not identical, political, social and cultural issues through the lens of private protagonists.

The first part has elements of a coming-of-age narrative focusing on Michael Pendreich, both as the portrait of a struggling artist, and as a queer *Bildungsroman*. As Michael's narrative is brought to a conclusion only later in other parts, these elements remain as stylistic variety and do not form the whole structure of the novel. Michael's story is nevertheless more significant as it helps to frame the narrative as a coherent text.

Michael, now in his fifties, lives at the cottage inherited from his father and is surrounded with his father's artistic oeuvre, and relatively isolated from the rest of the country apart from his unspecified romantic/sexual relationship with a character named Murdo. Michael spends his days taking landscape photographs (an important element as

we will discuss later) without a clear purpose or more as a meditative activity and struggles with the task of writing the catalogue introduction for the posthumous exhibition of his father, Angus Pendreich. Amid this present image, Michael ponders his childhood, starting from the 1950s; and his troubled family history is portrayed through his mother's rigidity and his father's artistic superiority in comparison to him, as well as his early years in Edinburgh. Next to Mike's personal history, however, the largely impersonal political issues appear as equally crucial and central. Moreover, Mike's story narrativizes socialization itself as part and constitutive of the individual experience. More crucially, however, Mike's narrative initiates the diversification of Scottish nation-ness through incorporating folkloric elements and centralizing 'ordinary' citizens in contrast to the monolithic and abstract comprehension of the nation through the lens of a limited number of 'heroes' and public figures.

A clear example of this juxtaposition appears through the character of Jean. Michael, hoping to be inspired about the introduction he finds challenging to write, travels to Edinburgh to visit Jean Barbour, a former lover of Angus and a long-time friend to Michael. Jean is an enigmatic character and a storyteller who could "keep that crowd entranced, but because of the voice she told them in" (32). The narrative introduces other stylistic elements as exemplified through some of her stories. More significantly, as the mentor and friend to Michael, Jean Barbour appears as the reincarnation of John Barbour, the 14th Century Scottish poet, one of the major, if not the first, literary figures to write in Scots. John Barbour is widely known for *The Bruce*, a narrative epic that has "the political history of the Scottish struggle for independence" as its background (Barbour). *The Bruce* is "a harshly realistic story of recent events in the style of the chansons de geste rather than a romance of chivalry" with a style that is "vigorous, direct, and admirably suited to the matter" (ibid.). It is suggested that John Barbour "took some trouble to collect firsthand accounts of the Battle of Bannockburn, which is the highlight of the poem" (ibid.). Battle of Bannockburn is a "decisive battle in Scottish history whereby the Scots under Robert I (the Bruce) defeated the English under Edward II, expanding Robert's territory and influence" (ibid.).

Jean, as a reconfiguration of John Barbour, a pattern repeated throughout the novel, also collects firsthand accounts from the people who fought for Scottish independence. Her

flat functions as a gathering place where left leaning intellectuals, students and artists, among others, come together to tell stories, sing Scottish and Gaelic folk songs and create a microcosm that stand against "Thatcherism, London rule, the destruction of old industries, the assault on Welfare State, the poll tax" (35-6). Jean Barbour's symbolic function is therefore a testament to Robertson's attempt of re-imagining the nation as a more inclusive collective by replacing the male figure of the first poet to write in Scots with the female figure to become the centre of Scottish folk tales and ballads although the narrative also emphasizes a hesitancy to comprehend gender as exclusively significant: Jean's stories "worked for women as well as men, it didn't matter if you were gay or straight or didn't know what you were, as plenty didn't back then" (32). To a certain extent, the shift from the institutionalized character of *The Bruce*, as part of the official history, to the everyday history of the 'ordinary' people is part of reimagining the nation as much as continuing the tradition of writing the firsthand accounts of ordinary citizens back into history. They, of course, appear at different conjunctions of history and thereby have different characteristics. However, Robertson's choice of a female character to have the spirit of John Barbour and the significance of his work, first Scots narrative epic and the inclusion of personal accounts, is linked to his task of reimagining the nation as more inclusive than the male-centric exclusivity of the former. More crucial here, however, is the translocation of the narrative from the relatively heroic to the everyday and folkloric language because "it wasn't just the sound of sex that folk heard, maybe it was also the sound of natural, non-bookish wisdom, that special female quality which, in times past, made some men fear some women and cast them as witches" (32). The diversification of Scottish nation-ness is further elaborated upon in the following chapters.

Jack Gordon through the eyes of Don Lennie: The Importance of Folklore in Scottish Nation-ness

The novel's second part follows Don Lennie, from as early as 1950s to the disappearance of his friend Jack Gordon, who is yet to be revealed as the enigmatic character of the intermediary chapters. Unlike the first part, Don's narrative follows a chronological and linear narrative with a correspondingly lucid language. Similar to the first part, however, the political is omnipresent in the second part, with the change of

perspective from Michael and his milieu to Don's post-war working class setting. In other words, the second part covers the same historical period, more or less, but has a different narrative form than the first one, creating a comparative focus. However, the constant juxtaposition of the political, social and cultural with the private, as the shared element in two chapters, limits the comparison to the realm of the self and the private and enlarges it by the imminent comparison of middle-class Mike's and working-class Don's perspectives of history.

Central to Don's narrative is his drinking partner and enigmatic friend Jack Gordon. In clear contrast to Mike and Don, Jack is apparently a steadfast Scottish nationalist, married to an English woman and rarely reveals anything about his past. As a former prisoner of war in Japan, he is a deeply traumatized figure who, slowly but surely, disappears from the social setting. He takes long walks in nature and has episodes in which he seems not to be able to communicate his troubled past. Don's narrative follows his marriage and the birth of his first son as much as his attempt to help or understand Jack. At the end of the first part, Jack disappears. What is significant here is Jack's rare confession of his time as a prisoner of war. He reveals that the only thing that kept him going, as well as his fellows, was a renewed and constant appreciation of Scotland in his head:

> It was home that kept me going really. Scotland. I dreamed about it, when I woke up I thought about it. I tried to remember everything I could down to the finest detail. Mountains I'd climbed, rivers I'd fished, towns I'd visited. I Thought of walks I'd done and I did them again. (152)

Jack recites Robert Burns and thinks of Scotland, and the first time he successfully recited the poem "Tam o' Shanter," he says: "I felt I'd won this tremendous victory. It wasn't that I'd defeated the poem; somehow by learning it I'd beaten the Japs" (156). This is a significant confession whose meaning becomes comprehensible in relation to Jean Barbour and what she signifies, and the folkloric elements that are used to diversify the conception of Scottish nation-ness. Just like the folk songs and tales of Jean Barbour, as much as John Barbour, the poems of Burns are significant in the narrative in the ways in which they provide the opportunity to transcend the self and connect with the collective that is re-imagined as more diverse than usually assumed through the introduction of the local, folkloric, and 'ordinary' in contrast to the heroic.

What is more striking is the nature of the aforementioned Burns poem, which is not stated in the narrative. Based on Jack's statement and without knowing the poem itself, the general assumption would easily imagine a nationalistic poem, or at least a poem that incites the national character that would lead Jack to think he had defeated the Japanese. "Tam o' Shanter," however, is one of the most well-known Burns poems and is perhaps better described as a social commentary, whose fundamental quality in relation to *ATLLS* is its use of 'ordinary people' such as the protagonist Tam and its final comic-ironic moralizing. In addition to Tam, Jack remembers "To a Mouse," (156) another famous Burns poem, which is also significant both for its celebration of ordinary life and compassion.

Burns, as a poet deeply interested in folk songs, appears in Jack's memories as the source for Scotland's rich and diverse culture. It is necessary here to note that it is not "Scots Wha Hae" that leads Jack to defeat the Japanese in his head, also a song by Burns, which is significant for its status as one of the unofficial Scottish national anthems, and as the more popular one until late 1960s (Harvie). "Scots Wha Hae" differs from the previous poems significantly, not so much as a direct call to Scottish national identity but its relevance to Jean (and John) Barbour. The significance here is again the move to the ordinary from the heroic. "Scots Wha Hae" has the form of a speech given by Robert the Bruce before the Battle of Bannockburn, thereby reaffirming the pattern started by Jean Barbour. "Tam o' Shanter" is then another link to the narrative's persistent task of re-imagining the nation in an inclusive, local and 'ordinary' manner, in the sense of acknowledging the mundane and private as opposed to the heroic and public in imagining a community. Robertson's text seems to strive for the same effect. The novel itself as a whole is an account of the real people of Scotland. The pit disaster in the fictional town of Borlonsgie as described in the novel, for instance, bears "a close resemblance to real events that took place at Knockshinnoch Colliery in Ayrshire in September 1950, and some of the words of the survivors are adapted from testimony given by miners at Knochshinnoch," in Robertson's own words (Acknowledgements 673). To a certain extent, reimagining Scotland is also a testament to the narrative's attempt to transcend the isolated individual by diversifying the levels of socialization, which becomes clearer with the following chapter's focus on a character, who is more or less detached from the society.

Hallucinatory Ruminations of Peter James Bond in contrast to the Ecstasy of the Folkloric

In the third part, Robertson employs elements of a spy novel through the character of Peter (James) Bond. Peter is an alcoholic and an outcast, living at the edge of the society. In his hallucinatory ruminations with imaginary characters, he reminisces his own take of the same time period of the former chapters, and always references the political, social and cultural background of Scotland. He is suggested to be some sort of a spy, installed by the English to gather intelligence on the Scottish independence movement. In a manner corresponding to his psychological breakdown, the text adopts a highly confusing and at times inaccessible narrative style. His speech is in the vernacular and most of the time lacks any punctual separation from his thoughts. Later, it is also revealed that he attended Jean's meetings and eventually was confronted by her. He also links to the second chapter as he is revealed to be Jack's niece.

At some point in the narrative, he becomes involved in the cover-up of the murder of Willie McRae, the former vice chair of SNP and a lawyer, who, according to the official investigation at the time, was considered to have committed suicide. This element is yet another evidence to Robertson's reimagination in that it narrativizes another strand of nationalism. It is therefore necessary here to refer to the issue in relation to its recent reappearance in Scotland. Five years after the publication of the novel, the aforementioned case was reassessed according to new evidence and affirmed the official conclusion and denied any involvement from MI5 (Delamore and Semple). Robertson leaves any speculation of this incident to the reader but it should be acknowledged that this is probably more a narrative device to substantiate Peter Bond's psychological deterioration than a reference to it as a historical fact. The narrative form that includes ghost apparitions and hallucinatory dialogues render this argument more plausible. Yet, the reference is still crucial as it portrays to what extent the other, England, was employed in imagining the nation. More crucially, it can also be grasped as the portrayal of yet another problematic trait, populist nationalism; the relapse to unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, which sets a stark contrast to the conviviality and sociality of previous folkloric elements. Unlike other characters, even including Jack, Peter Bond is almost completely isolated from the

collective. And unlike the conviviality offered through the folkloric elements, his isolation corresponds to his hallucinatory dialogues, or more specifically monologues. His monologues represent the closed, monadic consciousness. Indeed, folklore represents here healing, care, community and collectivity while Peter suffers from hallucinations, exemplifying once again the repercussions of absolute transcendence of the social background, as explained before. In comparison to other characters, therefore, his de-socialized existence is narrativized as the logical conclusion of the idea of the isolated individual. The neoliberal understanding of the self as atomized and separated from the social whole is thereby challenged with the dichotomy between, for example, Mike and Peter.

Diversifying the Nation

The third chapter is also crucial as the last individual narrative that focuses solely on a single protagonist because the following chapters are more panoramic rather than having an individual focus. The following three parts of the novel continue the narrative strands initiated by the first three as well as introducing new characters. In addition, the missing parts from the first three are revealed in the remaining three sections. Mike and his friends' parents, or Don and Jack's children, and Peter's family background are given much more detail in the remaining parts while extending the circle of relationality with additional characters, thereby strengthening the relationship between the individual and their social background.

Similar to the preceding chapters, although they do not have separate and singular focalizations, the last parts have stylistic variety. Don's second wife, for instance, tells the rest of their story in a first-person narrative voice (624); or when the narrative switches back to portraying Peter Bond's story, it again replicates the third part's language (610). It is superfluous to refer to these narratives one by one both because that would need a dedicated study of its own but also it is more important to follow the patterns instigated by the first three parts for the purposes of this analysis.

It is nevertheless important to emphasize that the juxtaposition of the private with the public continues until the end of the novel without any setback. Analogously, the task of re-imagining the nation in its rich complexity is further emphasized. Billy, Don's son,

for instance, develops a pronounced interest in Scots dialect (632) while his partner Catriona, Mike's girlfriend before he embraces his homosexuality, learns, or re-learns, Gaelic and is firm in her Gaelic identity that was kept hidden from her for years (ibid.). Catriona's narrative is significant for it suggests a nation-ness or social whole that is not based on ethnicity but rather cultural association and political resistance to London rule.

Similarly, Saleem Kahn and his family are clear manifestations of the novel's overall attempt of re-imagining Scotland as more inclusive and diverse. Saleem "had been a migrant all of his adult life" and settles in Wharryburn, where he becomes friends with Don. The choice of describing the growing racism through Don's focalization is of course significant as Don represents the narrative's re-imagination of inclusiveness in contrast to some of the residents of Wharryburn, where the idea of an inclusive re-imagination is revealed to be limited to the aesthetic realm, perhaps not completely but quite strikingly. Amid growing racism and social ostracism of the Khans as people of colour and when one of the locals complain about the Khans, "Aye, the wife hardly speaks any English," about which Don ruminates as follows:

> What was the point, exactly? The point was the pigment of the Khans' skin. The well-meaning people called them 'coloured'. Most folk called them Pakis, darkies. The shop had always been 'the shop' or 'the store' or 'Reid's'. Now it was 'the Paki's. (435)

Consequently, by focalizing Don's perspective, it becomes feasible to imagine a future where such issues reach a resolution. It is Don, after all, who enjoys Mr Khan's language while others make fun of them:

> he spoke English with deliberate care and accuracy, with some of the intonations white people found amusing to imitate. If there was a Manchester accent in there it had been overlaid with a Glaswegian one. If there was a Glaswegian it was mixed with the strange vowels of England. This was another thing Don enjoyed about Mr Kahn: the rich, rolling gutturals of his speech, and the way it moved across frontiers and continents. (437)

As the narrative suggests, however, the idea of an inclusive nation has its limits, too. This is best exemplified by the limited, yet retrospectively emphatic, representation of people of colour in the above quotations. Moreover, the concept of nation does not necessarily relate to the discussion of ethnicity in its specificity.

Nonetheless, the narrative continues the arduous task of connecting everything, and more often than not in a generally sympathetic manner. Saleem is another character that

appears in the Angus exhibition and therefore is also invited to the exhibition; he appears, after all, as a member of the Scottish nation-ness depicted in the novel. This is the point where the ambivalence and self-referentiality of the narrative in terms of its limited capacity in re-imagining Scotland becomes manifest. On the one hand, we have the sympathetic, welcoming and inclusive attitude from Don and the narrative itself; and on the other, the obvious hostility towards the Khans. The hostility is, however, partly ameliorated by the final conviviality of the exhibition, which employs the photograph of Don and Khan together as the primary image printed on the invitations, centralizing diversity once again.

As the narrative slowly establishes all the connections between a plethora of characters through the last three parts, it reaches its final moment in the exhibition mentioned above. Mike gives an unprepared speech. His speech focuses on a David Octavius Hill painting on the Disruption of 1843, which depicts the ministers "who walked out of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland that day to found the Free Church," including four hundred and fifty-seven faces (640). Mike reminds the audience that some people who helped with the set up the Church were not there at the day and not included in the painting but were eventually photographed years later: "the whole exercise is a like a reverse of the process of airbrushing people *out* of history" (ibid.). The picture is not historically accurate, "but a representation of a moment, a movement, in history" (ibid.). The thread of writing people back into history is repeated on another level through this painting and via the community depicted in the novel, revealing how Scottish nation-ness in *ATLLS* appears in a "discursive form" (Helgerson 11).

At the gathering for the exhibition, "a surprising number of people" sing "dust-laden Scottish songs," in Don's English wife Marjory's words, "with evangelical gusto" (657). It is hard to transfer the conviviality, the joy of the songs they sing to these pages but one stanza would speak for itself in substantiating how Robertson wants to re-imagine this collective as full of compassion and free of regressive elements of the idea of nation-ness:

> I'm happy in the summertime beneath the bricht blue sky,
> No thinking in the morning at nicht whaur I'm tae lie,
> In bothy, byre or onywhere or oot amang the hay
> And if the weather treats me weel, I'm happy aw the day. (658)

The folkloric is, for one final time, celebrated and is represented as both the creator and effect of this collective. The folkloric is the form and language that the collective comprehends itself, similar to the novel comprehending Scottish nation-ness. As such, the novel is a re-energized attempt, and perhaps an indispensable one, to reimagine the collective of Scotland with additional qualities. Moreover, linking to the overall focus of this study, it provides a symbolic resolution to the problem of social fragmentation and neoliberal individualism by transcending the atomized self through socialization or connecting the apparently invisible links between various characters and plots. In a way, remembering Anderson's identification of the novel as one of the precursors of the creation of the national identity, Robertson's text can be read as an emancipatory intervention to limited, exclusive and monolithic understanding of the nation.

Similarly, it appears that it is Mike's overt task as the curator, (as well as Jean's lifelong commitment as a storyteller, Don's character as a friend to Jack etc.) and Robertson's overall aim as the writer, to establish the connections between all of these people. The last paragraph detailing Mike's ruminations is a testament to this element when he is staring at the image of the enigmatic Jack Gordon who symbolizes the other side of the spectrum in his utter de-socialization and as the complete opposite of Mike's re-socialization narrative:

> He turns from the image of Dounreay, of the strange, intense man – Jack, Don called him – that he met on the road all those years ago, and looks back across the room, emptying now, to a cluster of people preparing to go to Jean's: Walter and Gavin, Ellen and Kirsty, some others. He thinks, where do you begin? How do you tell a man that he has a granddaughter he never knew existed? How do you introduce someone who never knew her father to her grandfather? How do you make the connections between Don and Marjory and Ellen and Kirsty that must be made, that will be made? He doesn't yet know. But the connections, more of them even than he can know or imagine at this moment – with Catriona and Billy and beyond, with the wife and daughter Jack had – the connections will be made, and he understands it has fallen to him to make them. (671).

It is quite clear that Robertson identifies in himself the same responsibility to connect the unknown, which is best evidenced with the story of Jack transforming into a nameless wanderer. But this is not a task Robertson isolates for himself: this novel is about all the figures who establish these connections: Angus as the photographer, Jean as the storyteller, Don as the compassionate fellow of others, Mike as the curator, Hill as the painter and Robertson as the writer who brings all these elements together. It is nowhere near perfect,

and nowhere near representative of the real complexity of a country but perhaps as extensive as it can get in a novel.

If John Barbour gave voice to Scotland's struggle for independence against England, if Robert Burns challenged the cultural hegemony of the English by collecting folkloric songs and tales, if Jean Barbour continues the task of recording and retelling the diverse stories of Scotland, and if David Octavius Hill painted people into history, Robertson is the one who wrote the account of the real people that stood against the invasion of Thatcher's destructive policies, and neoliberal individualism in general by rejecting the comprehension of the individual as isolated and separated from the social collective. In other words, through the concretization and diversification of Scotland, *ATLLS* transcends the limited and regressive understandings of nation-ness as well as transcending the idea of the detached selfhood, thereby narrativizing an emancipatory and progressive reaction to neoliberal individualism. Nation in this specific sense is a liberating idea: If, as Ernest Renan notes, nation is "a soul, a spiritual principle", which is comprised of the past, "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" and the present, "the desire to live together, the desire to continue to invest in the heritage" (19), *ATLLS* appears as the literary manifestation of this conception. The reconstruction of nation in *ATTLS* is nothing less than "a daily plebiscite", or in other words, the literary negotiation of "consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life" (ibid.).

PART II: The Natural Sublime as a Negotiation of Desocialization and the Historical Loneliness of Neoliberalism

The main six parts of *ATLLS* manifests a renewed sense of Scottish nation-ness as a re-imagined collective. Alternating between different narrative voices, forms, languages and stylistic devices, the overall polyphonic structure posits a relationality that transcends the atomized individual and challenges the exclusive characteristics of nationalism. Nowhere near being a complete portrayal of Scotland in the post-war period, *ATLLS* is nevertheless a political, social and cultural history of Scotland that is intertwined with the ordinary and mundane lives of its characters. It is therefore a narrative that explores different degrees of relationality, firstly through Mike, Don and Peter; and later through people who are in one way or another related to them. Among these characters Jack Gordon

stands out as the symbol of extreme social isolation whose narrative necessitates the radical rapture from the suggested nation-ness. This rupture manifests itself in the short, elusive and italicized chapters preceding each part of the novel, formulated as an internal dialogue by Jack and outside the register of the social space of nation-ness and inside the space of natural sublime where the logical conclusion of social isolation is negotiated.

The Spectre of Nationalism?: Jack Gordon's Yearning for a Community

Nature replaces nation in Jack's chapters in so far as establishing a separate relationality with the landscape. Irvine Welsh reads this narrative rapture as the symbolic death of nationalism as mentioned before. This argument, while partially valid, fails to fully comprehend Jack's narrative as part of the overall focus of the novel, the exploration of socialization, or relationality, to different degrees with diverse characteristics. This does not mean that it is not possible to read Jack as a symbol for the disappearance of nationalism for indeed Jack himself reminisces that it "wasn't the age of small nations" (228). However, Jack's narrative needs to be comprehended as part of the novel's larger political, social and cultural issues not just in relation to nationalism in its vague and different uses. For even in Jack's own dialogues with himself, it is clear that Jack is far from being the kind of nationalist that Welsh assumes him to be. This is probably because Jack's narrative is misinterpreted by only reading his nationalism through Don's focalization in the second part, where Jack has the appearance of a staunch nationalist due to Don's clear rejection of nationalism and failure to comprehend Jack. "I love my country," Jack reminds Don, "It's what kept me alive;" but Don struggles to understand him: "Nationalism's what's done this tae ye, Jack. You of all people dinna need mair o that" and contemplates uneasily: "*Love your country*, what did it mean? You could love a woman, your bairns, but a country? The Germans had loved the Fatherland, the Japanese had worshipped their Emperor" (164).

As a result of Don's focalization, Welsh's assumption also denies the fact that Jack's nationalism is not necessarily nationalism as such but a yearning for independence from oppression and London rule. This is because nationalism and national sovereignty are indeed related but they are not always one and the same. As a response to Don's suspicion of nationalism, for instance, Jack says:

> ‘I came through it. Survived. Thousands didn’t, but I did. Scotland saved me. Don’t you think I owe the place something? Scottish nationalism’s different,’ he went on. ‘It’s not about conquest or oppression. It’s about freeing ourselves. We’re not going to invade anybody, we just want what’s ours. Our own country.’ (164)

Jack’s nationalism is thus not an epistemological claim. Neither is it an ontological categorization. In fact, nationalism in Jack appears as a symbolic response to the trauma of the Second World War in the form of relating to the landscape in the vacuum of social isolation. Therefore, Jack’s nationalism is a symbolic negotiation of certain historical and social conflicts, which is symptomatic of his extreme social isolation. The most straightforward evidence to this is the significance of the Scottish landscape in Jack’s narrative, which creates the conflict between his ostensible and misinterpreted nationalism without any reference to the nation. Indeed, it is not the Scottish people against other nationalities, but the Scottish landscape that appears as the source of nationalism, or nation-ness in the sense of formulating a community, purging out its conventional and problematic connotations.

Understanding Jack’s narrative thus necessitates considering both the indirect depiction of him through focalizations and his inner dialogues for only through a focus on his desocialization, landscape acquires its symbolic meaning. For instance, unlike other prisoners of war, who, according to Don, “were bonded together because of the experience; there was sympathy, an understanding between them that nobody else could share,” (153) Jack is isolated because of trauma: Jack “was alone. He had a sister over the way at Slaemill but Don didn’t get the impression they were close. Jack wasn’t close to anyone, maybe not even his wife” (ibid.). In other words, his social isolation is mitigated with the anticipation of a communion with the nature. This is already clear during his time as a prisoner of war in Japan when Jack confesses that it was Scotland that kept him alive, as also explained above: “I dreamed about it, when I woke up I thought about it. I tried to remember everything I could down to the finest detail. Mountains I’d climbed, rivers I’d fished, towns I’d visited. I thought of walks I’d done and I did them again” (152). It is not a coincidence that Jack does not appropriate an exclusionary and even racist nationalist language in remembering Scotland. But more crucially, he does not talk about people but rather the landscape and the nature. Landscape therefore appears more as the replacement of the social, rather than an expression of nationalism.

The only reference to Scottish people as such, however, appears as a debilitating self-responsibilization of surviving the war. In remembering the horrors of war, it is clear that Jack feels responsible for the death of others, not in the direct sense of causing the death of anyone else but as a fellow human being who could not do anything to stop what was happening. This debilitating sense of responsibilization appears in Jack's inner dialogues. Sometime after his disappearance, a fisherman and his wife welcome Jack for the night while he is wandering through the landscape. The couple gives him food and a place to sleep. In the morning, upon seeing the newspaper headline "JAPANESE SOLDIER WHO THOUGHT THE WAR WASN'T OVER" (376) Jack relapses back into his need for isolation and leaves off to wondering alone through the landscape of Scotland. The following chapter reveals why:

> Now you understood why you left. You left because you could save Jack. You could do nothing for the others, but you could save Jack. You told 'Tam o' Shanter' to the hoolets. It was all you could do for Geordie. There was nothing you could do for Sim. (523)

This revelation appears late in the narrative and perhaps explains why Welsh associates Jack with the spectre of nationalism rather than the trauma of the war. It is, however, inevitable to oppose this assumption for Jack is clearly not the staunch nationalist he claims to be in the earlier parts of the novel. The feeling of guilt due to self-responsibilisation thus pushes Jack further away from any socialisation, which manifests itself in the appreciation of the landscape and communion with the nature.

The Dichotomy of Jack's Desocialization and Mike's Re-socialization

Landscape, of course, does not only appear in Jack's narrative. Because of creating a direct comparison and thus making it possible to comprehend that nature should be comprehended in relation to different degrees of socialization, Mike's narrative plays a significant role in relation to Jack. Mike, as mentioned before, reflects an analogous appreciation of and awe with nature. Mike's narrative has clear parallels to Jack and is helpful in understanding the significance of landscape in the novel. It is not a coincidence that Mike lives in a cottage up in the north, relatively isolated from people, and he evidently exposes a similar appreciation of the landscape:

> Sometimes he became incapable of making decisions and had to escape the house altogether. All through that autumn and into winter he ran away with his camera

> for whole days, heading for remote beaches, or at least beaches where he could be remote. An empty beach in summer is a delight, but it is nothing to an empty beach in winter. The brutality with which the meeting of land and sea reminded him of his insignificance was mesmerizing. (139)

Parallel to Mike's social isolation is his aesthetic appreciation of the landscape. Mike spends his time taking photographs of Scottish landscape, not for any clear purpose but more as a form of meditation that also translates into his constant ruminations of the insignificance of himself as an ephemeral being in contrast to the permanence of the land.

Jack, similar to Mike, is in awe with nature. In his astonishment with the landscape, he also exposes a similar conviction of the impermanence of human beings:

> The animals would still be around long after humans were gone. Long after humans had extinguished themselves. Birds would still be around. Insects, fish, seals. Trees, rain, mud, snow, grass. The land would still be here, the sea still eating it away. Only all human endeavour and struggle and stupidity and brilliance and pain and joy and love and hatred would be over. Everything else would be as it was before. (374)

Landscape therefore appears as the existential category that contains human beings as one of its temporary and ultimately insignificant manifestations. Leaving the possibility of any ontological validity and philosophical value in such a conviction aside, it is necessary here to relate this element to the overall focus of the novel, namely to socialisation. To do this, one of Jean's stories appears to be a helpful guide, not so much as a direct explanation but more as providing the social metaphors necessary to understand what landscape signifies in Jack's, as well as Mike's, narratives.

In the second part, Mike remembers a story that Jean told years ago, "about Jack again, the hero of so many of her stories" (128). Jack, "who has no brothers in this story" wants to "go to the edge of the world and have a bit look over the edge and see what lies beyond it" (129). Jack's mother warns him with a single advice: "'If you do reach the edge of the world,' she says, 'have a look over it but don't, whatever you do, step off it, because if you do I doubt you'll ever get back again, and I'd like to see you safe home again after your adventure.'" (Ibid.). As the story itself is a play on the nature of storytelling and questions narrative reliability, it is not explicitly related to Jack Gordon. It nevertheless links the question of socialisation by narrativizing the logical conclusion of social isolation and representing the limits of the idea of a communion with nature, or the conviction to "see what lies beyond" the social. In relation to this story, it is relevant to comprehend Jack

Gordon's, as well as Mike's, narratives as explorations of different degrees of socialisation. In fact, the protagonists of the first three parts of the novel emphasize this element very clearly: Mike as being at the edge, Don being far from such questions and fully socialised, Peter again situated outside the society. Jack, of course, is the embodiment of desocialization. He reaches the edge of the world, has a look over it and eventually steps off it, so to speak.

Jack's enigmatic narratives detail the process by which Jack first leaves his home (start the journey), sees what lies beyond (have a little look) and becomes determined to leave his human and ephemeral presence behind (step off it). In his inner dialogues we understand that Jack loses his sense of selfhood, any sense of relating to other human beings, and the sense of a linear time. His experience as a prisoner of war can be comprehended as the literal representation of the life that lies beyond the edge for indeed that was the moment when Jack lost his sense of selfhood:

> You were in a bamboo cage. There was no room to turn, no room to stretch. You could just about crouch, just about curl. They must have folded you smaller than yourself to get you in. There was no room to be a man.
> You were there in there a long time. You never knew how long. When you came out you weren't Jack Gordon. Jack Gordon was away. You were somewhere else. You didn't tell them. You didn't tell anyone.
> You were never going back. You were free. You were never going back in the cage. There was no room to be a man. (523)

Landscape here refers to the limits of social isolation and becomes the space where its logical conclusion is explored. Gradually, Jack loses the ability to trust anyone: "if you didn't know yourself, then nobody could betray you, and after that it would be between you and the land" (228).

Congruent with his loss of selfhood and social isolation, the landscape and nature also represent the loss of the sense of time as linear and is replaced by its cyclical description: "Night came. Morning came. Night came. Morning came. You did not move. Nobody else was there" (636). In order to survive, Jack desocializes thoroughly because after losing his sense of selfhood, comprehending the impossibility of relating to anyone else and losing the sense of a linear time, he can only ruminate his separation from the social: "to be separate, was to be complete" (521).

Eventually, Jack loses his sense of selfhood completely, which culminates into the final communion with nature and thus reveals the symbolic significance of landscape in

Jack's narrative. Without a clear sense of self, others and time, the only remaining possibility for Jack, if we can still call him so, is to abandon the human category and become one with the landscape:

> You were going.
> You ate the stones, and the sea faded, and the land faded, and the sand filled your ears and eyes and nose, and you faded into the land, into the sea. You were going, and you were not coming back.
> You were gone. (524)

As such, it is unavoidable to comprehend Jack's narrative as the problematization of social isolation. It is neither fully the death of nationalism, nor an escapist sentimentalism relying on nature: Jack's death is the symbolic appearance of the logical conclusion of desocialization.

In line with this argument, it is necessary to relate Jack's isolation to Mike as we have already established the relevance between them. Jean, in one of her conversations with Mike, reminds him that she finds it ironic "that we ranted on about solidarity and community and standing together against the Tories, and what some of us wanted more than anything was to be alone" (34). As a result, Mike also questions his social isolation. He asks himself

> Is his kind of solitude – call it independence if you like – different than Jean's? Does it diminish the whole, or does the whole diminish it? … By becoming more private do we become less of a community? Probably. Less Scottish? He doubts it. We just become different versions of ourselves. (36)

Even though Mike shares certain qualities with Jack, he acquires a contrasting task for himself, that of connecting all the people in his life and in return becoming more social and a member of a community for "he understands that it has fallen to him to make the connections" (671). Mike's re-socialisation therefore enlightens Jack's extreme isolation. This final responsibilization of establishing the missing links between the characters is significant because it does not identify hope and a sense of community limited to the aesthetic realm of the photographic exhibition. It also denounces the idea of a communion with nature as an unavoidable prospect. The prospect of re-establishing the missing connections is the last line of the novel, a subtle and humble suggestion that the narrative itself is also aware of its limited capacity to incite a sense of community, being limited to the world of fiction. The hesitant hope, however, is still there and sets a contrast to Jack's extreme isolation (and his defeatist, in social terms, death through a communion with

nature) by offering socialization as an emancipatory possibility. Furthermore, Mike ultimately acquires the same responsibility that Jean Barbour has filled for years: Mike's coming of age therefore ends with the task of connecting people and becoming part of a larger community, thereby transcending the neoliberal understanding of the self as isolated and atomised.

In a sense, if we comprehend the novel as a *Künstlerroman* that focuses on Mike's artistic and subjective development, *ATLLS* appears as a response to James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, another paradigmatic *Künstlerroman* that engages with the question of nation and its relation to identity formation. Unlike Joyce's narrative, in which the artist reaches fulfilment and hence successful subject-formation by leaving the nation and the society, the ending of *ATLLS* suggests a more affirmative statement about art and the artist as a collective enterprise rather than individual genius. Stephen, in Joyce's *Künstlerroman,* states "[t]his race and this country and this life produced me" (203). Yet, his response is to individualise his relation to his nation: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (252-53). While Stephen leaves his nation and society, Mike re-enters it, creating a powerful counterpoint to Joyce's valorization of subjectivity that is detached from the social, thereby enlightening Jack's desocialization as a counterpoint.

Conclusion: The Historical Loneliness of Jack Gordon as the Narrativization of the Neoliberal Self

Unlike other novels in this study, *ATLLS* ends with the suggestion of re-establishing missing connections and becoming more social, more of a community as a resolve. The problem here, however, is the assumption or the suggestion that this can be achieved with the help of an individual person who would be willing to accept the responsibility, rather than socialization happening in several instances, at once and cumulatively. But this is more a problem inherent to the novel form than the novel itself reflecting such an understanding of socialization.

In Adorno's words, it "is not open to the individual to transcend a collectively determined loneliness through his own decision and determination" (165). Jack's social

isolation is therefore best understood as a form of "historical loneliness" initiated with the trauma of war and exacerbated by social fragmentation. This is the point where the play between the individual perspectives of the characters and the totalizing picture of the society it represents clashes violently. On the one hand, Jack's ontological and self-chosen loneliness gives the impression of a communion, reminiscent of the image of Christ as he swallows the stones and becomes one with nature. On the other hand, the political, social and cultural history that *ATLLS* skilfully portrays delineates Jack's loneliness as a historical one, which is confirmed by Mike's re-socialisation. As such, it would be erroneous to comprehend Jack's desocialization and communion with nature as "an avoidable error or even as a bourgeois delusion" as Lukács did with Doestoevsky's *Letters from the Underworld* (ibid.).

If "taken to its logical conclusion, loneliness will turn into its opposite" and "the solitary consciousness potentially destroys and ascends itself by revealing itself in works of art as the hidden truth common to all men [sic]" (ibid. 166). In this context, *ATLLS* appears as a revolutionary novel that transcends the limits of the genre by correlating the social, political and historical to the self. In other words, by containing Jack's extreme isolation in the overall narrative, *ATLLS* posits the idea that isolation, or loneliness, is not a universal and ontological category but a historically structured inevitability. This is best reflected when Jack returns to Scotland and discovers a world that is rapidly changing which diminishes him in his isolation:

> You'd escaped because everybody else was hell-bent on wanting everything and you saw it wasn't going to work. Didn't matter what your politics were after all. Irrelevant. Didn't matter whether you were free or independent or democratic or oppressed, everybody wanted everything and they couldn't have it. It wasn't the age of small nations as you'd thought, it was the age of money and waste and garbage and pollution and destruction and it was all going to get worse, you could see it coming and you couldn't do it, you couldn't keep your place in such a world, couldn't support a wife in such a world, couldn't bring up a child in such a world. It was time to go. It was time to abandon. (228)

In a world where Jack is deprived of any possibility of connecting with other human beings due to the trauma of the war and a world where the idea of the autonomous and atomized individual replaces the solidarity that Jack yearns for, it is hardly surprising for him to disappear into to the landscape. Jack's narrative appears, in this light, more as the symbolic representation of Jack's suicide, portrayed in detail as an escape from the social and a

communion with nature to emphasize the problem of social isolation. Just "like a fish, like a bird," (635) Jack represents the solipsism of the neoliberal understanding of the self: "Perhaps at last you were heading towards yourself" (635). When all the social elements are removed, "You left the last of the house, the last of the people behind. … You were alone in the vast expense of land meeting water," (ibid.), when the idea of the autonomous and free individual is brought to its logical conclusion, Jack disappears from the world of the social, thereby inadvertently affirming the significance of socialization and comprehending the self as part of the social rather than seeing it as a separate, atomised and isolated entity as propagated under neoliberalism.

As such, *ATLLS* appears as the only novel in this study that does not simultaneously legitimize certain elements of neoliberalism. On the contrary, the surface polyphony and the symbolic and covert singular narrative of Jack Gordon culminate into a clear rejection of the neoliberal understanding of selfhood as potent, atomised, isolated and "individualised" for the narrative concludes with the suggestion that such an understanding of selfhood leads to non-existence in the very literal sense of Jack disappearing into the void. Mike's re-socialization and comprehending the novel as the literary manifestation of this premise, however, provides a sustained and powerful emancipatory possibility in contrast to Jack's isolation and annihilation.

Conclusion

Conclusion and Summary of Main Findings

What is perhaps most striking about *And The Land Lay Still* is that it appears as one of the rare literary and artistic phenomena that breaks through postmodern ahistoricism, cynicism and ironic detachment while simultaneously employing postmodernist literary techniques. Central to this departure is a clear rejection of the hyper individualism, and pronounced isolation and fragmentation of neoliberalism, which is ameliorated by a plea to re-socialize and strengthen communal ties. Unlike other novels in this study, Robertson's narrative offers a predominantly emancipatory departure from comprehending the world solely through the intersection of postmodernism and neoliberalism. If, as Fredric Jameson maintains, genres are "essentially literary *institutions* or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (*The Political Unconscious*, 92), *ATLLS* emerges as the novel that annuls this contract to a large extent.

As this dissertation has suggested, the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction appears as an emergent genre that negotiates the conflicts and meanings of what it means to live under neoliberalism with a distinctly postmodern way of comprehending the world. The original research question that has led to this thesis, whether it is possible to identify the polyphonic novel as a distinct genre, has created the possibility to ask the central critical question of this project: what are the social meanings, characteristics and

functions of the polyphonic novel in British contemporaneity at the specific context of neoliberal individualism and postmodernism? In other words, this thesis has aimed to explore to what extent the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction engages with neoliberalism and postmodernism; and as a result, to answer the question whether the polyphonic novel, as a way of seeing the world, comprehends the social, historical and cultural as constitutive of the individual.

Although my research has started with the presumption that the polyphonic novel could be comprehended as a critical reaction to neoliberal individualism due to the genre's discernible focus on narrative unification in contrast to social fragmentation, the analysis has proved that it is not possible to exclusively support this claim. As the chapter on *WT* demonstrates, for instance, Smith's narrative, in its engagement with central aspects of neoliberalism, such as multiculturalism, racism, family as a class institution and social fragmentation, and its negotiation with essential issues related to postmodernism as a historical condition, such as cultural relativism, cynicism, ironic detachment and rejection of causalities, can better be comprehended as a compromise between a clear rejection of the current historical conjunction and unquestioned complicity with the status quo. On the contrary, *WT* not only rejects postmodernism and neoliberalism but appears to also embrace them as a way of surviving the contemporary world, which summarizes the central social function of the polyphonic novel as a way of seeing the world. In other words, *WT* responds to British contemporaneity with a critical stance while also providing a specific way of seeing the world that could ameliorate what the narrative critically negotiates.

Similarly, Lanchester's *Capital* attests to this claim by its engagement with the culture of finance, the financial crunch, the conception of money as a central and invasive social mediator and its specific resolution of the separation of financial worries from intimacy by suggesting the latter as the possible emancipatory resolution that enables one to survive the problems and conflicts of the public world. *Capital*, too, rejects and embraces current historical and social conditions, which is constitutive of its polyphonic morality tale.

Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* mirrors the same double character of the polyphonic novel: on the one hand, it explores neoliberalism from a larger, historical perspective as a manifestation of an ontological constant, that of predatory behaviour due to competition,

and as such engages with central aspects of neoliberalism such as globalism, neo-colonialism, consumerism and environmental destruction. On the other hand, it employs a global and transhistorical polyphony to suggest an immaterial continuity of the human soul, which is offered as a hopeful response to the catastrophic world it describes. One cannot change the world, after all, but one can still fight for the good.

The comparison to *ATLLS* becomes clear here: when the polyphonic novel is characterized with a double social function of comprehending the world critically while implying the necessity to compromise, they strengthen the idea that the individual is capable of transcending the social, historical and cultural. In this context, it is worth remembering Slavoj Žižek's analysis of *Children of Men*, in which he identifies the narrative trope of the individual surpassing the (social, historical, cultural, or environmental) background as a central ideological message of late capitalism. In other words, this research has demonstrated that the polyphonic novel in contemporary British fiction appears as the genre that comprehends the individual as capable of transcending the social background of neoliberalism, postmodernism and the related issues such as racism (*White Teeth*), the financial crunch (*Capital*), environmental destruction and exploitative behaviour (*Cloud Atlas*). *ATLLS*, on the other hand, comprehends the social, historical, and cultural as constitutive of identity formation and emphasizes that no meaningful resolution or change is possible without engaging with the social whole.[43] In other words, the background in *ATLLS* can hardly be comprehended as the background but rather as an essential part of the whole. As a conclusion, my research has shown that the polyphonic novel, with its double meanings of surface polyphony and covert monological thought systems, s*eparates* rather than comprehending the individual and the social in a mutual and inevitable political osmosis, unlike in *ATLLS* that appears more as an exception rather than the norm. However, *ATLLS* demonstrates that genre, even when we comprehend it as a contract with a specific public in the sense of narrativizing a specific way of seeing the world, is never static and always in flux, demonstrating how genre is historically contingent.

[43] As such, *ATLLS* mirrors the World Happiness Report of Earth Institute, Columbia University, in which it is suggested that "community trust, mental and physical health, and the quality of governance and rule of law" may contribute more to happiness than an increase in individual income, or other metrics (Sachs 7).

Limitations of the Study

The comprehension of genre in this light necessarily emphasizes the limitations of my research and methodology. As the difference between *ATLLS* and other novels underline, the findings of my research are limited to a certain number of novels, which are representative of central social issues in British contemporaneity. That being said, the selection is neither conclusive nor representative enough to substantiate larger claims about the contemporary novel, or even the polyphonic novel. Additionally, my findings cannot and should not be comprehended as conclusive and absolute arguments about contemporary polyphony in general due to the limited number of selected novels.

This is exacerbated by the fact that each critical methodology, inevitably, centralizes certain aspects of a literary work while decentering some other issues. By employing a predominantly political analysis of literary works through form and plot structure, my thesis has concentrated more on the social meanings of a relatively common trend that has not been identified as a distinct genre in the scholarly literature. This means that it is theoretically possible to read these novels from the lens of different genres, even when we employ different meanings of genre.

Implications of the Study and Questions for Further Research

Yet, this project provides a critical and complementary contribution to the study of contemporary British fiction in that it employs a social and political comprehension of genre in order to interpret the postmodern, and its focus on variety, difference, and identity markers, from a historical perspective that can transcend dominant ways of analyzing literature. The central premise of this research, therefore, breaks from central methodologies in the study of British fiction while simultaneously embracing them as constitutive of its own methodological perspective. What this means is that this study has only been possible due to the study of contemporary British fiction in fundamentally postmodern ways, which centralize variety, change, identity markers and a general tendency to focus on themes and topics rather than form. As such, my research, as I hope to have demonstrated, *narrates* an alternative history of contemporary British fiction that

only becomes comprehensible in relation and possibly in opposition to other survey studies that I have extensively analyzed in the second chapter.

The central implication of this project relates to this complementary and oppositional quality: as the comprehension of the polyphonic novel as a relatively common trend and a specific negotiation of comprehending the neoliberal and postmodern world demonstrates, it is vital to centralize the historical in the scholarly response in order to better comprehend why we still read novels, and most importantly why we still enjoy them even when we have the capacity, and responsibility as academics, to critically approach them. Holistic hermeneutics that detail the inevitable relationship between literary trends and what it means to be human should therefore be re-centralized more as a mechanism to surpass hegemonic ways of interpreting literature and the world. However, as the double quality of the polyphonic novel, as a negotiation of our contemporaneity, emphasizes, this might be unmasked in the future as a mirage and a negotiation of current problems of academic research. A historical approach will indeed reveal to what extent these claims persist. One possible field of research that the use of polyphony can contribute to relates to the proliferation of other forms of narrative multiplicity, not only in the novel but also in other textual formats such as film and TV shows. Relatedly, an interesting premise could aim to comprehend the specific narrative form of the film in relation to the polyphony as a way of comprehending the world. Inevitably, while genres transform the social and different forms can denote diverse connotations, the comprehension of genres as a form of ideological meaning systems will persist.

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