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The Uncanny and the Fantastic in Fiction and Film:

The Legend of The Sleepy Hollow

Otilia BĂLĂNICĂ

INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes to lay emphasis on the elements of gothic and fantasy in the film *The legend of the Sleepy Hollow* by Tim Burton which was released in 1999. It has been considered a remarkable film as its effects are astounding for a film which appeared in those times when technology was not so developed. Anyway, people have always been interested in watching supernatural films which could rise suspense and intensify ambiguity. Tim Burton has the gift of making great films, creating creepy and gloomy situations, pervaded by ghosts, mystery and horror. This characteristic interweaves with many elements specific for Gothic films which will be found in *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow*.

I embraced the idea of writing about this film as when I first saw it, I was deeply inspired. What is interesting is the fact that in 1999 cinematic effects were not developed and it was quite difficult to create amazing effects, but *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow* comprises many techniques and scenes which could embody a veritable masterpiece in the film industry.

This writing consists of four sections: **The Origins of the Gothic**, **The American Gothic**, **The Uncanny and the Fantastic**, and **Tim Burton's *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow***. The first section lays stress on how the Gothic emerged, its origins from early ages, characteristics, elements, important figures who expressed an interest in analysing this genre, and notable writings. The second one develops on the American Gothic, its characteristics, symbols, representative writers. The third section is comprised of definitions of the uncanny, the fantastic, their specific elements, parts, origins. The last section lays emphasis on Tim Burton and his film *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow*, and it analyses its cinematic effects, techniques, scenes, important elements of fantastic, gothic, examples, and notable quotations.

THE ORIGINS OF THE GOTHIC

Gothic literature is believed to have many roots in the historical, cultural, social backgrounds. It had a great impact on the development of different subgenres, for example, the horror and supernatural fiction. There are various figures in the folklore which appear in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the belief in the idea of supernatural has been embraced by the early generations. Later on, it had become an important strand in the folklore. It is true that the gothic novelists expressed an interest in the analysis of the supernatural, but they also tackled significant aspects of morality and manners in the society. Gothic novels

usually lay emphasis on complicated plots, gloomy settings, heroes, strong feelings, supernatural creatures and so on and so forth. This kind of literature is said to have derived from the Middle Ages when a lot of strange things would happen: terrifying crimes, the art of witchcraft, piety, mysteries and barbarisms. Gothicism is comprised of themes and styles which are interrelated as English writers were interested in French romances, Teutonic tales, and German motifs. Gothic literature was profoundly marked by many writers such as Edward Bulwer, Theophile Gautier, Hans Christian Andersen, and Edgar Allan Poe, “a remarkable gothic is the star Gothicist of the 1830s and 1840” (Snodgrass 2005:16). Gothic literature provided readers with great fiction and motifs which appealed to their souls and mind

Neo Gothicism serves a variety of motifs and themes—the convoluted horror tales of H. P. Lovecraft, Daphne du Maurier’s English thriller *The Birds*, threats to midwestern children in Ray Bradbury’s *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, the quirky human dramas in Shirley Jackson and Eudora Welty’s short story collections and the plays of Marsha Norman and Beth Henley, Truman Capote’s nonfiction novel *In Cold Blood*, and the love-gone wrong plots of Carson McCullers, Iris Murdoch, and Joyce Carol Oates (Snodgrass 2005:17).

Slavery as the problem of revolution and imperialism represented an important background for the Gothic. Many critics have agreed with the fact that the Anglo-American Gothic was created within the Atlantic history developed by slavery: “The debates over slavery and freedom in the Atlantic world, as Laura Doyle argues, informed the Atlantic Gothic’s particular obsession with power and its anxiety over dispossession” (2008: 215–217 in Crow 2014:72). The Atlantic Gothic shows how violence, terror enables white subjectivity and liberty.

Some scholars embraced the idea that slavery stands for a notable historical context which led to the development of the Gothic which was also responsible for the rise of the New World. For example, the actions of putting an end to slavery and the rise of the Gothic genre coincided at the end of the 18th century. There is a connection between slavery’s Gothic and the Atlantic world’s Gothic fictions; Gothic fiction was based on slavery problems which laid stress on terror and anguish. For instance, the Haitian Revolution was considered Gothic, and it underlined the horrors of St. Domingo. In the United States, there was an antislavery movement which the Gothic managed to create a frame of slavery as being diabolical and without mercy.

The Gothic used different texts based on proslavery and antislavery in order to support political aims; either to induce fear or to destroy slavery. Both proslavery and antislavery texts utilized the Gothic for political aims: to feed on white fear in order to destroy slavery. Therefore, through the Gothic, slavery was transformed into a scary tale which pinpointed to societal realities and everyday issues.

It is said that the Gothic emerged from a realist and moral fiction. The Gothic represented veins of horror, terror, fear, anguish darkness, obscurity, etc. These representations are known to have first appeared in Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, then developed in Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Walpole said that the story he created was based on relics and he wrote a preface, in which a translator pretends that he actually discovered the tale. The novel consists of a tale with supernatural elements in which Manfred, Prince of Otranto, has a strong passion for the beautiful woman who had to marry his son. The son is killed by the helmet from a statue of a previous Prince of Otranto. Walpole built his house at Strawberry Hill, thus creating a gothic building and discovering a fictional area. Gothic usually entails the supernatural it involves the mysterious elements, placing the protagonists into strange and scary

buildings. The story focuses on Manfred's concern about his family line, but it also lays emphasis on supernatural elements, portraits which talk and can walk, hidden passageways or trapdoors. This novel became a real success and became a significant source of inspiration for many authors such as Clara Reeve, with her *The Old English Baron* and M.G. Lewis, the author of *The Monk*. Strange things have always existed and, therefore, people who have been interested in studying the Gothic fiction believe that its beginnings are correlated with Horace Walpole who was a veritable historian and built a house in Twickenham, near London, so as to fulfil his own fascinating world of history. All those buildings which seemed like castles contributed to the revival of Gothic architecture and also to the connection to the Gothic genre. His strong interest and determination helped him to build a good life as a writer, interweaving old and new elements so that the ordinary life can be mixed with strange and supernatural situations. The Gothic genre is also considered a form of escapist literature with a strange atmosphere but the American Gothic lays emphasis on aspects of daily life but with a Gothic structure, pinpointing to social problems. Walpole's *Otranto* and the play *The Mysterious Mother* underline the fact that women were chained to the societal norms, in patriarchal institutions.

These important writings found an important source in earlier works such as *Pamela* and *Clarissa* by Samuel Richardson, Defoe's *Moll Flanders* or even before those important figures, the gothic veins existed in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* or in Shakespearean plays. It is thought that American writers were actually part of the British culture, and they had many British models. There are many critics who considered that American literature was a gothic one and American Gothicists were more attracted to Godwin and James Hogg. What actually directed Americans to the Gothic path were the use of the rooms and halls of the monasteries, castles instead of houses, dark woods, etc. Apart from these, violence, fear and loneliness also contributed to the development of the Gothic; for instance, the Puritan society, as the idea of Gothic stems from the conditions depicted.

There were scholars who had argued the fact that the Gothic developed between 1764 and 1824 (political, social and cultural background), period which was known as the Gothic Revival. Gothic explores notions of cruelty, fear, anguish, darkness, terror but also moral doctrines. It also protests against the optimism and rationalism which were emphasised in the previous era, and it tackles concepts of negativity and degradation. Characters which appear in gothic writings seem not to believe in the idea of purity, virginity and they think they have a special superiority. The characters which act as "preys" are dominated by innocence; whereas gothic lays stress on chaos. There is a clear contrast which makes Gothic deal with transition; dark versus light, goodness versus evil, black and white etc. Gothic also lays emphasis on several extremes as demonism, profanities, incest and so on and so forth.

One of the most important characteristics of the Gothic style is the architectural style and how it is represented in the novels. Early Gothic writings explored medieval setting such as arches, crypts, stone buildings, secret rooms, labyrinths. Landscapes were characterised by dullness, wastelands and only a simple house with the use of little darkness might have pointed to a gothic atmosphere. Gothic managed to become an important genre, and its elements prevail the Victorian fiction. Remarkable writers such as Emily and Charlotte Brontë inserted the supernatural in their stories which laid emphasis on the society and realities of those times. In Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood, is forced to stay the night at Heathcliff's

house as outside is snowing heavily. He finds Cathy's diary and reads it. Then he has a terrible nightmare in which he sees a hand which reaches him through the window, and he hears a voice. This vision foresees what he will find out about Cathy and Heathcliff. Lockwood tells Heathcliff that *Wuthering Heights* is haunted. The plot focuses on a house, and it lays stress on the fact that when entering an old place, it means discovering the stories of the people who have lived there. As far as the ruins in Europe and Orient are concerned, it is said that they have a strong spiritual significance as they are related to the past and ancestors. You cannot access the past, but it points to many religious aspects at the same time, Christian or Judaic.

THE AMERICAN GOTHIC

The American Gothic genre is considered to be complex and vast, and it is based on elements which deal with daily life and it emphasizes social and political issues which may seem too trivial to be even mentioned. On the other hand, in the early centuries, there was a tendency to consider the Gothic as a form which tackled the idea of an escapist literature. Charles Crow states that this genre offered the possibility to express all the fears and desires in a free way. The American Gothic focuses more on the dark and the psychological drama of the daily life, in contrast with the early times when it shed light on elements of decaying and blood. The American Gothic Fiction was different from the European one and one of the writers who contributed to this was Edgar Allan Poe who is well known for being interested in the development of the genre. It is true that he had some sad events during his life which acted as a source of inspiration and encouraged him to write about evilness, supernatural and trauma which amplified the idea of horror. There were other American writers who embraced the gothic literature, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *The Prophetic Pictures* and Washington Irving, in *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow*.

The study of the American Gothic was deeply transformed between the 1960s and 2000s and this kind of change was encouraged by feminism, which had developed a lot over the years and emerged into many forms. For instance, important feminine figures known as Ellen Moers, Elaine Showalter, and Annette Kolodny (who were part of the feminist movement between 1960s-1970s) together with some French feminine figures criticised the society and expressed their desire for a notable change in the status of women so that they were regarded as equals to men.

The American Gothic lays more stress on psychological aspects and elements of mystery or wildness correlated with American settings represent a reason for discovering many identities. The Gothic genre tackles the physical frame and strange characteristics whereas the American Gothic lays emphasis on the importance of landscapes in order to symbolise the world and beliefs of characters. According to Charles Crow (*A Companion to American Gothic* 2014: 29), the American Gothic does not only include works which are based on ruins, haunted castles, foreign lands but it represents a literature which pinpoints to a confusing view of history and human nature. Basically, the Gothic is comprised of hidden things which lay within human nature.

There were many conflicts related to the way in which women were treated and revolts against the oppression of femininity. After the 1960s, it was observed that American writings created by women started to be redefined and texts which contained gothic insertions written

by American authors such as Sarah Orne Jewett, Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Edith Wharton were deeply inspired by Ann Radcliffe. They promoted the idea that feminine voices should be listened to and considered a normal style of writing. “This kind of feminist reading, in fact, has diverged in two main directions when it has not been extensively linked to other theoretical schools. In one direction are revelations of how American women have used Gothic fictions to openly criticize male dominance and hold up a female alternative” (Crow 2014: 20). Poe is thought to be one of the best gothic writers who has managed to create veritable works. His works are based on aloofness, unsettlement and dream. It has been said that his works deal with his life, segments of his experiences are inserted in his stories. Many scholars agree with the fact that Poe tackled the problem of ‘premature burial’ which is a controversial aspect which lays emphasis on the destruction of the self, and it may be considered a psychoanalytical approach.

Michel Foucault called the American ruins “emplacements which have the curious property of being connected to other emplacements but in such a way that they suspend, neutralise, or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected or represented” (in Crow 2014: 29). Some scholars agreed with the fact that the ruins can be called the ‘ghost town syndrome’ and this kind of syndrome is comprised of many different signs, aspects and phenomena but of course, a vocabulary specific for Gothic as phantom, uncanny etc. As Lambert Florin stated, those ghost towns which are very popular maintained their material resemblance. It is believed that a ghost town can be terrifying if it keeps the atmosphere and places as if there were residents; those places give the ghost hunters feelings of terror, worry and tension. American literature contains various themes which are based on the ‘ghost syndrome’ and of the most important works is *Ghost Town* (1998) by Robert Coover. But the ghost theme can be found in many other genres, not only in fiction; for example, in poetry or juvenile fiction which has mysterious or moral veins inserted in the stories.

Additionally, many scholars have debated on the problem of ‘American Monsters’ which appear in many gothic works. For instance, in New England, the Puritans believed that human nature was controlled by a divine will and that everybody should follow God’s will; God was the embodiment of both greatness and evilness. It has been said that America has various traditions based on Faustian pacts with the devil and sometimes when it is asleep, others perform actions on his behalf, as witches and demons appear frequently in gothic stories. Some people believe that they are actually sent by the devil in order to kill Christians. Witches have an important role in Tim Burton’s film *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow*. In his turn, Washington Irving wants to create in his writings an American background where ghosts prevail the story.

In *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), the putative spirit haunting this soporific region of New York state is the ghost of a German Hessian – a paid mercenary fighting on behalf of the British who lost his head to a cannonball during “some nameless battle” of the Revolutionary War (1978: 273). He is in essence the first US ghost, given that he comes into being coincident with the country establishing its independence. Here, Irving puts the supernatural to work to establish a kind of mythology for a newly established country, populating the landscape with invented spirits of white, European America (Crow 2014: 47).

For example, in Poe’s gothic writings, ghosts have the tendency to appear as feminine figures and represent irrationality. Therefore

the monstrous wills of both Ligeia and Morella seem to resist the oblivion of death in the eponymous tales (1838 and 1835 respectively), as does Eleonora's more benevolent spirit (1842). In 'Berenice' (1835) and 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839), seemingly dead women refuse to stay buried, while it is the uncanny duplicate of the stygian cat Pluto that shrieks for the silenced wife in 'The Black Cat' (1843). (Crow 2014: 29)

In addition, women writers embraced the idea of ghosts mainly because they wanted to criticise, pinpointing to discrimination and the way women were treated in American culture. These kinds of stories lay emphasis on the severe treatment that women used to undergo, the fact that they were abused physically and mentally by their fathers, husbands. For instance, in Freeman's stories, such as "The Lost Ghost" (1903) and "The Wind in the Rose-bush" (1903), ghosts of women and children stand for their abuse and sufferance. Other stories such as "Afterwards" (1937) and "Pomegranate Seed" (1931) point to the violent acts performed on women by their husbands "In the same way that supernatural themes were utilized by white American women as a form of social critique, as Kathleen Brogan (1998) details, ghosts have played significant roles in the writing of ethnic American women" (Crow 2014: 47). Moreover, on the other side one finds the natural monsters which consist of dangerous animals, plagues, etc. and the American Gothic literature and film has many strange aliens, but which are not supernatural. Extraterrestrial creatures are considered monstrous because of the way they look like and they have to be destroyed. They try to change the American way of living and to impose new rules; their destruction protects the 'American way'. Additionally, Gothic writers and film makers inserted in their stories a great number of animals which are monstrous due to their features, impressive size and intelligence, etc.

King Kong in both the classic 1933 film (Merian C. Cooper) and subsequent remakes, including the 2005 version by Peter Jackson, is an enormous ape discovered on an isolated island also containing dinosaurs. The *Jaws* franchise, based on the 1974 book by Peter Benchley, focuses on a gigantic – and surprisingly intelligent – great white shark with a taste for human flesh. The snakes in *Venom* (Piers Haggard, 1981) and *Anaconda* (Luis Llosa, 1997) and its sequels are impressively large, and while the rabid St. Bernard in Stephen King's *Cujo* (1981; adapted for film in 1983 by Louis Teague) isn't larger than usual, he nevertheless is an intimidating presence' (Crow 2014: 53).

There are many examples in which animals can become monstrous in numbers, for instance, flocks. Alfred Hitchcock's film *The Birds* (1963). Adapted from a 1952 novel by Daphne du Maurier, it lays stress on flocks of bird which kill people for no reason; thus, the viewers have the opportunity to create their own opinions and thoughts. Other examples are the ants which appear in *The Naked Jungle* (Byron Haskin, 1954), the snakes which create chaos in *Snakes on a Plane* (David R. Ellis, 2006), "Africanized" bees become an important threat among people in *The Swarm* (Irwin Allen, 1978), spiders in *Kingdom of the Spiders* (John Cardos, 1977) and *Arachnophobia* (Frank Marshall, 1990), and rats are the main problem in Daniel Mann's *Willard* (1971). Nevertheless, the Gothic has considered the 'virus' as a monster; this is the reason why there are many stories which focus on its dangerous and catastrophic effects. For example, in some writings there is the problem of contagion (*The Andromeda Strain* and *Outbreak*) which destroys people.

In addition, Nathaniel Hawthorne managed to create great plots in *The Scarlet Letter*, or *The House of the Seven Gables* which underlined the sense of sin and guilt but also the strict norms of the Puritan society. Herman Melville, whose works also touched on the literary movement labelled as Dark Romanticism, dealt with themes of anguish, sin and horror; the crew struggling to catch the big whale, fact which brought the vessel to destruction. Back then, male writers were considered the best and the most important but later on women started to have careers as writers, editors or they translated gothic works: “Christina Rossetti presented female relationships in *The Goblin Market*, a charmingly macabre fairy tale of menacing trolls. In New England, Harriet Beecher Stowe examined a subset of female enslavement in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, an abolitionist melodrama” (Snodgrass 2005: 15). In the nineteenth century, gothic motifs started to be analysed and developed; for instance, Charles Baudelaire made use of many gothic aspects as terror, death and gloom in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Many others explored themes as violence, various atrocities, crimes, incest etc.

American Gothic represents a subgenre of Gothic literature, and it became known for the way of elaborating on racism, horror and chaos. For example, Charles Brockden’s novel *Wieland* describes a frenzied murderer or Robert Montgomery’s work *Nick of the Woods* depicts the idea of psychosis. In the Victorian era, there were also novels which laid emphasis on feelings of distress, melancholia, terror, fury or even sadomasochism. “Charlotte Brontë exposed her own psychological flaws by filling Gothic fiction with autobiographical details. In *Villette* (1853), protagonist Lucy Snow develops sadomasochism complicated by anger, bitterness, exhibitionism” (Snodgrass 2005: 19). The twentieth century was also marked by the gothic influence, and it focused on describing human abnormalities. Writers such as Daphne du Maurier or Toni Morrison used many gothic elements in their works. In her work *The Birds*, Maurier described the birds’ strange behaviour and Morrison’s work *Beloved* interweaved gothic themes such as murder, fear, terror.

As far as the American Gothic is concerned, Leslie Fiedler was the first scholar who struggled to demonstrate the fact that American fiction was actually a gothic one. Until then, the idea of gothic was little discussed and analysed. Anyway, many people believed that the gothic genre was something inferior and was not created for high class readers. Gothic fiction was considered inferior and did not attract much attention as it did not respond to academic theories. It was even considered “anti-New Critical” as it was comprised of various genres, motifs, theories and many critics believed that this kind of genre would create fear and terror. The importance of American Gothic was maintained with the aid of various theoretical schemes which developed a lot after 1965; one example is the concept of poststructuralism, especially the idea of deconstruction deeply sustained by Jacques Derrida’s writings. Structuralism was implemented and analysed by Ferdinand de Saussure who explained the connections between concepts, objects and referents. Many critics who embraced the concept of structuralism were attracted by the symbolic relations and were preoccupied with the way numerous genres combine signifieds and signifiers.

THE UNCANNY AND THE FANTASTIC

In 1919 Sigmund Freud first published his seminal paper entitled ‘The Uncanny’. His theoretical aspects were based on everyday realities, culture, about what is truly terrifying or

frightening. His work lays emphasis on various scary figures which come to life, ghosts, monsters, double figures and he manages to create a real art in literature. His paper consists of two parts; the first one underlines the etymology of words whereas the second part focuses on people, experiences, different expressions and situations which are related to uncanny. Freud's example is the story of Hoffman's 'The Sandman' which is usually told by parents so that children can sleep better. The story is based on the idea that if a child is not asleep for the Sandman to put sand in his eyes, he will have the eyes removed by the Sandman. According to Freud, the word *uncanny* generates fear and terror from something which is familiar and not external. Freud also tackles the problem of the *doppelgänger*; the 'double' is an element which is closely related to shadows, mirrors and it was considered to protect the destruction of the self. Basically, the first soul or the first 'double' was thought to be immortal. The uncanny is tackled not only in literature but also in everyday life; people undergo this experience related to death, the dead or ghosts. When a novelist writes a story and inserts elements related to the uncanny, he has to make sure that those realities are familiar to readers; for instance, fairy tales are deprived of reality and elements specific for fairy tales are dreams, inanimate objects, hidden powers etc. The uncanny refers to feelings, sensations, emotions and it was shown that the world of aesthetics insisted more on analysing beauty rather than the uncanny; beauty stands for beautiful things whereas the uncanny is a symbol of terror and fear. Nonetheless, when Modernism started to develop, it was observed a tendency to study the grotesque. In his work, Freud interweaves elements of psychoanalysis and aesthetics in order to generate his theories based on uncanny. The connection between mental states and the uncanny is also analysed by Howard B. Levine. He explains the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century Freud was interested in exploring different pathologies that were considered to be beyond neurosis. Levine investigates the gap between what he actually sees as the 'unconscious' and the 'represented unconscious'.

In "The Uncanny" Freud wanted to translate the word 'uncanny' into many languages; for example, familiar, unfamiliar, scary, anxious, mysterious, confusing etc. His perspective on the essay points to different ways of thinking; people all have something foreign within their souls. The word 'uncanny' might have many definitions: it stands for haunting, ghosts, strange experiences, uncertainty, and so on and so forth. It is said that the uncanny is closely related to the period of Enlightenment and with Romanticism and it also contain archaic elements. For instance, Ralph Waldo Emerson, recalls a visit to Stonehenge which is an ancient and uncanny place. But it does not only imply alien things, it also combines elements of familiar and unfamiliar as it was mentioned previously "More specifically it a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context. It can consist in a sense of homeliness uprooted" (Royle 2003: 1). The sense of 'uncanny' can emerge from simple coincidences, when you do not expect and it can represent elements such as fear, horror, terror or something beautiful but frightening. Many scholars as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derrida were interested in exploring the 'uncanny'. Marx underlined the fact that all the things which had to deal with problems of alienation, revolution, destruction were somehow related to uncanny. In the 20th century, a modern philosopher, Heidegger, focused on exploring the idea that "what is ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra ordinary, uncanny". The fundamental character of our being in the world is uncanny, unhomely" (Royle 2003: 2).

In addition, the term *uncanny* is related to uncertain things in the sense that they could change the rational experiences. Nonetheless, the uncanny can be observed through several forms such as repetition, strange coincidences, animism, fear, telepathy etc. As far as the repetition is concerned, it points to an odd repletion of feelings or experiences. For example, the experience of a *déjà vu*, that something might have happened before or the idea of doppelganger as it was mentioned previously in this paper. Strange coincidences refer to situations which are bound to happen and to the fact that sometimes things happen despite our will. The idea of animism lays stress on experiences which contain inanimate things, but which are given life. Another form of the uncanny might be the feeling of being buried alive; for instance, images or situations specific for claustrophobia, being stuck somewhere and alone etc. A notable writing is Poe's story 'The Premature Burial' (1844) which is about a man who is obsessed with fear and anxiety of being buried alive. Silence and telepathy might be deeply correlated with the uncanny. Silence creates a mysterious and fearful atmosphere within characters' minds and souls. Moreover, telepathy prevails many works in literature such as *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Rocking-Horse Winner* and *The Turn of the Screw*, George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1878). In Eliot's story, Latimer is the narrator, and he has the ability to read other people's minds and thoughts; thus, it might be a telepathic narrator.

As far as the notion of *fantastic* is concerned, in contemporary French literary language, the term is mainly related to horror situations which imply a connection with the reader of the 19th century. It means that the readers have to believe what they are actually reading and be ready anytime to be overwhelmed by strong emotions, usually fear, anxiety and terror. In Italian, the words *fantastic* or *fantasia* entails entering the text full of emotions and mysteries "On the contrary, they imply a detachment, a levitation, the acceptance of a different logic based on objects and connections other than those of everyday life or the dominant literary conventions" (Sandner 2004: 134). The main characteristic of the fantastic is comprised of the reactions that the supernatural events could provoke and not just the events. It is said that the fantastic appeared at the end of the 18th century with Cazotte and later on, it is exemplified in Maupassant's stories. Considering Cazotte's tale, *Le Diable Amoureux*, the main character lives with a female being for two months and he considers her an evil spirit; the way she looks like pinpoints to a different world but the way she behaves draws readers' attention upon the fact that she is just a simple human with feelings. When she is asked where she comes from, she says that she was born a sylphide and the most powerful. Alvaro is not sure if he is actually dreaming, imaging or this is the reality. Ambiguity prevails the world of fantastic as Alvaro is induced asleep by the woman, when he wakes up, he does not know if he has been dreaming or it was just his imagination. The fantastic lays stress on confusion, dream, uncertainty, imagination and ambiguity. People live in a world where supernatural does not occur, sylphides do not exist and when a strange event happens, all that calm atmosphere changes. Of course, the person who undergoes this kind of experience could be the victim of imagination, illusion or the event simply happened as a part of reality. The fantastic stands for the feeling of hesitation experienced by a person who has to deal with a supernatural event. For instance, *The Saragosa Manuscript* contains a great example of hesitation between what is real and what is called "illusion"; we ask ourselves of what we saw was real or we were tricked, we simply do not know how to define what happened. Moreover, there is another type of hesitation which happens between reality and imaginary; in this case, we are not sure of we understood what

happened in a correct way. Many scholars have agreed with the fact that the fantastic could be identified and related to the readers' reactions, the persons who are holding the book in their hands: "For Lovecraft, the criterion of the fantastic is not situated within the work but in the reader's individual experience- and this experience must be fear" (Todorov 1973: 35).

It can be observed that the best science fiction texts are structured in an analogous way. The supernatural elements consist of robots, extraterrestrial beings, etc. The narrative encourages readers to realise that mystery, supernatural and magnificent things are so close to people. "The Body," is a story written by Robert Sheckley and its beginning lays stress on the begins with "the operation of grafting an animal's body to a human brain" (Sandner 2004: 141). The end makes the readers realise what men have in common with animals.

In the fantastic, the uncanny or supernatural situations are considered different from the background of things perceived as natural and the laws of nature determined people to be more aware of them. In Kafka, the supernatural events do not trigger hesitation, for the world depicted is very strange,

as abnormal as the very event to which it affords a background. We therefore find here (but in an inverted form) the problem of the literature of the fantastic—a literature which postulates the existence of the real, the natural, the normal, in order to attack it subsequently—but Kafka has managed to transcend this problem. He treats the irrational as though it were part of a game: his entire world obeys an oneiric logic, if not indeed a nightmare one which no longer has anything to do with the real. Even if a certain hesitation persists in the reader, it ceases to affect the character; and identification, as we have previously noted it, is no longer possible. (Sandner 2004: 141)

According to Sartre, Blanchot and Kafka, the "normal" man is actually the embodiment of the fantastic being. The hero represented a figure with whom the reader identified, and it was anormal being but in this context, the hero becomes "fantastic."

TIM BURTON'S *THE LEGEND OF THE SLEEPY HOLLOW*

Washington Irving's story *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is one of the most important American short stories and it was adapted in many films and television shows. A lot of people may have known the story by watching the film; for example, there was an early version in 1922 which was called *The Headless Horseman* where Will Rogers played the main character, Ichabod Crane. Later on, in 1949, there was also a Disney version called *The Adventures of Ichabod*. In 1999, Tim Burton created a remarkable film which starred Johnny Depp, and it had a darker gothic approach. Washington Irving is an important figure in American literature. His works lay stress on supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes which play a notable role in serves in the American culture people, by analysing and elaborating on norms, traditions, customs etc of the American background.

The community is depicted in a long paragraph by the first-person narrator who is actually a man in a tavern who tells the story of Diedrich Knickerbocker, who appears to be the fictional author. There are many levels of narration and many narrators, fact which confuses the readers. For example, Washington Irving is the author of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*.

Geffrey Crayon represents the fictional author, and he creates the stories. Knickerbockeris embodies the character who is said to have written *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

In the book, the place where the actions are settled, Sleepy Hollow, stands for the mysterious atmosphere that pervades the region. It is said that the people who live there are descendants of the Dutch people who lived there earlier. Nonetheless, those who live in Sleepy Hollow have the tendency to have superstitions and are more likely to hear voices and to imagine things. Sleepy Hollow's residents have the pleasure of telling stories about the ghosts in the region; and one example is that of a Headless Horseman, who rides a black horse at night in order to kill people until he finds his head so that he can have it with his body which is buried in the churchyard. He is said to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper who was decapitated in the Revolutionary War. The "authentic historians" of the town claim that the ghost rides out each night in search of his head, to join it with his body that is buried in the churchyard and returns to the churchyard before dawn. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is the embodiment of the Romantic movement in literature: Romanticism got its origins in the 18th century and Irving manages to depict the settings and areas of Sleepy Hollow in a remarkable way, using great details as calm, mysterious, lush, quiet etc.

There is a clash of cultures in the story, represented by Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones. In the story, Ichabod is a school teacher, whereas in the film he is a constable who comes to investigate the crimes and to figure out the truth. Irving creates a different portrait of Ichabod, he is regarded as weak and looser but at the same time, he stands for complexity, sophistication and culture. He is also dominated by fear and weakness, being considered a strange and naïve intellectual; he has the pleasure of hearing stories about ghosts, monsters, etc but he enjoys listening to the one of the Headless Horseman who comes at night in the valley.

Tim Burton, also known as Timothy William Burton, has gained his name for his original and remarkable style which prevails in elements of the fantastic and the macabre. Burton found his pleasure in making films when he was very young and he decided to attend the California Institute of the Arts. He made a series of short films which included the horror film *Frankenweenie* (1984) and he finally directed his first feature *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, in 1985. Burton also directed a dark comedy entitled *Beetlejuice* (1988), becoming an original and unconventional filmmaker. Washington Irving's tale *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* stands for the Gothic style and it prevails in horror details and mysterious settings; but it also contains Irving's witty style. The beginning is full of humour whereas the end appears to be terrifying. Burton, as Washington Irving makes use of many devices in order to create and amplify the atmosphere of terror and fear: setting, supernatural events, macabre characters, allegory, symbols, etc. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was first published in 1820, and Disney created a version of it entitled *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad (Algar & Geronimi)*. The cartoon appeared in 1949 and consisted of a mixture of elements from Irving's story and of *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame.

Additionally, Tim Burton's film contains several differences from Irving's original story in the sense that the narrative frame is changed. For example, in the original story it is not clear if the headless Horseman actually existed or it is just a story based on fiction, invented by men; whereas in the film, the Horseman definitely exists and he will not cease until he gets his head back, slaughtering everyone if necessary. There is another important change, that is when Ichabod Crane appears in order to investigate the murders and victims and who is a teacher in

Irving's original story. In Irving's tale, Ichabod is quite ugly with long limbs and a long nose, but Burton did not create him in such a way. Johnny Depp plays the role of Ichabod, and he does it in a spectacular way; there is a mixture of

eccentricity and awkwardness, which makes Ichabod Crane stand out from the rest of the townspeople in Sleepy Hollow. This works well as Crane is from New York and this difference is a defining point. The city is the origin of newfangled ideas and inventions. The country is where people remain set in their ways and still believe tales of hocus-pocus. (Page 2017: 120)

Crane is dominated by reason when he starts investigating the murders and thus, his scientific ways and deduction help him discover murders and find out who is behind those victims. There are many tools which Ichabod uses for investigating and this is a common fact in many other films of Burton. In *Edward Scissorhands* Edward's creator employed gadgets and machinery to make things like cookies and even Edward himself. In both *Batman* films, the caped crusader often uses them and we also see the Joker using things like an electrified hand buzzer and the Penguin employing a copter-brolly. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Willy Wonka uses a dazzling array of machinery in order to create his sweets. There are even examples of gadgets in Burton's stop motion animation *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, in which we see them being employed to make toys in Christmas Town and by inventor Dr Finkelstein in Halloween Town (Page 2017: 121).

Ichabod Crane has horrific nightmares which are revealed as flashbacks and the past points to his need of using science and reason in order to discover the truth; so he uses his head to investigate, whereas the Horseman who has no head, is the evil force of the story: "Thus the thinker, the man who uses his mind, overcomes the mindless at the end of the film" (Page 2017: 121). Christopher Walken plays the role of the Hessian, the headless Horseman. As in many cases, Walken's role is very good as he looks remarkably evil and vicious.

The film is definitely inspired by the tale written by Washington Irving, and it lays emphasis on a story about a headless horseman: he lost his head in a battle during the Revolutionary War, and he was buried without it. People claim that he often rides in their village because he is searching for his head. Ichabod Crane is asked to come in the village in order to see what is truly happening. Initially his heart is dominated by skepticism but in the end, he realises that the ghost of the man is real, and he has a reason: he wants his head back and he will not cease decapitating until he gets it. When Ichabod arrives in Sleepy Hollow, he finds accommodation at Van Tassels and becomes infatuated with their daughter, Katrina; her mother is a witch, and she is also engaged in strange practices. Ichabod comes to the conclusion that all the victims, with the exception of Brom are beneficiaries or witnesses to this new will, and that the Horseman's master is the person who would have inherited the estate.

At first, Ichabod thinks that Katrina is in the control of the Horseman, but when he finds her diagram, he realizes that it offers her protection, and she did not summon the Horseman. What rings a bell in his mind is the fact that Lady Van Tassel has a postmortem wound on her body. Lady Van Tassel is actually alive and explains to Katrina that she has a veritable heritage from a family who was evicted years ago by Van Garrett when he helped Baltus and Katrina instead. She promised to take revenge against Van Garrett and all who had treated her wrongly. Manipulating her way into the Van Tassel household, she used fear, blackmail, and lust to draw

the other elders into her plot. Having eliminated all other heirs and witnesses - and having killed her sister, the crone, for aiding Ichabod - she summons the Horseman to finish Katrina. Ichabod and Masbathgo to the windmill when the Horseman arrives. After a long battle at the Tree of the Dead, Ichabod throws the skull to the Horseman. When he sees that he has his head back, the Horseman does not kill Katrina and attacks Lady Van Tassel. Ichabod goes back to New York with Katrina.

It can be noticed that the film contains many gothic elements such as creepy situations, horrific scenes, dark settings (old castle, dark rooms) and some scholars agree with the fact that some elements in the story are related to *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. In the film *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow*, the action takes place in New York in 1799; these places intensify the gothic atmosphere as most of the scenes occur in forests, gloomy areas, haunted houses etc. Almost all the time the events take place in darkness or in fog; for instance, the chase at the Tree of the Dead, neighbourhood, the scenes when the victims are found decapitated by the Horseman etc.

The mist and woodland of Sleepy Hollow give the location a mysterious quality, one which adds greatly to the overall atmosphere of the film. They are ideal haunting grounds for the Hessian, perfectly matched to the brutal murders that take place there. They also create a sense of a fairytale, of a place removed from reality, hidden away in the mists. The town and its surroundings are places where the unusual can and will happen, where the idea of normality is completely different from that in the city and of the present day. (Page 2017: 122)

The elements of the uncanny and supernatural are seen as true and the science which Ichabod uses is regarded as something skeptic. Of course, as in many other gothic films, the presence of witches is very important, and it definitely places the story in the supernatural world. It is said that the film could be related to the films *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Big Fish*, in which there are also witches. The Van Tassel sisters use witchcraft, fact which contributes to the fantasy of the film.

The symbols play an important role in the film, contributing to suspense and mystery; these symbols have an important meaning related to the supernatural world in the film and the first symbol would be the blood. It is used in many gothic films, and it can also be observed in *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow* when Ichabod sees a fortune-teller in order to find out about the resting place of the Horseman; this is one of the scenes which amplify the mysterious atmosphere. Another notable gothic element is the idea of prophecy; when the fortune-teller says that he can actually feel and smell blood, it means that the headless Horseman will make other victims until he gets his head back. Another important symbol is the tree. It is considered a significant symbol in the gothic films as many people have believed in the power of religion for many years and the tree has been worshipped since ages because people became used to the fact that it stands for the limit between two worlds (heaven and hell); in the case of the film, there is The Tree of the Dead where many heads are buried at its roots. The evil eye plays a considerable role in the film in order to lay emphasis on magic and witchcraft; it was drawn by Katrina on the floor so as to offer Ichabod protection. Initially, he thought that it was drawn to do him harm but in the end, he realised that the reason was different, and Katrina wanted to protect him against spirits. It is said that the sign is a pentagram, and it is used for protection

and to control negative energy. The way in which the scenes are organised gives an air of terror and fear; for instance, the scene when the midwife's family are killed, it clearly indicates gothic and fantastic elements. When the Horseman kills her husband, many projections come from the lamp of their child, and he hides under the floorboards as the Horseman decapitates his mother. The moment when the Horseman kills the boy it is not shown but there is clear evidence that he actually did as he tightens the bag; it is terrifying enough to see that. The scene of the autopsy also shocks with its horrific elements, fear and blood:

The scene, for all its implied horror, is indicative of the kind of violence that's acceptable, and towards which kind of person. The other implied horror sequence occurs when Ichabod discovers the fifth victim and performs his first autopsy. The implication from the sword wound in the belly of the pregnant Winship is that the Horseman also decapitated her foetus. There are exceptions to this however, with some scenes being designed to confront and shock. (Odell and Le Blanc 2005: 106)

The rational and the fantastic interweave in the film and Ichabod's character is defined by dichotomy: he does not believe in the supernatural, is somehow controlled by rationality but in the end, he comes to the conclusion that something strange and beyond rationality happens. Watching the film, people could feel a continual feeling of danger and fear which is present behind every tree or house. The imagery which is used helps intensify these feelings and creates an atmosphere specific for a gothic background. The settings can be really terrifying, with evil figures in the woods, local people feel the fear dominating their souls full of terror, "All of this means an empathic bond is created between the audience and the townspeople to a degree because we understand their terror at the notion of a headless horseman hunting them down one by one, prowling the darker hours in order to collect their severed heads" (Page 2017: 126).

As far as fantasy is concerned, one important part of it is magic. In general novels which imply fantasy could be romantic, could contain historical elements etc. For example, the fantasy genre is comprised of legends, fairy tales and myths. Stories which lay emphasis on wizards, dragons, monsters are fantasy. Therefore, readers could see a different world which they have never known before. There are some typical characteristics of fantasy stories: the conflict in such novels points to the contrast between good and evil. Almost all the time, the main character and the rest of the characters are determined to fight against the evil. Most fantasy fiction contains specific details related to settings, creatures, words and names. For instance, the setting Sleepy Hollow which creates an atmosphere of mystery and terror, the name Headless Horseman, the way the horseman looks like is terrifying, the fact that the Van Tessel sisters perform various actions of witchcraft, etc. contribute to creating a fantastic frame. Of course, there are many supernatural creatures as monsters, vampires, dwarves and so on and so forth; In *The Legend of the Sleepy Hollow*, the headless horseman stands for the creature which has come back to get his head back and is totally deprived of any human feelings. Moreover, usually the characters have the ability of doing magic deeds as in the case of Katrina. Of course, as in many other fiction stories, there is the figure of a villain which has to be endowed with supernatural elements and must be extraordinary.

Moreover, there are many trademarks which Burton uses, for example one of the most important is the use of a graveyard which is also seen in *Frankenweenie*, *Beetlejuice*, *Batman*

Returns, The Nightmare Before Christmas, Ed Wood, Big Fish, Planet of the Apes and Corpse Bride. It represents a main setting for Burton, and it stands for horror surroundings; for instance, when Crane exhumes some victims from graves. Some scholars say that when Burton was a child he would play with his friends in a graveyard near Burbank. That kind of atmosphere might have found a place in his heart and made his desire of horror films stronger. Apart from the graveyard, there is the use of scarecrows and pumpkins, which are also used in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. The windmill which appears in the scenes when they chase the Hessian Horseman can also be seen in the film *Frankenweenie*.

Cinematic effects and techniques play an important role in the film. For instance, there are many times in the film when the closeness to the objects amplifies the idea of mystery and intensifies the suspense. A good example could be the scene at the beginning when a man sends a letter to Sleep Hollow but, on the road, he has the feeling that he is being followed. In that particular moment, the camera is close to him, so that those who are watching the film could feel the feelings of the scared man. There is a scene where Ichabod discovers a dead body in the river and, at that moment, the focus is on him, the rest of the objects are not clear. The gothic elements in this scene derive from the dark atmosphere and the panic which could be seen on the Ichabod's face. The lighting is also very important and points to gothic elements; most of the scenes are created in low lighting in order to render a feeling of terror, fear and mystery. There are a few scenes which use high lighting, for instance the moment when Ichabod dreams and has a vision. As far as the cinematic techniques are concerned, the close-up shots are frequent in the film; the scene where Ichabod hears a story about a horseman who was killed, and the camera focuses on his hands which are trembling as he becomes very scared and anxious. In addition, there are also techniques known as close ups which focus on the character's face in order to show emotions, feelings or to point to a notable moment in the story. For instance, there is a scene when a man is caught by the headless Horseman in the field and the terror is shown on his face. Other techniques are known as long and medium shots which are also present in the film; the scene when Ichabod arrives in Sleepy Hollow contains a long shot technique as the camera is set on the village and shows the subject from head to toe. In general, it is used in order to lay stress on the connection between characters and the surroundings. Thus, the audience becomes familiar with the atmosphere in Sleepy Hollow, which is gloomy and dark, the graves around it, the old buildings and the cold misty weather. One example of medium shot is when Ichabod is walking home, and he feels that he is being followed. The public has the sensation that something bad will happen; feelings of anxiety, mystery, terror and anguish are represented in the scene. When Ichabod hears that a horse is approaching him, he is dominated by horror.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to conclude, many gothic elements in the film are embodied through settings, symbols, protagonists, characteristics, effects and so on and so forth. The actions revolve around the protagonist, Ichabod, whereas other characters as the Van Tassel sisters, or the headless Horseman, are the antagonists. Starting with the setting which plays an important role in the film, the gothic elements which are present in the film are the embodiment of a gloomy

atmosphere (examples such as forests, grave, houses, weather etc). Symbols are also important in the film, in the sense that they point to the idea of supernatural and magic.

The elements of the uncanny and fantastic interweave so that they create a great atmosphere for those interested in watching such films. The term of *uncanny* alludes to words such as strangeness, mystery, something creepy in a familiar way; like Freud stated, the uncanny can be found in the ordinary life, in simple and familiar situations, more specifically the uncanny could be related to a situation when the familiar is disturbed. Of course, the uncanny pervades the scenes of the film as they deal with many strange settings and situations, starting with the title “Sleppy Hollow”. The fantastic elements are also dominating in the film as there are many scenes when the supernatural happens such as witchcraft, ghosts, walking dead bodies, etc.

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Margaret Atwood's Historical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Paratext on the Page and on the Screen

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Reading was not for girls: only men were strong to deal with the force of it.
Margaret Atwood- *The Testaments* (2020: 156)

Echoing George Orwell's appendix *The Principles of Newspeak*, Atwood's *Historical Notes* constitutes "the framing narrative which concludes" (Praisler, Gheorghiu 2019: 175) the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. The paratext and Hulu's adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* are centred around important issues: metafictional discussions on the sources, the intertextuality of history, the incorporation of the ideologies of a former regime into a current one, the importance of personal accounts in the context of history. The present paper aims to explore three important aspects: the antithetical issue between personal storytelling and historical discourse, the way in which the paratext emphasizes the novel's intertextual sources and the fact that the TV series represents a synthesis of historical and social issues.

Historical Notes on The Handmaid's Tale, "the paratext of the paratext" (Praisler, Gheorghiu 2019: 176) presents a fictional "transcript of the proceedings of the Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies" (HT 307). The symposium takes place at "the University of Denay, Nunavit" (HT 307). Professor Maryann Crescent Moon introduces the speaker, professor Pieixoto, a historian who will analyze Offred's story. The name of the university and its location suggest a lexical pun – "deny none of it" – "a piece of authorial advice to the reader to believe Offred's story" (Howells 1996: 137). In this respect, Atwood draws attention to the danger that can arise when history is read and understood only from the perspective of the political sphere. It is possible that true history be found in the experiences of those people who want nothing more than to make themselves heard. In this respect, the paratext raises various questions: Is history a faithful and objective reinterpretation of human experiences? Does the academia have the ability to manipulate people's perspective on historical events?

The paratext illustrates the practice of collecting and analyzing historical documents. It also highlights an important antithetical issue: personal account versus historical report/ personal storytelling versus historical discourse. Whereas the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* illustrates a story which is composed of individual experiences, its paratext emphasizes the way in which the same story is constructed and interpreted by male historians.

The title of Pieixoto's lecture "Problems of Authentication in Reference to *The Handmaid's Tale*" (HT 308) demonstrates the way in which the professor undermines Offred's story and trauma. Transforming individual experiences in simple tales is an act of censorship and an attempt to hide political and social issues. The paratext questions the accuracy of

historical issues as “although the labels were authentic [...] all such arrangements are based on some guesswork and are to be regarded as approximate...” (HT 310). Using his academic abilities, Pieixoto manipulates the audience illustrating a reconstructed version of Offred’s story. He prefers to use his male perspective on the handmaid’s story rather than let the audience hear Offred’s voice.

By illustrating historians’ inability to understand people’s real traumatic experiences, Atwood suggests that the academia is a force that can allow political and social extremism to suppress human liberties. Thus, Atwood suggests that human society should pay attention to the way in which historical facts are written. Being influenced by their own ideas or ideologies, scholars have different perspectives on interpreting the historical events.

Pieixoto considers Offred’s narrative a “soi- disant manuscript” (HT 308) and says that he “hesitate[s] to use the word document” (HT 309). Therefore, Offred’s thoughts and turmoil are totally undermined. The historian does not deny her story, but he denies its relevance. As Pieixoto has access to Offred’s memories and language, he uses his academic skills to manipulate and control Offred’s discourse in order to suppress her voice and to strengthen his authority.

Transforming personal stories in meaningless experiences, the academia uses history for political purposes or personal privileges. Hence, individuals should use their own judgement in order to understand societal issues and personal stories as history “cannot always decipher them [voices] precisely in the clearer light of our own day” (HT 320).

The writer confessed that she used three different sources for writing *The Handmaid’s Tale*: social and political events of the 80s, studies of the 17th century American Puritan theocracy and personal readings of utopias and dystopias, especially George Orwell’s *1984* or Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*: “When I wrote it, I was making sure I wasn’t putting anything into it that humans had not already done somewhere at some time” (*The Guardian* 2017).

The historical context is very relevant in analyzing the novel because it depicts a critique on various topics regarding social and political issues. In this respect, *Historical Notes on The Handmaid’s Tale* pictures “all intertextual sources, all hypotexts that support the narrative” (Praisler, Gheorghiu 2019: 179).

The “Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies” (HT 307) takes place in June, a month which symbolizes fertility and energy. Therefore, this element is a direct reference to the only role that Offred had in Gilead: to bear children. Offred – “of Fred” – is a patronymic name which suggests oppression and loss of identity. The practice was common during the Civil War. The African-American slaves took the name of their masters which highlighted the fact that they were deprived of identity and turned into personal property. In the novel, the Underground Femaleroad is a resistance network that helps people escape. It is a historical allusion to the Underground Railroad, a secret system set up by Isaac T. Hopper in the 1800s (*Essential Civil War Curriculum* 1999). African- American slaves used this secret network in order to escape to different free states or to Canada.

The return to traditional values and the rise of the birthrate were considered major priorities of the Gileadean norms. In this respect, Atwood’s contemporary society was also marked by the infertility crisis. In 1984, expert Martin Quigley declared for *Time Magazine* that “the United States suffers from an epidemic of infertility” (Marsh, Ronner 2019). This

information had a huge impact on society and led to the rise of conservatism during Ronald Reagan's presidency.

Gilead is a theocratic dictatorship which uses religious norms and doctrines as primary means of manipulation. The idea is derived from the realities of the 80s when political groups such as the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition considered religion the essential element of the American social life. In this respect, televangelists such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and Phyllis Schlafly played an important propagandistic role.

Atwood's contemporary society was also marked by brutal violations of women's choices and rights. Reagan, Ceausescu or Khmer Rouge were among the dictators who instituted laws which eliminated women's right to have a deep control over their own bodies. Forced pregnancies or abortion restrictions were some of their brutal and oppressive ways to assert authority and control. Their pro-life propaganda was an inhumane act that deprived women of fundamental rights.

In order to increase declining birthrate and to keep society under surveillance, the handmaids' children were kidnapped and "adopted by childless couples of the upper echelons" (HT 312). Throughout the history of humankind, this brutal act was practiced by the Nazi or by Francisco Franco's dictatorial regime. The Nazi Lebensborn program was responsible for the abduction of more than 250,000 children, especially from Poland, Russia and Yugoslavia.

More interesting is that, in the novel, Atwood does not give many details about "the infamous Colonies" (HT 317), a terrifying work camp where the Unwomen were banished. In countries like Russia, China or Thailand, these labour camps functioned as a brutal way to eliminate the opponents. For example, the Soviet Gulag was a cruel system of forced work camps where 1.7 million people died between 1918 and 1956 due to starvation and hard-working conditions (History 2018).

Atwood expressed a high interest in the way in which a totalitarian state establishes its ideologies. Being aware of the power of language, the writer illustrates two ways in which a regime can exercise absolute authority: either by offering false privileges or false power to a certain group of individuals in order to indoctrinate others, or by using members of a society to control individuals from within that society: "As the architects of Gilead knew, to institute an effective totalitarian system or indeed any system at all you must offer some benefits and freedoms, at least to a privileged few, in return for those you remove" (HT 316).

The paratext is not explicitly mentioned in the Hulu TV series *The Handmaid's Tale*, but there are clues that suggest its presence. By giving Offred a real name- June- the adaptation interprets and creates a new character whose identity illustrates a radical transformation completely different from that of Atwood's novel. The TV series invites the viewers to explore different realities of the contemporary society and to pay attention to the ideologies that may become a threat to individual rights. The frame of the TV series is represented by flashbacks which emphasize a list of facts around the genesis of Gilead and specify cultural and social reasons why Gilead came about. The flashbacks also highlight the importance of personal stories and human tragedies. Viewers are challenged to pay attention to the anxieties of the contemporary society and to understand the means in which they can avoid a misunderstanding of the new ideologies which may incorporate elements of an oppressive social system.

The filmic adaptation discusses its sources and adapts them to the contemporary society synthesizing a wide variety of realities that will be further illustrated.

The infertility crisis is used as a justification for the ideologies of the Gileadean regime. In the contemporary society experts are calling this phenomenon a “demographic time bomb” (*Insider* 2020) and consider that girls should be advised to listen to their “biological clocks” (*The Guardian* 2009). During Donald Trump’s presidency, there were many efforts to limit abortion. In 2017, *The National Abortion Federation* reported many acts of vandalism against the abortion clinics (*The Guardian* 2018). “Life was winning in America” was a phrase that was heard at the *March for Life* religious demonstration which was supported by President Trump himself (Dwyer 2017). In the filmic adaptation, all these actions are illustrated by Serena Joy’s speeches and her efforts to convince people that women must return to traditional values and assume their biological destinies. The return to the traditional values is an intertextual reference to both Reagan’s and Trump’s conservative policies.

The first episode of the TV series presents June, Luke and Hannah trying to get to Canada. They do not manage to escape because the Gileadean Guardians catch June and her daughter and brutally separate them. June is sent to “Rachel and Leah Center”, whereas Hannah is relocated to Commander McKenzie to be raised by the Gileadean infertile elite. In the contemporary society, “the family separation policy” or “zero tolerance” (ABA 2018) is part of President Trump’s political agenda. Under this law, the American authorities separated 4368 children from their Mexican parents with whom they crossed the US border. The Department of Health and Human Services takes care of these children until they are reallocated to different families.

Even if Atwood does not offer many details about the Colonies, the filmic adaptation expands the image of this brutal and radioactive labour camp where the Unwomen were banished to work until their death. The image of the Colonies reminds of the Nazi concentration camps or the Soviet labour camps where people were “discarded from the society and forced to work in the fields until they die and everything has been stripped away- their names, their families, their identities” (Miller, qtd. in *New York Vulture* 2019).

The Particutions/ the Salvagings are public executions which were carried out by the handmaids. Involving its own citizens in brutal acts, the Gileadean regime exercised its authoritarian role. The Salvagings provide the regime an opportunity for displaying its authority and for projecting its power over rebels and opponents. In 2019, there were identified 318 places in North Korea that were used for at least 27 public executions (*BBC News* 2019). Lee Younghwan, the director of the *Seoul-based Transitional Justice Working Group*, said that the public executions are used “to send a warning to the masses” (*rfa* 2021). In Saudi Arabia, the system is based on Sharia which allows the brutal regime to use public executions as a form of supreme penalty for violating the Quaran’s laws.

Episode five of the second season introduces viewers to another ritual: Prayvaganza. Guardians are forced to marry young girls in a mass ceremony wedding. During Khmer Rouge’s dictatorial regime, mass marriages had severe consequences on women who were abused and engaged in forced sexual intercourse in order to produce as many children as they could. Another example is the Unification Church whose history began in the 50s in South Korea and Japan. Its founder, Sun Myung Moon, rapidly expanded his ideologies in Europe and United States. Even if they were forced to overcome different cultural barriers, the members of this religious movement, participated in mass wedding ceremonies because they considered that this was the way through which they could “establish one God-centered family” (TGC 2018). The

practice is also met in Philippine where each year the government sponsors collective wedding rituals.

Human trafficking, “the Pandemic of the 21st century” (*Forbes* 2019), desensitizes and depersonalizes individuals. The main purposes of human trafficking are prostitution, organized criminality, sexual slavery, drug deals or children exploitation. The effects of human trafficking are devastating because victims experience physical and psychological trauma which may lead to illnesses or suicide. A form of human trafficking is the transfer of handmaids from one Commander to another.

In the filmic adaptation, mutilation becomes a form through which the regime imposes its excessive power and control on the individuals who do not respect the Gileadean laws or defy the authority of the state: Janine suffers the removal of one of her eyes; being accused of gender treachery, Emily becomes the victim of genital mutilation, a brutal act which is practiced in countries like Yemen, Indonesia or even United States. The filmic adaptation does sometimes illustrate the vulnerability that even the Gileadean elite finds itself in when facing the supreme authority of the state: when it becomes known that Commander Putnam had an affair with Janine, his hand is surgically removed; Serena’s little finger is cut off because she had the courage to read a Biblical verse. In our contemporary world, this form of mutilation is practiced by the members of Yakuza, the Japanese mafia. “Yubitsume” (Hardiman 2021) is a form of self-punishment which consists in cutting a part of the little finger. The act itself is either an apology or evidence of belonging to the group.

In Gilead, lesbians and homosexuals are labelled gender traitors. Throughout the series, the lesbians Emily and Moira must face oppression, discrimination assaults and mutilation. Unfortunately, Gilead is not a fictional world for the LGBTQ people. President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence excluded LGBTQ individuals from the protection of law. The administration decided to ban LGBTQ individuals from the military service (*Vox* 2020) and expressed its disapproval towards the *Equality Act* which would protect the rights of the community and blocked many sources that would ensure medical and educational protection (*Them* 2020).

Based on “guesswork” (*HT* 318), professor Pieixoto assumes that Nick was “a member of the shadowy Mayday underground” (*HT* 318) and he could have helped Offred escape Gilead. Atwood does not give many details about the resistance network because Offred is not an active participant in the rebellion. She even illustrates that Mayday “used to be a distress signal, a long time ago, in one of those wars we studied in high school” (*HT* 49). The first two seasons of the TV series explore the way in which June was trying to connect with the secret organization, but season four reveals that “we’re Mayday. We don’t hide. We fight. And, in this place, we all fight” [00:50:16-00:50:46]. Consequently, the filmic adaptation reveals that Mayday is not a secret group that tries to bring down the Gileadean regime. Mayday represents individual strength and collective action against oppression. Mayday is every human being who does not accept to be entrapped in a brutal system.

In *Historical Notes*, professor Pieixoto highlights that the “collective rope ceremony” (*HT* 315) was similar to the Salvaging. The seventh episode of the third season illustrates the handmaids who participate in a Salvaging of a man and two Econowives. The handmaids have the terrifying task of pulling three red ropes to hang the convicts. The ritual is reminiscent of Atwood’s studies and personal ancestry of the 17th Puritan New England.

The sixth episode of the third season is extremely relevant. June and the Waterfords travel to Washington DC in order to participate to a prayer as they hope that the Canadian government will offer them help into returning baby Nichole to Gilead. Washington proves to be a nightmare for most of the handmaids who must cover their mouth with a red cloth. The most brutal scene is represented by the image of the handmaids who are stripped of any human right because they are forced to wear rings in their lips. Sealed mouths are a sign of psychological mutilation and suppression of language as it suggests Gilead's barbarian and coercive practices. The most striking image is the beheaded statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial. Lincoln abolished slavery, but Gilead brought it back. June is hugging the pedestal of the former president's statue and covers her mouth with the red garment. The scene acts as a warning which suggests that America's ideal of freedom may be easily transformed into a brutal repression of identity and humanity.

The eighth episode of Hulu's last season may be considered as a reminiscent of Atwood's *Historical Notes on The Handmaid's Tale*. The episode is entitled *Testimony* and it illustrates the power of storytelling in the context of history and politics. In Atwood's novel, Offred's testimony helps her to survive in a reality which suppresses identities. It is her legacy. It is her revenge. It is the only tool she uses to fight against the regime. In Bruce Miller's adaptation, June testifies in court some of the atrocities and abuses she had to endure in Gilead:

I am grateful to be speaking to you today, but mine is just one voice. Countless others will remain unheard imprisoned by men like Fred Waterford, women, my friends, who lost their lives and can never be heard. It is for those women that I ask the International Criminal Court to confirm the charges against this man and put him on trial [...]. I ask for justice [00:22:45-00:23:55, season 4, episode 8].

June manages to survive and to become the voice of the oppressed. She has the courage to read her testimony in court and to face her persecutors even if she knows language is powerful enough either to free or to subjugate. Elizabeth Moss's (June) close-up helps viewers to explore the character's perspective because the testimony restores the identity Gilead tried to destroy it. She does not mention anything about Gilead's political structure. She is only recounting personal traumatic experiences in a system which denies human identity. She rememorates the painful brutalities she had to withstand and the reasons of her choice to stay in Gilead when she had the chance to escape. Apparently, June gets help from Mark Tuello, a mysterious character who seems to work for the ex- American government. The series does not reveal Mark Tuello's real identity, but his attitude and goals are similar to Atwood's male historian, professor Pieixoto. Tuello is not interested in getting justice for June and the other handmaids. He tells her that Fred Waterford will be released from arrest because he made an agreement with the Canadian government. Even if June asks for righteousness, Tuello's deal with Fred Waterford reveals that he only cares about Gilead's political and military strategies.

Consequently, neither history nor society seem to be interested in decoding Offred's message or June's testimony. As long as personal narratives do not reveal pivotal details about the political structure of a certain regime, history disregards individual ordeal.

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The Pygmalion Myth, the Narcissus' Complex and the Law of

Attraction in *Ruby Sparks*

Laura-Daniela COJOCARU (GÂȚĂ)

“You are a woman, writing the character of a man who writes the character of a woman, who you’re also playing as an actress. Your directors are trying to follow up a hugely successful debut with a movie about a writer trying to follow up a hugely successful debut... Were you trying to create as many layers as possible with this thing?” (Pond). When asked about this unignorable level of meta-intersection between her real life and the diegesis of the movie she wrote, Zoe Kazan (both writer and interpreter of *Ruby Sparks*) laughed and said: “I don’t really have anything to say about that. It got very strange, I try not to think about it. It’s like the universe – you don’t want to think about it too hard” (Kazan in Pond 2012). On an amusing note, one could accuse Kazan of being the *Ruby Sparks* of her own script.

However, as much as one might choose not to think too much about the depth of happenings in the movie *Ruby Sparks*, such as where did Ruby actually come from or if Lila was in fact justified to leave Calvin, certain aspects crawl into the viewer’s mind and let yet space for wondering.

A Greek mythology nuance, in the direction of Pygmalion’s Myth, has been confessed by Zoe Kazan – herself a descendent of Greek heritage on her father’s side. She admits: “I was a big Greek myth nerd as a kid, and I always liked the story of Pygmalion and Galatea.” Kazan also adds: “I was always interested in exploring that romance impulse men have to idealize women.”. But could that romance impulse, among other aspects in the movie, be traced back to something more complex than man could be aware of? (Kazan in Pond 2012).

In an attempt to answer this question and beginning with Kazan’s confession of the Pygmalion Myth, we adventured into identifying other core governing myths and principles in the movie *Ruby Sparks* that could also linger, unconsciously, in the lives of everyday viewers. Three were observed:

- The Pygmalion Myth (as stated by Zoe Kazan herself)
- A Narcissus’ complex (vital to Calvin’s process of creation)
- Manifesting and the law of attraction (subtly suggested)

Therefore, for the purpose of this essay, we shall explore each of these three hidden pylons of the movie and increase awareness upon them for the viewership.

The Pygmalion Myth and the Everlasting Shortcomings of the Creation

To provide a summary, in the 10th book of Ovid's series of *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion is a Cypriot sculptor who carves a woman out of ivory stone. Initially, he starts from a point of hatred towards females, “detesting the faults beyond measure which nature has given to women.” Highly dissatisfied with the feminine way of life in his time, Pygmalion chooses to

retreat into sculpting and remain celibate. Nevertheless, when his hands bring to motionless life Galatea, the ivory-sculpted woman, he falls in incurable love with her and starts treating the statue as a real human being. With Aphrodite's festival approaching, Pygmalion starts bringing offerings to the goddess' altar but, too scared to utter his desire, he only quietly wishes for a wife who would be "the living likeness of his ivory girl." Upon his arrival back home, he kisses his creation as he usually does, only that, this time, its lips feel warm. Aphrodite granted Pygmalion's wish.

Calvin has a relatively similar story. The first encounters with him display a young, rather unconfident, but highly successful writer who, at the current moment, is facing a typical writer's hardship: a literary block. Meeting no other friends than his own brother, Harry, and occasionally his editor, Cyrus, and being totally convinced that no woman would ever be interested in dating him for anything else apart from his fame¹, he finds himself once again in his therapist's office, confessing his feelings of inadequacy and loneliness. The therapist reminds him about Scotty, his dog, and gives him as an assignment to write no more than a page about somebody who would like Scotty, regardless of any shortcomings the dog might have.

Then, a page turns into a story, and the story turns into a never-ending book. A process of documentation about one Ruby Sparks begins for Calvin.

We first meet Ruby much like Pygmalion first met Galatea: surrounded by a halo-like light, in a dream-like atmosphere. We also learn that Calvin constructed her character detail by detail, moment by moment, falling gradually in love with her with each page:

It overwhelms me. I literally cannot sleep or eat. All I want to do is write. [...] It's almost like I'm writing to spend time with her. I go to sleep at night just waiting to get to my typewriter so I can be with her. It's like I'm falling in love with her. I can't fall in love with a girl I write. [00:13:08-00:14:24]

But in love he falls, and to life does Ruby come out of nowhere, conforming herself to each detail he wrote – a live embodiment of Calvin's deepest fantasy and desire:

Twenty-six years old. Raised in Dayton, Ohio. Ruby's first crushes were Humphrey Bogart and John Lennon. Cried the day she found out they were already dead. Ruby got kicked out of high school for sleeping with her art teacher... or maybe her Spanish teacher. I haven't decided yet. Ruby can't drive. She doesn't own a computer. She hates her middle name, which is Tiffany. She always, always roots for the underdog. She's complicated. That's what I like best about her. Ruby's not so good at life sometimes. She forgets to open bills or cash checks. Her last boyfriend was 49. The one before that was an alcoholic. She can feel a change coming. She's looking for it. [00:14:30-00:15:37]

However, Calvin's situation with Ruby goes a little bit beyond Pygmalion's with Galatea. While Pygmalion could do no further enhancements to his creation, for Calvin, everything he writes about Ruby still comes to pass. Consequently, to keep Ruby the way she is, he decides to simply stop writing about her at all, hide the manuscript, and simply enjoy life along with her.

¹ Much as Pygmalion, Calvin attributes a rather bad reputation to women due to his love failure with Lila, who "turned out to be a heartless slut" [00:14:21] for disposing of him right after his father's funeral.

Time passes and Ruby becomes more and more real, thus more and more autonomous, with new life experiences and viewpoints. She gets a part-time job, meets new people and, least but not last, decides to move out Calvin's house to get more space of her own. In other words, shortcomings start to crawl into this idealized persona of a woman who would have otherwise been perfect. Hurt, Calvin sees no solution but to tweak these changes a little bit using his most effective tool against Ruby: his book. So, he starts writing: "Ruby was miserable without Calvin..." [00:59:30]. And not only miserable does she become, but utterly dependable on Calvin. This, naturally, becomes an inconvenience to him and he gets back to writing: "Ruby was filled with the most effervescent joy..." [01:05:30].

From one adjustment to another, Ruby becomes increasingly extreme and gradually less real to Calvin. Their Edenic situation turns into a nightmare, especially for Ruby, who ultimately loses all control of her body, after a fight with Calvin: "Ruby speaks French.", "Ruby snaps with her right hand.", "Ruby strips and sings."

Disempowered and horrified, the creation leaves her creator, who turned tyrannical against her and broke his vow of not using his God-like powers. In a last gesture of nobility, Calvin gives Ruby the most precious gift he could give her in the last sentences of the book: "As soon as she left the house, the past released her. She was no longer Calvin's creation. She was free" [01:25:19 - 01:25:55].

This approach on the exploration of the Pygmalion myth, as well as beyond it, could provide a visual experiment for the male audience who, often times, is inclined to want certain "enhancements" in the partner. The more a person models themselves after one's desires, the less authentic that person will become.

Narcissus' Complex in the Process of Creation

Critics of the movie (*Rotten Tomatoes*) pointed out a great physical resemblance between Calvin (played by Paul Dano) and Ruby (as formerly stated, played by Zoe Kazan). The resemblance is not coincidental, Kazan explains, admitting to having this aspect in mind from the very beginning.

A few other similarities further exist. Among other things, Calvin is an artist (a writer) and so is Ruby (she draws); Calvin is of a rather introverted nature and so does seem to be Ruby. Comparing the two, one can reach the same conclusion Lila puts forward at her encounter with Calvin:

You weren't curious about me. You never were. You just had this image of who I was. And anything that I did that contradicted it, you just ignored. [...] The only person that you wanted to be in a relationship with was you. So I let you do that. [01:13:43 - 01:14:30]

When his therapist gives him the assignment of writing a piece about somebody who would like Scotty just the way he is, unconsciously, Calvin writes about himself. The way through which he manages to go past the writer's block is for the creation to become a reflection of the creator – a typical case of Narcissus' complex. To be taken into consideration here remains Micaela Janan's commentary in "Narcissus on the Text: Psychoanalysis, Exegesis, and Ethics": "That overflow of self onto the object enables creativity" (Janan 2007). In fact, the very name

“Sparks” entails in itself an idea of a muse, or else a divine inspiration who would spark a creator’s imagination.

Equally considerable in this case is how the more Calvin changes Ruby’s personality with his further writing (in other words, the more of his own personality he removes), the less does he like her. Nevertheless, his narcissism propagates him into changing Ruby with each and every inconvenience, while remaining oblivious at the possibility of making adjustments to his own persona as well.

The Law of Attraction

A plethora of cues is given towards the Law of Attraction and Manifestation. Unlike Pygmalion’s Galatea, who was revived by Aphrodite, Ruby seems to come into Calvin’s life straight out of the book, with no other explanations. In utter amazement, Harry is the first one to point out: “You manifested a woman with your mind!” [00:41:38].

Indeed, it is made clear multiple times that Calvin envisioned every little detail about Ruby’s life, appearance, and personality and invested himself thoroughly in her creation. Not only that, but he also used specific details in her story, such as his own name for her partner. The process of creating Ruby falls entirely perpendicular on the laws of manifestation. Although one might think that this is purely coincidental, confirmation of this matter comes with the character of Calvin’s mum:

- That was insane! [...] Mom’s gonna fucking freak.
- Whoa, you can’t tell Mom.
- Why not? She loves all this New Age shit.
- Seriously... you can’t. [00:41:28 - 00:41:46]

On one hand, Harry slips the explicit information of their mother’s interest in New Age practices. At the same time, that he refuses to confess to his mother how Ruby came into existence, along with the overall conflict they were in, are two very telling facts of their antagonization. Mother’s way of life in a cottage, connected to nature and energy, seems to bring her a much higher level of happiness than life in a villa brings to Calvin.

To some extent, and especially considering that the central problematic of the entire movie is around the idea of manifestation, we can assume the Law of Attraction to actually be a central theme in the movie “Ruby Sparks”.

As we have just demonstrated, many layers of the movie “Ruby Sparks” are to be discovered. In what seems to be an ordinary, everyday world, a very intricate depth takes its characters to priorly unsuspected places. Although the Myth of Pygmalion is indeed the stem of the entire screenplay, as Zoe Kazan confessed, we still believe that there is a little bit more to it than merely that, and the universe is thought about more than in her claim that we put in our introduction.

All in all, for us, information in “Ruby Sparks” is not to be taken with a pinch of salt, but rather tasted as it is, because it entails much complexity in flavour. The exploration of the three pylons that sustain the movie could go infinitely deeper than we did in this paper, but, nevertheless, the outline has been traced. From here ahead, it only remains for the movie to

linger a while in the minds of its viewers, as a warning, for them to be aware what they wish for.

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Neil Jordan's Gothic Variations

Violeta MATEESCU (ACOSTANTINESEI)

Although the image of classic unnatural beings, such as Dracula or Frankenstein's monster, is not exploited in some films, the director manages to frighten the viewer by creating an unnatural environment, which generates by deviations from normality and indicate unpredictable behaviour, thus bringing about a feeling of creepiness caused by the alarm over undefined danger.

The explanation of the supernatural produces the uncanny feeling that is represented by a character's reaction (e.g., fear) to something which appears to be unimaginable or unreasonable. According to Freud, the source of apprehension is internal and it is triggered by repressed childhood memories brought back by a sense of uncertainty over the authenticity of the events depicted (Mohor-Ivan 2021).

The narrative is concentrated on only one central character and the story is depicted from his point of view, thus the anchor character recounts the extrinsic events from his mind – where his ambivalent consciousness is not able to distinguish between reality and fantasy – through psychological projections characterized by confusion.

Neil Jordan's films reflect the brilliant Irish director's special gift to create situations and states of mind that can be easily perceived, although they are too intricate to be understood right away. Very little is known about his characters, as their background is usually kept secret and gradually revealed to a small degree nevertheless, usually through emotional quests which are set off by important changes in the characters' lives. Thus, the viewer has to draw inferences from character traits, as well as audiovisual cues. However, most of Neil Jordan's characters are tormented by loss and they act out the feelings that they experience in a way that provokes the viewer to carefully observe instant emotions exhibited during moments of perception or epiphany.

Neil Jordan dares to explore complex themes, such as forbidden love, the search for identity and personal independence in *Byzantium* (2012), erotic tension, sexual personality, the boundaries of sanity and the secret or unreasonable aspects of the soul in *The Company of Wolves* (1984).

The latter presents the experience of a young girl who groans and tosses back and forth in her bed while having bizarre erotic dreams which reflect her interior mental struggle:

The Company of Wolves presents with some panache a Freudian world of brutal, iridescent imagery, with Little Red Riding Hood at the centre of its complex myth-spinning. The film's framework consists of an Alice-like dream, with the naïve heroine (Sarah Patterson) on the point of sexual awakening creating a fairy-tale world while lying in a twentieth-century bedroom. (Forshaw 2013: 79)

The opening sequence shows a wolf dog running home, through a forest, after sniffing a tattered doll. When it gets to its owners' house it goes straight to the girl's door, but it is forced

to leave by the girl's elder sister (Georgia Slowe), who starts to knock at the door, calling her sister a "pest", for she is upset because Rosaleen (Sarah Patterson) has locked herself up. Inside the room, a white dress is dangling because of the draft coming from the open window. On the bed, next to the girl who sleeps wearing lipstick and a white dress patterned with red and pink hearts, one can see a magazine entitled *The Shattered Dream*, which alludes to a gothic element – the frightened victim frequently associated with female characters.

Rosaleen's dream takes her through the mirror and outside the window on a journey to her deep psyche, this symbolizing the tumult produced by her sexuality which, unrestrained by reason, begins to awaken, thus elements of her subconscious turning into characters as she attempts to discover her own hidden desires. Within the gothic labyrinth of the dark woods, where her fears are disguised as animals concealed among the trees with reddish trunks resembling muscle tissue, Rosaleen's toys come to life due to her hyperactive intellect. A teddy bear and a doll try to grab her annoying sister, but she manages to escape and runs past giant mushrooms, an owl sitting on a pipe organ covered by moss, a grandfather clock and a dollhouse infested by mice, until she freezes at the sight of a pack of wolves with glaring eyes which start to chase her. Surprisingly, Rosaleen smiles while dreaming. The death of childhood is rendered by an interesting juxtaposition: a stork next to the tolling bell of the cemetery, where the grandmother (Angela Lansbury) gives the girl a piece of gingerbread to chew on with the purpose of keeping her mind off the recent events.

After the funeral, Rosaleen's father (David Warner) decides that she should stay with Granny for a while. Rosaleen's increasing self-reliance provokes her to doubt the state of things, a significant aspect disclosed during a discussion she has with her grandmother about her sister's encounter with the wolves: "Why couldn't she save herself?"

Her grandmother seeks to prevent her sexuality from emerging, so she undertakes the vital task of teaching her about men's immoral methods by telling her tales that warn against the evil while twining the thread from a red shawl. The first story is about a woman who gets married to a "traveling man" (Stephen Rea) whose eyebrows meet and who feels the urge to go outside on their wedding night after looking at the moon accidentally – he opens the door to throw a hedgehog hidden under the blanket of the bed by the woman's younger brother. Since the groom does not return, the people assume that he must have been eaten by the pack of wolves prowling about the previous night. The woman remarries and has children with her second husband. After a few years, on a winter's night the first husband returns and asks her to give him food. While eating, he is disturbed by the children's cries. Subsequently he calls her a "whore" and turns back into a wolf intending to attack, but the second husband returns just in time to behead it. The wolf's head falls in a bucket of milk, once again taking on his human countenance, and the woman claims that he looks exactly as he did when they got married. On hearing his wife's remark, he slaps her, this signalling that women are threatened by patriarchal judgment and abuse. When Rosaleen requests information on mating rituals, Granny answers sharply: "Animals! All wild animals!" After returning to her parents' house, Rosaleen is woken up one night by a moth that is attracted by the flame of a candle, and she sees her parents kissing. She brings the subject up the next day and her mother states that: "If there's a beast in men, it meets its match in women, too."

The second story is about how a young man meets the devil (Terence Stamp), who arrives in a car driven by a blonde Rosaleen and who offers him an ointment which covers his

chest with hair. After this scene, Rosaleen is shown sitting in the church while spiders drop from a web above her head onto her Bible. At the end of the sermon, Granny warns her not to stray from the path before she goes into the forest with a boy whom she sometimes makes fun of and whom she accepts to kiss only after being challenged. A few moments later, Rosaleen runs away from him and climbs up a tree, this act symbolizing that the innocent girl is becoming a woman. When she gets to the top, the stork flies away and she finds a mirror and some eggs. As soon as Rosaleen looks into the mirror, realizing her capability to bear children, and puts on lipstick, the eggs start to crack open, uncovering very small figurines of newborns. She leaves taking one with her and walks past a wolf, but it does not attack her. At the same time, the boy whom she left in the woods comes across a slaughtered cow and runs to the village to warn people against wolves on the prowl.

The villagers leave in search of the wolf and Rosaleen remains home with her mother, whom she tells a story about a woman who was pregnant by a wealthy nobleman and who, on hearing that he got married to another woman, shows up at his wedding and transforms all the guests into wolves. The witch goes on to living in the forest with her baby, compelling the pack to serenade them every night. Meanwhile, the villagers set a trap, kill the wolf and Rosaleen's father brings home a paw that changes to a hand. He throws it into the fire and the real Rosaleen starts to cry in her sleep.

The dream continues with the girl setting off on a journey to visit her grandmother. On the way, she runs into a huntsman (Micha Bergese) who jokes, plays with her, tricks her into giving him the basket with the knife and into taking his bet, for she wishes to lose and to be kissed by him. The hunter gets to the grandmother's house first and pretends to be her granddaughter. He kills the old woman and persuades Rosaleen to enter, but she figures him out, snatches his rifle and shoots him. He turns into a wolf but, instead of attacking, he starts yelping. Rosaleen kneels down beside it and begins to pet it, telling it that she "never knew a wolf could cry." She also tells a story about a she-wolf who climbed up from the underworld through a well, meaning no harm to anyone. A man shoots her and a priest takes care of her wounds before she goes back to her world. Yet, the wounds that urge the repudiated innocent to return to her private refuge of estranged introversion, will heal entirely in time, and her tears will continue to fall, filling the well. A white flower, symbolizing Rosaleen's purity, is blooming at the end of the story and turns red, emphasizing the process of sexual evolution: she has grown up, found her mate and tamed his wild side. By the time the villagers come to save her, she is already a wolf, but she is recognized by her mother from the crucifix on the chain around her neck. Her mother stops her father from shooting her and she jumps through the window, going away with her mate, jumping over a dollhouse and other toys.

The two join a pack of wolves that enters Rosaleen's house in the real world, running up to her bedroom. She wakes up screaming, as a wolf jumps through the window and many others burst through the paintings, damaging her toys.

Byzantium is the story of Eleanor Webb (Saoirse Ronan), an undead teenage girl, also in search of her identity, who admits her need to confess her sins and to talk about the strange relationship she has with Clara Webb (Gemma Arterton), her undead mother, whom she calls "my savior", "my burden", "my muse", who imposes herself on her and who forbids her to tell their secrets to anybody.

Eleanor comes home one evening and discovers the body of a man her mother has just killed. Clara tells her daughter to pack her bags, Eleanor complains about frequently moving house, but Clara sets the apartment on fire and Eleanor reluctantly leaves with her mother. They go to a different town where Eleanor has a strange feeling of familiarity while they are on the beach – “We’ve been here before” – but her mother calls her silly. Clara meets Noel, a distressed man, in front of whom she pretends to be a “damsel in distress”, arranges for both of them to move in with him, introducing her daughter as her sister, but Eleanor is upset because her mother turns his old hotel into a brothel. Unlike Rosaleen, whom her grandmother desperately tries to shelter from maturity, Eleanor openly accuses her mother of being a degenerate parent who does not care about what kind of life she offers to her child.

Memories start to come back to Eleanor and she begins to have moments of epiphany. She feels desperate to ease her conscience and she reveals to a drug addict that her mother thought about killing her when she was a newborn. Both Rosaleen and Eleanor are disturbed by the events in their lives, but only Eleanor is fully aware of her situation and decides to counteract. She gives her written life story to Frank, a boy she falls in love with, who, in turn, shows it to their teacher. She also offers him a map of a cursed cave where every human who dares to enter meets his double and becomes an immortal undead, for she is worried because of his condition: he suffers from leukemia.

On realizing that she is not able to control Eleanor anymore, Clara decides to murder Frank, and while she is away two higher ranked vampires kidnap her daughter, but she manages to find them and save her child.

Both films depict the challenging and dramatic quest for self-discovery and independence. However, *The Company of Wolves* ends with a frightening sequence showing Rosaleen’s horrified face while screaming, whereas the last scene in *Byzantium* displays a more optimistic tone through its open ending.

Another similarity is that both films were adapted from literary writings: *Byzantium* was adapted by Moira Buffini from her own play and *The Company of Wolves* was adapted by Neil Jordan and Angela Carter from her own short story, too.

In *The Company of Wolves* the house that was safe and familiar in the past, turns into a frightening and unsettling construction. The uncanny sensation is produced by the disruption of the normalcy of the real world:

Fairy-tales are often seen as dealing with the 'uncanny', the distorted fictions of the unconscious revisited through homely images and beasts can easily stand for the projected desires, the drive for pleasure of women. (Makinen 1992: 9)

The image of the woods integrates the archetypal Gothic representation of the labyrinth, as the area where the lack of reason and ethics generates strange, deviant and disruptive behaviour exhibited through ultimate horror. The forest turns into the place where Rosaleen loses her innocence, develops a new personality and gains freedom and attainment. She pities the rejected outsider and fights for deliverance by breaking the established norms. At some point, the shape of the moon is overlayed by the image of an eye, as if reminding of the fixed stare of the omniscient spectator of the psyche.

Rosaleen's transformation is mirrored by a change in the way she reacts to the animals in the forest. In the beginning, she is happy when she sees the white dove, which stands for her juvenile naivety regarding sexuality, whereas towards the end she ignores the white rabbit, whose vulnerability warns of Rosaleen's predator, the wolf portraying her sexual desires which she gives in to eventually.

The colour red has an outstanding importance: drops of red blood fall onto the snow, Rosaleen is tempted to eat bright red fruit, such as berries that she nearly strays from the path in order to pick and the apple that is fallen for it has worms inside.

Ambivalence prevails in both films. While *The Company of Wolves* deals with the image of the werewolf conveying the tensions between the conscious (repressed) and the unconscious (liberated), *Byzantium* tackles the dualistic comprehension of self or 'other'.

Byzantium also explores the impact of trauma on identity, usually doubled by a sense of loss. Thus, Eleanor is determined to overcome the horrors of her emotional quest for discovery.

Both *The Company of Wolves* and *Byzantium* remain some of the most interesting films of the genre, due to Neil Jordan's brilliant intellect and remarkable talent.

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Pushing Out the Gender Frontiers. Women Avatars in War Films

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Anthropologists tell us that, since the beginning of time, men did the hunting and the fighting, leaving women to do the demanding work back in the cave. The film industry, a citadel of male power, in support of this traditional gender division of tasks, has done it all to prove that war was an exclusively male affair, unsuitable for women due to their noncombatant and nurturing nature. Most war films depict men fighting their wars, men interacting with men, men fighting men, and men dying with or because of men and, therefore, we cannot help wondering where the women are. Obviously, they are at home, fighting their own war. They often appear in the form of a photo or a memory of a loved family member, as the desires of those on the front line, as casualties of war, or not at all. Women are underrepresented, while men are vastly overrepresented in war films. Don't these onscreen portrayals affect the contrasting demographic audiences?

The aim of the present paper is to skim and scan some cinematic portrayal of women in war films, examine whether the situation has changed in the last decades and how it compares to the evolving role of women in society. Theoretically, we all know that film is only entertainment, yet it is starting to become more obvious than ever that film can construct realities and influence the opinions of the viewers. War is not something most people experience directly, therefore the power of film in constructing the associated cinematic reality should not be ignored. The film can build an image of war and the people who fight it, that does not necessarily correspond to the historical reality.

Relying both on secondary source and primary source in the analysis of thirty films released in the last decades, the goal is to voice out that film portrayal of women in war films has evolved much slower than the condition of women in reality and, although women have received more covering on-screen and more diverse and significant roles, they continue to be underrepresented in the war film genre and confined to traditional roles such as nurses and love objects. Due to its limitation, the study does not provide answers, but tries to increase the appetite for further discussions on the topic while illustrating the traditional women avatars depicted in war films. The analysis concentrates only on the World War I and World War II films, therefore films about wars that occur before the First World War or more modern ones like the Iraq War, the War in Afghanistan, or the ones concerning terrorism were excluded. The same selection was applied to fictional wars in post-apocalyptic worlds or dystopias, as well as films involving science-fiction elements (aliens, robots, fantasy creatures, magic, or zombies) as they were considered beyond the bounds of this paper. We recognize many depictions of "girl power" in games, film and books, a status that allows female characters equality or superiority over men, but these depictions are too futuristic to be understood as inspired from reality, while films that describe adventures during actual wars having taken place might have a greater impact on the opinions and beliefs of the audiences.

Considering the depictions of women in the context of the social gender movements of the last decades, we hope to reach a deeper understanding of the attitudes toward female characters, as well as the factors that shape the themes and representations that appear in the most popular war films. Readers are advised to tackle this study as a personal, subjective analysis of a range of war films, meant to encourage brainstorming on gender divisions.

Due to a powerful combination of visuals, sound and narrative, film has a subtle, but considerable impact on people of all ages, particularly war films as they display rough scenes and stories, some inspired from realities which are meant to stir various feelings and emotions in the viewers. Women's roles have evolved over the last hundred years, changing dramatically during World War II, yet this film genre, traditionally rooted in masculinity, fails to mirror reality. Inadequacies in cinematic representation both on screen and off screen have prompted several social outcries over the past few years (*#OscarsSoWhite* campaign, *#MeToo* and "Time's Up" movements shifted the focus to promoting awareness and advocacy for objectification of women). Stereotypic portrayals and the lack of complex female roles remain common on the big screen and in the media as a whole. To understand the reasons behind this slow evolution of female representation, we could call upon societal history and its vicious cycle. Male filmmakers create art that reflects prevailing cultural attitudes about gender roles, and that adds to the stereotypes. We could also connect women's roles in the film industry to their representation on screen.

Were women to enter the combat, men would lose a crucial identity – that of the warrior. Fighting wars is a gendering activity; it represents one of the few remaining male activities, just like childbearing is female by definition. Were we to take it away from them, their whole identity might collapse. When women do fight, Hollywood usually displays it as an aberration, or eventually, as women needing to be saved by men. Films like *G.I. Jane* (1997) have pushed back against traditional gender restraints, yet they constantly remind the audiences that femininity can barely survive in combat. Women are more often placed on the battlefield in science fiction war films, in a future that has not yet materialized, both proving the difficulty of accepting the idea and providing hope for less gender discrimination in the future.

Just like Homer, who placed Helen right at the centre of *The Iliad* to explain one of the main reasons men fight each other, the film industry has often included women in war films to provide a "love interest". Depicting women in war films is an old box-office formula: every hero needs a heroine to attract and distract or to add more sex-appeal to the film. When a film cannot count on a ground-breaking story, it can be spiced up with a little female nudity, and/or a man's shocking adventure for the sake of the woman he loves.

There is no doubt that women have also been added to expand the appeal of a war film to potential female audiences, not just to potentiate the archetypal emotions about the male defending the female. All media tend to represent women focusing on the following: beauty, physique, sexuality, emotion – seen as opposed to the intellect, and relationships – as opposed to freedom. War films are no exception, as they use images of women for the gratification of men. The so called "male gaze" is almost omnipresent in war films, and that is if female characters are included. It is a man's world; therefore, the objectification of women seems legitimate and constitutes social support for an ideology that evaluates women on predefined aesthetic criteria. The roles that women really play in war are often more complex and more varied than "the women who loved" the fighters, so war films tend to misinform audiences.

Nonverbal communication reinforces the inferior role model concept. From the time a boy is old enough to discern, he is taught that “*Big boys don’t cry: only girls do*”, “*Don’t play with dolls: Dolls are for girls*” or “*That little scratch doesn’t really hurt a little man like you, does it?*” Boys are shown in diverse ways that acting in a certain way is inferior, flawed and incomplete, and it must be avoided at all costs. The lesson applies to grown-up men fighting war. Recruits are derisively called “girls” or “ladies”, “maggots” or “boots” by instructors, and they must earn their manhood status by successfully completing a rough training to deserve the status of Marines, soldiers, sailors, or airmen. Experiencing so much negative comparison with girls, it is not surprising that they have become convinced of the inferiority of females, at least with respect to traditionally male activities and behaviours such as making war. This paternalistic perspective is so well inflicted that it is the only possible point of view on the planet.

Since scientists have proved that the female brain produces more oxytocin (a neurochemical which promotes nurturing behaviours) than the male brain, it is even more difficult to fight the cliché representations. We are socialized from birth to adopt specific gender roles – men as warriors and women as caretakers. Cultural expectations have their share of influence, and this is reflected both in books and on screen.

Female avatars are associated with emotionality, prudence, affection, support and nurturing, compliance, gentleness, and dependence, while, in contrast, male avatars are linked with rationality, power, strength, aggression, risk-taking, courage, and independence. Based on these cultural stereotypes, it is no wonder that male characters are depicted as more dominant, violent, and powerful than their opposed sex. Cultural differences and limitations are commonly reflected in Hollywood screenplays. Men have an automatic advantage in war films. Women, no matter the depiction, take their restrictive condition with them. Women are acted upon and even when they do act, they are forced into it by circumstances. The female comparative is seen as the undesired mode of behaviour, and a way to denigrate a recruit’s manhood is to implicitly or explicitly hint that the soldier is a homosexual. Anything less than full-on manliness is too feminine for men in the service, therefore a failure as men.

When chronicling the evolution of the treatment of women in film in her book *From Reverence to Rape*, Molly Haskell characterized the best women’s roles as “*whores, quasi-whores, jilted mistresses, emotional cripples, drunks, daffy ingénues, Lolitas, Krooks, sex-starved spinsters, psychotics, icebergs, zombies and ball-breakers*” (2016: 327). On-screen, women should play as many roles as they do in life, but in war pictures, women are narrowly drawn as they must serve the bellicose narrative.

There are two predominant tropes for women, either an auxiliary or a provocative presence, more often in supporting rather than leading roles. The presence of women provokes different reactions in men compared to how they normally act in an all-male environment. Women can be aspiring soldiers represented in competition with men for dominance or distinction in this formerly all-men’s club. Women are represented as being part of men’s thoughts and in flashbacks like in *1917* (2019), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *The English Patient* (2007) or *Dear Elza* (2019), they may be mothers, wives or sweethearts back home. Although Mrs. Ryan appears in *Saving Private Ryan* only in one scene of the film, and she does not even say a word, she is the principal motivator of the entire adventure and she is discussed both positively and negatively among the men assigned to save the last of the four Ryan boys, as one

of the soldiers says, “*I have a mother, too*”. Women are represented as a strange, alienating presence that affects male decision-making and behaviour. Regardless of the circumstance, women are portrayed as provocateurs and the men’s task is to fight both an exterior and an interior war.

According to Lucy Komisar, men relegate women to three basic roles in war films. The first is described as the Madonna (mothers, sisters, daughters, and girlfriends that men put on a pedestal to idealize and respect). The second one is much more ambiguous; they are depicted as chattel to acquire and use legally in marriage, or illegally via assault and rape (some of them possess Madonna qualities, while others do not). The third category refers to either to “loose” women or prostitutes who provide temporary satisfaction while men are away from home. In all three categories, women are seen as “the other”, a separate, unequal entity that men in war films find distracting or one that the director uses to highlight by opposition to the male character.

The defeated people get no respect or consideration of their human rights from the conquerors and in these scenarios, all women are considered chattel, part of the spoils of war. There is usually a male hero who rescues a woman about to be ravaged by some beastly stereotypical villain. Madonnas often appear as stock characters or extras, or they show up later in the film, or they are misjudged. An example worth mentioning could be the semi-historical film *Flyboys* (2006), where the situation is depicted in such a way that both the audience and the protagonist assume that she is a prostitute, as her first appearance happens in a French brothel, but she proves to be a Madonna who takes care of her dead brother’s children, cultivates flowers as a hobby and runs a farm in the midst of war. Therefore, she becomes the symbol of all that the hero was fighting for. The examples of disbelief and misjudgement of women could go on and on and can be found in most war films – *Allied* (2016), *Anthropoid* (2016), *Dear Elza* (2014), *Inglorious Bastards* (2009), *Less Femmes De L’Ombre* (2009) or *Malena* (2000).

From genre to genre, from Hollywood to Bollywood, from cave days to the present day, women are trapped in the social limitations of their lives, imprisoned by their emotions rather than liberated by their actions. Men are depicted as active, being able to put feelings aside, while women are passive and much too complicated, as their feelings colour the outcome of an action, for good or not (Basinger 1986). Some changes came with World War II and women’s images evolve from girlfriends, views, daughters, and mothers to new kinds of women who were needed to help win the war. Madonnas got jobs in auxiliary services or as military nurses, roles they needed to play while their men were away, fighting the war, but it was not to last too long, just as long as World War II lasted. When one places a woman on a pedestal, there are two inherent dangers: the woman can fall from it, or a man might find the height unscalable. It is often men who draw the lines for their Madonnas. Sometimes, character development and plot reversals topple women from their pedestals, and they fall from Madonna status to whores or, at best, women of “loose” or situational character.

In the world of men, when they brag to their buddies about their relationship with women, possessing and controlling women as chattel – as if women were their private property – is a descriptor of male potency. So, stories of controlling and possessing submissive chattel command the men’s attention. War has caused many women to turn to prostitution, some as helpless victims of wartime rape or human trafficking, or out of desperation or ignorance – *Full*

Metal Jacket (1987), *The Big Red One* (2005). There are also many depictions of unfaithful wives in these films.

Male and female spies often appear in war films, but some consider it a separate genre. They are depicted as suave, multitalented secret agents risking their lives for the country or personal profit in elaborately plotted scenarios of international intrigue. Women from many social classes, from wives and mothers to high-heeled sophisticated women are recruited into spy work by males who are looking for individuals who can pass for civilians and are also intelligent and skilled enough to be trained for various kinds of spy missions. One notorious woman is remembered for her efforts during World War I – Mata Hari. She was famously executed for being charged with spying for the Germans and became a model for all amateur or professional spy roles in war films like *Inglorious Bastards* (2009), *Allied* (2016), or *Anthropoid* (2016).

As adjuncts to the military, female nurses and doctors are a vital part of any war narration. Nurses are associated in war with healing, and their devotion to patients mirrors men's sacrifice in combat. They are depicted as varieties of Madonna, chattel, and low morality women – *The English Patient* (1996) or *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Most war films relegate nurses to the background, concentrating on men doing the fighting, and they are brought forward whenever they serve love interests. Once the purpose is attained, they return to the background. Although the generic setting of such films is combat, these women are worried about love and romance, motherhood, sex, and choice. Their objective in combat is to take care of men, not fight the war itself.

The opposition between feminism and male power has become a popular theme, but there are still very few female combatants portrayed in warfare films. Could it be against the feministic ethic of being anti-male violence, were women to play more important roles in war films? Does not war affect citizens of both genders? These are questions to keep in mind when assimilating what war films provide. Considering the prevalence of war in the history of mankind, the percentage of female fighters may not be as small as depicted on screen, since they have been involved in the conflict and affected by it as much as men. Women have played many roles in combat, technology, and diplomacy, and worked in intelligence, munitions, and espionage. And if warfare is essentially human, it is female as well as male: a shared burden. Women have been portrayed as peacemakers, victims, coward-shamers, or red-lipsticked morale boosters in war films, yet have rarely been just that. Violence seldom solves violence. But neither has the idea of gender segregation brought enlightenment and peace, and history can prove it with plenty of examples. Women in war films take on several avatars, but they still share a common identity – “the other”. There will always be a certain percentage of people for whom these Neanderthal beliefs will never change, but the vast majority of people affected so relatively easily by what they see on screen can change their opinions.

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Identity and Multiverse in Science Fiction. *And Then There Were (N-One)* (2017) by Sarah Pinsker and *Parallel* (2018)

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Although science fiction is often seen as a genre that is written for a specific group of people that enjoy it, it is one of the most productive genres. Besides the fact that it combines different traditions and came to be later recognised as a genre per se, it succeeds in generating numerous discussions and analyses also because of its flexible limits that allow tropes, props, narrative conventions in a lot of forms from short stories, novels to graphic novels and comics. As a result of its specific features, it allows both writers and readers to exploit concepts and ideas in a way other genres cannot and one of them is identity. Another thing science fiction does is develop identity and reinvent it in some cases to the extent of becoming alterity. It exploited human fears of the 'other' either through extra-terrestrials, superhuman powers or secret identities and took it further creating alterity through other planets, worlds or even universes. On the other hand, the idea of identity is also explored in each aspect from shape, colour, preferences, experiences, gender, abilities to origin or "political" identity to which the contrast is added by a costume or connection to a group that accentuates the idea of otherness.

For the present paper, the aim is to discuss the way identity and multiverse were approached in the film *Parallel* (2018) and the short story *And Then There Were (N-One)* (2017) by Sarah Pinsker through tropes, props and characters.

The concept of multiverse is common to both the short story and the film. The term appeared at the end of the 19th century, and it was used by philosopher William James to refer to confusing moral meaning of natural phenomena. Later it was used with the meaning we know today in fields such as philosophy, physics or mathematics.

Although scientists have yet to confirm that parallel worlds exist, in physics there are three main models for the multiverse:

- Bubble universes or baby black hole universes
- Membranes and extra dimension universes
- Many worlds picture of quantum mechanics

Taking these theories in consideration, both the film and the short story fit the third theory that states that every version of a story is possible as long it has the conditions for a person to exist in.

Returning to the corpus, the short story was published in 2017 and it was awarded The Nebula Award for Best Novella. Sarah Pinsker published her first novel in 2019, but has published short stories since 2013. In turn, the film was shot in 2018 but it was released in the United States of America in 2020. It was directed by Isaac Ezban and it was nominated for a few awards but it did not win any.

The short story begins in a similar way to Agatha Christie's novel with the title *And Then There Were None*, although the title may be a hint. Why is it similar and not identical?

Because Pinsker's short story's title can be read *And Then There Were (N-One)* where n is a variable whose value we do not know.

The main character, Sarah Pinsker (same name as the author), who is an insurance investigator receives an invitation to a convention on Secord Island, Canada, more specifically to SarahCon. At first, she is hesitant, but she decides to attend. The convention is the place where over two hundred versions of herself from other universes meet. During the event, one of the Sarah Pinskers is killed and our protagonist as the only kind of investigator present there, on account of the bad weather, has to discover who died, who killed her and why.

The film begins with a murder, as well. A woman is killed in her own house by an intruder that proves to be an identical version of her and who takes her place. The sequence is like a warning. The focus shifts then to four friends: Noel, Josh, Devin and Leena. They live together in a house and, by mistake, they discover a room with a mirror that allows travelling to other universes. Each time they enter through the mirror they travel to another world, but they always return to their own. They soon start to take advantage of this by stealing ideas, artwork or devices from other universes and claiming to be their own creations.

In the short story, the universes differ by personal choice and it fits the theory of many worlds picture where for every outcome that could result from one decision, there would be a range of universes. These differences are called divergence points. But unlike the film, the differences are not related to creativity; the Sarahs look different, some are men, some are older, younger, some Sarahs play instruments, some are married, some have the same job, some do not and so on.

In the film, the parallel universes have the same history with minor differences, same evolution and these differences are of a creative nature, like arts and inventions. The main idea is that the worlds and the people in them reach the same faith: they have the same jobs, live in the same place, they eventually will end in the same place. There is also a time related difference in the film: when the four friends travel to another universe, time goes slower in their original universe, one minute in their own universe means three hours in the other universe.

The short story and the film show ramifications at a personal level that put emphasis on the concept of identity, individuality and alterity. Personal dissatisfaction, distrust, fear and envy are present in both but in the film, the events take a more dramatic turn as each of the main characters are replaced by other versions of themselves. It leads to the fear, paranoia even, that a version of a person could come with the intention of taking a life and replace him/her just because in their world things did not turn out as expected.

Domination is also present in the film, as Noel is the one that pushes the others to let their morality aside and take advantage of their other versions. Leena appropriates works of art and becomes famous, Josh fulfils his childhood dreams, Devin looks for his dead father to apologise and Noel uses technological inventions to make money and become famous. It comes to a point where Noel replaces his friends with versions of themselves so as not to ruin things for him.

In the book, the distrust is not accentuated as we see what is happening through the eyes of our protagonist and she cannot imagine someone like her murdering and because the murder is said to be a simple death, at first, not to scare the others. Sarah (the narrator) has to remind herself it is not her that filled the information that they are almost identical, it is not her that it is dead and try to figure out what could have determined someone almost identical to her to kill.

A common point to both the film and the book is dissatisfaction with personal life: it is what determines the characters to take the place of people they consider have a better life, thus hinting at a theme in science fiction: that of searching happiness or quick solutions for present problems in other worlds, universes and the search that leads to a catastrophic end.

In terms of props, the short story uses the multiverse portal, an alternate reality resort hotel on an island that in reality was never inhabited (“Four months later, I flew to Nova Scotia, took a bus to a seaside town too small for a dot on the map, boarded a ferry to Secord Island, and stepped through the waiting portal into an alternate-reality resort hotel lobby swarming with Sarah Pinskings” (Pinsker 2017)), the job of quantologist (“Sarah Pinsker [R0D0] [...] made the discovery creating the multiverse portal. She is a quantologist at John Hopkins University”) with an issue of a magazine related to it. There is also the Nebula Award (“... a stack of novels, a Nebula award for science fiction writing, an issue of Quantology Today containing an article with a seventy-word title that I guessed amounted to ‘Other Realities! I Found Them!’”) that incidentally is also the murder weapon, thus strengthening the ties with the Science Fiction genre.

The Parable of the Trickster is a prop that may be of significance, as it should have been a novel written by Octavia E. Butler from an intended trilogy alongside *The Parable of the Sower* and *The Parable of the Talents*, but she died before writing it – (“A dog-eared paperback novel called Parable of the Trickster”). Another element that could be considered important is the No Good Deed band that plays an important role in solving the mystery - (“But hey, No Good Deeds. They were a cool band’ [...] ‘ARE a good band. Bam! Divergence point! In my world they’re on album number six and still awesome”).

Unsurprisingly, the film has a stronger visual impact. First, there is the mirror that allows travelling between universe, the telescope that lets them see where their other versions are in the house so they could get unseen. Moreover, Leena reproduces works of art from other universes to be famous and we even see a version of Mona Lisa with short hair. Among the devices that Noel stole, there is a gun that pulverises people and works on fingerprint recognition, the Effluvium which is a device that modifies matter at a molecular level, an e-reader that scans documents or a type of paper that does not crumple.

In point of tropes, in the short story and in the film, we may list multiverse, parallel worlds, divergence points, alternate history and ethical dilemma. For the short story, the following quotations seem to support all the tropes.

First, there is the parallel world/ divergence point trope:

Address messed with me the most for some reason. Someone else here shared my full name, birthday, and address. She worked as a program director at a non-profit. That was the only place our lines on the list differed. (Pinsker 2017)

As stated above, in the film, history is common to all the universes with small discrepancies that were rendered possible by creativity. However, in the short story, things are varied, they could be the same or differ to extremes, so the alternate history is employed here:

Our Seattle was destroyed in an earthquake.” We both stared at her. [...] “I never got out west myself, so it wasn’t a personal thing for me, but it was horrible. Four thousand people died. The city never recovered. (Pinsker 2017)

One person lived in a world where dogs had been rendered extinct by a virus.”

Ethical dilemma is one of the main tropes in the film and short story that is also relevant for identity. In the book, the dilemma is for our protagonist to decide whether to tell who the murderer is or leave things as they are (and also for the murderer who broke their ethics).

If you turn me in, [...] there’s going to be a whole lot of confusion in a whole lot of places. I have no idea how any authority will deal with it. There’ll be a dead body in a world, an accused killer in another. If you let me go, think of all the good I can do. [...] This Sarah was never going to pull out of her spin, I swear. She would be dead tomorrow or next week or next month. And she’ll still be dead tomorrow. I could do some good there in her world. (Pinsker 2017)

In the film, things are more complicated. Each character breaks their moral code and as a result they suffer consequences and there are instances for identity crises as many characters cannot adapt to the world they are brought in as Noel keeps replacing his “friends”.

As stock characters, we can identify the mad scientist – in the short story the Sarah that discovered the multiverse portal and decided to change places with another version of herself.

And in case you’re wondering, I wouldn’t have killed you for your Seattle, either. [...] Anyway, when I started my research, I thought I would be happy if I just proved that they were out there somewhere, in some other reality. [...] Until I found her –” she pointed at herself” – and realised there was a way to make it happen. If I didn’t try, I’d always wonder about it. You’d do the same, right? (Pinsker 2017)

In the film, Noel could fit the pattern, to a certain extent, as he is the one that figures the way the portal functions and comes with theories about the nature of the universes and also because he has inclinations as an inventor.

The Red-Shirt Character is present also. In the short story this is the DJ Sarah Pinsker who we ‘meet’ briefly: “As I approached, I saw what had the hotel manager so spooked: a dead Sarah.” In the film, Marissa, the original owner of the house that kills her other version because in her world her husband had died fulfils the same role.

In terms of villain/ hero, in the film, Noel is the villain as he incites his friends to follow their own interests no matter what. Devin becomes the hero when he has a change of heart and saves Leena, the damsel in distress. In the book, the hero is the protagonist and the villain is the killer, a subtle allusion that circumstances determine sometimes if we are the hero or the villain as both of them are Sarah’s versions.

As a genre, the text is a science fiction short story that uses intertextuality, i.e. references to Agatha Christie’s novel, and which also employs humour quite often.

I stuffed a dinner roll into my bag in case I missed the entire meal. The others nodded approvingly, knowing we didn’t work well when hungry.

If the list of occupation had made me feel like an underachiever, this display reinforced it. A Grammy for Best Folk Album 2013, a framed photo of a Sarah in the Kentucky Derby winner's circle, a Best Original Screenplay Oscar, a stack of novels [...]

I was what they had. Right. So until the police got there, I played coroner, law and order. Not a role I was comfortable with at all, made weirder by the circumstances. Victim: Sarah. Investigator: Sarah. Suspects: All variation on the theme, other than the hotel staff.

I'm getting a distinctly bad vibe from all this. Do you have Agatha Christie in your world? Isolated island, bad weather. I'm still waiting for us all to be picked off one by one. And yet you were standing here all alone. So either you're not scared as you say... As I said it, I wish I hadn't. If I was joking, it wasn't funny. If I was implying she was a suspect, well, everyone was except me, since I knew I hadn't done it. That didn't make it a smart move to address the subject directly. ...or I'm the killer, in which case you're the one in trouble, not me. (Pinsker 2017)

Moreover, the metatextual element is very strong as there are several similarities between the author and the character(s): the latter is/are named after the author, she lives in Baltimore as some of the characters, she plays in a band and so on.

The film also displays a combination of conventions from more than one genre. The tension is visible as the viewer is made to wonder: how long things will go this way. Drama results from the outcome, as discovering the portal did not bring happiness to any of them. The comedy is represented through Josh who comes to fulfil the dream from his childhood: he and Noel dress as the film character, the Godfather and they literally blow up a million dollars. Devin gets to share his love to Leena, apologise to his father and in the end he and Leena destroy the mirror and start in a new place.

The text, as well as the film are open-ended. Finding out who is responsible for the murder does not help the character in the short story in taking a decision thus accentuating the ethical dilemma. The protagonist Sarah has yet to choose to reveal the identity of the killer or say nothing, possibly leading to an identity crisis – If she discloses her findings, will it be like any investigation or will it appear like betraying herself? The film ends on a more pessimistic tone as another version of Leena seems to have replaced her. All the worlds in this multiverse eventually follow the same path and the audience remains wondering how many times others will come from other universes and replace the previous version of the protagonists.

As a conclusion, identity is created by using multiple versions of the same character within multiverse. It “places mirrors” in front of characters and transforms them into “the other”. People see themselves in a certain way, and science fiction challenges this through the fear of being the best or the worst version and making the characters question their decisions that made them the person that they are.

Both the film and the short story have an ordinary world as a starting point but throughout the unveiling of the multiverses, none of them loses the connection to science fiction, keeping the fantasy element in plain sight to remind the viewer/ reader it is a new and alien experience leaving the audience with unanswered questions for both the unfolding of the events and the situations.

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