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IDENTITY IN-BETWEEN. LIMINALITY AND RELATED NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN SELECTED NOVELS BY ANITA BROOKNER.

Tożsamość zawieszona.
Liminalność i związane z nią techniki narracyjne
w wybranych powieściach Anity Brookner.

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List of Abbreviations

The titles of Anita Brookner's novels are abbreviated as follows:

SL *A Start in Life*

P *Providence*

LM *Look at Me*

HL *Hotel du Lac*

FF *Family and Friends*

Introduction

Anita Brookner was born on July 16, 1928 in London as the only child of Polish Jewish parents. Her father, Newson Bruckner came to Britain from Piotrków Trybunalski, and her mother, Maud Schiska was born in England in the family of Polish Jewish immigrants. Anita Brookner's maternal grandfather came from Warsaw and owned a tobacco factory in London where Newson Bruckner was employed. Maud Schiska was a concert singer but gave up her career after marriage. Because of anti-German sentiments, the couple changed their surname to more English-sounding Brookner around World War II. Brookner claimed that she had a lonely childhood, yet her parents' house was always full of people. The family lived with a grandmother, an uncle, cousins and, significantly, hosted Jewish refugees during the war (Sadler 2).

Brookner attended a private school, the James Allen's Girls' School and King's College of the University of London. She received BA in French literature in 1949 and continued her studies at the Courtauld Institute of Art (University of London) in art history. Her MA thesis on a painter Jean-Baptiste Greuze was extended into her PhD dissertation and she received the latter degree in 1953, aged twenty-five. Most of the 1950s Brookner spent in Paris since she was awarded a scholarship to the École du Louvre. The scholarship from the French government allowed her to stay in the French capital and write the dissertation under the supervision of Anthony Blunt, the director of the Courtauld Institute of Art. Between 1959 and 1964 Brookner was a visiting lecturer at the University of Reading, where she taught French art and culture. Then, she was an art history lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art since 1964 until her retirement in 1988. As a first woman in history, Brookner was awarded the title of the Slade Professor at Cambridge University (1967–68). She was also a renowned author of art history articles, books, the reviews. Her research field comprised mostly the 18th and 19th-century French art, hence her most well-known studies concern this period. Among her most acclaimed publications are her monographs of Antoine Watteau (1967), Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1972), and Jacques-Louis David (1980). In 1971, she published a series of essays devoted French art criticism entitled *The Genius of the Future. Studies in French Art Criticism: Diderot, Stendhal, Baudelaire, Zola, the Brothers Goncourt, Huysmans*. Brookner's last publication in the field of art history was *Romanticism and its Discontents*

in 2000. Apart from her engagement in the history of art, since her time in Paris, Brookner also worked as a translator (from French and Italian into English). *The Fauves* (1962) by Jean-Paul Crespelle may serve as an example of one of her outstanding translations (Williams-Wanquet 2; "Anita Brookner").

At the age of fifty-three, Brookner wrote her first novel, *A Start in Life* [*SL*] (1981), whose publication began her career as a novelist. She became a truly prolific and diligent writer as she published twenty-three novels with an astonishing regularity of almost one novel a year: *Providence* [*P*] (1982), *Look at me* [*LM*] (1983), *Hotel du Lac* [*HL*] (1984), *Family and Friends* [*FF*] (1985), *A Misalliance* (1986), *A Friend from England* (1987), *Latecomers* (1988), *Lewis Percy* (1989), *Brief Lives* (1990), *A Closed Eye* (1991), *Fraud* (1992), *A Family Romance* (1993), *A Private View* (1994), *Incidents in the Rue Laugier* (1995), *Altered States* (1996), *Visitors* (1997), *Falling Slowly* (1998), *Undue Influence* (1999), *The Bay of Angels* (2001), *The Next Big Thing* (2002), *The Rules of Engagement* (2003), *Leaving Home* (2005), *Strangers* (2009). In 2011, the writer published her last story, a novella *At the Hairdresser's*. Brookner was appointed a Commander of the British Empire in 1990. She died on 10 March 2016 in London.

HL remains the most recognizable novel of Brookner's abundant literary oeuvre, probably due to the fact that it was awarded the Booker Prize in 1984. That distinction sparked a heated debate among the reviewers about the worth of her fiction, with commentaries ranging from undisguised disdain to great appreciation. Brookner's novels have been criticized mainly for their invariably bleak and anachronistic perspective on woman's life (Fisher-Wirth 1995; Katutani 1985; Steiner 2000; Watson 1995), repeatability (Coe 1992; Derwent 1985; Kemp 1989), and the lack of a wider historic context (Hardy 1984; Lee 1984; Taliaferro 1984). Perplexingly enough, some of the criticism ostensibly attacks Brookner's fiction for its focus on womanhood, which John Skinner takes for "emphatic male hostility towards a certain kind of 'woman's novel'" (1). Indeed, in a BBC radio programme Anthony Burgess refers to *HL* as a writing about "menstrual cramps in a hotel in Switzerland" and in his review of *Lewis Percy*, Peter Kemp depicts Brookner as the writer of "migraines, flushes and female malaises" (in Skinner 1–2). The disparaging judgment of Brookner was also offered by Julian Barnes:

> The (mainly male) press dubbed her 'Modest Anita' and – ignoring her stellar career as an art historian – decided to pigeonhole her as a lonely spinster whose life had not worked out and who therefore consoled herself by writing novels, once a year, as a regular act of comfort, like a posh version of buying herself a box of Quality Street. (online, 2016)

A similar, definitely limiting and misleading, mixing of Brookner's private life with her fiction is a frequent approach of literary critics to the author and her work, which is especially visible in few interviews Brookner gave (*Literary Review* 1984; *Paris Review* 1987; *Women Writers Talk* 1989).

Nevertheless, Brookner has been widely recognized for her workmanship and writing style (Taliaferro 1984; McCrun 2001; Mcpherson 1985). For instance, William McPherson (online), in his review of *HL*, praised the Booker-winning novel for being "austere, subtle, controlled, and reminiscent of the work of that French neo-classical painter Jacques Louis David," and finally stated that *HL* "is art of a small but special kind" (1985). Moreover, the often criticized, recurring pattern has been by some critics perceived as the strength of Brookner's novels. For example, Alfred Hickling detected a certain depth and even consolation in the repetitiveness of Brooknerian themes as for him "Brookner's work may seem repetitive, but it is never redundant. Her stories stake out a refuge, a quiet corner in a crowded world" (online, 2003). Furthermore, Brookner has become noted for her subtle sense of humour and irony which are often intermingled with very serious reflections on woman's existence. In the article published few days after the writer's death, Tessa Hadley wrote that "the stories come into their being through Brookner's distinctive sentences, ripely substantial, stamped unapologetically with the writer's personality, commenting and discriminating, digressing and summarising – and darkly funny" (online, 2016).

Brookner's literary oeuvre has also provoked in-depth analyses and manifold interpretations of her narratives. Considering the still expanding scope of academic research, let us examine some of the most prominent tropes observed in the relevant studies. To the fore come intertextual references in Brookner's prose. They constitute one of the most extensively investigated issues. In the first monograph devoted to Brookner, Lean Veach Sadler, while discussing the first seven novels of the renowned art historian (1990), analyses, among others, the overt references to Honoré de Balzac in *SL* (13–14) and Benjamin Constant in *P* (22–27). She also frequently remarks on general affinities between Brookner and other writers, stating that: "In many ways, the relation of Brookner's heroines to literature remind us of Margaret Drabble, peculiarly of Rosamund Stacey […] as well as of Flaubert's Emma Bovary, who not only confuses life and work is offered by John Skinner in the chapter "French connection" of his book *The Fictions of Anita Brookner. Illusions of Romance* (1992). Skinner focuses on the analogy between Brookner's first three novels and French literary classics but also notes Dickensian

parallels in *SL*. A very interesting and refreshing take on intertextuality is proposed by Peta Mayer in her *Misreading Anita Brookner* (2020). Mayer employs hermeneutic devices of "intertextual Romantic personae – comprised of the military man, the analysand, the queer, the aesthete, the dandy, the flâneur, the degenerate, and the storyteller" (23) to investigate what she calls performative Romanticism in *Friend from England*, *A Misalliance*, *Brief Life*, *Undue Influence*, *Falling Slowly*, and *HL*. As far as ekphratic references are concerned, the visual world of Brookner's prose is thoroughly analysed by Margaret Stetz in "Anita Brookner's Visual World" (2010) and art in *LM* is carefully examined by Laurence Petit in "Framing Terror: Illness and Art in Anita Brookner's *Look at Me*" (2021).

The parallels between Brookner's life, including family background and some events, and her prose constitute another significant research field. Although many researchers have been drawn to quick and rather superficial comparisons, there were also those who have attempted to investigate Brookner's autobiographical tropes more systematically. The most discerning analysis is offered by Skinner in the chapter "Fictions of the Self," where he examines the information provided by Brookner in her interviews and compares it with their reflections in her literary texts. Moreover, Skinner observes that the recurring motifs in various novels comprise "one monolithic fiction" of Brookner. To illustrate that she groups her characters according to Propp's scheme for characters and "spheres of action" (161). In her book *Art and Life in the Novels of Anita Brookner. Reading for Life. Subversive Re-Writing to Live* (2004), Eileen Williams-Wanquet openly admits that she feels indebted to Skinner as his "Fictions of the Self" inspired her own studies on autobiographical elements in Brookner's fiction. Williams-Wanquet extensive analysis employs structuralist methodology as well as deconstructionism and ethical criticism to investigate "the dialogic interplay between art and life, […] the way in which these novels illustrate how real life obeys codes of behaviour transmitted by narrative and how narrative is in turn modified to fit the real life" (24–25).

Along with autobiographical issues, Williams-Wanquet dwells also on the narrative techniques of Brookner, focusing on the different employment of the internal (or intradiegetic) narrator and external (or heterodigetic) narrator (40–41). Skinner, too, devotes a whole chapter ("Novels of Departure") to Brookner's technical experiments in *HL*, *FF*, and in *A Misalliance* including *mise en abyme*, like, literary framing, and comprehensive iconography. Framing devices constitute a subject of interest also for Petit, who analyses them regarding *LM* (2021). Additionally, Petit investigates narrative

techniques in *FF* (especially those connected with the motif of dance) in her article "War, Trauma, and the Dance of History: Anita Brookner, Ettore Scola and Terence Davies" (2018). Another approach to the research on narrative techniques is presented in *Misreading Anita Brookner* by Mayer, in which the author dwells on elements of orality of narration in *HL* (224–246).

Finally, various kinds of otherness of Brooknerian characters have captivated scholarly attention. In *Understanding Anita Brookner* (2002), Cheryl Malcom signals the disparity between protagonists' aspirations to join British society and their Jewish background. Likewise, Skinner and Williams-Wanquet note the hidden references to Jewishness. Yet, it is Louise Sylvester's article "Troping the Other: Anita Brookner's Jews" (2001) that addresses the Jewish issue directly and most insightfully. Sylvester comments on the writer's avoidance of overt references to Jewishness in the following way:

> Brookner associates Jewishness with various kinds of trauma, and it is perhaps this, most of all, which had led to the desire to look the other way in order not to see the discomforting truth of the ruption which accompanies the attempt to live inside English culture as the child of foreigners. (56)

In her other article on the question of Jews in Brookner's narratives, namely, "The Trauma of Assimilation. Anita Brookner as Jewish Novelist" (2014), Sylvester once again undertakes the issue of Brookner's obliteration of clear identification of her protagonists as Jewish. The scholar provides a more historically contextualized interpretation of Brookner's effacing difficult memories and explicit references to Jewish background of her characters. Other researchers consider the matter from yet another angle. Aránzazu Usandizaga investigates the link between the specific family dynamics of the protagonists and their ethnic background (2006) whereas Petit addresses the issue of repression and considers the protagonists' acting out of trauma related to the Holocaust (2018; 2021). A quite revealing study by Stetz (2021) evidencing the parallel between the persecution of Jews throughout the history and a superior position of servants in *SL* and *LM* also adds to the scope of research concerning Jewish tropes in Brookner's oeuvre. However, a revolutionary approach to otherness in Brookner's prose is proposed in two publications, one by Patricia Smith (*Lesbian Panic: Homoeroticism in Modern British Women's Fiction,* 2017) and the other by Peta Mayer (*Misreading Anita Brookner*, 2020). The methodology they adopt, as Mayer, notes, "operates across historical, temporal, gendered, erotic, semiotic, and generic modes" (22).

As it can be concluded, the feeling of exclusion, repressed memory, and narrative devices linked to these motifs are not new when it comes to the research on Brookner's prose. However, the studies conducted thus far seem to lack a detailed cross-examination of the suspended identity of a Brooknerine.[1] In other words, although such a betwixt status of the protagonists is directly noted or barely implied in some of the critical analyses, it lacks an in-depth investigation.

Thus, the aim of the present study is to investigate the liminal identity of the protagonists of Brookner's first five novels in order to explore this facet of Brooknerian research that appears to lack in scrutiny. This objective provokes further research questions concerning the aspects of the protagonists' existence, which contribute most to the transitory status of these characters. Consequently, the identification of such aspects will help to expose the mechanics of narrative representation of female characters' self-identification. In particular, attention will be given to the narrative techniques which are employed to construct the in-between characters in *SL*, *P*, *LM*, *HL*, and *FF*. The scope of the study is limited to these novels because they provide a concise and coherent representation of motifs typical of the novelist's entire oeuvre. Simultaneously, this selection offers a decent number of variations to be considered characteristic of Brookner. Skinner, for instance, links *SL*, *P*, *LM* as one type of Brookner's fiction, and *HL*, *FF*, and *Misalliance* as another group (1992). By choosing the novels from these two groups, the oversimplification of conclusions can be avoided and some variation can be, therefore, taken into consideration. Hence the study of the liminal identities in these particular novels allows for a diverse but credible characterization of the issue under discussion.

To avoid confusion, which may result from the recurrence of motifs, themes, and types of characters, a brief summary of each of the novels under scrutiny seems justified. Brookner's first novel, *SL*, tells a story of Ruth Weiss and her family. Ruth lives with her European grandmother, Mrs Weiss, and her parents in a house in Oakwood Court, in London. Her father, George, owns a shop with rare books, and her mother, Helen, works as a comedy actress. Since Ruth's frivolous parents do not take care of little Ruth, the grandmother assumes the role of the main caregiver of the little girl. The family dynamics change with the death of the old Mrs Weiss. Ruth's parents employ Mrs Cutler, an intrusive housekeeper. Soon after, Helen and George slip into the habit of spending the

[1] The term 'Brooknerine' is often used in research on Brookner and refers to her typical female protagonist, that is to say, a lonely, spinsterish, timid young woman living in London and pursuing a quiet life of a keen observer of the world.

day idly with Mrs Cutler who neglects her duties. The whole household descends into chaos and Ruth is forced to tend to her own needs and the comforts of her apathetic parents. Meanwhile, she turns out to be a skilful student and expresses a genuine interest in French. After persuading her mother that embarking on higher education is a good idea, Ruth starts her academic journey. While at the university, she makes friends with self-confident Anthea and falls in love with god-like Richard. In order to develop the relationship with him, the protagonist moves out from her parents' house. The preparation for dinner, which Ruth holds for Richard in her new flat, constitutes one of the tensest stages of action of *SL*. Despite Ruth's dedication to the timely preparation of the meal, Richard comes late and the food is ruined. Richard does not appreciate Ruth's efforts anyhow and focuses his attention entirely on the problems of women he is helping at that time as he works charitably as counsellor. Ruth feels pressured into lending Richard a sum of a hundred pounds and that forces her to move back to her family house in Oakwood Court. Meanwhile, Ruth is awarded a scholarship in Paris. In France she meets an attractive English couple, Jill and Hugh Dixon. The couple motivates some changes in Ruth's appearance and habits. She buys new clothes, changes her hairstyle, and spends less time in a library in favour of trendy restaurants. At one point, Ruth succumbs to sexual advances made by Hugh, however she seems more involved in the relationship with older and more distinguished Professor Duplessis. When the Dixons decide to return to England, Ruth happily takes over their apartment because she hopes it will serve as a comfortable space for a meeting with Professor Duplessis. While waiting for his first visit, Ruth receives a call from home. Mrs Cutler urges the protagonist to return and take care of her distressed mother as Helen has just learned about George's affair with Mrs Jacobs. Ruth leaves Paris also because Mrs Cutler marries and leaves her post of a housekeeper at her parents' house. Soon after, Ruth's parents go on holiday by the sea. On their return, Helen dies in a taxi and George suffers a stroke. Ruth stays at home and tends to her father and simultaneously manages to work at the university. Pressured by her father, Ruth marries Roddy, Mrs Jacobs' son. Ruth's husband dies in an accident shortly after the wedding.

Brookner's second novel, that is *P*, features Kitty Maule as the protagonist. She is brought up by her grandparents because her English father died before she was born, and her mother passed away prematurely because of a mysterious heart condition. Kitty's grandparents are immigrants, Louise is French and Vadim is Russian. The protagonist divides her time between her flat and the family house of the grandparents, and this

division seems to be reflected in her public and private personae. Kitty teaches a seminar about Constant's *Adolphe* at the university and prepares her seminal lecture on Romantic Tradition. Her private life is devoted to Maurice Bishop, an attractive, celebrated historian who researches gothic cathedrals. Although Kitty appears to be constantly planning meals and waiting for Maurice, he does not reciprocate her affection. The protagonist ignores all the clues and even ventures a trip to France where she hopes to spend time with Maurice. Maurice finally arrives at the hotel only to announce that his stay will be shortened and that he is not going to stay at the same hotel. Nevertheless, they manage to sightsee few medieval cathedrals together. However, during these trips, Kitty is overwhelmed by the feeling of exclusion and hostility. She returns to London and continues to prepare for her lecture. The preparations are interspersed with tailor fittings of her dress made by Louise. The process of dress making becomes a ritual that accompanies Kitty during her entering the adult world. The growing sense of anticipation is partly caused by Kitty's unsubstantiated hopes that the lecture will ultimately provoke Maurice's love declaration. As he has offered to host an after-lecture dinner in her honour, Kitty takes it for a clear sign of his serious, romantic intentions regarding their future together. The final scene of the novel describes the dinner party during which, to Kitty's utter bewilderment, she realizes that Maurice has been romantically involved with Mrs Fairchild, one of Kitty's English students.

Turning to *LM*, it portrays Frances Hinton, an aspiring novelist, who works in a library of a medical research institute. There she is in charge of the visual representations of melancholy and madness. The protagonist seems to be surrounded by various, overwhelming pictures (at work) and objects (at home). While the library is filled with depictions of mental illness, her flat is filled with peculiar furniture belonging to the previous owner. Frances' deceased parents, who bought the flat, never changed a thing in its arrangement. As a result, the protagonist does not really feel that she belongs to this space, especially that she inhabits it with an elderly Irish maid Nancy who is more at home there than she is. The quiet routine of Frances' life is disrupted by the appearance of her new friends, Alix and Nick Fraser, a glamourous English couple. She spends a lot of time with them, and they introduce her to James, an English divorcee who becomes very important for Frances. Alix pressures the protagonist into a relationship with James. The liaison progresses slowly, which Frances enjoys. But Alix and forces the protagonist to make faster progress with James. When Frances finally initiates physical intimacy, James does not participate, saying "Not with you, Frances. Not with you" (*LM* 127) and

leaves. After the initial compliance with James' rejection, Frances revives her hopes and prepares herself for Christmas celebration at the restaurant with the Frasers and James. She believes that the relationship could be repaired and looks forward to the festive dinner. Upon the arrival at the restaurant, Frances realizes that the Frasers are already there, and that James is accompanied by their other friend, Maria. Alix tentatively observes Frances who finally realizes that the whole scene has been arranged by the Frasers. They have manipulated Frances into believing that James could be interested in her while knowing that, at the same time, he has been involved with Maria, a sensual and outspoken woman, quite the opposite to shy and asexual Frances. Frances tries to maintain calm and keeps appearances although she is being ostensibly ignored by her companions. After the dinner, she leaves the restaurant, still hoping, somewhat irrationally, that the Frasers will join her and ask to spend the rest of the evening together. As it does not happen, she walks her way home through the deserted London streets and a dangerous park. She enters an underground tunnel where a drunkard tries to grab her, but she manages to escape and reach her flat totally exhausted. At home, Nancy feeds her, gives Frances a bath, and clothes her in a new white sleeping gown. Frances goes to bed in a room which previously belonged to her deceased mother. After a long and interrupted sleep, she wakes up and starts writing her novel that seems to recount her own story.

The Booker-winning novel, *HL*, also presents a protagonist who is a novelist. However, while Frances in *LM* is an aspiring novelist, Edith Hope in *HL* is already a successful romance writer known by her pseudonym Virginia Wilde. Nevertheless, the protagonist's private life is not as successful as the lives of the characters she creates. That is why Edith's lively neighbour, Penelope, introduces her to a respected but dull Englishman, Geoffrey. Despite Edith's simultaneous affair with a married man, David, and the absence of genuine affection for Geoffrey, the marriage between Edith and Geoffrey is quickly arranged by Penelope. Just before the wedding ceremony Edith withdraws from this marriage of convenience. In the face of a scandal caused by this sudden decision, she is sent by Penelope to a Swiss resort. Edith's disappearance from London is designed to make the protagonist repent her actions. She is meant to come back as a penitent member of society, but the stay takes an unexpected turn. The array of female hotel guests provokes Edith's reflections on different models of womanhood. Her attention is mostly captivated by Mrs Pusey and her daughter Jennifer. The Puseys display attributes completely different from Edith's: they are confident, coquettish, and talkative. The seemingly peaceful stay in the out of the season hotel is interspersed with Edith's

letters to David and the trips she takes. On one such excursion, she learns more about Mr Neville, a rich owner of a technology company. The man tries to persuade Edith to his hedonistic world view and offers her a marriage which would be devoid of love but would guarantee her an acceptable social status. When Edith is very close to accept Mr Neville's offer, she accidentally witnesses his leaving the bedroom of Jennifer Pusey. As Edith departs the hotel, she tears down the farewell letter to David and instead sends him a telegram that reads: "Returning" (*HL* 148).

FF, Brookner's fifth novel, is a story of the Dorn family. The novel revolves around the descriptions of the wedding photographs which propel the action. After emigrating from some unspecified German-speaking country before the Second World War, Sofka Dorn, a widowed matriarch, tries to instil English conventions in the upbringing of her children. The novel presents the coming-of-age stories of Frederick, Alfred, Mimi, and Betty (Sofka's children). Frederick, his mother's beloved son and a desired suitor of all the girls he meets, settles to marry Evie, a loud and lascivious daughter of a hotel owner. To Sofka's disappointment, Frederick emigrates with Evie to southern Europe. The more withdrawn younger son, Alfred, who as a child enjoyed reading most, is forced to assume the responsibility for the family firm after Frederick's emigration. Alfred seems to never find his place as when he buys a home in Kent, he tries to model it on the English homes he read about in his childhood. His affair with Dolly, a married woman, enhances the impression of Alfred's lack of stability. As far as Sofka's daughters are concerned, they also constitute a pair of contrasting characters. While Betty is a brave, flirtatious young woman who dreams about acting career, lovers, and escaping from her family home, her younger sister Mimi resembles other Brooknerines who timidly accept the roles designated for them by their families. It is not surprising, then, that Betty goes to Paris (when her mother is convinced that she is on her way to the boarding school in Switzerland) and arranges a meeting with a dance teacher who turns out to be quite interested in Mimi. As for Betty, she "wins" as a more viable character. She starts dancing career, marries a Hungarian nephew of a film producer and finally emigrates to Hollywood. Nevertheless, contrary to her expectations, she does not land any successful film roles and spends her mature years disillusioned, passing her time at the swimming pool, and recalling childhood memories. Coming back to Mimi, she accepts her fate, stays with her mother in London, and marries Lautner, an elderly manager of the family firm. Although she dreams to be a mother, she loses her baby after the shock wrought by Sofka's death. The description of the photograph of yet another

wedding (of Ursie, the family maid) concludes the storyline of *FF*, completing it at the same time.

Determinism, complicated family dynamics, and social maladjustment constitute the central themes of these five Brookner's novels. The writer meditates on the predetermined fate of her protagonists who are unable to escape the limitations imposed by their childhood devoid of parental guidance and stability. With each novel, Brookner tells a similar story about the hardships and loneliness of characters whose ethnically hybrid families set them apart from the mainstream English culture. Thus, Brooknerine is an exemplification of both the feeling of exclusion from and the attempt to fit into English society. Despite differences in plots, *SL*, *P*, *LM*, *HL*, and *FF* all feature these recurring themes, thus typifying Brookner's interest but also making this set of novels somewhat uniform analytical material as regards the research aims of this thesis.

Considering the selection of novels to be discussed and the research goals of the thesis, namely the liminal position of the aforementioned protagonists and relevant narrative techniques, the present dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first one presents the basic concepts related to liminality and methodological background which are essential for the analyses of liminality in the literary texts. The second and third chapters are devoted to practical considerations. The closing part offers findings related to liminal identities in the discussed novels.

Chapter 1 provides some historical context of the ideas offered by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, two most important figures in the context of liminality. The chapter describes the structure of the rites of passage and the attributes of liminality. Moreover, it also presents some structuralists methodology of literary analysis of narrative techniques relating to space and time as well as a discussion of post-modern, discursive notions of identity. The traditional structuralist devices are then employed in the following chapters to identify certain qualities, motifs, and categories (for example, the emerging division of space in the novels) by identifying their semantic fields. The post-modern theories connected to discourse and identity are further used to interpret the function and meaning of these categories to reveal the mechanics of self-identification of the characters.

The analytical part is composed of two chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the analysis of the protagonists' liminality connected to their complicated ethnic ancestry. Section 2.1 examines the way the family houses represent the feeling of displacement of the characters. Next, section 2.2 discusses the motif of expulsion and exile. The final section

of this chapter, 2.3, considers the issue of otherness. This section is further subdivided into the part devoted to Darwinian narrative and Holocaust tropes, and the part dedicated to duality, translation, and dehumanization.

Chapter 3 discusses liminality in the private and romantic spheres of the protagonists' lives. Similarly to the previous chapter, it is divided into three sections. Section 3.1 addresses the characters' suspended position between childhood and adulthood, the state which results from the complicated family dynamics. The next section, 3.2, looks at the motif of waiting as at liminal condition and reveals how it influences the action of the novels. Finally, section 3.3 aims at discerning the elements of traditional rites of passage in the discussed novels. The role of these rituals is examined in relation to the protagonists' personal hopes and expectations.

The dissertation finishes with conclusions concerning the emerging dynamics of identity construction in the first five novels by Brookner. It demonstrates how liminality regarding different aspects of the protagonists' existence reveals itself on the narrative level of the discussed novels.

Chapter 1 Liminality and Related Narrative Techniques: Historical and Theoretical Aspects

It may come as a surprise that liminality, the term that is quite widely used nowadays, became universally employed only after decades of academic neglect. Once the concept is revived, it turns out that the discussion about various phenomena in sociology, anthropology, history, arts, and culture is hardly possible without referring to liminality. Since the term originally indicated the transitory states in tribal structures during the rites of passage, it has taken some time for researchers to notice the validity of the application of liminality to the phenomena in the industrial society. Nevertheless, the liminal condition has become to be understood more broadly as the state of being suspended and deprived of the stable status, which appears to correspond with the cultural and intellectual ambience of the postmodern era.

1.1 Anthropological Origins of the Concept of Liminality

The pivotal work for the development of the concept of liminality is *The Rites of Passage*, a book written by Arnold van Gennep[2] in 1909. However, even the most supreme ideas do not emerge in an intellectual void and therefore a brief introduction of the milieu of the sociological and anthropological thought at the turn of the century is necessary in order to understand the concept in question. Such an exposition to the intellectual background which led van Gennep to his academic discoveries appears purposeful for yet another reason.

[2] Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) was born in Germany and educated in France. He was interested in rituals, taboo, religion, myths as well as linguistics and classification systems. He was highly regarded for his work as folklorist but was underestimated as far as his anthropological studies are concerned. His understanding of the role of rituals in the tribal societies stood in opposition to Durkheimian determinism which resulted in his exclusion from scholarly circles. Unable to obtain employment in the French academia, van Gennep was finally offered a position of the chair of ethnology at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. Although his academic career in Neuchâtel was thwarted by the outbreak of World War I, van Gennep managed to organize there the first international conference concerning ethnographic/sociological science in 1914. Short afterwards he was expelled from Switzerland for his critical opinion about the factual siding of Switzerland with Germany, which was covered by the apparent Swiss neutrality. In 1921 van Gennep was awarded the degree of *Docteur ès Lettres* at the Sorbonne, however this achievement did not secure him a job. Upon returning to France, after having given the series of lectures in the USA and Canada in 1922, he settled on a small farm in Southern France and took up the studies of French folklore (Thomassen 2014: 39-42).

Van Gennep's ideas were appreciated and developed relatively late because during his lifetime neither his work received the attention it deserved, nor did he obtain any academic position in France.This absence of scientific recognition stemmed directly from the conflict with Emil Durkheim[3] who was a powerful figure in French social science at the time and this disagreement influenced the course of events which followed the publication of *The Rites of Passage*. Thus, the presentation of the development of the notion of liminality would be incomplete without providing the general circumstances of its intellectual origins.

As pointed out by Solon T. Kimball in his introduction to the English translation of *The Rites of Passage*, van Gennep's thought is rooted in the intellectual ambience of the doctrine of positivism (v– vii). Accordingly, the writings of van Gennep may be allocated in line with the claims voiced by the 19th-century renown scientists, like Auguste Comte,[4] Herbert Spencer,[5] and Lewis H. Morgan.[6] Charles Darwin's findings on biological evolution were adopted by Spencer and Morgan in broader social, institutional,

[3] Emil Durkheim (1858–1917) was a French scholar interested in psychology, philosophy, ethics, and sociology. He spent a year in Germany researching the current academic thought where he became fascinated with the works of Wilhelm Wundt (regarded today as the founder of modern psychology). He obtained a teaching position in social science at the University of Bordeaux in 1887. Durkheim also established an influential journal *L'Année sociologique* (1896) and coined such terms as *the sacred* or *totemism*. The French scholar rarely travelled and did not do any fieldwork because he claimed that the aim of his research was not the historical record of the customs of primitive tribes but the knowledge which helps to understand contemporariness. Moreover, Durkheim represented the sceptical attitude towards the prospects of the technological advancements and felt that society of his time was in the state of *anomie* i.e. the state of the lack of values and social norms. His most important works include: *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), *Suicide* (1897), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). In 1906 he obtained the professorship at the Sorbonne University ("Emile Durkheim").

[4] Auguste Comte (1798–1857) is regarded as the founding father of sociology and positivism. Between 1826 and 1829 he conducted a series of private lectures on system of positive sociology which was so successful that this resulted in redelivering them in Royal Athenæum the following year. He spent another twelve years on their publication (*Cours de philosophie positive*, 1830–42). His other works, like *Système de politique positive* (1851–54), focused on the role of moral progress in the formulation of political organizations. Comte claimed that social phenomena could be categorized and described in terms of physical laws. Moreover, he believed that the advancement of social science would contribute to the general improvement of society. He defied Christian supernaturalism and advocated new spiritual order. He introduced the law of three stages which presumed that the development of society underwent the following stages: theological, metaphysical, and positive. Comte was widely read in Europe and became an influential figure admired by English thinker John Stuart Mill and French lexicographer Maximilien Littré, to name only a few ("Auguste Comte").

[5] Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was an English sociologist and philosopher who introduced the concept of social Darwinism according to which society, similarly to living organisms, is governed by the principles of evolutionism such as the law of natural selection. *Synthetic Philosophy* (1896) is considered his greatest work ("Herbert Spencer").

[6] Lewis H. Morgan (1818–1881) was an American ethnologist and anthropologist appreciated for his analysis of the kinship systems and theory of social evolution. He accomplished a profound study of the culture and organization of the Iroquois nation ("Lewis Henry Morgan").

and civilizational contexts. Such an attitude contributed greatly to the rise of the scientific discipline of anthropology.

In their book *A History of Anthropology*, Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Finn Sivert Nielsen mention yet another factor that contributed to the formation of anthropology, namely the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath. The introduction of railways (1830s), regular transatlantic steamship (1840s), and the invention of telegraph (1846) enabled a much faster transmission of information, relocation of population, and dissemination of goods. Along with other technological advancements, this easier and more efficient circulation allowed the increase in different kinds of production. Consequently, the population in Europe increased rapidly and this was not impeded even by a higher risk of epidemic or terrible working conditions in the factories.[7] The technological and demographic changes resulted in the massive relocation of population from Europe to other continents. People migrated in pursuance of their economic needs, "relieving population pressure in Europe, and permitting a long-term rise in standards of living for all" (Eriksen and Nielsen 21).

New power relations arose in the colonial paradigm in places such as Australia, India, and Africa. The administrators, owners, and new settlers acted superior in these territories and treated natives as inferiors. Such power relations resulted in new ideologies, but also in scientific works aiming either at defending or criticising the new *status quo* (Eriksen and Nielsen 25). Again, the technological advancement of transport influenced the realm of thought as it allowed for the rise of "international science." Actually, Eriksen and Nielsen hypothesize that Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1851) would not have been possible if it had not been for his six-year travel around the world to conduct his research (21). Importantly, in line with the emerging rules of the scientific, objective principles, the anthropologist should base his theses on field studies. Thus, the prototypical global researcher gave rise to the anthropologist whose concepts derived from specific data about people all over the world. With the availability of such

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> Europe was able to feed more people, in part through increased production, in part through expanding imports. As a result, population grew. In 1800, Britain had 10.5 million people. By 1901, there were 37 million, 75 per cent of whom lived in cities. Peasants deserted the countryside, forced out by population pressure and the rationalisation of agriculture, and moved to urban centres like London or Paris, where they were re-socialised as workers. Conditions in the rapidly growing cities were hardly optimal: epidemics were common, and when the first British law against child labour was introduced in 1834 it affected only children under the age of 9. (Eriksen and Nielsen 20)

a reliable material, anthropology became an established academic field. The greatest achievements in this area are attributed to Adolf Bastian.[8] This German anthropologist, educated by Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, was an exception among his colleagues in that he disapproved of the theory of evolution, claiming that it does not fulfil the principles of empiricism. Indeed, it has to be stated that Darwin could not have possibly observed empirically the evolution of species. Therefore, Bastian propagated *the psychic unity of mankind*, the idea that the mental framework is what all humans have in common (Eriksen and Nielsen 22). His extensive travels aimed at proving this thesis by recording myths and collecting artefacts from various distant parts of the world.

Another important term coined by Bastian is *Elementärgedanken*. It denotes basic ideas which are universal, i.e. independent from culture and history. However, *Elementärgedanken* may have different expressions among cultures because of the influence of a given environment (Eriksen and Nielsen 22). Therefore, it should be noted that the tendency towards the universal and comparative study of human condition was prevalent in the 19th century and van Gennep's way of reasoning as well as his method of research situate him within this tradition.

Bastian's disagreement with the theory of evolution anticipates two main paths which anthropology would then follow: evolutionism and diffusionism. Evolutionism presupposes the gradual development of societies according to the universal rigid model, whereas diffusionism advocates the unique progress of each community influenced by their specific history (Eriksen and Nielsen 22). Moreover, towards the end of the 19th century different schools of anthropology crystallized. They referred to the traditions of a particular anthropological thought. The schools could be briefly divided into three types: (1) American and English, (2) German, and (3) French.[9] As for American and English approach, evolutionary theory prevailed with the focus on human activity in areas such as magic, law, or kinship. The main representative of this movement was Edward B. Tylor.[10] The German anthropological thought was dominated by the aforementioned

[8] Adolf Bastian (1826–1905) was a German anthropologist who, besides propagating the concept of the psychic unity of mankind, inspired Carl Jung's notion of collective consciousness. Bastian was a professor of ethnology at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and a founder of Royal Museum of Ethnology. *Man in History* (1860) and *The People of Eastern Asia* (1866–67) constitute his most regarded publications ("Adolf Bastian").

[9] Although the circulation of ideas already affected scientists in those times, still the centre of a given intellectual thought and the sphere of its strongest resonance were connected with the place of residence of the leading proponent of a particular approach.

[10] Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) was an English anthropologist. His definition of culture is still relevant, and he is considered the founder of cultural anthropology. Tylor claimed that different cultures should be analysed as elements of a single history of human thought. In his concepts he referred to the theory of

diffusionism based on Bastian's ideas. Later, his followers' interpretation of the innovatory discoveries concerning the history of the Indo-European languages led to the understanding of how the cultural qualities might have spread across various regions of the world. This understanding gave rise to diffusionism which is much more sensitive to the local uniqueness and defies the rigid stages of transgression of society represented by Tylor.[11] Finally, in France sociology intermingled with anthropology. It was represented mostly by Durkheim who stated that social phenomena should be perceived and studied in a similar way objects were studied.

Nevertheless, despite the differences in approaches to anthropology, common circumstances were responsible for the appearance of all the above-described scientific movements: the prerequisite to relieve supernaturalism, emphasis placed on empirical observations, and the need for systemic classification. The Torres Expedition of 1898 might be regarded as a practical embodiment of these principles (Herle and Rouse 17). The undertaking aimed at collecting reliable data about the culture of Torres Straits. The task was divided among Charles G. Seligman,[12] William H. R. Rivers,[13] and Alfred C. Haddon.[14] The expediency of the original academic education of the researchers might

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evolution, but advocated the psychical and psychological unity of the mankind in the 19th-century disputes over the issues of race. Moreover, he was the proponent of terms such *animism* which denoted the early forms of religion and *survivals*. Taylor's most significant works include: *Researchers into the Early History of Mankind* (1865), *Development of Civilization* (1865), and *Primitive Culture* (1871). Taylor became the first professor of anthropology at the University of Oxford in 1875 ("Edward Burnett Taylor").

[11] Tylor's idea was not new; it originated from Comte's *The Law of Three Stages*. Comte claimed that the large-scale development of society underwent three basic stages: 1) the theological stage, 2) the metaphysical stage, and 3) the positive stage (Comte 1853). His follower, Morgan, proposed the classification of human advancement, which is reminiscent of Comte's in its rigid three level structure: savagery, barbarism, and civilisation (Morgan 1877). Thus, Tylor could be definitely placed in this tradition if one takes into consideration his attempt to create an evolutionist synthesis and to reconstruct social development of mankind in his *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865). He asserted that culture is rather a matter of degree, so the issue of development of a given society depends on its advancement with respect to the universal scheme of social evolution (Tylor 1878). Such an approach was unacceptable for Bastian, and later, also for the representatives of diffusionism, who strongly believed in the uniqueness of different cultures. However, it is important to notice that in many aspects Tylor agreed with Bastian, and the psychic unity of humanity might serve as the emblematic example of the idea they both advocated.

[12] Charles G. Seligman (1873–1940) was educated as a doctor but after the Torres Expedition he became drawn to anthropology. He continued the fieldwork in Melanesia, Ceylon, and the Nilotic Sudan and formulated the conclusions of his expeditions in the works such as *The Veddas* (1911), *Races of Africa* (1930), or *Egypt and Negro Africa* (1934). In his findings, Seligman referred to Sigmund Freud's theories of dreams ("C.G. Seligman").

[13] William H. R. Rivers (1864–1922) was an English psychologist. He was the director of the first experimental psychology laboratory in Britain and the lecturer at the University of Cambridge. During the Torres Expedition he administered tests of sensory functions to Melanesians. In his books *The Todas* (1906) and *Kinship and Social Organisation* (1914), Rivers contributed to the studies on Toda people of Southern India and kinship respectively ("W. H. R. Rivers").

[14] Alfred Haddon (1855–1940) was a professor of zoology at the Royal College of Science in Dublin. He went to the Torres Islands primarily to investigate marine biology but became fascinated with the

seem doubtful nowadays, but it was effective and, as Hynes writes, "[t]hrough their work British social anthropology was born" (26). The attitude of the members of this pioneering group might be called *urgent anthropology*, as Eriksen and Nielsen term similar endeavours made by Morgan and Boas (22), because of their concern about the possible disappearance of the traditional customs of the islanders. They worked collaboratively to gather and analyse specific information based on their fieldwork.

As a natural consequence of the national specialization outlined above and the endeavours such as that of the Torres Expedition, anthropology became institutionalized and taught at universities.[15] However, the state of the anthropological thought at the beginning of the 20th century could not be as univocally described and classified as in the 19th century. What could be generalized is the broad abandonment of evolutionism with a simultaneous respect for "the fact that the evolutionists, from Morgan to Tylor, had after all established some of the basic parameters of the discipline" (Eriksen and Nielsen 38). From such a background there emerged the most influential figures of the 20th-century anthropology: Franz Boas,[16] Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown,[17] Bronisław

indigenous people so he organized the Torres Expedition a year later. Haddon obtained the position of the reader in ethnology at the University of Cambridge from 1909 to 1926. Being a prolific writer, he published more than 600 studies. These include *Evolution in Art* (1895), *Head-Hunters: Black, White, and Brown* (1901), *History of Anthropology* (1910), *Wanderings of Peoples* (1911).

[15] It is important to remember that attempts to institutionalize and regulate anthropology were undertaken even earlier. One of such attempts was the publication of *Notes and Queries of Anthropology* in 1857. It was a highly regarded work on the methods and ethics of field research. Another example might be the founding of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain (1843), which was dedicated to promoting anthropology. It remains faithful to its goals also nowadays. However, Sam Addison records that the title of "the father of anthropology" usually goes to E. B. Tylor who was the first person to have obtained the professorship in that field at Oxford in 1896 (Eriksen and Nielsen 25) ("Edward Burnett Tylor Bio").

[16] Franz Boas (1858–1942) was a German-born American anthropologist who founded the relativistic, culture-centred school of American anthropology. He specialized in the culture and language of North American Indians but was also actively involved in the development of anthropological education. Boas strongly believed in the equality of races, which was not a popular claim in his time. Boas inspired and influenced other famous anthropologists: Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Edward Sapir. In 1886 Boas decided to stay in New York after the research on the tribes of British Columbia. He was an editor of *Science* magazine and established *International Journal of American Linguistics*. He taught at Clark University and Columbia University. Boas was also a curator at the American Museum of American History in New York. *The Primitive Man* (1911), *Primitive Art* (1926), *Race, Language and Culture* (1940) are some of his most important books ("Franz Boas").

[17] Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) was an English anthropologist who established British social anthropology. He developed the theory of functionalism and systemic framework applicable to analyse the function of social structures of preindustrial societies. He travelled and carried out fieldwork on the Adaman Islands, Western Australia. Radcliffe-Brown hold teaching positions at Trinity College, Cambridge, the kingdom of Tonga, the University of Cape Town, the University of Sidney, the University of Chicago, and the University of Oxford. His works include *Structure and* Function in Primitive Society (1952), *Method in Social Anthropology* (1958) ("A.R. Radcliffe-Brown").

Malinowski,[18] Durkheim, and Marcel Mauss.[19]

Boas continued the German thought and Bastian's approach towards the exceptionality of a given culture, although he was active in the USA. His research found its quintessence in historical particularism which was Boas' response to evolutionism and diffusionism (Boas 311–21). The uniqueness of each culture as well as the diversity of the world were also the reasons why he advocated the meticulous gathering of data and fieldwork before engaging in formulating generalizing theories. To accomplish this goal, he opted for collective research consisting of repeated short stays in the field over the years. Moreover, Boas proposed that the anthropologist, after completing their education, should specialize in one of the four aspects: linguistics, physical anthropology, archaeology, or cultural anthropology. It seems that the last one mentioned played a substantial role in Boas's work, as in the American tradition the interest in human endeavours grew and became to function as *cultural anthropology* (whereas in Great Britain it became to be known as *social anthropology*) (Eriksen and Nielsen 39). This designation reflected the influence of Tylor and his views concerning culture as encompassing a wide range of phenomena in society. However, Boas's approach is still relevant in contemporary anthropology not only because of the terms coined by him (e.g. *cultural relativism*) but also thanks to the work of the following generation of the most prominent anthropologists.

However, the world of anthropology was yet to be shaken with the publication of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922. That evolutionary book written by a Polish researcher, Bronisław Malinowski, followed his study of social system of exchange on Trobriand Islands between 1915–18. During his fieldwork he practised what he termed *participant observation.* That is to say, he immersed himself in the customs and practices

[18] Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942) was a Polish anthropologist who revolutionised the methodology of anthropological research. In 1914 he spent six months doing field work in New Guinea, which earned him a doctorate of science degree from the University of London in 1916. Although Malinowski travelled a lot during his lifetime, his two stays on the Trobriand Islands in 1915-16 and 1917-18 seem most fundamental for his future career because there he formulated the method of *participant observation*. His functional theory focused more on the individual and the understanding of the functions and interrelations of small elements which constitute particular culture. His trilogy consisting of *The Argonauts of Western Pacific* (1922), *The Sexual Live of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (1929), *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* (1935) is the outcome of his fieldwork and is defined as the first modern ethnography ("Bronislaw Malinowski").

[19] Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) was a French sociologist and anthropologist interested in social structure and its relationship with forms of exchange. He contributed to the works of Durheim, who was his uncle, notably to *Le Suicide* and edition of *L'Année sociologique*. Mauss founded Ethnology Institute of University of Paris in 1925. He wrote *The Gift* (1925), a book about the function of material exchange in different societies ("Marcel Mauss").

of the region and people he studied. He disregarded indirect sources, translators or formal interviews. Such an attitude to ethnography was ground-breaking and resulted in detailed observations of the trading practices, their importance and correlation with other institutions in Trobriand Islands.[20] Malinowski paid attention to various factors including seemingly insignificant details. This might be the aftermath of his former education in Leipzig where he was influenced by the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt. Thus, Malinowski became convinced that, from the academic point of view, the synchronic research was the most valuable one because it provided a holistic view of the society. Indeed, what Malinowski frequently emphasized was the importance of the context in which the social phenomena occur. Furthermore, he advocated that the anthropologist should adopt the perspective of the subject he investigates to comprehend their milieu. Bearing in mind these principles, it becomes only natural to understand Malinowski's contempt for the comparative examination of a single social factor. What is more, Malinowski gives a prominent place to an individual. Accordingly, social institutions address the needs of an individual and hence become functional. Consequently, such an understanding of the relationship between an individual and society provided the basis for biopsychological functionalism.[21]

The perception of the institution as the response to human needs differentiated Malinowski from Radcliffe-Brown. In his attitude toward the role of society, the latter was the follower of Durkheim. According to Radcliffe-Brown, social institutions form

[20] It seems noteworthy that Kimball regards van Gennep's descriptions of the ritual exchanges to be the forethought to the concept of reciprocity advanced by Malinowski (Kimball x).

[21] While addressing the issue of the British school of *functionalism*, or rather "functionalisms" as represented by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown respectively, it was necessary to refer to the already mentioned French sociologist, Durkheim, whose work was later popularized by Marcel Mauss. Nevertheless, it might seem confusing to find that all those figures are mentioned together in relation to van Gennep since they represent different generations of anthropologists. Evidently, there is a 13-year gap between the publication of *The Rites of Passage*, the work of the most interest for this study, and Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and Radcliffe-Brown's *Andaman Islanders: A Study in Social Organization* (1922). Even Durkheim's academic activity overlapped only partially with van Gennep's: Durkheim belonged to the previous generation as compared to van Gennep, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. However, in his insistence on describing rituals in the wide context in which they appear and evading broad generalizations, van Gennep anticipated the methodological approach of functionalists. Then, since Durkheim was preoccupied with religion and through it with magic, ritual, and totemism, his research interests matched van Gennep's scope of work. On top of that, Mauss whom he acknowledged in his first book *Tabou et Totémisme à Madagascar. Étude Descriptive et Théorique* (1904), was van Gennep's close friend at the École Pratique. Finally, it was precisely van Gennep's critique of Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915) which caused the ostracism surrounding van Gennep in French academia and influenced the lack of appreciation of his revolutionary work and the concept of liminality for decades to come. Thus, it appears reasonable to introduce, at least briefly, the basic theoretical stance of Durkheim and his follower, Mauss, since it will enable to contextualize van Gennep's position in relation to their ideas.

social structure whose function is predominantly to secure its own existence. Thus, social structure is functional for its own sake and does not promote the agency of the individual. In fact, structural functionalism proposed by Radcliffe-Brown aimed at revealing the dominant role of a social structure which limits the independence of the individual and describes the relationships between the elements of this structure. Hence, its subsystems (e.g. systems for the division of labour, conflict resolution, distribution and inheritance) complement one another for the existence of the whole social structure.

Society was for Durkheim a social organism and his Weltanshauung balanced elements of both evolutionism and diffusionism. He was interested in synchronic interpretations based on discernible data. Although Durkheim resisted the rigid universal division into stages of social evolution, he did believe in the purposeful, coherent construction of society that operates as a whole. In this respect, similarly to evolutionists, he saw the correlation between biological laws of human body and the laws of society. Thus, the organisation and structure of society was of particular interest to Durkheim, which brought him closer to sociology. Indeed, he regarded religion, magic, and rites as belonging to social phenomena. These spheres were based on the division into *sacrum* and *profanum*, the distinction also adopted by both Hubert and Mauss (Jerzak-Gierszewska 423). Moreover, in his last, monumental work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim offers an investigation of religion to demonstrate that it is an expression of solidarity and "collective representations." Those terms in Durkheim's model can be neatly summarized as follows:

> Solidarity, Durkheim argues, arises from collective representations – then as now a controversial term. These are symbolic 'images' or 'models' of social life that are shared by a group. Such 'images' develop through interpersonal relationships, but attain a supra-individual, objective character. They make up an all-embracing, virtual, 'socially constructed' reality that echoes Kant and Hegel, and which to the people who live in the society appear just as real as material world. But they are not objective images of this world. They are moral entities, with power over the emotions. Religion becomes an important object of inquiry for Durkheim, because it is here, more than anywhere else, that the emotional attachment of individuals to collective representations is established and strengthened. (Eriksen and Nielsen 31)

Thus, Durkheim wrote about rituals as those elements in religion which attach a strong emotional value to *collective representations* in society:

> This attachment is primarily formed in ritual, in which religion is expressed through physical interaction and solidarity becomes a direct, bodily experience. Ritual hedges itself off from profane daily life, drawing a protective magic circle around its own,

> forbidden, sacred domain. This demarcation allows the experience of ritual to be intensified until an almost mystical union is achieved. (Eriksen and Nielsen 31)

Consequently, Durkheim's consideration of religion as the expression of solidarity and a binding force of society provided methodological tools for the generations of anthropologists concerned with religion. Moreover, Durkheim's schemas of relations between the conceptual classification and social structure proposed in *Classification Primitive* (1900) offered findings which are still pertinent today to anthropological studies of categorization. His contribution to anthropology includes concepts of *collective consciousness*, i.e. a set of beliefs functioning as unifying social force, and the classification of *mechanic* and *organic solidarity*. Mechanic solidarity, according to Durkheim, was based on the recognition of similarity, of e.g. people's role in society, and was prevailing in simple societies, whereas organic solidarity was founded on the appreciation of the divergent roles people undertake to complement each other in complex institutions. Thus, the concepts introduced by Durkheim emphasized the way society functions, not just the theoretical quality of those terms.[22] Indeed, Durkheim was interested in the operating dynamics of society most and this interest granted him the position of the precursor of functionalism developed later by Radcliffe-Brown in Great Britain.

However, the most direct continuator of Durkheim's thought was his nephew, Marcel Mauss. Besides being an influential educator and activist,[23] Mauss also contributed to the theoretical musings on human activity by introducing the following sub-categories: ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology.[24] Nevertheless, such a

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[22] Durkheim's interest in the functioning of society eliminated also other ways of analysis, e.g. psychologism:

> Between evolutionist theories representing intellectualism and emotionalism and Huber-Mauss-Durkheim's account representing sociologism there is evident agreement as to their relation to introspectionist psychologism. Evolutionist theories presuppose this psychologism, while the conception of L'*Année Sociologique* group is clearly anti-psychological (anti-introspectionist). Durkheimian anti-psychologism is expressed by the firm rejection of the explanation of social phenomena ("social facts") through direct reference to psychological phenomena. The author of *The Principles of the Sociological Method* categorically claims that 'whenever a social phenomenon is directly explained by some psychological phenomenon, one can be sure that this explanation is false' (Durkheim 1968, p 139). (Jerzak Gierszewska 423)

[23] Mauss founded the Ethnology Institute of the University of Paris in 1925 and was a strong supporter of Alfred Dreyfus in infamous Dreyfus affair ("Marcel Mauss").

[24]

> Mauss, on this background, divided the study of anthropology into three levels of inquiry: ethnography, which was the detailed study of customs, beliefs and social life; ethnology, which was the empirically based craft of regional comparison; and anthropology, which was the

division was just operational because his main ambition was a universal comprehension of the life of society. Mauss desired to crystallize the constitutional characteristics shared by divergent types of society. *The Gift* (1925), his major work, comparatively examines the relationships between exchange of goods, reciprocity, and the building of the group organization. In this way, Mauss delves into the issues of human integration and concludes that:

> Societies have progressed in the measure in which they, their sub-groups and their members, have been able to stabilize their contracts and to give, receive and repay. In order to trade, man must first lay down his spear. When that is done he can succeed in exchanging goods and persons not only between clan and clan but between tribe and tribe and nation and nation, and above all between individuals. It is only then when people can create, can satisfy their interest mutually and define them without recourse to arms. (80)

Nevertheless, what is most relevant for this study is Mauss's aspiration to draw larger generalizations, which finds its reflection in the final paragraph of *The Gift*:

> Thus we see how it is possible under certain circumstances to study total human behaviour; and how that concrete study leads not only to science of manners, a partial social science, but even to ethical conclusions – 'civility', or 'civics' as we say today. Through studies of this sort we can find, measure and assess the various determinants, aesthetics, moral, religious and economic, and the material and demographic factors, whose sum is the basis of society and constitutes the common life, and whose conscious direction is supreme art – politics in the Socratic sense of the word. (81)

This quotation attests to the line of argument here, namely that *The Gift* was the final presentation of Mauss's long-lasting exploration of multitudinous anthropological subjects. His broad research and intellectual endeavours found such a composed embodiment as late as 1925 partly because he was engaged in editing his colleagues' work and contributed significantly to the works of Durkheim (Lévi-Strauss). Among the texts he proofread was van Gennep's thesis concerning taboo and totemism in Madagascar (*Tabou et totémisme à Madagascar*) published twenty-one years earlier (Thomassen 35). The two researchers were both influenced by Léon Marillier[25] who taught at *École Pratique* where Mauss and van Gennep met. After the death of Marillier in 1901, it was Mauss who became van Gennep's mentor (Thomassen 35). Erikson and

> philosophically informed theoretical endeavour to generalise about humanity and society on the basis of the two former research efforts. (Eriksen and Nielsen 48)

[25] Léon Marillier (1862–1901) was a professor of history of primitive religion in at the Ecole Practique des Hautes Etudes in Paris (Scott 110).

Nielsen rightly indicate some preliminary affinities with Durkheim's thought: "Anticipating Durkheim's sociology of religion, van Gennep argued that such rituals are dramatised expressions of the social order, which strengthen the integration of both initiates and spectators" (50). Although Bjørn Thomassen recognizes those similarities, he realizes that it was precisely van Gennep's thoughtful attitude towards Durkheim which induced the lack of academic approval of *The Rites of Passage*:

> However, based on what we have seen so far and on the argument that follows it seems more plausible to suggest that this exclusion happened exactly because van Gennep's critique of Durkheim was well-founded, precise and went straight to the heart of Durkheim's entire academic project of creating a solid social science based on empirical facts. (48)

The critical attitude towards Durkheim did not stem from van Gennep's arrogance or ambitions. In fact, it was a coherent reaction to subsequent shortcomings of the method and conclusions drawn by the author of *Primitive Classification*. Some of the first critical comments came from the introduction of van Gennep's book *Mythes et légendes d'Australie* published in 1906, where he expressed his doubt towards Durkheim's analytical ethnocentrism (Thomassen 36). The comparative method adopted by Durkheim ignored many significant details, and that in turn allowed for fallacious conclusions: the change in society was usually explained with the swift, yet universal justification of "the general needs of society." Since neither the origins of those needs nor a fruitful comparison was offered by Durkheim, van Gennep regarded his project as *métaphysique sociologique* (Thomassen 50). Durkheim's superficial suppositions about the order of matriarchy and patriarchy in Australia may serve as an example of such an untrustworthy method in practise. What is more, van Gennep, a diligent ethnographer himself, could not tolerate Durkheim's uncritical treatment of the second-hand data he had explored. In this way he did not meet the most basic demands for scientific transparency, reliability, and empirical observations. Van Gennep concludes that Durkheim's method is essentially evolutionist and, correspondingly to this methodology, he uses historical assumptions. The paradox of this situation is grasped by Thomassen:

> At a more general level, van Gennep exposes Durkheim's underlying evolutionist stance that lurks behind his allegedly sociological and 'timeless' explanatory apparatus. This has been pointed out again and again since, but it has rarely, if ever, been fully recognized that van Gennep was the first to raise this critique explicitly, and in direct connection to Durkheim's empirical writings on religion. Durkheim wanted to cut off historical

> explanations from sociological science, but the moment he sets out to theorize himself, he plunges into evolutionist speculation. (50)

Another, but no less important, charge against this renown French sociologist was his societal determinism, a flaw recognized not only by van Gennep but also, quite unexpectedly, by Mauss (Thomassen 57).[26] Such an approach offers the dictatorship of the demands of social structure as the single explanation of social phenomena and, moreover, it excludes entirely the individual agency.

A conscious scrutiny of Durkheim's methods might have proved to be helpful in formulating van Gennep's own scientific approach. Moreover, his ethnographic experience and folklorist expertise must have directed him towards existing, empirical evidence[27] and twofold perspective of diachronic and synchronic observation which allow the researcher to focus on the natural condition of man.[28] In contrast to the Durkheimian approach in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* which presupposes that the belief of social structure is expressed via rituals, in *The Rites of Passage* rituals are observed to delineate their pattern and reveal the transformational potential that rites provide for their subject. Hence, van Gennep is not concerned with a formulation of a theory of rites or the unilineal scheme of development of a ritual. What is more, van Gennep does not judge the beliefs underlying a given ritual, but he claims that the rituals are functional. As a matter of fact, it is precisely what is so innovative and yet veracious about *The Rites of Passage*. Van Gennep's work exposes the ways in which rites demonstrate the transformative potential for the individual as well as for social groups. For van Gennep who was so strongly attached to the organic quality of mankind, biological science, and,

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[26] As Thomassen exposes, the critique of Durkheim came also from Radcliffe-Brown; however, it was not as straightforward as the critical assessment of van Gennep (56– 57).

[27]

> Van Gennep wanted social scientists to deal with living facts, rather than 'dead' and abstract social facts. Even a material object tells its own story, about the techniques behind its making, its use, and its social significance. Van Gennep was truly passionate about ethnographic details, real living details, artefacts, artistic techniques, paintings, beliefs, rites, production techniques, legends. He published widely on highly specialized topics, from weaving techniques to pottery making, and animal and property markings. (Thomassen 45)

[28]

> He emphatically distanced himself from Durkheimian sociology, and instead proposed a social science methodology inspired by biology, 'une biologie sociologique', as he would call it. Already in 1909, in the second volume of Religions, moeurs et légendes, van Gennep argued that 'when we wish to study social phenomena, we must study them both locally, with the help of the historical method, and also comparatively, with the aid of the biological method, so that we can classify them into "natural" categories: family, genus, species' (here as translated by Hafstein 1999). (Thomassen 43)

ultimately, life[29] the discovery of such a capability, which allows society to remain in a constant motion, could eventually present social structure as an active construct. However, as Thomassen indicates, van Gennep refrained from "reducing them all to one universal function" (36–37). Commenting upon ethnographic facts, van Gennep compared different rituals, but he always insisted on indicating their divergent contexts. Thus, he classified rites and demonstrated that various rituals accompany the change of a person's status while others complement the natural, temporal transitions. Van Gennep presented life as a path of changes and transitions concerning manifold spheres of existence. He observed that in the groups "at the simplest levels of development", to use van Gennep's phrasing (*The Rites* 2), the sacred constitutes their major concern and is persistent in most decisive moments since such groups are built on magico-religious foundations. Conversely, in industrial society the division between religious and secular groups is the least definitely delineated social distinction, although it does not mean that sacrum is ultimately absent. Nevertheless, irrespective of the civilizational extent of a given group, obviously an individual is the subject to numerous changes, most essentially those deriving from our biological development as for example birth, puberty, parenthood, or death. Then, some changes of social status also seem fairly universal – two examples will suffice: the participation in the educational process and the beginning of the professional career. Although van Gennep stated that rites may have different purposes such as, for example, granting protection, blessing with fertility, providing defence, order, or designating attachment to deity, he also emphasized that those are the transitions marked by the shifts of the sacred and the profane and such shifts "do not occur without disturbing the life of society and the individual" (13). Moreover, their remarkable significance stems from the change "from one cosmic or social world to another" (10) and, finally, as van Gennep most emphatically states, such transitions "are regarded as real and important [as it] is demonstrated by the recurrences of rites, in important ceremonies among widely differing peoples, enacting death in one condition and resurrection in another" (13). The extraordinary meaning of these transitions imposes a

[29] Thomassen bluntly summaries van Gennep's critique of Durkheim:

> It is not simply the data that is wrong; it is not the flawed methodology; it is not even the circular, redundant nature of Durkheim's theory that is the issue: the problem is that Durkheim lacks a sense of life. This statement boils down the fundamental problem that van Gennep had identified before anyone else: Durkheim's project did not even belong to the life sciences. (55)

separate category designed to the rites which "reduce their harmful effects" (13) and those are regarded by van Gennep as rites of passage proper.

Furthermore, a crucial subdivision of such rituals is proposed. According to van Gennep, rites of passage begin with rites of separation, which are followed by transition rites, and are concluded with rites of incorporation. Nonetheless, the proportions between these phases may vary accordingly to a given ceremony.[30] However, it seems obvious that van Gennep is predominantly concerned with the transitional period, which in some cases may constitute a separate state with its own dynamics that further mirrors the threefold division of separation, transition, and incorporation. Among such internally subdivided transitions, the passage from adolescence, through betrothal, to marriage, or transition from pregnancy, through delivery, to birth, are mentioned as examples.

1.2 Liminality and its Attributes

Van Gennep drew special attention to the transition phase of rites of passage called by him interchangeably transition or liminal rite/phase. Although he did not offer any precise definition of liminality, the term derives from his concept of liminal rite, which in turn originates from the Latin word *limen* denoting threshold. Consequently, liminality designates the condition of the liminal subject[31] but it is often employed in an active mode. As Thomassen efficiently condensed it, "liminality belongs to rites of passage, understood also quite concretely as territorial-emotional crossing of boundaries" (xi). Though succinct, Thomassen's attempt to define liminality conveys its essence that is the combination of emotional and spatial aspects accompanying transitional situations. This interdependence was analysed by van Gennep who demonstrated an interesting correlation between rites of passage and the actual, physical spatial transition. According to him, our behaviour and customs associated with crossing the boundaries originated

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> These three subcategories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern. Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; or they may be reduced to a minimum in adoption, in the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated. (van Gennep , *The Rites* 11)

[31] Liminal subject, passenger, or initiate are the names used by van Gennep and denote the person in liminal stage. It seems that these terms are used interchangeably and they do not imply any dominance of a particular semantic aspect of an individual during the liminal rite.

from magico-religious practices and beliefs. The transitional quality of crossing the frontier is given emphasis as an epitome of liminality. Therefore, various characteristics of this liminal condition relating to space deserve to be mentioned here. First of all, van Gennep implies that there is a correlation between the psychological and social position of the initiate in the middle of the transitional ritual and the spatial position of a person traversing a frontier. Liminal subject is suspended in between two statuses in an ambiguous intermediate stage which bears little correspondence to everyday reality and is inhabited temporarily. Van Gennep reconstructs the historical regulations which induced the existence of neutral zones in between the territories assigned to particular countries or the claimed regions (for instance, in ancient Greece). Another significant aspect is touched upon on this occasion, namely van Gennep stresses the relativity of the sacredness concerning the spaces involved. That is to say, sacredness is assigned to the regions in which one is *not* present:

> Because of the pivoting of sacredness, the territories on either side of the neutral zone are sacred in relation to whoever is in the zone, but the zone, in turn, is sacred for the inhabitants of the adjacent territories. Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. (18)

Such a transitional space is symbolically transformed into the rites of passage concerning the change of social status. The symbolic role of gateways, doors, windows, etc., signifying the liminal condition is frequently observed, for example, by Richard Dilworth Rust. Such a role of the above-mentioned objects may be traced back to the ceremonies from the past, discussed by van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage*, in the chapter entitled "The Territorial Passage," where he notes: "The neutral zone shrinks progressively till it ceases to exist except as a simple stone, a beam, or a threshold" (19). The rituals performed there constitute specifically the rites of passage because they lead the subject to the union with new reality. Similarly, entering a new house is often accompanied by the rituals of transition in order to lift the taboo concerning the future dwelling. Moreover, after the ritual the threshold of the main door is considered to be purified and sacred, hence it is often forbidden to contaminate it with stepping on it, carrying the corpse across it, or passing it by menstruating women.

Van Gennep also mentions the space of a house and a motif of a door to discuss numerous aspects, among others, the status of the liminal subject with respect to the members of their communities: "An individual or group that does not have an immediate

right, by birth or through specially acquired attributes, to enter a particular house and to become established in one of its sections is in a state of isolation" (26). He analyses extensively the complex role of the separation of the individual in a liminal rite. The seclusion generates two-fold, contrasting features of subjects: strength and weakness. Moreover, very often these attributes characterize passengers simultaneously. Such a condition may be achieved because, on the one hand, weakness is caused by the lack of protection from the group and the break of the social bonds, and on the other hand, strength is provoked by the entrance of the initiate into the sphere which is sacred to those outside it. Thus, the liminal subject acquires a peculiar, ambiguous position.

This vagueness of liminality became of the main interest to Victor Turner[32] who explored it in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969). He advocated the claim that this ambiguity is not coincidental as liminality is in fact a state of being located in an indiscernible place – somewhere in between the statuses, periods, customs, and locations. Consequently, it seems only natural that such a transitive phase would find its expression in a wide range of incoherent symbols. Among them Turner mentions those which are related to "death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon" (*Ritual Process* 95). Moreover, the appearance of initiates who are often barely dressed or even naked, or, contrary, intentionally disguised as, for example, monsters, indicates that lack of social rank as well. Another feature which distinguishes an initiate from the rest of their community is humility manifested by their passive behaviour in the face of the groundless humiliations during the rites.[33] This submissive acceptance of the mistreatment seems to fulfil the peculiar function as if the essence of the initiate was reduced to nothingness by that destructive treatment so that they can become someone else. Moreover, humiliations and punishments may, quite paradoxically, strengthen the subject so as s/he is able to deal with the challenges of the new position. Thus, the traits of submissiveness and insufficient cover of nakedness affiliate the ritual subject with a womb and a grave at the same time. Both positions are undeniably conditioned by our

[32] Victor Turner (1920–1983) was a British anthropologist. He was predominantly interested in rituals, religions, conflicts, and symbols. Because of these inclinations Turner's approach might be called comparative symbology. He did the fieldwork with his wife, Edith Turner, in Ndembu tribes in Africa, which resulted in the publication of his books (*The Forest of Symbols* (1967), *The Ritual Process* (1969), *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1974)) as well as the development of his ideas of communitas and social drama (John).

[33] Turner describes oral humiliations and corporal punishments as frequent elements of initiation rites he observed in Ndembu tribes.

biological functions, but while the former is a preparatory place, the latter constitutes a final location of a body. Additionally, the places suggest two extreme moments which in turn create the feeling of timelessness. Hence, Turner's statement that liminality offers "moment in and out of time" seems convincing (96).

Other variable attributes derive from these two main features of the passenger: humility and indistinguishable appearance. One of the most significant qualities of the liminal subject is the absence of the definite sexual identity. As Turner argues, in many rites the initiates are devoid of any attributes which could identify their sex.[34] They become anonymous – males and females are dressed alike, which may convey the idea that the liminal subjects are not themselves but that they "are merely entities in transition" (Turner, *Ritual Process* 103). What follows is the initiate's sexual continence which marks the sacredness of liminal space, but also indicates the separation from the social structure. As Turner argues: "[t]he undifferentiated character of liminality is reflected by the discontinuance of sexual relations and the absence of marked sexual polarity" (104). That is why very often the postliminal reintegration with society occurs through the participation in a sexual act.

The status of language in tribal societies generates yet another characteristic trait of the initiate – acquiescent silence. Speech is not simply one of the means of communication, but it also reflects a range of social values. The passenger must succumb to the controlling influence of the representatives of a community who manifest the most significant values and wisdom of that community: "The wisdom (*mana*) that is imparted in sacred liminality is not just an aggregation of words and sentences; it has ontological value, it refashions the very being of the neophyte" (*Ritual Process* 103).[35]

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[34] Turner mentions *Kumukindyila* rite of coronation in Ndembu tribe (Zambia) or baptism in Christian and syncretist sects in Africa as examples of such rituals (102–3).

[35] Turner uses the term *tabula rasa* to demonstrate the effect of various verbal humiliations directed towards the liminal subject. In this way the person becomes: "a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status" (103). The way Turner describes the process of acquiring a new social status evokes the image of stamping or extruding. This might provide additional evidence to Thomassen's reflections on van Gennep's initial interest in numismatics:

> We must appreciate van Gennep's interest in numismatics and in property marks as much more than a mere anecdote and for reasons that can be spelled out from the outset: essentially, the 'stamping' of liquid forms into a 'hard' or 'frozen' still-image is of course very basically what happens with coinage and with the invention of alphabetical writing; but such techniques have their close parallels in social processes of 'stamping' liminal experiences onto the neophyte and his or her cohort, producing lasting forms, and closing the liminal period. […] The question that van Gennep somehow intuited from an early age concerns how ritual and symbolic forms can leave lasting marks on both individuals and societies undergoing such ritual experiences. (32)

Among Turner's contributions to the research of rituals, the characterization of liminality is most significant. What is more, Turner is acclaimed for introducing the term *communitas*. As it has been already indicated, liminality is often based on a paradox because of its relative sacredness or strong/weak position of the passenger. Moreover, since this is the transitional phase between social structures, the initiates form an elusive temporary anti-structure called communitas. This means an arrangement between people in which the traditional social bonds dissolve giving way to the fundamental generic sameness that unifies the initiates who succumb to the ritual elders. In communitas, though it presents the antithesis of society, the basic relationship to others is recognized, which, in turn, corresponds to the actual fundament of society. However, any hierarchical differentiations are dissolved and the members of communitas are placed in the same position. Further, Turner notices that according to most schools of thought of his contemporaries, conflict is understood as the underlying principle of social arrangement, i.e. social structure. Thus, it might be inferred that communitas is devoid of conflict because "communitas emerges where social structure is [*sic*] not" (Turner, *Ritual Process* 126). Yet again, the idea of communitas emphasizes the ambiguous, contrastive nature of liminality because, on the one hand, liminal subjects are excluded from society, and on the other, they explore fully the original human unity which is the foundation of society. As Thomassen concludes, liminality "simultaneously brings together and sets apart" (26). Subsequently, such dynamics of being "taken apart, recomposed and regenerated" through the liminal phase makes the progress, both individual and collective, possible (38). Kimball also remarks that the regeneration, as the prevailing law of the world, is realized in the periods of change (viii). Such a transformative potential of liminality must have inspired Turner who seems to emphasize it in his writings: "Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities, not a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to postliminal existence" ("Dewey, Dilthey…" 42).

Turner also proposed the term *liminoid* to differentiate the voluntary, subversive phenomena stemming from leisure in industrialized society from those occurring within the rigid pattern of rites of passage within tribal societies. The decisive factor marking off liminal from liminoid is the very voluntariness. Turner mentions the rituals in Ndembu, Luvale, Chokwe, or Luchazi tribes to give evidence that within these societies even breaking the rules is imposed on the initiates during a liminal phase of the ritual. Moreover, the individuality of the performer in a liminoid condition is much more

emphasized than in a liminal phase. However, Turner recognizes "the seed of liminoid" in liminality, as such a phase may develop into a more voluntary, individual state once the constrains of society are loosened ("Liminal to Liminoid" 75). Then, Turner reflects on the critical moments in Western history when the time was ripe for events like revolutions which may be interpreted as metaphorically liminal entities. They do not constitute the elements of a linear process but rather systematize a holistic development, directing communities towards "global human society" (76). What is important, however, about artistic, thus also literary, activity is Turner's conclusion that the meaning of symbols, which is always dynamic, becomes even more flexible in liminoid phenomena.

Nevertheless, there are still some who are not convinced by Turner's differentiations between liminal and liminoid phenomena. Thomassen is one of those who are quite reluctant towards this twofold classification:

> If adopting Turner's notions of the liminoid in the analysis of the liminal-like phenomena in modern, consumerist society does *not* represent a convincing analytical strategy […], the concept of liminality can indeed serve to highlight dynamics of thought, experience and social change in both 'simple' and less simple social situations. (75)

Nevertheless, Thomassen appreciates Turner's book on the nature of pilgrimage where he argues that it is in fact the embodiment of the rite of transition (82–83). Indeed, among other factors, time and space in which pilgrims are found are the liminal elements of their sacred journey. Analogically, the Christian model of an individual existence is equal to the situation of the initiate: man is just a pilgrim in this world as it is merely a transitive stage, a passage in their way to heaven. Thus, Turner introduces the idea that liminality may not be only a phase but also a permanent state. This idea was later explored by Arpad Szakolczai who regards liminality from a broader point of view and identifies modernity as the permanent liminality (2000). As far as the temporal dimension is considered, Thomassen clarifies the length of time involved in liminality by dividing it into three classes:

> 1. moments (sudden events)
> 2. periods (weeks, months, years)
> 3. epochs (decades, generations, arguably even centuries) (90)

As it might be observed, Thomassen offered a very basic division of time units of liminality. His categorization seems quite arbitrary – the difference between e.g. moments or periods is highly subjective. Nevertheless, the categorization indicates the complex

nature of liminality: (1) suggests that the liminal phase may transgress relatively quickly into postliminal one, and (2) implies the potential permanence of liminality.

While van Gennep highlights the correlation between a rite of passage and the actual, physical change of position ("A rite of spatial passage has become a rite of spiritual passage" [*Rites* 22]), Thomassen additionally offers the classification of the spatial dimension of liminality:

> 1. specific places, thresholds (a doorway in a house, a line that separates holy from sacred in a ritual, specific objects, in-between items in a classificatory scheme, parts or openings of the human body); 2. areas, zones and 'closed institutions' (border areas between nations, monasteries, prisons, sea resorts, airports); 3. countries or larger regions, continents (meso-potamia, medi-terranean; Ancient Palestine, in between Mesopotamia and Egypt; Ionia in Ancient Greece, in between the Near East and Europe). (91)

Such a systematic division into three categories revolves around the notion of space which is crucial for the concept of liminality. Furthermore, Thomassen's categorizations of spatial and temporal levels of liminality imply the ubiquity and universality of the liminal condition. They make it more plausible to conceive of liminality as the quality present in various social situations with a different scale of impact. Consequently, it might be deduced that liminality is the prevalent and ingrained quality of human existence. Hence it could not have escaped the attention of scholarly scrutiny. In his book *Shakespeare's Comic Rites* (1984), Edward Berry notices that intellectuals[36] often investigate the transitional phase but they do not employ the anthropological terms. Nevertheless, their conclusions are in line with anthropological line of inquiry. Susan Langer's reflections on romantic comedy may serve as an example of such affinity to van Gennep's understanding of the pattern of initiation rites as she perceives romantic comedy as "upset and recovery of the protagonist's equilibrium" (331). Moreover, Langer's focus on life and its rhythm also resembles the recurrent point of reference of van Gennep's investigations of rituals and fluctuations of human existence: "Whatever the theme […] the immediate sense of life is the underlying feeling of comedy, and dictates its rhythmically structured unity, that is to say its organic form" (331). Although Langer examines the reoccurring patterns of comedy, the representations of liminal states pervade different literary genres. In prose transitory states are manifested mainly in narrative strategies, primarily in spatial representations of a literary model of the world.

[36] Berry mentions Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Susan Langer, and Bruno Bettelheim.

1.3 Liminality and Literary Space

Space has been of interest to literary critics and researchers who based their studies on semiotics. The literary scrutiny of Yuri Lotman (1922–1993), a semiotician who founded Taru–Moscow Semiotic School, resembles the structuralist anthropological divagations on border and its significance. Katherina Hansen Löve's comments on Lotman may provide an adequate introduction to the analysis of his ideas about border and space:

> In his literary analysis, Lotman departs from the presupposition that the most fundamental organizing element of literary space is the boundary. An exploration of the literary universe must start with the detection of this dividing line. As a result, spatial opposition would emerge, oppositions polarized by the same boundary. It must be notified that borders, in general, have a separating as well as connecting function – they do not only divide but also bring together what is different – and are therefore of extremely ambivalent nature. Lotman, however, exclusively emphasizes the separating function of borders, as the point of orientation for his semantic oppositions. (34)

Löve emphasizes the structuralistic tendency of Lotman towards explaining the world phenomena in binary oppositions. In fact, it was also a result of Lotman's wide scope of research. In his 1968 essay "The problem of artistic space in Gogol's prose," Lotman analyses Gogol's oeuvre, but constantly refers to the general cultural and anthropological conceptualization of space. Such a line of argument is present in Lotman's other works like *Universe of the Mind* (1990) where he studies the double and contrastive quality of the places of threshold. His comments on the paradoxical nature of boundaries, doors, windows, "out" and "in" spaces etc. are strikingly similar to those of van Gennep and Turner, as Lotman also realizes the relativity of any of the attributes assigned to space. Furthermore, he recognizes that in an artistic text it is not only a literary point of view which is responsible for the way a given space is characterized but also the "typology of culture" and its influences on the interpretation of this binary division (Lotman, *Universe of Mind* 131). Accordingly, Lotman maintains that space as an element of the literary model of the world is more the consequence of the general worldview of a particular artistic movement or the outcome of the ambience of a given epoch than the individual employment of the authorial arrangement. Understandably, the spatial organization in literature is not a mere expression of the general ideology of a given epoch, but it is also a subordinate structure to the creation of the characters or the formation of various models. For instance, spatial arrangement may generate an ethical model. Consequently, literary space performs a metaphorical function which directs the reader's attention

towards the characterization of, for instance, characters referring to their localization (Lotman, "The problem of artistic space"). In this way Lotman sees the potential of literary space for articulating much more than topographical details: "In a literary work, space models different relations of the world-picture: temporary, social, ethical and others. […] in the literary model of the world 'space' sometimes metaphorically adopts meanings of relations in the modelled world-structure, that are themselves not spatial at all" (qtd. Hansen Löve 33).

Lotman's approach to the metaphorical potential of space is comparable to the way Janusz Sławiński explains the function of space on the levels of scenery, and of the superimposed senses of a text. However, Sławiński's attitude is more rigid methodologically, as the Polish scholar offers sharply divided categories to study literary space. Moreover, Sławiński defies the primacy of the anthropological (and generally cultural) perspective for analysing space in literature.

It seems therefore reasonable to present Sławiński's overview of the perspectives from which literary space could be studied. He offers a concise description of seven different research viewpoints: 1) Poetics is indicated as the context in which space could be analysed. From such a perspective space is functional for the compositional and thematic scope of a text. Thus, it could be classified as an element of morphology of a literary work because it is created within its stylistic level. 2) Historic poetics would focus our attention on "the compositional schemata of the fictional space ratified by tradition" (Sławiński 198).[37] In other words, it concerns particular literary epochs or movements and their prevailing presuppositions about the meaning of spatial representations. 3) Another framework for the analysis of literary space may be constituted by the semantic system of language. Hence, the lingual structure creates spatial representations in the reader's mind which, in turn, result in their "literary afterlife." As such, a literary text is merely a linguistic manifestation which could provide a sample for the analysis of semantic fields connected with the concept of space. 4) Cultural patterns regarding the way space is experienced constitute another analytical perspective which concentrates on how these patterns influence the setting of the literary work. Consequently, the relationship between the social hierarchy and spatial arrangement or the spheres of conquest and defence, may be a case of such a study. 5) Literary space could be a testimony of archetypical spatial universals of collective consciousness. Carl Jung and

[37] All translations from Polish sources are mine.

Gaston Bachelard are among those researchers who investigated such spatial universals and their role in the writers' imagination, stylistics, semantics and theme of their literary works. 6) The relation of literary space to physical places, sizes, and arrangements of objects, belongs to the scope of interest of philosophical disputes which often refer to physics or cosmology. The emphasis is placed on the relativity of the spatial arrangement considering the position of the implied observer. This gave rise to the concept of points of view and contributed to the theory of narrative transmission. 7) Lastly, literary space could be understood not only as an element of a setting but also as a quality of the text itself. In such a case a literary piece is considered as an arrangement of spheres, layers, levels, etc. which determine the relationship between manifold factors of this piece. Thus, a literary work is treated as an apparatus which is constituted by the unique interplay between characters, narrator(s), objects, semantics, linguistics, etc.

Sławiński claims that it is crucial to determine the dominant perspective of the spatial research, which does not mean that other contexts could not serve as complementary frameworks. However, he asserts that the lack of such awareness, that is to say the inability to indicate the prevailing ontological nature of space which is the object of a given study makes such an analysis ultimately futile. Moreover, Sławiński considers the first perspective to be fundamental for the analysis of space in literary studies. Thus, he is preoccupied with the identification of the layers that constitute literary space from the perspective of descriptive poetics. In this way, space is recognized as the morphological element of the text. If the research interest is framed in such a mode, then other contexts mentioned by Sławiński stem from this morphological position of space. However, these different reflections on cultural, anthropological, or historic aspects of literary space are subordinate to the primary position of space as one of the constituents of the scheme of representation in a literary text. Another important point raised by Sławiński is the ultimate need to focus on the construction of space, that is on the way it emerges and functions in the text and not how it is commented by the characters or how the narrator conceptualizes it.

Sławiński presents three processes which contribute to the creation of literary space and all of them are the "manifestations of the same semantic process" (205).[38] Accordingly, literary space is created on the level of description, scenery, and

[38] Originally: "manifestacjami jednego procesu semantycznego."

superimposed senses.[39] The basic function of descriptions pertaining to space is the incorporation of the spatial factor into the semantics of the text. Sławiński postulates that the potential of description to generate meaningful units should be recognized by the reader. Therefore, it is important to identify description not only as a longer passage of similar stylistics, but also as a smaller unit of the text which may appear in contexts pertaining primarily to other concerns than spatial factors. Consequently, it is the semantic potential which determines description rather than its form. As such, description may appear in types of discourse which conventionally are not regarded as descriptive ones. Literary space emerges through descriptive sentences therefore description is essential for the existence of literary space. Accordingly, space may transform[40] and develop on the two other levels of scenery and superimposed senses.

Sławiński notices that there are few important research fields which arise from the level of description. First of all, it seems crucial to ascertain when a description commences to perform a semantic function. This means that it should be established whether the mere act of naming a site generates this function or whether the grammatical form signifies the meaning. Therefore, the role of the semantics of the proper names of places in reference to other elements of the setting should be investigated. Another relationship which deserves attention is the structure emerging between the descriptive sentences and other semantic tendencies of the text (Sławiński 208).[41]

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[39] Polish: *opis*, *sceneria*, *sensy naddane*.

[40] However, Sławiński warns against the interpretation of "implied space." In other words, he claims that space should be inferred directly from the utterances in the text, and not, for instance, deduced from what is not expressed about it. This understanding of the implied space refers to the *reconstructed level* of the text defined by Benjamin Harshav.

> The patterns in any text are organized on *two levels*: the *level of text continuum* and the *reconstructed level*. Characters, plot, ideas, time, space, etc., are built by the reader from discontinuous elements in the text and are recognized according to their inherent principles (such as: chronology – for time elements, logical order – for ideas, etc.). This reconstructed level is the one which is usually discussed in criticism, often without making clear the differences between what is given in the text and what has been added, understood, or constructed (however necessarily) by the reader. (264)

[41] This strikes a chord with Benjamin Harshav's general divagations about the nature of literature. Harshav claims that language has a special role in the literary text because it builds a mutual reference between Internal Field and External Field. The italicised words in the following quotation exemplify how the smaller units of the text may semantically interplay with larger ones with respect to Harshav's concept of *frames of reference*.

> A text is not presented in the form of one continuous Field of Reference. We may distinguish a whole series of frames of reference (frs*)*, which are pieces of the text continuous in meaning in some respect, in space, in time, or in ideas. There is a whole range of "shifters" which transfer the reader's attention from one small *fr* to another, from one space or time to another. Two contiguous *frs* may be constructed by the reader as belonging to one larger FR, e.g., separate episodes in one

The next level of the creation of space presented by Sławiński is scenery. This concept concerns the units of the text which are larger than words and sentences, thus scenery is not autonomous. Consequently, scenery is always functional as it accompanies the characters or turns of action. Sławiński compares scenery to the arrangement of theatrical decorations as its importance lies in what is happening within them. However, scenery is an important part of the model of reality in a given literary piece; it is not as self-directed as other morphological units (Sławiński does not provide examples of these units). This is why scenery is analysed in reference to particular aspects of the text. Sławiński provides a classification of the main applications of such aspectual categories:

1) scenery marks (i.e. it differentiates, divides, classifies) an area in which the network of characters is exposed;
2) scenery constitutes a set of arrangements – plot events, scenes and situations, in which the characters participate;
3) scenery is the objective manifestation of a presupposed communicative strategy within a text[42] (Sławiński 209)

The first category here is especially apparent when the range of space assigned to a given character is taken into consideration. Usually, there is a correlation between the attributes of a given hero and the places in which he is presented. However, the designating role of scenery may also indicate the social class or position which is a decisive factor of placing the characters in a particular scenery. In the second category, space directs the course of the plot as in the motif of a journey, passing the boundaries or as an equivalent of emotional states, to name just a few. The last aspect of the analysis of scenery concerns the relationship between the implied author and the implied reader. The way scenery is communicated in a given text influences the construction of space by the reader. Subsequently, the shattered and incoherent scenery implies an independent reader who must make their own assumptions about the nature of space and its missing areas. Conversely, consistent, well recorded space demands a less self-reliant recipient. When

person's life, two places in space continuity, etc. In some cases such a continuity cannot be established by the reader by the immediate context and creates two separate sets of FRs, to be linked at the *later stage* or to be *linked by larger principle*. […] Also senses which refer realistically to one *fr* may be transferred metaphorically to another fr. (Harshav 261; emphasis mine)

42

1) sceneria wyznacza (a więc: różnicuje, dzieli, klasyfikuje) obszar, w którym rozpościera się sieć postaci; 2) stanowi zbiór umiejscowień – zdarzeń fabularnych, scen i sytuacji, w jakich postacie uczestniczą; 3) występuje jako przedmiotowy wykładnik pewnej założonej w obrębie utworu strategii komunikacyjnej. (Sławiński 209)

describing, even briefly, this context of scenery, the issue of points of view should not be overlooked. Although the point of view is dependent on the spatial arrangements in a literary work, perspective is not solely determined by scenery.

Finally, the already mentioned superimposed senses of literary space emerge when elements, such as the correlations of objects, distances between places, portrayals of landscapes and other sites, generate connotations which cannot be traced back only to the descriptive level. Thus, superimposed senses bear symbolic traits. Nevertheless, in discerning the dominating set of symbols or prevailing metaphors, space is just one of the elements beside, for instance, plot or the narrator, which are employed to this purpose. All in all, superimposed senses emanate only from the attributes of a literary work which are classified and systematized axiologically. Inevitably, such an analysis leads to wider cultural issues and conventions; however, as long as the study tackles the origins of superimposed senses inferred from the scenery, superimposed senses still constitute the morphology of the text.

The operational purpose of space in literature, in other words the intentionality of a literary text, manifested in the creation of literary space is discussed by Andrzej Stoff in his article "Poetyka i semantyka literackich zobrazowań przestrzeni miasta" (1993) ["Poetics and semantics of the literary depictions of urban space"]. Stoff offers a description of stages involved in the construction of urban space in literature. According to the scholar, this process requires delimiting, creating, functionanalysing (in Polish *funkcjonalizowanie*), and valorising of places, areas, and territories in municipal environment. It is important to notice that such an exposition of the problem displays merely an analytical quality of this categorization for the reason that the aspects depicted by Stoff are indivisible in the artistic text. Thus, the literary analysis should dissect limiting and establishing "the horizon of the fictional world" and "establishing [...] the internal diversity of that space according to typical topographical units."[43] Such a process is called by Stoff delimitation of space. Stoff warns against understanding the topographical names in the way they operate in a non-literary world. Similarly, Benjamin Harshev clarifies that "[t]hough much of the language of the literary text behaves as if it were used in relationship to a known, real F[ield of]R[eference], actually no such real space and time are given in advance" (260). Therefore, corresponding names of places do not necessarily determine the degree of similarity when the chosen city is empirically

[43] "ustanowienie [...] wewnętrznego zróżnicowania tej przestrzeni na typowe jednostki topograficzne."

possible to verify. The compatibility between the literary topography and existing topographical data has an incidental role in delimiting space in a literary work because in doing so other literary devices are of more importance. In the process of delimiting, literary space is depicted as diverse and notionally unique. Yi-Fu Tuan requires the complex creative process since space is not limited merely to the usage of a given name of city:

> Places can be made visible by a number of means: rivalry of conflict with other places, visual prominence, and the evocative power of art, architecture, ceremonials and rites. Human places become vividly real through dramatization. Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs and functional rhythms of personal and group life. (178)

Analogically, Yi-Fu Tuan's assumptions may be applicable in literary studies if the relative positioning of a given city or space is taken into consideration. In contrast to reality, geographical names in literature may be employed to contest geographical distances and to emphasize the unbounded character of human thought or political atmosphere in a given time. Seweryna Wysłouch notes that the names of the cities in the titles hint at the broad spectrum of the thematic content of the text (117). Similarly, Lotman comments on the importance of the location for the theme of the literary text. He proposes a conceptual experiment consisting of the relocation of the plot into other possible places. Such an alternative space for the action (as well as the location in which the action is not possible) may inform about the underlying opposition (e.g. city versus countryside) which becomes one of the thematic concerns of the text (Lotman, "The Problem of artistic space"). If the name of a city constitutes the title of the text, the reception of the story may change because the city imposes the connection between several separate sub-plots. Wysłouch mentions *Manhattan Transfer* by John Dos Passos as an example of the novel whose title emphasizes the factors which unify the characters of the novel (116–17). This correlates with Sławiński's reflections when he observes that the descriptive level, which includes the names of the cities, has a semiotic tendency (207). Thus, the usage of topographical names is legitimized and may be interpreted as one of the intentional processes, along with other important factors enumerated by Stoff as operational in delimiting space, such as:

> […] the representability of particular places, the sufficiency of the realized spatial scale for the exposition of a given problem, the adequacy of the choice of the territory for the undertaken theme, the sufficiency of the diversity of space for the complete exploration

> of the opportunities that are provided by that theme, finally the possibility of the empirical verification of the fictional space.[44] (13)

Furthermore, Stoff realizes that the composition and dynamics of a literary work is strictly connected with delimiting of space. For instance, the monographic approach or an increase of the pace of action are often characteristic of the texts where just one city is a place of action.[45] In such a way delimiting space is congruent with broader purposes of a given text and, consequently, amalgamate to a large extent with the creation of literary space.

Creating literary space is a process which involves the selection of the qualities assigned to places within the text. Again, the attributes of space bear a semantic importance as they influence the perception of a given space as hostile, familiar, simplified, etc. The objects situated in literary space may, on the one hand, prove to be essential to identify the locus simply as universal, typical of a certain kind of places; and on the other, specific descriptions of commodities or furniture may provide detailed information about the place. The procedure of creating space also determines the homogenous or heterogeneous nature of space as well as the degree of its complexity. Wysłouch notices that homogenous space is usually closed; moreover, when homogenous space is multiplied it is often used to expose social inequality and exploitation (120). When the similar sub-plots take place in few flats, as in Hanna Górska's *Ślepe tory* (1937), then the spatial background suggests that the occurring events are not accidental but imply a general portrait of the group and typicality of the events. Wysłouch observes that heterogeneous space does not demand multiplicity because it is created by opposition. She analyses the novel *Idzie skacząc po górach* (1963) by Jerzy Andrzejewski where public sites are contrasted with private places. Such an opposition allows, as in the case of this novel, for a broad social criticism on many levels: "In so far as a private, intimate place allowed unmasking human foibles, public places uncover mechanisms of human behaviour, careers and myths" (Wysłouch 123).[46]

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[44] Originally: "reprezentatywność wybranych miejsc, wystarczalność realizowanej skali przestrzennej dla ekspozycji danego problemu, właściwość wyboru terytorium dla podjętego tematu, wystarczalność zróżnicowania przestrzeni dla pełnego zrealizowania możliwości, jakie temat ten daje, wreszcie możliwość empirycznej weryfikacji przestrzeni powieściowej."

[45] As an example of such a novel, Stoff mentions *Lalka* [*The Doll*] by Bolesław Prus, which is considered to be "a book about Warsaw." However, he also points out that even if a text is commonly categorized as "a book about one city," usually other places accompany the major one (Stoff 14). Most explicitly, though, the generic character of time and space was recognized by Mikhail Bakhtin whose concept of chronotope will be referred to later in this chapter.

[46] "O ile miejsce prywatne, intymne, pozwalało demaskować ludzkie słabostki, miejsca publiczne obnażają mechanizmy ludzkich zachowań, karier i mitów."

Nevertheless, it seems that the creation of space, as understood by Stoff, may reveal not only the contrast between the private and the public spheres, but it may also entail diverse, unlimited characteristics and binary features. Thus, attributes mentioned by Lotman may broaden the possibilities of literary analysis in this aspect. Lotman suggests that artistic space might be linear, punctual, flat, or three-dimensional. Furthermore, the linear space might be characterized as vertical or horizontal which, in turn, implies the temporal dynamics of the text (Lotman, "The problem of artistic space"). Another notion resembling Stoff's category of creating space is, of course, Sławiński's concept of scenery in literature. However, Stoff concentrates on urban space and observes that a city as a concentration of experience may be expressed in a literary text with the intensifications of qualities which might lead to its antropomorphization.[47] Such a literary treatment of a city constitutes an emblematical case which exemplifies that "the fictional reality is an illusion built on a linguistic foundation with the knowledge and imagination of the author"(Stoff 20).[48] When Stoff concludes that a literal depiction of the city does not mirror the objective, topographical essence, he refers to Roman Ingarden who defended the premise/assumption that an object could not be defined by a word (19).

The next process described by Stoff, functionalizing, resembles, in some respects Sławiński's superimposed senses as the following sentence attests: "generally speaking, it means that they are intended for other aims than the mere demonstration of their existence" (20).[49] Consequently, functionanalysing is the semantic aspect of the relationship between space, characters, events and time organization. Here the question emerges whether Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope might be categorized as an instance of functionalizing. In an attempt to compare Bakhtin's understanding of the chronotope with Stoff's idea of functionanalysing, the definition of the chronotope needs to be quoted in full:

> We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. […] It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). […] In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the

[47] Stoff raises this point in reference to Yi-Fu Tuan's idea of place as a type of object (18).

[48] "świat przedstawiony jest iluzją zbudowaną na fundamencie językowym z wiedzy i wyobraźni autora."

[49] "mówiąc najogólniej – przeznaczane do celów innych niż samo demonstrowanie ich istnienia" (Stoff 20).

> artistic chronotope. The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic. (Bakhtin 84–85)

Clearly, the idea of the chronotope attaches additional meaning to the depiction of space, which goes beyond the simple presentation of spatial arrangement. However, it appears that Bakhtin creates another, separate category by binding the spatial factor with the temporal one in an inextricable manner. Moreover, Bakhtin understands the chronotope as a generic feature and as such he discusses the chronotope in ancient literature, gothic novel, and 19th-century prose. He implies some difference between these genres. In the ancient Greek texts the chronotope conveyed the fragmented depiction of time and space whereas in gothic novel and novel of manners the chronotope effectively reflected the unified, multidimensional experience of time and space. What is more, Bakhtin investigates the threshold chronotope which he identifies with a road in regard to time and space. The description of this chronotope resembles the unity of humankind achieved in communitas: "spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people – representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point" (Bakhtin 243). Nonetheless, what is similar when it comes to Stoff's conception of functionanalysing (which is broader in its scope) and Bakhtin's chronotope is that both phenomena refer to literary conventions, epochs, and genres.

Valorising is the concluding procedure according to Stoff's conceptualization of the process of generating literary space. The arrangement of a literary text and characters' utterances reveal the values attached to a given space which is evaluated accordingly. However, Stoff claims that the investigation of valorising is possible only from the perspective of the philosophical paradigm of the times when the literary work was created. In accordance with Sławiński's postulates, such an advanced analysis, which concentrates predominantly on the cultural and philosophical axiology of the literary text, would probably be rejected as not meeting the standards of literary analysis.

Literary space as a construct and its analyses are also open to deliberations stemming from other domains such as anthropology, philosophy, art, and culture. Gaston Bachelard is a leading proponent of such an approach as is evident in his *Poetics of Space. The Classic Look at How We Experience the Intimate Places* (1953). It seems that in his attempt to determine the essence of the house, Bachelard is not merely interested in

literary depictions of space but rather in the experience of it (as it is confirmed by the subtitle).[50] Furthermore, he refers to dreams and daydreaming as prevailing sources of personal images of houses to diagnose this experience:

> Now my aim is clear: I have to show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle of this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, simulating one another. (Bachelard 6)

The individual character of the act of daydreaming is one of the reasons for focusing on the recipient of such an approach to the analysis of space. Bachelard not only emphasizes the intimate nature of the house and its recollection, but he also frequently refers to the readers' experience initiated by the reading of *Poetics of Space*: "Paradoxically, in order to suggest the values of intimacy, we have to induce in the reader a state of suspended reading. For it is not until his eyes have left the page that recollections of my room can become a threshold of oneirism for him" (13). Thus, Bachelard's book is supposed to place the readers in the state of the liminal condition, when they are situated between their memories and the act of reading. In addition, the distinction between the author's memories and those of the readers are intermingled, as Bachelard claims that each reference to the house provokes the listener's personal reminiscences. Indeed, Bachelard states that "we 'write a room,' 'read a room;' or 'read the house'" (14). This signifies that reading about space is simultaneously an active and passive process. Therefore, the conception of the house which emerges from this complex act of reading, is not easily described since "it belongs to the literature of depth, that is, to poetry, and not to the fluent time of literature, in order to analyse intimacy needs other people's stories" (13). With these words Bachelard grants poetry a special status among other literary genres. Because he repeatedly stresses the intimate quality of the reflections upon the house and the notion that in his research "psychic weight is dominant" (12), it might be inferred that poetry is deemed to be the essential way to express personal experience affectionately. Therefore, one of the most important theoretical perspectives adopted by Bachelard is psychoanalysis which provides adequate tools to explore these intimate relationships and memories of space. This investigative strategy appears to be particularly satisfactory when he writes that his goal is to examine "all the subtle shading of our attachment for a

[50] Although Bachelard is interested specifically in the concept of the house, some of his remarks could be applied more universally to other kinds of space (5).

chosen spot space" (12). Surprisingly enough, among Bachelard's vague divagations the reader finds a few traces that resemble Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope. This is visible in the following passage: "In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for" (Bachelard 7). Needless to say, the methodological approaches of Bakhtin and Bachelard differ tremendously. While the former advocates a homogenous methodological attitude and understands the chronotope as specific to a particular genre, the latter combines different analytical strategies and does not concern space and time as generic traits. Thus, Bachelard does not claim that the time-space dependence constitutes a functional factor of the text (as for instance Sławiński's superimposed senses or Stoff's functionanalysing), but, above all, it actually mirrors our experience of space in non-literary reality as we cannot dissect space from time. It is worth remembering that Bachelard focuses quite specifically on domestic space because he considers home as the place where human experience reaches its epitome. Accordingly, the indefinite characteristic of home may be interpreted as the equivalent of the liminal condition of an individual. Bachelard describes some stable features of the image of the domestic space (its verticality and concentration), but he also mentions ambiguity of home (its simultaneous unity and complexity). Furthermore, he analyses other motifs connected with the images of the house, which refer to various rhythmical transitions and fluctuations like seasons, hurricane, conflict, etc. To do so, Bachelard frequently analyses poems by Baudelaire, Bachelin, Rilke, Bosco, Hugo, Miłosz because, he claims, their poetry reflects the intimacy of living. On top of that, Bachelard dissects the house into the respective parts and aspects like drawers, chests, miniatures, corners, nests, and scrutinizes those employing typoanalysis[51]: "Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with theirs false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life" (78). Consequently, drawers are connected with secrets, wardrobes with centrality, and corners with animalistic need for protection.

Bachelard's study was an innovative perception of the notion of space and originated the line of followers who applied an interdisciplinary approach in their studies of space. Joan Ockman asserts that:

[51] Edward Casey defines typoanalysis as follows:

> Typoanalysis, presupposing the psyche as the seat of all significant images, seeks the detailed description of particular images. Such images shelter contents that arrange themselves into systemic themes, for example, earth, water, air, fire – which, taken together, constitute Bachelard's own distinctive fourfold. An imagistic psychical *topic* is thus inherently *thematic*. It is not merely formal or structural; the content or theme of a given topic informs it from within. (290)

> […] the work of Foucault begins – consciously – where Bachelard leaves off. Instead of Bachelard's timeless reverie of felicitous space, Foucault prefers to confront the "coefficient of adversity" in the phenomenology of human habitation, addressing questions of historicity and power in relation to spatial discourse and institutions. *The Poetics of Space* thus leads, at least by one route, to Foucault's seminal essay of 1967 on heterotopia, in which Foucault suggestively proposes to shift the problematic of Bachelardian topoanalysis from intimate space to "other spaces" – spaces of crisis, deviance, exclusion, and illusion; in other words, to heterotopoanalysis. (online, 1998)

However, Foucault's concept of heterotopia bears also many common traits with liminal and liminoid spaces. In his essay "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" (1967), Foucault uses the metaphor of mirror to explain his idea. Although utopia is an idealized reality, it is an inverted and unreal model too. Foucault argues that it might be assumed that one's reflection in the mirror is utopian because it is unreal and placeless in regard to the person:

> In it, I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up potentially beyond its surface; there I am down there where I am not, a sort of shadow that makes my appearance visible to myself, allowing me to look at myself where I do not exist: utopia of the mirror. At the same time, we are dealing with heterotopias. The mirror really exists and has a kind of comeback effect on the place I occupy: starting from it, in fact, I find myself absent from the place where I am, in that I see myself in there. (32)

From this perspective, man can recreate themselves in their actual, physical space. The heterotopic function of the mirror enhances the reality of this physical location but also annihilates this authenticity because to see the place means that the place has to traverse "this virtual point which is over there" (32).

Foucault claims that every society has its own versions of heterotopia. Perplexingly enough, the sacred places in primitive societies, called by Foucault "heterotopias of crisis" ("Of Other Spaces" 32) seem analogous to the liminal space described by van Gennep. Enumerating people who enter the heterotopias in such a society, Foucault actually describes the initiates of various rites of passage like "adolescents, menstruating woman, pregnant woman, the elderly, etc." (32). In modern societies the residues of such heterotopias exist in such forms as boarding schools, or honeymoons, which originate from the archaic notion that maturing or loss of virginity should take place out of sight and away from familiar surroundings. Most probably, van Gennep would attribute the origins of honeymoons to the liminal phase situated in the elusive space in between. Indeed, Foucault uses the word "nowhere" to describe hotels and trains used by newly-wed which correlates with van Gennep's spatial

conceptualization of liminality. Unlike Turner who saw positive aspects of the liminal (or liminoid) phase as embodied in communitas of the hippie movement, Foucault seems more negative about heterotopias, especially the heterotopias of deviation. Such heterotopias accommodate people who do not meet the usual social expectations. They are exemplified by such institutions as mental hospitals, prisons, retirement homes. As it might be concluded from these examples, the deviation in this kind of heterotopias is a relative term reflecting certain policy towards citizens who are disregarded in their society. While it could be argued that offenders and patients of mental hospitals are people whose behaviour deviates from the social norms, the same could not be generalized about pensioners and old people. Thus, heterotopias of deviation reveal the prejudice against those who need assistance. Furthermore, heterotopias are characterised by inherent incompatibility since in fact they may contain diversified places positioned against each other. This incompatibly may be detected in the theatre or garden. Accordingly, especially in urban environment the horticultural space is treated as an idealized miniature of the natural world, with different plants and flowers from varied regions which are incompatible to each other and one another. What is more, temporal incompatibility might be a principle of heterotopia "when men find themselves in a sort of total breach of their traditional time" (34). Foucault mentions libraries and museums to exemplify such cases of heterotopias since they represent an attempt to cumulate different artefacts or books from distant epochs in one place supposedly not inflicted by time. Other heterotopias, usually outside Western culture, are based on specific entering and leaving of the space: "[e]ither one is forced, as in the case of the barracks or a prison, or one must submit to rites of purifications" (35). Coming in, therefore, might seem misleading because in the case of prison, for example, the disposing of personal belongings allows entrance but at the same time it forbids the secrecy as it equals the recognition of authority and invigilation. Other rituals of purification at the entrance of heterotopia include the religious ceremonies such as Arabic hammams[52] and hygienic ones such as Scandinavian saunas. Nevertheless, heterotopia is always characterized with specific space devoted to entering and leaving. Foucault concludes that heterotopia is connected with all other spaces as heterotopias emphasize the real spaces by contrast.

Being aware of the concept of the liminal space in its ritual context as well as its liminoid "afterlife," it is difficult to overlook its basic affinities with heterotopias. These

[52] Hammam is an Islamic variation of sauna.

correlations, as well as references to these ideas in modern life, encourage researchers to investigate these "nowhere" places in the critical moments of contemporary people. Literature provides ample material for such research as it has always attested to the manifold ambience in which it was created. However, the literary material being an artistic construct does not mirror directly the reality. Nevertheless, literature invites even more profound studies of space and transition because it constitutes both metaphorical and symbolic functions.

The symbolic representations were of particular interest also for Turner's reflections on liminal and liminoid. He claimed that his methodology may be termed as *comparative symbology*. Symbols for him were not only liminal elements of rituals but also parts of liminoid phenomena:

> But 'les symbols sauvages,' as they appear not only in traditional, "tribal" cultures but also in "cultural refreshment" genres (poetry, drama, and painting) of post-industrial society, have the character of dynamic semantic systems. They gain and lose meanings – and meaning in social context always has emotional and volitional dimensions – as they 'travel through' a *single* rite or work of art, let alone through centuries of performance, and they are aimed at producing effects on the psychological states and behaviour of those exposed to them or obliged to use them for their communication with other human beings. ("Liminal to Liminoid" 55)

From these lines as well as from Turner's other writings, it may be concluded that he seems equally preoccupied with liminality in the ritual and in literature. This is strikingly visible in his musings where he often refers to the theatre while discussing communitas, liminoid, and the theory of social drama. Moreover, quite frequently the function of the ritual is compared by Turner to the function of a literary work of art. Turner's anthropological treatment of literature rises a question whether anthropological tools are appropriate to conduct a reliable literary analysis. Mario Cesareo critically assesses such an aspiration:

> The use of anthropological notions to read literary texts and that of literary texts to perform ethnographic work is problematic, as the sets of analytic categories of each discipline have historically evolved in direct relation to the particular types of primary sources that have constituted their fields. Even though both literary criticism and anthropology are practices based on typification, the range of what constitutes their "materiality" differs in important ways: whereas anthropology deals with the semiotic of communally constructed objects and practices, literary studies has more often than not emphasized objects over practices – underplaying the generic and institutional dimensions of the production, circulation, and reception of the works it analyses. Thus, the incorporation of anthropological tools to examine literature becomes misleading: they

> are circulated *strategically* within the structure of a text, to aid in its interpretation, to unravel *hidden structures* within the *narrative world,* while the findings are then posited as anthropological insights made to function *without that structure* – a process that leads to the kind of textualization of historical experience so common to cultural studies production. (159; emphasis mine)

However, without pretence of arriving at anthropological conclusions, a reliable literary analysis of liminality in contemporary literature is not only feasible but also complementary to other research in this field. Hence, the anthropological theory of liminality may be employed as a valuable but, most of all, indispensable background for scrutinizing literary portrayals of human predicament in the face of a social change. Liminality in the literary model of the world is conveyed through the construction of what Cesareo calls "hidden structures of the narrative world" (159) which seem to correspond to what functions in literary studies as narrative strategies.

1.4 .Other Narrative Strategies and Liminality

In his *Dictionary of Narratology*, Gerald Prince provides the following definition for narrative strategies:[53] "In recounting narrative, the set of narrative procedures followed or narrative devices used to achieve some specific goal" (64). Thus, the already discussed category of literary space as well as other narrative constructs may, as elements of narrative strategies, lead to the demonstration of liminality in the literary text. However, the general liminal condition might constitute the theme of a given text or it can be an accompanying aspect of the structures of plot, characters, or space. As Sławiński's concept of superimposed senses attests, a single element of the narrative (in this case space) manifests other imposed semantic structures. What is more, various narrative devices interact with one another on different levels and these interactions result in the uniqueness of the model of the literary world in a particular text. Accordingly, the text is distinctive through its heterogeneity. Still such a characteristic is perceived by Valerij Tjupa as a kind of textual unity:

[53] Valerij Tjupa draws attention to differences in terminology:

> Western narratology examines differences that can be characterised as strategic, using other terms such as "narrative modalities" (Doležel 1973; Ryan 1992), "suppositions" (Roussin 2010), etc. These various terms can be used to cover such fundamental characteristics of narrative discourse that are denoted with the widely used term "strategies."

> the non-traditional narrative practices of the 20th and 21th centuries are characterised by a trend towards polystrategic symbioses and eclectic unities of the narrative act. Unity is preserved thanks to the dominance of one of the complexes of narrative characteristic (i.e. complexes of a narrative modality, a narrative world picture and a narrative *intrigue*). (para. 22)[54]

The narrative modality, mentioned by Tjupa, regulates the relationship between the narrator and narratee, which is determined by the kind of knowledge which the narrator possesses.[55] Tjupa reckons that a story could be narrated in various modalities:

> a) neutral knowledge, b) an unreliable narrator's personal opinion (Booth [1961] 1983: 158–59), c) authoritative conviction that does not need approval, or d) in the modality of understanding that is not subjective (e.g. an opinion) but is also not neutral or objective and that can be characterised as inter-subjective (sharing of a common understanding among subjects). (para. 6)

By the notion of modality of knowledge it is surmised that the narrator's position is external in relation to the story (this allows, for example, to give account of the events in which the narrator did not take part). Moreover, this strategy is also described as "impersonal narrative omniscience" and akin to a choral teller in a ritual choir who expresses the knowledge of the whole group (Tjupa). In contrast to a neutral narrator, an unreliable one is guided by prejudice, bias, and emotion and presents the story from a subjective point of view. It implies that this type of narrator is more internal in regard to the events than the neutral one. Booth realizes that unreliable modality of a narrator invites the reader to a more active participation in the narrative than the modality of the reliable one (159). As for the modalities of authoritative conviction and understanding, they constitute transitional positions in comparison to a neutral narrator and an unreliable one. The perspectives of authoritative and understanding narrators are more extensive than the horizons of participants of a story, and at the same time these narrators do not assume knowing everything. They are external in relation to the events but not unjudgmental.

The narrator's capability to refer to the external world is manifested by a narrative world picture. According to Lotman, a narrative world picture is inseparable from a plot:

> A plot thus viewed does not represent something independent, taken directly from life, or something passively received from tradition. A plot is organically related to a world

[54] The quotes are taken from the electronic version of the article without the numbered pages. Therefore, for easier localisation of the quotes they are indicated by a number of the paragraph.
[55] Tjupa correlates the concept of narrative modality with perspective, point of view, and focalization.

> picture which provides the scale for determining what constitutes an event and what constitutes a variant of that event communicating nothing new to us. (*The Structure* 234)

Consequently, both a narrative world picture and a narrative intrigue strongly refer to the notion of event. However, a world picture is more concerned with the ontological quality of event than a narrative intrigue. Tjupa distinguishes four types of narrative world picture: 1) precedental, 2) imperative, 3) occasional, and 4) probabilistic (paras. 12–16). These kinds of world pictures directly correspond to the four aforementioned narrative modalities. Therefore, precedental world picture is connected to the modality of an omniscient narrator and is quintessential for fairy tales and myths where participants of a story are powerless against their fate. The imperative world picture is characteristic of the parable type and refers to the modality of an unreliable narrator. The values are strictly determined and though characters are not devoid of free will their choices are rigorously scrutinized according to an operative moral law. Within the occasional world picture, the status of an event is given to any alternation of stagnant plot. Similarly, the experience of characters is rendered as exceptional too, even though their experience might not be vital or singular for the outside reality in which they exist. The fourth type of a world picture, the probabilistic one, corresponds to intersubjective rhetorical modality and focuses on the alternative possibilities of story development. The changes which actually take place as well as those which do not are endowed with equal status which translates to the kind of emphasis laid onto characters: "Eventfulness of this kind is based on a character's responsibility for choosing one of the possible directions of the further course of life; however, in comparison to the imperative strategy, the unfolding of the chain of events cannot be assessed unambiguously because it correlates not with the norm of being but with its mystery" (Tjupa para. 15).

As stated before, a particular narrative world picture determines what could be considered as an event whereas a narrative intrigue illustrates the tension generated by the chain of these events. A narrative intrigue is defined with stronger historical and extra-textual context than a world picture, it "connects the beginning of the story with its end and is based on our ability to trace a chain of narrated events. […] Intrigue is not plot (sjuzet) distinguished from the story (fibula), as proposed by the Russian formalists, but an aspect of plot that addresses the reader's receptive intentions" (Tjupa para. 16). Thus, intrigue corresponds to Hayden White's emplotment which is an arrangement of events that create meaning (19). The centrality of events is also a feature of world picture since it "provides the scale for determining what an event is" (Lotman, *The Structure* 234) by

its referential competence. However, a narrative intrigue also addresses the reader's expectations about the arrangement of these events. Narrative intrigues are classified into four categories and each of them is assigned a corresponding narrative modality and world picture:

> 1) the retrospective *intrigue* of realisation takes place in a fairy tale or in a mythical narrative with the precedental world picture related in the modality of knowledge whose end is already known; the narrative interest at reception results from nuances of detail and the fabric of speech;
> 2) narrative with the imperative world picture presupposing the modality of conviction is paired with the didactic *intrigue* of necessity; narrative interest is concentrated on a positive or negative outcome of the sequence of events;
> 3) the occasional world picture of narrations in the modality of opinion motivates the *intrigue* of adventure; the receptive intention consists in the reader's paradoxical expectation of the unexpected events that are supposed to occur in this kind of plots;
> 4) the heuristic *intrigue* of revelation of the unobvious is generated by the probabilistic world picture of narrations in the modality of understanding. (Tjupa para. 21)

Even from the brief presentation of the three categories (a narrative modality of knowledge, a narrative world picture and, a narrative intrigue) mentioned by Tjupa it might be deduced that the unity of the narrative act revolves around the common point of reference for these categories, namely the notion of event.

It is also essential for this study to notice the correlation between the concepts of event and transition. In the studies on different aspects of narratology, the frequent association of those two terms implies that liminality is effectively manifested in the domain of events as transition is its primary constituent. In "Event and Eventfulness" Peter Hühn makes a brief but direct observation that event plays a crucial role in the literary depictions of liminal changes described by van Gennep and Turner:

> For the individuals involved and, seen from their perspective, changes defined as rites of passage possess the features of a type II event. But for a knowledgeable superior observer, these changes are conventional and predictable, lacking the quality of unexpectedness and deviation from a norm. This difference highlights the context-dependence of type II events. As for their relevance to social life and their reflection in literature, such rites are

> clearly prescribed in traditional, relatively stable and cyclical cultures, but much less so in modern societies. (para. 17)[56]

The correlation between liminality and eventfulness noticed by Hühn requires a more precise clarification of the two types of events and the concept of eventfulness.

According to the latest studies of narratology, it is the eventfulness which determines the ontologically separate status of narrativity among other types of discourse (Hühn). Temporality, which is involved in every change of state or condition, implies a certain chain of events (Ryan 124). This sequentiality distinguishes the narrative texts and gives the transition a prominent role. Transition is, in turn, constitutive of both types of events: event I and event II, and usually refers to a character (or a group of characters). The concept of event I is broader since it encompasses all kinds of objective change, whereas event II is more exclusive because it is subjective and "concerns a special kind of change that meets certain additional conditions in the sense, e.g., of being a decisive, unpredictable turn in the narrated happenings, a deviation from normal, expected course of things, as is implied by event in everyday language" (Hühn para. 3). In view of that, the liminal stage in a character's course of development may be perceived as event II because of its significantly influential role when it comes to the identity of a character. Moreover, while Hühn claims that rites of passage are not an evident imposition on modern society, Turner applies the liminal condition more universally (*Ritual Process*). As Hühn himself exemplifies, liminality pervades contemporariness with states of "erosion of the established order, disorientation, [or] possibility of new perspectives" (para. 16). Additionally, event II is relative and its status relies on the context and narrative interpretation. Such an understanding of a threshold experience corresponds with modern manifestations of liminality because the liminal condition nowadays is frequently a matter of subjective perception. As Hühn suggests, event I (or a combination of such events) may become event II if a character, narrator, or reader contextualizes it within the social frames of norm and deviation. Such a process causes the events, which otherwise could have been perceived as objectively ordinary, to be interpreted as liminal situations in consideration of the whole structure of the text.[57] The already mentioned

[56] The quotes are taken from the electronic version of the article without the numbered pages. Therefore, for easier localisation of the quotes they are indicated by a number of the paragraph.

[57] Hühn finds that eventfulness II corresponds to the notion of tellability as discussed by Marie-Laure Ryan:

> Ryan defines tellability in terms of the complexity of the plot sequences, which she situates in an 'underlying system of purely virtual embedded narratives' (156), i.e. a network of realized and alternative, unrealized (desired, rejected, imagined), courses of action. In this way, as with event

Lotman's spatial semantics proves to be pertinent to the analysis of eventfulness II. Lotman claims that in literary texts normative values are assigned to the binary spatial oppositions (*The Structure*). Thus, his concept of a spatially conditioned meaning is a metaphor of a binary normative order, called by Lotman a semantic field (*The Structure* 233). Lotman's explanation of events which construct the plot, resembles the characteristics of event II as "[such] an event in a text is the shifting of a persona across the borders of a semantic field" (233). Furthermore, his divagations draw attention to the interdependence of plot and event. For Lotman, eventfulness constitutes plot with the following elements:

> 1) some semantic field divided into two mutually complementary subsets; 2) the border between these subsets, which under normal circumstances is impenetrable, though in a given instance (a text with a plot always deals with a given instance) it proves to be penetrable for the hero-agent; 3) the hero-agent (240)

Consequently, a semantic field proves to be a relevant model for the investigation of the complexity of liminality in the text because Lotman's model combines the interplay between space, border, meaning, event, and character in the state of transition. Significantly enough, such constitutive components of a narrative could be also enumerated as essential elements of anthropological description of liminality. A transitional phase is characterized predominantly by an unstable and undetermined status. However, Schmid asserts that eventfulness requires conclusion and factual occurrence (25–27). Hühn summarizes Schmid's additional criteria of the degree of eventfulness as follows:

> relevance (significance in the represented world), unpredictability (deviation from what is expected, from the principles of the general order of the world), effect (consequences of the change for the character concerned or for the narrated world), irreversibility (persistence and irrevocability of the change's consequences), and non-iterativity (singularity of change's consequences). (Hühn para. 26)

All of these conditions also apply to the nature of liminal states. In the tribal societies described by van Gennep the above criterion of effect was easily met: the rites of passages facilitating the transition into the postliminal phase led to the acquisition of a new social

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> II, but without the term itself being used, the tellability of a story is derived from the structure of its course of action and the complexity of that structure. However, the equation of structural complexity with tellability is problematic, since it tends to isolate textual structures from (cultural, literary) contexts. (Hühn para. 11)

status (1960). An individual was accepted again into to the community as a transformed person. Such social transformations were predictable and conventionalized (e.g. an adolescent became a mature member of a tribe, a girl got married, or a boy achieved a status of a warrior). The course of an individual life was so conventionalized in such cases that these passages could be easily conceptualized as events I as they did not disturb the world order permanently. However, the liminal condition itself considered separately and/or in relation to modern society does not always lead to a clearly delineated postliminal phase. There are many more choices and life paths available to a contemporary man than it was in the past. Moreover, as Turner realizes, liminality in the contemporary Western world is more often than not a permanent state of existence than a transitional ritual (1969). The liminal condition implies nowadays a more personal choice and more unpredictable consequences, which situates it more in line with event II. Even if liminality proves to be more of a state than a phase, from the point of view of the liminal subject this transitional phase is deeply transformational and reverses a pre-existing world order. Thus, the classification of liminal transitions as event I or event II is predominantly a matter of context, interpretation, and point of view. The uncertain, subjective classification of liminal events reminds of the probabilistic world picture which is a reflection of "unstable condition of the fictional world demanding a change that can, however, be different from the one reported in the story, meaning that the story could have unfolded in another way" (Tjupa para. 15).

1.5 Liminality and Identity: Towards Anti-essentialist Idea of Self

The previous section explored the notion of liminality as a social phenomenon pertaining to a specific phase of human life, as well as a set of qualities that characterize an individual or a group, the liminal traces and motifs. Moreover, narrative strategies relating to liminality were outlined. A relevant concept intertwined with both, the notion of liminality itself and this study, namely, the conceptualization of self, constitutes another research area that requires broader theoretical framework.

Throughout recent decades the concept of identity has intrigued many researchers. This scholarly preoccupation has led to new theories and, according to some, even a new paradigm. The Cartesian model of a person, as an intelligent being separated from their community in their strive for individual and rational self-recognition gave way to a more dialectic idea of identity. Despite this great academic interest, the clearly delineated,

unified theory of identity is nowhere to be found within the scope of social and humanistic studies (De Fina 265). In their pursue of theoretical framework, Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall realize this challenge stating: "[g]iven the scope of such scholarly research, our definition of identity is deliberately broad and open-ended: *Identity is the social positioning of self and other*" (586). Imprecise as this denotation may seem, it does emphasize the contextual and social aspects of situating oneself versus others and does not limit the further investigation of these contexts and social conditions. Thereby we have to do with many reflections, observations, and postscripts to the ruminations of renown academic personas like Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman, Anthony Giddens or Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, to name only a few, who in the course of their deliberations touched upon ideas related to identity. Thus, the new paradigm within which identity is discussed nowadays derives from various, distinct theoretical contributions such as: intertextuality, feminism, social theory, interactionism, or social constructionism. Those academic realms, in turn, influence the research areas in the field of identity:

> On the one hand, theorist of modern identity emphasise concepts like 'fluidity', 'migration', 'diaspora', 'crossing' and 'decentring'. On the other hand, much attention is paid to individuals' strategies for shoring up an authentic sense of self in an uncertain world, including the revival of traditions of 'self-improvement' and psychoanalytically-inspired explorations of the self. (Benwell and Stokoe 22)

These diversified sources of thought have contributed to interdisciplinary framework of an anti-essentialist, interactionist approach to identity. Consequently, a satisfactory record of all ample studies relating to the redefined theory of identity seems to be an unattainable task taking into consideration the scope of the present study. Being cognizant of the descriptive rather than defining nature of modern identity studies, this section will offer the characterization of the principles that govern the performative notion of identity.

1.6 Identity and Discourse

The areas which seem ubiquitous while discussing identity, in contrast to a more conservative approach to self, oppose some isolating tendencies of conceptualization of social phenomena as presented by, for example, Erik Erikson (109). A different approach to the construction of self comes from conceptualizing it as a communal occurrence, intersubjective structure of interpretative and performative qualities:

> This construction takes place in discourse and other social and embodied conduct, such as how we move, where we are, what we wear, how we talk and so on. […] It is common to read about 'discursive' and 'postmodern' turn across social sciences and humanities, within which theories of identity have undergone a major shift. Crucially, identity has been *relocated*: from the 'private' realms of cognition and experience to the 'public' realms of discourse and other semiotic systems of meaning-making. Many commentators therefore argue that rather than being *reflected* in discourse, identity is actively, ongoingly, dynamically *constituted* in discourse.[58] (Benwell and Stokoe 4)

Once such a stance is adopted, a definite identity separate from discourse seems preposterous. The rhetorical use of a binary opposition of internal and external identity in order to achieve a specific social goal is the concern of social constructionists. According to their approach, there is no genuine inner self opposed to socially imposed outward self, "[r]ather, it is a very idea of an *inner* self and its *outward* expressions that is constructed […] who we are to each other, then, is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse" (4). The 'discursive turn' recomposes the notion of self and unprecedently takes into account social, cultural, and historical factors as vital obstacles to an individual formation of identity independent of outside influences. The scholarly discussion, which revolves around the idea of discourse, addresses the dynamics of power, where discourse becomes a tool of hegemony which is defined by Stuart Hall as "a way of representing the order of things which endowed its limiting perspectives with that natural or divine inevitability which makes them appear universal, natural and coterminous with 'reality' itself" (*The Rediscovery* 65). In a way, one may say that subjects are not forced to follow this process, but avoiding it often turns out to be unfeasible in practice "bcause the dominant cultural group generating the discourse persuades them of their essential 'truth', 'desirability' and 'naturalness'" (Benwell and Stokoe 30). Though a similar procedure was described by Louis Althusser and termed by him "interpellation" (1971), it was Michel Foucault who fully expanded the power dynamics focusing on the discourse and the subversion of the idividual subject which results from this interrelation. Althusser claims that ideology through its political and social apparatus constitutes subjects' self-ascription, the process called by him "hailing" (as referred to subjects in social practice). The notion of discourse was proposed by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and indicates a historically

[58] As Anna De Fina points out, the discursive inclinations are strongly intertwined with the role of interpersonal communication, language, and discourse practices. Thus, the activities like interactions, conversations and other transmissions of information are the realm where identity is constructed rather than merely expressed (264).

conditioned system which generates meaning and knowledge. For Foucault identity is a product generated by predominant discourse, that is to say, "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (*The Archaeology* 54). Therefore, we may conceptualize discourse as such an organization of knowledge that it is perceived as a social fact which, by virtue of this collective acceptance, produces social practices and social relations. As Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon conclude "[c]entral to Foucault's writing is the concept that within sociocultural and historical periods are particular ways of seeing, analysing, and acting in the world which distribute power such that participants in these periods take on the discipline of living out their periods' discourses" (542). Thus, both social practices and certain conceptualizations (beliefs, attitudes, ideas) are the products of discourse which are instrumental in validating social power to codify truth. In other words, since identity is a product of discourse (as instrument of power), identity replicates power dynamics including social inequalities too – a process called by Judith Howards "ideological constitution of the self" (385). From this point of view, discursive practices could be also understood as procedures preventing any social change:

> the development of the individual becomes a process of acquiring a particular ideological version of the world, liable to serve hegemonic ends and preserve the status quo. Identity and identification thus become a colonizing force shaping and directing the individual. This type of discursive model implies an anti-essentialist view of identity, since it presumes all meaning to be situated not within the self, but in the series of representations mediated by semiotic systems such as language. (Benwell and Stokoe 30–31)

These radical notions are balanced by S. Hall[59] for whom the self is rather a junction of a twofold discursive process during which we are "interpellated" and hailed into specific social roles but also endowed with "subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'" ("Who needs identity?" 19). Thus, identity is a kind of transitory connection to the subject's positions generated in discourse dynamics. The reformulation of Foucault's ideas were also undertaken by Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1997). In line with psychoanalytic-inspired French poststructuralist feminism, she postulates that a gendered identity is devoid of any actual essence and continuity because it is mediated with and placed in discourse (Butler 1990). Nonetheless, subjectivity as a discursive practice could be also employed and, at the same time, used in a *performative* manner. Thus, Butler reformulates Foucault's radical view into one that includes both

[59] To distinguish Kira Hall from Stuart Hall, the latter is designated as S. Hall.

structure and agency. Gendered identity constitutes Butler's major interest – actually she undermines the very notion of it claiming that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (*Gender Trouble* 33). Thus identity is repeatedly performed and that is where the transformational potential resides. The conventionalized practices and signs which are iterated in a socially and historically accepted manner allow for a performative agency: "[e]ach new performance may entail the introduction of new elements: intertextual borrowings, resignification, reflexivity and disruptive tropes such as irony" (Benwell and Stokoe 33).[60]

The repetitive quality of emergent identity is touched upon by Michael Bamberg who also recognizes how recurring practices form the sense of selfhood in the small units of interactions in relation to bigger narratives and sees in it the goal of narrative research:

> A final aim is to advance a project of documenting identity as a *process* of constant change that, when practiced over and over again, has the potential to result in sense constancy and sameness, i.e. big stories that can be elicited under certain conditions. (Bamberg para. 24)[61]

Bamberg emphasizes the role of the narrative in the formation of selfhood, and consequently we resume the theorization of narrative procedures which has been already undertaken in this chapter. However, now the idea of narrative is broadened and approached from a more interdisciplinary perspective which is a result of a discursive turn which took place in the late 20th century.

1.7 Narrative Analysis

The accountability of a researcher who is aware of the inherent interplay and mutual conditioning of culture, language, and society prompts further inquiry into the interdependency of power, discourse, and sociocultural aspects (Urban 1991). Nonetheless, the phrase "discourse analysis" may prove to be difficult to define clearly as it may be understood in two ways. A given text could be studied in a strictly linguistic manner and this approach stems from a long but diverse tradition of research "including linguistic analysis, French structuralism, the ethnography of communication, Hallidayan

[60] Butler's idea of performativity will be further referred to in relation to *emergence principle* in the section "Five Principles of Identity."
[61] The quotes are taken from the electronic version of the article without the numbered pages. Therefore, for easier localisation of the quotes they are indicated by a number of the paragraph.

functional linguistics, linguistic philosophy, pragmatics and variation analysis […], all of which focus on the analysis and the interpretation of texts in use" (Scollon and Scollon 539). Misleadingly enough, the term might also refer to collective conceptualizations and social practices mirrored in various texts of different generic kind. The analysis of discourse understood in this way "grows out of critical, sociocultural, sociological, or historical analysis. To distinguish this sense from a narrower use of 'discourse,' writers speak of Discourses, order of discourse, or discursive formations" (539). Thus, narrative analysis is just one modality of discourse study along with other methods like conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, discursive psychology, positioning theory or critical discourse analysis.

The foundations of present narrative analysis of discourse might be traced back to structuralist narratology and the canonical publication of *Morphology of the Folklore* (1968) [1928] by Vladimir Propp. The Russian scholar was interested in the recurrent patterns of events in traditional stories and his study might as well be termed "the *syntax* of the folktale, since its fundamental claim is that all folktales have the same syntagmatic deep structure, the same sequence of 'functions' or meaningful actions by characters" (Johnstone 636). Propp's conceptualizations of formal syntax in folktales was as eagerly adopted in analyses of literary texts[62] as Claude Lévi-Strauss's formal semantics. Lévi-Strauss investigated how semantic units and contrasts are manifested in myths and came to a conclusion that, though apparently miscellaneous, narratives from different geographical locations utilize the same, finite scope of themes and motifs. The varied structuralists inquiry of literary texts shares the following premises: "One was that there are abstract levels on which structures and meanings that seem different superficially are really the same. The other was that narrative can be separated from events it is about" (Johnstone 636). Analogous categories were adopted into linguistic study of personal experience narrative (PEN) by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky and presented in their "Narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience" (1967). Russian formal methodology was employed: "Labov's project was similar to Vladimir Propp's in its attempt to lay out the underlying syntagmatic structure of plot elements in narrative, except that Labov's focus was on the functions of individual clauses rather than larger chunks" (Johnstone 637). Two basic functions of clauses were distinguished by Labov: referential (dealing with events, characters, setting) and evaluative (having to do with the

[62] The book *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* by Roland Barthes might serve as a prominent example of the texts employing Propp's and Claude Lévi-Strauss's narratological ideas.

reasons for presenting the story). The minimum of two narrative clauses form *minimal narrative* though *fully developed narrative* comprises of more clauses with more advanced functions (Labov, "Transformation" 360).[63] It is worth noticing that "[f]or Labov, 'narrative' is not any talk about the past, or any talk about events; it is specifically talk in which a sequence of clauses is matched to a sequence of 'events which (it is inferred) actually occurred'" (Labov qtd. in Johnstone 637). From Labov's analysis it would seem that it is possible to distinguish some common elements of various narratives. The basic components would constitute a teller addressing events which follow a certain direction. Thus, the course of the story is supposed to be intentional, conclusive, and positioned in particular time and space. Other aspects are also necessary to categorise "a stretch of talk or text […] as a 'narrative', it has to incorporate basic structural features including a narrator, characters, settings, a plot, events that evolve over time, crises and resolutions" (Benwell and Stokoe 134). Admittedly, Labov's work provided essential categories used to define a narrative, but they tend to be quite rigid, and his approach does not escape a certain amount of criticism (Barthes 1977; Edwards 1997; Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001). The narrated stories do not always follow the clearly delineated trajectory construed by Labov and oftentimes it is not evident how to categorise the particular element of the story (Edwards 273). What is more, Labov seems to ignore not only the context of the analysed stories, that is to say the interactional component, but also the way the conducted interviews were socially embedded. The stories then, appear falsely isolated and the main emphasis is laid on their inner construction only. However, as pointed out by Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1997), stories perform many more functions (overlooked by Labov); they are meant, for instance, to entertain, advertise, blame, attack, defend, or construct social arrangement. Nonetheless, the more recent research takes into consideration the previously omitted interactional context in narrative analysis (Wooffitt 1992; Edwards 1997; Antaki 1998; Holstein and Gubrium 2000). The content of the stories referring to self-identification is considered equally important as the manner and conditions of their delivery.

[63] Labov delineates the following functions of a fully developed narrative:
1 abstract
2 orientation
3 complicating action
4 evaluation
5 result or resolution
6 coda
(Johnstone 637)

One of these contextual interests, called "positioning," takes into account the relationship between the speaker and the receiver(s) of the story. It investigates the ways in which the teller positions themselves in relation to "subject positions" offered in particular discourse (Benwell and Stokoe 43). Thus, positioning theory (PT) presupposes some agency in the speaker's response to an already existing patterns of their subjectivity, even if various modes of positioning are possible simultaneously (Davies and Harré). The advantage of analysing small stories in this manner is emphasized by Bamberg:

> Placing the emphasis on small stories allows for the study of how people as agentive actors position themselves – and in doing so become positioned. This model of positioning affords the possibility of viewing identity constructions as two-fold: analyzing the *way* the referential world is constructed, with characters (self and others) emerging in time and space as protagonist and antagonists. Simultaneously, it is possible to show how the referential world (what the story is about) is constructed as a function of interactive engagement, i.e. the way referential world is put together points to how tellers "want to be understood," how they *index* their sense of self. (para. 23)

However, positioning takes place in longer narratives too. The speakers may undermine master narratives and their constructed selves are not dominated by micro or macro positioning, rather their identity is an amalgamation of *relational* and *social* positioning (Swan and Linehan). Therefore PT connects the minimal stories with narrative discourse,[64] just as narrative identity theories recognize "that the local stories we tell about ourselves are connected in some way to wider cultural stories (or master narratives, cultural plotlines, discourses, interpretative repertoires)" (Benwell and Stokoe 138). There is a tension between the setting created by a speaker and sociocultural implicit anticipation of the typical pattern of plot and such a correlation constitutes one of the major interests for a narrative analyst. This nuanced view on identity which takes into consideration the diversified factors influencing the construction of selfhood is also presented by Bamberg. He proposes four characteristics of narrating subject's identity:

> the narrating subject must be regarded a) as neither locked in stability nor drifting through constant change, but rather as something that is multiple, contradictory, and distributed over time and place, held together contextually and locally; b) in terms of membership positions vis-à-vis others that help to trace the narrator's identity within the context of social relationships, groups, and institutions; and c) as the active and agentive locus of control, though simultaneously attributing agency to outside forces that are situated in a broader socio-historical context. (Bamberg para. 6)

[64] Though the methods of positioning theory are criticized for the lack of clarity (Benwell and Stokoe 141).

By and large, it may be inferred that the dynamics of narrative formation of identity is conceptualized analogously to the discursive formation of identity. Narrative is understood as a discursive tool for identity to be expressed and performed or, as it could be concluded from the preceding lines, contested. Moreover, it seems to function for agentic purposes: "the practice of narration involves the 'doing' of identity, and because we can tell different stories we can construct different versions of self" (Benwell and Stokoe 138). This aspect of storytelling is also recognized by Georgakopoulou who notes that stories allow for editions and evaluations of self by, for instance, enhancing particular elements of the story more than the remaining ones (2002). Thus, the notion of *storied selves* appears frequently in narrative analysis (Mishler 1999; Cortazzi 2001; Riessman 2003). This phrase emphasizes that in discursive practises storytelling constitutes the most fundamental arena for identity construction. As transient and dynamic as discursive the notion of identity may seem, it is storytelling which gives the impression of continuity and stability because of its temporal links – a quality noted by Ricoeur and termed by him in "Life in Quest of Narrative" (1991) as *temporality*. Hence storytelling could be viewed as an action in pursuit of unity as it helps us to organize our experience in a more coherent form than it is actually experienced, and clarify our social reality in a logical, temporal manner (Daiute and Lightfoot xi). A similar tendency to rearrange events in a narrative so that the perceived course of action would lead to a clear resolution or form a thematic unity is called *emplotment* by Polkinghorne ("Narrative as Self-concept," 1991). Such an active composition of personal events could be seen as a biographical activity where tellers interpret their experience (Denzin) but also as a key factor defining human beings: "The essence of humanness, long characterized as the tendency to make sense of the world through rationality, has come increasingly to be described as the tendency to tell stories, to make sense of the world through narrative" (Johnstone 635). Narratives as varied as literary texts, advertisements, autobiographies, conversations, Internet content, and others[65] take part in this procedure resulting in the creation of "storytelling society" where stories play fundamental role in creating societies and maintaining social life (Denzin). Yet, such an extensive understanding of storytelling poses some methodological challenges and results in no definite method of analysing the narrative data. Therefore, narrative analysis has not been ascribed to one academic discipline but

[65] Constructionist approaches also acknowledged that people's identities are performed in and positioned towards all kinds of texts (Berger and Luckmann 45).

rather applies broadly to the research which focuses on various narrative activities in the process of defining one's identity (Benwell and Stokoe 143).

The heterogenous nature of different narratives in social context was fully recognized by Kristeva who investigated the interplay of texts in culture and society (1986). It is worth clarifying that for Kristeva a text is not synonymous with a literary text or even with a written word in general. The word text, in Kristeva's understanding, refers to its Latin origin *textere* meaning "to weave" (hence the English word "textile" – a woven material). The metaphor of weaving is employed to illustrate the dynamic interaction of text conceptualized as "everything or, at least, every cultural formation" (Pfister 212). Thus, texts include literary forms but their definition does not limit texts to stories or written word. Therefore, when Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in 1966, she emphasized that the meaning of a given narrative could be obtained only from the correspondence to other texts, i.e. "other cultural formations". Hence there is no originality or novelty in artistic expression since "[t]he production of art and literature under these auspices becomes a recycling of waste material rather than act of creation" (Pfister 211). According to Kristeva, no text exists in isolation, all texts are intertextual which makes culture "a network of interconnected texts of every kind" (37). Such a conception of culture links Kristeva to Foucauldian conviction of discursive formation of social practices which encompass "is all the different discourses, ways of speaking and saying, institutionally sanctioned structures and systems which make up what we call culture" (Allen 35). In line with this argument, every narrative is a manifestation of certain ideology, time, social standards since "a text can only 'emerge' through this social text; thus, any text is therefore situated within history and society itself" (36). Interestingly enough, the individual's formation of self is also a text as for Kristeva a subject "is composed of discourses, is a signifying system, a text, understood in a dynamic sense" (Still and Worton 16). If identity is a dynamic and transient result of interwoven texts, understood in this broad, intertextual sense, it might seem impossible to analyse the self-creation or trace all the texts which take part in the process. In face of this challenge, Michael Riffaterre proposes the notion of "intertext" which helps decoding the text:

> An intertext is a corpus of texts, textual fragments, or textlike segments of sociolect that shares a lexicon and, to a lesser extent, a syntax with a text we are reading (directly or

> indirectly) in the forms of synonyms or, even conversely, in the forms of antonyms.[66] (142)

Therefore, intertext is an indispensable presence in the interetextual reading of a text which, Riffaterre argues, is an obligatory "operation of the reader's mind […] necessary to any textual decoding" (142). Without intertext understanding of a text is not fully acquired "or satisfactory [because] the text does not signify unless the function of a complementary or contradictory intertextual homologue" (143).

1.8 Principles of Identity

The preceding presentation of discourse, narrative analysis, and intertextuality were linked by an alternative, significant relationship between language and identity. In these ruminations language is seen in a broader context of discourse, not only as isolated linguistic items. The critical role of language in the creation of identity could not be accentuated more in the sociocultural linguistic perspective on identity. Such a scholarly positioning of self is not limited to the reason of Cartesian self-governed man but takes into consideration other influences within which a human being exists: "the broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture, and society" (Bucholtz and Hall 586). This observation echoes other, earlier reflections of scholars like Bauman or Giddens who noted that "the idea that the self is essentially unitary, continuous and rational is seen as a product of history rather than as a necessary and characteristic condition" (de Fina 265).

Drawing from fields ranging from linguistics to anthropology, the sociocultural linguistic approach also recognizes that identity is not constructed within one sphere of human existence, but it is performed and negotiated at the intersection of these various domains. Accordingly, sociocultural linguists like Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall claim that "identity does not emerge at a single analytic level – whether vowel quality, turn shape, code choice, or ideological structure – but operates at multiple levels

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[66] It is essential to bear in mind that sociolect here should be understood according to a semiotic standard, that is as:

> a language viewed not only as grammar and lexicon but as a repository of society's myths. These are represented by themes, commonplace phrases, and descriptive systems (stereotyped networks of metonyms around any given lexical nucleus). Sociolect is opposed to 'idiolect,' an individual's specific semiotic activity, and in case of literature, the lexicon and grammar specific to a text and whose rules and verbal equivalences are valid only within its limit. (Riffaterre 159)

simultaneously" (586). The above-mentioned researchers offer a comprehensive set of five principles that delineates a valuable research tool for analysing the identity within a sociocultural linguistic framework: *the emergence principle*, *the positionality principle*, *the indexicality principle*, *the relationality principle*, and *the partialness principle* (Bucholtz and Hall 587–607). Let us now proceed to a brief summary of the main presumptions of these principles.

The emergence principle opposes the conservative view according to which identity is a mere product of an individual's mind and as such one uses language only to express this mental creation. Linguistic anthropologists, such as Dell Hymes, anthropologists like Richard Bauman, Charles Briggs, Bruce Mannheim, Denis Tedlock, and even literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin are listed among those who contributed to the formulation of the discussed principle (Bucholtz and Hall 587). The net of influences and academic inspirations from the scholars of the past could be observed in the introduction to Mannheim and Tedlock's book *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* where they refer to Bakhtin's (liminal we might note) understanding of language as happening *between* the speaker and the other: "In this sense, language has an emergent quality, at one and the same time produced by speakers and estranged by them. The idea of 'emergence' is central to understanding how culture and language acquire regularities through the interaction of individuals without being reducible to them" (9). The emergence principle balances the individual's notion of self with the discourse within which this conception is adopted, negotiated, or transformed. However, the novelty of this principle does not lie only in the consideration of the underlying social background but, most importantly, in admission of the significance of the interactions where language is utilized to create identity: "Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (Bucholtz and Hall 588).

Another factor which transpires in this concise synopsis of emergence principle seems to be performativity, which in turn echoes the aforementioned ruminations of Judith Butler. In her other works, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter* she examines the performative identity in relation to gender, sex, body and language and realizes that "[w]ithin speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which is named" (*Gender Trouble* 13). De Fina also notes that Butler foregrounds that identity is something interpolated in interaction and discourse as contrasted to the notion of identity as one's stable ascription (266). Thus, it may be

inferred that identity is characterized by a quality of flux, but to stretch this notion a step further, it is performative in a sense that identity is a matter not only of ideas but also of practices and behaviours (Lazar and Kramarae 233). Therefore, these practices, especially linguistic ones, call for deeper analysis in order to understand the interactional origin of identity emergence. The requirement is articulated by S. Hall:

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciating strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, that they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity – an 'identity' in traditional meaning (that is an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation). ("Who needs identity?" 17)

A similar sentiment is voiced in the thought of Bauman (2005) and Giddens (1991) who claim that identity is the result of historic and cultural powers at play rather than self-determination in defining oneself in accordance to one's own desire or intent. Even if a person believes that they aspire to a certain model chosen by them, these models are invariably constructed within the frame of broader ideological contexts determined by historical moments and cultural movements.[67]

The second principle to be discussed here is *the positionality principle* which nuances the view of identity from ascription to macro social categories to more local and less predicted ones that, in addition, may be transitory. Identities according to this principle "encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (Bucholtz and Hall 593). Thereby, to appropriately analyse the identity that emerges in a given interaction one should go beyond determining the macro-level demographic categories, such as age, sex or social class, of interlocutors taking part in it. Moreover, the local ethnographical micro-level categories should not be given the priority in the research process but both levels ought to be recognized in the understanding of their interlacing coexistence.

The sociocultural linguistic approach owes a lot to the already mentioned Labov's precursory works (1966, 1972a, 1972b) in which the author demonstrated the correlation

[67] "Nonetheless, Giddens has attracted considerable criticism from historically-minded scholars for ways he sidesteps issues of socialisation, context and history (and the notion of being *subject* to available discourses)." (Benwell and Stokoe 24).

between demographic categories and the pronunciation of sounds, however the present state of research proves this interrelationship to be more complex. A given linguistic variety does not necessarily function as a reliable marker of identification with the community of the speakers of this language variation. "Temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants, such as evaluator, joke teller, or engaged listener" are mentioned by Bucholtz and Hall (591) as vehicles through which discursive identity is constructed, while de Fina (268) proposes differentiation into collective, individual, social, personal and situational identities. As the terms suggest, "collective identity" refers to belonging to groups of people, often employed in, for example, public utterances, whereas "individual identity" relates to our personal experience that we often would like to project in a more intimate setting, for instance, during a therapy session. The term social identity seems synonymous with macro-level demographic categories of race, gender, or political affiliation while personal identities "are constructs that may include not only sets of membership categories, but also moral and physical characteristics that distinguish one person from another (a courageous person or a coward)" (de Fina 268). After Zimmerman (1998), de Fina mentions situational identity as one that is bound to or restricted to a given setting of exchange such as teacher and student in educational interaction. It is worth noticing though that by defining one identity in the interactional process the other identity (or identities) is not excluded, as various identities are often performed almost simultaneously or in a blurred fashion in one interaction. The above-mentioned categories may be stable or temporary, fleeting or negotiable but "[n]onetheless, all of these categories will be appropriated and negotiated in everyday processes of communication and usually it is through those that they will become available to people" (de Fina 269).

After *the principle of emergence* and *the positionality principle*, *the indexicality principle* shall be introduced and explained. This term refers to the basic mechanism of meaning production. Since the 1970s it has been established that the meaning is ascribed to a linguistic item in the communicational situations (Silverman 1976) and, later, that these social situations impose some ideological semiotic relationship between linguistic forms and their users (Silverman 1979, 1985). The gradual evolvement of these observations led to the broadening of the research field by other scholars (e.g. McConnell-Ginet, 1989, 2002; Murphy, 1997; Sacks, 1995) and, finally, the principle is delineated by Bucholtz and Hall as follows:

> Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (594)

In accordance to *the indexicality principle* words, but even accents or other linguistic elements, do not constitute ideologically neutral parts of language. On the contrary, they are prone to be used in the socially marked and evaluative manner as the speakers use them in the wider contexts of certain representations linked to particular social groups. However, as they function within the fluctuating dynamics of language, the relationship between the linguistic symbols (phrases, words, accents etc.) and the elements of social construct may be traversed or contested (de Fina 269).

The most apparent way of meaning production is through (a) an overt mention of identity categories and labels, more indirect ways characterize (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position. Implicatures are used to imply certain information in an ambiguous way so that it is understandable only to the group of insiders. Presuppositions, on the other hand, relate to the socially constructed preceding models of the identity of the person in question. To explore further (c) the term of *stance* should be introduced – stance is "the display of evaluative, affective, and epistemic orientations in discourse" (Bucholtz and Hall 595). Thus, stance exposes how identity may be a result of the attitudes of the participants of discourse through, for instance, their differentiation or alignment with other participants. Above all, research on stance dwells on the attitude of the speaker manifested in linguistic ways, participation framework, and participant roles (Goffman 1974, 1981; Goodwin and Goodwin 1992; Hunston and Thomson 2000). Moreover, stances may develop into more stable categories of identification, however the epistemic nature of the relationship between linguistic form and social identities is not straightforward. As Elinor Ochs notices, the indexical connection is rather constructed via interactional stances which then develop into larger categories built by society on the basis of association (300). Finally, the part (d) of the indexicality principle refers also to more macro levels of language as, for example, the choice of a particular code, which seems especially topical in present globalized society. The choice of language employed in interactions might attest to larger nationalistic, ideological, or globalization processes (e.g. Besnier 2004). In conclusion, the four indexical processes presented here manifest the complex and manifold dynamics of

identity constitution, and should not be understood as ontologically separate from one another as Bucholtz and Hall signalize:

> Disparate indexical processes of labelling, implicature, stance taking, style marking, and code choice work to construct identities, both micro and macro, as well as those somewhere in between. By considering identity formation at multiple indexical levels rather than focusing on only one, we can assemble a much richer portrait of subjectivity and intersubjectivity as they are constituted in interaction. (598)

Having outlined the indexicality principle concerned with the meaning production, let us now consider the processes taking place at the moment of one's placement versus others in a linguistic interaction. *Positioning*, according to de Fina, explores the multiple identities that either people assumed or which are assumed of by others as a result of social contexts they exist in and discursive behaviours they practice (272). Thus, as Bucholtz and Hall argue, *the relationality principle* touches upon the ways people position themselves versus others via, mostly but not limited to, the process of differentiation: "Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (598). The researchers propose the terms of "adequation" and "distinction" to underline the departure from a more traditional attitude applied to similarity and difference. Adequation presupposes that one does not have to bear many similarities with a given community in many fields to ascribe to a certain group. The minimal number of characteristics or qualities seems sufficient to allow the individual to establish the relatedness with this group, while some differences may be acceptable if they are not decisive to this ascription (599). In contrast to adequation, through the process of distinction, potential similarities are neglected and in order to position oneself as devoid of any correspondence to the group an individual would like to distance oneself from. Another set of relations at work in the process of positioning is "authentication" and "denaturalization" which deal with the degree of perceived legitimacy to assume a given identity. As Bauman showed (1992), authenticity may be employed for example by a narrator to prove their right to tell the story. Intriguingly enough, the use of language is often perceived to be authentic to a given representant of the group but not necessarily to a researcher (Bucholtz 2003). The last intersubjective pair proposed here constitutes "authorization" and "illegitimation" and concerns the institutional and structural aspects of the identity construction. Bucholtz and Hall offer a concise explanation of these relations: "[a]uthorization, involves the

affirmation or imposition of an identity through structures of institutionalized power and ideology, whether local or translocal. The counterpart of authorization, illegitimation, addresses the ways in which identities are dismissed, censored, or simply ignored by these same structures" (603). Similarly to the previously discussed principles of identity construction in the sociocultural linguistic framework, the pairs of relations presented here, though they might seem mutually exclusive, may coexist. In addition, positioning is not limited to typical oral interactions, but it is also at work in more narrative forms, which did not escape attention of quite a few scholars (Bamberg 1997; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Moita Lopes 2016).

The last principle proposed by Bucholtz and Hall is *the partialness principle*. This characteristic stems from the postmodern and feminist critique undermining the authority of stable representations of social life. The research in cultural anthropology, feminist theory and even the earlier realizations of female ethnographers challenge the unified description of the world. In her article "Histories of Feminist Ethnography", Kamala Visweswaran notes that "second wave feminist ethnographies such as Hortense Powdermaker's (1966) *Stranger and Friend*, Laura Bohannon's (1966) *Return to Laughter*, Elizabeth Fernea's (1969) *Guest of the Sheikh*, or Jean Briggs's (1970) *Never in Anger*[68] often report the authors' assignment to the world of women, and moments of disaffection or disidentification following from the authors' inability to identify with their subjects to create a unified 'woman's point of view'" (607). Visweswaran concentrates on the position of a researcher realizing that the feminist ethnographers mentioned by her acknowledged their own role and influence on the research process and observed phenomena. However, Bucholtz and Hall emphasize that the partialness characterizes not only the point of view of a researcher in relation to their subject but that it plays an important role in other identity constructing dynamics as well:

> Because identity is inherently relational, it will always be partial, produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other. Even seemingly coherent displays of identity, such as those that pose as deliberate and intentional, are reliant on both interactional and ideological constrains for their articulation. (605)

[68] The specification of the exact editions of the works which would correspond to the dates given here by Visweswaran proves to be quite difficult therefore bibliography includes the first editions of these publications.

The realization of these multitudinous factors and constrains influencing the emergent identity negates the traditional notion of agency as resulting exclusively from rational and intentional actions of an individual.

1.9 Agency

Taking the complexity of agency into consideration, it demands a closer investigation in relation to the process of identity construction. Though linguists usually focus on the linguistic competence more than on the interaction and performance, Laura Ahearn adopts an anthropological linguistic approach and perceives language "as a form of social action, a cultural resource, and a set of sociocultural practices" (110). Much as Ahearn sounds simplistic, her concluding assertion that "[p]eople do things with language" (110) embodies in-depth studies of scholars she refers to: Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Butler (1997), Brenneis and Macaulay (1996), Duranti (1997), Hanks (1996). Thus, from the anthropological point of view, language is more than competence or 'langue' – it is a performative force. For instance, the mutual, social and individual conditioning of reality was realized by Berger and Luckman in *The Social Construction of Reality* where language was given a prominent role: "I encounter language as a facticity external to myself and it is coercive in its effect on me" (53). But then language is also endowed with "transcendent" qualities which allow for breaching the boundaries. This transcendence refers to space, time, and social dimensions as language enables various kinds of interactions:

> Through language I can transcend the gap between my manipulatory zone and that of the other; I can synchronize my biographical time sequence with his; and I can converse with him about individuals and collectivities with whom we are not at present face-to-face interaction. As a result of these transcendences language is capable of 'making present' a variety of objects that are spatially, temporally and socially absent from the 'here and now.' (54)

When Berger and Luckman mention linguistic transmission from the past, it may be interpreted as if language is employed not only to convey objective meanings but also to ensure the continuity of certain discourses, so that language transmits certain ideas independently from temporal constraints concerning the existence of an individual:

> As far as social relations are concerned, language 'makes present' for me not only fellowmen who are physically absent at the moment, but fellowmen in the remembered

> or reconstructed past, as well as fellowmen projected as imaginary figures into the future. All these 'presences' can be highly meaningful, of course, in the ongoing reality of everyday life. (54)

Language is additionally conceptualized here as a binding agent between different temporal contexts (hence it is possible to surmise various historical and cultural contexts, too) which influence the social reality.

Once sociocultural contexts are not ignored, not only spoken but also written language is positioned in a constant interplay with culture and society. If cultural and social frameworks are acknowledged, language could not be understood as separate from power dynamics and would cease to be conceptualized simply as neutral vehicle of meaning. Given this interrelation, a question arises to which extent a language user, who is invariably involved in ideological and discursive practices, is an agentic speaker and what is agency *per se*. Considering the sociocultural conditioning Ahern undertakes to define the concept broadly: "Agency refers to socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (111). As for the denotation of an agent, Ahearn refers to Ivan Karp's distinction between actor and agent:

> In Karp's view, an actor refers to a person whose action is rule-governed or rule-engaged, whereas an agent refers to a person engaged in the exercise of power in the sense of the ability to bring about effects and to (re)constitute the world (Karp 1986, p. 137). Actor and agent should be considered two different aspects of the same person, according to Karp, or two different perspectives on the action of any given individual. (113)

Although these attempts to define agent and agency seem cautious,[69] they nevertheless allow for a thorough investigation of the characteristics of agency rather than its limiting delineation. Other researchers agree with this proposition: "This way of thinking about

[69] In the introduction to her article "Language and Agency", Ahearn touches upon the limited significance of the precise definition of the concept:

> While I propose a skeletal definition for the term, my purpose is not to dictate how scholars should define agency, or even to insist that they should use the term at all. Rather, my purpose is to survey scholarship on agency and to suggest how important it is for scholars interested in agency to look closely on language and linguistic form. (109)

Later, Ahearn contradicts herself stating that:

> questions about agency are so central to contemporary political and theoretical debates that the concept arouses so much interest – and why it is therefore to define clearly. (110)
>
> Precise definitions are equally essential for words such as agency that have taken on new meanings on entering academic discourse. (110)

agency is vital to any discipline that wants to consider the full complexity of social subjects alongside the larger power structures that constrain them" (Bucholtz and Hall 606). In line with this approach, instead of merely defining what constitutes agency, Ahearn also draws attention to what agency is not. She warns against equating agency with free will since such a faulty conceptualization ignores "the social nature of agency and pervasive influence of culture on human intentions, beliefs, and actions" (114). Likewise agency should not be narrowed down to resistance as resistant behaviours and actions are only some of many forms of agency. Among those who voiced opposition to agency are feminist scholars (e.g. Goddard 2000) and other researchers investigating social and economic injustice and domination (Pruyn 1999; Scott 1985, 1990). At the other end of the spectrum, we may position Foucault who completely refutes the idea of agency (Foucault 1977, 1978). Though criticized for generalization, the lack of nuanced perspective and detailed analysis (Hoy 1986; Said 1983; Stoler 1995), Foucault's radical notions of ubiquitous power relations have attracted wide academic interest. In his view on pervasiveness of power discourses in every sphere of human existence, real agency has no right to be. Others argued that Foucault's research could be interpreted as not excluding the possibility of agency altogether and that power dynamics create apart from oppression also an opportunity for reaction to it (O'Hara 1992; Halperin 1995). Unquestionably though, Foucault's focus lies predominantly on discourses of power and their all-encompassing features as "[p]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (*The History of Sexuality* 93).

The influence of social structures on subjects' undertakings was also recognized by Giddens. His theory of structuration reflects "the understanding that people's actions are shaped (in both constraining and enabling ways) by the very social structures that those actions then serve to reinforce or reconfigure" (Ahearn 117). Therefore, the social arrangement seems to be a self-propelled mechanism. The preservation of existing social conditions is similarly explained by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) with a term "habitus." The notion shows human actions as a result of the interplay of agency and structure through the process of socialization. There are no pre-existing tendencies concerning our choices of speech, dress, career, preferences, etc. before we become socialized. Habitus effectively restricts our decisions:

> Although he [Bourdieu] defines the habitus as 'an endless capacity to engender products,' Bourdieu emphasizes dispositions in order to preclude any assumption of free will on the

> part of actors, repeatedly pointing out how far removed his concept of the habitus is from a creation of unpredictable novelty. (Ahearn 118)

Theoretically habitus may generate limitless numbers of social practices, but in reality individuals are socialized in a manner that predisposes them to perform in the way that reaffirms social distribution of power. To conclude, thinkers associated with practice theory like Giddens, Bourdieu, or Michael de Certau, perceive agency as intertwined in structure which imposes itself on practices which in turn reinforce or challenge the structure. However, they do not offer any detailed description on how the social transformation takes place.

One of the proposed explanations of social change is formulated by Marshall Sahlins in *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981). According to his "structure of the conjucture," a situation of crisis provoked by events or circumstances may bring revolutionary results when people try to approach it in their usual, structurally conditioned way. Sahlins combines historical, temporal and structural factors in his attempt to describe transformation – a time of disparity when social practices derived from habitus are applied to novel circumstances and instead of reproducing the social structure they start to alternate it. Thus, agency is linked to historical conditions (which bring new circumstances) and communal defiance to mechanical acts.

An alternative view to the ideas of Sahlins and Bourdieu is adopted by Sherry Ortner (1989). Social structure is not completely consistent, according to Ortner, and habitus is internally contradictive. Subjects make use of these disparities by exploring different responses included in cultural schemas, thereby subjects are "loosely structured" and are endowed with choices of responses. Each culture is unique because of its own contradictions and incoherences and agents may react to them in a number of ways not only by an automatic reproduction of social practices. The subjects' agency is therefore liminal: "Because of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the habitus, actors are neither free agents nor completely socially determined products" (Ahearn 120). Following, language could be analysed in an analogous manner. On the one hand it may seem that the linguistic system is restricted to a limited, self-affirming rules, on the other hand it does develop by virtue of time and exchange. Narrative arrangement is one of the focuses of academic scrutiny aiming at comprehending the complexity of human existence:

> For years, linguistic anthropologists have examined specific speech events in order to illuminate how people think about their own and others' actions. By analysing grammatical markers, pronoun use, turn taking, narrative structures, dispute resolution, overlapping utterances, and other linguistic features linguistic anthropologists have looked to language for concrete examples of effective (and ineffective) social action. (Ahearn 125)

We may once again recognize the recurring motif of this chapter, namely the interplay of language and broadly understood narrative strategies in the formation of identity.

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Having presented the historical background and characteristics of the concept of liminality, the structuralist narrative strategies have been outlined. Then, we proceeded to the investigation of identity construction in discourse which led us back to the narrative structures understood in a more interactional terms, that entailed the section about narrative analysis, storytelling, and intertextuality. The chapter was completed with the characterisation of the principles of anti-essentialist conception of identity and structural agency. In the following chapters these theoretical assumptions will be adopted in the analyses of ethnical and relational liminality in the novels of Anita Brookner.

Chapter 2 Ethnic Liminality

2.1 Introductory Remarks

Among Brookner's most repeated motifs, the theme of exile holds a prominent position. The expulsion of the ancestors of Brooknerian protagonists from the Continent to Britain is revealed early in *SL*, *P*, *HL* and *FF*. In her attempt to link Brookner's fiction with the writer's biography, Eileen Williams-Wanquet tracks the hints of the time markers dropped through the novels (58–78). Although the exact temporal positioning of events is of no interest for this study (neither are Brookner's autobiographical influences), the conclusions of Williams-Wanquet concerning this issue seem pertinent to the discussions of the cultural and ethnic background of the protagonists. As the author of *Art and Life in the Novels of Anita Brookner* argues, the location of the family houses and the time suggestions in Brookner's fiction indicate the 19th-century Jewish settlement in London and later emigration of Jews caused by, among others, two World Wars (Williams-Wanquet 58–78). Consequently, though it is not explicitly stated, there are indications that the paternal grandparents of Ruth Weiss, the protagonist of *SL*, who were born in Berlin were actually German Jewish emigrants. They came to London to escape the persecution sometime around World War One. This is where Ruth's father married Helen, an English comedy actress. The tension between the two national mentalities structures one of the most important dynamics of the novel and situates Ruth in the liminal position between the two traditions. Although devoid of the refugee element, a similar tension is present in *P* where the English father of Kitty Maule dies before her birth, symbolically terminating her connections with British culture. Kitty's grandparents are foreigners just like Ruth's in *SL*. While Ruth's ancestors come from Germany, Kitty's maternal grandparents were born in two different countries; Louise originates from France and Vadim is from Russia. Although there are no obvious hints of Vadim's potential Jewish origin, the reader, referring to other four novels, may experience a growing sense that it was specifically the reason for his departure from Russia. He arrived in France as a member of an acrobatic group, where he met practical and resourceful Louise. Soon after their marriage the couple emigrated to England (London). The gloom of exile is compensated by the intensity of

the nostalgia they feel for the two countries they had left. These places become not only missed homelands, but also the indicators of Kitty's internal disagreement between her need to fit into English culture, standards, traditions, and the atmosphere of her family house isolated from this cultural environment.

Relatively little is said about the relationship between the position of Edith Hope in *HL* and her parents' countries of origin. Nevertheless, the fact that Edith's mother comes from Vienna and her father is English corresponds to the general pattern of the family arrangement in Brookner's fiction. This allows to draw some conclusions confirmed by the clues from her other books which provide the mapping for the missing links in *HL*. Moreover, Williams-Wanquet concludes that in the case of *HL*, the element of exile is also plausible:

> In *Hotel du Lac* (1984), it is also possible to deduce that Edith Hope is of the same generation as Brookner. Her childhood memories indirectly yield a certain number of historical details. Her parents met when her English father was a student in Vienna, writing his thesis on "Klimt or Schnitzler or the Jugendstil, or all three" […], before bringing his foreign (Jewish) wife to England. Edith remembers holidays spent in her mother's family in Vienna when she was seven years old. The artists Klimt and Schnitzler and the Jugendstil movement in the arts all belong to the Viennese Symbolism of the beginning of the twentieth century, making it plausible that Edith's father went back to England just after World War One (when many Jews fled central Europe) and that the holidays spent in Vienna as a child are situated between the two World Wars. (34)

In the process of tracing the foreign background of the protagonists of Brookner's early fiction, *FF*, unlike the remaining four novels, offers a panoramic exposure to the history of few generations of the Dorn family and not just a life story of a single character. However, as in the other novels described so far, London-based Sofia Dorn, together with her children and the members of her extended family, is displaced from some German-speaking country on the Continent. Although the atrocities of the two World Wars are not mentioned, there are still some hints about exile, danger, and fleeing. The allusions emerge subtly and surprisingly, as when a lace seller who knocks at the door unexpectedly turns out to be an impoverished friend from their time spent in the homeland. Similarly, the sudden presence of the two dark-haired young maids from Europe, who tend to cry at night, evokes the Holocaust survivors evacuated to Britain. In her article "Troping the Other: Anita Brookner Jews," Louise Sylvester also notes the already mentioned motifs of exile as an indication of the experience of Jewish emigration for political reasons:

> It seems to me, however, that the privations associated with the Second World War for Jews living in Europe are alluded to in the urgency with which Betty and Max (who is Hungarian) leave Paris for America, and in the anxious question Sofka asks her friend Irma Beck when the latter knocks at her door selling lace: "At last, and fearfully, Sofka enquires, 'Your children?' For the first time the woman relaxes, and smiles. 'Safe,' she says 'Here.'"' […] The twin motifs of hurried departure, and of having to earn money, almost always in ways alien to one's upbringing and expectation, may be seen as tropes for the émigré experience of Jews before and during the Second World War. (51)

Among the first five Brookner's novels, *LM* constitutes a seemingly exceptional case. Neither of the protagonist's parents comes from outside Britain; however, they are still portrayed as emigrants in their own country. Frances has lived in London all her life, but her parents come from some village in Surrey. Paradoxically, the short distance between the two locations does not prevent Frances' parents from existing in London as two expats in a foreign world. And yet Margaret D. Stetz attributes this *modus vivendi* of Frances' parents to their Jewish ancestry which, though not stated straight-forwardly, could be still perceived by a more inquisitive reader. Commenting on the hopes of Frances' mother that her daughter will marry a Jewish doctor who got her a job in a library and her parents' move to London, Stetz concludes: "That an Englishwoman of the generation that came of age in the 1930s – Frances tells us that her parents sold their house in Surrey and moved into their London flat 'during the war,'meaning in the early 1940s […] – would so ardently wish to see her only child marry a Jew seems unlikely, unless she and he shared a similar background" (160). Taking this plausible argumentation into consideration, the background of the protagonist of *LM* ceases to appear so atypical of Brookner's oeuvre.

Thus, it might be concluded that the ethnic discrepancy, duality of traditions and the tension in between them constitute basic dynamics of *SL*, *P*, *HL*, *LM*, and *FF*. This, however, requires a more precise formulation of the issue of ethnicity. The approach established by Frederik Barth after the symposium at the University of Bergen in 1967 provides a suitable theoretical frame for further investigation. Barth claims that there is much more to the complexity of ethnicity than the generally accepted definition which "used to refer to groups of people who are considered to have a shared identity, a common history, and a traditional cultural heritage" (5). He was interested in the fluctuations taking place in the process of constructing and defying ethnic identity which ultimately led him to the recognition of the importance of the boundaries between ethnic groups. Therefore, Barth disproves the limitations of Raoul Naroll's traditional definition the implications of

which convey the idea that ethnicity is mainly possible in the conditions of isolation where the distinctive factors such as language, cultural values and organizations are preserved. Characteristic ethnic features, Barth argues, do not stem from the lack of exchange in the state of alienation of given groups. On the contrary, the self-ascription to a given group happens "*despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories" (10). Moreover, on the broader social level the boundaries between ethnic groups do not prevent essential social interactions. Such relations very often constitute the bases of the stable, multicultural societies, where acculturation is not the reason for stability but it is rather its interdependence between various ethnic groups. Such a social arrangement is also present in Brookner's fiction where the portrayal of the protagonists' families simultaneously constitutes the description of the existence of the dislocated ethnic groups within British society. This raises the question of the boundary between Englishness and the other cultures inherited from the ancestors where the protagonist is usually an individual who does not function in one ethnic milieu but in the sphere between them. This is indeed a liminal place of existence, where one's clear identity ascription is suspended. It seems that for these characters the boundary occupies a much vaster space than the narrow, adjusted places of ethnic stability.

What is more, Barth notes the two-fold nature of an ethnic boundary: it unifies the members of the same group and, at the same time, separates them from other social circles. Therefore, the ethnic boundary presupposes the shared criteria according to which an individual's ethnic identity is assessed, but the boundary also limits the common attributes and values which enable the understanding between various cultures (15). Thus, the historical and spatial qualities of boundary, recognized by van Gennep, are not the only reasons to conceptualize the frontier as liminal. What Barth contributes to the issue (although he does not write about it directly) is the fact that the liminal quality of the boundary is also an ontological one. This is the other reason why Barth's preoccupation with boundaries is so relevant in the present study. He emphasizes that "[e]thnic groups are not merely or necessarily based on occupation of exclusive territories; and the different ways in which they are maintained, not only by once-and-for-all recruitment but by the continual expression and validation, need to be analyzed" (15). Thus, it might be inferred that the boundary of the members of ethnic groups dislocated from the areas to which they have historically or politically belonged is still preserved though not as topographical but a mental one. This process is also evident in the case of the families portrayed by Brookner. In accordance to Barth's quoted statement, their ethnic

membership is continuously negotiated. Consequently, the vagueness and impermanency of the ethnic boundary of immigrants is even more liminal. This brings to one's mind the adjective "discreet" used by Barth in reference to the categories that distinguish members of ethnic groups in the conditions of exclusion and incorporation.[70] Indeed, the boundaries between the Brooknerian families and British society, as well as the categories according to which their membership in a given group is indicated, are usually signalled in an extremely unobtrusive manner. Thus, the discreetness of the categories which separate the ethnic groups in Brookner's fiction may be understood as liminal; however they are discreet in a literary sense too. Brookner does not clearly define the merits of Englishness, nor does she point to exact ways her protagonists and their families are different from others. The history of the families and the paths which have led them to London are factographically transmitted to a various degree of precision in *SL, P*, *LM*, and *HL*. However, the exact reasons for the painful emigration of the Weiss family is omitted in *SL*. This situation, namely the concealment of the actual reasons for the protagonists' ancestors' emigration, is present to a certain extent in all the novels in question. Most conspicuously, the subtleties of resettlement, and the re-establishing of the bourgeois family position in the realities of a new country are the main themes of *FF* though; still, this is the novel which leaves the reader ignorant about the exact country Dorn has left. Such a lack of topographical references reminds of the following line in *SL*:

> She [Ruth] became alarmed at her dispirited condition, picked up Balzac's *Un Début dans la Vie*, got annoyed by the excessive geographical information given in the first few pages, realized that she would have to travel fairly widely in the provinces when she got to France, and became slightly cheered by this faint indication that life might hold some substance beyond the events of this particular evening. (*SL* 51)

This quotation might be interpreted as an autotelic commentary on Brookner's epic oeuvre. Ruth is not exhilarated by the topographical details in her reading; what excites her is the vision of her future travel provoked by the lecture of Balzac. Brookner openly plays with the intertextual element and the motif of reading by giving her first novel the title borrowed from Balzac (she literary translated his French title into English).[71] Such

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[70] " categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby *discreet categories* are maintained *despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories" (Barth, 10; emphasis mine)

[71] Those who are familiar with the course of life of Anita Brookner will easily realize that the title, especially its American version *Debut*, refers also to her biographical situation as Brookner debuted with *SL* as a fiction writer.

literary allusions encourage one to draw comparisons between the relationship of the characters versus their reading and the relation of the implied reader towards novels by Brookner. Thus, the implied reader of Brookner's fiction, analogously to Ruth, is never "annoyed by the excessive geographical information." The names of actual places in France standing for the direct extra-textual references are contrasted with Ruth's planned arrival there, in other words, with an idea, for example, of an imaginary journey. Similarly, Brookner offers a certain conceptual debate which is more universal than a locally conditioned plot. This notional dispute surpasses the limitations of its setting, which resembles Ruth's realization that "some substance [might be hold] beyond the events of this particular evening." Places do not necessarily play a referential role in Brookner's novels – they may and often do stand for specific ideas, attitudes, or cultural environments, which constitutes a strategy typical of the poetic function of literature (Stoff; Sławiński; Lotman; Hirshev). Consequently, the lack of geographical details is also functional for the superimposed senses[72] of Brookner's novels and the last quotation attests to this fact.

In Brookner's writing, even if some parts of the histories of the families' misplacement are signalled in the novels, the profound and complex consequences of this dislocated status for the identity and for the course of lives of the protagonists are usually only implied. Obviously, the Holocaust comes to mind as the main reason for emigration of the families of Jewish origin from the Continent around the time of the Second World War, though it is not stated explicitly. Similarly, Jews and the atrocities which happened to them at that time are never directly mentioned. In the same vein, Sylvester notes the omissions of any references to the persecution of Jews. However, her conclusions are misleading and blur the boundaries between the personal and implied author because she claims that Brookner is mimicking the strategies of the characters she created. Consequently, Brookner, as her character "refuses to name [her] catastrophe" ("Troping the Other" 53). Considering Brookner's biographical details, it might be tempting to reduce the interpretation of her earlier works in a similar vein. In as much as Sylvester's way of argumentation could be easily adopted to analyse the lack of scrupulous information about the past of the characters in *SL*, *P*, *LM*, *HL*, and *FF*, it does limit the role of the narrative strategies and ignores the distinction between the personal author and implied author.

[72] A term borrowed from Sławiński.

An analogous effort to link the details of Brookner's biography with the repetitive dislocated patters of her earlier fiction has been already undertaken by several scholars (Sadler; Skinner; Malcolm; Williams-Wanquet). Though these correlations are not the subject of this study, Brookner's responses to the interviewers' questions offer some additional evidence as for the literary analysis of her fiction. Sylvester concludes that:

> Brookner's responses in the published interviews draw together Englishness and Christianity as indissolubly linked within the mainstream of British culture. They also indicate her belief that personality itself is dependent on whether one is at home in, or feels dislocated from, the culture in which one lives. (48)

Sylvester rightly links the mixed background of the characters with their feelings of otherness. This observation takes us back to Barth's understanding of ethnicity which revolves around the idea of contrasts and boundaries between certain groups and cultures. Christianity might serve as a quite clear category on the basis of which one assesses the membership to a certain ethnic group or lack of it. However, the much more opaque term "Englishness" might constitute one of these "discreet categories" which ultimately result in an onngoing, liminal negotiation of the cultural identity. In such conditions a person is left in the liminal space between the different cultural circles. This ethnic suspension might lead to the intensified sense of otherness since it stems from an inability to fit in any of the two (or more) ethnic groups. Therefore, the fact that Brookner neither names the country where the Dorn family come from nor indicates the Holocaust or Jewishness directly might even further emphasize this ambiguous and liminal state whose only distinctive characterization is otherness devoid of any distinctive identification, memory, or historical retrospection.

Brookner's writing is far from being only a personal strategy of imposing the individual trauma of the author on the inability of her characters to name the atrocities that have happened to them. The novelist's narrative techniques inform us about the extent of the damage done to her characters more by omission than by a direct descriptive elaboration on this matter. The effect is even more evocative since Brookner is well known for her affluent descriptive passages devoted to portraying the inner landscape of the characters. Thus, what Brookner's omissions actually mimic is the general inability to represent the actual individual memory of the most important events which happen to have also a historical importance. A similar literary impotence is pointed by Susan Onega in her analysis of narrative strategies employed by W.G. Sebald in *The Emigrants*:

> to the post-war generations, the discrepancy between the (supposedly objective and teleologically oriented) narratives of history and the (emotionally charged and subjective) records kept in the memory of the survivors becomes a crucial issue that points to the unspeakability of trauma and the limitations of traditional narrative forms to represent it. (293)

Correspondingly, Brookner's way of informing about the unspeakable by the inefficiency of information may be treated as a universal commentary on the faultiness of any representation of memory. It also functions on the narrower scale, to borrow the terminology from other scholars, "as an experience whose atrocity defies representations and which has often been compared to falling into a (mnemonic, temporal, and existential) 'black whole'" (Onega 295).[73] However, some notes of scornful criticism of such a void in Brookner's fiction might be inferred from Sylvester, who writes:

> What one is finally left with as a reader, however, is the simultaneously offered clues for the initiated, and a smattering of exoticism and sadness for the general reader who will probably feel, with Enright, the faint echoes of Jewishness, and the relief that its implications, and especially its recent history, are not explored in any detail. A perfect solution for the English audience Brookner has sought and found. ("Troping the Other" 56–57)

If the avoidance of controversial and troublesome issues was Brookner's conscious quick fix to satisfy the unrefined English reader, the ambience of a nagging irresolution paired with the feeling of aggravating sadness would not constitute the pervasive trademark of her early fiction. Conclusions similar to those offered by Sylvester undermine the role of narrative strategies which reveal more complicated intricacies of the blurred ethnic identity which is always connected with the displacement on other levels of characters' existence in Brookner's novels. Such oversimplified inferences of the narrative inevitably lead to disregard of one of the main themes of these novels, namely, the continual quest for identity. Nonetheless, elsewhere Silvester claims that: "In Anita Brookner's novels, assimilation – the movement between Jewish and English identity – is represented not as an outcome but as an ongoing and incomplete process, in which identities are always in flux" ("The Trauma of Assimilation" 16). It should be noted that this theme has a processual nature and thus cannot be reduced to referential content which merely informs the reader about the exact historical past of the characters. This approach stands in opposition to Michael Bamberg's claims:

[73] Onega refers here to the publication *Between the Urge to Know and the Need to Deny* (2011) by Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué, where the phrase "black hole" is used.

> If past-time narration is triggered by the question "Who am I?," having the narrator's quest for identity or sense of self as its goal, the leeway for ambiguity, transgression of boundaries, or exploration of novel identities is more restricted: the goal is rather to condense and unite, to resolve ambiguity, and to deliver answers that lay further inquiry into past and identity to rest. ("Identity and Narration" para. 5)

Nevertheless, the reason for this past-time narration could be not only the definite answer to the question, but also the portrayal of the impossibility of such an answer. In this case it is exactly "the ambiguity, transgression of boundaries, or exploration of novel identities" which would most adequately inform about the state of characters and their self-recognition. The position of the constant negotiation of the identity of Ruth in *SL*, Kitty in *P*, Frances in *LM*, Edith in *HL*, and the members of the Dorn family in *FF* resembles Bamberg's characteristics of the everyday communicative situation:

> However, the reduction of identity to the depiction of characters and their development in a story leaves out the communicative space within which identities are negotiated in interaction with other. Limiting narratives to what they are about restricts identity to the referential or cognitive level of speech activities and disregards real life where identities are under construction, formed, performed, and change over time. It is within the space of everyday talk in interaction with others that narration plays its constitutive role in the formation and navigation of identities as part of everyday practices and that the potential for orientation toward human values takes form. ("Identity and Narration" para. 6)

It is tempting to apply Bamberg's assertions about identity in everyday speech to Brookner's fiction because they seem to emphasize the processual context of identity more than his claims about the fictitious narratives. Once the last quote is referred to the fictional narrative, it provokes three pertinent conclusions for the research of the novels which are subject of this study. Firstly, the issue of identity in the novels cannot be reduced to the level of plot, so the narrative strategies should occupy the most important sphere of analysis (the focus should be placed on *the way* these stories are told not merely on *what* is told). Secondly, the communicative situation in which the identity is constructed could be translated into the level of communication between the narrator and the narratee in the text as it is the most dominant communicative level of the epic mode. Thirdly, the realm of the oral interaction, according to Bamberg, is the sphere of negotiating the boundary which overlaps with Barth's understanding of the role of the boundary between the ethnic groups. Thus, in the case of Brookner's novels the interaction between the narrator and the narratee would be the level of negotiating, demarking, and constructing ethnic identities of the characters, namely the liminality of their ethnic self-ascription. In consequence, the narrative strategies and their role in demonstrating the ethnic

membership are the subject of analysis in this chapter.

2.2 Familiar Strangeness and Strange Familiarity

Family houses in the discussed novels constitute one of the most striking fields of displacement and clashes of cultures which could be interpreted as the places of creation and negotiation of the protagonists' ethnic identities. Let us go through some of the semantic processes proposed by structuralist scholars (Sławiński; Stoff;) which will help us to identify the mechanics of literary space of domestic realms in Brookner's novels on the level of description, scenery and its superimposed senses. The elements of the structuralist analysis will be complemented by constructing semantic fields of the particular spaces of family houses in vein of Lotman's conceptions of binary oppositions. This will enable a broader understanding of ethnicity in view of cultural patterns and tropes present in Brookner's early fictions, including the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia.

On the whole, the interiors of family houses where the older members of the family reside are gloomy, crammed, and dark. It seems that this ambience implies the characteristics of these first-generation immigrants, their age, conservatism, pervasive sadness, melancholy and nostalgia, but also the feeling of certain danger, threat, most probably the result of past experience in their homeland. Notwithstanding this sombre quality of family houses, some isolated rooms in them seem to function as contrastive areas which further enhance the overall gloominess. This seems to be the case in *SL* where the interiors occupied by Mrs Weiss's English daughter-in-law (protagonist's mother, who is a comedy actress) are described as filled with objects connoting youth, frivolity, and chaos:

> If the dining room belonged to her grandmother, the drawing room was Helen's. It *was light and bright and frivolous* and it had a piano and a lot of photographs in silver frames and *cut glass vases* filled with slightly *stale flowers,* and *a white carpet*. It looked exactly like the set for one of Helen's more successful comedy roles and she used it as an *extension of her dressing room*; women friends dropped in on those afternoons when Helen had no matinée and they all drank tea and nibbled biscuits and smoked. There was a great deal of frail china, collected by an aunt on George's side, in cabinets; never used because *Helen was careless about these things and preferred the kitchen cups*. (*SL* 13; emphasis mine)

The space occupied by Helen is characterised by the attributes and qualities that are in

stark contrast to those found in Mrs Weiss' dining room. Thus, Helen's space is crammed with objects made of materials which reflect light such as silver or glass. This fleeting play of light resonates with the "frivolous" atmosphere of the room emphasized by the presence of the piano. Even if the china belonged originally to George's (Mrs Weiss' son's) ancestors, it seems that it is placed in Helen's room only because of its delicate look. However, the usage of the china requires the attention which Helen lacks. Hence, the fragile family dishes are devoid of its function in Helen's room as her superficial nature does not value the traditions of her husband's family. Helen is preoccupied mostly with her own appearance and pleasures but is not thoughtful enough to create the restful space herself. Having her needs fulfilled by others, she is not able to invest her energy to control her environment. The "slightly stale flowers" and kitchen cups she uses signal her future demise. Thus, Helen's room functions metaphorically – it represents Helen's character, and, more universally, the English reality Ruth Weiss's grandmother had to face. When the dining room, as the space assigned to older Mrs Weiss, is juxtaposed with Helen's room, the binary oppositions emerge. On further inspection these antagonistic features demonstrate the contrast of mentalities and experience in a truly Lotmanian understanding of opposing literary spaces which constitute contrasting semantic fields. Mrs Weiss' part of the house (living room) is heavy, dark, adorned with damask fabric and filled with ancestral furniture, while Helen's is "an extension of her dressing room." Thus, this scenery designates Helen's disregard of conventions and her attitude towards life as more light-hearted, concerned mostly with appearance. Helen's living space is also a form of the extension of her professional life since being an actress she has to change her clothes routinely and treat her body as a tool. Consequently, Helen's part of the house is neither intimate nor public, suggesting that Helen, this English wife of George Weiss, lacks the sense of privacy or devotion to family. Thus, according to Sławiński's notion of superimposed senses of literary space, if we treat Helen and her room as the representation of Englishness, then Englishness can be understood as an abstract concept, superficial and devoid of substance.

Turning to Mrs Weiss' space, it is comprised of contradictory qualities as is evident in the following description:

> Mrs Weiss had brought with her from Berlin pieces of furniture of incredible magnitude in dark woods which looked as though they had absorbed the blood of horses. Wardrobes with massive doors and fretted cornices seemed to house regiments of midget Renaissance *condottieri*. Sideboards, in the Louis XIII style, fumed and contorted, with

> breaks and returns in their brooding silhouettes, supported *épergnes*, silver cake stands, entrée dishes, while cupboards opened beneath on to sauce boats, platters and wine coolers. There was a separate press for the table linen, and green baize drawers in stumpy dressers held the knives and forks. (*SL* 12)

The fragment above begins in a strange, mysterious way only to give way to a simple enumeration of objects at its end. Instead of defining the colour of the furniture as red, the phrase "the blood of horses" is employed. Such a depiction of colour constructs the military context with other words like: "magnitude," "regiments" and "*condottieri*." If the Jewish ancestry of Ruth's grandparents is taken into account then the "magnitude" may allude not only to the significance of the furniture but also of dramatic events of the Second World War. Thus, it may be inferred that Berlin functions here not only as Mrs Weiss' former place of residence but also as a metonymy standing for Nazi Germany and its persecution of Jews. When the fact that the horses' blood could be seen usually during the battle before the Second World War is taken into consideration, then the hints that the description of the dining room metaphorically suggests war are even more plausible.

Analogous militaristic associations were found by Stetz who noted that "Anita Brookner demonstrated her obsession with the domestic realm as a potential warzone" (156). Similarly, the "Renaissance *condottieri*" would function here as a metaphor of people who could commit to military actions just for profit not because of their convictions.[74] However, their importance is diminished as they are described as "midget" and the wardrobe is big enough to place the whole regiment there. Correspondingly, the Weiss family was able to escape the persecutions and found themselves in exile in London, however the shadows of the dim history never vanished completely as the hints of Ruth's ancestors' sad and mysterious past appear throughout the novel. Thus, not only are the events from the past enigmatic but also their exact effect upon the present. The furniture seems to mirror this state of affairs as it is dark and ornamented in complicated patterns "with breaks and returns."

Nonetheless, this solemn portrayal of the dining room changes into a precise listing of dishes. It resembles the museum inventory rather than the presentation of family home space. The dark colours, antique furniture, and heavy fabrics impose the stern ambience different from the common interiors from the second half of the 20th century when the plot of *SL* is set. Therefore, it might seem that Ruth did not feel safe and

[74] In Reineissance *condottieri* was a term used for the leaders of militant groups which could be hired by Italian city-states.

comfortable there, and the following sentence may attest to this: "To the child [Ruth] it seemed as if all dining rooms must be dark, as if sodden with a miasma of gravy and tears" (*SL* 12). Indeed, it is difficult to compose a more hopelessly sad picture that would so skilfully emphasize how the traditions and rituals often hide the tragic family history or broken relationships. In the quoted passage, the familial traditions and rituals are symbolized with gravy connoting traditional dinner, whereas broken relationships are expressed with tears, the obvious sign of sadness. The two symbolic meanings merge, therefore stressing the fact that for Ruth home and sadness are inseparable notions.

A similar amalgamation of comforting domesticity and lethargic melancholy is present in the characterization of the house of the grandparents of Kitty Maule, the protagonist of *P*:

> her grandparents' house in the suburbs, where, once inside the front door, one encountered the smells, the furnishings, the continual discussion that might take place in an apartment house in Paris or perhaps further east. (*P* 6)

The importance of the door as the border which delimits Kitty's grandparents' house recalls Foucault's concept of heterotopias and van Gennep's observations: "Precisely: the door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with the new world" (*The Rites of Passage* 20). This reflection was later restated and explored in the context of literary studies (Rust; Dilworth). In fact, in *P* one may also notice that behind the front door of Louise and Vadim's house, even sensual experience signals that it is the threshold of the different realm. The stimulation of the senses of smell, sight (furnishings) and hearing (sounds of discussions) indicate an almost multidimensional transition.

Another important element that we should acknowledge in this passage is the act of Kitty's entering her grandparent's house. The significance of entering domestic space was already noted by van Gennep in the quoted passage. Strangely enough, when Kitty goes through the door of her family house, she does not cross the boundary "between the foreign and domestic worlds" but rather she experiences a different kind of foreignness. The space of the London house of Louise and Vadim, Kitty's grandparents who were immigrants from France and Russia respectively, is permeated with nostalgia. Such an ambience contributes to the feeling of displacement. Therefore, although their house is located in the suburbs of London, its atmosphere reminds Kitty of Paris or even more

distant places. In a similar manner, Mrs Weiss in *SL* designated her areas in the house by furnishing them with her belongings from Berlin and incorporating her strict household order, which made the impression that the house is somehow dislocated. Consequently, the protagonists of *SL* and *P* paradoxically associate domestic space with displacement.

The liminal quality of such a dislocated place lays in the fact that irrespective of its topographical location all its characteristics indicate a different localization. Strangely enough, the protagonists in the discussed novels become to identify the unstable, confusing liminality of their family houses as the distinguishing factor of what is familiar, known, and stable. Moreover, if Ruth in *SL* considered the "miasma of gravy and tears" as a standard and adequate symbolic characterization of a dining room, then Kitty's perception of Louise and Vadim's house seems analogous also in this respect:

> An air of dimness, of stuffy comfort, an emanation of ceremonious meals, long past, an airlessness, hours spent on the routine matters of rising and eating and drinking coffee; an insistence on food, the centrality of food; great sadness, organizing the simple empty days, but never despair, never the complaint known to English doctors as depression. But sadness, much sadness. (*P* 6)

As this passage demonstrates, the depiction of the suburban house in *P* is based on the predominance of food and sadness. This fragment might easily serve as the elaboration of the brief portrayal from *SL* because the passage from *P* seems to define what "gravy" stands for: unrelenting and desperate attempt to regulate and balance life with monotonous and rigid timetable of shared meals. The irregularity of the first sentence of the quote, of the substantial length, dull rhythm, and repetitions, parallels the strange monotony of the house. Moreover, the word "sadness" repeated three times functions as an echo to "tears" employed in the description in *SL*. Notably, the emphasis placed on the fact that the sadness of Kitty's family is not a common English complaint suggests that even their melancholy stems from a different national mentality. This further enhances the incongruous estrangement characteristic of her grandparents. Whilst "a miasma of gravy and tears" from *SL* and the more elaborate description of the house from *P* might seemingly suggest the bleak picture of the domestic space, the characterization of this domain in both novels falls in the already described pattern of "familiar strangeness." This is to be noticed in phrases like "stuffy comfort" and "oddly comfortable," both of which function as oxymorons. The adjective "stuffy" indicates stifling, airless, or even oppressive quality and yet it is coupled with "comfort." In this way, the reminiscences of the paradoxical nature of the atmosphere of the house instigate Kitty's unexpected

relaxedness in other spaces where liminal situations take place. One of such cases is her visit to a clairvoyant, which is described as " an initiation ten times worse than her lecture would be" (*P* 69) thus as a terrifying ordeal. Nevertheless, Kitty feels secure in the space of this liminal experience: "Madame Eva's consulting room was small, dark, dingy, indeterminate and *oddly comfortable*" (*P* 69; emphasis mine). The emphasized words mirror the contradiction of the phrase "stuffy comfort," so it might be inferred that there is a connection between the perception of the domestic space of Kitty's grandparents and the clairvoyant's room. In other words, Kitty might find even the strange place comfortable precisely because it resonates with the ambience of the house she knew from her childhood.

If in *SL* separate areas of the house are valorised according to the semantic fields connoted with Englishness and European past, in *P* we have to do with the two spaces standing for certain national mentalities. When Kitty Maule returns from the house of her French and Russian grandparents to her own place, it is described in connection to the photograph of her English father who died before her birth:

> She had *two homes*: one a small flat in Chelsea, where she kept *her father's photograph*, taken on his last leave; the other, her grandparents' house in the suburbs. (*P* 6; emphasis mine)

> When Kitty went back to her other home, the rational little flat in Chelsea, it seemed to her *quite empty of everything* […]. She would survey the *empty street*, vaguely disquieted, *longing to be the one thing or the other*, for she felt that she was not what she seemed. She looked enquiringly at *the photograph of her father*, whom she thought of as '*Father*.' (*P* 7; emphasis mine)

The two physical houses may function as the metaphors of two cultural traditions, two national ancestries. In contrast to the grandparents' house full of odours, stuff, and noise, the English house is empty, vague, distant, unanimated as the picture of the dead father. It is rather a certain model than a real thing, similarly to the capitalized word father that connotes respect but not intimacy of the real experience of paternal care. This duality of two traditions is manifested by the descriptions where contrastive features characterize one family space (as in *SL*), or are distributed over two houses (as in *P*). This results in two phenomena: firstly, the paradox of "odd comfort," and, secondly, the heterotopic quality of such spaces.

The houses of the immigrant family members could be categorized as heterotopia-like spaces because, as Foucault writes, a principle of heterotopia is a certain temporal

and cultural dislocation in relation to its surroundings ("Of Other Spaces"). This is the case of the already described houses in *SL* and *P*, both of which seem to function in different geographical locations and periods than the settings of the novels suggest. As it was already mentioned, in *P* Kitty's grandparents' house is described in a way that implies a separate universe, set outside London in some continental metropolis with its own, distinctive sensory experiences, cuisine, language, and traditions. The discrepancy between the outside world and her grandparents' house causes troublesome realignment when Kitty comes back from the visits to her English friends' houses (*P* 12). The noted discrepancy during the visits implies a distant journey as if her family home was really abroad. Moreover, while paying a visit to Louise and Vadim, the grandparents seem to function in different time and Kitty knows that she can only connect with them when she talks about the past (*P* 15). Analogously, the part of the house where Mrs Weiss spends time in *SL* is furnished only with antique objects bought before the Second World War. The dining room evokes an old continental interior of distant provenance. Moreover, Mrs Weiss cultivates her old family customs, like cooking food specific for Jewish cuisine and keeping continental mealtimes. The household rules practiced by her seem generally more formal and archaic than the prevalent approach in the time when the action is set.

Similarly, on the surface, Sofka's house in *FF* has an appearance of a stable household of a wealthy family. However, on closer investigation, there is something menacing about it – the strong insistence on preserving etiquette, decorum, and conventions brought from her homeland bears some alarming quality. Perhaps to a lesser degree but the Dorns' household also disturbs the perception of time and space. Though their status is diminished by abrupt immigration, its matriarch is portrayed as an aristocrat from the previous century never bothered by fears of bankruptcy and social rejection that are actually the ever-present anticipation of the novel: "On the whole, life is very pleasant, very comfortable. In her drawing-room, lightly touching roses brought in the morning by the gardener, Sofka smiles, listens, sits contented. Being a lady, she does very little, but her house is well run, as it should be, her monogrammed linen immaculate, and the soft sweet food that she prefers always lavish" (*FF* 28). The descriptions of the house often include its peculiar silence (only sometimes disturbed by distant echoes of Mimi and Betty practising their scales) and it seems that time is measured there by the regularity of coffee and marzipan cake being served in a manner specific to German-speaking countries. Peculiarly enough, the unmoved orderliness of the Dorns' house and its archaic

representation contributes to its tense and unrealistic ambience.[75] These heterotopic tropes suggest the disturbance of a unitary chronotope which is also observed by Mayer when she comments on a popular attitude of Brookner's ficitions commentators: "For reviewers, there is something unresolved about the combinations of Brookner's representation of historical time and behaviour" (51). Some of these multiple chronotopes which Brookner's novels are comprised of are instrumental in creating heterotopia-like houses, which in turn could be interpreted as another strategy aimed at conveying the acute otherness of the protagonists' ancestry. The houses pictured in a heterotopic way seem to be countries within countries and thus protagonists like Ruth and Kitty are perceived as displaced women navigating completely disparate fields of various ethnicities – these of their grandparents' European past and their contemporary, English one.

Thus, the portrayal of family houses plays an essential role presenting the cultural and national liminality of the protagonists. The flat rented by Ruth in *SL*, however, functions as the representation of the protagonist's unsuccessful attempt to mature and form a romantic relationship. It is bare, empty, and minimalistic, so strongly contrastive to a dark and heavy furnished family house. Similarly, Betty's (Sofka's daughter's) desire for lighter interiors symbolises the need to begin a new stage in life and getting rid of the past. But, the protagonists' relationships with men, who are usually English thriving students or intellectuals, are never finalized successfully. Moreover, the protagonists are often forced to return to the previous space to take care of their parents. It is as if their transgression into adulthood is not possible because of national liminality (symbolised by family houses) which does not allow them to progress and define themselves in other areas.

Similarly, within the professional space of university or the libraries where they work, they are also held in transitional space. Such an indecisive, paradoxical ambience of the space in which the protagonists are situated suggests the space where they were brought up. That is to say that the cultural, ethnic liminality generated other kinds of psychological and social dislocations which thwart the protagonists' desire for stability and social acceptance on many levels. Their life resembles the passage from one

[75] Phyllis Lassner commenting on "the illusory nature of domestic protection and stability" of the house in *FF* notes: "The Dorns may have escaped the brutal material and political realities of being homeless and stateless but they are haunted by them nonetheless" (51).

heterotopia to another and finding in it an "odd comfort." And though a typical Brooknerian protagonist is not an extremely satisfied person, it is someone whose "oddly comfortable" liminal position enables their endless quest for the essence of identity, challenging the superficial concept of Englishness, femininity, maturity, or respectability.

While discussing space, *Look at Me* has been purposedly left out as it constitutes a seemingly separate category because Frances Hinton's parents are not foreigners as they come to London from Surrey. Nevertheless, the way they live and the space they occupy hint that they are also dislocated and their position resembles the one of a refugee. The flat they buy in Maida Vale in London is furnished with the most peculiar, strange objects belonging to the previous owner. Therefore, we could consider Frances' parents' situation as a variation of inner exile. Frances herself refers to the flat as to a strange and isolating place:

> I am hardly aware of this place as home, although I have always lived here, and, as the flat now belongs to me there is no real reason for me to move, particularly as prices are so high at the moment. Indeed I am so excessively comfortable, and my life is so regulated, that the question only rarely crosses my mind. […] But it is very difficult to invite anyone here. […] And I can see that I should have a hard time disowning the furniture, of which I have grown inexplicably fond, although I spent some of my most critical years grumbling about it. The wind of change would have to blow very hard indeed for me to feel that I had at last taken possession of this place and was entitled to make it my own. (*LM* 23)

It transpires that Frances got used to discomfort and the only ease she is able to find is within the troublesome, secluding conditions she has become to tolerate. The unattractive space which she is not able to leave could be interpreted as another version of "odd comfort," that is to say, the paradoxical feeling of stability in unstable surroundings which has already been discussed in reference to other Brooknerian protagonists. Moreover, in the passage, Frances states twice that she cannot consider this place home – at the beginning and at the end of it. The sense of foreignness could be perceived in Frances' attitude although, unlike other protagonists, no foreign ancestors are mentioned in *LM*. The strangeness of Frances is accentuated by the fact that she feels that her flat, so the space connoting her family, her background and being the starting point of her journey towards life and adulthood is the underlying reason for her social isolation. Similarly, Edith, Ruth, and Kitty also could not fully integrate with their peers and colleagues because of the social incompatibility caused by the origins of their ancestors. These mappings further point to the already mentioned conclusion of Stetz that, though devoid

of most implicit markers of Jewish ethnicity, *LM* is a portrayal of the secular Jewish family. The more the literary space of *LM* is scrutinized, the more factors support this thesis. Frances' flat is situated in Maida Vale and is usually characterized in reference to her parents' anxious mode of existence which evokes the uncertainty of recent immigrants' life:

> this extremely peculiar décor, which looks like something sprung directly from the brain of an ambitious provincial tart. Times being what they were, my parents did nothing to change it; they were in any case too wrapped up in each other, too fearful for the safety of each other, to care for their surroundings, so long as these were safe, warm, comfortable, and could keep danger at bay. Even when life settled down and became more normal than they ever dared to hope, they changed nothing, perhaps out of superstition. (LM 24)

The interior and the lack of change of its look give evidence to Frances' parents withdrawal. Their life aim is to survive and they seem to fear any action as if it would jeopardize their security. Thus, the flat functions as a comfort zone which distances them from the outside world that is perceived as dangerous. Although the actual threat is never verbalized, still their existence is subordinated to the avoidance of danger. Although the actual design of the flat does not corelate with Frances' parents' life choices and personalities, they do not introduce any alternations due to their withdrawn attitude. In the fragment referring to Frances' home, the description of her parents' shy characters occurs immediately after the mentioning of "an ambitious provincial tart." This contradiction creates a paradoxical image of Frances' surroundings and signals the disquieting atmosphere of her house. Moreover, it hints that the efforts to create safe and comfortable space have failed. The inconspicuous life of the Hintons stands in stark contrast to the bizarre furnishings of the flat:

> That is how I came to grow up with all manner of terrible cut-glass mirrors with bevelled edges hanging from chains over tiled fireplaces, shaggy off-white fitted carpets, zig-zag patterned rugs, nests of walnut tables, semicircular armchairs upholstered in pale creaking hide, standard lamps with polygonal ivory satin shades, white wrought-iron trellises over the radiators, a dining table massive enough to overshadow the ten dining room chairs whose seats are composed of beige brocade secured with brass studs, divan beds with headboards which sweep round to accommodate bedside cabinets, dressing tables with sheets of glass covering the surfaces and triple mirrors, and, *pièce de résistance*, a collection of china and glass birds, some rather large, which march along the shelves of highly polished pale wood bookcases with sliding doors made of yet more glass. (*LM* 24)

This remarkably long sentence epitomizes the ambience of the Maida Vale flat. The

quotation ceases to describe the flat as it develops into a lengthy and quite tiresome enumeration of the random pieces of furniture and decoration. This long list of intricately designed objects mirrors the stifling, overcrowded atmosphere of the interiors where these objects are situated. On the linguistic level the reader might perceive what Mario Praz calls *horror vacui* when he analyses Victorian houses. Praz uses the term previously reserved for antique, Celtic, or baroque composition of the painting surface to criticize the rooms of that era. According to Praz, the affluence of decor in the 19th-century rooms in Britain precluded the appreciation of it (1964). In this way, *LM* incarnates Brookner's incessant tendency to refer to the 19th-century values and literary heritage. It seems as if Frances' domestic realm metaphorically linked to ancestry, alike other Brooknerian protagonists' family houses, is of a different chronotope than the outside world. Moreover, the bizarre commodities of her flat create the space where she has no room for her own expression. What strikes one as being pertinent in reference to the discussion of ancestry, is the fact that all these peculiar elements of furnishings belonged to a complete stranger who Frances' parents bought the flat from. Since the most important and thus exposed pieces in any household are usually the inherited family valuables, the arrangement of the decorations in the flat in Maida Vale has some quality of borrowed heritage. Thus, this version of ethnic liminality seems even more acute, striking, and thought provoking when the protagonist's parents are of (at least partly) British heritage and yet devoid of any kind of personal memory and feeling of belonging in their own country.

From this perspective, *horror vacui* of the flat mirrors the fear of emptiness in the domestic space which traditionally stood for the allegory of homeland. The lack of the feeling of inclusion and the multitude of random objects both express the fear of personal emptiness which demands to be filled with anything. One may even venture to interpret it further as a fear of non-existence hence Frances' parents did not endeavour to change the commodities they already found in the flat. Moreover, such a behaviour might stem from the fear that, like refugees, one day they might be forced to move again. This implies their liminal, transitory condition. The way they are described suggests that to a certain extent they are devoid of any characteristic personal features. Frances is also presented as a very distant, withdrawn person who seems to be quite restrained in expressing her emotions. Thus, if the visual qualities were to be applied, the whole family could be interpreted as rather transparent and the mismatched patterns of the house design do not denote them but rather show through them. This, in turn, emphasizes their incomplete existence.

Thus, borrowing Stoff's notion of functionanalysing, the domestic spaces in the discussed novels demonstrate the semantic quality; they are employed to demonstrate the troublesome, inconsistent ethnic identity of the protagonists. The family homes function as a metaphorical realm of the protagonist' foreign, Jewish (or implied Jewish) ancestry which seems to be neither fully assimilated nor completely absent from the experience of Ruth, Kitty, and Frances. Moreover, the transition between the cultures is not portrayed as frictionless. The crossing of the boundary of particular subsets is by all means possible for the characters but it leaves traces in the form of the absence of total familiarity and comfort. The construction of domestic spaces gives the impression that the protagonists will always exist in the paradoxical reality where familiarity is forever linked with the feeling of strangeness.

2.3 Exile All Inclusive

One may quite easily form a false impression that *HL* does not tackle the theme of ethnic identity of the protagonist as strongly as other Brookner's novels. This could be strengthened by the fact that the main plot, with few exceptions, takes place in the territory which is neither connected to the city of Edith's upbringing (London) nor with the origin of her immigrant family (Vienna). It might seem that Edith is purposely placed in, historically neutral, Switzerland in order to be presented in a completely anational context. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the novel the issue of spatial boundaries oscillates also around the lack of stability:

> And within an extraordinarily short time we were there (I notice that I say 'there' and not 'here') and he put me in a taxi, and after about half an hour I ended up here (and it is beginning to be 'here' rather than 'there') and very soon I shall have to unpack and wash and tidy my hair and go downstairs and try to find a cup of tea. (*HL* 11)

The quotation manifests how the change of place entails the shift of perspective resulting in the perceptual distortion. Such a deformation of perceptual unity is also characteristic of the position of Brooknerian protagonists who find it difficult to place themselves on either side of the cultural border between their family and English society. In this subtle manner the fragment introduces one of the main themes of the novel which touches upon dislocation.

The provisional state of Edith's position is portrayed through spatial but also

temporal references. The first ones could be immediately noted whereas the later require a more general scrutiny of Edith. In the book *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* Luke Strongman concludes: "Edith's Woolfian mask is a persona for the modern female novelist […]. The legacy of empire in *Hotel du Lac* is signified by the nostalgia of romantic adventure associated with the spread of empire, a nostalgia that can only be experienced at second hand in the ironic and self-consuming culture of aftermath" (237). The grotesque effect of the explicit references to Woolf in *HL* emphasizes Edith's dramatic maladjustment to modern times. As Strongman hints at the nostalgia for the values and ambience of the British imperial domination, he also demonstrates that Edith functions beyond the temporal frames. Her frequent internal monologues often consist of memories, fragments and broken passages about her parents' youth spent in Vienna. She retells the stories from, what seems to be, a different era. Thus, Edith actually meets the description of a liminal subject who exists in provisional time and space.

Moreover, the aftermath of the collapse of the multicultural British Empire which Strongman alludes to seems to be echoed in Edith's personal disintegration. Hence the desire (though quickly abandoned) to marry Mr Neville, a seemingly perfect Englishman whom she meets in a Swiss resort, could be also interpreted as a path to integration with English culture. This situation conforms to Brookner's pattern because a yearning to become a wife of a universally desired English bachelor takes place also in *SL*, *P*, and *LM*. In each of these novels such a prospective marital union is perceived as a potential unity of the protagonist and Englishness; however, in each of these cases the intention turns out to be futile, further adding to the liminal position.

It appears that in *HL* Edith's ethnic and social otherness is further intensified by her childlessness. Following this line of reasoning, the absent children in Edith's life are substituted with her writing. These texts authored by her also function as a justification of her as a productive member of society. She does not produce any children but by creating the "female novels" she seemingly becomes a fertile and useful person, at least within the social frames designed for women. Edith produces texts in Barbara Cartland's vein, her novels belonging to a popular genre in Britain are "consumed" by its citizens. Though Edith herself falls prey to this conservative patriarchal discourse, she nevertheless actively takes part in its reinforcement. This situation may be treated as an exemplification of the Foucauldian idea of the hegemonic power of discourse and the consequent lack of agency which is imposed by the dominant narrative. Similarly, Bourdieu's notion of habitus could be employed here to understand Edith's repetitions of

social practices, even if they do not aid in her existence. Thus, Edith micro-story is also embedded in a macro-narrative about a traditional place of a woman in British society. Edith is sent to the Swiss resort to "repent" a socially unforgivable "sin" of resigning at a very last minute from a marriage of convenience; a union with an Englishman, Geoffrey, arranged by her acquaintance. Bearing in mind the symbolic role of a marriage with a British man in many Brookner's novels, Edith's negotiations with the generally accepted role of a woman in contemporary British society have also the undertones of the mediation of her ethnic and national identity.

Notwithstanding Edith's initial desire to become socially accepted, the stay in the hotel takes an unexpected turn: though the aim of Edith's "curative stay" is to become "properly apologetic," i.e. she is to be even more submissive and ready to comply with contemporary standards of womanhood in English society, the target is not reached. Such a plot twist, goes in line with Turner, who claims that extra-ordinary potential of liminality, even though it is painful and intimidating, lurks in its unexpected results and the subversive quality (*The Ritual Process*). This gradual change might be also attributed to what Ortner conceptualizes as loose structure: social actors who are neither free agents nor completely determined products may explore the inherent contradictions of habitus. Analogously, Edith is portrayed as a person who, on the one hand, complies with social pressure (agrees to marry Geoffrey, takes into consideration marriage with Mr Neville) but, on the other, defies it (finally resigns from marriage and has a simultaneous extramarital affair). At the same time, though on a deeper level, Edith also appears to be negotiating her ethnic and cultural affiliation as she probes and scrutinizes the implicit discrepancies of her ancestry and relationship with Britain. This is only possible in the secluded, sterile conditions of the Swiss hotel out of season where Edith has a chance to dissect, though not in an orderly or chronological manner, various factors influencing her predicament, including her upbringing.

Though *HL* begins as a recounting of the most recent events in Edith's life, there are parts which point to thought-provoking hints of the long-lasting effects of the ethnically liminal conditions of the environment where the protagonist was brought up. One of such moments is developed via Edith's reminiscence of the summers spent in Vienna, her mother's place of origin. A holiday spent in Austria was infused with the atmosphere of angry bitterness over the sophisticated life Edith's mother and her sisters led in their youth. Definitely the atmosphere of the Viennese house is the one of regret-wielding and full of strange sounding words. It is hardly surprising that the child could

feel completely out of the context:

> When the sisters found each other again, many years later, together with their cousin Resi, it was to outbid other with stories of horrific boredom of husband become too puny to interest them […]. Annoyance and frustration blazed from their every pore; in their mother's dark drawing room the air was filled with dissension, with ugliness. They were now heavy women, punishingly corseted, with badly pencilled eyebrows, and large, hard bosoms. They whipped themselves into a blaze of retrospective fury, voices raised, coffee spilling from their cups. "*Schrecklich! Schrecklich!*" they shouted. "*Ach, du Schreck!*" Seven-year-old Edith, hiding behind Grossmama Edith's chair, heard with relief her father's key in the door and ran to him, crying. The brutal sound of the words, which she did not understand, hurt her. Her father, guessing, smiled palely, and suggested that they go for a walk. He took her to the Kunsthistorisches Museum and tried to explain the pictures to her, but she pressed her wet and red face against his hand and would not listen. And when he stopped longingly before a picture of men lying splayed in a cornfield under a hot sun she burst into further tears, and he bent down and smoothed her hair back from her forehead. Now, Edith, he had said, wiping her eyes with his handkerchief, this is when character tells. (*HL* 48)

The distress of the child is not explained directly. One might suspect that the loud, aggressive, and relentless behaviour of the grown-up ladies might frighten little Edith and the foreign language reinforced this impression. Edith's mother and aunts are portrayed in a nearly monstrous manner. Their melodramatic, excessive, loud complaints about adult life and longing for the bygone youth are further highlighted with the phrases indicating their aging looks ("heavy women, punishingly corseted, with badly pencilled eyebrows, and large, hard bosoms"). The women voice their dissatisfaction in a noisy and exaggerated fashion which provokes Edith's emotional reaction and proves that the space where she felt dislocated from the very young age affected her deeply. The older relatives who missed the past so vehemently contributed not only to her spatial but also temporal dislocation.

The relief for the fretful child is provided by the appearance of her father whose modest description constitutes a sharp contrast to the representation of Edith's maternal relatives. Consequently, his idea to visit the Viennese Kunsthistorisches Museum could be interpreted as an expected alleviation of his daughter's anxiety and the gallery space as a peaceful area (in contrast to her mother's drawing room). Perplexingly enough, one particular picture referred to in the fragment above provokes an impulsive response. The title of the painting is not mentioned directly, but its brief characterization could suggest that it is *The Harvesters* painted by Peter Bruegel the Elder in 1565 (fig.1.). Nowadays the painting is located in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; however, *The*

Metropolitan Museum of Art Guide discloses that it was purchased somewhere between 1902–1920.[76] *The Harvesters* constitutes a part of Bruegel's series of commissioned paintings depicting different seasons of the year. The Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna still displays *The Gloomy Day*, *The Hunters in the Snow*, and *The Return of the Herd* – other pictures from the cycle. This presumptive evidence hints that the words "a picture of men lying splayed in a cornfield under a hot sun" could indeed refer to Bruegel's *The Harvesters*.



Fig. 1. *The Harvesters*, Peter Bruegel the Elder, 1565, oil on wood, 119cm x 162cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

Brookner remains one of the most renowned art historians of the 20th century, therefore her employment of different texts of culture should be understood as a very deliberate and conscious artistic act of intertextual dialogue. Though indirect, the

[76] This is what *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Guide* states about the circumstances of this purchase:

> But in 1902, everything changed. Jacob S. Rogers, an eccentric businessman who made locomotives in Paterson, New Jersey, and by all accounts was more paranoid misanthrope than museum lover, left the Met the extraordinary sum of 15 million to be used solely for the purchase of art. It was a gift that transformed the Met from a struggling institution to a powerful force in the art market, and put the Museum in a position to acquire original works of art. Within the first twenty years following the establishment of the Rogers Fund, the Met bought Bruegel's *The Harvesters*. (251)

reference to *The Harvesters* seems to be another example of such an activity. The picture alluded to in the novel is considered a milestone in the art of landscape painting, as is stated in its description in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Guide*:

> Through his remarkable sensitivity to nature's workings, Bruegel created a watershed in the history of Western art, in which the religious pretext for landscape painting was suppressed in favor of a new humanism. Bruegel's depiction of the local scene is not idealized but rather based on observation of nature and human activities. The vastness of the panorama across the rest of the composition is not on the labors that mark the seasons of the year, but on the atmosphere and the transformation of the landscape itself. (251)

The novelty of Bruegel's famous painting stems from the secularity of the depicted scene and the dominant presence of the space itself. It portrays the workers in the field and the ships looming in the distance. These elements are instrumental in demonstrating the process of production and consumption of food as well as the dominance of Belgian fleet. Thus, *The Harvesters* is a painting about the role of people in the economy of a country. The landscape gives the impression to be a domineering part of the composition equally to the workers, hence it illustrates the idea of a country as the outcome of collective effort to achieve stability and affluence. This reading of *The Harvesters* goes in line with the description of the hotel surroundings, where Edith is staying: "For this was a land of prudently harvested plenty, a land which had conquered human accidents, leaving only the weather distressingly beyond control" (*HL*8). The striking link to harvest in both these descriptions, that is of Switzerland and of Bruegel's painting, contributes to a common semantic field designating an economically stable country where its citizens find themselves to be productive members of society. Harvesting brings to mind the process of production, a reasonably planned and executed activity which grants reward, peace, and stability. Traditionally, gathering of crops was a group activity that entailed strong, reliable social relationships. Such a web of meaning, associated with land, production, and security sheds some light on the emotional reaction of Edith's father. It indicates that, though in a different way than Edith's mother, her father also felt disconnected from a stable national structure. Moreover, even as a little girl Edith also did not feel that she belonged to the social order symbolized by *The Harvesters* because at the sight of the painting "she burst into further tears" (*HL* 48). Hence, the protagonist is portrayed as a person who from an early age constantly dwells in places which feel alien and threatening. The sceneries of her mother's drawing room as well as the museum space constitute the spheres of dislocation, anxiety, and disparity. It might be inferred then that this national

disconnection and final inability to adjust anywhere, even after changing one setting into another, are the superimposed senses attached to these spaces. Thus, the land is not only a background to the story but bears semantic importance and is regularly brought to the attention throughout the narrative of *HL*.

Landscape is also mentioned when Edith analyses the hotel brochure. This is also the day when the weather brightens:

> It was to be supposed that beyond the grey garden, which seemed to sprout nothing but the stiffish leaves of some unfamiliar plant, lay the vast grey lake, spreading like an anaesthetic towards the invisible further shore, and beyond that, in imagination only, yet verified by the brochure, the peak of the Dent d'Oche, on which snow might already be slightly and silently falling. (*HL* 7)

> The dense cloud that descended for days at a time and then vanished without warning to reveal a new landscape, full of colour and incident: boats skimming on the lake, passengers at the landing stage, an open air market, the outline of the gaunt remains of a thirteenth-century castle, seams of white on the far mountains, and on the cheerful uplands to the south a rising backdrop of apple trees, the fruit sparkling with emblematic significance. For this was a land of prudently harvested plenty, a land which had conquered human accidents, leaving only the weather distressingly beyond control. (*HL* 7–8)

Though not completely accurately, these fragments could be used to describe the general outline of the composition of *The Harvesters*. The castle, boats, lake, mountains, and upland mentioned in the second quotation are also depicted in Bruegel's picture. Moreover, the apple tree refers to food production as well as to the season of the year – both in the painting and in the novel the action takes place in autumn. But while in *The Harvesters* it is a time of affluence, well-deserved reward, and, above all, the cooperative spirit of community, in *HL* it signifies withdrawal and dislocation. Edith is placed in the Swiss resort, but she does not belong there – the situation seems to be yet another replication of the recurring pattern of the dislocation known from her childhood. The time of her stay is repeatedly specified as out of season, which emphasizes that she is not the resident but a tourist (an outsider) in the land of stability and wealth. Neither does the period of harvesting refer to Edith's time of life. What is more, the impression of dislocation is also created by her inability to see the view which is so close to her when she speculates about the hotel view on the basis of the brochure because the actual landscape is covered with fog. Therefore, it implies that the image evoked by *The Harvesters* signifies for Edith an unobtainable place – the space of belonging, balance and order created by some secular law. The ineptness to obtain the position of an

inhabitant of such a country and to feel assimilated there has been present from Edith's early age when she reacted so emotionally in the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The life suggested by the image is still unattainable when she is an adult.

Considering the way the sceneries are described in *HL*, it appears that the land is recurrently mediated – through the painting and the tourist brochure, as it barely transpires through the fog. These instances suggest the impossibility of a direct relation or proximity of space which places the protagonist in a strange spatial suspension. Through the use of the artistic and commercial images, the outside world in *HL* often resembles a fragmented scenography which is to be constructed by the reader along with Edith who guesses what is hidden in the fog with the help of the photographs in the tourist folder. What this indirectness of space reveals is the image of Edith's transient existence where her settlement is repeatedly prevented. The displacement is further stressed by the fog which seems ever-lingering. The frequent mentioning of this atmospheric condition makes the hotel appear as if sailing in the universe, isolated and surreal. Fog is often the reason why shapes and people are indiscernible. The view from the window is indistinguishable too, which is remarkably mentioned in the opening sentence of the novel: "From the window all that could be seen was a receding area of grey" (*HL* 7). The absence of the charming landscape may be seen as a symbol of the lack of certainty about the prospect of the future. The protagonist is kept on hold in the liminal phase which prevents any hasty actions, but such a state comes with the cost of uncertainty. Edith is left only with speculations about her future, she does not know what waits ahead but she is aware of the life scenarios prepared for her by society and culture. Similarly, she speculates about the landscape veiled in the fog. The protagonist is not able to examine the surroundings of her new residency herself. This indicates that, at least for a time being, Edith loses contact with the stable, empirically proven course of events. The need to use the brochure to find out what is located in front of her metaphorically corresponds to the uncertainty of her future. Similarly, the aftermath of resigning to marry Geoffrey is so close as the view from her window. However, she cannot guess what exactly the repercussions will be, as she cannot pierce through the fog, she may only infer the nature of the consequences (Gładkowska 101).

Much as the importance of the picture in the Kunsthistorisches Museum has been attached so far in reference to Bruegel's *The Harvesters*, it is worth noticing that the mere indication of this panoramic view may also function as an implicit reference to a generic landscape painting. Analogously, the brochure might be considered in more universal

terms. Thus, these visual images mentioned in *HL* also operate as texts in Kristeva's understanding of the term: they are cultural units which are interwoven into the textile of the novel co-creating its senses. What is more, the visual images in *HL* seem to bear similar characteristics to Riffaterre's notion of intertext as an essential element in the process of understanding a given text. As Riffaterre asserts, intertext is a "repository of society's myth," "themes," or "descriptive systems" (159). Similarly, even without identifying the probable title and authorship of the painting shown to Edith by her father, the landscape itself plays a semantic role in the text. The components of the picture are sufficiently described to categorize it as a quite pleasant, typical panoramic painting. The reader has to consult their "personal archives" of various landscapes they have encountered to amalgamate the vision suggested only by a very general outline provided in the novel. The details are so scarce that the mentioning of sunny weather, people, and cornfield (*HL* 48) requires the reader's referencing (even if unconscious) to the previously seen paintings. In this truly intertextual process of comprehension of a literary text, the reader most probably indexes the images which connote decorative purposes, mimetic representations and their general approachability. But there again, even the plainest landscape cannot be devoid of the political markers mirroring the social structure of the world it is a part of. In the book *Political Landscape: The Art History of Nature*, Martin Warnke notes that an unassuming representation of land always transmits message about the administrative organisation of a given land:

> Fields, patches of woodland, dykes, pastures and meadows are all the outcome of the agrarian policies. […] Among the simplest political features of any landscape are the boundaries that separate private, regional or national territories, ecclesiastical or secular domains, and spheres of influence. (10)

Inferring from these sentences, political relevance is a generic trait of any landscape hence the painting in *HL* as an intertext contributes to deciphering the novel also in the political sense.

The brochure operates in a similar fashion: as most leaflets with photographs are used for commercial purposes it aids in decoding Edith's temporal setting in economic terms, underlying the wealth of the country and its financial potential. That amalgamation of political and economic factors brings us to the observations made by scholars like Strongman or Phyllis Lassner, namely that among other themes *HL* tackles the problems of the dissolution of the British Empire. Commenting on the fact that most of the events of *HL* are set in a hotel abroad, Lassner notes that "[r]ather than embedding the fortunes

to be won from imperial investments, Brookner plots disenchantments resulting from escaping imperial oppression" ("Exiles" 47). Admittedly, quiet and self-restrained Edith Hope who takes stock of her life comparing herself to other more successful women in the hotel embodies a different model of a travel narrative protagonist than a traditional persona of a self-assured Englishman abroad.

However, it is difficult to fully agree with Strongman who claims that: "Edith represents a reduced feminine version of the 'Englishmen abroad', no longer confident and judgmental but inhibited and timid. She represents a middle-class England which consumes images and conventions of its own cultural past" (237). As it has already been discussed, the literary space functionalizes in *HL* via revealing Edith's ambiguous (to say the least) relationship with Englishness. Consequently, Edith cannot be considered just a variation of 'Englishmen abroad' character because she does not feel fully English in the first place. Her "inhibited and timid" disposition is not a result of the dissolution of the British Empire but rather the feeling that she has never been a part of this hegemonic tradition. Mr Neville, who stands for the traditional Englishness in the novel, with his unwavering convictions still corresponds to a character of a self-confident (and very calculated) British man in a foreign country. One piece of his advice to Edith may attest to this assertion:

> You have no idea how promising the world begins to look once you have decided to have it all for yourself. And how much healthier your decisions are once they become entirely selfish. It is the simplest thing in the world to decide what you want to do – or, rather, what you don't want to do – and just to act on that. (*HL* 95)

Edith does not constitute a modification of such an attitude and character but their strongest opposition. Analogously, she does not symbolise a middle-class England or imperialistic nostalgia but represents a person who is unsuccessfully assimilated into this culture and tradition. Edith's belonging to a bourgeois stratum of English society is illusive hence the negotiation of her ethnic identity is never fully conclusive. When she tries to understand the incomprehensible rules and conventions of society which are alien to her, she hears her father's words uttered in the Kunsthistorisches Museum:

> It seems that I shall never learn the rules of correct behaviour, she thought, those rules that girls are supposed to learn at their mother's knee. All I learned I learned from my Father. Think again, Edith. You have made a false equation. This is when a character tells. (*HL* 150).

The last sentence of the quotation reappears in the novel and reminds the reader that Edith's existence in English society is experienced by her as an ordeal she has to endure, almost as a test that she has to pass every time she encounters a situation which she does not feel comfortable with. Thus, far from being "a reduced feminine version of the 'Englishmen abroad'" (Strongman 237), Edith epitomizes a refugee character in line with Lassner observations that "Brookner's European Jewish subjects and their stories intervene in evolving meanings of hybridity, postcoloniality, and the transitional" (47).

Brooknerian protagonists, though second-generation immigrants, are pictured as eternal refugees who exist in Britain as in an exile and this feeling is present even during their time spent abroad (like Ruth's in *SL* or Kitty's research stays in France in *P*, or in *FF* Sofka's children's emigration to the United States and Cote d'Azur). The protagonists seem to dwell forever in their liminal states as these journeys only further reveal that they will never assimilate. This implies the duplication of the motif identified by Aránzazu Usandizaga as one of the Wandering Jew. Usandizaga turns to George Anderson's study *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* in order to briefly trace the origins of this trope when she writes that "[s]everal extrascriptural legends refer for the first time to the Wandering Jew. According to them, the condition of living in permanent exile was imposed by Christ upon a Jewish man as a consequence of his bad treatment of Christ in the last hours of his life" (Usandizaga 120). Therefore, on a deeper level the continuous displacement experienced by Brooknerian characters might also carry antagonistically religious connotations. This seems especially applicable to *HL* as Edith's stay in the Swiss resort is described openly as punitive and redeeming isolation after her violation of social rules, that is to say, resigning from marriage of convenience: "Penelope Milne, who, tight-lipped, was prepared to forgive her only on condition that she disappeared for a decent length of time and come back older, wiser, and properly apologetic" (*HL* 8).

Hence a marriage, which is also a religious ceremony, with an English man and arranged by a pragmatic English friend, could be interpreted quite plausibly as a symbolic act of atonement for Edith's Jewishness. As a consequence of Edith's radical departure from this arrangement, she is expelled back to her exiled status. Thus, the Jewish ancestry is intermingled with maladaptation to cultural norms and a refugee position. The journeys and stays outside England only intensify the internal exile of Brooknerian protagonists as Usandizaga notes:

> The sadness of Jewish exile becomes in most of her novels a memory that characters internalize and that is reflected in their permanent failure to properly adapt to their London lives, in their obsessive need to seek for further horizons in other cities and cultures. (120)

In *HL* the representation of exile is the most unexpected because of the juxtaposition of the expectations shaped by the location of the novel (built up already by the mentioning of the hotel in the title) and the oppressiveness of Edith's actual stay in Hotel du Lac. This discrepancy mirrors the inherent paradox of exile which oftentimes entails survival but is never devoid of the feeling of isolation and foreignness. Such complex dynamics are accurately presented by Lassner when she comments on the motif of exile in Brookner's oeuvre:

> Although Brookner gives us no reasons to believe her European Jewish characters are anything but grateful for their resettlement, these novels show them reflecting and internalizing the profound ambivalence of British culture to the assimilation of its immigrants. In turn, these immigrants enact this ambivalence by creating, not a hybrid, but a tensely ambiguous Anglo-Jewish identity that in its hyphenation incorporates, satirizes, erases, and redefines insular meanings of Britishness, Englishness, Other, and Brookner's own literary aesthetics. (48)

The position of Edith described in the initial pages of *HL* mirrors this matrix of inherently exclusive qualities of exile:

> Edith Hope […]remained standing at the window, as if an access of good will could pierce the mysterious opacity with which she had been presented, although she had been promised a tonic of cheerfulness, a climate devoid of illusions, an utterly commonsensical, not to say pragmatic, set of circumstances – quiet hotel, excellent cuisine, long walks, lack of excitement, early nights – in which she could be counted upon to retrieve her serious and hard-working personality and to forget the unfortunate lapse which had led to this brief exile, in this apparently unpopulated place, at this slowly darkening time of the year, when she should have been at home […]. But it was home, or, rather 'home', which had become inimical all at once […]. (*HL* 8)

Just as exile usually takes place under political pressure or other threat, Edith's stay in Hotel du Lac though seemingly luxurious is executed coercively and she is supposed to rehabilitate and act in a specific, socially accepted manner. Yet again it brings us to the issues of economy and productivity because Edith's atonement for not marrying Geoffrey, thus indirectly proclaiming her Jewishness, is linked to her "hard-working personality." It almost implies that the ethnically dubious protagonist could be possibly accepted back into society only on condition that she contributes to the country's prosperity as if she had to compensate somehow for her mixed ethnicity. That is why neither a holiday in the

Swiss resort nor life in London could be perceived by Edith with genuine gratefulness because there is an imminent awareness of a conditional, forced nature of her existence in these circumstances. Thus, after first mentioning of home, the word is written in quotation marks just as though after consideration her London residence could not be regarded as a natural, safe environment but a surrogate for such a place.

Home, which is conventionally associated with security, protection, and comfort, transforms into a hostile place when she becomes a subject of a social scandal. However, it might also be the case that in this liminal seclusion Edith finally realizes that England has always been a place where she has been accepted only as long as she complied to certain rules and practices produced by the dominant discourse. Once she implies, even indirectly, her Jewish ethnicity, the conditional acceptance she has been provisionally granted is lost. Resigning from marrying Geoffrey may be treated then as the threshold, the onset of liminal phase for Edith but also realization that, similarly to the legendary Wandering Jew, she has always existed in a liminal state. The subsequent circumstances in which Edith finds herself in are characterized by displacement and this quality of being dislocated is strikingly present on many levels in the novel. For instance, Edith writes in the letter to David about her feelings towards the Heathrow airport: "I should not be here! I am out of place!" (*HL* 10). What follows is a description of such an anonymous place as an airport which is characterized by chaos and collective transience: "Milling crowds, children crying, everyone intent on being somewhere else" (*HL* 10). The displacement is expressed even more straightforwardly in the already mentioned sentence: "But it was home, or, rather, 'home', which had become inimical all at once"(*HL*8).

Consequently, Edith feels displaced in the world she finds herself in. From her point of view, a remote hotel becomes more of a shelter than her own house. That is why the word home is placed in inverted commas when repeated, as it has ceased to be everything that usually home represents for its dweller. Moreover, on the narrative level Edith's contemplations in the Swiss hotel are interrupted by the flashbacks from her childhood and the bits and pieces of the events which preceded her "curative stay." Thus the story in its chronological order is constructed by the reader only towards the final of the novel, which also adds to the feeling of displacement.

This section has discussed the motif of exile and displacement in *HL*. The trope of refugee has been identified in the employment of visual images, like the references to *The Harvesters* by Bruegel, landscape paintings, and tourist brochures. This mediated access to the surroundings and space has led us to understand how ethnic identity of Edith

Hope is intertextually constructed in *HL*. Moreover, the unrealized marriage with Geoffrey might be read as a symbolic union (or rather lack of it) with English culture and the renunciation of Jewish identity. The Jewishness has also been traced in the impossibility of Edith (and other Brooknerian characters) to find a place where they belong, and such a permanent displacement has been linked to the motif of the Wandering Jew. Finally, it has been recognized that the social approval of Anglo-Jewish characters is only provisional and that the protagonist has to meet several conditions to be accepted within the realms of the middle-class England.

2.4 Otherness

The spatial and temporal displacement as well as the accompanying motif of exile discussed in previous sections have only hinted at the distinguishing of those features of the protagonist that set them apart from other characters of English provenance. The focus has been laid on the narrative mechanisms of creating protagonists' feelings of instability and constant awareness of not belonging to the middle-class English culture. Passing on from these personal perceptions, a more collective and external perspective is adopted in the ruminations in this section.

The importance of difference was already realized by Ferdinand de Saussure who noted that it is essential for meaning making processes (*Course in General Linguistics*). For de Saussure the nature of linguistic signification was contextual in a sense that the meaning of a given sign could be decoded only through reference to binary oppositions. The structuralist approach to difference has proved to influence various fields of thought concerned with the issue, including anthropology and philosophy. A similar structuralist sentiment is echoed in the reflections of Andrew Okolie who writes that:

> Social identities are relational; groups typically define themselves in relation to others. This is because identity has little meaning without the "other". So, by defining itself a group defines others. Identity is rarely claimed or assigned for its own sake. These definitions of self and others have purposes and consequences. They are tied to rewards and punishment, which may be material or symbolic. There is usually an expectation of gain or loss as a consequence of identity claims. This is why identities are contested. Power is implicated here, and because groups do not have equal powers to define both *self* and the *other*, the consequences reflect these power differentials. Often notions of superiority and inferiority are embedded in particular identities. (2)

Referring to Okolie's observations, the main interest of this section lies in the mechanisms employed to portray the otherness in Brookner's fiction and, even more importantly, the connotations and consequences of distinguishing her liminal protagonists from other characters on the narrative level.

2.4.1 Survival of the Fittest and the Holocaust Tropes

In Brookner's novels various phrases, situations, and arrangements of characters hint at Darwinian discourse. For one thing, it may be observed that the characterization of Brooknerian protagonists and the members of their families highlights their otherness. Usually, ethnicity is implied as the marker of this oddity as the following examples demonstrate:

> George adored his English wife; she had all the lure of an *alien species*. (*SL* 12, emphasis mine)

> She was not surprised to hear them speaking English and wished that she could signal to them that she was English herself […]. She studied the couple closely, as if they were an *unknown species*. They were, in fact, an *unknown species*. They were happy. (*SL* 94, emphasis mine)

The phrases "alien species" and "unknown species" are employed in reference to Englishness of Helen, and Hugh and Jill Dixon respectively. Furthermore, the word "species" underlines the distinctiveness of those who are English to such a degree that it suggests that the difference between Ruth and the Dixons is a biologically conditioned fact. Consequently, Helen's lightness of being or the Dixons' happiness seem to be their undeniable natural right.[77] This indicates that Ruth and her father, belonging to a breed of those who are not homogeneously English, are not endowed with the innate ability to find contentment. The second quoted fragment describes the moment when Ruth notices the Dixons for the first time in the Louvre. Initially, the protagonist intuits that the common language unifies her with the couple. Additionally, meeting the Dixons in a foreign country, she hopes that Englishness will form an immediate mutual bond between them.

[77] Later, the reader finds out that any English traits ascribed to Ruth are connected with heaviness while other English characters like her mother, Anthea, or Hugh and Jill are always portrayed as frivolous figures. This is especially visible when Ruth talks with the Dixons for the first time: "They sat down facing each other. She [Ruth] was, in fact, unmistakably English in her heavy coat, with her heavy bag, and her heavy hair obscuring the shape of her head" (*SL* 95). The heaviness mentioned in the description of Ruth implies that although she speaks the same language and was brought up in the same country as her English friends and relatives, her Englishness was of a different, troublesome kind.

However, after a close observation, Ruth realizes that although they speak the same language (and presumably come from the same country) it does not make them similar (or rather: adapted to life in a similar way). Emphasized with repetition, it is indirectly stated that the Dixon types are inherently privileged by their English ancestry and enabled to take advantage of life. They enjoy their time in Paris, whereas Ruth, who is nowhere at home, feels foreign everywhere. Thus, when she states that they belong to "an unknown species" and that "[t]hey were happy," the reader is immediately informed that, by analogy, she is inherently destined to be unhappy.

This emphasis on the biological, organic conditioning of human ability to experience happiness and security is even more visible in *FF*. Such an interest in categorizing people also demonstrates the preoccupation with the issues of social class and Englishness and how these factors influence the overall position of a literary character. However fallacious it may seem, Brookner's narratives convey an impression that privileges and assets that come with Englishness are biologically conditioned, therefore their bond is indissoluble. That is why so much consideration is devoted to the physicality of e.g., Evie, Frederick's first true love who later becomes his wife:

> Evie gives the impression that she is of a slightly lower order of accomplishment than the girls who usually besiege Frederick. She seems, moreover, to be extraordinarily noisy and to have the ability to displace any object in her vicinity. She conveys an idea of power which has nothing to do with charm. […] In addition to this idea of power, which is in effect little more than restlessness, but none the less menacing for that, Evie gives an impression, greatly exaggerated, of size. Sofka is somehow persuaded that Evie has huge primeval hands and thighs, the teeth of a shark, the braced back of a giant-killer. Evie is in fact of middle height and average weight; she has, to be sure, rather large hands, but she is not bad-looking. She is not bad-looking if you abandon all thoughts of feminine beauty in the more regular or conservative sense: Evie is not bad-looking as a member of the species. And it is as a member of the species, in those days before the lava cooled, that she is most viable. That is Evie's trump card: viability. With her strong neck, ready smile, wood-cutter's teeth, and unvarnished good health, Evie seems to promise, on her own, the propagation of the race. (*FF* 73)

As this quotation clearly demonstrates, the portrayal of Evie focuses on the features of her body as perceived by Sofka who with her motherly (and imposing) eye scrutinizes her son's potential fiancée. The description highlights Evie's almost beastly demeanour simultaneously revealing that it is the image partly created in Sofka's mind which is signalled with the repeated phrases like "give the impression," or "convey an idea," "exaggerated." However, towards the end of this fragment, the description seems to adopt a more referential point of view when it is stated that "Evie is in fact of middle height and

average weight." And it is in this objective manner that Evie's biological superiority is mentioned. Again, as in *SL*, the word "species" draws attention towards the undeniable difference between Frederick's beloved and the women like Sofka for whom "charm is indispensable" (*FF* 73).

Moreover, it is worth noticing, how the quote above employs the narrative modalities. In the beginning, Sofka's observations are presented from her prejudiced point of view resembling an unreliable narrator just to give way to a seemingly more objective voice. This latter narrative entity seems to be the narrator of the whole novel, elusively hiding behind the characters' thoughts and repeatedly revealing themselves in illusively distanced commentary. Such a perplexing modality seems to be most akin to the modality of understanding according to Tjupa's categorization ("Narrative Strategies") because the narrator in *FF* is misleadingly impartial while in fact the novel is narrated from the point of view which is best described as inter-subjective. In other words, the story in *FF* is told by an external voice but though the narrator assumes a broader perspective when compared to those of other characters, the narrating subject is not neutral. The portrayal of Evie might serve as an instance of such a lack of neutrality when she is described in strictly biological terms, underlying her "strong neck, ready smile, wood-cutter's teeth, and unvarnished good health" and finally alarmingly mimicking the dangerous Nazi political and ideological sentiment present in the 40s (the time when the plot of *FF* is set): "Evie seems to promise […] propagation of the race." Moreover, the hint of this historical context implies various threatening scenarios even if they are not mentioned directly. This goes in line with the theorization of the inter-subjective narrator and the corresponding heuristic narrative intrigue (Tjupa). Such a mode of narrative intrigue acknowledges not only the actual plot but also an alternative, probabilistic course of events as in *FF* the threat is not stated in a straightforward manner, but the narrative strategies seem to convey the ambience of danger. Though Lassner categorizes the narrator simply as omniscient, she also notices the significance of the imposing narrative dynamics in the creation of the feeling of threat:

> Brookner empowers narrative structure to take over. The result is kind of omniscient narration which forms characters and allows them to be known only through the realities and registers of their external social, historical and impersonal dynamics. Through its plot trajectory and mapping of the characters' movements, the narrative structure reveals the anxiety that is produced by external contingency and that underlies the failure of more direct expression. (49)

The whole narrative structure of *FF* mirrors the dynamics present in the already discussed fragment when Sofka is observing Evie in horror noting her animalistic traits. If we take into consideration the conclusions presented by Herbert Kelman in his article "Violence without restraint. Reflections of the dehumanization of victims and victimizers," the focus on viability, biologism, and animalism in *FF* becomes once again linked with plausible danger. Kelman explains that dehumanization and hostility lead directly to justification of organized violence hence they destroy moral relationships with the victim. In his study of different academic perspectives on dehumanization, Haslam notes that:

> According to Kelman, dehumanization involves denying a person "identity" – a perception of the person "as an individual, independent and distinguishable from others, capable of making choices" (p. 301) – and "community" – a perception of the other as "part of an interconnected network of individuals who care for each other" (p. 301). When people are divested of these agentic and communal aspects of humanness they are deindividuated, lose the capacity to evoke compassion and moral emotions, and may be treated as means toward vicious ends. (254)

The foreign Mediterranean ancestry of Evie seems to play a critical role in the arrangement of characters. It is faintly alluded that Evie might also be of Jewish origin, thus Sofka's thoughts may come as a surprise. However, as the more objective voice reminds about the lurking danger and historical context of the Holocaust ("propagation of the race"), Sofka's perception of Evie might be also interpreted as an internalization of some aspects of Nazi discourse which she might have been exposed to. Thus, Sofka is unable to see in her future daughter-in-law a human being and a member of her community, but only a deindividualized member of species that could become a rival in a competition. Therefore, Evie is presented as an invincible threat to Sofka because her advantage is linked to the basic needs of humanity: biological survival. In the face of this, the values Sofka admires and tries to instil in her children seem suddenly insufficient and inadequate. Frederick, whose previous descriptions have underlined mostly his masculinity, becomes portrayed in a different light once Evie appears on the narrative horizon:

> It is the astonishing fact that in spite of or perhaps because of his great success with women, Frederick has a sort of feminine sensibility. He adores women, he appreciates them, he maddens them with his knowledge of their little ploys. He bathes in an entirely feminine atmosphere, and in this way subtly eludes that English persona that his mother has decreed for him and reverts to more distant origins. The violin player in the provincial coffee-house was not altogether wide of the mark. (*FF* 74)

The presentation of Frederick changes, once Evie appears in his life. He ceases to represent an adamantly, victorious male character from the beginning of the novel. Thus, by virtue of contrast, it is hinted that his sexuality is no longer a distinguishing binary feature. Frederick is described as reflecting two opposite sides of human nature: the female one and male one. This inconstancy is intertwined with his ethnic background when his "elud[ing] that English persona" is mentioned in the text. Frederick's liminal characterization on the verge of determinate sexual identification is set in relation to his ethnicity which entails further conclusions that Englishness means an unambiguous identification and binary definition of character. The revealing of the female side of Frederick's nature serves in the novel as evidence for his liminal provenance. Moreover, it also emphasizes the extent to which ethnic liminality exerts its influence on other, seemingly unrelated areas of human existence. Contrary to his mother's expectations, English manners turn out to be relatively easier to acquire than (what is conceptualized in the novel as) genuine English mentality and, ultimately, Frederick could not imitate the latter.

The connection between ethnicity and sexuality becomes apparent also in the following fragment:

> Evie is no oil painting, and, as far as Sofka can discern, is entirely devoid of feminine mystery. But this is where Sofka ignores the clues. Evie may not be feminine, but she is abundantly female. The spread tights, the gleaming teeth, the shouting laughter, the springy yardage of hair: all these features speak a language which perhaps Sofka has never understood. But this is precisely this concentration of animality that has hooked Frederick and knocked him out. All of those years of half-measures, of flattery and *badinage*, of conquests too easy because they were largely unsought, have dulled his appetite for dainty fare. He now seeks cataclysms and no longer cares for disguise. (*FF* 74–75)

The manner in which Sofka's incomprehension of Evie's way of being is expressed reveals a lot about the origin of Sofka's confusion (or even contempt). Evie's rough physical vitality formulates "a language which perhaps Sofka has never understood." As language constitutes one of the most apparent attributes of cultural separateness, ethnicity becomes foregrounded once more through the employment of the notion of different codes used by the two women. Sofka is presented as someone whose ideas about charm, beauty and social conduct are shaped by her ethnic otherness which is alluded to with her inability to understand the "physical language" of her future daughter-in-law. Evie operates on the sensual, instinctive level, while Sofka conceptualizes existence on the

level of social duties and manners. As Sofka comes from an unidentified German-speaking country it might be deduced that the acquisition of a foreign language was an element of her adaptation to British culture. Therefore, the implications of the metaphor of not understanding the language are even more multifaceted. The lack of the natural ability to understand fully the intricacies of a language may also stand for her general maladjustment to the new culture she finds herself in.

Acyually, it might be concluded that this maladjustment implies worst chances for survival as this thread of argument is consistently suggested throughout the novel and finally confirmed by the opposition of Evie and Sofka. Though Sofka is initially portrayed as a strong-willed matron,[78] her power is gradually presented as diminishing. The alternation of her position in the family is manifested with such a narrative strategy as the arrangement of characters. Furthermore, at the beginning of the novel Sofka's attitude to Frederick escapes the conventional frame of the mother-son relationship, which is enhanced by the fact that she is a widow.[79] Her relation is characterized by a romantic, almost incestuous, inclination and the admiration of her son; their bond is particularly strong, which grants Sofka's excessive leniency for her son. Once Frederick becomes seriously involved in a romantic relationship for the first time, Sofka's position might be interpreted as inferior. This lowly rank becomes especially prominent when his chosen one turns out to be Evie whose animalism stands in such a sharp opposition to Sofka's *modus operandi*. It seems that this rough physicality is the decisive advantage which has altered Sofka's position drastically exposing the superficiality of her cultural adjustment. Though Evie's foreign ancestry is never explicitly stated, we learn that her family is not of English origin since young Evie was sent to England to get her education (*FF* 76). Subsequently, when we take into account that both Evie and Sofka are not English, they function as two different models of cultural assimilation. Sofka is determined to become as similar to the English as possible, while Evie embraces her way of behaviour – the loud, robust, straightforward manner of eating and peaking, and the disregard for social

[78] This image of Sofka is projected in fragments such as the following one:

> Sofka would be at the centre of this group, of any group. (*FF* 9)
>
> She is a shy woman, virtuous and retiring, caring only for her children, but determined to fulfil her role as duenna, as figurehead, as matriarch. This means presentation, panache, purpose and, in their train, dignity and responsibility; awesome concepts, borne permanently in mind. (*FF* 17)

[79] "And if she [Sofka] looks an indulgent eye on Frederick, it is because she sees in him his father's disgraceful charm. And a mother is more susceptible to this sort of charm than a wife or a lover can ever be." (*FF* 21)

consequences. All in all, Sofka's manner, though more refined, proved to be eventually ineffective as the proper assimilation of her family is never accomplished. A similar observation is made by Lassner who claims:

> Neither the opened borders that allow immigration nor the family's economic and social well-being have provided a pathway to self-determination and expression. Instead, the amply endowed, carefully designed, and well-insulated world created by Sofka in the heart of London has not saved her children from suffering the vestigial effects of a lost sense of belonging – chronic malaise, restlessness, and inexpressiveness. (48–49)

Therefore, it might be concluded that the viable characters, portrayed as sensual and intuitive (Evie), are presented in *FF* as better adapted to and equipped for surviving than those who are more civilized and cultured.

Additionally, Sofka is portrayed as a mother who, even in peaceful circumstances, is unable to bring up her children to become resilient adults. Sally Mair Jones recognizes how in Brookner's texts the equilibrium of family is associated with a safer position in evolutionary hierarchy:

> Versions of intact families and a sense of belonging are central to Brookner. Each seems conditional on the other. Without children her protagonists are destined for loneliness and personal extinction. It is exactly this struggle to marry and have children that concerns her and she sees it in Darwinian sense. (210)

Survival is directly connected with procreation and this factor also (though seemingly) differentiates *FF* from other discussed novels. Among the protagonists of the analysed narratives only Sofka is a mother. However, this position of hers might be also understood as a cunning and painful understatement as the narrative develops the reader witnesses the slow demise of her position. From the respected matron Sofka transforms into a disillusioned woman whose influence over her family weakens, and the lives of her children turn out contrary to her plans, efforts, and expectations. In an unexpected way, Sofka is an antithesis of who is traditionally considered a mother – she is someone who could procreate but cannot nurture and make sure that her children are strong and well adjusted.

The repetitive employment of the analogy between evolutionary processes and social hierarchy to indicate social hierarchy as well as the usage of biological terminology to describe them constitute some of the most distinctive features of Brookner's literary style. In "Conflicting Literary Interpretations of Evolutionary Theory 'Stella Sea' and the Novels of Anita Brookner," Jones also claims that Brookner does not refrain from

pointing out the direct application of Darwinian theories to the mechanism of societal hierarchy (207). Moreover, Jones indicates another important issue connected with the history of Darwinism, that is eugenics, which may serve as the basis of the deeper understanding of Brookner's constant preoccupation with the concept of the survival of the fittest. As Jones points out, the evolutionary concepts were further developed by Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, who first suggested "the value of controlled human breeding […] as producing the improvement of the species" (Rose and Rose 207). Galton was also the first one who employed the term 'eugenics' in the book *Inquiries into Human Fertility and Its Development* in 1883. Later, in the 1930s, the Nazis adopted these theories to perpetuate the constant and atrocious extermination of Jews who embodied the perfect victims in the process of the "purification of race." Jones suggests that Brookner's understanding of social natural selection is completely different than Galton's propositions, however, the critic does not develop this argument any further stating only that

> For Brookner, Nazi racism is very different from what she regards as nature's own system of ensuring that the strongest survive to pass their 'superior' genetic make-up. This sense of social hierarchy may originate in her sensitivity to exclusion and belonging in conventional English society of her time. (209)

Jones strongly separates the Nazi applications of evolutionary theories from Brookner's applications of Darwin's ideas in the social sphere. However, the awareness of Nazi outrageous misinterpretation sheds some light on the interpretation of this issue in Brookners's fiction. Once these historical consequences are acknowledged, the recurrent motif of the human competition on the fierce, biological level could be finally understood similarly to the ever-lingering atmosphere of imminent danger. Hence, the persistent recurrence of the motif of physical conditioning of the social success seems to have a deeper meaning. It explains the potential reason for the formulation of such a narrative in the first place, and then, the origin of this fright. The non-literary historical facts, the Nazi persecution of Jews supported with the pseudoscientific background of evolutionism might provide the foundation for the arrangement of characters based on the most important factor – viability. The viable characters (the Dixons and Anthea in *SL*, Maurice in *P*, Mr Neville, Mrs Pusey and Penelope in *HL*, Nick and Alix in *LM*, Evie in *FF*) constitute the reappearing opposition to the liminal protagonists (Ruth in *SL*, Kitty in *P*, Edith in *HL*, Frances in *LM*, Mimi and Sofka in *FF*). The juxtaposition of these two groups of characters straightforwardly points to the clear pattern where the more viable

characters are those of homogenous English ancestry whereas the fragile protagonists are of heterogenous decent. The stronger and fitter characters enhance the impression of the protagonists being weak and mentally disintegrated. Ethnicity then becomes the critical factor which determines the social position of the individual. However, the emerging disparity between these two types does not function as a plain existential difference or narrators' psychological remark. The social adjustment of the viable characters and the maladjustment of the weaker ones is directly linked to the ability to survive, which might be surprising in the novels set in the second half of the 20th century in Britain where there is no direct threat to one's existence.[80] Nevertheless, in Brookner's fiction the fragmentation of the characters of liminal ethnical origins place them in the inferior, endangered position. This risky rank hints that Jewish origins might function also symbolically as positioning an individual in the liminal place in any country (place) and, consequently, the liminal characters might be the target of actual, severe repression that poses a threat to their lives.

Thus, Jewishness through the historical context of the Holocaust carries an additional semantic weight added to the characterisation of a liminal protagonist in Brookner's fiction. It suggests that liminality constitutes the condition that exposes the individual of Jewish origin to, more or less evident, annihilation. The sheer conception of society in terms of those who are fit, fitter and the fittest is marked with anxiety as if all who could not be labelled as the fittest could be easily discarded. It seems that the hierarchical arrangement of the viable characters plays a critical role in the novels as it hints at far-fetched yet possible deadly threat to a liminal protagonist. This explains the reasons why such a social hierarchy exerts the ambience of fear and terror in Brookner's fiction.

It is evident in the novels that such a categorization seems to be very isolating for those who could not be placed at the top of this structure. Thus, Brookner's obsessive theme to fit in might be in fact conceptualized not only as a matter of mere social acceptance, but once the historical facts are taken into consideration, even more importantly, also as a matter of survival among the members of the privileged Western society. Although seemingly these books bear characteristics of the modern novel of

[80] Lassner analysing aesthetics of *FF* states that "[i]n effect, the novel enacts a never-ending attempt to escape some omnipresent, if indefinable threat even as all of its setting offer the characters safety and stability" (50).

manners, it can be claimed that this convention is being continuously distorted.[81] The tension emerges between the tendencies to follow and breach the convention, which in turn creates a paradoxical world picture in the novels. The literary landscape of Brooknerian protagonists is rich in reflections on social codes, conventions, and manners and yet it is also saturated with panic, fear, obsessive self-inspection, and control.

Since that day Sofka has felt a tremor when she sits in her drawing-room or when she hears a step outside the front door. (*FF* 99)

The realm of fear seems to be elusive, difficult to define and even more disturbing because the reason for it proves to be problematic to determine without referring to the Holocaust. Since the direct references to the persecution of Jews are absent, the reader might perceive the atmosphere of the novels as perplexing and overwrought. Usandizaga comments on this paradoxical placement of ancestry in Brookner's novel: "Jewish culture is […] a central subject in *FF*, yet all these novels tend to blur historical facts and the desire for denunciation" (111). Consequently, on the one hand the reader navigates between the implications of the Holocaust, Nazi propaganda, the Second World War, and the concealment, repression, and apparent stability on the other. This results in a quite peculiar world picture, where nothing is as it seems to be. The novel gives an impression of an impending catastrophe and though it never takes place the reader is engaged in the more or less vague anticipation of one. This probabilistic world view portrays the anxiety-ridden existence of an immigrant family in London that has managed to escape genocide. Moreover, the general narrative structure of *FF* adds to the feeling of motion and instability. Noting this constant movement, Laurence Petit compares the construction of the novel to the accordion:

> [T]he accordion-like structure [is] provided by the alternation of narrative moments and frozen (or pseudo-frozen) images, and reinforced, or duplicated, on the occasion of each significant family gathering (christenings, weddings, and funerals), by the recurring close-up shots of one particular framed photograph. ("War, Trauma" para. 7)[82]

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[81] Daphne Watson points out that Brookner's novels are too often taken for face value and confused with the novel of convention noting that the writer's

> rejecting attempts to relate her to Jane Austen school of fiction, stating very firmly what has become all too evident in her subsequent writing, her sense of being outsider, an alien observing the minutiae of the manners of the tribe, *not* the ironic member of the tribe that Austen undoubtedly was. (38)

[82] The quotes are taken from the electronic version of the article without the numbered pages. Therefore, for easier localisation of the quotes they are indicated by a number of the paragraph.

Additionally, Petit draws our attention to the motif of dance in *FF* which, together with the accordion-like narrative, provokes the impression of motion, movement, and instability. Such narrative, Petit claims, mimics "the dance of history," that is to say, the unexpectedness of brutal historical turns on the one hand, and, on the other, the cyclicality of this brutality.

The liminal Brooknerian protagonists are presented as more timid, weak, and humble. In turn, the reader tends to perceive them as vulnerable, and exposed to various threats, including death. Although the threat of death is never mentioned, the relentless, inexplicable fear which the novels are infused with suggests the danger of annihilation. This could seem hyperbolic, however, as history teaches us, sometimes the most farfetched ideas do materialize, as it happened with Hitler's ideas. Obviously, these are non-normative groups that become the victims of the atrocious theories which are based on the hierarchical social structure. Therefore, in *FF*, where the time of action is very close to the events of World War Two, Evie's advantage is pointed out most straightforwardly and incessantly as physical viability. Lengthy passages are devoted to the description of (Sofka's perception of) Evie's strong, invincible body. If other hints are taken into consideration (for example, the appearance of the presumably Jewish maids and the old friend selling lace) it could be supposed that Sofka's critical point of view reveals her anxiety connected with her seemingly Jewish origins; the fear of belonging to the weaker ones who do not fit in.

This might explain the preoccupation with Evie's stamina and the multifaceted reasons why Evie poses a danger to Sofka's family status and survival. As Evie seems to be the stronger and fitter one, she diverts Frederick's attention from his beloved mother. For Sofka, whose family's societal status has changed after immigration to England, the role of the respected matron among the closest relatives has substituted the prestige her family enjoyed in their homeland. Nevertheless, Evie's presence undermines even this replacement of social position thus eliminating Sofka from any social structure she cares about.

In those of Brookner's novels which are set later in 20th century the narration does not point to physical viability so directly. Of course, the impeccable appearance is always a characteristic feature of the English men whom the protagonists dream to marry and live with. Their attractive and exquisite appearance reaffirms their function – Maurice, Mr Neville, and Nick represent the models of desirable, successful English persons who perfectly fitted in. However, in *SL*, *P*, *HL*, *LM* the subtler categorization into "different

species" is employed which is mostly revealed in the usage of narrative language. The Darwinian undertones are present here as well, but they are less obvious than in *FF*. Nevertheless, Stetz perceives the household dynamics in *SL* as symbolical (2021). Mrs Cutler, the domineering English housekeeper employed by the Wiess family, becomes the most decisive force in the house and reverses the power relations in the family. Her employers, Ruth's parents, come to be controlled by Mrs Cutler in their own house (which is constantly neglected together with the ancestral keepsakes). Stetz claims that "[t]he battles for power and control of domestic space are rich with allusions to the historical situation of European Jews in the twentieth century, as Brookner deploys tropes of occupation and confinement on the one hand and of displacement on the other" (155). Frances' existence in *LM* can be interpreted analogously where her Catholic servant dictates the rhythm of the household and, for result, Frances becomes accustomed to supressing her needs to conform to the priorities of her employee. The considerate nature of protagonists of *SL* and *LM* who want to respect their housekeepers turn out to be the reason of Ruth's and Frances' miserable position, where they are supervised and inhibited by their own servants:

> The impeccable nature of this situation, in which ethical concerns are fatal disabilities, renders middle-class women characters with Jewish backgrounds uniquely "unfit" in Darwinian terms to make use of their socio-economic advantage and to thrive. Even in domestic spaces that they occupy, they refuse to insist upon the primacy of their own needs, whereas Brookner's non-Jewish, working-class servant figures feel no such compunction. Thus these novels in which the shifting power relations between women servants and employers feature so prominently also function as allegories of both British Jewish victimization and British Jewish self-sabotage, played out in the context of the drawing-rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms of London flats. (Staetz 167)

Additionally, the ease with which the protagonists allow to be controlled in their own houses and then isolated there from their English environment together with the ever-lingering presence of their ancestors' history seems to be a practical illustration of the idea of postmemory introduced by Marianne Hirsh. In her article "The Generation of Postmemory," Hirsch mentions several researchers (Fine 1988; Lurry 1998; Landsberg 2004; Fresco 1984; Zeitlin 1998; Young 1997) who investigated the complex issues of transferred memory in the 90's and delineates the common ground of these speculations:

> These terms reveal a number of controversial assumptions: that descendants of survivors (of victims as well as of perpetrators) of massive traumatic events connect so deeply to the previous generation's remembrances of the past that they need to call that connection memory and thus that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transmitted to

> those who were not actually there to live an event. At the same time – so it is assumed – this received memory is distinct from the recall of contemporary witnesses and participants. Hence the insistence on "post" or "after" and the many qualifying adjectives that try to define both a specifically inter- and trans-generational act of transfer and the resonant aftereffects of trauma. If this sounds like a contradiction, it is, indeed, one, and I believe it is inherent to this phenomenon. (105–106)

A similar contradiction is illustrated in Brookner's novels where the young female protagonists experience psychological repercussions of the events which precede their births. What is more, their peculiar participation in social interactions also gives evidence to the troubled identification with the past although, as has been previously indicated, Brookner's literature is devoid of direct references to the Holocaust. There are no straightforward descriptions of or conversations about traumatic events which might have happened to the grandparents of Ruth, Kitty, Edith, or Frances, yet the ambience of danger and traumatic past is almost tangible. While defining postmemory, Hirsch describes similar ways of transmission of the memory:

> And yet postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea; I see it, rather, as a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove. (106)

Thus, for the socially-oriented research of Hirsh and literary texts of Brookner the void constitutes the crucial factor in the transmission of the past, trauma, and fear. It seems that the lack of oral recall of the atrocities in the Brooknerian families does not only shape the existence of the young protagonists, but it also affects their identities. Lassner comes to similar conclusions when she writes the following about *FF* and *Latecomers* (another Brookner's novel from 1988): "Both novels represent their characters' survival as an aesthetic that interlaces conflicting and empty memories of their European past with their ambiguous status as Britons. In these novels, Brookner's aesthetic constructs the past as both a haunting presence and irreparable lack" (47).

Though the stories about the past traumas are absent from the houses of Ruth, Kitty, and Edith, the descriptions of objects like furniture, clothes or food are often employed as metaphors of the sad past. The grandparents of Ruth and Kitty habitually project their past experience onto completely different situations in their granddaughters' lives. Such seemingly random strategies might be in fact the actual reasons for the personal disintegration of the young female protagonists. Hirsch describes a similar process in the following words:

> Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. This is, I believe, the experience of postmemory and the process of its generation. (107)

As this section aims to demonstrate, using mainly *FF* as the most prominent example, Brookner's novels revolve, though indirectly, around the traumatic events motivated by the Nazi ideology which made use of discourse of biological inferiority. According to Petit, the recurrent sensation of trauma not only informs the texts but through the repetitions of certain motifs works as a textual version of a "compulsive and melancholic acting-out" (LaCapra 14, qtd.in Petit "War, Trauma" para. 18). Nonetheless, the final release or healing never takes place, neither in a single novel nor in the whole fictional oeuvre of Brookner – the need of acting out is never satisfied. In *FF* the description of photographs constitute the narrative frame of the novel and they also indirectly transmit the painful memory hence "wedding photographs forever projecting an institutionalized picture of order and harmony could also be seen as a screen barring access to, while giving evidence of, the repressed trauma of the Holocaust, and thus preventing a 'working-through' of that trauma" ("War, Trauma" para. 18).

Another explanation of the pervasive absence of direct references to the Second World War and the genocide of Jews is offered by Silvester who argues that "assimilation, and modern attitudes towards it, lie at the root of this silence" ("The Trauma" 256). In order to investigate the approach to traumatic events of the Second World War and to outgroups in the 20th-century England, Sylvester traces the historical motives preceding even the Great War and refers to historian David Cesarani (1992) commenting on the perception of close-knit intergenerational Jewish families in England:

> In the twentieth century this mode of being carried with it the risk of opprobrium from the majority culture: as seen, for example, in the discourse surrounding the Aliens Act 1905, which was aimed primarily at Jews and responded to propaganda that accused them of clannishness. (257)

Even earlier, that is in 1893, Cesarani detects the messages in *Jewish Chronicle* which would discourage Jews in England from the display of luxury or the conspicuous behaviour in public in response to antisemitism. Assimilation and the renunciation of

distinctive Jewish characteristics were perceived as the solution to the threat of violence and danger:

> Thus, in response to events in Third Reich, the *Jewish Chronicle*'s editorials urged Jews to conform to the expectations of society that was ambivalent toward Jewish difference; though one of its leader writers argued that religion and tradition inevitably set Jews apart from their fellow citizens, and it was therefore futile to strive for the total acceptance that Victorian Jews had thought was possible. (258)

The attitude conforming to the expectations of the English majority became generally accepted and shaped the representations of Jewish identity long ahead. Furthermore, Anglo-Jewish identity was one of marginal heterogenous statuses as it usually incorporated continental ancestry and due to that it was not equal to the central, dominant homogeneous English culture. Consequently, Jews in England wanted to conform to whatever expectations as concerns their assimilation were formulated but, on the other hand, understood their uneven status in that society as stressed by Sylvester:

> These two viewpoints played off against each other, producing an acute sensitivity to the connotations of the label 'Anglo-Jew'. The resulting conflict had its beginnings in childhood, as Anglo-Jewish children absorbed the message that they were supposed to achieve acceptance and success in the outside world, but on the other hand they mustn't stray too far from the confines of the family: they must keep close, and not marry out. (257)

Taking into account these complex historical conditions, Brookner's novels could be also understood as the continuation of a long-adopted tradition of the subdued representations of Jewishness which places the members of this outgroup in a relatively safe position in relation to the ingroup even if the prize for this "acceptance" is a partial renunciation of ethnic differences. Along such an understanding of assimilation, any distinctive markers of ethnic dissimilarity could be considered as violation of this tacit agreement, including strong references to trauma. This denial of cultural representation of one's ethnicity itself could be interpreted as a practice manifesting the discourse of power and violence.

2.4.2 Duality, Translation, Dehumanization

Ethnic liminality might be conceptualized as a state of being suspended between various cultural traditions but also as a practice of constant interpretation, deciphering, and

confrontation of the codes, values, and customs of the two different nations. This kind of process of translating one culture into another might be an attempt to understand the mutual relationship between two cultures. In addition, a person who is in this liminal situation explores also his/her position against given cultures. Consequently, the liminal transmission occurs between the person in a liminal condition and the society. At the same time, the said transmission takes place within the psyche of a given individual. Thus, such an ethnic self-identification is an attempt to understand oneself within the scope of two traditions. The characteristic of the liminal transmission strikingly resembles the process of translation where ideas, values, and experience recorded in a particular medium are converted by means of another code so that they become comprehensible for a wider/other circle of addressees than it was originally designed for. As has been already argued, the complexities of the quest for an ethnic liminality are most fully realized in the narration of a spontaneous speech act, therefore if we apply the metaphor of the translation to this quest, it will bear a resemblance to the act of oral translation (interpreting). Considering the first five novels, *SL* most consistently adopts free indirect discourse,[83] which predominantly resembles a spontaneous inner debate. Moreover, this internal discussion often refers to the notion of translation. This narrative situation strikes a chord with the reflections of Suzanne Keen who points that

> [n]arrated monologue [other term for free indirect discourse] presents the character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse. Most theorists thus consider it a double-voiced kind of discourse. In other words, reading narrated monologue gives the impression of the words and modes of expression of the character, while retaining the tense and person of the narrator's language. (62)

[83] Suzanne Keen notices that "free indirect discourse […] is considered one of the most significant innovations in technique in the nineteenth-century novel, though some critics have spotted it in earlier texts" (62). First paragraphs of *SL* seem to actually illustrate the history of this mode of narration as they mention some of the most renown novels of the 19th century:

> Dr Weiss, at forty knew that her life had been ruined by literature. In her thoughtful and academic way, she put it down to her faulty moral education which dictated, through the conflicting but in this one instance united agencies of her mother and father, that she ponder the careers of Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary, but that she emulate those of David Copperfield and Little Dorrit. […] Dr Weiss, who preferred men, was an authority on women, *Women in Balzac's Novels* was the title of the work which would probably do duty for the rest of her life. (*SL* 7)

Immediately after the initial sentence of the novel, the technique of narrated monologue is additionally acknowledged by the enumeration of the works of Tolstoy, Flaubert, and Dickens who were all famous for using this mode of narration. In this way, Brookner's fiction is inspired by 19th century on many levels: intertextual allusions, discussions about vice and virtue, the form of Bildungsroman as well as the manner in which action is transmitted.

This observation might be applied to the narration in *SL* where the "double-voiced kind of discourse" further demonstrates the liminal condition of the protagonist and provides a space for the process of inner translation of the cultural values. This might be the reason why the employment of the word "translation" appears numerous times in *SL*:

> Literature, on the other hand, was now her [Ruth Weiss'] stock in trade, if trade were an apt description of the exchange that ensued three times weekly in her pleasant seminar room, where students, bolder than she had ever been, wrinkled their brows as if in pain when asked to consider any writer less alienated than Camus. They were large, clear-eyed, and beautiful; their voices rang with confidence, but their *translations* were narrow and cautious. (*SL* 7)

> Why had her nurse not read her a *translation* of *Eugénie Grandet*? The whole life might have been different. (*SL* 8)

> Mrs Weiss longed to preside over a roomful of sons and their spouses, but was forced, through the raggedness and temporary character of her *translated* life, to sit first with George at breakfast, then with the child and the nurse at lunch, and with the child and nurse at tea, and at their supper. (*SL* 12; all the emphases mine)

As it could be deduced from the examples above, the world *translation* is used here in reference to the actual academic task, the adaptation of Balzac's novel, and the provisional condition of Ruth's grandmother. It seems that only the last instance manifests metaphorical meaning, however, after a closer investigation it transpires that all of them function on a more profound level.

The first of the fragments quoted above subtly reveals a recurrent Brooknerian arrangement of characters. The virtuous, inadequate, and unfortunate protagonists are contrasted with the corrupt, canny, and successful characters. The issue of attractiveness of those who are without scruples is deliberated in *SL* via the characters of Anthea, Hugh, and Jill Dixon, in *P* in the figures of Nick and Alix, in *HL* these are Penelope, Mr Neville, and Jenifer Pusey, in *FF* through Betty and Frederick. The opposition of characters is also constructed on the principle of their Englishness, good fortune, and the lack of obstacles. As has already been mentioned in this chapter, the characters employed in such a context are usually the objects of desire of the protagonists: Ruth in *SL* dreams about smart and reserved Richard Hirst, Kitty in *P* feels affection for Maurice, a successful art historian, Frances in *LM* would like to form a steady relationship with James, and Edith in *HL* desires David, a married Englishman. All male characters are unmistakably English and all of them reject the advances of respective protagonists. Although they are not presented as overtly vicious characters, they are distinctively unattainable and tend to take

advantage of the affection of their admirers. One of the reasons why they seem to be so appealing is their thriving, victorious lifestyle which does not require facing any challenges as these characters are endowed with perfect qualities by nature (appearance) and their cultural background (Englishness). Such qualities are also echoed in the description of Ruth's students who are "large, clear-eyed, and beautiful; their voices rang with confidence." Ruth's timidity and lack of confidence situate her in an opposition to her attractive, self-assured English students. In this way, it is implied that even as their lecturer she does not feel completely secure. Such dynamics suggest that this in-between position of Ruth, where she has to constantly negotiate her identity prevents her inclusion. Though the characters in *SL* speak the same language, when Ruth interacts with others she seems to be involved in a metaphorical act of translation – she converts her peculiar experience as an Anglo-Jewish woman into commonly understood segments of meaning. The trope of translation strikingly points to the emergent principle of identity. Since Ruth inhabits both traditions she is impelled to facilitate the mutual understanding between them, thus she must change the position depending on who she interacts with. When she invites her English friend Anthea for tea, for instance, she represents her family, but when she takes care of her elderly father, she stands for English culture which she brings closer to him.

Kitty in *P* has an analogous two-fold position regarding the comprehension of English culture:

> Turning her puffy hands in her lap in a strange mute appeal, she [Louise] said, 'I do not understand your life. Are your colleagues real men? Is it so different here? What do you discuss over your tea and biscuits? Come,' she would say, with a glint in her eye, but the hands still turning, sadly, 'come, ma fille, tell me about England.' (P 16)

> She [Kitty] tried to read his [Maurice's] mind, to follow his thinking more closely. She saw there something inaccessible. The vague, pleasant, and somehow mysterious smile closed her out, while closing in something highly significant, something that she did not know, something foreign to her. Tell me about England, she thought. (*P* 26)

These quotations demonstrate the transient positioning of Kitty: when she talks to her grandmother, she is the one to explain Englishness to her whereas when Maurice engages Kitty's mind, she seems not to comprehend his English ways. The phrase "tell me about England" signifies the feeling of incomprehension of and the desire to understand English culture, and it turns out that these feelings are common for both Louise and Kitty. When Louise perceives her granddaughter as more accustomed to Englishness, she identifies

herself with the outgroup of those who do not belong to this dominant culture. However, Kitty feels the same when she gets involved with English people like Maurice. This shifting of position resembles oral translation with Kitty being an interpreter of both cultures and a mediator between them. Thus, her self-ascription is contextual as Ruth and Kitty are positioned in various ways which reveal different aspects of their hybrid ethnic identity.

However, one may presume that such a transfer of meanings, conventions, and attitudes is also an internal process which is underlined by free indirect discourse mode of narration. The reader witnesses Ruth's constant deliberation about vice and virtue, often relating to Balzac' literature and trying to capture the rules of society from the position of an outsider. She is similarly juxtaposed with her students who are presented as confident, young, uninhibited insiders. However, their ability to fully experience the conflicting sides of existence stemming from the mixed heritage is limited: "their translations were narrowed and cautious." Thus, it may be presumed that the lack of obstacles in the privileged English spheres makes life comfortable yet limited. Perhaps this situation results in the strong interest which Ruth's students show in existentialists like Camus. This fascination is downgraded and portrayed as a whim of spoilt children longing for some serious and solemn intellectual stimulation. As the situation is told from the perspective of the protagonist, it might be assumed that this deprecation expresses Ruth's disapproval. She could not regard such an attitude seriously because it is implied that her alienation is much more real. It originates from actual experience of unsteady, erratic ethnicity, and this enables her to accomplish wider and braver translations.

It is important, however, to note that translation denotes here also the existence between two cultures and the desire to reconcile them in some agreeable formula. This understanding and coexistence of two cultures could create a peaceful environment for the construction of the developing identity of the protagonist. Unfortunately, such a situation is never achieved in Brookner's fiction, and this provokes constant reflections on the protagonists' past which gradually become the means of acquiring the knowledge of the reasons for their inner divergence. Remarkably, the question posed in the second quote above does not refer to a novel, a book, or a story, but to the *translation* of Balzac's piece. The word "translation" additionally stresses the significance of liminal space in which the absorption of a foreign thought is possible; it widens the space of negotiation, confrontation, and exchange. Thus, this question might be interpreted as a regretful debate over the influence of the early education on the future life. Predominantly, it is the lack

of guidance and realistic examples that result in the lack of successful private life of Ruth (one of the main themes of *Eugénie Grandet* includes the attractiveness of the successful people). Therefore, if we consider the nurse and her role in Ruth's life, then the absence of parents who could undertake the educating role in the protagonist's life is additionally highlighted here. To conclude, the realm of translation, transmission, and exchange is the sphere which Ruth knows well from her personal experience and which indicates her profound familiarity with a certain liminal condition (as suggested by the first quotation).

Though Ruth is accustomed to this transitory state she is still not well-equipped for life. Ruth's maladjustment might be an outcome of her being brought up by uninvolved mother and father. The role of caring parents is partly fulfilled by Mrs Weiss, but her life is also "translated." In other words, she is displaced from her homeland which is a cause of the provisional quality of her life. Consequently, the sphere of translation in *SL* could be treated as the metaphor of the ethnic boundary with a two-fold characteristic: it widens the experience which does not necessarily make it easier to navigate in the meanders of life. This brings us to the main thought of John Ciardi's famous essay in which he argues that translation is the art of failure.[84] Cardi's statement may serve as the commentary on Ruth's existence. Her aspirations to settle down and find stability with her complicated heritage become impossible to fulfil. A more affirmative view on the issue of translation is presented by Salman Rushdie: "[t]he word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across.' Having being born across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained" (17). The use of the metaphor of translation provides the glimpse into the development of the protagonist of *SL* and the way she was "born across the world," however the gain seems more of a burden to Ruth.

Looking closer at Brookner's first five novels, it is *FF* where single French words are most frequent. In this novel the role of French intrusions is mainly to demonstrate a certain social status of the Dorn family. As the family comes from the Continent, the achievement of social status in England seems the focal objective of Sofka Dorn (which

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[84] This is actually the paraphrase of Ciardi's title "Translation. The Art of Failure" where he claims that

> [A] translator's explanation of his method has no choice but to be an apology for failure. Frost might have been right when he said that 'Poetry is what disappears in translation.' For a translator to dream of success would be overweening: what he tries for is no more than the best possible failure.(17)

The actual sentence "Translation is the art of failure" has been for long misattributed to Umberto Eco.

is reflected in the fragments similar to this one: "Fredrick's deportment, in love and business, is extremely aristocratic. Somehow, out of the unpromising debris of a European family, Sofka has bred an English aristocrat. This is perhaps her most triumphant achievement" (*FF* 22)). It might be assumed that the fluency in French was an element of social refinement and education. Thus, words such as *portières*, *nuage*, *étude*, *peignoir*, *badinage*, *salade cuite* in *FF* contribute to the general ambience of the social stratum Sofka and her family aspire to. The usage of them also hints that the narrator adopts the language of the Dorns, which further suggests that the speaking voice mimics the language of the characters creating the inter-subjective world picture (the issue has already been noted in the previous section). Furthermore, the semantic play with foreign words is also present in *FF*:

> When Betty remembers, she can twist her body into charming little undulating walk, languorous but tongue-in-cheek, and can receive the same appreciation while walking down the street as she previously did when dancing rumba, the tango, or the cachucha. She knows in her heart that such posturing is what Sofka would call *mauvais genre*, but she is above such considerations now. Or perhaps she is below them […]. (*FF* 91)

The use of the French phrase *mauvais genre* at the same time implies Betty's upper-class education and denotes her lower status (the words mean "bad type"). Sofka pays attention to the social status of her children in a foreign country: she provides her daughter Betty with the French language lessons and dance classes. Nevertheless, in Betty's case these efforts have reverse outcomes. Although Betty enjoys herself to the fullest, her behaviour becomes too vulgar for her family's standards. The subsequent occurrence of the words "above" and "below" puts in play the idea of social status since the vocabulary denoting the dimension of height (verticality) is used in reference to the place in social hierarchy. This reference may serve as foreshadowing of narrative dehumanization processes concerning Betty. Haslam notes that "[p]ortraying others as lacking UH [uniquely human] characteristics such as refinement is understood as locating them below others on an ordinal scale of development or evolution" (258). The above quoted passage from the novel describes adolescent Betty when her position is still somewhere in between: she might be perceived as degraded socially (dancing in the cabaret) but at the same time she might regard herself inwardly regenerated (living according to her own principles). The employment of the words *mauvais genre* in this passage of *FF* could be treated as a condensed formulation of the paradox of Betty's position.

An analogous procedure could be observed in another fragment, where the narrative reveals also the point of view of Mr Markus who invites Betty for dinner:

> As she is not paying, Betty orders caviar, steak, and *île flottante*. With coffee, Betty relaxes, inserts a cigarette into a long holder, leans back, surveying her favourite meeting place through eyes narrowed by smoke. […] For a moment she has almost forgotten to make an impression on Mr Markus, who, unbeknownst to her, is watching her with genuine amusement. This child, he thinks, with her tiny fragment of experience, has the temperament of a great *allumeuse*: greedy, probably frigid, good-natured, vicious. Obviously well brought up but happier being less well brought up than her mother intended. Rich, well fed, well cared for: a glossy little girl but able to convey a marvellous impression of dirtiness. (*FF* 92–93)

This fragment further confirms the semantic play with the French words. *Allumeuse* denoting a flirtatious woman with no desire to satisfy men alludes to the opposition between Betty's education and her actual behaviour. Analogous to the previous example, the rest of the quotation could be interpreted as an elaboration on the complexity of meanings contained in the word *allumeuse* used in the last quote. Betty's disgraceful behaviour, exemplified by the lack of concern for the cost of the meal paid by her date together with her provocative body language, stand in opposition to her social background. Thus, Betty is an amalgamation of the superficial appearances acquired at home ("[r]ich, well fed, well cared for: a glossy little girl") and her bad manners ("impression of dirtiness"). This is easily summarized in the French word *allumeuse*. Along this line of argument, Bucholtz and Hall suggest that code switching is a significant element of meaning creation. According to lexicality principle, a change of language contributes to a multilevel identity formulation. The usage of French words like *mauvais genre* or *allumeuse* adds a next layer to understanding the complex position of Betty. On the one hand, she is a representative of a bourgeois family and, on the other, a black sheep. The French phrases help then to represent her not only as one or the other but as a hybrid of both; she is a stranger who escapes simple categorization.

The strangeness related to the figure of Betty is even more visible in the descriptions in which the protagonist's appearance and manners are compared to those of an animal:

> Plump and petite like Sofka, with the same small hands and feet, Betty has a guttersnipe charm. '*Elle a du chien*,' murmured the women admiringly among themselves when Betty, as a child, swept into an elaborate curtsy, with an adorable lift and fall of the shoulders. (*FF* 32)

The French expression *avoir du chien* [to have a dog] is an old-fashioned way to indicate woman's charm and class. On a deeper, intertextual level, it reveals Betty's contrasting qualities – though the French phrase has positive connotations the semantic play with the reference to a dog hints to her animality. Betty is portrayed as a ruthless flirt, a rebellious, self-confident woman who embraces her lower instincts – an attitude which stands in sharp contrast to the strict rules of her upbringing. As has been already indicated, the figure of Betty does not represent only a break with tradition or turning away from established values but rather a fusion of tradition and nonchalance. That is why she is so difficult to classify. The manner in which others describe her mirrors her liminality which is a fusion of bad taste, impropriety and tradition, prestige, and class. Thus, she could be also categorized as a distinctive species. The fact that she is frequently characterized via the references to animals additionally underlines her instincts related to sexuality as well as her otherness.

Later in the novel the references to Betty's animality seem to amplify, especially when she is viewed from a perspective of men:

> What Betty did not know was that Max […] particularly savoured that wild unstudied side of her nature that could turn, with equally keen appetite, from simple physical greed to the stern and unforgiving appraisal of her appearance before some evening party, when, at her dressing-table, she would moisten her lips, narrow her eyes, take up her mirror and study her reflection from every angle […]. Both uncle and nephew would delight in ordering some dish for her and watching her, as, *dainty as a cat*, she would eat her way through it, deaf and blind to what was being said or done in her presence. At moments like this Max would congratulate himself on having snared an original, *a little animal* who would keep him amused for as long as any woman had ever kept him amused, which was not very long, but, in his view, long enough. (*FF* 152)

> And, the chair having been found, she would stretch out, *purr like a cat*, and hitch up her white linen skirt, revealing her firmly muscled legs and her dancer's feet in tiny white shoes. (*FF* 153; all the emphases mine)

The slow but regular process of comparing Betty to an animal and focusing on her body may be treated as a literary exemplification of the dehumanization processes.

Dehumanization is usually targeted towards members of outgroups and is inclined towards justification of violence. Haslam links the mass aggression with animalisation:

> The animalistic form of dehumanization, in which others are denied UH [uniquely human] characteristics such as higher cognition, self-control, civility, and refinement, is best exemplified in the context of interethnic antagonism (e.g., genocide, racial stereotyping, attitude towards immigrants). Animal or organism metaphors for ethnic

> outgroups are commonplace in this domain, as is the sense that intergroup differences are as sharp and impermeable as boundaries between species. (260)

The animalization of Betty along with Darwinian tropes in *FF* (discussed in the previous section) evoke associations with Nazi propaganda and foreshadow the Holocaust. The impression should not be considered far-fetched as Haslam directly states that dehumanization is frequently analysed in relation to genocide, specifically to the extermination of Jews in the Holocaust among other ethnic conflicts (253). He refers to the works of Chalk and Jonassohn (1990), and Kelman (1976) mentioning the mechanics of the animalization in justification of mass violence. Once a person is portrayed as devoid of human traits, it is easier to inflict pain on them without remorse as the ontological and moral position of the victim has been undermined. Analogously, Betty's descriptions enhance her strangeness by focusing on the traits that are not conceptualized as uniquely human, like control of the urges, reason, sophistication, or erudition. Though Betty is not in immediate danger in the novel, she is nevertheless positioned as a potential victim, a subject of animalization, the other who is not fully one thing or the other. Moreover, Betty is portrayed as a blissfully ignorant character – she enjoys the attention of men but does not realize the possible danger of their interest which diminishes her humanness. Thus, again the probabilistic narrative intrigue seems epistemological here. Hence the potential tragic development of the process of animalization is realized when the tropes of Darwinian discourse are brought together and the semantic field of the Final Solution creates a probable heuristic course of events in which the ethnically heterogenous individuals are persecuted.

The fictional worlds of Anita Brookner are populated with characters like Betty, who are difficult to categorize. Another Brooknerian protagonist, Kitty, seems to gain two divergent personalities as the duality of her nature is constantly signalled in *P*. This is most evidently symbolized by her names. Generally, she is named Kitty, but her grandparents call her Thérèse, after her mother. This arrangement mirrors her social and psychological position:

> Yet Kitty felt herself to be English; […] And indeed no one had ever faulted her on grounds of Englishness. Yet she felt a part of her to be shrewd and watchful, mistrusting others, paying less attention to their words than to the words they were not voicing. She thought these characteristics were a sign of some moral defect […]. (*P* 5–6)

Consequently, Kitty manifests simultaneously two different attitudes. She feels as an average English person but there is also a mistrustful part in her. This cautious side of

Kitty is in the state of emergence which suggests an imminent danger. The employment of understatement refers to her seemingly unshaken sense of Englishness. In fact, under a mantle of perfect assimilation, Kitty embodies a cultural discrepancy. She appears to be an ultimate epitome of such a condition. Unlike the protagonists of other four novels who are usually described in opposition to the people in their environment, Kitty is portrayed as the combination of the two cultural elements. The ethnic doubleness is symbolized by her two names – one used at her family home (Thérèse) and the other at work (Kitty).[85] Therefore it is not a harmonious fusion whereby the names are employed interchangeably – she is addressed with name Thérèse only by her grandparents and this implies that the part of her, connected with her family, exile and emigration could only manifest itself around her relatives. This situation imposes alienation which stems directly from the family history:

> Her father, John Maule, had died, but her grandparents, her mother's parents, had monstrously survived him and had taken the widow and her child back into their care. And here the strangeness began, for they were not like other people, and destined perhaps to designate the island of remoteness in Kitty's character which gave her so much trouble. (*P* 7)

The words "monstrously" and "strangeness" additionally imply the contrast between the conventional household and Kitty's upbringing and family arrangement. These phrases also suggest the reasons for some flaws in her English disposition she would like to present outside the narrow family circle of hers. The emotional distance, mistrust, and self-doubt might be perceived in "the island of remoteness," the formulation used in reference to her English name (Kitty), in other words, her desire to adapt to English standards is undermined. The two names also symbolize the fact that neither of them truly reflects the person in question:

> Kitty's grandparents, who so consistently undid the myth of Kitty's Englishness, in which she believed so fervently and which no one who knew her sought to disbelieve. (*P 6*)

> To Kitty, who loved England as only one who is not wholly English can do, Louise and Vadim and Marie-Thérèse were almost an embarrassment. (*P* 12)

The quotations above demonstrate how Kitty's Englishness is of a mythical quality. In other words, it is something that Kitty aspires to but never achieves. Such an unattainable

[85] The two distinct countries the grandparents come from (France and Russia) also mirror this duality. A foreign ancestral line in other novels originates in one continental country.

ideal becomes intangibly elusive. Kitty's zealous inclination towards English culture seems visibly unnatural when it is juxtaposed with the origins of her family. Although "no one who knew her sought to disbelieve" Kitty's Englishness, the phrases "myth" and "fervent belief" suggest that her ardour distinguishes her from the regular English citizens who take their nationality for granted. Paradoxically, the more Kitty wants to appear English, the more spurious she becomes.

The fragments also reveal the role of her grandparents in the formation of the protagonist's fragmented identity. It is exactly when Kitty observes Vadim's elaborate behaviour while he is doing shopping which provokes her conflicting emotions: "Part of her cringed with the imagined antagonism of the shopkeepers. Part of her admired his [Vadim's] tenacity. Part of her wished her father were alive. Yet another part noted what fashion magazines were on sale, and bought them for Louise" (*P* 13–14). The anaphoric repetition of the phrase "part of her" draws attention to Kitty's internal fragmentation related to various points of view on her situation. It seems that Kitty is constructed with different, separated parts that enable her to empathize with society (shopkeepers), her Russian grandfather, her deceased English father, and her French grandmother, respectively. However, such a combination may be overwhelming for Kitty because there is no part which would allow her to empathize with herself. Thus, navigation in the complex cultural environment proves to be difficult as existence in this liminal space demands a swift adaptation to the changing realities:

> Returning home from these visits, she found she needed several days to change over from being Kitty to be Thérèse. (*P* 12)
>
> The transition from one life to another was not always easy. (*P* 15)

Along these lines, it might be inferred that the mixed heritage of the protagonist of *P* does not arm her with the inherent ability to switch from one cultural circle into another. If the metaphor of translation is used again, Kitty is not able to transcribe herself automatically.

This situation is echoed in her conversation with Mrs Bentley, the mother of her English friend Pauline. Once Kitty tells the elderly lady about her family, Mrs Bentley exclaims: "'But that is charming!' […] 'And do you speak French at home? They must give you a head start with your work.'" (*P* 82). Later on, the reader finds out that there is no response from Kitty which might hint that a foreign language representing a foreign culture is not always an asset. French phrases that occur frequently in Brookner's novels seem to additionally emphasize the displacement of the characters within their own

families. It is especially visible in Louise's remarks directed to Kitty, such as "*Mais tu es folle, ma fille*" (*P* 14) or "'I don't understand your life. […] What do you discuss over your tea and biscuits? Come,' she would say, with a glint in her eye, but the hands still turning, sadly, 'come, *ma fille*, tell me about England'" (*P* 16). As the French words appear in the fragments which refer directly to otherness, the change of the code further distances the foreign phrases from the otherwise English narration. Thus, Louise's commentary about Kitty's craziness in French might simultaneously offer an explanation of this situation. Namely, Kitty is different from others because she was brought up in an outlandish house symbolized by the foreign language. And so Louise is not able to fully comprehend her granddaughter's lifestyle and when she asks Kitty to "tell [her] about England," Kitty is addressed with *ma fille* that immediately informs the reader about Louise's foreign point of view. This external perspective is the actual reason for Louise's inability to comprehend English way of life. In such a way the change of the code implies a new semantic layer which operates in a structural manner with the rest of the utterance.

Among the protagonists being discussed, as already observed Edith in *SL* also constitutes an ethnic other. Similarly to the names of the protagonist of *P*, Edith's name plays a significant role too: "One new arrival. Hope, Edith Johanna. An unusual name for an English lady. Perhaps not entirely English. Perhaps not entirely lady. Recommended, of course. But in this business one never knew" (*HL* 23). These remarks of the hotel portier close the first chapter of *HL* and reveal how Edith might be perceived by people who do not know her well but are exposed to basic facts about her persona. The fragment alludes to the protagonist's ethnic otherness which is the first information other characters obtain even without seeing Edith. It also attests to the mistrust connected to her hybrid identity and expanded to other fields – if she is not fully English, most probably she is not a lady, that is to say, a valuable, cultured woman. In this manner, Englishness is also morally connoted and liminal ethnicity is perceived as dubious (even a recommendation does not prove to be enough when one's national background is unequivocal).

The analysed instances create a pattern of not fulfilling a given ethnic category either by hybridity (Betty), duality (Ruth, Kitty) or lack of fullness (Edith). Such a position seems to be even more uncertain and threatened with annihilation because, as S. Hall argues following Mary Douglas "what really disturbs cultural order is when things turn up in the wrong category; or when things fail to fit any category" ("Spectacle" 236). Moreover, he gives an example of mix-raced individuals as a people "who are neither 'white' nor 'black' but float ambiguously in some unstable, dangerous, hybrid zone of

indeterminacy in-between" ("Representation" 226). Such a liminal status is the most prominent characteristic of Brooknerian protagonists who are constantly treated with hard-hidden distrust. They are not only "the others" but they also intermingle both cultures without fully identifying with any of them. The position in-between clearly defined categories appears to be worse than one of a complete stranger, foreigner, antithesis of ingroup. The social desire for clarity, binary oppositions, and boundaries is noted by S. Hall:

> Stable cultures require things to stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories 'pure', giving cultures their unique meaning and identity. What unsettles culture is 'matter out of place' – the breaking of our unwritten rules and codes. Dirt in our garden is fine, but dirt in one's bedroom is 'matter out of place' – a sign of pollution, of symbolic boundaries being transgressed, of taboos broken. What we do with 'matter out of place' is to sweep it up, throw it out, restore the place to order, bring back the normal state of affairs. The retreat of many cultures towards 'closure' against foreigners, intruders, aliens and 'others' is part of the same process of purification (Kristeva 1982). ("Spectacle" 226)

Once again the theoretical assumptions from the social fields complete the interpretation of mechanisms of ethnic liminality in Brookner's fiction. The imminent danger and uncertainty are informed by atrocious historical facts of the 20th century and the experience of their ancestors who had to flee their countries. Being coerced to exile could be read as an equivalent of cultural "sweeping up" or "throwing out" which contributes to dehumanization since people are treated as commodities in the process of "ethnic purification."

It is important to note that dehumanization does not affect only people of distinctive or mixed race, ethnicity, or sexuality but also the mentally ill. People suffering from mental disorder are ostracized and become subjects of dehumanization (Haslam 253). Additionally, the psychiatrist discourse utilizes the dehumanizing language and qualification:

> Similar concerns are raised in critiques of psychiatrist practice (Fink 1982). Szasz (1973) argued that biological psychiatry's deterministic explanations and coercive treatments relieve individuals of their autonomy and moral agency. According to Szasz, psychiatric classification is equally dehumanizing, involving a 'mechanomorphic' style of thinking that 'thingifies' persons and treats them as 'defective machine[s].' (Haslam 200)

These observations shed some light on the repetitive motif of damage, or "moral defect," which prevents the protagonists' happiness and overall satisfaction from life and

frequently contributes to presenting them as unresponsive, inhibited, and devoid of agency. The protagonists' sensitive personalities are often conceptualized as weakness stemming from being brought up in the family of mixed origins. The fragile temperament of Brooknerian characters, especially when they were children, portrays them as powerless, weak, and anaemic:

> She [Ruth] remembered herself as a pale, neat child, with extraordinary hair that made her head ache. Most things cost her a great effort; even now she could recall her attempts, tongue protruding gracelessly, breath coming heavily, at trying to replace her cup in the exact depression of the saucer. Nurse had been patient but brisk; she was expected to grow up fast as she could decently manage it, and to this end was supplied with sad but improving books. (*SL* 11)

> Her [Edith's] strange mother, Rosa, that harsh disappointed woman, that former beauty who raged so unsuccessfully against her fate, deliberately, wilfully letting herself go, slatternly and scornful, mocking her pale silent daughter who slipped so modestly in and out her aromatic bedroom, bringing cups of coffee which her mother deliberately spilled. And shouting, 'Too weak! Too weak! All of you, too weak!' Sighing for Vienna, which had known her brilliant, and not fat and slovenly, as she was now. And weeping for her dead sister, Anna. (*HL* 48)

The above passages suggest that Ruth and Edith were not nurtured as children but treated in a mechanistic way when they were "expected to grow up fast" and accused of being weak. In the case of Edith, the impression is even stronger because of the contrast between her paleness, silence, and weakness and her mother's loud and robust personality. As dehumanization constitutes a process of spectre quality, the descriptions of Ruth and Edith could be easily read as bearing traits of mechanisation, that is to say, the young protagonists are deprived of their humanness by being treated as machines. They are expected to function properly as devices with full power, otherwise they are considered too "weak." Moreover, Edith's timidity does not connote a human expressiveness but an inferior, or even a robot fulfilling her mother's whims. Haslam proposes a model of dehumanization which distinguishes animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization. The latter erases qualities of human nature such as "emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency, individuality," and instead presents individuals as "inert, cold, rigid, passive, fungible and superficial" (Haslam 257). Such a process allows to justify neglect or violence because the abuser does not empathize with the dehumanized victim who is conceptualized in mechanistic terms. Applying this mechanistic dehumanisation in the context of the discussed novels, it was easier for Ruth's and Edith's mothers to ignore their daughters as they were perceived as weaker, dysfunctional

versions of model children.

Though *SL* and *HL* contain some tropes of mechanisation of their protagonists, the most explicit references to otherness connected to stigma of mental disorder are present in *LM*. Frances' vocation is connected to psychic anomalies as she "work[s] in the reference library of a medical research institute dedicated to the study of problems of human behaviour" (*LM* 5), which is mentioned in the opening part of the novel. The specification of the aims and arrangement of library evoke "psychiatry's deterministic explanations" (Haslam 200):

> I am in charge of pictorial material, an archive said to be unparalleled anywhere else in the world, of photographs of works of art and popular prints depicting doctors and patients through the ages. It is an encyclopaedia of illness and death, for in early days few maladies were curable and they seem therefore to have exerted a dreadful fascination over the minds of men. We are particularly interested in dreams and madness, and our collection is rather naturally weighted towards the incalculable or the undiagnosed. Problems of human behaviour still continue to baffle us, but at least in the Library we have them properly filed. (*LM* 5)

The preoccupation with categorization of anomalies replaces the inability to fully comprehend the complexity of human psyche. Moreover, once again in Brookner's fiction the element of repressed tension and fear seems to play an important role. For one thing, the classification of mental illness seemingly allows to assign some categories to those who escape any norms of society. As has already been mentioned, subjects that transgress the clear boundaries of a given society are perceived as "matter out of place" and usually become subjects of actions aimed at "purification" (Kristeva 1982). That was also the case during the Second World War when Nazi ideology pursued the executions of the mentally ill. The words like "an archive," "encyclopaedia," "collection," or "filed" emphasise the endeavours to control and frame the ambiguous afflictions of the soul but if we juxtapose these with the initial sentences of the novel (which precede the last quotation) the references to genocide might be constructed:

> Once a thing is known it can never be unknown. It can only be forgotten. And, in a way that bends time, so long as it is remembered, it will indicate the future. It is wiser, in every circumstance, to forget, to cultivate the art of forgetting. To remember is to face the enemy. The truth lies in remembering. (*LM* 5)

The fixation on cataloguing the mental illness of those who were historically understood as the others could be actually a way of processing the atrocious memory of the Holocaust. Frances is someone who cannot forget (*LM* 84), thus her awareness of this

part of history "indicate[s] the future," that is to say, the possibility of repetition of brutality aimed at the weakest who transgress the boundary designating the norm. Therefore, Frances being most probably of Anglo-Jewish descent would also constitute the potential victim. However, the repression of fear is manifested in her professional position too – she is employed to catalogue and categorize thus cognitively control what is incomprehensible, ambiguous but also weak.

A similar willingness to distance oneself from the memory of horror is present in the following fragment:

> Next to melancholy is our filing system of madness, and this section too is heavily patronized. Here, the good news is that quite a bit has changed: madmen were once thought to be incredibly amusing, and there are far too many popular prints, most of them English, I am sorry to say, of funny men hitting themselves in the head or pulling faces at one another. But of course this material can be very serious indeed, particularly as quite a few artists have a close understanding of this sad condition. How powerful lunatics are! Once they were nude, struggling, chained. (*LM* 7)

Ruth hesitates and moves between sympathy and ridicule of mental illness. The fact that the pictures perceived by her as funny are of English origin seems to be very telling. The guise of Ruth's amusement could apparently hide her lack of security in England. Interestingly enough, the pictorial representation of madness may be interpreted as the discursive manifestations of dominant power. S. Hall reminds us that generally power is misled for force and coercion (259). Nevertheless, power is present in:

> *representation*; power to mark, assign and classify; or *symbolic* power; of *ritualized* expulsion. Power, it seems, has to be understood here, not only in terms of economic exploitation and physical coercion, but in broader cultural or symbolic terms, including the power to someone or something in a certain way – within a certain 'regime of representation'. It includes the exercise of *symbolic power* through representational practices. Stereotyping is a key element in this exercise of symbolic violence. (Hall, "Spectacle" 259)

The power exerted over the mad and mentally ill in *LM* seems to be of all possible kinds. It is shown through a physical constraint – the patients are "struggling, chained," and via ridicule and stereotyping. Moreover, the mentally ill are represented in a conventional way and classified according to biological disfunctions. Frances is responsible for cataloguing the visual material so the section transforms into the specification of some of the most popular pictures in the library collection. One of them brings to mind a

Renaissance engraving by Albrecht Dürer entitled *Melancolia I* (fig. 2.). The piece is described as follows:

> Take the problem of melancholy, for example, I could almost write a treatise on melancholy, simply from looking through the files. In old prints melancholy is usually portrayed as a woman, dishevelled, deranged, surrounded by broken pitchers, leaning casks, torn books. She may be sunk in unpeaceful sleep, heavy limbed, overpowered by her inability to take the world's measure, her compass and book laid aside. She is very frightening, but the person she frightens most is herself. She is her own disease. Dürer shows her wearing a large ungainly dress, winged, a garland in her tangled hair. She has a fierce frown and so great is her disarray that she is closed in by emblems of study, duty, and suffering: a bell, an hourglass, a pair of scales, a globe, a compass, a ladder, nails. […] These men [struck by melancholy] seem to me to be striking a bit of a pose, unlike the women, whose melancholy is less picturesque. The women look as if they are in the grip of affliction too serious to be put into words. […] Which shows that nothing much has changed since the sixteenth century. (*LM* 6–7)

Although the quotation indicates some of the symbolic meaning of objects traditionally adopted in iconographical interpretation of works of art, the emphasis is laid predominantly on the mood of the portrayed figure and her chaotic surroundings. Despite the fact that the character is presented with the attributes of study, they seem futile and their role is similar to other random and broken objects in the picture. As the fragment points to the accumulation of the useless objects and the distressed mental condition of the character, it stresses the circumstances which could characterize Frances as well. The protagonist of *LM* is also surrounded by the collection of useless objects in her flat and seems to be disillusioned with her ability to understand, incorporate, and adhere to social rules. Moreover, the way Frances refers to the individual in the engraving, highlights her unattractiveness and a withdrawn, apathetic state. Likewise, Frances is presented as self-conscious and unsatisfied with her looks, but what is more important, she seems clumsy, overwhelmed, and indecisive in her efforts to navigate in life. Frances also tries to use her own tools to investigate "the world's measure" adopting the tool of writing to catalogue people's modes of interaction and similarly to the person in the picture described in the passage, fails in using those tools.

The difference in portraying melancholy affecting men and women might refer to the major theme of *LM* which deals with the intricate social rules concerning romantic relationships, particularly the implicit assumptions of the behaviour of women. Thus, when Frances claims that the portrayed person "is very frightening, but the person she frightens most is herself. She is her own disease," the words might actually refer more to

herself than to the melancholy depicted by Dürer. If interpreted in this way, Frances' self-disappointment and acute awareness of her inability to comprehend and assimilate the social norms might pose a bigger threat to her causing her resignation and even disassociation from herself. Remembering the crude truth – the law of survival of the fittest and one's helplessness in relation to it might indicate Frances' future decisions embodied in the opening sentences "[t]o remember is to face the enemy. The truth lies in remembering." Thus, by remembering the truth she has found, Frances becomes disillusioned about the reality she functions in and grows to be "her own disease." Though in her study of *LM* Petit focuses mostly on ekphrasis and narrative device of framing, she also concludes that "those paintings and engravings serve another purpose, that of containing and 'muzzling up,' as it were, the manifestations in the text of both an individual and topical, but also more largely – for Frances, as well as all the other members of the Jewish diaspora in a post-Holocaust world – a collective and historically-grounded terror" ("Framing Terror" 205).

This section has been devoted to the otherness in Brookner's fiction. The issue was touched upon earlier by Marylin Button and Toni Reed in their book *Foreign Woman in British Literature: Exotics, Aliens, and Outsiders* where they conclude that:

> Both Ruth Weiss and Kitty Maule belong to the Romantic literary tradition of exotic and alienated other. Although their alienation is largely self-imposed, it is aggravated by nineteenth-century standards of femininity in the domestic and professional spheres and by the failure of entire fictional communities to value personal differences. Thus, if critics find Brookner's narratives to be chronicles of female weakness or malaise, they are only partly right. They are also testaments to the limited social conscience of an entire country that fails to tap the resources of its own diverse cultural heritage. (180)

The ambivalent attitude towards Anglo-Jewish characters pointed out by Button and Read is not addressed straightforwardly in the discussed novels by, for example, the incidents of direct aggression, violence, or persecution. Nonetheless it transpires that the motif of otherness in Brookner's fiction has the connotations of annihilation. This section has aimed at investigating the subtle ways in which this semantic field of horror, danger, and threat is constructed and transmitted. The narrations of the discussed novels echo the discourse of "purification of the species." This is frequently manifested on the semantic level, narrative structures, employed metaphors, and the arrangement of characters. Such an indirect treatment of the psychological legacy of the Holocaust resembles the assumptions of Hirsh about the memory of those atrocious events. Brookner's narratives seem to be literary manifestations of postmemory as they employ various strategies that

avoid explicit transmission of the past events but they nevertheless are used to bear witness to and process the generational trauma. The language of the novels alludes to evolutionism, especially to the idea of the survival of the fittest – it emphasizes biological advantages of characters who are presented as more predestined to survive, thrive and be successful in life. The characters of English provenance are often juxtaposed with the weak, timid, and shy protagonists of Anglo-Jewish background. The latter position is connoted with insecurity and danger.

The probabilistic world view alludes to the Holocaust and the preposterous yet real possibility of the repetition of most horrible historical events when the most vulnerable, non-normative groups become victims of the mass violence. When it comes to the narrative strategies, they enhance the impression of insecurity and allude to the inability to categorize characters of mixed ethnic origins and because of this ambiguous status the protagonists disturb the social order and transgress the established boundaries (Kristeva 1982). Ruth and Kitty are most explicitly portrayed as mediators between the two cultures which they exist in and therefore they themselves have to constantly cross the boundaries of these two aspects of their personalities. Their identities are contextual and constantly emergent which is further emphasized by the metaphor of translation. The ethnically liminal characters are engaged in continual mediating and making sense of Englishness and their Jewish origin. Finally, it is impossible to assign them to any of the ethnic or cultural classification. Thus, they are most prone to being victimized and persecuted. According to Kelman (1976), the persecution of outgroups is often preceded by their dehumanization. In Brookner's fiction the protagonists are often dehumanized (by highlighting their animalistic features) or mechanized (by presenting them as weak, broken, or unresponsive). Moreover, they are presented as subjects of symbolic violence, for instance, when the connotations are drawn between the representations of mentally ill people (understood here symbolically as the vulnerable outgroups in dominant societies) are ekphrastically employed in *LM*.

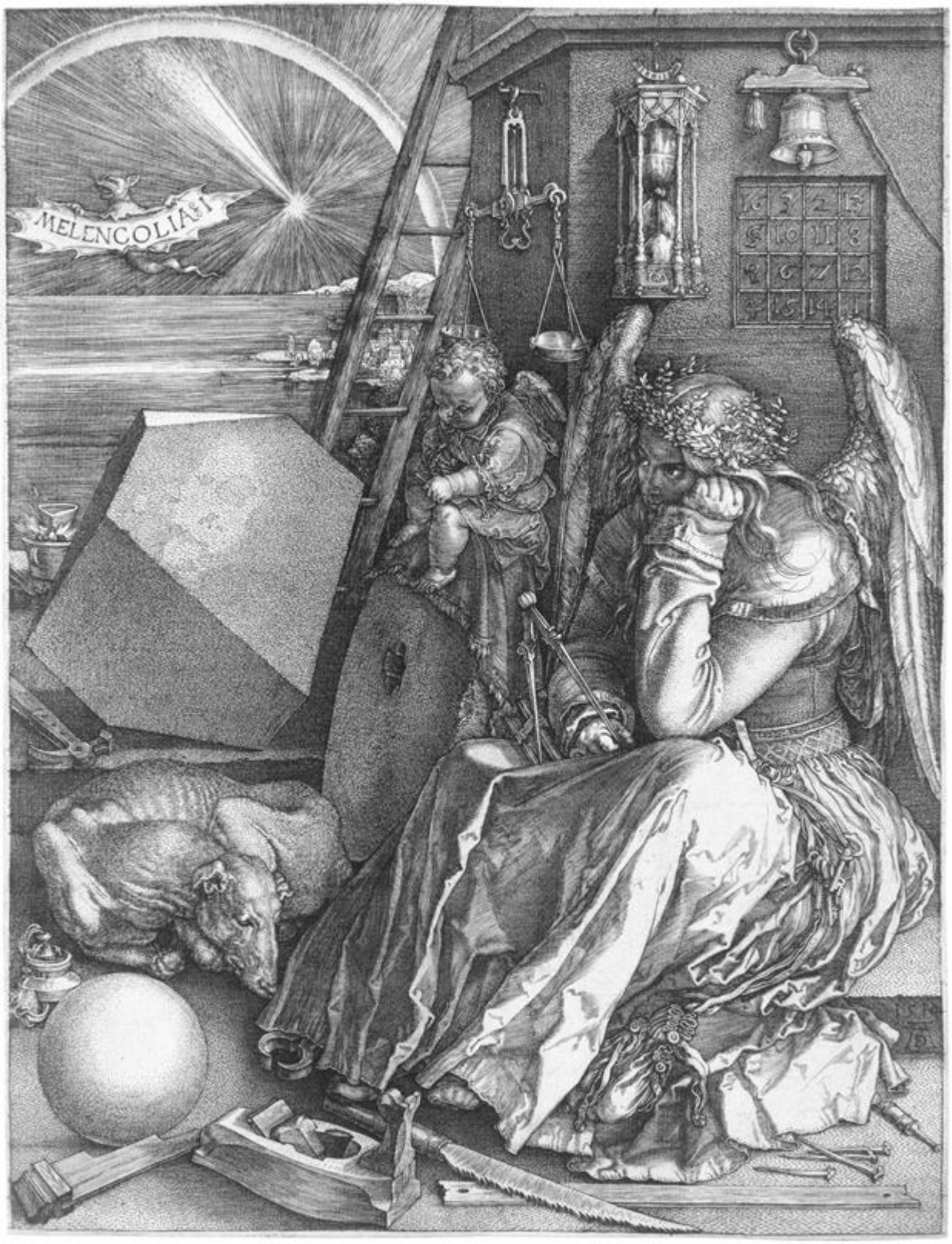


Fig. 2. *Melancolia I*, Albrecht Dürer, 1514, copperplate, 23,8 x 18,5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Chapter 3 Personal Liminality

3.1 Introductory Remarks

In contrast to the previous chapter, in which liminality has been discussed mainly as characters' position between two ethnicities, this chapter will scrutinize different aspects of protagonists' transitory existence. Specifically, whereas ethnicity, culture, and history have provided contexts for considerations in Chapter 2, the perception of protagonists' ages, time suspended (waiting), and romantic relationships will constitute a starting point for the analyses in Chapter 3. Consequently, this chapter will examine the liminality of the protagonists viewed as the attribute of their personality as well as the mode of their existence. Hence, the narratives will be observed from the perspective of the character, the perspective which is personal and thus subjective, yet emotionally truthful. The first section will scrutinize the complexity of the perceived age of the main female characters in *SL*, *P*, *LM*, *HL*, and *FF*. The second section will investigate the motif of waiting perceived as a liminal suspension. Moreover, it will focus on timidity since this feature is inherently linked with this type of waiting. Finally, the third section will be devoted to the study of these elements of the respective narratives which mirror, either overtly or in a slightly veiled manner, the traditional rites of passage in the novels under discussion.

The liminal tropes that will be investigated in this chapter manifest various aspects of liminality. These aspects complement one another, and such dynamics contribute to the complexity of experience of the liminal individuals. However, for the sake of clarity they are presented separately, therefore such a categorization may seem at times arbitrary.

The main aim of this part is, therefore, to reveal the processes behind the creation of personal identity of protagonists. The term "personal identity" is understood as the individual approach signifying one's moral code (de Fina 268). Thus, personal identity, unlike the protagonists' membership categories, provides insight to characters' private values.

3.2 Girlish Women, Mature Girls, Distorted Time

The arrangement of events typical of a traditional Bildungsroman can be noticed in *SL*, *P* and *LM* and these novels might be described as coming-of-age stories. They recount the most important incidents taking place during the introduction of young women into the adult world. Although many similar elements and decisive moments are outlined in the other two novels, *HL* and *FF* constitute a variation of the genre. In *HL*, initially, the protagonist is presented as naïve and of little experience, despite the fact that she is already an adult woman with quite an accomplished career. Additionally, her life is not shown in a panoramic view. The reader is provided with some events from her childhood, but these are more like disjointed snippets than the logical sequence demonstrating her development into adulthood. As far as *FF* is concerned, we have to do with a more collective portrayal of a multigenerational family which is in the process of a full assimilation into a new culture, so it is quite difficult to indicate the most important character in the story. Though *FF* portrays many models of adolescence, the hardships of the separation from a parent, and some ways of entering the adulthood, the novel recounts various episodes to present a history of the whole family in a certain historical period rather than the individual story of each character. As regards *SL*, *P*, and *LM*, they demonstrate on many occasions the liminal position of Ruth, Kitty, and Frances in relation to their age and stage in life. These stories are strongly focused on the female protagonists, and it seems that within the scope of their lives the main attention is drawn to the transitory phases of their existence, when according to social assumptions they are expected to behave as adults because of either their education level or their professional occupation. Ruth in *SL* enters college and at one point even moves out from her family house. When it comes to Kitty in *P*, the first chapter explores her childhood, whereas the other fourteen chapters delve into the preparation of her lecture which is going to be decisive in awarding her academic tenure. Frances in *LM* is employed in the library of a medical research institute. Although they could be objectively regarded as young adults if we consider their ages and occupations, the textual elements, nevertheless, undermine their positions of matured, autonomous persons.

Assuming that adulthood is a natural consequence of departing from a child-like existence, from the period when one was cared for and protected by other adults, then one's adult personality is obviously shaped by our childhood experiences and relations with adults. Therefore, the disturbed childhood may in turn result in further disturbance

in adulthood. Early in *SL* it is signalled that Ruth's parents do not fulfil the role of mature caretakers of their daughter:

> Poor Helen. Poor George. The grandmother knew, and bore the knowledge grimly and in silence, that her son was lightweight and her daughter-in-law a lighter weight still, that each needed the protection of the other, that neither had grown up or would be able to grow old, and that their ardent and facile love-play would damage the child. (*SL* 15)

> Their great strength, had she but known it, was that they were able to voice every passing anxiety. This process, which sounded like a litany of hardship, was in fact an alleviation of disappointment. The child registered only their disappointment, and felt apologetic about her presence which somehow marred the hectic honeymoon atmosphere which they sought to prolong. (*SL* 16)

In the first passage, the matriarch in the family, Mrs Weiss, notes that Helen and George are maladjusted to the responsibility which parenthood brings and this will in the future negatively affect Ruth. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Mrs Weiss is associated with duty and obligation often indicated by the descriptions of her belongings and the space identified with her living area. Her possessions and décor are heavy, dusty, and made of resistant materials – the very qualities, that may as well symbolically characterize their own. From her perspective, her son and his wife are unfit for the obligation. Such a view is signalled by the emphasis on lightness as a quality which is in contrast with Mrs Weiss' heaviness (that is to say, her responsibility). Actually, the strong bond between the parents ("love-play") might potentially constitute a strong foundation for supportive upbringing of their offspring, however, this is not the case here. Since the phrase hinting at the emotional tie between the two is preceded by the adjective "facile" and earlier in the passage the word "light" is repeated, there is a strong suggestion that the relationship between George and Helen is more akin to teenagers' infatuation. Such a reading further highlights their immaturity and the fact that they are unfit for parenthood. In other places in the novel, the similarity between the character of Ruth and her grandmother is noted, thus it might be inferred that the psychological damage concerning the protagonist is the reversal of the child-parent relationship. Indeed, soon after her grandmother's death, Ruth adopts the role of an adult. Although Mrs Cutler is employed by her parents as a housekeeper, she quickly joins them in their midnight gatherings and carefree habits. Such behaviours of George, Helen, and Mrs Cutler resemble teenagers enjoying not being watched by their parents rather than adults responsible for bringing up a child. It seems that Mrs Cutler contributes more to the untidiness and chaos in Oakwood Court than to the order in the house. In this situation, Ruth takes the responsibilities

previously assumed by her grandmother such as preparing her own meals, expanding her reading, and organising her education. She seems to be repeatedly unaccustomed to her parents' way of life and reacts in embarrassed puzzlement when she accidently finds the three adults in the filthy bedroom full of cigarette smoke late at night. Such an arrangement positions Ruth in a role of a mature caretaker when she is still a child. What is more, her behaviour and character echo those of her grandmother who consequently stands for Ruth's ethnic otherness. Subsequently, it may be inferred that this kind of liminality affects consecutive generations.

The second fragment also portrays the carelessness of Ruth's parents' relationship and how it dismisses the emotional security Ruth deserves as a child. Helen and George do not take into consideration the sensitivity and personality of their daughter and do not modify the mode of their expression. As a consequence, Ruth interprets their complaints personally. Her interpretation is a result of a naïve egocentricity of a child but, at the same time, it directs the reader's attention to the hints dropped throughout the novel that Ruth's birth was not looked forward to. The suggestions are not straightforward, and her parents are people of pretences and conventions, so they do not voice such a sentiment openly. Yet, the sentence "The child […] felt apologetic about her presence which somehow marred the hectic honeymoon atmosphere which they sought to prolong" accurately attests to the way their treat their daughter.

What is worth noticing is the sexual undertone of both passages. They emphasise the lightness, joy, honeymoon, and love-play which connote a carefree sexual intercourse. And Ruth is positioned as an obstacle because she might also function as a reminder of the consequences of a sexual act. This further points to Helen's and George's immaturity: they would like to enjoy life without repercussions, just as teenagers do. As they occupy the realm of youth, Ruth is not enabled to do so and the need of her acting as an adult becomes a matter of survival. Since the young girl acts as an adult, the transitory stage into adulthood is different from that of her friends:

> Adolescence? It was hardly an adolescence as other girls knew it, waking up to their temporary but so exhilarating power over men. No slow smiles, no experimental flaunting, no assumed mystery for Ruth. She was in no hurry to enter the adult world, knowing in advance, and she was not wrong, that she was badly equipped for being there. In any event it seemed unattractive and nothing to do with her. Her most persistent image of the adults was that smoky bedroom, untidiness, watchfulness, and over-insistent and over-demonstrated affection. It was not unlike the world of the more advanced girls she knew, those who had changed from cheerful children into potential antagonists. Mrs Cutler's incomprehensible innuendos where all too like the clumsy sexual squibs of her

> contemporaries. She understood neither. She remained thin and childlike, a fact which suited Helen well enough, and badly dressed because Helen would not let her buy her own clothes and had no time to go with her to shops. (SL 22)

The passage above demonstrates how the atmosphere at her home disabled Ruth to act as other adolescents and further sets her apart from her peers. The family home which is supposed to function as a safe base one leaves in due time for autonomous explorations, after the death of the grandmother, constitutes for Ruth the space of danger and its inhabitants change "into potential antagonist." Taking into consideration Helen's preoccupation with her appearance and her vanity, it seems that the reference to potential antagonists refers directly to her as she would be jealous of Ruth if her daughter highlighted her femininity. It might be deduced that Helen treats her daughter as a potential rival and that is why she is satisfied with Ruth's lack of physical appeal – she still looks like a child and does not invest in her looks. Moreover, Helen successfully prevents any change of this situation by neither purchasing new clothes for her daughter, nor allowing her to do so on her own. The dynamics hinted here implies the intertext of the fairy-tale, *Snow White*, with Helen being synonymous to Wicked Stepmother. Just like the fairy-tale character, Helen is obsessed with her looks and appearance, which emphasizes not only her shallowness but also her cruelty towards the daughter (in the fairy-tale Wicked Stepmother's jealousy finally leads to an attempted murder of Snow White). What invites the intertextual comparison between the life of Ruth and the tale of Snow White even more is that the figure of Wicked Stepmother becomes an antithesis of a mother: she is the harbinger of death and the symbol of destruction instead of life and protection. By analogy, this implies that behind the frequently demonstrated shallowness of Helen lurks a real threat to Ruth. This affinity hints that Ruth might be in serious danger. Correspondingly, the position which might grant her relative safety is posing no competition to her mother. As it is often suggested that Helen strives to be desired and sexually appealing, the implication is that Ruth has to become asexual to maintain a relatively secure status. This might be another explanation why any references to carnal pleasures and sexual exploration seem unattractive to her. Thus, Ruth is reluctant to enter adulthood and probe her budding sexuality. The rules concerning basic human needs of care and shelter are inverted in Ruth's world because adults act as teenagers and the family space conventionally associated with shelter is a space of danger.

The undertones of the competitive approach of Helen might be noted when she speaks with Ruth's teacher:

> ‘She’s still very young for her age,’ said Helen, considering her child whimsically. ‘When I was her age I was very much out, I can assure you.’
> ‘Now, now, darling heart,’ replied George automatically.
> They turned to Miss Parker for audience response. None came. Helen began to feel a vague but definite sense of annoyance. (*SL* 26)

Even during the parent-teacher meeting Helen is, as always, preoccupied with herself. Moreover, her words exemplify a few principles of an anti-essentialist, interactionist emergent formation of identity. In this speech act Helen contrasts herself to her daughter as she ascribes to Ruth the qualities that oppose hers. According to the relationality principle, Helen positions herself in distinction to Ruth by mentioning only those traces that set her apart from her daughter. Helen, who values socializing and being recognizable, refers to Ruth as different from herself in these aspects, ascribing herself in this way to the group of attractive people who stand for social success. The irritation resulting from the indifferent rapport of Miss Parker, Ruth’s teacher, further proves that Helen wants to be admired and to be identified as funny and desirable by others. What is more, Helen’s words addressed to Miss Parker are quite surprising, taking the circumstances into account (parent-teacher meeting) and therefore position her not as a representative of a macro-level demographic category of a mother but more as a member of a local and culturally specific group; she brings to mind a budding actress, a frivolous, but socially accepted, attractive girl. On top of that, Helen refers to less overt presuppositions that socialising is more important and valuable than Ruth’s calm and academically-focused life. Self-identity of Helen in this conversation stands in stark opposition to Ruth, but also to a role of a mother. What seems to be especially intriguing, is the confusing employment of the age-related words. When Helen says that her daughter is “[s]till very young for her age,” she relates to Ruth who is objectively young (she has not entered college yet), therefore this implies that Helen expects Ruth to behave in a more mature way than she does. However, having a complicated relationship with her own age and acting as a person much younger than she really is, Helen only attests to the reversed positions of parents and children in her family and, thus, to the inability of Ruth to truly adopt the conventional role of a teenager.

The space occupied by Ruth’s mother in the Weisses’ house also demonstrates Helen’s immaturity. Her bedroom has the superimposed sense of frivolity and of the lack of responsibility. As has been aleady hinted in the second chapter, her room serves

different functions; she sleeps there, receives guests, eats, plays the piano, dresses up and changes her clothes leaving them in random places, hence making her look like "an extension of her dressing room" (*SL* 13). As for actors who display their bodies and strip their clothes routinely, so for Helen the space designed for changing clothes does not seem to be an intimate place, which is attested by the fact that her friends visit her there. The easy-going atmosphere of the room frequented by Helen's women friends of a similar profession resembles the ambience of the young girls' get-together. Nonetheless, Helen's vocation could not be treated as the sign of her responsibility and adulthood as her theatre endeavors are referred to in the novel in a disparaging manner and in regard to comedies only. This superficial world of sparkle and temporality may be tempting for little Ruth but not secure: "Her quarters seemed less substantial than the grandmother's. More alluring, but less safe" (*SL* 13-14). Ruth is cared for by her grandmother not by her mother who seems to be a person without age, belonging to a different world to which she might return:

> At any moment, the child felt, the friends might try to rescue her mother from the alien atmosphere into which she had fallen and take her away with them, back to the West End and a shared past of theatrical digs, and a late supper somewhere. They had the advanced girlishness of their profession, and they were high-spirited and petulant and charming. (*SL* 14)

Helen, still being friends with actresses and singers, is also characterized with "advanced girlishness" and so her place in the house in Oakwood Court is the place symbolizing youth as opposed to the space controlled by Mrs Weiss and thereupon standing for maturity. What is striking is that Ruth, being the youngest in the family, does not represent qualities of youth. It is the mother, the person who is usually expected to display virtues like responsibility and maturity, who is portrayed as the young one in the family.

Considering Ruth's ascription to the particular space of the house, she does not resent the startling and depressing picture of the dining room. The area appears for Ruth as something ordinary and known – she is used to the place which, for a long time, was the only type of a dining room she was (physically and symbolically) familiar with. Paradoxically, such gloomy characteristics and bizarre family relations constitute a variation of stability for Ruth, an attitude which is typical of Brookner's novels. This dubious situation could be described with the quotation which openly alludes to Dickens and the beginning of *The Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Maintained in childhood by her youthful parents and her ageing grandmother, the

girl marvelled at the stability of her world" (*SL* 16). Nevertheless, this stability can be easily questioned since the atmosphere in Oakwood Court appears to be anything but stable. Ruth might interpret her home as permanent and relatively secure due to the fact that this was the only setting she knew as a child, so she had no possibility compare it to the space of other families. Another explanation might be Ruth's love of reading. In literary works she finds a more adventurous world in comparison to her own: "In books, to mention only the works of Charles Dickens, such great trials were undergone. Inside the flat, Oakwood Court, there was no change" (*SL* 16–17). The juxtaposition of the earlier cited sentence ("It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.") with the experience of Ruth ("there was no change") undermines her objectivity and shows how much she was influenced by literature. This might be even a more credible explanation since in the sentence which follows the assertion of the stability of Ruth's family, it is stated that: "Bursts of laughter in another room signalled the presence of her parents, never to be taken for granted because of the many more attractive places they might have been" (*SL* 16–17). The lack of the certainty of the presence of the closest relatives is not something which would conventionally be associated with a child's sense of security and stability. Thus, Ruth's experience has taught her to correlate security not with her parents but, paradoxically, with their absence (Helen and George are constantly occupied with daily pleasures) and with the presence of her grandmother. Consequently, the house of the Weiss family represents a peculiar realm where, for little Ruth, the idea of stability is reversed.

However, the strangeness of Ruth's family house is still more complicated when the striking and archaic conservatism associated with the dining room is contrasted not only with the public space but also with the drawing room of Ruth's mother, Helen. As has been analysed in the first chapter, the colours of the rooms are juxtaposed, which also clearly marks the extend of control of both ladies in the house: "If the dining room belonged to her grandmother, the drawing room was Helen's" (*SL* 13). In fact, Ruth's room is mentioned only once before the death of her grandmother and this is done in the following words: "She had a room of her own, now, and did not even notice that it was as dark, as silent, as heavily furnished, as that of her grandmother. 'You'll ruin your eyes,' said Helen, 'always reading.'" (*SL* 17). The fragment does not offer any detailed description of Ruth's room, it only mentions those characteristics which are common to the space assigned to her grandmother. This signals that within the model of the world designated by the arrangement of space in *SL* Ruth is ascribed to the space of the old age,

traditional values, and responsibility also typical of Mrs Weiss. Those factors are translated in the novel into spatial terms as darkness, silence, and weighty furniture. Such positioning of the young protagonist suggests the lack of respect for Ruth's childhood and no recognition of her individuality and needs. Interestingly, Ruth's mother is mentioned by her name, which further emphasizes the weak bond between the mother and her daughter. This is especially visible by contrast to the word "grandmother" employed in the previous sentence, which highlights the close bond between Ruth and her grandma. Moreover, the remark of Ruth's mother only intensifies the impression of the girl's alienation because Helen neither understands nor approves of the greatest passion of her daughter, that is reading. Until the death of Mrs Weiss, the structure of Ruth's family house creates a peculiar space constructed on the basis of two extremes where there is no place for transitory states between these binary oppositions (youth versus old age; immaturity versus maturity; irresponsibility versus responsibility). After her grandmother's death these features become assigned in the subversive manner, namely, Ruth, the youngest of the family is characterized with the traits conventionally associated with adults, namely maturity and responsibility, while her parents are portrayed as immature, irresponsible teenagers.

It seems that the paradoxical stability that some of Brookner's protagonists, for example Ruth, find in liminal states is the reverberation of their suspended position between childhood and maturity. This binary opposition appears to be one of the recurring themes of Brookner's narratives and may be discerned in the tension between the older generation of the portrayed family and the young protagonist and, consequently, in the corresponding arrangement of the space. Frequently, the dark, grandiose and old-fashioned furniture designates the extent of power of the representatives of the old generation which is visible, for instance, in *SL* but also in *FF*:

> Privately she [Betty] turns her attention to the décor of her mother's house which she finds stuffy and lacking in style. Those brown velvet sofas, those portières, always absorbing sunlight and smelling of pepper, those mahogany wardrobes, those high beds with their carved headboards and their feather eiderdowns, those sideboards, that long ancestral dining table – all this she would sweep away. She would replace them with something lighter and more modern, in tones of green and orange, with plenty of glass and white paint. The only thing she would retain from Sofka's life is that little cabinet filled with fans. (*FF* 33)

As this passage clearly exemplifies, the matriarchal position of Sofka Dorn is enhanced by the choice of the furniture and colours in her house. The antique, gloomy, and

traditional furnishing is in accordance with her rank in the family. In line with this pattern, her young and rebellious daughter scorns at the conservatism of her mother's house. In a predictable manner, which justifies the binary opposition of the young and the old, further mirrored by their contrasting preferences, the transparency and lightness of glass together with bright colours are assigned to Betty.

The complicated relationship with her own age, and the grandparents acting as parents are the key elements which link *SL* and *P*. Although Kitty works at a university and is respected as a scholar, she is still described in terms of a girl:

> It will be an Englishman, she had said to Vadim. 'But not yet!' he replied in alarm. Louise shrugged. 'She is twenty-four. But that is all right, for men mature late in this country.' […] But five years had passed since then, and both Kitty and her grandmother had felt unstated alarm when nothing happened, when the avatar of John Maule [Kitty's deceased father] failed to materialize and claim his bride. […] She [Louise, grandmother] designed clothes for Kitty and urged her to eat, to put on weight, for Kitty still looked as slight and as virginal as her mother had done. Kitty felt the burden of her grandmother's supervision and knew that although Vadim was delighted to have her home, Louise could not wait for her to be gone, so that she could die in peace. For as long as that relic of a daughter remained, Louise must remain to protect her. (*P* 93)

Although the passage discusses Kitty's marriage and passing of time, the narrative portrays her from the point of view of Louise who perceives her as child-like, hence unmatching her age. Therefore, the grandmother would like her granddaughter to gain weight. Also, the word "virginal" straightforwardly draws attention to sexuality, suggesting that there is disparity between Kitty's age, social pressure of getting married, aging, and the actual readiness of the protagonist to enter adulthood and develop a romantic relationship. The portrayal of Kitty is constructed here from the perspective of her grandmother who recognizes her deceased daughter in the granddaughter. Similarly to Ruth's position in the family, Kitty's status is also somehow displaced – the protagonist of *P*, who cannot perform her role of the granddaughter to Louise and Vadim, instead is treated by them like their daughter. On top of that, she is suspended between confusing perceptions of her age: on the one hand, she is impatiently expected to find a husband because she is considered to be mature enough to marry and, on the other, she is depicted as frail, unexperienced, and fulfilling the role of a child-daughter to her aging grandparents. There is also little cordiality experienced from her grandmother. However, this does not seem to be analogous to Ruth's situation in *SL*. In *P*, Louise's abruptness is apparently caused by the excessive sense of duty and not by the absence of it as in the

case of Helen in *SL*. Thus, Louise does not function as the opposition to mother figure. Nevertheless, the displacement in relation to the protagonist's role in the family and the age resembles the displacement of Ruth in *SL*. Ubiquitously, the hint of national otherness is present here as well – Vadim positions his family by accentuating the nationality of the potential husband as being a fact in need of emphasis. This connects the unstable perception of Kitty's age with the ethnic liminality of her grandparents.

As for the portrayal of Kitty's age, it is not homogeneous – while she is sometimes described as a child, at other times she is given the role of an adult caregiver. This alludes that the perception of Kitty's maturity is flexible and positional. For instance, her colleague Pauline's opinion of Kitty could be interpreted as symbolizing the impression Kitty makes in the professional sphere of her life where she interacts with the English university staff:

> Pauline kept her eyes firmly on examination schedules. She did not want any part of this initiation ceremony; she thought that Kitty looked like an obedient child before a party, and although she was moved by Kitty's happy expectancy, she rejected the idea that she might be responsible for any extensive nurturing. She had had enough of that. (*P* 169)

The situation described in the quote above takes place before Kitty's important lecture during which she hopes to be finally appreciated by Maurice and which she perceives as a praeludium to her engagement with him. Nonetheless, it is hinted through the novel that Pauline (who knows Maurice not only from work but also from various social events that they both frequent due to a similar high rank in prestigious English social circles) knows that Maurice has no serious intentions concerning Kitty. Although Pauline is on friendly terms with Kitty, she perceives her as naïve and childish. Pauline regards Kitty with irritation and little empathy. Similarly, Maurice, who through all the time of the action has been romantically involved with one of Kitty's students (as we learn at the end of the novel), does not seem to care much for the disguise as he believes that Kitty would never suspect his disloyalty. Thus, it might be concluded that for Pauline and Maurice, who represent traditional and a well-educated English stratum Kitty's worldview is childish, ignorant, and naïve. Her values and approach to life seem too idealistic once they collide with English reality. In comparison to Kitty, people she meets outside her family seem calculating and their experience leads them to dishonesty, scheming and to the choices motivated by cold logic and social benefits. Sometimes Kitty herself gains a momentary insight of such a position of hers, especially when she anticipates a challenging task and feels alone during this period of expectation. While preparing for a long awaited post-

lecture dinner during which she expects Maurice's romantic declaration, "she felt calmer, more adult, more controlled" (*P* 177). Apparently, when Kitty deals with the circles outside her family, she has to combat the feelings of inadequacy usually manifesting themselves as childishness, lack of control or even panic. Subsequently, she feels impelled to behave in a more studious way so that she appears "more adult." Such behaviour, as in *SL*, could be the outcome of the lack of stable parent figures in her life. Kitty never knew her father because he died before she was born and although she still had her mother, Marie-Thérèse, the woman is portrayed almost as a ghost and there is no interaction between mother and daughter: "So Kitty would spend most of her weekend in her petticoat while Louise made her a dress and Marie-Thérèse watched or listened to the radio, her place in her novel marked by handkerchief" (*P* 14). If Marie-Thérèse seems absent and absorbed in the media, Kitty's grandparents seem even more entranced: "Vadim and Louise followed the various serials with great intensity, like children" (*P* 14). Due to the fact that Louise used to be a very hard-working and popular seamstress and Vadim has been always involved in some peculiar cooking, they are now occupied with the activities which substitute their active past. Their senile habits give an impression of childishness. Considering that Kitty's grandparents act as her parents, while Marie-Thérèse refuses to act as Kitty's mother, noting the apparent age reversal of Kitty's caregivers (the grandparents seem "childish"), the statement that "[i]t was a bizarre and anomalous family" (*P* 12) should not come as a surprise. After all, Louise and Vadim in their old age cease to keep up with their times and become even more dislocated than before. Louise's obsession with making a dress for Kitty reveals how distanced Louise is from the existing social standards and changing conventions. The dress is designed for Kitty's important lecture and the meticulousness of Louise's preparation as well as the old-fashioned, official, and stiff style of the garment reveal Louise's incompatibility with modern times and her ill-equipped style of taking care of Kitty:

> She saw that this might be the last dress she would ever make […] and that honey-coloured silk, which had been wrapped in black since the death of Marie-Thérèse, for whom it had been destined, would finally be made into a dress not only in keeping with her own professional career, now vanished, now hardly remembered, but which would tip the scales in favour of her grand-daughter's future. […] And yet she knew that however outlandish Kitty's activities might seem, she must be there in the form of a guide, of designer; whatever happened to Kitty, Louise would see to it that she was, on this occasion at least, perfectly dressed. (*P* 137)

The finished dress is commented in the novel many times and although it seems very elegant, its immaculate execution[86] appears bizarre and unsuitable for the academic event. Moreover, Kitty herself feels ambivalent toward the dress: much as she is appreciating Louise's effort, she feels remorse and dislikes the garment. When she is about to present herself to her neighbour Caroline, she realizes that she does not like the way the dress makes her feel: "The dress was as good as ever, but Kitty did not like what she saw. I am strained, she thought" (*P* 153). Caroline suggests that there is something wrong with the dress: "'Very nice,' said Caroline, in a dubious sort of voice. 'But don't you think you ought to liven it up a bit? I think if you wore my chains and a vivid scarf'" (*P* 153). If we interpret the dress as a symbolic legacy from her grandparents, it might be regarded as a quality which distances Kitty's from the standards of her own times. Moreover, the quote describing the preparation of the dress offers some insight into Louise's misunderstanding of Kitty's endeavours – Louise's ignorance is revealed when she considers herself "a guide" to her granddaughter's life and attaches a great importance to Kitty's appearance. On the contrary, Kitty is actually the one who functions as her grandparents, namely a guardian who protects them from what she considers to be a harsh modern reality which they do not understand. One of such incomprehensible issues for Louise and Vadim is the change regarding fashion and social rules. They are unaware that women are no longer required to wear impeccable, extremely stylish, and elegant clothes.

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[86] The perfection of the dress which is, nonetheless, perceived as slightly awkward and somehow out of place, echoes Pauline and her mother's (Mrs Bentley) reflections on Kitty's language and appearance:

> 'She is very well-dressed, almost too well-dressed. Oh I suppose she is quite attractive. They think highly of her in the Department.'
> 'She has such a pretty voice,' said Mrs Bentley. 'Such very precise English. You rarely hear such good enunciation these days. It comes from her being a foreigner, of course.' (*P* 150)

The women take Kitty's sophisticated style and exemplary language as signs of not belonging to their social strata by birth. Despite Kitty's membership in academia, her refined conduct does not grant her a full, indisputable inclusion into the English upper-class. There seems to be no possible way for Kitty to fully integrate into the community because even her most correct usage of English is perceived as a kind of fake code she tries to learn rather than the true ability that she already possesses. Thus Kitty is again portrayed as a child who is in the process of learning the language, that is to say, in the process of acquiring the rules of conduct of the country she happens to almost accidently find herself in. Remarkably, her being the third-generation immigrant is still a marker of the otherness. As Pauline responds: "'Oh, really, Mother. She was born in London. Although I agree that she gives the impression of someone not quite at home here. Trying to learn the rules, as it were " (*P* 150).

The fragment presents Louise and Vadim's unfit position to introduce Kitty into life and additionally demonstrates how their granddaughter unconsciously adopts the role of her mother. The fabric the dress is made of was originally intended for her deceased mother's clothing. Thus it could be assumed that Marie-Thérèse was brought up according to similar inadequate principles and one could even dare to draw a conclusion that Marie-Thérèse's depressed, detached presence and later her pre-matured death might have something to do with the incompetent parenting style of Louise and Vadim. This further suggests that Kitty is afflicted with her mother's "disease" which comes as a symbolic heritage of this "anomalous family" (*P* 12). Marie-Thérèse is indeed characterized in a peculiar way: "Marie-Thérèse, whom widowhood had restored to virginity, moved slowly about the little flat, watering her plants, reading romantic novels to which she was addicted and which Kitty sometimes borrow" (*P* 13). Paradoxically, the status of Kitty's mother is described in the most impossible manner since her "restored virginity" undermines her role as a mother and a sexual being. Additionally, romantic novels she reads might serve as a substitute for the romance she lacks in her real life. It may also imply that Kitty's status of a liminal subject suspended between girlishness and womanhood is akin to that of her mother as they share the romantic novels. Such an interpretation is further justified when Louise's thoughts are exposed in the previously quoted sentence: "She designed clothes for Kitty and urged her to eat, to put on weight, for Kitty still looked as slight and as virginal as her mother had done" (*P* 93). The virginity, which both women are characterized with, enhances the impression that Kitty, in her grandparents' eyes, is often merged with her mother. What is more, it presents them as liminal entities because as Turner notes "[t]he undifferentiated character of liminality is reflected by the discontinuance of sexual relations and the absence of marked sexual polarity" (*Ritual Process* 104). Moreover, sexual abstinence is linked to religion and social relations: "While this is a feature of certain types of religious behaviour in almost all societies, in preindustrial society, with its strong stress on kinship as the basis of many types of group affiliation, sexual continence has additional religious force" (104). Both aspects of virginity, namely, the religious and social ones, as well as a recurring motif of absent mother seem to merge when Kitty visits a French cathedral with Maurice:

> She [Kitty] listened, as if taken back in time, for the confident footsteps of the faithful. There were none. She searched for a candle to light to Marie-Thérèse and could not find one: this was a church for members only. Then she saw Maurice sink to his knees in front of the statue of the Virgin by Dagobert's tomb and watched his bent head as he prayed.

> He left me; she thought; I am alone, and she leaned against a pillar, her throat aching. She tried to pray and failed. Then she said, silently, Marie-Thérèse, dearest little mother, are you there? Is this what you wanted for me, your heart's darling, on those evenings calm enough to quiet even your fears, when we walked together arm in arm in the tiny garden? Do you see him, my pious lover, for whom I wait in hotel rooms, whose notes I type, whose dinners I cook, and who will never marry me? He prays to the Madonna, a stone lady with a chipped face. Do you watch me, the daughter who amazed and alarmed you sometimes with her strange ambitions? Did you wish for something simpler, more docile, more predictable? You did not hand me on, as a parent should, but you were so scarcely a parent. You were a child, and perhaps all the children I shall ever have. (*P* 120)

While sight-seeing cathedrals of France, Kitty and Maurice enter Basilica Cathedral in Saint-Denis. The solitude of the building is linked to the absence of Kitty's mother, and this further highlights her cultural and religious displacement there. Moreover, Maurice's praying is juxtaposed with Kitty's addressing her mother. While Maurice prays to a cold stone Madonna, Kitty "talks" to her mother whom she barely knew. Also, within the quoted passage, the name of God's Mother appears twice. This makes intertextual connections to other references to Madonna like Virgin Mary, Blessed Mother, Holy Virgin. These names emphasize the virginity or parenthood of the mother of Jesus. From a nonreligious point of view, virginity and parenthood are mutually exclusive concepts. Similarly, Marie-Thérèse is a paradoxical persona in Kitty's life – intangible, absent, and confusing as indicated by the unconventional phrase "little mother." It seems that Kitty connects her mother's strange presence in her life with the complications she experiences in her private life. Thus it might be interpreted that her disappointing love life (constant waiting for the emotionally unavailable lover) as well as her social and cultural isolation ("this was a church for members only") are associated with the absence of a traditional mother figure.[87] Furthermore, the liminal status of her mother, who incorporates the

[87] In many respects, the influence of the absence of a stable mother on Kitty's social maladjustment resembles Edith's situation: "It seems that I shall never learn the rules of correct behaviour, she thought, those rules that girls are supposed to learn at their mother's knee. All I learned I learned from Father. Think again, Edith. You have made a false equation. This is when character tells. Sad precepts of a lost faith" (*HL* 150). The lack of proper motherly guidance is recurrently linked to Edith's inability to integrate with others and confusion regarding to her age. When she recalls the time spent with her father, she becomes acting like a child:

> Drinking her coffee in the salon, Edith felt purged by her grief, obedient and childlike, as she had on so many occasions, reaching back into the mists of childhood, to that visit, perhaps, to the Kunsthistorisches Museum with her father. And, childishly anxious to please, she went forward, when the signal came, to join the Puseys at their table. The man in grey had positioned himself nearby, and although purporting to read a newspaper, was almost visibly listening to their conversation. Perhaps he is a detective, thought Edith, without much interest. (*HL* 62–63)

The mentioning of Edith's grief could be related to the long unreconciled absence of a deep relationship with her mother. As she was devoid of a positive role model of an adult woman in her childhood, in the

characteristics of both an adult and a child, is perceived here as the reason for Kitty's anticipated childlessness. It seems that for Maurice praying comes much easier than for Kitty. Maurice's object of adoration is perceived by Kitty with a quiet reserve as "a stone lady with a chipped face." The material the statue is made of evokes stability whereas Kitty's addressee seems completely illusive as "[s]he always lit one [candle], for Marie-Thérèse's, but she felt nothing, for she had no sense of Marie-Thérèse's presence in her life and therefore did not believe that the dead could live eternally" (*P* 21). Consequently, Kitty's mother is also linked to ethnic liminality and, by extension, to the alienation resulting from it. Moreover, the lack of spiritual guidance and hope often offered by religion could be an outcome of Kitty's secular upbringing in a Jewish family. Thus, the prospect of afterlife seems implausible and the protagonist's existence is not devoid of difficult and fundamental questions concerning the meaning of life. This is what Usandizaga sees as Jewish legacy in Brookner's fiction:

> [S]traightforward dramatization and discussion of Jewishness is relatively scarce in Brookner's novels. What is constant in her writing is her complex dialogue she establishes with the elements of her inherited Jewishness that concern her most and that in her novels becomes most relevant to late twentieth-century culture. Brookner shows the importance of the Jewish legacy she has received by proving its prophetic and universal value in representing the human need to come to terms with central aspects of life as well as with suffering and death not only in the Jewish tradition but in all cultures and circumstances. (116)

The suffering and death belong to less overt but still pertinent issues of Brookner's oeuvre. The aging of once vivid and youthful mothers into disillusioned, ailing women is portrayed in *SL*, *HL*, and *FF*. The hardships of old age of grandparents are described in *SL*, *P*, and death is strikingly present in all five novels. Mimi, the character in *FF* who remains the most typical Brooknerian female protagonist, had a miscarriage: "Mimi lost her baby. They put it down to shock at her mother's death, and, sadly, it was clear that she would never have another" (*FF* 181). The death of the infant is linked to the death of Sofka which, in turn, designates the future devoid of children, in other words, the future without any new life. Surprisingly, such a linking of the events gives an illusion that life is a series of deaths; this illusion is later reinforced in the sentence: "There is a period in her life which was almost entirely unlived" (*FF* 181). This in a way summarizes what

moments of insecurity she is "obedient and childlike." Moreover, just after Edith's memory of the time spent with her father, her way of thinking resembles the divagations of a child ("Perhaps he is a detective.").

generally Brookner's fiction deals with, namely, the acute awareness that one's existence is a constant approaching of death. The focus on the female aging points not only to death itself, but it also demonstrates the recurrence of the natural cycles and repetitions of some of family patterns. One of the most significant dynamics which repeats itself is duplicating some qualities of the protagonists' mothers. For instance, in *P* Kitty replaces her deceased mother, Marie-Thérèse, and functions as a daughter for her grandparents. Mimi takes the role of Sofka in the Dorns family: "Mimi has acquired depth, a depth not of her own choosing. She is mildly matriarchal, given to sober pursuits, an excellent housewife. She is at ease with Lautner and his elderly ways, no longer seeking diversion" (*FF* 185). The second sentence of this quote could easily describe Mimi's mother who was in charge of the whole household, cared for routines and conventions and wanted to establish her resettled family in a new country. Moreover, the epithet "matriarchal" evokes Sofka who, for the most part of the novel, is presented as the head of the family and a person who (unsuccessfully) wants to direct her children towards prosperous future. Sofka's insight into the consequences of her children's choices regarding marriages and occupation could be understood as akin to Mimi's "depth not of her own choosing." That it to say, Mimi in a way inherits the role of matriarch after Sofka's death and with time feels the weight of this responsibility. Additionally, Mimi's depth might also stem from her experience of death of her child and her mother, which, consequently, makes her comfortable with her much older husband's "elderly ways."

Contrary, Betty, Mimi's foil character, struggles with aging. Betty's never achieved aim was to become a film actress. The older she gets, the more she recalls her childhood which she previously wanted to distance herself from. It seems that in face of the lack of a successful movie career, she tries, in vain, to entertain everyone with the stories of her past:

> When performing this particular number at dinner parties Betty's eyes widen and her face takes on the look of the spoilt child she has grown into. These anecdotes make an initial impact but generally fall on deaf ears. Childhood is not much valued here in Hollywood. And with so many exiles and refugees in their circle, it is not always entirely tactful to refer to her uneventful early years in such sentimental terms. (FF 156)

Betty is portrayed here as ignorant and indelicate, which might explain her futile career endeavours. Moreover, the fragment demonstrates Betty's paradoxical position in many contexts. For one thing, though being an adult woman, she is presented as a "spoilt child," which could also be understood as an outcome of avoiding the repercussions of the

Second World War. The Dorns manage to immigrate from Europe before the war, presumably before the persecution of Jews becomes too severe. Consequently, Betty is presented as an inconsiderate person who does not take into account the hurtful experience of people in her circles. This superficiality of Betty's character positions her in contrast to her sister's "matriarchal depth." Moreover, whereas Mimi "is at ease with Lautner and his elderly ways" (*FF* 185) and has got accustomed to death, Betty is trapped in her pursuit of endless youth.

Betty's existence in film industry is ambiguous and reveals her conflicting attitude towards her age and the passing of time. On the one hand, she has to present herself as youthful as possible and, on the other, her references to her young self are not welcomed. Betty is supposed to look and act young but only to an acceptable extent as it is implied that Hollywood makes one appear as if they were without any past or as if they came from nowhere. Betty comes from a culturally and ethnically ambiguous family and wanted to escape from home it as soon as she could. Therefore, her emotional return to her childhood may signify her attempt to accept her complicated background and to determine her identity. It seems, though, that the social and professional circles she interacts with in her adult life do not allow for her evident self-ascription. The interplay between the impossibility of being eternally young and the conflicting attitudes towards her past and Jewish origins reverberate in her husband's reaction to her stories:

> 'You never talked about your childhood when we met in Paris,' Max says to her curiously one evening, as they are undressing for bed. 'Why go into it now? You are getting older, not younger.' At which she flounces into the bathroom and does not speak to him until the following day. (*FF* 156)

The quote reveals that Betty previously hid her childhood memories, and presumably her Jewish provenance, when she was younger and just met Max. Thus, her stories might serve the purpose of reconnecting with that part of herself when she becomes older. However, Max's attitude demonstrates that he does not understand nor accept Betty's desire to reconcile with the past. What is more, Max simultaneously draws Betty's attention to her aging. Strangely enough, his words might suggest that her nostalgia stems from some infantile yearnings. Getting old is mutually understood here as an accusation because Betty takes offence at this remark and Max uses it in his generally condescending comments about her.

Thus, Betty's relationship with time gives the impression of a person who behaves like a spoilt child, but who, at the same time, cannot really grow up emotionally as it is

impeded by the social standards demanding her youthfully attractive appearance. What is more, the reconciliation with her childhood memories, that could possibly allow for a healthy rearrangement of her approach to her adulthood, is also prevented by her closest ones who clearly manifest that such nostalgic yearnings are not acceptable. Thus, Betty continues to behave like a capricious teenager and treats life as "a prolongation of that childhood she had been so anxious to shed" (*FF* 157). At the same times she, as other Brooknerian protagonists, seems to be a curious amalgamation of a spoilt child and disillusioned woman:

> What has happened to the ludic impulse that was once so strong in Frederick and in Betty? […] Why does Betty, so fiery and so fearless in her early days, sit like a child, in her childlike clothes, eating concoctions that might have been devised for a child's party? Can it be that their youthful habits pertained only to their youth, and that middle age left them stranded, without guidelines and curiously and noticeably devoid of impetus? (*FF* 184–185)

This inconsistent description of Betty situates her somewhere in between her juvenility and adulthood. She lacks girlish energy, and it is stressed that Betty's and Frederick's "youthful habits pertained only to their youth." Yet, the preceding sentence suggests quite the opposite – Betty's posture, clothes and food relate her to childhood. The reader begins to doubt the reliability of the narrator. This contributes to the feeling of confusion similar to the character's feelings of abandonment and lack of direction. Evidently, what is left from Betty's childhood are the traits that are considered negative in adult life, like passivity, avoidance, and indulgence, whereas the positive characteristics, like a proactive attitude does not persist.

Perhaps in a less conspicuous manner than in the case of Betty in *FF*, but still some childhood traces are also detected in Edith in *HL*. In the already quoted passage (*HL* 62–63), Edith's submissive behaviour is categorized as a sign of childishness – she is "obedient and childlike" and "childishly anxious to please." This inability to act assertively and maturely is linked with sadness and evokes the memory of her father and the visit to the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The picture which Edith and her father see there, (most probably *The Harvesters* by Peter Bruegel as it has been evidenced in Chapter 2), motivates some reflections about their lack of social belonging. Thus, by the connotation with Bruegel's *The Harvesters* the undertones of ethnic otherness are implied and this could be linked to the distorted sense of Edith's age.

The protagonists' dissociation concerning their ages takes various forms. While Betty could not find a cultural and social space for growing up, Kitty finds it difficult to fully experience her young age. When Kitty visits the house of her English colleague Pauline what seems to be the thread of understanding between Kitty and others is only old age: "Kitty, for her part, was not unused to the petty squalors of old age, and did not think about them. She worried far more about being her own age and not making most of it" (*P* 83). While she gets to know Mrs Bentley, Pauline's mother, they unexpectedly find themselves in the space of mutual understanding. Although there is some dialogue quoted in the text, the real connection seems to happen tacitly, for example when Kitty helps the old lady to clean the spilled water from her chin. If the words are exchanged, they concern aging and old women. It seems that being old is far more natural for Kitty than being young as if "making the most of it" was incomprehensible for her and not attractive. Moreover, enjoying her youth is a cause of worry, in other words, Kitty perceives the attributes of youth as a duty and something that has to be learned and acquired as if she has never been young. The disrupted notion of the protagonist's age could be also recognized in *LM*:

> In our dark and serious room, like a nursery for grown-up children, Olivia and I were drinking coffee out of mugs with suitably juvenile decorations. Women in their places of work frequently give way to these domestic impulses and festoon their offices with pot plants and alternative shoes and the odd cardigan: Miss Morpeth, my predecessor, had her own bone china cup and a saucer and a padded velvet coat hanger, and I put these details into my story, which Olivia thought was rather tasteless. Being unmarried and childless, and still living in our parents' houses, Olivia and I don't go so far as to create a home away from home; we limit ourselves to our Mickey Mouse mugs, over the rims of which our eyes scan at the Library and each other, meeting in a mutual warning gaze when anything disruptive or subversive seems about to happen. (*LM* 46)

Though Frances is employed in a library of a research institute, an organisation connected with reason and intellect, her own maturity is often undermined. In the fragment above, it seems even more puzzling as her place of work is at the same time described as "dark and serious" and as a "nursery for grown-up children." The opposition is explored further by contrasting Frances and her colleague's relation to this space and that of Miss Morpeth and other women's domesticated connection to workspace. The use of the word "women" in the second sentence of the quotation above, by virtue of contrast, suggests that Frances and Olivia are not women, but girls. That is why Frances does not imitate the habits of Miss Morpeth – she can only use them in a story, that is in a piece of fiction, which is but

a mere, unreal, mimicking of life. Doing so, Frances distances herself from the lifestyle that she associates with maturity. But the habits of Miss Morpeth were not only the way to domesticate her workspace but also to prove her forethought, like a spare piece of clothing just in case it is needed. Frances underlines her immaturity by mentioning Micky Mouse as an emblem of childhood on the only object she has brought from her home. By bringing the Mickey Mouse mug and naming the library space the "nursery for grown-up children," she positions herself not as the young adult but more as a child wrongly or accidently placed in work environment. Such an impression is reinforced also later in the novel:

> Becoming rather animated, she [Mrs Halloran] seized our Mickey Mouse mugs, splashed the wine into them, and handed them round. Olivia, to do her credit, drank with an expression of calm enjoyment; […] was not so lucky, but I made a great show of sipping and exclaiming with pleasure. I found Mrs Halloran's eye fixed on me with an expression of extreme scepticism. (*LM* 147)

The discrepancy between mugs with Mickey Mouse (suitable for children) and the alcohol drunk from them (intended for adults) exposes Olivia's and Frances' transitory status between childhood and adulthood. Frances pretends to enjoy the wine as she assumes that all adult people take pleasure in drinking alcohol. She feels impelled to fake the enthusiasm to appear more mature. But in fact, she looks even more childish since her exaggerated behaviour does not convince Mrs Halloran. Frances makes an impression of a person who feels a constant need to prove that she is an adult because she realizes that no one takes her seriously: "It is extraordinary how everyone assumes us [Olivia and Frances] to be totally inexperienced. It must be the way we look" (*LM* 149). The passage does not clearly explain whether Olivia's and Frances' appearances are simply youthful and innocent or if their looks point to their ethnicity. It is subtly implied in the beginning of the novel that Olivia, like Frances, is also Jewish thus their common origin might be linked to their ageless status. When she spends time with Olivia, Frances' childishness is especially foregrounded: "Shades of our childhood, when we always had to rest before a party […]. I sought her advice on what to wear that evening, and she thought my grey dress with the white collar would be about right" (*LM* 149–150). When Frances arrives at the restaurant where the fateful dinner takes place (and she learns that she was manipulated into believing that James was romantically interested in her) her look additionally highlights her childish naivety. Frances' modest dress recommended by Olivia stands for girlishness, timidity, and lack of confidence. In contrast, Alix and Maria,

James' lover, are spectacularly dressed up and their clothes expose their womanhood, confidence, and strength:

> She [Alix] looks older, more powerful, in her tight black dress; the curves of her figure seemed more opulent than usual, reducing my dwindling confidence still further. Blameless and understated in my grey dress, I could capture no one's eye. Look at me, I urged silently. Look at me. (LM 158)

> Maria was already there, looking equally dressed up in satin trousers and a white ruffled shirt. (LM 158)

The visible difference between Frances' dress and the two women' clothes makes her look even younger than she really is. Such a belittlement is associated by Frances with her friends' dismissive attitude towards her. The lack of experience and modesty are not perceived as attractive, thus Frances feels invisible and ignored. Hence her desperate, repeated, voiceless cry "Look at me." The title of the novel, that is *Look at Me*, noticeably directs the reader to the situation described in the first quote above, thus making the silent imperative more distinct and, in turn, establishing the relationship between naivety, childish ignorance, and social exclusion as central for the novel.

As can be deduced from the foregoing analyses, the distorted relationship with time and aging constitutes an important marker of the protagonists' liminality. Brooknerian female characters are rarely perceived accurately in relation to their metrical ages. They usually display the characteristics of both girlishness and womanhood at the same time, and as a result they seem ageless. Because their definite ascription to a particular stage of life seems impossible, any expectations concerning their behaviour also appear to be illusive. The novels portray main female characters like Ruth in *SL*, Kitty in *P*, Edith in *HL*, Frances in *LM*, Mimi and Betty in *FF* on the verge of adulthood. However, womanhood is not always associated here with their actual ages but rather with a certain defining event like entering college and moving out (*SL*), delivering an important lecture (*P*), resigning from marriage of convenience (*HL*), writing a novel (*LM*) or emigrating (*FF*). To approach maturity means a greater degree of freedom but what the protagonists really hope for in their more mature stages of life is apparently a feeling of social inclusion. This observation was also made by Watson who notes that in Brookner's novels "we are shown heroines who feel 'left out' and want to be 'let in' to what they perceive to be the adult world; they expect a 'stroke of luck' which never comes" (39–40). If adulthood connotes the assimilation of Brooknerian characters into English society, then their apparent indefinite ages signal that they will never feel as members of

this group. Therefore, their perceived status often resembles the prolonged adolescence – they are in part independent and in part reliant on their parents or grandparents.

Consequently, we have to do with two kinds of age falsification – the amalgamation of attributes of childhood and adulthood or the prolonged adolescence. Both distortions strongly connote liminality, as in the first instance it is the paradoxical mix of contrasting traits, and in the latter the pre-adulthood functions as a metaphorical epitome of liminality. Since adolescence itself is viewed as a transitory phase between childhood and adulthood, when the protagonists seem trapped in this stage, they cannot proceed to the next one. This entrapment is indeed of multilevel significance. Ostensibly, the distorted sense of maturity generally stems from a complicated mother-daughter bond, hinders romantic relationships, and echoes ethnic otherness. It might be concluded that the inability to fully enter the adult life is the result of distorted relationships between the protagonists and their mothers, who repeatedly abstain from acting as adults and responsible caregivers. The troublesome mother-daughter connection might as well attest to Jewish ancestry of Ruth, Kitty, Edith, Frances, and Mimi, which is noted by Usandizaga:

> The most intense connection with Jewish culture Brookner's many heroines and few heroes are endowed with is of a double nature. In the first place most of her characters undergo a lifelong determining experience in the complex and ambivalent relationship they have with their mothers. Not that non-Jewish children do not often experience complex connections to their mother, but it is a particularly strong feature in Jewish culture, especially in exile. In the second place, most Brookner characters also share a constant sense of displacement and a strong desire for other place. The responsibilities to aging mothers of extremely dutiful daughters and the complex and ambivalent relations that derive from such commitments, as well as the nostalgic desire for other places become the most idiosyncratic and permanent features in all her novels, and both attitudes are centrally related to Jewish culture. (117)

The absence of a reliable mother who could introduce her daughter into the adult world constitutes a motif that metaphorically manifests the lack of guidance in the society which seems alien to the protagonists in Brookner's fiction. The adult world becomes then equal to English culture. Thus, the notions of time and ethnic belonging are intermingled, which is also evident in the protagonists' attitude to the past. In the case of *LM*, the family past is symbolically substituted by the objects from the past belonging to the previous owner. What is more, this novel seems especially preoccupied with the issue of remembering and forgetting. The past with its horrific history of persecution of minority groups becomes threatening. However, the passing of time and the approach of death seem ubiquitously

present in the discussed novels. Except *HL*, the recount of the death of a family member constitutes a turning point in the plots of the novels and makes the protagonists aware of the cyclicality of life. Most importantly, however, the death of the matriarch additionally suggests that the chance of reconciliation with the past (the emigré history of the families) and the present (the new English reality) is forever lost.

3. 3 Waiting as a Liminal Condition

The complicated relation to time finds its exemplification in the liminal positioning of the protagonist beyond or below their actual age but also in the temporarily suspending the course of action. The first strategy is evident in the fragment quoted below and the second one is just foreshadowed:

> But he was so splendid! Ruth, brought up by her parents who did not always hide their exasperation at her inability to grow faster or put on weight, felt inadequate. She did not doubt that the essence of physical attraction lay in superior degree of beauty, and she knew that she could only wait and wonder that he was there at all for he had a choice; she had none. (*SL* 55–56)

The first part of the quotation demonstrates the already analysed motif of disrupted, forced attitude of Ruth's parents to her age. Sometimes she is expected to be child-like and asexual so as not to pose a threat and competition to her mother, and at other times, she is expected to look more attractive and grow faster in order to assume the role of her parents' caretaker. The first and second expectations do not regard her mental and physical needs and limitations stemming from her actual age and seem to be pressured by her parents. Furthermore, they present the worldview according to which the physical attractiveness and desirability are placed on top of the hierarchy of virtues. Therefore Richard, as an epitome of conventionally conceptualized attractiveness, is perceived by Ruth as superior in their budding relationship. As a result, "she could only wait" while he was privileged to exercise the choice. Ruth succumbs to inaction and passivity which takes place in the timeframe beyond the natural passing of time – the one of waiting. This state in Brookner's novel acquires a special status where reality seems to be beyond the laws of physics, time bends and the protagonists seem to occupy the temporal space excluded from the usual course of events. Such a world model seems akin to van Gennep's and Turner's descriptions of tribal rites of passage that are characterized by

them as moments of inverted laws, paradigms, and rules (*Rites*; *Ritual Process*). In the case of Brookner's novels, these periods are stretched to their limits, disrupting the traditional course of action and the perception of time and space.

The significance of waiting as an inherent part of a romantic relationship is revealed in the following passage: "She had not known that a state of waiting could be so consuming an affair. […] She sat in the shaft of sunlight and reflected how little there was to do when she was not working" (*SL* 50). The first sentence might as well be perceived as the essence of the romantic experience of the all protagonists in the discussed novels. Various denotations of the word "affair" relating either to a private event or a public one (like in the phrase "internal/external affairs") or to a sexual relationship (like in "love affair") seem to overlap here. As a result, waiting is given the status of a totalizing representation of Ruth's life. It definitely pertains to her most intimate sphere of life since Ruth's love affair almost equals waiting and longing. Although this quote refers to Ruth's waiting for a particular date with Richard, it can actually be extended to the overall model of the construction of her expectations towards romantic relationships. Ruth's intimate life takes place unproportionally in the realm of her anticipation, the actual events give way to the time spent imagining them. What is more, the damage of the traditional comprehension of life merits can be observed in stating that this phase has such a potential of urgency and passion. The uneventfulness is given equal dominance to actual events, which is also exemplified later, when Ruth contemplates the shaft of light. The description of the ray of sunshine paints a still and minimalistic picture and contributes to the feeling of time that has stopped. Furthermore, in this very moment Ruth realizes a certain void, as if there was a mysterious passage leading beyond time and space, when she notices the futility of her petty attempts.

In Brookner's novels such a conviction of the emptiness and shallowness of life always lurks behind lengthy descriptions of protagonists' preparations for dates. Life appears to be devoid of a real purpose except for the fulfilment provided by the union with a male object of their desire. The time distancing the protagonists from such successful relationships often seems to be just a passage to endure. As the reader comes to realize that in the novels under consideration these liaisons are never achieved, then it turns out that there is nothing left which could constitute valuable elements of existence. Life then becomes a sum of unimportant habits aimed at random fulfilment of a day. Thus, when Kitty asks her neighbour about her daily shopping, there is a hint that the question concerns something more than what she buys in Harrods: "'What do you do there every

day?' Kitty asked her. Caroline had looked blank. 'But I don't go there every day. Sometimes I go to Harvey Nichols'" (*P* 174). The irony of this exchange demonstrates the difference between Kitty and her English neighbour. Whereas Kitty's question might be interpreted as wondering how one may face the pointlessness of life, Caroline comprehends it literally. Consequently, the different ways of understanding this question manifest the contrasting attitudes towards existence and shows that people like Caroline are not disturbed by its prosaic nature.

Contrary to Caroline, Kitty struggles with the futility of her attempts. Such an internal conflict is also present in other Brookner's novels when the female characters repeatedly wonder how to spend their days in the anticipation of the visits of their desired lovers. The recurrent descriptions of their meticulously arranged shopping, the pre-arranged visits to cafés, the pre-planned walks and naps demonstrate the lack of other natural and meaningful activities. The minutiae of everyday are considered by Lassner at al. as Brookner's method to show the mental landscape of her protagonists:

> Brookner's narrators often hover around her characters, choosing not to intrude on their struggles for individuation. Instead, Brookner represents psychological life through graphic, painterly detail, depicting still life – the objects and exteriors – that defines and expresses her characters' desires and responses. Yet her narrative point is never static. ("Introduction" 15)

The narration follows the protagonists in their observations of food they buy in shops or order in restaurants, as if the only justified conventions were these which refer to the biological sustaining of life, that is feeding oneself. Sometimes the luxury of the items that the characters are willing to purchase ostensibly camouflages the superficiality of the activities that the female protagonists engage in. However, the effect turns out to be the opposite. This is the case in *LM* in which the action mostly takes place during the Christmas season. Frances frequently complains about the superficiality of this celebration but, at the same time, she takes an active part in the trivial Christmas customs when she awaits the invitation from Nick and Alix, her new, English friends: "I went on shopping, in those same department stores, but this time looking at incredibly expensive and extravagant things: French soaps, jars of Stilton, cashmere pullovers, Carlsbad plums. I did not buy them for I wanted to extend my pleasure" (*LM* 97). It is evident that in *LM* Frances' prolonged window shopping is just another version of non-activity and a way to postpone any action. Additionally, Frances yearns the acceptance from her socially attractive friends, and the luxurious presents she plans to buy are an attempt, perhaps an

unconscious one, to win their approval since such gifts are not typical of her: "From being very frugal I now become anxious to spend as much money as possible. I was in a state of euphoria which cancelled every prudent thought I had ever had" (*LM* 97). Since Frances postpones her shopping, she simultaneously suspends herself in the process of transformation from being frugal to excessively lavish to please others and fit in.

Nonetheless, even the usual arrangement of daily meals and snacks serves as a means of slowing down the action. The descriptions of waiting for the meeting with Maurice, which revolve around the moments when Kitty buys or prepares food for herself, might serve as an example of this frequent strategy in Brookner's fiction:

> But there was no message waiting for her. Rather slowly she went up the stairs and unlocked the door of her room. She walked to the window as if she might see him coming. Then she sat on the bed for a few minutes. Eventually she sighed and stood up and started to unpack; she washed her face and brushed her hair, and then, when she could put it off no longer, she went down the stairs again and out into the cooling evening, and made her way to the rues de Rivoli, for chicken and chops, with Mr Pascoe, and the girls. (*P* 111)

> She brought bread and cheese and two peaches, and made some strong coffee, a little uncertain of what to do with the afternoon. (*P* 174)

> But still she sat, eyeing the carnations, the smoke of her cigarette drifting round her head, until the Italian owner called out, 'Another coffee, signora?' and she started, and nodded, and said, 'And the bill please', and gave him her newspaper, and taking a deep breath she stubbed out cigarette and drank her coffee and went out into the street, where people were complaining of heat, but humorously, as if enjoying the ordeal. As she made her way back to the flat she felt as if she had passed the day in a dream, and indeed something of dreamlike mood persisted, even as she looked through her manuscript once more, and shampooed her hair, and stripped her bed and made it up with fresh sheets. The atmosphere of dream impelled her to sit in the window, and she did not really notice the light diminishing its glare and the shadows lengthening. It was not until eight that she got up and made coffee and ate an apple, and shortly after that went to bed. (*P* 167)

As can be observed in the passages above, Kitty seems to be suspended in her reality since no action takes place except for her recurring, almost automatic activities. She tries to construct her day around the necessities of survival shrouded in conventional habits of visiting public places, like cafés. Such a behaviour of the protagonist results in the impression that the time is no longer measured by hours and days but by repetitive elements, like yet another coffee, cigarette, or paper bought in a nearby newsagent's. Consequently, these elements punctuate the narrative, and their recurrence misleads the reader, giving an impression of repeatability and no time passing. This strange time distortion is further emphasized by phrases "day in a dream" and "dreamlike mood." A

similar effect is achieved in *SL* when Ruth prepares for the date with Richard Hurst. The insight the reader is given of Ruth's meticulous planning of the dinner reveals all the conscientious considerations of prosaic details. Although, contrary to *P*, the exact time is often mentioned in *SL*, the waiting itself appears to be more meaningful than the awaited meeting. This process, similarly to the situation in *P*, becomes confusing in the whole course of activities repeated by Ruth. Unexpectedly enough, all these technicalities, from finding the reliable recipe, through the precise timing of the preparation of the dish and composing the shopping list, to arranging the devices needed for cooking, provide the exposure to Ruth's deepest psychological yearnings and fears. The reader becomes to empathize with the protagonist more and more as all these particularities amplify. The preparation of a chicken casserole gradually ceases to be a mundane task, and a rather boring literary endeavour, once it gains a metaphorical meaning and begins to escalate the narrative tension. The tensed description of the dinner arrangement, together with the regular information concerning the time, mirror the anxious state of waiting. Indeed, "Chapter Seven" of *SL* provides a profound delineation of the stages of apprehension. The initial sentences set the tone of the whole chapter:

> She returned home in the early afternoon, with her chicken, and wondered what to do next. By then she was dreamily depressed, half longing for the day to be over. She had not known that a state of waiting could be so consuming an affair. (*SL* 50)

As the novel discusses the relationship between the life expectations and the lack of their realizations, similarly this chapter constitutes the compressed laboratory of the same issue but on a narrower scale. It seems that the stage of anticipation is disproportionately more significant and intense than Richard's presence. Predominantly, the mere act of waiting already constitutes a diversified experience, as another wave of emotions provokes a change of mood:

> This, now, was the best of it. Waiting becomes something to enjoy, to savour; waiting was almost a tribute she owed herself. The sun blazed strongly on a carpet, its shaft now pointing into a corner of the room; soon it would disappear and the curious white light of a June evening in Edith Grove would make lamps superfluous. The street noises diminished in volume as the evening rush subsides [...]. (*SL* 52)

Ruth is submerged in the calm meditative atmosphere but soon this ambience is broken by the reference to the ticking of the clock. This may imply nervousness, time passing, and waiting: "Seven o'clock. Only another hour" (*SL* 52). Surprisingly for Brookner's

fiction, together with the mentioning of the smell of food some rays of hope are introduced, but only to deepen the ultimate despair and further stimulate apprehension:

> The kitchen began to smell pleasantly of food. She filled a large saucepan with water, salted it, and measured the rice into a cup which she placed at the side of the stove. She took knives and forks and napkins – her grandmother's – into the sitting room and put them on the long low table in front of the sofa. The meal suddenly seemed endowed with success. She took the apple tart out of its box and laid it on baking sheet, ready to go into the oven when the casserole came out. (SL 52)

A moment later, the signs of menace appear with a "furiously boiling" water. Ruth almost compulsively repeats spraying perfume and becomes hungry:

> At a quarter to eight she switched off the gas under the pan of water, which was boiling furiously, went into the bathroom and sprayed herself once more with scent. She was extremely hungry but had neglected to buy anything in the way of normal food. There was not so much as a banana in the flat. She made herself a cup of coffee and drank it guiltily, standing at the window, her cheeks flushing deeper with the scalding heat of it. Then there was nothing for it but to refill the pan of water for the rice and start boiling all over again. (*SL* 53)

The fragment adequately portrays the situation in which Ruth focuses on pleasing Richard this particular evening but loses a more general sight of their potential future or her role in their potential mutual life. Similarly, concentrating on preparing the chicken casserole for Richard, Ruth ignores the fact that she might be hungry before the dinner. She basically ignores herself and her own needs. Ruth's hunger also alludes to her solitude and longing for emotional fulfilment. Hence, hunger in *SL* is both metaphorical and literal. Such a reading is emphasized by the greedy way she drinks her hot coffee.

The situation gets only worse when Richard does not appear on time: she gets impatient and anxious. Ruth's feelings are to be inferred from her erratic reheating of food, but they are never mentioned directly. The reader learns a lot about the phases of her emotional state via the description of the deterioration of the chicken casserole and the information about the time:

> At a quarter past eight she was feeling rather ill. She filled the pan of water yet once more and looked in the oven at her casserole. There was an ominous browning round the edges and she added more wine. She then powdered her face. (*SL* 53)

> Ruth walked resolutely to the kitchen, filled the pan of water again, stood over it until it boiled, and with a gesture of supreme recklessness poured in the rice. She then added more water to the casserole, splashing her blouse in the process, and made herself another

> cup of coffee. She noted in the passing that the apple tart was leaking through the pastry crust in the heat. (*SL* 54)
>
> At nine o'clock she felt so ill that she thought she must go to bed. The rice had cooked, stuck, and been thrown away. Wearily she refilled the pan with water and set it to boil. (*SL* 54)
>
> At half past nine Miss Howe shuffled out of her basement, the television blaring through her open door, and began her ritual locking up for the night. [...] She [Ruth] went into the kitchen and poured the water away, switched off the oven, and walked out without clearing up. She turned down her bed and kicked off her shoes. She was beyond feeling anything but relief that the hideous day was over. (*SL* 55)

Contrary to a conventional association which links food with comfort, family, and feasting but also with sex and desire, Brookner's employment of the culinary element usually demonstrates the harmful imperative to fulfil other's needs, the solitude of the protagonist or the lack of social bonds. What is more, in the case of Ruth in *SL*, her preparation of chicken casserole also dramatizes the state of waiting for the personal fulfilment. Through the references to the role of food in the earlier part of the novel, this description reveals her hopes and fears, but, above of all, it portrays the inner struggle of the introvert soul.

Compared to the elevated apprehension of waiting for Richard, his actual appearance seems to be endowed with anti-climax characteristics. Although Ruth devotes some complimentary thoughts to him, the dinner is marred by Richard's being late and his preoccupation with the problems of another woman. Definitely, the dinner does not meet the protagonist's expectations. The only thing Ruth concentrates on when her guest finally arrives is the state of her unfortunate meal. The description of the final presentation of the dinner actually portrays Ruth's state:

> If she gave him the melon, Ruth thought, all that was retrievable of the chicken casserole, and most of the apple tart, she could pretend she was not hungry and the day would not be lost. [...] He ate carefully but not uncritically and did not praise her or thank her. Why should he, she thought. It looked disgusting. The apple tart had finally burst its pastry bounds and she had had to scrape it together and serve it in a pudding bowl. She looked at the fragments longingly; she could have eaten the lot. (*SL* 56)

Not surprisingly, the relationship between Ruth and Richard never comes to being, which could be as well assumed from this fragment. And as Ruth resolves to remain hungry trying to satisfy the appetite of the man in front of her, her own emotional needs will never be satisfied.

On many occasions it seems that lengthy descriptions of Brookner's protagonist waiting, mainly for men, are the variants and elaborations on the previously quoted sentence signalling that "a state of waiting could be so consuming an affair" (*SL* 50). The inadequacy of any action compared to waiting could be also noticed in the following passage:

> Richard was due at eight o'clock on Tuesday evening. Ruth woke at her habitual early hour of six and wondered how she was going to fill the day. With anticipation, naturally. That is how most women in love fill their day. Frequently the event anticipated turns out to be quite dull compared with the mood that preceded it. The onus for redeeming the situation rests on the other person who is, of course, in no position to know of the preceding mood. Thus both fail and both are disappointed. (*SL* 45–46)

The process of waiting for the meeting is charged with anticipation that might emotionally exhaust the characters more than the date itself. However, in this fragment the uneventfulness of waiting seems to be devoid of the metaphysical sense present in the previous quote. The sentence "That is how most women in love fill their day" bears a quality of a conventional organization of one's existence that is arranged in accordance with an anachronistic view of women's aspirations. The way this part is delivered suggests construing one's identity according to the indexicality and the partialness principles. This linguistic structure hides the agent at work here. The reader is led into believing that such a broad statement is a part of a certain paradigm. However, the sentence seems to express the idea of how women in love are supposed to spend their time according to some patriarchal narrative rather than to mirror the actual behaviour of women. Such a discursive practice stands in line with the previous ruminations of Ruth who would like to be a part of the dominant discourse, but it is also implied that this inevitably leads to disappointment.

The echoes of disillusionment reverberate in those passages where waiting is described as clearly depressing time resulting in the protagonists' inability to fully experience the present. During Kitty's trip to France in *P*, she awaits the message from Maurice so that they could meet and travel further together. The final reunion proves to be dissatisfying because Maurice does not plan to stay in the same hotel as Kitty and his stay with her turns out to last much shorter than she has expected. However, Kitty's preceding expectancy already puts her in a disadvantageous position which foreshadows her future unfulfillment:

> She did not notice the beautiful evening, for her gaze was turned inwards, and she held her head still, using the tall slices of building sliding by on either side of her as blinkers, shutting out that part of the world that was irrelevant to her preoccupations. She gave herself over to the business of anticipation, for she suspected that she might need to become rather good at doing so. Paris seethed past her unnoticed as she tried to remember whether or not she had given Maurice her telephone number. She had told him the name of the hotel and where it was. Oh, this is ridiculous, she said to herself. He probably called in and left a note, telling me where to find him. (*P* 111)

In her state of focusing solely on the planned meeting with Maurice, Kitty misses other potentially valuable experiences. As this passage clearly demonstrates, Kitty's anticipation effectively excludes her from the surrounding space and time. Neither streets of Paris, nor the charming time of the day are of interest to her, hence her mind is constantly occupied with almost obsessive thoughts about Maurice's arrival. Consequently, Kitty with her "gaze turned inwards" seems to inhabit a different time and space. Her state of prolonged expectation places her in some non-specific timeframe – when she is consumed with waiting, she is mentally constantly ahead of the time she is physically in. Thus, she is suspended in a liminal time of the events which are about to happen. Moreover, Kitty anticipates that if her relationship with the English historian develops, its dynamics will place her in a less favourable position. This means that she will be the one who awaits her potential husband. This anticipation, together with Kitty's disregard for her beautiful surroundings, imply that her preoccupation with Maurice will not serve her best interests.

Kitty's waiting seems never to cease. In the beginning of the novel, she is mentally consumed with the dinner preparation for Maurice, then she is waiting for him to join her in France and, finally, she is looking forward to her post-lecture party when she expects Maurice to declare his devotion to her (which naturally never happens). Thus, she cannot fully take part in her own life and ceases to notice what really takes place around her. Such a state disturbs her perception of time and reality:

> She was ready and waiting by ten o'clock the next morning, and only the repeated knocks of the chambermaid got her out of her room, for she would have been content just to sit there until he arrived. She wandered haphazardly through the uninteresting streets of her immediate district, unwilling to venture far, her own plans and wishes suspended. The sunshine of the previous weeks had given way to a grey humidity which was not unpleasant but which impaired a slight feeling of unreality. She was now in a world of low definition. The previously acute angles made by the streets were softened, blurred; even sounds were remote. And although it was morning it felt like afternoon, as if the weather had brought with it a prolonged siesta. (*P* 114)

> She must have slept, for her next clear thought was of the time, which she could no longer calculate. With wakefulness came a strange and unanticipated feeling of desolation, as if she would have been better employed in doing something sensible with the day instead of consecrating it to the evening. Really, she thought, it is almost easier to be at work; I am not built for leisure. (*P* 175)

As these quotations clearly demonstrate, Kitty's permanent expectancy distances her from a traditional comprehension of time and space which is signalled on the semantic level with the phrases like "feeling of unreality," "world of low definition," and adjectives describing the view of the streets like "soften," "blurred," and "remote." The feeling of dislocation is achieved as she appears to be drifting in a foreign country without attachment to her surroundings. In such circumstances Kitty's self-identification seems to be blurred too, since all of her intentions and arrangements are totally subordinated to the arrival of Maurice. As the date of his arrival is not specified, Kitty enters a state displaying some traits of depersonalisation – during her stay in France, Kitty's waiting seems to disconnect her from herself and her surroundings.

Her perception of time is distorted in a similar way when she awaits her lecture later in the novel. In this case the purposelessness of Kitty's life is revealed when she tries to fill her days before the lecture. The lack of any daily routine, provided otherwise by her professional activities, leaves her in a state of complete disorientation, similar to the sensation she experienced during her waiting for Maurice in France (the first quotation above). The ambience of a strange "prolonged siesta" appears akin to Kitty's disorientation after the naps she takes in the absence of other activities. As Kitty continually inhabits the space of tense expectations, she has to endure what seems a long wait separating her from the final resolution (that is to say, Maurice's romantic declaration). The arrangement of these days repeatedly gives an impression of a wearisome challenge:

> Kitty was amazed to see that it was nearly one o'clock. Suddenly the rest of the day ceased to be a problem. She bought a newspaper and went back to the café and ate lunch. She scanned her paper and ordered more coffee, waiting until the small crowd had left and gone back to work. There was no sound now but the hiss of the coffee machine, and the tuneless melancholy whistling of the owner, Kitty, seated beside the plate glass window, looked out indulgently at the street, but finding the people too distracting and her own thoughts too important, dropped her eyes to the table and to the glass vase holding three dark red and rather exhausted carnations and turned them about and lifted the vase to her nose for the sweet and faintly rotten smell and even brushed her face against the thin and infinitely soft petals, wondering at the tightness of the stem and the complexity of the flower. Then, putting the vase down, she lit a cigarette and smiled faintly to see how the

> time was getting on and that soon she could wander home and make a cup of tea and then it would not be long until the evening, when she really would have to work, and she would be in bed early and the way ahead would be quite simple. (*P* 166–167)

The passing of time is perceived by Kitty with a sense of relief ("the rest of the day ceased to be a problem"). She looks forward to the approaching evening so that she does not have to invent the ways to fill the time. Once again, the emptiness is vividly suggested, this time via the type of space (public) the protagonist is in ,on the one hand, and on the other, through her lack of communication with others. Kitty's longing stare at the people behind the window gives the impression that although she desires a connection with others, her psychological constitution prevents such a possibility. The glass pane that divides her from other people metaphorically depicts Kitty's presence in society: she can only observe others but her limitations (like the window in this passage) prevents any real action. Thus, the situation in the café mirrors Kitty's social entrapment. The waiting appears to have some bitter-sweet quality which might be also symbolically conveyed in the "sweet and faintly rotten smell" of the flowers. Kitty reaches for the crimson flowers that could stand for passion, love, and desire. However, their bad smell might foreshadow the future failure of Kitty's hopes for love. Additionally, the distant sounds contribute to the distressing atmosphere of the café. The unpleasant quality of the machine sounds does not match Kitty's romantic thoughts. Such a melancholic side of waiting sometimes gives way to a more disheartening expectancy in the novel:

> And since that time their evenings together, and they were not very frequent, for during the term Maurice was greatly in demand, had filled her with a slight but persistent melancholy. From the moment at which she sat down to wait for him, to the moment some four hours later when she heard his car roar off into the dark and sleeping street, she was not certain why she could no longer respond with that unforced pleasure she felt in the Senior Common Room on that first afternoon. […] Since there had been intimacies, but he always left her afterwards, and she had had to try very hard to censor out of sight a feeling of dismay, almost of shame. For she never knew when she would see him again.
>
> She has thought that he might guide her towards some conclusion, and because that conclusion had been so long delayed, she wondered if she herself might be too pressing and urgent wanting it, pressed and urged by the need to justify herself in Louise's eyes and to bring happiness to those grandparents whom she had so far disappointed. Although she knew that she was threatened – by their eventual death, which would leave her alone and undirected. (*P* 25)

The passage suggests that Kitty senses that she is not a priority for Maurice and yet she desires him so much that she complies with his neglectful treatment. The superior position

of Maurice is enhanced by the dynamics of their relationship in which Kitty has to adjust to his plans. Kitty's waiting here is an instance of subordination and the protagonist's lack of agency. Though Maurice is presented as a deeply religious Christian, his attitude towards Kitty reveals a persona who stands in a sharp contrast to Christian ideas of love. His behaviour also implies that Kitty's point of view is unreliable as she naively ignores Maurice's manipulations that slowly make her dependent on him. Kitty seems almost addicted to the man's presence despite the fact that he never fully meets her needs as if he wanted her to constantly long for him. As a result, Kitty ceases to be a conscious agent in her own life and her existence is limited almost exclusively to waiting for Maurice's visits. Thus, the protagonist becomes an exemplification of the subordination of a woman to patriarchal paradigm.

The quote reveals another important aspect of the motif of waiting in Brookner's fiction, namely its connection to death. In a broader, metaphysical sense, life could be understood as an interlude between birth and death. The awareness of an approaching death is always present in the discussed novels, even if the references to the end of life are not always overt. Kitty, whose father died before her birth and whose mother passed away prematurely, is mindful about her grandparents getting old. As much as Kitty sometimes indulges in a prolonged apprehension and obediently accepts her subordinate waiting for Maurice's declaration, she also wants to satisfy Louise and Vadim who impatiently wait for her engagement. Additionally, Kitty fears their death because for her it will mean the loss of the only remaining part of family. This awareness makes Kitty understand the passing of time but they it repeatedly reminds her about the impending end of life. Similar hints are present in the previously quoted passage describing the scene with carnations. "The faintly rotten smell" of the half-dead flowers signals that death is looming. Actually, Kitty's withdrawn behaviour in the café demonstrates how the protagonist unconsciously removes herself from real life. She diverts her eyes from the people in the street (from movements) and turns inside (to immobility). This self-imposed immobilization evokes death.

The connection between waiting and death could also be observed in *SL* when Ruth tries so pass the hours before (the previously described) dinner preparations for Richard:

> In the morning, which was bright but charged with steamy cloud, she went for a walk in the cemetery to calm her mind. For a little it worked. There was no one there but the gardener and an old man with a young child: they took small steps, their heads down, all the time in the world to spare. A rank growth of a loose purple flowering weed flowed

> over the graves, binding them together in a common fate. It seemed hard on the newly dead not to be able to join the others beneath the flourishing undergrowth. Vaguely deterred by the absence of a religious edifice, which would somehow give the whole excursion a weight which it presently lacked, Ruth turned homewards at half past ten and made herself a cup of coffee. The rest of the morning could be taken up with deciding where to buy chicken. And perhaps a bunch of flowers. (*SL* 46)

As has been already demonstrated, the state of waiting is often presented as a paradoxical temporal dimension devoid of the actual passing of time. In the passage above, this feeling is additionally enhanced by placing Ruth in a heterotopic space of a graveyard. Like all heterotopic spaces, the cemetery is characterized by the distorted perception of time. Peter Johnson points out that:

> For Foucault, the cemetery is the prime example of a 'fully-functioning' and 'highly heterotopian' site in its enclosure of 'temporal discontinuities' [*découpages du temps*]. Although not mentioned by Foucault, it is also noteworthy that the cemetery links with other principles of heterotopia: a major example of a space that marks a 'crossing' or a rites of passage (Ragon, 1983: 65–71) and an emplacement that paradoxically incorporates both extremes of a 'heterochronia', an utter break with time as well as an accumulation of time through its formation as a kind of 'museum' of the dead (89–105). In his brief comments on the cemetery, Foucault seems to be suggesting that the cemetery combines the principles in a particularly concentrated formation, that the emplacement may provide a lens through which the others can be analysed and, finally, that the importance of these spaces may lie in their historical utility. (online)

It is significant that during her walk in the cemetery Ruth observes "an old man with a young child" who "took small steps, their heads down, all the time in the world to spare." Via the employment of the figures of the old man and a boy the scene symbolically demonstrates the beginning and the end of life. The passage between these extremes seems compressed and the time in the graveyard does not play any role as the two do not hurry. Ruth in her waiting chooses to be in the place where one finishes all the events of their lives. Hence it might be inferred that Ruth succumbs to uneventfulness which is later sharply opposed to the mundane task of buying a chicken. This emplotment underlines the shallowness of the daily concerns.

Additionally, at the end of this description the perceptive and knowledgeable reader might notice a subtle intertextual allusion in the last sentence. The plan to buy flowers for the evening meal links this passage with the introductory sentence from *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (5). The referred novel is one of the most famous books devoted to the issues of death and suicide. Clarissa Dalloway frequently thinks of death and, similarly to Ruth in *SL*,

feels disconnected from the outside world when she strides London streets: "She had a perpetual sense as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, far out to sea, and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day" (Woolf 10–11). The protagonist of Woolf's novel also spends her day on the preparation for the social gathering that is to take place in the evening. Analogously to Ruth, Clarissa Dalloway runs errands in London and her ruminations voice similar concerns to those tacitly and symbolically present in the cemetery scene in *SL*:

> Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived […]. (Woolf 11)

Thus, Ruth's walk in the cemetery, together with the references to *Mrs Dalloway*, constructs the semantic field of death, rite of passage, and alienation.

The prolonged phase of anticipation and expectation also demonstrates the reluctance of the characters to move on to the next stage. Such a suspension accentuates the liminal status of the protagonists who are unable to cross the boundary of the following phase of their life. They are trapped in the constant act of becoming someone else and never achieving the desired stage. In the case of Frances in *LM*, she cherishes the transitional phase of her relationship with James:

> That whole late autumn, which was exceptionally cold and exceptionally dry, favouring our walks, was for me a time of assurance and comfort and anticipation. […] Oddly, or perhaps not oddly, when you come to think of it, I wanted nothing more. I had no thought of going on to the next stage, because I was enjoying this one so much. […] I still kept to my old habits, still lunched with Julia or the Benedicts on Sundays, made an expedition to Harrods […] . I knew that when the time came some sort of transition would be effected, but that even this transition must be carefully lived through. I did not want to hurt anyone – that old reflex. No one must be disinherited. (*LM* 96–97)

For Frances, the future engagement with James connotes making choices and troublesome changes. Frances got to know James through her new glamourous friends, Alix and Nick, and through the development of the relationship with James she hopes to become a different, more attractive, and more mature person. At the same time, she does not want to disregard her old friends who stand in a sharp contrast to Alix and Nick. Moreover, on a few occasions, Frances feels impelled to choose between meeting her new friends and leaving alone her elderly maid, Nancy, or staying at home with the elderly lady and

missing the date with Alix and Nick as it happens, for instance, during the Christmas celebration. Thus, becoming the newer, bolder version of herself, the process which Frances frequently mentions, is repeatedly postponed as it would entail uncomfortable and painful choices. Though Frances seems to want nothing more than to marry James, it is hinted that she might sabotage herself because of her previous traumatic experience with a man:

> He [James] did not keep me waiting. He did not make me wonder or speculate. This was so unlike the last time, the last time of which I never speak. I can only say that everything that had happened then was miraculously reversed, and I embarked in this venture with full confidence. The worst thing that a man can do to a woman is to make her feel unimportant. (*LM* 96)

First of all, the quote implies that before James, there was some other man in Frances's life and that the relationship with him was a failure. Second of all, the passage suggests that in the previous relationship Frances was treated similarly to Kitty in *P* (she is sensitive about being kept waiting). Subsequently, as a consequence of her previous experiences, Frances might unconsciously avoid entering into another serious relationship this time with James. The passage also attests to Frances' ignorance because towards the end of the novel the reader learns that actually nothing was "miraculously reversed" as a result of meeting James. In fact, Frances falls prey to yet another cunning ploy. This time it is designed by Alix who sadistically enjoys observing Frances' emotional involvement while James simultaneously is developing another, less platonic relationship.

Frances renounces the awareness of her past experience on many occasions. And it does not seem accidental that one of such renunciations happens when she is in Alix's flat. As has been already noted, in the novel, the domestic space of characters is frequently employed as an indication of the role of memory, creating identities of the individuals. Let us then consider the passage presenting Alix's place:

> Although I could not admire Alix's furniture, I registered the fact that it had a more distinguished lineage than my own, and I could see why the zig-zag rugs and the wrought-iron lamp standards of Maida Vale had inspired her to mirth. The difference between us was that she clung to her memories and allowed them to overshadow the present, whereas I tried hard to disown mine and looked forward to a time when they would not trouble me. I would shed my surroundings, like a butterfly sheds chrysalis, and I would fly towards a future which was not lumbered with other people's relics. (*LM* 55)

Describing oneself as a nymph form of a butterfly corresponds to defining oneself as one in an intermediate phase in the process of becoming a mature being. The chrysalis simile

constitutes a vivid image of the liminal stage. When she chooses to disconnect herself from the past, Frances does not actually mention her memories but "other people's relics." That is why becoming an adult person might mean for Frances inhabiting the present and creating the identity that would be defined only by her own values, not the ones accidently incorporated by societal standards similarly to "other people's relics" in her own flat.

Through disconnecting herself from any form of memory, Frances tries to free herself from the limiting self-identification. The novel portrays Frances in the liminal phase when she prepares for the next stage of her life. The quotation above states directly that the protagonist is aware of the demands of this process and tries hard to dissociate herself from the memory and heritage of her parents or from belonging to a given community. While describing the attributes of the entities in transition, Turner points to the acts of purification which seem similar to Frances' efforts:

> The neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tampering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. They have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society. (*The Ritual Process* 103)

The purification of the liminal subject which Turner characterizes in this fragment resembles Frances' attempts to dispose of the connection to the past of her family. In other words, the protagonist is engaged in the process of actively forgetting of who she was. In contrast to Turner's definition of the traditional, tribal rite of passage where the liminal subject is being prepared to absorb "the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status" (*The Ritual Process* 103), Frances wants to free herself from the societal demands and limitations. If we consider the recurring sentences in *LM* such as "[i]t is wiser, in any circumstance, to forget, to cultivate the art of forgetting. To remember is to face the enemy. The truth lies in remembering" (*FF* 5), then Frances' attitude to discern the past is also a way of avoiding the enemy and the truth. Subsequently, we might assume that the enemy Frances thinks about is actually the truth. What follows the sentences about forgetting is the description of the library where Frances works. As has been already discussed in the previous chapter, Frances' workspace might be interpreted as a way of distancing herself from the horror of persecution of the weakest ingroups, which evokes the Holocaust. Consequently, in *LM*

the truth about the past also denotes the memory of persecution which could affect one, if they belong to a more vulnerable outgroup ("so as long it is remembered, it will indicate the future" (*FF* 5)). This truth is so devastating to acknowledge that forgetting is the only possible way to proceed.

The fear of advancing her life could also be noticed in the conduct of *P*. Similarly to Frances in *LM*, Kitty simultaneously longs for and is afraid of change:

> She had many fears and one great hope and the hope was finally greater than the fears. But the hope, she knew, meant the end of Thérèse and the beginning of Kitty, and the thought of the dress that she would carry away and the occasions on which she would wear it afflicted her with alternate moments of sadness and joy. (*P* 139)

In her anticipation, Kitty is overcome with conflicting emotions which are provoked by the apprehended change. The alternation of the name from Thérèse (used at her family home) into Kitty (employed only outside her family) rrecalls the ritualistic marking of the new identity of the subject. This renaming indicates that Kitty is expecting to discard this part of her that is linked to her mixed ethnic background and fully assimilate to the expectations of English society. Though greatly desired, such a transfiguration fills Kitty with sadness because it entails the suppression of this side of her identity which does not conform to dominant narrative.

Kitty prolongs the liminal time separating her from the important lecture she is about to give and the anticipated love declaration from Maurice. This state becomes a private ceremony for Kitty:

> She looked forward to that Saturday evening when, in decent obscurity, and with no accompanying remarks, no rectification of the shoulder seams, no strictly professional appraisal, she would prepare herself and sit quietly at the window, savouring the enormous and unbearable pleasure of waiting for the taxi that would take her to Maurice. She would have liked to shut her door to Caroline whose intention, she knew, was to oversee every stage of the ritual, from the vantage point of greater experience of the world. But Kitty also knew that she had her own ritual to follow, and that it was fraught with superstition, that if she did not obey her own imperatives, something would be wrong and the evening would be ill-omened. She could not have said what this ritual was, but she perceived that it was something to do with acknowledgment of the luck that have come to her, that in fact her earlier bewildered searchings and dreads had been neutralized, sanctioned, that she was no longer a petitioner, that plans had been made in which she had a part. For this supreme leniency on the part of fate she did not know what or whom to thank, but made polite obeisance in the direction of what she now regarded as Providence, and for this, she needed to be alone. (*P* 143)

Startlingly, the expectation is intensified to its limits by the fact that Kitty is waiting for Saturday evening so that she could wait for Maurice. Such an enhancement of anticipation further distances the protagonist from the seemingly desired resolution. It might be interpreted as unconscious fear of or disbelief in the positive outcome. The passage demonstrates also how Kitty strives to regain her agency in the process of preparing herself to lose any remnants of her troublesome heritage. She wants a private time away from her dear ones like Louise and Vadim (who are engaged in tailoring alternations) or Caroline (who offers unsolicited advice). In her will to create a private ritual one may perceive Kitty's striving to find some quality which would signify her individuality independent from the past (mixed background of her grandparents) and the future (anticipated subordination to English standards). Additionally, Kitty searches for some metaphysical connection with the divide and although she does not have any tools or cognitive frames to pray, she tries to secure some isolated space to connect with the transcendental force that she conceptualizes as "Providence."

The change which is about to come is often deliberated by Kitty and comprehended by means of a conventional metaphor of a journey or passage:

> As she sat in the garden her grandparents' house, she was aware that the time had come to say goodbye to those to live a different sort of life. No more clairvoyants, no more waiting in hotel rooms, no more glum acceptance of Caroline's advice. From now on she would be more definite, more admirable, she thought. She would eat reasonable meals, she would not panic before her lecture, she would deal sensibly with everyone, but would not allow anyone to dominate her. She was saying goodbye to her pliancy, the quality that had kept her, like her mother, a girl for far too long. And I am already thirty. It is time. (*P* 143)

During this liminal waiting for change, Kitty is engaged in imagining her future life and contemplating the transformation that awaits her. She understands the next stage of her life as entering adulthood, but her naïve conceptualizations of what maturity means undermine her expected maturity. What Kitty conceives of adulthood is akin to permanent constancy and unwavering self-determination. Kitty is unconcerned with the actual process of developing such attributes and expects to change herself so drastically just because Maurice will declare his devotion to her. Such an attitude directly points to Kitty's ignorance and situates her hopes within the realm of magical thinking. Consequently, Kitty's liminal act of waiting is characterized by imagination and expectancy, which in turn reveals that she is not ready to transgress into adulthood. Kitty's unrealistic expectations resemble a course of events of a character in a fairy-tale, a genre

for children. Not surprisingly, her naïve hopes never materialize. Watson points attention to the ideological underpinnings of such a break with a convention of a fairy-tale: "For the reader who hopes for a true Cinderella story and its comforting happy ending there is only anti-climax; for the reader aware, as Brookner does not seem to be, of the possibilities of feminist closure there is only disappointment" (41). Contrary to Watson's reflections, *LM* does not justify Kitty's compliance to the conservative pattern of woman's fulfilment. What Brookner's novels reveal is rather a complex dominant discourse which makes a young female of a mixed ethnic background especially susceptible to the false promise of "happily ever after." The reversal of the Cinderella story helps to deconstruct the traditional macro-narrative which affirms that a woman's only and final destination is marriage which always grants her happiness. The disillusionment caused by the absence of the expected romantic commitment made by English suitors in Brookner's novels undermines the conservative notions of marriage and present the protagonists as victims of the dominant discourse.

One of the reasons why Brooknerian female characters are unable to transgress is in fact their constrains concerning the choices they take into consideration. The protagonists as individuals who escape simple categorizations and are vulnerable to exclusion always look for seemingly the safest option that could potentially guarantee assimilation. The extremely limited range of options available for the protagonists seems to be imposed by the dominant culture. In line with this argument, the waiting of the female protagonists also demonstrates their strive for social acceptance. These characters are presented as limited by their unceasing desire for approval by those who are perceived by them as stronger and more attractive as illustrated by Frances:

> I thought, first, and instinctively, of Nick and Alix, and I remembered how they had delivered me from various prospective prisons – old age, silence, solitude – and how I had risen at their command as if I had been waiting for it all my life. (*LM* 181)

Nick and Alix are naively perceived by Frances as her liberators. She interprets her new friendship with them as a reward for a long period of misery and overlooks that instead of being liberated she is being manipulated into, perhaps different, but yet another kind of dependency. The Frasers cynically play with Frances' need of belonging and even when their ploy becomes uncovered, she is reluctant to admit that she has been cheated by them:

> I maintained my airy walk and my smile was still on my lips. For as long as I thought that Nick and Alix might take it into their heads to worry about me and offer me a lift home in their car, I sauntered along, looking amused and nonchalant, as if having witnessed some particularly rare episode of the human comedy, available only to connoisseurs of the absurd. My hands in my pockets, my head tilted at its usual enquiring angle, I took my time, perusing articles in shop windows, stepping unconcerned from areas of light into areas of darkness, attentive to the hiss of tyre behind me, waiting for a car to stop and a voice to hail me. I would have gone with them. Yes, even then I would have gone with them. For what I felt, beneath the bright factitious surface of my outward appearance, was an enormous sense of loss. (*LM* 162)

The psychological repercussions of Nick and Alix' deception seem so great that Frances is unable to face the disheartening reality. She is the only one who is surprised when James comes to Christmas dinner with his lover Maria. What is more, it is revealed that the Frasers have known about this liaison for some time. At first, Frances pretends that nothing has happened and keeps up appearances ("smile was still on my lips," "looking amused and nonchalant") as long as she can. Then, she distances herself mentally from what she has been exposed to, trying to conceptualize what has just happened as some sort of anecdote, which in the passage is delivered as an "episode of the human comedy, available only to connoisseurs of the absurd." Finally, Frances slows down her steps because she still hopes that the Frasers will appear and include her in their plans for the evening. This situation symbolically demonstrates the function of Frances' waiting – she does not seem to be apt to accept the rejection of those who are stronger and better assimilated (the Frasers) so she prefers to choose to be blind to the fact that she is their victim and as such will never be considered their equal. Frances' strategy is, therefore, to wait, that is say, to enter the mental space where she unreasonably hopes for their reapproval. She is in a state of expectancy and willingness to sacrifice her dignity if the readmission to the desired society requires that.

A similar condition was implied even before the disastrous dinner, when Frances was kept unsure till the last minute whether she would be considered at all for the invitation:

> And, in almost physical distress, I moved my head from side to side, wondering what was wrong. And then I became quiet, for I realized that I was still waiting, hoping that one of them would telephone and invite me to their Christmas celebration. (*LM*)

Kitty's waiting in *P* is also linked to the need for assimilation. Though it might not target such specific people as Nick and Alix in *LM*, Kitty too feels a longing for some sort of community while she is expecting Maurice:

> Her usual reaction to Maurice was a tremor compounded of fear and longing followed by the window, card in hand, for her heart beats to subside, she saw Caroline, in yellow, making her way in the direction, she supposed, of Harrods. A sudden desire to move in crowds, to disperse her tremendous feelings, to share her golden prospects, impelled her towards the telephone. She dialled her grandparents' number. (*P* 94)

While Kitty succumbs to Maurice's capricious plans, she yearns to be a part of a larger group. The paradoxical feelings of Kitty, compounded by "fear and longing," seem equal to her ambiguous attitude towards her own situation. On the one hand, she is placed in a subordinate position waiting for Maurice who is never on time, and, on the other, she considers her circumstances to be "golden prospects." It is possible that Kitty, though she does not want to admit it, unconsciously senses her degradation and rejection by Maurice and that is why she feels the urge to be included "in crowds." She thinks of a faceless crowd since she is devoid of the feeling of belonging to the larger community that could compensate for Maurice's absence. Since Maurice stands for the assimilation with Englishness in the novel, the fact that Kitty calls her grandparents might suggest that the possibility of being included in English society is quite limited, if not entirely impossible.

The analyses in this section demonstrate that the motif of waiting is the most prominent in *SL*, *P*, and *LM*. This could be attributed to the format of these novels which most strikingly draws from the *Bildungsroman* convention. While the plots of *SL*, *P*, and *LM* focus on the development of a single character in a rather chronological manner, the story in *FF* presents the whole family more chaotically. The storyline of Edith in *HL* is told in an achronological manner. *SL*, *P*, and *LM*, as variations on coming-of-age story, reveal how a disproportionately big part of existence is compounded by the imaginings of events rather than by the events themselves. It has already been observed that "[…] Brookner's novels were organised by lack" (*Misreading* 11) and waiting constitutes one of the tools of such an organisation of the text. An entirely different model of eventfulness emerges when the periods separating the protagonists from the anticipated and expected events, paradoxically, bear most of the emotional tension because they are filled with the most mundane activities. The world picture is reversed, and the reader is impelled to perceive the most prosaic hours of Ruth's, Kitty's, and Frances' lives respectively as the most elevated and meaningful. Moreover, these periods seem to be the most defining ones for understanding the general message of Brookner's texts: the uneventfulness of *SL*, *P*, and *LM* often enhances the impression of absence of any metaphysical life purpose and unmasks the faultiness of the dominant narrative about a woman's destiny. The waiting in *SL*, *P*, and *LM* also plays a role of *memento mori* by presenting life as a prolonged

interlude to death. On some occasions, the existence of female protagonists consumed with waiting is undermined by depicting them as absent and removed from the course of events around them, suggesting, in turn, that they are party dead.

It could be also concluded that the motif of waiting influences the world view in the novels. Because of the disruption of the traditional sense of time and the unproportional attention given to the events that merely *may* happen, the motif of waiting contributes to the construction of a probabilistic world view, as the novels appear to focus mostly on the alternative versions of action. Frances, Kitty, and Ruth seem mentally and temporally transported to the future, non-existent, situations. This impression is especially strong in *P* where Kitty's two visits to a clairvoyant additionally direct reader's attention to the potential development of the story. For instance, when Kitty is leaving the clairvoayant's place, she is "strangely relived," the clairvoyant waves at Kitty, and Kitty waves back, and then "facing each other, walking backwards, each waved until the other was out of sight" (*P* 166). The passage depicts the moment of departing characterized by stillness. The protagonist silently faces the psychic. If we consider the clairvoyant in *P* as a person who has access to the potential future developments in Kitty's life, the scene could be understood as a metaphysical juncture of different time dimensions. As in a mirror, Kitty seems to momentarily confront the potentiality of her life when she wordlessly copies the gestures of the clairvoyant opposite her.

What also seems to be significant as regards the motif of waiting is the reference to *Eugénie Grandet* by Honoré de Balzac's in *SL*. Ruth is an academic and Balzac's oeuvre constitutes her research field. The concluding sentences of *SL* are the words Ruth writes in the letter to her editor: "P.S. The section on Eugénie Grandet has turned out rather longer than expected. Do you think anyone will notice?" (*SL* 176). The intertextual reference to Balzac's novel foregrounds the common theme of *Eugénie Grandet* and *SL*. Both novels tell a story of a faithful woman waiting for her beloved only to realize that she was naïve to believe in his faithfulness. Eugénie waits years for Charles, her cousin, whom she trusted, and is betrayed. The similarity between the fates of Eugénie and Ruth is striking, thus, the last question in the quote above might be treated as a humorous, autotelic reference of the implied author. Obviously, the prolonged passages describing Ruth's waiting for Richard should not be ignored. Nonetheless, it would be too credulous to assume that Brookner's narrative technique is a simple duplication of Balzac's strategies. Brookner does not only tell the story of the vulnerability of a naïve woman in the world, but she also recounts the problems faced by individuals of the liminal status of

a mixed ethnicity in the contemporary world. Consequently, such an amalgamation of themes calls for some innovative narrative practices. As Homi Bhabha observes,

> [t]he borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of the past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (7)

It seems that *SL*, *P*, and *LM* embody Bhabha's ideas about cultural representation of the liminal experience. By the employment of the motif of waiting, Brookner constructs an original literary depiction of experience. Waiting in Brookner's fiction disturbs the traditional temporality and directs the reader's attention to alternative storylines. What is even more significant, the descriptions of waiting reconfigure narrative emplotment in a way which enables a more accurate transmission of the liminality of the protagonists and reveals their inhibitions, fears, and longings. Additionally, the uneventfulness of waiting in *SL*, *P*, and *LM* conveys a world view based on disillusionment and reversal of a fairy-tale plot.

3.4 Rites of Passage in Modern Society

Brookner's novels portray the female protagonists as liminal individuals. This is achieved by their characterization – the discussed women display some liminal attributes, like their mixed ethnic background, the feeling of exclusion, and a seemingly ageless status. In addition to such qualities, they are involved in the situations that strikingly resemble the traditional rites of passage. The characters' liminality is not only a matter of their constant displacement in the family, their romantic relations, the country they come from or the society they belong to, but, at some point, it is also due the rituals of initiation they go through. On these ritualized occasions their in-between status resembles a liminal rank of an initiate in a traditional sense, that is the one described by van Gennep (*Rites*).

First of all, it should be noted that in the novels under consideration the respective protagonists feel a certain premonition of some impending, revolutionary change. Though in some cases it is apparently connected with some professional endeavour (finishing the study on Balzac in *SL*, delivering a lecture in *P*, writing a novel in *LM*), in the majority

of situations the change is related to high hopes the main female characters have for a fundamental transformation of their lives as is alluded in the following passage from *P*:

> For two days she sat in the garden and walked about the streets, and she would remember those two days as a curious interval, when all things seemed possible, an almost mystical time of promise and anticipated fulfilment. The hours of the day were uniform in their bright silent intensity, and the sun did not appear to move. There was a suspension of appetite and of all agitation, replaced by an extraordinary concentration of the faculties, a stillness, something strange and new. It was as if some genuine metamorphosis were taking place, yet she did not know what it was. (*P* 144)

The way Kitty perceives the time before her lecture resembles a spiritual experience of concentrated potentiality. The temporal and spatial immobility ("the sun did not appear to move," "a suspension of […] all agitation," "a stillness") creates an impression of a different reality to which universal laws of physics do not apply. This peculiarity and intensity of Kitty's perception further indicate that the approaching academic presentation is not the only reason of her excitation. Kitty's expectation is not about a mere alternation of the terms of her employment at the university but, above all, about "some genuine metamorphosis." Kitty hopes that her lecture will make Maurice focus on her, especially that he promises to throw a party in her honour afterwards. Since Kitty assumes that he plans to declare his romantic devotion to her during the party (or, at least, that his idea to celebrate her lecture tacitly means that he is serious about her), she attaches a great importance to Maurice's hosting the dinner. Thus, it might be inferred that although Kitty is unable to identify clearly what the future change will concern, on some deeper level she hopes for a change of her marital status. Maurice is described in *P* as an epitome of Englishness, consequently Kitty's desires acquire manifold meanings, though not explicitly formulated: she longs for another status that entails social inclusion.

In comparison to Kitty, Frances in *LM* voices her needs for change in a more direct manner. When preparing for a Christmas outing with the Frasers, she expresses her yearnings both as regards her ethnicity (becoming English) and femininity (becoming a wife, and, perhaps, a mother) openly:

> I wanted this year to be different, I wanted it to be decisive. However nebulous the events of the past two months, and however little I understood then, I wanted a resolution, and a resolution in my favour. And I wanted that friendship back and with it the expectation of more. I wanted it all to come out right; […] I wanted a future for myself that would be totally unlike the past, and I wanted that future to include not only James but Nick and Alix as well. I wanted there to be four of us again, but within that four I wanted the two of us to be regarded as a couple. This did not seem to me to be too much to expect. (*LM* 154)

Frances' desperation is indicated with the anaphoric repetition of the phrase "I want." She has been kept in a state of tentative waiting (especially by indecisive James) for such a long time that the phrase attests to both her decidedness and her impatience. What is even more important, the words "decisive," "resolution," "future […] totally unlike the past" suggest that Frances strives for a fundamental transformation that would be final and lasting. By including James, Nick, and Alix in her expected, different stage of life, Frances also signals that the future change should pertain to her social status.

The metamorphoses sensed and desired by the protagonists of Brookner's fiction bear resemblance to the initiation rites in terms of their power to change the social status of a person. As liminal subjects, the protagonists are just about to alter their ontological status in a group. A similar situation can be also observed in the case of Edith's "curative stay" in Switzerland in *HL* (9). Although she resigns from the ritual of marriage, which would have assisted her through the change of a marital status, Edith is given a second chance to repent in order to become an accepted member of society once again. The resolution awaited by Frances, the metamorphosis sensed by Kitty, the possibility of regaining social respect by Edith, as well as series of marriages in *FF*, correspond to the pattern of transitional rites whose main objective is to facilitate the profound transfiguration of the individual's existence in society. These instances in Brookner's novels refer to the fundamental life-crises of each human being as identified by van Gennep:

> Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined. (*Rites* 3)

In the liminal stage of these universal transitions, the liminal subject is suspended in what Turner calls "a limbo of statuslessness" (*Ritual Process* 97). This transitory stage allows for a temporary abandonment of any attributes designating the past or future social position.

Consequently, even in the rigid structures of tribal societies, the liminal phase permitted a liminal subject to experiment with alternative identities. A similar investigation of who the protagonist could possibly become is hinted at on a few occasions in Brookner's novels. This can be observed in the scenes when the female

protagonists look in mirrors, scrutinize their reflections in the shop windows or describing one's photographic images. Frances' desire to somehow frame herself might serve as an example: "I wanted to see myself in mirrors, in windows, as I had seen myself in the photograph that Nick had taken that day we had all driven down to Bray" (*LM* 154). The trip to Bray which Frances took with the Frasers was imbued with a free-spirited atmosphere and she tried her best to be more light-hearted and pleasing for her companions. Since Frances is confident that once she becomes more entertaining, she will be permanently accepted by the community of attractive people,[88] the picture taken during the trip reminds her of someone she could possibly become. Frances' evolution into a light-hearted persona will not be successful because of her self-consciousness. That is why, through the alternation of her outward appearance, she tries to alter her disposition:

> I looked, I thought like some beady Victorian child. I moved to the cupboard to search for something more interesting to wear and when I glanced back I saw a more flattering side of myself in the glass, a small waist, a long back, a full and flattering skirt. And it was getting late, so I took a deep breath and tried to look more interesting, and willed my face into a softer, less critical expression. (*LM* 154–155)

Though, finally Frances does not change anything in her clothing, she shifts the perception of herself: from thinking of herself as somehow quirky, old-fashioned immature persona ("beady Victorian child") to noting that she is apparently an attractive woman ("a small waist, a long back, a full and flattering skirt"). The situation resembles a process of trying on different personalities, especially when considering Frances' deliberate adjusting of her facial look.

An analogous scene takes place in *P* when Kitty presents to her neighbour, Calroline, the dress she plans to wear at her lecture. Caroline, who is characterized in the novel as a woman with a tacky fashion sense, tries to "liven up" (*P* 153) Kitty's look and

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[88] The notion that funny personality equals social desirability is repeatedly expressed in *LM*. The following passages might serve as instances of such a conviction:

> For if one is serious, one is rarely a welcome guest. Everything must be converted, somehow, into entertainment. And I could do it. (*LM* 164–165)

> But that would change. I had only to take a pull at myself and be tactful and light-hearted (yes, light-hearted; that was essential) […]. (*LM* 155)

Moreover, the way Frances is addressed by the Frasers, "Little Orphan Fanny," seems especially telling. The name points to the way Frances is perceived by them, which highlights her immaturity and vulnerability. "Fanny" is also a slang word for female sexual organs; this meaning additionally brings to focus the Frasers' cynical attitude towards Frances' sexuality. Significantly, "Fanny" and "funny" are examples of paranomasia and every time Frances is called "Little Orphan Fanny" her nickname also evokes the desired quality of being funny.

after the application of heavy make-up and the addition of various accessories, the protagonist notices an alternative persona in herself:

> When she had been draped in the chains and scarves, she saw, with interest, that she resembled a prostitute she had once seen emerging from the George-Cinq. A cynical, capable, and utterly French other self had emerged, and this self was not the sort of woman who gave lectures or aspired to the unity of a simple life or desired to align herself with the beliefs and customs of the established majority. This startling face held promises of great assurance, of sophistication; this was the face that belonged to a woman who knew how to please. (*P* 154)

The reflection in the mirror gives Kitty an access to another, even if most far-fetched, version of herself. Interestingly, she is momentarily exposed to an alternative interpretation of her French ancestry. While in the rest of the novel her foreign background is associated with the strong work ethics of Louise and the displacement of Vadim, in this scene, unexpectedly, Kitty notices in herself the flirtatiousness of a French prostitute. Since this effect is achieved only by some make-up and accessories, which Kitty normally never wears, the situation is analogous to trying on different masks. In such circumstances the protagonist adopts for a while a completely different persona to the one she usually is ("the sort of woman who gave lectures or aspired to the unity of a simple life"). In this fleeting moment she vicariously experiences the qualities she thinks she lacks – sexual attractiveness and feminine confidence. What is more, these attributes are indirectly ascribed to a person who is brave enough not to "align herself with the beliefs and customs of the established majority." Thus, this alternative persona which Kitty "tries on" provides her with an alternative model of existence. The model allows for being a member of the minority according to which a woman does not have to adjust to the expectations of others and may bravely experience her sexuality in a way which might not be socially accepted.

Nevertheless, such rare instances of experiencing an alternative, confident self are only momentary. In general, Brooknerian female protagonists are characterized by timidity, shyness, and insecurity. These could be also interpreted as typical features of a liminal entity:

> Their behaviour [liminal subjects'] is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructions implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint. It is as though endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life. (Turner, *Process* 94)

For example, the expulsion of Edith to the Swiss hotel after her resignation from marrying Geoffrey might be as well treated as such an "arbitrary punishment," especially that Edith does not protest against her coerced leave:

> My profile was deemed to be low and it was agreed by those who thought they knew me that it should stay that way. And no doubt after a curative stay in this grey solitude […] I shall be allowed back, to resume my peaceable existence, and to revert to what I was before I did that apparently dreadful thing, although, frankly, once I had done it I didn't give it another thought. But I do now. Yes. (*HL* 9)

Edith seems to be forced to repent and, although she initially does not feel any remorse, she obeys the pressure imposed by "those who thought they knew" her to disappear from London. Not surprisingly, her final penitence seems to be an outcome of this social pressure rather than genuine regret. Similarly to an initiate in a traditional rite of passage, she tacitly accepts her punishment and exhibits extremely unostentatious behaviour.

The longer into her stay in Hotel du Lac, the more self-effacing Edith's conduct becomes:

> Edith, once again anonymous, and accepting her anonymity, made an appropriately inconspicuous exit. And, sitting in the deserted salon, the first to arrive from the dining room, she felt her precarious dignity hard-pressed and about to succumb in the light of her earlier sadness. (*HL* 62)

This passage almost directly exemplifies humility and anonymity of a liminal subject outlined by Turner (*Process* 102). He refers to the ceremonies of the African tribe of Ndembu to describe the unrecognizability and submissiveness of the liminal entities, and Brooknerian protagonist's disposition is not that different from that of the tribal initiates. The depiction of Edith in the quote above underlines not only the absence of any characteristic features of the protagonist but also her acceptance of this condition. What additionally strikes the reader in this scene is Edith's solitude. Although she is expelled to a hotel, that is to say a place usually crowded with people, the protagonist is frequently presented in isolated areas, for example in her empty room or, as in the passage above, in the salon before anyone else arrives. Such an almost ritualistic solitude is also the case in *LM* where Frances is about to enter what seems to be her own rite after she has discovered her friends' betrayal: "And then I was alone, in that emptying street, with that emptying street, with the night's blackness to hide me" (*LM* 162). The more her ritual progresses, the darker and more secluded her environment becomes:

> I was unprepared for the darkness, and the silence. […] Vacant, I was surrounded by vacancy. (*LM* 165)

> Emptiness flowed away from me on either side. The rain was now steady but silent […]. There was no evidence of life around me, no rustle in the undergrowth, no reassuring country twitterings. The park, at night, was empty of comfort. (*LM* 165)

When entering the dark, deserted park, she enters a liminal space situated between reality and a dream. And although it is the park she knows well because she would often take her walks there, after the fateful dinner, the same areas become temporarily strange and devoid of life. It is also significant that Frances' passage takes place at night since "liminality is linked to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility" (Turner, *Process* 95). Frances enters a peculiar phase and the outlandish depiction of the places, which previously constituted a welcoming territory for her, signals that she is situated in a liminal space. Crossing this threshold between the preliminal and liminal spaces, that is to say, departing ordinary looking London streets and enetring the peculiar space of the dark, deserted, silent city, was already foreshadowed at the restaurant, during the dinner with the Frasers. Within the theoretical frames of rites of passage, Frances' social exclusion which is signalled at the said event, constitutes a predictable circumstance for the later, liminal phase. Frances, as a typical liminal persona, becomes a subject of social exclusion:

> And indeed it seemed as if there were only the three of them present, and as I followed them down the stairs, I felt, in a curious way, outclassed. […] the three of them seemed to move as unit, all tall, all handsome, physically linked. […] This made me very silent, but as no one addressed the question or even a remark to me, my silence was not noticed. Or perhaps there was a tacit agreement not to notice me at all. In this way, still smiling, but as alert and wary as an animal, I sat down with them at their favourite table. (*LM* 158)

> I looked at James and saw that he was enjoying himself; his face was highly coloured, and although he was sited next to me he was half turned away, as if to face Maria. The thought that he could not even bear to look at me was so terrible that it did not occur to me that he was being very impolite. And anyway, what sort of half-baked, old-fashioned notion was impoliteness in the midst of this avid crowd, their eyes glistening with mockery and pleasure, the extraordinary conversation now so allusive that I felt a touch of nightmare, as if this could not possibly be happening except in a bad dream? (*LM* 159)

> […] I could only identify a feeling of exclusion. I felt as if the laws of the universe no longer applied to me, since I was outside the normal frames of reference. A biological nonentity, to be phased out. And somewhere, intruding helplessly, and to no avail into my consciousness, the anger of the underdog, plotting bloody revolution, plotting revenge. (*LM* 163)

The passages above demonstrate how it gradually dawns on Frances that she has been excluded by her friends. In the beginning the protagonists realizes a certain separateness between her and the rest of the group. The common denominator of Nick, Alix, James, and Maria seems to be their visible attractiveness ("all handsome, physically linked"). Thus, Frances' feeling of being "outclassed" implies a defeat in the realm of physical appeal (which will be later confirmed by her realization that James and Maria are actually lovers). What is also important to note is that, although the protagonist is painfully aware that she is being ignored, she still pretends that it does not affect her. However, some time later Frances becomes more anxious and, as a result, her need to be considered, included, and wanted, appears to be more and more desperate. Frances notices that "[James] could not even bear to look at her" precisely the moment she observes that James is extremely attracted to Maria. Thus, the title phrase "look at me" comes to the reader's mind as a kind of intertext and suggests that the desire to be considered attractive and to be included in a group of confident people is of the greatest importance to the protagonist. As can be seen in the second passage, Frances' realization that her friends' indifference is not coincidental turns out to be so terrifying to face that she dismisses her feelings of resentment ("The thought […] was so terrible that it did not occur to me that he was being very impolite"). Therefore, Frances' rumination on the obsolescence of politeness gives an impression of her desperately trying to justify James' behaviour in order to protect herself from the mental damage it might cause. Finally, the way Frances is regarded by her companions is so evidently discriminative that her denial gives way to the admission of being excluded. Frances' ultimate understanding takes an extreme turn when she feels as "a biological nonentity, to be phased out." Considering the conclusions of the previous chapter, such a phrasing echoes the danger of annihilation caused by the memory of the Holocaust. Even if it is not the case in *LM*, Frances still borders on the different liminal time-space where "the laws of the universe no longer applied to [her]." Indeed, this moment proves to be the onset of her defining rite.

The timidity and silent acceptance of mistreatment are also the characteristics of Kitty in *P*. Her reaction to Maurice's behaviour and his dismissive attitude toward her manifest these traits most clearly:

> Kitty herself had loved him for two years and had entertained secret hopes. But their brief affair had settled down into a strange comradely routine which puzzled her but which she accepted. She accepted his random telephone calls, too random for her taste, and his eventual reappearance, at her dining table, where he would talk about his work and eat

> her food appreciatively; and seeing him there, she too, at last, would eat. […] She could hardly go up to him and ask him what time he would arrive at the flat, nor would he bother to let her know, so she could only nurse her glass of sherry in a corner, watching him being charming to the Friends, and calculate when she could buy the meat and whether or not to prepare something that would only need reheating or whether to do something fresh on the night and therefore easier in terms of forwards planning but more difficult in terms of realization. (*P* 19)

The repetitions of the verb "accepted" and the adjective "random" adequately focus the reader's attention on Kitty's compliance with Maurice's incidental appearance. Kitty's involvement in the relationship is out of proportion in comparison to Maurice's emotional engagement or, actually, lack of it. The passage demonstrates how committed Kitty is when it comes to holding dinners for him. As already indicated previously, her planning of food is shown as an intricate, demanding task. This conscientious preparation to meet Maurice is juxtaposed with Maurice's lack of respect for and attention to Kitty. Her thoughts about the meal which Maurice eats without the awareness of how much effort she had to put in its preparation manifest the said asymmetry of their emotional involvement. Moreover, Maurice's visits at Kitty's place obviously do not make them friends. When in public, Kitty instinctively feels that she is not entitled to talk to Maurice, even if the matter is of importance, like the time of his next visit. Such dynamics clearly depict Kitty as an inferior person in the relationship and her consenting to such a position resembles the behaviour of liminal subjects who timidly suffer humiliations during their rites of passage.

This parallel does not seem far-fetched if we take into consideration the fact that the longest stage of action in *P*, which is composed of the time separating Kitty from her lecture, is apparently described in very ritualistic terms. The ceremonial process of sewing Kitty's dress for her lecture is plainly shown as the preparation for a liminal passage. The quote below explains when the making of a new dress was customarily required in Kitty's family:

> For Kitty, this rite of passage, which she found tiring, uncomfortable, and inappropriate, was nevertheless an essential preliminary to any important occasion. It had been thus all her life: before going to a party, or to her relations in France, or on her birthday, she had a dress made for her by Louise. The ritual was so familiar as to be unnoticeable: the silent consultation, the gravity of expression, the lengthy lingering of the material, the draping, the pinning, the minute adjustments to a shoulder seam, to hang of a skirt, to a sleeve, tiny pinchings at the back of the waist, the weighting of the hem. There was never any discussion over the design and colour of these garments, for Louise had always been dictatorial in her professional life. She knew better than anyone else what would be

> suitable for a particular occasion. She, the product of the rue Saint-Denis and Percy Street, was on more intimate terms with the rituals of society than her many clients, at home with the requirements of royal garden parties, wedding receptions, Glyndebourne, the South of France, Scotland. She had not, it was true, yet designed any clothes suitable for someone giving a talk but she did not doubt that she would be equal to the task. (*P* 137)

The inevitability of the ritual dress-making is analogous to the necessity of the tribal rites which were so rooted in the social structure that it was unimaginable to omit them during the passage to another life stage. Similarly, Kitty, for whom the custom is "tiring, uncomfortable, and inappropriate," does not even consider the possibility of evading the traditional preparation of the garment. The importance of the tradition is underlined by Louise's seriousness and focus ("the silent consultation, the gravity of expression") which seems almost of religious quality. Additionally, the enumeration of all the technical details reveals the arcana of Louise's workshop and attests to the complexity of the act. Kitty's grandmother behaves as an authoritative priestess in this secular version of the ritual ("[t]here was never any discussion over the design," "Louise had always been dictatorial"). As "a celebrant" who leads the ceremony, Louise is seemingly the one who is most knowledgeable about "the rituals of society." Although she is presented in the novel as uncomprehending when it comes to the English lifestyle, this passage demonstrates that Louise perceives herself as experienced in both French and English fashions (the names of "Saint-Denis and Percy Street" are metonymic of these two national conventions). Consequently, what follows is a list of social occasions that she prides herself on being familiar with and which are associated with the elite to which she aspires. For example, going to the Glyndebourne Festival Opera or spending holidays in the south of France are highly conventionalized upper-class events demanding a particular dress code.

Curiously, she is convinced that her experience with other English traditions makes her apt for the present task, namely her granddaughter's academic lecture. Therefore, the making of Kitty's dress is demonstrated as a highly conventionalized process which, similarly to tribal rites, is aimed at aiding Kitty's transition to the new life stage. Louise intends to design a garment which will signal Kitty's suitability for the elevated status she desires. Thus, Louise uses her experience as an elder to make Kitty conform to social expectations and be included in the society to which she herself is foreign. It is quite telling that although Kitty does not feel very convinced about the sophisticated elegance of the dress, she nevertheless wears it at her lecture. Her instinct was right since the dress eventually turns out to be too refined for the occasion. In turn,

such a resolution undermines Louise's confidence in her knowledge about English customs. Kitty is, therefore, depicted as a vulnerable member of society, a person who cannot rely on her family to guide her through the complexity of social conventions. The final scene of the novel when Kitty learns that Maurice has been for some time romantically involved with her student, Miss Fairchild, and of which she has been utterly unaware, further attests to her susceptibility to deception. Therefore, the rite of passage facilitated by Kitty's grandparents seem ineffective, which underlies the cultural displacement of Kitty and her family, and their inability to adapt to the rules of English society.

Ultimately, the protagonist is portrayed as someone who cannot evolve to the next, more mature stage of her life because she is unable to interpret the silent clues understandable by her English colleagues, like Pauline. Kitty's blind belief that Maurice is to express his love for her is analogous to Louise's false conviction that she is sufficiently familiar with English conventions to make a suitable dress for her granddaughter's lecture. The two women turn out to be equally ignorant and maladjusted to the surrounding culture. Additionally, although Kitty thinks that she fails due to her ignorance concerning Maurice's romantic relationship with Miss Fairchild ("Quite simply, I lacked the information. She had the impression of having been sent right back to the beginning of a game she thought she had been playing according to the rules" (*P* 182), it is actually suggested that the causes of her failure are more complex. Kitty has not been socialized in a way that would prepare her to lead an adult life in the first place. That is why she is unable to take the subtle clues about Maurice's disregard for her that are easily read by others. Yet, Kitty learns from her failure that social life is like a game in which fair play does not equal success. Subsequently, as the transition is often described as the passage that one has to go through, the phrase that Kitty feels like she has been "sent right back to the beginning" reverses the situation and indicates that the family ritual of dress-making was ineffective. Therefore, the dress symbolizes the lack of understanding of English social norms, which in effect causes the maladjustment of Kitty's family.

A similar perspective on the cultural ancestry which turns out to pose an obstacle in the processes of assimilation and growing up is present in *SL*. The situation evoking a ritual initiation into adulthood happens when Ruth's father pays a visit in her new flat after Ruth's decision to move out from her family home in Oakwood Court:

> The next evening Ruth, at her window, saw his car draw up. She went downstairs to let him in and found him on the steps holding a carton filled with damask napkins, entrée dishes, serving plates, a ladle, and some knife rests. 'Mamma would have liked you to have them,' he said. (*SL* 42)

In Chapter 2 of the present thesis the objects in the antique cupboard of old Mrs Weiss, like cutlery, dishes, etc., have been described as symbols of the ethnic otherness of Ruth's family. After Ruth's moving out, mainly to get a space where she could meet Richard and thus develop the relationship with him, her new flat in Edith Grove functions as another semantic field, the one which stands in contrast to her family home. She intends to invite Richard over for dinner to signal her readiness for their potential romantic relationship. Thus, her flat is a space where she wants to lead a more autonomous life and to pursue serious relationships. All these are to help to ascribe herself in the categories separate from her family. Subsequently, the modest flat in Edith Grove, which stands for the beginning of Ruth's adult life, is contrasted with Oakwood Court that connotes her childhood and her family. The preparation to live on her own and the setting of furniture in the new flat do seem like a modern rite of passage, namely, the young woman's transition from childhood to adulthood. Following, it might be inferred that this evolution will entail the development of Ruth's adult identity. Oakwood Court was a place of childhood, but with the death of her grandmother, Ruth's subjectivity has ceased to be recognized there. Her existence has become subordinate to the needs of others (Helen, George, Mrs Cutler). Therefore, moving to her new flat in Edith Grove suggests that Ruth wants to be become more mature in a sense of her own agency in the process of self-identification. However, her father's gift foreshadows another scenario. The kitchen utensils and other objects of her grandmother's inheritance that are passed on her shortly after moving to her first own flat foreshadow that her adult life will be troubled by the problematic liminal elements from the past that could not be easily discarded or overlooked. George's gift ominously resembles a dowry handed on to brides when they are moving out from their family houses to inhabit a house with their newly wed husbands. Ruth, too, is positioned on the brink of her adult life, especially when she opens the door, a symbolic border between the outer world and her new life inside the recently acquired flat. Moreover, George stands on the steps to the house – the scene paints an iconic picture of liminal threshold and brings to mind van Genepp's ethnology-based ruminations regarding the traditional rites of passage taking place on the doorstep (*Rites* 21–25). In *SL*, Mrs Weiss' household goods are tools that she could cherish as family

souvenirs. However, these heavy, foreign looking objects are also a sign of the burden of the past, ethnic liminality and its consequences including unfit existence within British society.

Perversely, since Richard's sexuality is on a few occasions alluded to (either as not matching Christian teachings or as not satisfactory enough, according to unceremonious Anthea) and it might be inferred that Ruth plans a sexual initiation with him in her Edith Grove flat, George's visit with these particular objects seems to bear a very ritualistic character. According to a conservative and/or tribal belief, the first sexual act changes the identity of a female from a girl to a woman and, therefore, it deserves some highlight mostly in the form of some ritualistic behaviour. The situation might be interpreted as a modern variation of the traditional rite of passage of a girl on the brink of becoming a woman. The symbolic "dowry" of her paternal line becomes a problematic incompatibility with what is perceived as English identity in *SL* since Richard is described as an epitome of Englishness and the most desired model of male virtues. Moreover, he is the main reason why Ruth decided to move to Edith Grove thus the problematic gift brought to the space designed for romance foreshadows that liminal ethnicity will constitute the impediment to the development of the romantic relationship.

Another instance of a situation resembling a traditional rite is Frances' night walk back home after the dinner following her discovery of having been betrayed. As discussed previously, Frances finds herself in secluded, dark London streets which do not resemble the city she knew and often sauntered in with James. At some point, the protagonist reaches the park which is described as "a place for outlaws, for those who desired concealment" (*LM* 166). Such a description signals that the same place that she previously enjoyed, and which offered a space where her relationship with James could slowly develop, now is transfigured into some dangerous territory. The buildings visible from the park during the day, become indiscernible:

> Lights, in the big hotels, merely served to accentuate the opacity in which I moved. There was a moon, revealed and again concealed by the drifts of black vapour, but it did not reach down into my darkness and was in any case on the wane. (*LM* 166)

What seems peculiar in the description of Frances' entering the park is the repeated motif of secrecy and hiding. As already noted, the park provides concealment for those running against the law, and in the quoted passage, as if to match this secrecy, the moon is rhythmically covered by dark mist. Consequently, this implies that the protagonist finds

herself in some bizzare territory, which has nothing in common with the respected, public places she frequents, like a library where she works or the restaurants where she dines. This is a territory of outlaws, that is to say, the space of those who exist on the fringes of society. Moreover, the need for concealment suggests that something very private and intimate is going to happen. Interestingly, Turner symbolically links lunar eclipse to liminality (*Process* 95) and in the quote above the moon is waning so, though not fully, it is also darkened. The general feeling of spatial displacement caused by the darkness is additionally enhanced by the temporal confusion experienced by Frances: "I had no idea of the time, although it must have been very late" (*LM* 167).

After some time, Frances sees an underground tunnel and then she enters what seems to be a katabasis journey into the underworld:

> In the thin glare of the mauvish lights the endless tunnel stretched before me, a far more frightening sight than the dark and empty park. There was a stink of the urine, and someone had recently been active with an aerosol, for several fresh slogans in blue Arabic writing decorated the tilted walls. 'Victory of the Revolutionary Council in Iran', proclaimed a grease pencil, applied to an otherwise innocent poster advertising men's dress suits for hire. There was no one in sight, but now I felt a touch of unease, and my footsteps drummed out rather more loudly, their echo coming back to me. At one point I stumbled and must have kicked an empty lager can, whose mournful clatter, a doleful sound, made my teeth clench and sent me hurrying on. Then, just as I felt the first faint stirrings of alarm, a figure staggered round the corner ahead of me and came to a groaning halt, propping itself against the wall, and bending over as if in an extremity of pain. (*LM* 168)

The passage depicts an exceptional scene in *LM*. Since the historical or political mimetic allusions are virtually absent from the novel, the reference to Iranian Revolution constitutes a sharp contrast to the overall aesthetic of the story. Such a contrast is present also on the micro-level: the political proclamation on the walls of the tunnel is juxtaposed with the commercial advertisement. In other words, the act of political vandalism is contrasted with "innocent" consumerism. Thus, the underworld of the tunnel accommodates sensually repulsive elements like "the stink of the urine" and "empty lager can" and at the same time connotes the issues, otherwise repressed in the novel, like politics, or economic order. This is an atypical moment when Frances is forced to face the matters which exceed her usual obsessive preoccupation with Alix, Nick, and James. Additionally, the words describing sounds, like "mournful" or "doleful," evoke death. Just like in the mythological katabasis, where the hero descends to the land of death to meet the deceased ones or gain immortality (Louden and Bruce 197), Frances moves

through the tunnel to complete her hero journey. Only instead of the deceased deity (like in mythical katabasis), she meets a drunkard contorted in pain who displays somewhat ghost-like qualities:

> Heels drumming, and eyes staring steadily ahead, I walked towards him. I could smell the whisky and hear him mumbling and groaning. Out of the corner of my eye I could see him bending over, as if to vomit, and then righting himself; then I could see him spread-eagled against the wall; one hand, with thick black nails, splayed on the tiles behind him. As I came level with him, the other hand reached out and made as if to grab my sleeve, but his arm was too unsteady and he missed it. This angered him, and his voice came to me, a threatening animal sound. I stamped on, electric with terror, assuming an expression of worldly indifference, as if I had not noticed anything amiss. Only when I had reached the other end of the tunnel and was about to turn towards the steps did I dare to look back. I saw him, propped against the wall, his hand still stretched out, feeling for me. His face was a darkish purple. (*LM* 168–169)

There is something inhumane in the way the drunkard looks and acts. He is "bending over, as if to vomit" and is "spread-eagled against the wall," while "his face was a darkish purple." Additionally, he does not speak but only utters strange, alarming, and incomprehensible sounds ("mumbling and groaning," "a threatening animal sound") and as for his appearance, he seems not to care about it at all ("thick black nails"). On top of that, Frances' reaction may lead the reader to believe that she has met some unworldly creature. In symbolic terms, the protagonist confronts her biggest fear – the homeless addict constitutes the epitome of social exclusion, becomes a symbol of Frances' phobia of rejection. Thus her "reach[ing] the other end of the tunnel" metaphorically means that she has processed her greatest dread of being socially excluded. The rejection by Alix, Nick, and James is echoed in and magnified by the encounter with the drunkard in the tunnel. Furthermore, since Frances repeatedly avoids or ignores the uncomfortable suppositions regarding her exclusion, the man's attempt to grab her might be interpreted as the need to acknowledge her fears. For Frances, who claims that "[o]ne must, at all events, keep up appearances" (*LM* 139), facing the outcast who disregards social conventions, is like a secondary experience of everything she has repressed. Frances becomes undefeatable. This transformation makes her similar to the mythological hero who gains immortality through katabasis, especially that her passage evokes death:

> I felt as if I had to accomplish this ritual on foot, and only if I did so could I face the heaven warmth and muffled air that awaited me. Only in this way could I exhaust myself sufficiently to put thought to sleep, and if I did not so exhaust myself I would feel that I was entering a tomb, rather than a perfectly ordinary bed. (*LM* 169)

> This must be the most terrible hour, the hour when people die in hospitals. (*LM* 171)

In the first passage, "the heaven warmth and muffled air" resembles the anabasis, that is to say, a journey upwards hence the references to comfort, sky, and air. Thus, the successful completion of passage is understood by Frances as avoiding death ("entering a tomb"), the presence of which could be felt during the whole transition. As Frances seems to be surrounded by death, the fact that she eventually manages to get home, that is to survive the dangerous process, puts her in a hero-like position.

Once the long and exhausting passage comes to an end, she returns to the comforts and ordinariness of her Maida Vale flat, which further underlines the abnormality of the night walk:

> No sound, no light, the vital forces ebbing away, even the memory indistinct. I had no reliable information on where I had passed the earlier part of that evening, nor could I really understand what had happened, or how I came here. I only knew, as I passed dreamlike along the endless empty street, that I must get home; I even put my hand in my bag to get my key, and I held it before me like a talisman as, light-headed, and vague in my movements, I reached the corner where the Westminster Bank stood foursquare, as it always had done, and when I lifted my eyes I could see a very dim glow behind the curtains of the drawing room, as if lamp had been there for me.
> It took me a long time to climb the red-carpeted stairs. I felt like a pilgrim who at last reaches the place of his pilgrimage, after days and nights of search and exhaustion. I noticed, as if it were some item of sacred furniture, the gleaming brass of the stair-rods; my hand crept out and touched the wooden banisters. Slowly I looked around me. I had reached the end of my journey. I raised my hand and with it my key. (*LM* 171)

The "dreamlike" state and no clear recollection of events add to the mystery of the passage. Frances must have acted as if in a magical trance. The magical quality of the experience is enhanced by the key that she compares to a talisman. Furthermore, the moment when she notices a distant light in the window of her flat brings to mind the fairy-tale scenes when lost characters find their way home after a long journey (for instance, in *Hansel and Gretel*). Then, the accession of the stairs accentuates the upward movement as opposed to Frances' stay in the tunnel, that is to say, in the underworld. Consequently, the entering of the flat will ultimately complete her passage that is conceptualized with a classical cognitive metaphor of reaching the end of a journey or a pilgrimage. The significance of re-entering the familiar space is pointed to by phrases, such as "sacred furniture" or "gleaming […] brass," which additionally underline an almost religious quality of the situation.

Once inside her flat, exhausted from her journey, Frances is fed, bathed, and clothed by Nancy, her elderly maid. She also decides not to sleep in her bedroom and

moves to the room of her deceased mother. Thus, the return to the flat indicates the stage similar to an assimilation phase of a passage when an initiate is welcomed back to society as a person who has just acquired a new status. Next, after an interrupted sleep, Frances senses the fundamental transformation of herself: "I was not only being rested but also programmed for the task that lay ahead of me" (*LM* 178). However, the awaited resolution turns out to be different from her expectations. Frances has hoped, like other Brooknerian protagonists, to be allowed to enter adulthood. This hope has had simultaneous undertones of a full incorporation into the respected English society. However, her hope has quickly proved futile. When she looks at her naked body in the morning, she feels disappointed and disgraced:

> […] when I drew off the night-gown the sight of my body filled me with shame, so lacking did I perceive it to be in adult qualities, so flat, so unremarkable, so humiliated. I wondered if this feeling would ever leave me or whether I was condemned to see myself in this manner for the rest of my life. (LM 179)

Although Frances' own hero quest seems complete, it does not turn out the way she awaited. Her dissatisfaction with her physicality reveals that she must have presumed that the experience from the previous night would somehow change her disposition. In other words, the realization that her child-like body remains the same provokes her disillusionment and, at the same time, signals that Frances has not been incorporated into the social sphere she aspired to. Although she has managed to reach the post-liminal phase, her transformation has more to do with surviving the social exclusion than with being accepted into society. The task Frances mentions earlier appears to be writing her book. The process of composing her novel seems to be the way to assimilate the knowledge of the rules of the world Frances has recently been exposed to: "I would simply be here, not knowing how to recover, but working at it, with my pen and my notebook" (*LM* 181). Ultimately, Frances tries to come to terms with the fact that she belongs to the outgroup, to the people who are weaker or forgotten. This recognition can be noticed in the last part of *LM*:

> I see in its reflection Dr Constantine, crouched over the telephone, his brown eye vacant and without resource. I see Dr Simek braced against the back of his chair, his amber cigarette holder clenched in his teeth. I see Mrs Halloran, becalmed on her bed in South Kensington, a bottle beside her. I see Miss Morpeth, writing to her niece. I see myself. Nancy shuffles down the passage, and I hear her locking the front door. It is very quiet now. A voice says 'My darling Fan.' I pick up my pen. I start writing. (*LM* 192)

The image of Frances starting her novel is the final stage of action of *LM*. In a way this end guides the reader back to the beginning as it seems that Frances is writing about her experience, that is to say, the story that has just been completed. Consequently, what emerges is some cyclical pattern. Such cyclicality of life is also underlined by the mentioning of Dr Constantine, Dr Simek, Mrs Halloran, Mrs Morpeth, and Nancy, all of whom are old, weak people. When Frances pays visits to ill Dr Simek and abandoned Mrs Morpeth, these old people are depicted as forgotten and unattractive. Therefore, their appearance at the end of the narrative Frances is the protagonist of and, simultaneously, at the beginning of her own novel may indicate that she eventually acknowledges that she shares their position in society.

The final consideration can be given to *HL* which is another example of Brookner's novel where the protagonist's writing has a significant function. Edith is a writer of romantic novels, but her most authentic reflections are written down in the letters to her lover. These, however, are never sent (except the last one) which denotes that Edith's correspondence does not serve a conventional communicative purpose. The letter-writing constitutes a space of becoming someone else, someone with different awareness. Thus, Edith's writing has some ontological function as it changes who she is. An analogous role of words in liminal rites is observed by Turner: "The wisdom (mana) that is imparted in sacred liminality is not just aggregation of words and sentences; it has ontological value; it refashions the very being of the neophyte" (*Rites* 103). In *HL*, Edith in her writing uses words to regain her subjectivity. Such a process takes place not only when Edith writes letters but also when, at the end of the novel, she sends a telegram: "'Simmonds, Chiltern Street, London W1,' she wrote. 'Coming home.' But after a moment, she thought that this was not entirely accurate and, crossing out the words 'Coming home,' wrote simply, 'Returning.'" (*HL* 184). This final message demonstrates that, similarly to the situation in *LM*, entering the post-liminal phase does not mean that the protagonist will harmoniously adapt to English society. The act of writing the telegram serves as an epiphanic moment. Edith suddenly realizes that London has never been and never will be her home. In other words, she is coming back but she knows that she is not going to assimilate. Thus, her actual change pertains to the confrontation with the futility of her attempts to become entirely grown up and fully English. Edith returns to London but with different knowledge of herself comparing to her awareness when she left for the Swiss resort.

The events in *P*, *SL*, *LM*, and *HL* most strikingly resemble the traditional rites of passage described by anthropologists (van Gennep; Turner). The instances considered in this section are the literary representations of the variations of rituals of initiation in the modern world. As Langdon Elsbree notes, the pattern of the liminal rites proposed by van Gennep proves to be quite adaptable:

> This dual aspect of ritual passage and liminality – their universal formal properties and their existence through particularized social settings – is their value for narratives. That is to say, one can define and analyze the homologies between ritual passage and narrative structures within a culture, including changing motifs and their probable causes as part of that culture. (32)

It should be noted that in the discussed novels all the ritual transitions are provoked by the female protagonists' relationships with men. As has been already observed, Richard in *SL*, Maurice in *P*, James in *LM*, and Geoffrey in *HL* are all English upper-class. Therefore, the women characters not only hope for a romantic union but above all, they dream of getting into the English elite, which would give them a sense of belonging. Moreover, the realization of their hopes and dreams about the future, which also means the long-awaited adulthood, is accompanied by certain rites. The rites do facilitate the transitions of the female characters; however, the liminal rituals take some unexpected turns. In all cases, the protagonists do not achieve what they were hoping for, and they are forced to face the brutal reality. Turner notes that "if liminality is regarded as a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it can be seen as potentially a period od scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs" (*Process* 167). It seems that in the liminal periods Edith, Kitty, Frances, and Ruth are exposed to the superficiality and deceit of the world in which they previously wanted to be included. This exposition forces them to reconsider their aspirations. Consequently, the ritual transitions in the novels have some subversive potential. Although the protagonists do not achieve the status they expected, they gain different and, it seems, more realistic awareness of who they are and, accordingly, learn how they can exist within English society. If they are provided with any kind of assimilation, it is the assimilation to themselves and their (sometimes unwanted) liminal heritage.

The rituals analysed in this section also shed some light on the narrative world picture of the novels. According to Schmid, when an event meets the additional criteria of relevance, unpredictability, effect, irreversibility, and non-iterativity it can be classified as event II (20–27). The analyses of the transitional situations in *SL*, *P*, *LM*, and *HL* have

demonstrated that these events fulfil the conditions of event II. Furthermore, the ritual elements transforms the seemingly mundane circumstances and occasions into the unpredictable and life-changing events, thus, additionally transfigure what could otherwise be conceptualized as event I into event II. The contextual, intradiegetic references contribute to the representation of quite ordinary situations, like the dinner in *LM*, the lecture in *P*, moving houses in *SL*, or holiday in *HL*, as decisive moments or periods in protagonists' lives. The realizations of betrayal (*LM*, *P*), disrespect (*SL*, *P*), and social pressure (*HL*, *LM*, *P*, *SL*) which accompany these events are so disheartening and disillusioning that they transfigure the existence and awareness of the protagonists. Although a dinner, a lecture, a new flat, or a holiday are not rituals in their own terms, in the discussed novels they acquire such a status and therefore should be regarded as events II chiefly due to the elements of rites of passage which go along with these situations. The night walk and the entering the tunnel in *LM* may serve as a perfect example of an ordinary situation that is narratively dramatized into a life-changing situation. And last but not least, the unexpectedness of the resolution of the tension in the novels also situates the final situations in the second category of events.

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The analyses of liminal tropes in this chapter have revealed the consistent set of personal rules governing the protagonists' lives. Since their ethical values seem incompatible with modern society, their stable moral codes lead to their liminal position within their English social circles. The perceived virginal characteristics of the protagonists rightly foreshadow that they are not going to resort to any ploys in order to establish romantic relationships. This innocent attitude further reveals their childlike naivety that situates them as vulnerable and weak within the world of adults. Moreover, the patient waiting for their uninvolved lovers manifests the protagonists' belief in traditional values when it comes to building the relationship between a man and a woman, implicitly pointing to gender stereotyping. However, the timidity and readiness to accept humiliation during the times of their hopeful expectations simultaneously situate the protagonists' whole existence in the context of liminality – the persistent waiting for change and social inclusion appears to be their constant preoccupation; thus, the protagonists, just like humble liminal subjects of traditional rites of passage, wait to enter the following, postliminal stage of assimilation.

Conclusions

This dissertation has investigated the liminal identity of the female protagonists of the first five novels written by Anita Brookner. In the course of the analyses, the aspects of the protagonists' existence that contribute to their transitory status have been identified and the narrative modus operandi for a literary representation of liminality in the said novels has been revealed. The classical structuralist tools have been employed to analyse the liminal aspects of protagonists' experience. The mechanisms of the construction of limnal identity in the selected novels have been studied in regards to anti-essentialist theory of self.

The main liminal trait of the protagonists is linked with their mixed, Anglo-Jewish ethnicity. This ethnic duality is represented by particular narrative techniques, namely the creation of metaphorically charged space, the use of the motif of exile, and the animalization of the characters. The investigation of the heterotopic quality of domestic spaces in *SL*, *P*, and *FF* has demonstrated the families divided between the past in Continental Europe and the present in England. Thus, the domestic space becomes a metaphorical representation of a cultural conflict. The protagonist either navigates between separate areas designating Jewish and English traditions within the family house (Ruth in *SL*, Betty in *FF*) or constantly moves between houses whose interiors stand for a twofold family ancestry (Kitty in *P*). space functionalyses in the novels and reveals that a harmonious fusion of two cultures (here English and Jewish) is not possible in the case of the characters in question. The feeling of displacement experienced by female protagonists in their family houses is pervasive in the discussed texts. In consequence, this kind of emotional perception of their familial surroundings translates into the way the characters function in the outside world. In other words, the unsettling ambience of home and the confusing position of the protagonists in their respective families give rise to their sense of exclusion in other spheres of their lives. Such a repetition of dislocation is reminiscent of Bhabha's reflections on displacement:

> The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (9)

The public sphere in Brookner's first five novels is a strange world where women are unable to find their own place. The displacement they experience in their family houses is parallel to the lack of belonging elsewhere. A prominent example of social exclusion can be observed in *HL* where a fashionable Swiss resort at the lake, the place which connotes relaxation and socializing, becomes the place of Edith's banishment. Furthermore, in this novel the economic and historic contexts of Edith's liminal position are implied. This is done through the intertextual reference to Bruegel's *The Harvesters* and the visit to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The former directs the reader's attention to Edith's role in the economic system, while the latter addresses the bygone days. Although the Jewish ancestry is only hinted at, the subtle allusions towards it effectively link Edith with the motif of Wandering Jew. She feels excluded everywhere to the extent that even the luxurious hotel becomes the scenery of exile. The ever-lingering fog the hotel is immersed in metaphorically functions as an invisible barrier that separates Edith from society and precludes her from the immediate experience of the world.

The provisional nature of the female protagonists' existence situates them as refugees in their own homes. The arrangement of Frances' flat in *LM* most evidently attests to the lost memories and no feeling of inclusion. The multitude of random objects belonging to the previous owner underlines her lack of agency and temporariness of her situation. Although the motif of exile is often employed metaphorically, in *FF* it finds its literal manifestation. There are some hints that the Dorn family arrived in England because they had escaped the persecution of Jews in Continental Europe. Consequently, Sofka tries to establish her family in a new country. However, her attempts for a perfect assimilation with the English high society turn out futile. There is always something forced and tensed in the deliberate atmosphere of Sofka's house. The studious behaviour and conventions Sofka adheres to seem to be adopted in order to prevent the imminent catastrophe.

Significantly, this sensation of danger is present in all novels and the use of phrases connoting biologism and Darwinian discourse point to Nazi propaganda that favoured the strongest and the fittest. Brookner's female protagonists are presented in opposition to their English viable friends (Jill and Hugh in *SL*, Anthea in *P*, Nick and Alix in *LM*, Penelope in *HL*), thus seem more susceptible to annihilation. Additionally, the protagonists associate the ability to experience happiness and satisfaction with the physical and characterological superiority of the English. In *FF*, the most historically

contextualized novel among the analysed stories, Sofka's perception of her daughter-in-law, Evie, reveals the matriarch's fear of extermination. Evie is described in animalistic terms which underline her biologism and viability. In *LM*, the catalogues, files, and archives in the library where Frances works seem not only to contain the visual representations of madness but also to frame her terror of being excluded. It is in the library where the methodical detachment of Frances' analytical stare allows her to contemplate the representations of the ostracised minority. Being a member of such an outgroup constitutes her greatest fear, which implies past persecution of Jews. The omnipresent feeling of impending catastrophe, approaching annihilation and danger is transmitted through the elements of the probabilistic world view of the narrator who alludes to the 20the century difficult history and anticipates the possibility of recurrence of its atrocities. In a way, Brookner seems to creates the world beyond end, by default taking into consideration alternative turns of events, which makes her characters constantly alert and insecure. Such a temporal perspective is similar to the one identified by Bhabha in *The Locations of Culture*:

> Being in the 'beyond', then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell 'in the beyond' is also, as I have shown, to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*. In that sense, then, the intervening 'space beyond', becomes a space of intervention in the here and now. (7)

In Brookner's novels the act of waiting also provides such an intervening space. The uneventfulness of the major part of plot allows the characters to inhabit a space where they seem to exist in the realms of a mere possibility. However, the potential intervention, revelation, disillusionment or any other kind of resolution are postponed to the very end of the novels. This disproportionality between the uneventfulness of waiting and the scant description of the event itself adds to the brutality of the final disillusionment of the protagonists.

The protagonists' values, aspirations and moral codes are represented in Brookner's novels via age, frequent instances of waiting, and ritual elements of their transitions into adulthood. As regards the first of the enumerated issues, the perception of age of the protagonists appears to be distorted. They are suspended between the girlish naïve view of romantic relationships and mature responsibilities towards their parents (*SL*, *FF*), grandparents (*P*), or even maids (*LM*, *SL*). Thus, the protagonists are often portrayed as existing in a paradoxical situation, when time passing is apparently devoid

of time. Such timeless space relates to their age, but also to their activities. Ruth in *SL*, Kitty in *P*, Frances in *LM* spend most of their days thinking about and waiting for a revolutionary change. This type of uneventfulness reveals the superficiality of the life comprised of routinely performed habits. Furthermore, waiting is akin to a liminal ordeal which tests characters, patience and endurance. The timidity of the protagonists who quietly accept the late arrivals of their lovers additionally situates them as passive individuals devoid of true agency. Nevertheless, Brooknerines' conviction that marriage will entail stability and happiness is not merely the result of macro-narrative of the dominant conservative culture. The arrangement of characters proves to be a persuasive narrative strategy also in the case of the protagonists' lovers. The fact that female characters constantly dream of getting married to attractive, unmistakably English men indicates their longing for assimilation. As these unions of people coming from two different cultural backgrounds are never successful, the protagonists are shown as unable to fully integrate with English society. The failure to develop serious relationships also demonstrates the protagonists' naivety and maladjustment to adult life in general. Importantly, this inability to grow up stems from the absence of a proper parental model as can be observed in case of Ruth', Kitty's, or Edith's childhoods.

The innocent, romantic attitude towards relationships (the conviction that virtue and patient waiting is always rewarded) positions the protagonists as disadvantaged individuals. The ritualistic elements accompanying their passage from adolescence to adulthood are supposed to facilitate the transition and support the vulnerable characters. However, the awaited change of status never takes place and the private rituals, for example the dress making in *P*, only further demonstrate the otherness of the protagonists and their families. Yet, a close reading of the transitional situations reveals an important pattern: although the liminal phase does not bring the expected results, its ritualization in the novels underlines the life-changing function of what otherwise would be perceived as mundane situations. Consequently, moving houses (in *SL*), giving a lecture (in *P*), or writing a novel (in *LM*) are elevated into Event II through the contextual, intradiegetic references that dramatize the action.

Another conclusion stemming from the analyses is that ethnic liminality is inseparable from other aspects of protagonists' lives. The study of the ethnic and private liminalities in Brookner's prose demonstrates that such a clear-cut division could only be adopted for the analytical purposes. Since ethnic liminality results from the childhood of the protagonists, they become shaped by duality of traditions and cultures. Their

ascription to any membership category is suspended because they feel neither sufficiently Jewish nor English. This transitory status translates to every other aspect of their lives. That is why the inability to enter the adult life has the undertones of ethnic otherness for the protagonists of *SL*, *P*, *LM*, and *HL*. Analogously, the inclusion into groups of confident, attractive English friends or entering into marriage with an Englishman means more than social assimilation. Such relationships would additionally diminish the threat of ostracism, and, in a bigger picture, of death. This looming fear of death seems to motivate indirectly the main characters' choices as well as their acceptance of the inferior position in romantic relationships and among glamorous friends. The novels subtly imply that there is a price for a seemingly peaceful existence for a female of Jewish ancestry in English society. She could be tolerated under the series of implicit conditions. For example, there are hints in *HL* that a marriage with an Englishman should be considered as a favour for Edith. However, she abstains from the marriage with Geoffrey and thus breaks some tacit agreement and further aggravates the reaction of Penelope who was arranging this union. In *SL* and *LM*, the fact that it is always Ruth and Frances who pay for extravagant dinners of their English friends additionally highlights the conditional acceptance temporarily granted them by their companions. In *FF*, the contrast between Sofka and Evie also demonstrates different ways of existence in a foreign country – whereas Sofka intends to most effectively merge with English traditions, Evie does not care about such a liaison. Although Evie is more confident, it is Sofka who stays in London, while her ostentatious daughter-in-law emigrates with her son to Italian riviera. Kitty in *LM* strives for perfection as far as her English pronunciation and fashion style are considered as if any flaw in these respects were unforgivable. Ultimately, despite the efforts to meet all these demands, the protagonists of all the novels never prove themselves English enough to be truly included in English society. In line with Okolie's observation on inherent inferiority of the identity of the other (2), Brooknerines do not negate their need to become affiliate with Englishness as if they presume that it is a sign of their social advancement. In this way they fall prey to the discursive practise of power, considered as the power to present a given hierarchy as natural and universal (S. Hall, "Rediscovery" 65). Thus, the transitional time in Brookner's novels constitutes the opportunity to scrutinize various models of existence of a woman in modern English society. For example, in *HL* such a scrutiny is undertaken by Edith when she observes the hotel guests, like Mrs Pusey and her daughter Jennifer, who represent different but traditionally accepted types of womanhood. However, Brooknerines, whatever their age,

never utterly undermine the existing social order. Therefore, the time of transition in Brookner's fiction does not lead to revolutionary changes which are usually associated with liminality:

> Liminality both initiates and becomes the process of change. It initiates change by severing the participants from whatever has been the merely customary or the enforced routine, and it thereby suggests these familiar realties are merely customary, time-bound, routinized-in miniature […]. Liminality becomes this process of change by liberating participants to be other than they have been, and it thereby directs their energies toward this otherness, often new identity status. (Elsbree 20)

While Brookner's female characters long for a new status, their aspirations are the product of the discursive practices of the mainstream culture to which they do not belong and that is why the subversive nature of the transitions does not lie in a newness of the status they desire. The revelatory potential is embedded in the unexpected and unwanted revelations to which the protagonists are led by their personal rites of passage. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the liminal transition in Brookner's novels does not constitute the transition to a stable, accepted, and grounded identity. What the transitory time provides is not the ultimate access to the acceptance and inclusion in English society but a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of their liminal position within this society. Such alternative and unexpected results of liminal passages are pointed out by Elsbree:

> By no surprising paradox, liminality can be both highly unsettling and highly structured. The efficacy of the liminal often resides in its orderly processual features, its step-by-stepness, as in the case of children's games and ceremonies. But there is another side to liminality, characteristic in the narratives of many cultures and dominant in Western societies and elsewhere since at least World War I. This is the liminality that is unchosen, unwanted, unexpected, more notable for the ways it isolates, desolates, at times terrorizes. The modern odysseys of lives warped and shattered by this century's events and the quests for a minimal incorporation into some social order somewhere transform liminality into passages that are bitter farce, disillusionment, often sheer waste. (20)

As evidenced in the foregoing analyses, Brookner's novels illustrate the tendency described by Elsbree. Though it would be too radical to claim that liminal passages of Brooknerian characters are "sheer waste," liminal transitions definitely operate through disillusionment. Brookner does not provide easy consolations for her protagonists. Instead, she paints a more sombre picture of experience of individuals who realize that liminality is not only a transitional phase for them but their destiny. However, although the protagonists do not achieve incorporation into desired English stratum, they do seem

to gain some knowledge of who they are, what limitations they have, and how wrongly they perceived reality.

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Identity In-between. Liminality and Related Narrative Techniques in Selected Novels by Anita Brookner.

Summary

Anita Brookner (1928 – 2016) was a renowned art historian and a novelist. Determinism, complicated family dynamics, and social maladjustment constitute the central themes of Brookner's fiction. The writer meditates on the predetermined fate of her protagonists who are unable to escape the limitations imposed by their childhood devoid of parental guidance and stability. With each novel, Brookner tells a similar story about the hardships and loneliness of characters whose ethnically hybrid families set them apart from the mainstream English culture. Thus, Brooknerine is an exemplification of both the feeling of exclusion from and the attempt to fit into English society. Despite differences in plots, *A Start in Life* [*SL*] , *Providence* [*P*], *Look at Me* [*LM*], *Hotel du Lac* [*HL*], and *Family and Friends* [*FF*] all feature these recurring themes, thus typifying Brookner's interest but also making this set of novels somewhat uniform analytical material as regards the research aims of this thesis.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the liminal identity of the protagonists of Brookner's first five novels, *SL, P, LM, HL,* and *FF,* in order to explore this facet of Brooknerian research that appears to lack in scrutiny. This objective provokes further research questions concerning the aspects of the protagonists' existence, which contribute most to the transitory status of these characters. Consequently, the identification of such aspects helps to expose the mechanics of narrative representation of female characters' self-identification. In particular, attention is given to the narrative techniques which are employed to construct the in-between characters in *SL, P, LM, HL,* and *FF*.

Considering the selection of novels to be discussed and the research goals of the thesis, namely the liminal position of the aforementioned protagonists and relevant narrative techniques, the present dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first one presents the basic concepts related to liminality and methodological background which are essential for the analyses of liminality in the literary texts. The second and third chapters are devoted to practical considerations. The closing part offers findings related to liminal identities in the discussed novels.

Chapter 1 provides some historical context of the ideas offered by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, two most important figures in the context of liminality. The

chapter describes the structure of the rites of passage and the attributes of liminality. Moreover, it also presents some structuralists methodology of literary analysis of narrative techniques relating to space and time as well as a discussion of post-modern, discursive notions of identity. The traditional structuralist devices are then employed in the following chapters to identify certain qualities, motifs, and categories (for example, the emerging division of space in the novels) by identifying their semantic fields. The post-modern theories connected to discourse and identity are further used to interpret the function and meaning of these categories to reveal the mechanics of self-identification of the characters.

The analytical part is composed of two chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the analysis of the protagonists' liminality connected to their complicated ethnic ancestry. Section 2.1 examines the way the family houses represent the feeling of displacement of the characters. Next, section 2.2 discusses the motif of expulsion and exile. The final section of this chapter, 2.3, considers the issue of otherness. This section is further subdivided into the part devoted to Darwinian narrative and Holocaust tropes, and the part dedicated to duality, translation, and dehumanization.

Chapter 3 discusses liminality in the private and romantic spheres of the protagonists' lives. Similarly to the previous chapter, it is divided into three sections. Section 3.1 addresses the characters' suspended position between childhood and adulthood, the state which results from the complicated family dynamics. The next section, 3.2, looks at the motif of waiting as at liminal condition and reveals how it influences the action of the novels. Finally, section 3.3 aims at discerning the elements of traditional rites of passage in the discussed novels. The role of these rituals is examined in relation to the protagonists' personal hopes and expectations.

The dissertation finishes with conclusions concerning the emerging dynamics of identity construction in the first five novels by Brookner. It demonstrates how liminality regarding different aspects of the protagonists' existence reveals itself on the narrative level of the discussed novels. The conclusion stemming from the analyses is that ethnic liminality is inseparable from other aspects of protagonists' lives. The study of the ethnic and private liminalities in Brookner's prose demonstrates that such a clear-cut division could only be adopted for the analytical purposes. Since ethnic liminality is linked to the childhood of the protagonists, they become shaped by duality of traditions and cultures. Their ascription to any membership category is suspended because they feel neither sufficiently Jewish nor English. This transitory status translates to every other aspect of

their lives. That is why the inability to enter the adult life has the undertones of ethnic otherness for the protagonists of *SL*, *P*, *LM*, and *HL*.

It is also safe to conclude that the liminal transition in Brookner's novels does not constitute the transition to a stable, accepted, and grounded identity. What the transitory time provides is not the ultimate access to the acceptance and inclusion in English society but a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of their liminal position within this society. The liminal transitions of Brooknerian protagonists definitely operate through disillusionment. Brookner does not provide easy consolations for her main characters. Instead, she paints a more sombre picture of experience of individuals who realize that liminality is not only a transitional phase for them but their destiny. However, although the protagonists do not achieve incorporation into desired English stratum, they do seem to gain some knowledge of who they are, what limitations they have, and how wrongly they perceived reality.

Key words: Anita Brookner, liminality, narrative techniques, identity, Anglo-Jewish identity, rite of passage, postmemory, the Holocaust tropes, Darwinian narrative, otherness, exile

Tożsamość zawieszona. Liminalność i związane z nią techniki narracyjne w wybranych powieściach Anity Brookner.

Streszczenie

Anita Brookner (1928 – 2016) była znaną historyczką sztuki i pisarką. Główne tematy jej prozy to determinizm, skomplikowana dynamika relacji rodzinnych oraz nieprzystosowanie społeczne. Pisarka umiejętnie kreuje postaci swoich bohaterek, które nie są w stanie uciec od ograniczeń narzuconych przez pozbawione stabilizacji i rodzicielskiego przewodnictwa dzieciństwo. W każdej powieści Brookner opowiada podobną historię o trudnościach i samotności kobiet, których mieszane pochodzenie sprawia, że różnią się od otoczenia i nie potrafią do końca dopasować się do dominującej kultury – w tym przypadku angielskiej. Proza Brookner jest więc skoncentrowana zarówno wokół poczucia wykluczenia, jak i prób dopasowania się do angielskiego społeczeństwa. Pomimo niewątpliwie obecnych pomiędzy nimi różnic fabularnych, powieści *A Start in Life* [SL] , *Providence* [P], *Look at Me* [LM], *Hotel du Lac* [HL] oraz *Family and Friends* [FF] zawierają powtarzające się motywy, będąc typowymi przykładami poruszanej przez Brookner problematyki. Wybrany zbiór powieści stanowi zatem na swój sposób jednolity materiał badawczy, co pozwoliło uczynić go przedmiotem analizy literackiej pod kątem celów badawczych niniejszej pracy.

Celem tego studium jest zbadanie liminalnej tożsamości głównych bohaterek pierwszych pięciu powieści Brookner: *SL, P, LM, HL* i *FF*. Wspomniany element twórczości Brookner uczyniono przedmiotem badania, bowiem nie był on do tej pory dokładnie eksplorowany. Z obranego celu wynikają dalsze pytania badawcze, dotyczące tych aspektów egzystencji bohaterek, które w największym stopniu przyczyniają się do ich liminalnego statusu. Rozpoznanie tych aspektów pomaga odsłonić narracyjne mechanizmy samookreślania postaci kobiecych. W szczególności zwrócono uwagę na techniki narracyjne, które są wykorzystywane do konstruowania postaci liminalnych bohaterek w *SL, P, LM, HL* i *FF*.

Z uwagi na wybór omawianych powieści oraz cele badawcze pracy, a mianowicie analizę liminalnych aspektów wspomnianych bohaterek oraz służące temu techniki narracyjne, niniejsza rozprawa została podzielona na trzy rozdziały. W pierwszej przedstawiono najważniejsze pojęcia związane z liminalnością oraz podstawy metodologiczne, które są niezbędne do badania obecności tego zjawiska w tekstach

literackich. Rozdziały drugi i trzeci poświęcono analizom materiału literackiego. W końcowej części przedstawiono ustalenia dotyczące tożsamości liminalnych w przywołanych powieściach.

Rozdział pierwszy prezentuje kontekst historyczny idei Arnolda van Gennepa i Victora Turnera, dwóch najważniejszych postaci w badaniach liminalności. Opisano strukturę rytuałów przejścia oraz atrybuty liminalności. Ponadto, przedstawiono niektóre strukturalistyczne metodologie analizy literackiej technik narracyjnych, odnoszących się do czasu i przestrzeni oraz omówiono postmodernistyczne, dyskursywne koncepcje tożsamości. W kolejnych rozdziałach klasyczne narzędzia strukturalistyczne zostały zastosowane do wskazania w analizowanych tekstach cech, motywów i kategorii (na przykład wyłaniający się podział przestrzeni w powieściach) poprzez określenie ich pól semantycznych. Wykorzystano także postmodernistyczne teorie związane z dyskursem i tożsamością do interpretacji funkcji i znaczenia tych kategorii, w celu ujawnienia mechanizmów samoidentyfikacji bohaterów.

Część analityczna pracy składa się z dwóch rozdziałów. W rozdziale drugim skoncentrowano się na analizie liminalnego statusu bohaterów, związanego z ich skomplikowanym pochodzeniem etnicznym. Sekcja 2.1 zawiera wyniki badań sposobu, w jaki domy rodzinne stają się reprezentacją poczucia wyobcowania bohaterów. W kolejnej sekcji omówiono motyw wypędzenia i wygnania. Ostatnia część tego rozdziału zawiera zaś rozważania nad kwestią inności. Sekcja ta została podzielona na część poświęconą narracji darwinowskiej i tropom Holokaustu oraz część poświęconą zagadnieniom dwoistości, translacji i dehumanizacji.

W rozdziale 3 omówiono liminalność obecną w prywatnej i romantycznej sferze życia bohaterów. Podobnie jak poprzedni rozdział, ten również podzielony jest na trzy części. W sekcji 3.1 skupiono się na kwestii zawieszenia bohaterek między dzieciństwem a dorosłością – stanu będącego wynikiem skomplikowanej dynamiki cechującej ich relacje rodzinne. Przedmiotem rozważań w sekcji 3.2 uczyniono motyw oczekiwania jako stanu granicznego oraz to, w jaki sposób wpływa on na akcję powieści. W sekcji 3.3 z kolei opisano elementy tradycyjnych obrzędów przejścia rozpoznanych w omawianych powieściach. Funkcja tych rytuałów jest badana w odniesieniu do osobistych nadziei i oczekiwań bohaterów.

Rozprawę zamykają wnioski dotyczące sposobów i dynamiki konstruowania tożsamości w wybranych powieściach Brookner. Pojawiają się odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak liminalność dotycząca różnych aspektów egzystencji bohaterek ujawnia się na

poziomie narracyjnym omawianych tekstów literackich. Z przeprowadzonych analiz wynika, że liminalność etniczna jest nierozerwalnie związana z innymi aspektami życia bohaterek. Badanie etnicznych i prywatnych graniczności w prozie Brookner pokazuje, że tak wyraźny podział na te dwa rodzaje liminalności mógł być przyjęty jedynie w celach analitycznych, jako że liminalność etniczna jest nierozerwalnie związana z dzieciństwem bohaterek i kształtuje ich kulturową dwoistość. Ich przynależność do kategorii etnicznych zostaje zawieszona, ponieważ nie czują się wystarczająco związane ani z kulturą żydowską, ani angielską. Ten graniczny status przekłada się na wszystkie pozostałe aspekty ich życia. Dlatego niemożność wejścia w dorosłe życie ma dla bohaterek *SL*, *P*, *LM* i *HL* podtekst odmienności etnicznej.

Kolejnym nasuwającym się wnioskiem jest spostrzeżenie, że przejście liminalne w powieściach Brookner nie stanowi przejścia do stabilnej, zaakceptowanej i ugruntowanej tożsamości. Tym, czym skutkuje czas przejściowy, nie jest ostateczne otrzymanie akceptacji i włączenia w angielskie społeczeństwo, ale głębsze zrozumienie i uznanie granicznej pozycji bohaterek w tym społeczeństwie. Ich liminalne przejścia zdecydowanie działają przez rozczarowanie, a pisarka nie oferuje swoim bohaterkom łatwych rozwiązań. Zamiast tego kreśli raczej ponury obraz doświadczeń jednostek, które zdają sobie sprawę, że liminalność jest dla nich nie tylko fazą przejściową, ale raczej ich przeznaczeniem. Jej bohaterki, choć nie dostają się do pożądanej anglojęzycznej warstwy społecznej, zdają się jednak nabierać pewnej wiedzy o tym, kim są, jakie mają ograniczenia i jak błędnie postrzegały dotąd rzeczywistość.

Słowa kluczowe: Anita Brookner, liminalność, techniki narracyjne, tożsamość, tożsamość anglo-żydowska, rytuał przejścia, postpamięć, tropy Holokaustu, narracja darwinowska, odmienność, wygnanie