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Fe/Male Quest for Voice in Maxine Hong Kingston's *the Woman Warrior and China Men*

By Dr. Faten Houioui

Abstract

Both *the Woman Warrior* and *China Men* are two postmodern Asian American texts written by Maxine Hong Kingston respectively in 1976 and 1980, they are the outcome of the civil rights movement of ethnic minorities and women. They deal with gender, race, ethnic and class issues, so they cross multiple boundaries in theme and structure. In reality as a concept postmodernism breaks boundaries —between genres, between disciplines or discourses, between high and mass culture, and most problematically perhaps, between practice and theory (Hutcheon 18).

The transgression between boundaries creates a tension that reflects the anxiety and pressure the postmodern subject lives in. The postmodern subject is aware —of being within, first, a language, and second, a particular historical, social, cultural framework. That is ...within a particular framework or paradigm of thought (Marshall 3). This awareness-of a hazy paradigm of thought- is the backdrop of questioning the subject as being constituted or constituting. S/He is constituted by multiple philosophical, historical, social, linguistic and cultural determinants. And is constituting discourse through language and meanings. Thus, the questioning of language and environment we live in and use arises.

It is within this framework that is to say questioning the language and the historical, social and cultural environment we live in and use, that my conduct of this research can be situated. I attempt to unravel instances of silence- whether imposed or self-chosen- and subvert them in different voices while depicting their outcome. In the works under analysis the writer questions particular frameworks and reads them as

represented in the past to explain present circumstances and positively shape future thoughts and treatment of the Chinese American subject.

Kingston's development of the characters is based on unraveling their language or its absence. In this article, I will decode their speech and interpret their silence. Indeed the author depicts numerous instances of silent characters; she also refers to two mythical figures who try to break silence. The second technique is analysing the characters through their utterances and thoughts. What follows is that the two books are multi-voiced texts, filled with polyphony of voices. As voices need silence to be heard, Kingston repeats this pattern throughout the two texts: multiple voices are silenced or choose a self-imposed silence before the author allocates them a discursive space. This paradigm is justified in the voice of the Chinese culture or the voice of the Chinese American as embodied in the two texts and conveyed by some characters. There is also the voice of her family members turned characters. Consequently, I intend to unravel Kingston's treatment of silence while exploiting a multitude of voices, with reference to her male and female ancestors and relatives. I shall also discuss silence and voicelessness as informed by Bakhtin's typology of literary discourse. I will try to illustrate Bakhtin's use of dialogic/polyphony and apply them to Kingston's treatment of silence.

Bakhtin's literary theory prioritises parole- the utterance we use to communicate over 'langue'. Moreover he sees language as –essentially social or dialogic (David Lodge 57). Bakhtin contends in *The Dialogic Imagination* –The word in living conversation, is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction (Bakhtin 280). This insight affirms Lodge, entails that an utterance is understood in a context which involves the status and relation between speakers, addressee and the object of reference (58). Henceas the word in a living conversation implies an answer, so there is a speaker, a listener, an object of speech and context. This being, a dialogic interaction governs the text. Thus Kingston's first two texts are far from being monologic, they are rather dialogic. Kingston's texts unfold against diverse spaces, whether in China or America. Likewise, the disclosing of the plot is within different circumstances governed by both the author's Chinese heritage inherited from her

mother's talk story, and her present American life in Stockton. Moreover, both *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* host many characters: Chinese and Chinese Americans and Americans who are engaged in —the great dialogue, which will lead the author to construct and assert her identity.

The first paradigm of silence and voice portrayed by Kingston in *China Men* is reflected in the character of the father. The text is written in response to the father's silence. Kingston tells her father —You say with the few words and silences: No stories. No past. No China (*China Men* 9). Thus unlike her mother's self —affirmation through talk stories, the father deliberately negates his past, his origins and himself. In this context I locate Yuan Yuan's argument that Kingston's experience of China is structured in a polarised position between her mother's intricate talk stories and her father's impenetrable silence (3). Hence silence and voicedness are a dominating paradigm that governs Kingston's first two texts. Kingston writes while being influenced by her mother's personality. And at the same time she writes back to her father. She addresses her father: "You kept a silence for weeks and months. We invented the terrible things you were thinking" (*China Men* 9). Hence she invents a China, a past and stories for him in a narrative she entitles *China Men*.

Furthermore, her father's silence stimulates her to decipher the Chinese stories and to refer to her great grandfather's experience in Hawaii. He is with his fellow Chinese Americans silenced and oppressed. In addition to this, Kingston illustrates how her ancestors were pushed into a state of dead silence through two vignettes, —On Mortality and —On Mortality Again||, which focus on keeping silence to gain immortality for humanity.

Within the framework of silence, and structurally speaking, *China Men* begins with a chapter about a mythical figure whose captors are —sewing [his] lips together (1). Then, the narrator announces her search for her father who incarnates all Chinese Americans. After that, she presents her father in —The Father from China||. What we can decipher from this is that the main character who embodies silenced Chinese Americans is the father. Again two myths follow to emphasise --thematically speaking-- that silencing her male ancestors goes back to the sixth century--with the story of Tu-tzu Chun-- as well as to highlight that the silenced men reflect each other.

While in China, Kingston's father is in a privileged position (Ning Yu 5). He is associated with the high culture which was institutionalized by the imperial examination system (ibid). Indeed –Grandmother, Ah Po says –Your little brother is different from any of you. Your generation has no boy like this one (...) This boy we'll prepare for the imperial examination|| (*China Men* 11). Yet the scholar father becomes illiterate in the Gold Mountain for he cannot speak the English language. Moreover, the educational background of the father is ignored in America, even by his Chinese partners. They accuses him –you were always reading when we were working (71) and swindles him out of his share of the laundry (ibid). Consequently the scholar father is silenced twice: first, by the white demons, second by his partners. Thus his anger and frustration coupled with alienation make him fall into deep silence.

Although the father negates his past, his history and China, he cannot negate his being. As defined by Bakhtin –To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends|| (cited in Gardiner 25). Hence Bakhtin negates being or existence without dialogue. Kingston's father expresses his anger in two ways: first, through verbal and physical abuse of women, second through silence (Goellnicht 201). We identify the first way with the curses uttered by the father and we will deal with them later. Concerning the father's silence it is [T]he silence of resignation that signals withdrawal and humiliation, the inability to articulate his own subject position|| (ibid).

However –throughout *China Men* argues Huntley –Maxine Hong Kingston ruptures the silence in which her ancestors have been enveloped for nearly a century (142). Noteworthy here is the fact that silence is a Chinese tradition according to which the author is brought up. Her ancestors in old China obliterate the memory of The No Name Woman. Then her father negates his stories and his past. Generally speaking the Chinese and Chinese Americans living in The States chose to be silent for fear of deportation. This silence leaves a fissure in the author's Chinese heritage and identity. It is out of diverse silenced voices that Kingston produces a multi-voiced text.

In breaking her father's silence she grants him a linguistically constituted identity (Goellnicht 203). "I'll tell you what I suppose from your silences and few words and

you can tell me that I'm mistaken (*ChinaMen* 10). The author challenges her father's silence and imagines his history for him. Though she asks him to correct her: —speak up the real stories if I've got you wrong (10), he remains voiceless. However as long as the father is recognised and heard by his family through the —few words or —obscenities, and since he works and interacts with the other, he is one voice in a multi-voiced text. This refers us to Bakhtin's insight that "Life by its nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse (cited in Gardiner 31)

Kingston's father is a dialogic character. He expresses himself through all his senses, his gestures and his body; all of which the author interprets as constituents of an internal dialogue between the father's consciousness and the outer world. Concerning the father's verbal abuse' and physical abuses' and curses, his daughter writes —you were angry. You scared us. Every day we listened to you swear, —dog vomit. Your mother's cunt...Obscenities. I made a wish that only meant gypsies and not women in general (*China Men* 7). Moreover, the father is tricked by gypsies and threatened by the police as a consequence. In cursing women, the father seems to consider them responsible for his misfortune. Kingston attributes her father's curses, states Goellnicht, to his feelings of emasculation and sense of powerlessness in America (201). For she acknowledges —we knew that it was to feed us you had to endure demons and physical labour (*China Men* 8).

What follows from this is that the father endures discrimination and hard work to support his family financially, but he punishes them through silence. His daughter asserts —You punished us by not talking. You rendered us invisible, gone (8) Thus rather than to understand Chinese women, China men like Kingston's father punish them with another silence, contends Goellnicht (202). Ultimately Kingston compensates for the undoing of the Chinese subject through allocating him/her a discursive space in which to construct and assert an identity. Her father who is driven to a state of dead silence by —his feelings of emasculation and sense of powerlessness in America (201) renders his children, according to Kingston, invisible, which echoes Bakhtin's statement —When dialogue ends, everything ends (quoted in Gardiner 25).

The father makes his children invisible, by maintaining silence for a long period which results in their being —gone||, an alternative for disappearance.

Concerning her father's negating his stories, his past and China, Kingston affirms in an interview with Paula Rabinowitz:

Infact, I wrote the characters so that the women have memories and the men don't have memories. They don't remember anything. The character of my father forexample has no memory. He has no stories of the past...He is so busy making the present, which he has to build, that he has no time for continuity from the past. It did seem that the men were people of action. (Skenazy 70).

Thus in writing her father's China narrative, Kingston subverts his silence, imagines his stories and experiences and obliges him to be interpreted by a woman for his lack of imagination and fantasy. Ultimately, as Goellnicht puts it, the father needs to restore his imagination and dreams of which he was robbed in America (202). In the Gold Mountain, the father was —busy making the present|| and had no time for stories, or imagination which asserts his voice and identity.

The second paradigm of silence and voicedness concerns the first generation of Chinese workers. An in-depth analysis of the chapter —The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountain highlights the necessity to break silence on a psychological, linguistic and social level. Bak Goong, the great grandfather, works in the sugar cane fields in Hawaii. He stands for a whole generation of Chinese labourers , who were oppressed in the slave labour camp' (*China Men* 99)

Indeed the plantation prohibits talking at work. They work under all conditions: rain, heat, illness...yet silenced. Some workers respect this rule, while others commit suicide:they —walked into the ocean or jumped off the mountain (102). After only three days of work, Back Goong breaks the rule.

How was he to marvel adequately, voiceless? He needed to cast his voice out to catch his ideas, I wasn't born to be like a monk, he thought, and then promptly said —If I had to take a vow of silence he added, —I would have shaved off my hair and become a monk. (*China Men* 97).

What we can interpret from this is that Bak Goong ,a talk addict' ,with a good memory' (116) deems that voicelessness destroys the faculty of thinking. Moreover, he considers only religious men naturally silent. Yan Gao states that Back Goong —is a hero who challenges white people's abuse of the Tu Tzu-Chunian code (77). She contends that imposed silence symbolises enslavement, and is contrary to both human rights and human nature (ibid). This translates my reading of —The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountain.

Though Back Goong is beaten and fined for talking, he persists in breaking the rule and challenging it. —I will talk again. Listen for me (*China Men* 99). Elaine H. Kim compares his revenge to —a sword forged of words (cited in Gao 77). Back Goong gathers his fellow Chinese Americans and encourages them to resist silence. He addresses them —Uncles and brothers, I have diagnosed our illness. It is congestion from not talking. What we have to do is talk and talk (*China Men* 113).If we put it differently, silence not only disrupts their intellectual faculty but also leads to congestion' and the climax would be suicide. Since for Bak Goong silence is spiritual death, so articulation and communication are the remedy to his psychological trauma.

Bak Goong's experience in the slave labour camp' portrays so tellingly a dialogical character able to initiate dialogue and to provoke both actions and responses. Since —A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for existence(Bakhtin cited in Gardiner 25) , so being is associated with a dialogic communication and non-being is associated with a monological voice, attitude or silence.Bak Goong acts as a shaman' or healer who diagnoses the illness--their silencing -- and prescribes the remedy —talk and talk|. He conceives their being as communicating dialogically.

Bak Goong heals himself, first individually then collectively with his fellow Chinese Americans.First, He let out scolds disguised as coughs (...) All Chinese words conveniently asyllable each; he says —get-that-horse-dust-away-from-me-you-dead-white-demon. Don't-stare-at me-with-glass-eyes-I-can't-take-this-life;thus he felt betterafter having his say (*China Men* 102).

In this case, Bak Goong acts the way any dialogic character will do. Two types of dialogues are taking place, one internally between Bak Goong and his self or his consciousness; he is a talk addict who needs to utter speech, but he is angry and liable to punishment. Another external dialogue, in which Bak Goong imagines the other--the American demon boss-- and starts scolding him as if he were listening to him. This quote, though it is humorous, translates an urgent need to raise one's voice.

The second step in the healing process is a shouting ceremony--in imitation of a Chinese King, whose story is recalled by Bak Goong. --They dug a wide hole (...) flopped on the ground with their faces over the edge of the hole (*China Men* 115) and told their secrets. They told their hard work, their gambling as entertainment, their loneliness and their experiences with Blonde Demonesses (Gao 78). Throughout the shouting party they claimed China --I want to be home|| Bak Goong said(*China Men* 116). All Chinese Americans labourers in the Sandalwood Mountain yell together: --I want home. Home.Home.Home.Home (116). The shouting ceremony reveals their urgent need to dig an ear in the Gold Mountain which will listen to their secrets, experiences and feelings. In addition, it frightens the demons, which hid as a consequence of their shouting.

Bak Goong manages to break the absurd rule of silencing Chinese American workers. --From the day of the shout party, Bak Goong talked and sang at his work, and did not get sent to the punishment fields (116). He regains his voice and the voices of the other workers. His resistance is acknowledged by --the masters and leads to asserting his voice. Ultimately Chinese Americans --material quest also becomes a spiritual quest for identity and truth (Gao 81). They intend to assert their identity by raising their voices and countering the imposed silence in its different forms.

Moreover, Kingston refers to her father and great grand father's experiences with silence and voicedness , then she raises the same issue in two myths 'On Mortality' and 'On Mortality Again'. In her book *Chinese Mythology an Introduction*, Anne Birrell defines immortality as --attaining the divine state of god by suffering off moral coils (181). Indeed immortality was sought by magicians, emperors and everybody alike. Birrell writes in *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China* that --From the third century BC the Chinese began to speculate about the mystery of immortality and embarked on

a variety of experiments and ritualistic practices in search of this goal|| (64). Hence immortality was sought by all categories of people, through different strategies, and at all costs. Within this framework we situate Kingston's two myths of immortality. Moreover she relates immortality to keeping/breaking silence for some reasons which will be analysed later on.

On Mortality', a three-page chapter, is about a man named Tu Tzu-Chun. He is tested by a Taoist monk to make the elixir for immortality for the human race, providing that he keeps silent. The Taoist monk orders him –don't speak; don't scream for –all that you'll see and feel will be illusions (*ChinaMen* 117). He is faced with many illusions. He sees –ox heads, horse faces and the heads of generals decapitated in wars."He didn't speak seeing his wife being tortured and many other illusions. He simply considered –Why should I scream if I know they're illusions?" (117).After this, his gender changes for the gods and goddesses decide to –let him be born a woman (118). Yet he is reborn a deaf-mute female named Tu. That muteness and silence -- contends Goellnicht--is considered by patriarchy an ideal for womanhood (195). In this myth when the deaf-mute woman marries, her husband asserts –Why does she need to talk, said Lu to be a good wife? Let her set an example for woman (118)

However, when the husband breaks their child's head against the wall, Tu shoutes and breaks the silence needed for immortality elixir. The Taoist Monk concludes that Tu Tzu-Chun –overcame joy, sorrow, anger fear and desire and evil desire but not love (119). In this regard, Goellnicht observes –Here humanity loses the opportunity to gain immortality because maternal love (Tu-transformed into-mother) disobeys a patriarchal (in this case monastic Taoist) injunction to silence (...) here Kingston displays maternal love as superior to the gods of patriarchy (196)

The second myth On Mortality Again' is a Polynesian myth about Maui the demi god –the trickster [who] played jokes (*China Men* 120) .In his quest for immortality for men and women, –he instructed the people, the beasts, the birds and the elements to be silent (120). Nevertheless, the formula is spoilt in the last step. He is to gain immortality by stealing it from Hina of the Night. He enters her body through her vagina and when a bird sees him, laughs and breaks the silence. So Hina of the Night wakes shuts herself and Maui dies.According to Taoist thinking and in the Polynesian

divine world, maintaining silence is a prerequisite for achieving immortality, states Gao (75). Hence, in both the Chinese and in the Polynesian myth of immortality silence is a requirement for immortality. The Taoist monk orders Tu Tzu-Chun neither to speak nor to scream, which the latter views as —easy (*China Men* 117). Then, Maui instructs all living creatures to be silent. However that silence is broken and resisted when it is imposed, and this pattern governs the entire book.

The titles of the two myths —On Mortality and —On Mortality again|| stress Kingston’s concern with the theme of death figuratively, states Gao. She adds that the metaphor silence/death symbolically introduces death in the modern story, where silence equals social and spiritual death (75). Silence cannot be maintained, and Gardiner speculates that if the self is separated from the other, it is lost (28). Bakhtin considers —To be means to communicate. Absolute death(non-being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized(quoted in Gardiner 25). Absolute death, spiritual death and non-being equal silence, which is resisted and subverted , not even for the sake of —attaining the divine state of god(Birrell 181).

In *China Men*, Kingston depicts the various ways her male ancestors were oppressed and silenced socially and spiritually. By keeping them from speaking, the mainstream culture targets their death on a social and psychological level. This idea is summarized by Kingston’s statement:

So in a way the silent Asian is a stereotype, too. I think the whole idea of the fightbetween the silent and the talking is very exciting both on a wide cultural,political level and also on a personal psychological level: should you speak up,and should you not speak up, and what do you say, and will I let another personcripple my tongue? So in both books there is that theme of silence versus speech(Hilgers cited in Gao 76).

A close reading of this quotation reveals that Kingston considers the issue of silence and speech a struggle . It is an interaction between oppressors and oppressed. Then it occurs on a cultural, political and psychological level. Hence the clash between the Chinese,the American and the Chinese -American culture. In the novel each culture is represented through a voice, a consciousness, and the clash’ is what Michael Gardiner

labels 'the great dialogue'. It is —an endless clashes of unmerged souls' , the construction of a multiplicity of diverse yet interconnecting ideological worlds (25). This great dialogue is deemed by Bakhtin as —a principle which inheres in every element of the polyphonic text (ibid). The great dialogue is omnipresent in Kingston's first two books. They host multiple consciousnesses which construct interconnected ideological worlds. Therefore the diverse voices of the Chinese in China or in the Gold Mountain, as well as the Chinese Americans, and the Americans; are in a clash. Every voice carries a set of beliefs and traditions which it seeks to transmit protectively. From there springs the clash that leads to the great dialogue.

Though the four instances of breaking silence, the father, the great grand father, Tu Tzu-Chun and Maui are culturally and historically different, they present the same form of silence. Tu Tzu-Chun is silenced by a Taoist monk. Maui imposes silence on all living creatures. Then, the Chinese American is silenced by rules made by master demons. And the narrator's father chooses voluntarily to keep silence, though he sometimes breaks it. In the four experiences the subject struggles hard to subvert those rules by making up customs and values for they are the founding ancestors of that place.

In short, Kingston's father, Bak Goong, Tu Tzu Chun and Maui epitomise the human consciousness which exists in a tensile, conflict-ridden relationship with other consciousnesses , in a constant alterity between self and other (Gardiner 28). The consciousness is in conflict with other consciousnesses for it cannot exist without interaction with the other. Bak Goong needed —to cast his voice out to catch his idea|| (*China Men* 97). He needs another I' to listen to him and recognise his being by interacting dialogically with him. The idea of casting one's voice is the same from ancient times to present, just as the father's voice is as urgent as Tu Tzu-Chun's and Bak Goong's experience is the same as Maui; the former is silenced and the latter silences all living creatures, and in both cases silence is not maintained.

In *China Men*, silence is introduced in the first chapter with sewing Tang Ao's lips. Then, in Stockton the father pays a fine for his ignorance of the English language, that is to say his lack of communication with the other'. In Hawaii Bak Goong is fined and beaten for the plantation rule, which prohibits talking at work. In the Sierra Nevada,

Ah Goong talks while swinging in a basket. The text begins with silencing a male character and unearths many similar experiences lived by the author's ancestors. Consequently, as Huntley asserts –ironically , the Gold Mountain has imprisoned the Chinese fathers within the very silence that they have prized in- and demanded of women, and the men discover how powerless an individual feels without the freedom to speak (140).

This is why Kingston attributes her father's avoidance of communication to his feelings of powerlessness. He refuses –willingly- to tell his children his life story or to translate his feelings. Hence, Huntley deduces that the father alienates them not only from him but also from a cultural heritage that ought to be theirs (141). Moreover –China which has traditionally silenced daughters has itself been silenced (ibid).Accordingly the Chinese subject is silenced deliberately by himself or externally by the –other.

Though China men experience an absolute spiritual death while being silenced, they oppress women and reduce them to a state of non-being. Actually, they silence themselves as well as the female subject and China. Therefore, we have treated the silenced male characters prior to the female ones. Furthermore as King-Kok Cheung puts it –the indignities suffered by men of Chinese descent are analogous to those suffered by women (125). However China men suffer, then they trap Chinese women within the same experience, and they don't sympathise with them.Chinese and Chinese American men take up women's jobs, for job opportunities are scarce and women were absent in the bachelor towns(Elaine Kim cited in Goellnicht 197).Indeed though Kingston's male ancestors took up women's jobs which prove to be difficult and demanding, they did not sympathise with women.

Many experiences lived by Kingston's ancestors present the debasing treatment Chinese and Chinese- Americans received. First, Kingston's father works in a laundry—very late at night (*China Men* 60). They sing the laundry song':

The laundry business is low, you say,

Washing out blood that stinks like brass

Only a Chinese Men can debase himself so (ibid)

Second, at night, they cook, wash dishes, clothes...What follows from their describing the job as low and debasing, then restricting it only to China men, thereby exposing their suffering in the Gold Mountain. Though they worked in sugar plantations, in railway and railroad constructions in forests and in fishing they are associated with the laundry business. This is because the dominant society attempts to erase the character of the masculine' plantation or railroad worker while trapping China men in stereotypical feminine' positions (Goellnicht 198).

Chinese and Chinese American workers risk their lives and —suffered many physical hardships (*China Men* 108).However, they do not sympathize with Chinese American women. They suffer twice as ethnic minority descendants from a patriarchal culture and living in another patriarchal community. Ultimately , —the treatment China Men received at the hands of the dominant culture was remarkably similar to that suffered by women of all races for centuries (ibid 200).

Concerning silence and speech in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, the cautionary story about Kingston's paternal aunt who humiliates the family by an illicit pregnancy sets a pattern of a self-imposed silence. This tale is —a timeless variation on the Philomela Myth in which the tongue of the raped woman is cut off: victimisation incurs voicelessness (Cheung 166). In the aunt's case, voicelessness is at the core of the tragedy. Her tongue was cut metaphorically twice. First, she is silenced by the man who —commanded her to lie with him (*The Woman Warrior* 14) He threatens her —if you tell your family. I'll beat you. I'll kill you (14) and she obeys since —she always did as she was told (ibid). Second, her family silences her memory and denies her existence after death.

I shall treat the aunt's victimization and voicelessness while analyzing the two contrasting hypotheses about the causes of the adultery. I shall be attentive to the context within which the tale is interpreted, that is to say a patriarchal Confucian society dominated by a feudal moral code of behaviour.The aunt's silence is an act of will (Huntley 78). As such I will analyze her silence. She maintains a total silence: she neither cries nor screams, and she gives birth without sound (78). Due to her silence,

Kingston imagines numerous alternatives about what happens to her aunt. She suggests it was a rape. Then she proposes her aunt was a seducer. The narrator also speculates about the child's father: —Perhaps he worked on an adjoining field or he sold the clothes for her dress, (*The Woman Warrior* 14) or may be her aunt —ha [s]to buy her oil from him or gather wood in the same forest (ibid). Hence the multiplicity of interpretations indicates the difficulty of reconstructing the story and the necessity to break the aunt's silence; yet Kingston must make the effort because of her hope that her aunt is her forerunner.

In reconstructing her aunt's story, Kingston provides many possibilities and interpretations for lack of information. Moreover, as Yan Gao puts it, the writer uses a powerful imagination to fill in missing details (27) since her mother —will add nothing unless powered by necessity (*The Woman Warrior* 13). In subverting her aunt's silence, Kingston considers her an innocent and victim at the same time. First, she is innocent as —some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil (14). Hence she is raped. The No Name Woman is also a victim of the patriarchal Confucian society. For as Gao deems, the feudal moral code requires women to follow Three Obediences: to the father before marriage then to the husband; and to the son after the death of the husband and to follow the Four Virtues: morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent work (25). Indeed in this patriarchal code women are slaves and victims to a male figure whether it be the father, the husband or the son. And this is the case of The No Name Woman.

Since the aunt breaks the feudal moral code of behaviour-she does not remain chaste while her husband is absent- and —crossed boundaries not delineated by space (*The Woman Warrior* 15) so she sacrifices her life. Her suicide serves to redeem herself and glorifies her clan, states Gao (15). This cautionary tale which is meant to be instructive incites the narrator to break the silence; she probes the situation, the causes and the result. According to Gao's reading of this tale, Brave Orchid stresses humiliation, shame and bad luck brought by the aunt, while her daughter aims to prove the innocence of her aunt. In old China, women were subject to the authorities of society, religion, clan and husband (Gao 28). In addition, after marriage, the woman becomes the husband's property: divorce, remarriage, elopement, love affairs were

not tolerated or excused (Gao 28). It follows from this that the villagers punished the aunt for transgressing authorities. Indeed they raid the house, scattered the rice, ruin the house, kill animals and destroy everything: clothes, dishes, food stock...Consequently she commits suicide with her undesired baby.

Kingston identifies another reason for her aunt's sin, love of beauty :—For warm eyes or soft voice or a slow walk—that's all—a few hairs, a line, a brightness, a sound, a pace, she gave up family (*The Woman Warrior* 16) . In this view, the aunt is a rebel. She revolts against her community, against the moral code that governs women's life in old China. Accordingly King-Kok Cheung sees the aunt as a rebel, a breaker of conventions and Maxine's forerunner (173). Eventually, the aunt revolts against an old patriarchal community. Thus her love is an act of defiance and her silence is an act of will. Though she is courageous and resists —dead conventions she pays with her life for this; Kingston, in an interview ,praises her for

She had the daring to be an individual. She became a woman that other women hear about and can see as an example of bravery. I thought it was brave to have a love affair like that, and then it was amazing that my mother could bring the story here. (Carabi cited in Gao 29)

A close reading of this statement reveals that in transgressing the moral authorities and having a love affair, the aunt dares to be an individual, recognize her body, love beauty and express her feelings. Then up to the moment of suicide the aunt is caring to her daughter and her father, since she does not reveal his name.

She gives birth to her child the night of the raid at midnight in the pigsty. The narrator views that it is —to fool the jealous, pain-dealing gods, who do not snatch piglets (*The Woman Warrior* 21). Thus her love for her child incites her —to protect this child as she had protected its father (ibid). Yan Gao examines the birthing place from another dimension. She reckons that it is a representation of the social position to which the aunt has fallen (29). After that she drowns herself and the baby in the family's well. Kingston remarks after her first trip that —I also saw that the well where she jumped into is right next door to the temple and then I saw how dramatic it is to have

a well to commit suicide be next to a holy place. I wish I had put that in the book (Carabi quoted by Gao 29).

Regarding committing suicide in a well next to a temple, Gao sees it a protest against the unpleasant rigidity of ancestral authority; thus Kingston gives a positive interpretation to the aunt's suicide (30). Moreover, the narrator states that —Carrying the baby to the well shows loving. Otherwise abandon it. Turn its face into the mud. Mothers who love their children take them along (*The Woman Warrior* 21) In depicting her aunt as a victim of the rigid conventions, which are spiritual fetters invented by feudal society and imposed on women, such as concubinage, footbinding and encouraged them to commit suicide and forbade widows to remarry (Gao 25), Kingston treats her as an innocent rebel. She writes —Unless I see her life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help (*The Woman Warrior* 16). In this respect there are close affinities between *The No Name Woman* and the narrator.

First, the aunt is the outcast and so is the narrator (Gao 30); who declares —every house had to have its crazy woman or crazy girl, every village its idiot. Who would be it at our house? Probably me (*The Woman Warrior* 170). Second, both the narrator and the aunt have no name. The aunt is referred to as —Father's drowned-in-the well sister (13) and —she had never been born (11). Also the narrator's name does not figure in the book. Third, both the aunt and the narrator revolt against authority. In the narrator's rebellion, states Gao, she subverts the model of an obedient wife (30). For instance, she spills soup, twists her mouth, limps and drops dishes. Likewise the aunt is punished —for acting as if she could have a private life, secret (*The Woman Warrior* 19) which she did. Kingston wanted to have a separate life: going to college and asserting her identity. The narrator rebels against her mother's arranged marriages and refuses to be a submissive wife. Consequently, by contrasting her aunt's story, the narrator fills in missing information and revives the memory of her aunt, yet she frees herself from her mother's —You must not tell anyone (11). Eventually, she declares —Imagining many lives for her made me feel free. I have so much freedom in telling about her, I'm almost free even from writing itself; and my mother, who said —don't tell (Kingston cited in Gao 31).

Although *The No Name Woman's* story is reconstructed by her niece through different interpretations, she is not a monologic character. The aunt —participated wholly and throughout [her] life with [her]eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit and[her] whole body and deeds(Bakhtin cited in Gardiner 31).First, she subverts the moral code of behaviour with her pregnancy. Second, she chooses to remain silent. Third, she commits suicide with her new baby. These three acts reflect her voice which is —the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. A voice always a will or desire behind it, its own timbre and overtones (Holquist 435). The aunt is internally a dialogic character. Through her acts she communicates with the whole clan as well as future generations .Her deeds, then her silence highlight her personality.

She can be seen as a rebel and she is the author's forerunner. First, the aunt asserts her identity and raises her voice then she participates in making the family's history, the way China men contribute to the making of more Americans. Then she leaves behind her a blank space in their talkstory, which the author is filling in. Ultimately, *The No Name Woman* communicates--in Kingston's speculation about her aunt-- her feelings of her love and happiness, through her care of her person, even through her anger then sacrifice. Then she maintained with her suicide silence leaving room for infinite interpretations.

The second instance of treating silence concerns Moon Orchid, who is Kingston's maternal aunt. Moon Orchid comes to the United States because her sister arranges for her to come to be reunited with her husband. She is old but her husband is young. For thirty years, her husband was away from her and her daughter, yet —she had been receiving money from him from America|| (*The Woman Warrior* 114). Moon Orchid is silenced twice. First, by the patriarchal Confucian upbringing she received. Second by her barbarous authoritative husband who —looked and smelled like an American (137). The result of this double silencing is madness.

Moon Orchid is a delicate woman. She lives all her life in China, then at sixty years old immigrates for the first time in her life. She is unable to adjust to the life of the Chinese overseas. She confesses, —I am scared I want to go back to Hong Kong (115).She has never worked. She leads a relaxing life with the money she receives from her husband. Moon Orchid —had long fingers and thin, soft hands. And she has a

high class city accent from living in Hong Kong|| (116). Consequently, she is unlike the other female immigrants. Moreover, she is unlike her hard working sister, Brave Orchid. The latter travels to study and takes the initiative to join her husband in the Gold Mountain. While Brave Orchid –Could work at the laundry from 6.30 a.m. until midnight (97), her sister cannot work because of the heat, then she is unable to iron, to fold or to mend clothes. Both Moon Orchid and her daughter are –the lovely useless type (118).

Moreover, Moon Orchid was brought up this way. She confesses that she did not know any man except her father and her brother then her husband, for the short time she lived with him. In addition, she leads a comfortable easy life. Consequently, she defends her husband and sees his sole role as giving her money for food and clothes. She objects that: “He didn’t abandon me. He’s given so much money. I’ve had all the food and theClothes and servants I’ve ever wanted. And he’s supported our daughter eventhough she’s only a daughter. He sent her to college. I can’t bother him. I mustn’tbother him” (*TheWoman Warrior* 115)

Moon Orchid adheres to the three obediences of the feudal moral code mentioned earlier in the chapter. She is obedient to the father and to the husband, but not to the son for she has a daughter. In this patriarchal context, Moon Orchid is taught to be obedient and silent which makes it easy for her husband --a brain surgeon-- to silence her. Furthermore, she is scared of him to hit her, to throw her out. Her unnamed husband deems that –you don’t belong. You don’t have the hardness for this country (138).

Moon Orchid is like any Chinese woman living in old China, and her husband, though unnamed, could be like any Chinese male figure living in China. Though he spent thirty years in the United States, he complains that his Chinese wife –had food. She has had servants. Her daughter went to college. There wasn’t anything she thought of that she couldn’t buy. I have been a good husband (138).In due course, as Moon Orchid is not taught to adjust to the American way of life, she becomes mad then dies in a mental asylum. Kingston considers her aunt insane for the latter merely –open[s] and shut[s] her mouth without any words coming out (138).The writer connects

voicelessness to insanity –I thought talking and not talking made the difference between sanity and insanity. Insane people were the ones who couldn't explain themselves (*The Woman Warrior* 166).

When Moon Orchid is uprooted from her China, which is her other self, she is lost. Moreover her voice is no longer heard as she becomes mentally ill and she dies spiritually before going mad. Since a fully sufficient and isolated consciousness cannot possibly exist, so acquiring self consciousness is a process that depends upon a discursive interaction with another 'I' (Gardiner 28). In the light of this idea, Moon Orchid's voice, which symbolises her speaking personality and consciousness, is unable to interact with another voice, thus preventing her from acquiring self-consciousness in a different world from old China.

Subsequent voicelessness, victimization and madness are interrelated in the tales of No Name Woman and Moon Orchid, observes Cheung (167). This association highlights –the exigencies of expression but also the brutal aspect of speech (ibid). What illustrates the brutal and domineering aspect of speech is Kingston's attack on the Chinese American girl by trying to make her talk. And this is the third instance of a silent character. The mute girl is assaulted for muteness but cannot defend herself or scream for help.

Kingston attacks the sixth grader, she pinches her cheek, –grabbed her by the shoulder–squeezed her face (*The Woman Warrior* 161). She further threatens her –If you don't talk, you can't have a personality (162). As a result voicelessness and articulation are two painful aspects of speech. When Kingston –the protagonist- fails to make the mute girl speak, she warns her –Don't you dare tell anyone I've been bad to you (ibid). Again silence is imposed. Cheung attributes Kingston's frustration with the mute girl to her anxiety for the two aunts who are silenced (167).

The mute girl is –a younger version of Moon Orchid (Huntley 87). The resemblance between them is striking. The mute girl's –silence... fragility... neatness and pastel dresses (*The Woman Warrior* 159). echo Moon Orchid's –high class city accent|| and –soft hands||. Also both of them are silent, passive and dependent on others. Kingston's recreation of her attack on the Chinese American is--according to

Sidonie Smith-- a way to reveal her confusion about speechlessness (168). During the experience Kingston responds cruelly to the female image: her useless fragility, her China-doll hair cut, her neat clothes (169). Indeed she reflects what Kingston fears: not having –a personality and a brain (*The Woman Warrior* 162), not being –the type that gets dates, let alone gets married (162). Consequently Kingston attacks the muteness and Chineseness of the girl and of herself. She torments herself and the girl; she is crying at the same time as the girl –I cried, clenching my teeth. My knees were shaking, (162). Then strangely enough, she –spent the next eighteen months sick in bed with a mysterious illness. There was no pain and no symptoms (163). During this illness, Kingston is like the mute girl: she is confined to bed, isolated inside the house, a fragile and useless girl (Smith 169).

The three characters: the unnamed aunt, Moon Orchid and the mute girl are characterised through their language or rather their voicelessness. This trio –embodies, what Kingston should avoid becoming for they represent passivity, lack of agency and the status of victim (Huntley 86). We conclude that voicelessness defines the three characters. First, the mute girl cannot speak even in a Chinese school. Her silence is inaction, of an overprotected and weak woman (Huntley 87). Second, the No Name Woman maintains total silence. Third, Moon Orchid cannot utter any word in front of her westernised husband who calls her grandmother. Kingston develops the female characters through unraveling either their language or its absence. She portrays passive, silent and victimized women as talkative, active and heroic female characters. The women who speak and act are Brave Orchid, Fa Mu Lan, Ts'ai Yen and Kingston as a character.

Concerning the swordswoman, –language literally is self; on her back there are symbols of oppression as well as her motivation to be a woman warrior (Huntley 87). This mythical figure, as recreated by Kingston, is a positive model. She combines female and male traits, excels in public and private duties. She fights, loves, bears a child and expresses her feelings. She uses language to enumerate the wrong deeds of the baron. Moreover the poetess Ts'ai Yen communicates through her singing. Her singing –transmits the emotions to others and translates her subjugation into art (ibid). Concerning the female characters that are in control of their destiny, I shall

deal mainly with *Brave Orchid* and *Kingston*. I will analyse their personality from two perspectives: first, from some of their signifying actions; second their thoughts and voice.

Brave Orchid is introduced as a —new woman coming of age during China’s turbulent modernization period, a college --trained itinerant doctor with her own successful practices (Wong 28). Indeed she is an intelligent woman with a strong personality. She is independent in China as she studies in a medical school and has a professional career. *Brave Orchid* takes the initiative to join her husband in the United States, has six children after the age of forty and works as a laundry woman in California. Noteworthy here is the fact of the author’s mother being a dialogical character. She is a —champion talker, transmitting a Chinese cultural heritage to her Chinese American children.

Moreover in telling Chinese stories to nurture her children, she transports the tales into a different context, and then her daughter translates them from one zone to another (Gao 40). From this perspective *Brave Orchid* is a central figure in *Kingston’s* texts as well as in her life. The mother begins the telling of Chinese stories which the author finishes or reconstructs into Americanised stories. Second, she tells her of victims that the daughter transforms into heroes. Finally she initiates her in an oral tradition that she transcribes into a written one.

This transformation of information, considers Holquist, is always simultaneously an appropriation or assimilation of it (424). So the author is constantly appropriating her mother’s old stories to a different chronotope —time space. As defined by Bakhtin, chronotope is —the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and special relationship that are artistically expressed in literature (84). *Kingston’s* reconstructing of the mother’s stories connects ancient time and space with their modern counterparts.

However, in the process of assimilating the information—we mean the mother’s stories--there is always a gap between our own intentions and the words we articulate (Holquist 424). Hence the gap depends on *Kingston’s* intentions in reconstructing the stories and her choice of words. *Brave Orchid* on the other hand

does not appropriate any story. Therefore she mistranslates some cultural beliefs. She calls —ghost, says Gao, —those who confuse her or who are different from what she is familiar with (37)In the United States, she has an experience with The Druggist Ghost, for he mistakenly delivers medicine to her. Having a strong personality, she swears to —avenge this wrong on our future, on our health and on our lives (*The Woman Warrior* 88).She makes her daughter go to the druggist to ask for candy to stop the curse. The American druggist misunderstands her by believing they are a poor family, gives them candy all year round, and Brave Orchid, states her daughter, —thought she taught The Druggist Ghosts a lesson in good manners (154); while actually , she does —something awful, something embarrassing (152).

Whether Brave Orchid displaces her beliefs and practices from their roots or mistranslates cultural practices, she is simply practising her Chineseness, asserting a Chinese identity through a Chinese personality and voice. Though she is the American stereotype of a laundry woman, a productive member in society, she is culturally Chinese. Therefore as a voice, Brave Orchid has special experiences, attitudes and beliefs. Because —[T]wo utterances, separated, from one another both in time and in space, knowing nothing of one another, when they are compared semantically, reveal dialogic relations (Bakhtin cited in Macoviski 11). Consequently Brave Orchid’sChineseness is no longer a mistranslation, but it is in constant dialogic relationship with the other’s’ set of beliefs, experiences and attitudes; in this case the other is the American: druggist, taxi, police, fire, tree trimming, bus ghost , or her children —whom she considers Americans. Brave Orchid does not need to appropriate her Chinese stories that carry her values, for they are intrinsically connected across times and spaces. Her stories possess —dialogic relations as —[E]ach word contains voices that are sometimes infinitely distant, unnamed, almost impersonal..., almost undetectable, and voices resounding nearby and simultaneously (11).

Her Chinese cultural heritage is linguistically constructed by remote, unidentified, unfriendly voices which are untraceable, yet in a dialogic relation with other voices. Such is the case of The No Name Woman’s voice, Moon Orchid’s voice and the sixth grader’s voice. Their voices are remote, anonymous and unfriendly; but they are in a dialogic relation with other voices across different chronotopes.Kingston as a

character in the two books —is confused about her place in the world, her identity and herself (Huntley 89). She is confused about whether she belongs to the west or the east: China or America. The same dilemma is reflected in her search for identity. Being the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Kingston is tossed between her parents prejudice and her personal ambition, between a Chinese past and an American present (Cheung 1992 169).

Kingston has an identity crisis during her kindergarten years. First, she —flunked kindergarten (*The Woman Warrior* 164). Second, she was silent like many other Chinese students. Her silence is translated in different ways. She asserts “My silence was thickest—total—during the three years that I covered my schoolpainting with black paint. I painted layers of black over houses and flowers and suns, and when I drew on the blackboard, I put a layer of chalk on top. I was making a stage curtain and it was the moment before the curtain parted arose (149).

In this quotation Kingston is pre-eminently a shy child in the process of constructing her identity, yet suffering terribly. As a child, she is imaginative and intelligent. She draws flowers, houses and suns, and then she paints layers of black over them. Although in Chinese art, black symbolises killing, evil yet knowledge, Kingston —the child appreciates it. She sees light and other colours in darkness. Therefore blackness awakens clarity and harmony whether it be language or thought. Hence she asserts— in her attack on the baby- soft sixth grader— I hated pastels; I would wear black always (159). And in *China Men*, she asserts —I liked hiding in the dark, which could be anywhere, (180) and —[b]ut the real marvel was the black dirt, which was clean and not dirty at all (165)

While painting layers of black, the author discloses her feelings. She asserts so tellingly her search for identity, since she is Chinese studying in an American school. Hence the dual nationality, language and culture make her refuse to communicate and resort to an easy silence. From here springs her identity crisis. Consequently her black painting symbolises her anger and retreat from the world as well as it epitomises her knowledge and wisdom. She is proud of her black coverings and describes them as —so black and full of possibilities. Moreover when the curtains are flying up, there is —sunlight underneath mighty operas. Her paintings are full of light,

colours, shapes and scenes, all of which characterise her inner dialogue. Since the others—parents and teachers alike—fail to understand her personality, they cannot communicate with her. Hence, their decision to send her to a speech therapist. Her paintings and black covering both conceal her personality, while at the same time reflect a fragile child who is angry, for the other is unable to understand her or translate her ideas. At the same time they—the painting and covering—mask her personality. She uses a curtain that separates her thoughts as well as her voice.

Kingston's experiences silence at school, at home and at work. She does not speak for three years at school. When she reads aloud in her first grade class, she —heard the barest whisper with little squeaks come out of [her] throat (*The Woman Warrior*150). The author dislikes school for she has to speak and read aloud. However, —the other Chinese girl did not talk (150). Consequently she attributes silence to Chineseness.

Though her parents sends her to speech therapy, her voice remains after growing older —soft and non existent like a crippled animal running on broken legs (152). At home the author has a list of over two hundred things which cause her throat pain, and she wants to reveal them to her mother who deems her daughter has a —duck voice. Kingston is born and raised in —an invisible world the emigrants built (113). In that world there are many secrets —never to be said (164). Then their parents —would not tell [them] because [they] had been born among ghosts

What follows from this is that the Chinese raise their offspring in total silence. The former are exposed to silence from an early age, which echoes Kingston's reporting of her mother's admonition —you must not tell anyone in the opening of the first section of her first text. Kingston structures her writings upon this prohibition of telling. Thus she complains that —I hated the secrecy of the Chinese (164) then —the good things are unspeakable (166). Kingston summarises an old tradition of silence in —If we had to depend on being told, we'd have no children, no babies, no menstruation (sex, of course, unspeakable), no death (ibid). Actually Kingston's no children, no babies, no sex, no death, reiterates her father's no China, no stories, no past; likewise her mother's—and by extension the Chinese—no telling. Accordingly negating speech is omni-present in her two texts.

Another experience reflects silencing at work. When she works in an art supply house, she answers her boss in —a bad, small-person’s voice that makes no impact(50).Additionally, while working at a land developers’ association, she refuses to type invitations for a restaurant picketed by two black activist organizations. But she expresses her viewpoint in a whisper and an unreliable voice. These experiences are but variations on many others in the two texts in different times and spaces. For instance her silence at work is the same as her great grandfather_s on the Sandalwood Mountain. She is expelled when she refuses to write the invitations and Bak Goong is beaten, fined and punished for speaking. The same experience of her aunt Moon Orchid being a woman of high class in Hong Kong; who never worked and lived comfortably cannot adjust to the American way of life, and she is unrecognised by her husband then rejected, and finally becomes insane. The same experience is lived by Kingston’s father; once a scholar in China, he is illiterate in America and tricked for his inability to speak English. Thus we see the continuity of the experiences which reflect each other.

Consequently the agonising experiences lived by Kingston at work, by her father in the laundry and her great grand father (Bak Goong), not only account for the power of the western patriarchal culture, but for the power of the oppressed. Indeed in his Foucault and Social Dialogue, Christopher Falzon identifies two types of forces: forces that —aim to organise, direct and harness other forces and those other forces which —transgress imposed limits and challenge the existing order (48). Therefore, the instances of refusing to type the invitations, painting layers of black, the father’s curses and Bak Goong’s healing ceremony are forms of resistance used by the oppressed subject to transgress imposed boundaries, and counter existing institutions and discourses. Through this —resistance and revolt, dialogue will continue, and forms of life will be subjected to re-examination (Falzon 52).

All the experiences of breaking silence in the two texts can be considered as instances of countering opposition and going beyond socially imposed boundaries, in order —toinvent new forms of life, new ways of being and acting and to be able to influence others in turn(Falzon 52-3). Hence the necessity to assert one’s being through acting to influence the other. And this is the goal of Kingston the writer and the character.It

is necessary for Kingston –to get things straight, always trying to name the unspeakable (13). She names, describes and defines while writing. Cheung considers writing –the disparate alternative to speech(170). –She resorts to writing to escape mental contortion and assuage loneliness and pain (169).

Kingston's first two texts host many characters: Chinese, Chinese American and American. They are at the same time speaking characters communicating through their experiences, attitudes or voices, as there are silent characters—willingly—who are internally dialogic subjects such as *The No Name Woman*. Yet all of them are engaged in –the great dialogue which will lead the author to construct and assert her identity. Kingston portrays so tellingly two types of characters; in being silent or –champion talker their experiences reflect each other and are variations on many others. Indeed experiences are not –concentrated simply on its own object, [they are] accompanied by a continual sideway glance at another person (Bakhtin cited in Gardiner 29).

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**“It’s very dark, the darkest dark you can imagine,”
Thus Spoke Dionysus: Art and ‘Psychic Infection’
in Carole Maso’s *The Art Lover***

By Insaf khemiri

Abstract:

The paper studies the ‘chaosmos’ of Carole Maso’s *the Art Lover*, focusing on the protagonist’s relationship with her fathers and with reference to Nietzsche’s concepts of the Apolline and the Dionysiac. While the first part deals with the archetypes of the Devouring Father, the Eternal Son, and the Shepherd who inspire an Apollonian perspective to life and art, the following section deals with the protagonist’s metamorphosis in a Dionysian ‘chaos.’ Entering a Dionysian consciousness occurs, first, in nature and, then, through sharing art; and the significant references to drawings and paintings represent the conflict that occurs between the Apolline and the Dionysiac in the novel.

Key Words: The Dionysiac, the Apolline, art, chaosmos, psychic infection

The Italian American writer Carole Maso introduces herself and her work as a bridge for an “imagined community” to reach people “in other places and other times” (Llewellyn 166), inviting them to join her ‘chaos’ with “hybrid forms, fluid, porous, strange, bleeding texts” (Maso interview with Brian Evenson). This ‘chaos,’ or “Chaosmos” as Deleuze prefers to call it, translates “the power to affirm divergence

and decentering” (Deleuze, "Simulacrum" 265) and advocates an “openness in acceptance of texts, of forms, this freedom, this embrace will serve as models for how to live. Will be the model for a new world order” (Maso, Rupture 175).

The Art Lover (1990) is the second novel by Carole Maso, dedicated to her close friend Gary Falk who died in 1986 of AIDS. Indeed, Maso remains one of the least explored Italian American writers inasmuch as her work does not answer the imposed rules and models as far as Italian American literature is concerned because to be celebrated as an Italian-American writer means to ‘honour’ the tradition of *The Godfather*, the well-known movie by Francis F. Coppola that is based on Mario Puzo’s novel of the same name. However, *The Art Lover* does not eulogize the Italian American man as a romantic criminal or a member of the mafia, nor does it portray “Madonna-like” women who endure suffering and make good housewives and cooks (Gardaphé 5). Maso’s ‘art lover’ is freed from clichéd patterns and the protagonist is not a Pandora deprived of her ‘box’ of possibilities.

In *The Art Lover*, the relationship between fathers and daughters is redefined and Caroline, the protagonist, tries to break free of patriarchal influences to become a creative artist. Though she is raised to become her daddy’s daughter and respect the hierarchies and hegemonies of the Apollonian ‘order,’ she manages to flee to nature at the Cummington Community of artists to accomplish a rebirth through embracing a Dionysian consciousness. This conflict between Apolline and Dionysiac forces is represented through selected works of art that emphasize the experience of psychic infection and, hence, inspire the female artist, Caroline, to embrace the Dionysian approach to life and art.

I. “Touch Me Not”: The Light Looks Like Apollo

In *The Art Lover*, Caroline tells stories about her father Max, her mother Veronica, and her dead friend Steven. The novel starts with a portrait of a father and his daughter, Max and Caroline, and a detail of Giotto’s fresco, entitled *Noli me Tangere* (*Touch me Not*), is introduced on page 17. Christ’s words to Mary Magdalene, “Touch me not,” are translated in the painting with a focus on the distance between the two figures. The powerful presence of Christ is accentuated with a conspicuous

light that makes him look superior, pure, cold, proud and inaccessible; he is moving away from Mary Magdalene who is almost invisible and immersed in darkness. On page 24, another detail of the same fresco is presented with an emphasis on the figure of Mary Magdalene who is kneeling with a longing and begging gaze; her arms are outstretched, craving for a touch of Jesus. The distance between their hands is stressed with another detail of *Noli me Tangere* on page 49.

This zoom in on the distance between Christ and Magdalene reminds the female character of her predicament caused by her 'inaccessible' father. Max is portrayed as the prototype of a Devouring Father who keeps his daughter as his captive in his Saturnian world. Reis argues that the archetype of the Devouring Father is prominent in Western myths and each era has its own 'Saturn,' the Patriarch who devours his children to imprison them in his 'belly'; and even when a revolutionary awakening of the powers of the Mother occurs to challenge the Patriarch, a son rises to overthrow his father, inherit his 'crown' and revive the legacy of patriarchy (46). Zeus killed his father Saturn to become the Devouring Father; Apollo is his father's Sun/Son who is destined to become the Patriarch and though the rise of Christianity ended the reign of the Olympians, the Devouring Father archetype is reproduced in God and Jesus Christ takes the place of Apollo.

Apollo is the Greek God of light and perfect 'Truth,' symbolized by his 'Sun'; he is born from Zeus' belly for his father devoured him in an attempt to protect his beloved child from his jealous wife Hera. He is the Eternal Son who "never sucked a woman's breast" (Deutsch 59) and the "most powerful of Olympians after Zeus" (Deutsch 81) and, ergo, the genuine heir of his father's patriarchal kingdom. Deutsch studies Apollo as the prototype of the "Son who Kills" (49), the 'Sun' that struggles against 'Mothers' and the chasm of their darkness and mysteries (81). He is the god of masculine law and order, regarded by Nietzsche as the "father" of the Olympian world (*Birth* 21) whose "eye must be sunlike, as befits his origin" (*Birth* 16). The Apolline in art is whatever serves this dream-world of Apollo where perfection, forms, measures, rules and belief in a 'higher truth' are emphasized. Classical sculptors are in the service of the Apolline forces; epic poets are the advocates of an Apolline culture that glorifies gods, heroes, kings, and masters of arts "who must overthrow a realm of

Titans and slay monsters” to “emerge triumphant over a terrible abyss” (Nietzsche, *Birth* 24).

In the novel, Max is a Saturnian father who seems to block Caroline’s imagination; he is depicted as an inaccessible, remote, and obscure man who excels in teaching “the lessons of art and distance” (13). After the death of his wife Veronica, Max buries himself in his library and Caroline feels as if he is “saying good-bye, putting [her] into a painting, holding [her] afar and admiring” (11). The daughter is imprisoned in her father’s territory where she feels threatened by “his things—his papers, his extensive library, his coffee mug, his pipes, his brandy glasses” (10); Caroline seems to be tormented by the enormous art history library, a space that is highly masculine, ordered, and ‘perfected’.

As a Devouring Father, Max weakens Caroline, absorbs her energy, and obliges her to become his ‘captive’ for after the publication of her first novel, *Delirium*, Caroline loses her creative power and for a long time, she remains unable to write since her father has appropriated her voice for, as she says, he “liked *Delirium* a lot” and “defended it” (37-8). Max admires Giotto and tells his daughter stories about the “Shepherd Drawing Sheep”: “A long time ago, a shepherd boy was sitting in a field with his sheep” and “it was such a lovely day and the sheep were so beautiful that he decided to draw them” (52). This ‘Shepherd’ is Giotto who represents the Apolline influence in the novel; indeed, Miller considers that the image of the ‘Shepherd’ is associated with the archetype of the ‘Divine Child’ or the Eternal Son since it highlights a “sense of perfection” with “connotations of ruling and controlling” (11-13).

In *The Art Lover*, Christ is the Shepherd who leads his ‘sheep’ and teaches them how to be obedient children of the Devouring Father. The ‘Shepherd’ is also Giotto who “would become one of the greatest painters ever to live” (52); he represents the ruling Master of Art, Max’s idol. For this reason, Max enjoys lecturing his daughter on Giotto’s masterpieces: he wants to teach her his “love of seeing” (50); but ‘seeing,’ according to Max, is related to the light, not darkness. Just like the figure of Christ in the fresco, Caroline’s father is the “best teacher” of “What the Light Look[s] Like” (50). He actually believes that he can control everything and change the world to make it perfect like a ‘dream.’

An Apolline artist is “naive,” according to Nietzsche (*Birth* 24), in his celebration of this perfect ‘heroic’ self with the ‘sunlike eye’ that guides human beings and instructs them on how to talk, how to think, and how to look in order to become an Apollineself. He is lost in his illusion, isolated and dedicated to his ‘Master’ and sees in his work a reflection of his ‘self’ as a servant of Apollo and, thus, a guardian of his codes of masculinity and his rules of perfectionism since “Art academics took a [perfectionist] approach to [history painting] as they did to [landscape painting: [they] observe the world carefully and assemble its most perfect parts into an ideal composition” (Facos 110). After the publication of her first book, *Delirium*, Caroline becomes blinded by the Apolline ‘Sun’ and, influenced by the ‘Shepherds’—her father, Jesus Christ, and Giotto—who ‘lead’ her, she experiences ‘delirium’ since she rejoices at being admired as a “genius,” an “extraordinary talent, a child of brilliance” (26).

The protagonist describes her “Post-Delirium” state when she embraces an Apolline approach to art and, ergo, to life; she “hate[s] all the chaos, all the disappointment”; she takes delight in believing that she is a unique person who can create something perfect and flawless (27). The controlling ‘Shepherds’ block the protagonist’s creative impulse; she wants to break free of the ‘Master’ and the ‘Teacher’ of art who “want to conserve everything [and] worship false prophets” because they “consider certain art forms to be debased” (Maso, “Rupture” 164-5). For this reason, she decides to flee her father’s ‘den’ and seek a rebirth of the artist “away in the country at the Cummington Community of the Arts” (12).

II. The Dionysian Invasion:

A. The Dark: Awakening Dionysus in Nature

Eventually, Caroline escapes the huge library of the ‘anti-artist’ and spends a whole year at Cummington with a community of artists who look for a “release from the self” though entering a Dionysian consciousness (Nietzsche, *Birth* 28). Dionysus is perceived as the “Son who Saves” (Deutsch 13), the “god of women” (Deutsch 19), and the “first feminist in the history of mankind” (Deutsch 27). According to Greek mythology, Dionysus is also born from Zeus’s belly, but unlike his brother Apollo, he

is mortal like his mother Semele. In other words, Zeus cannot offer him a complete birth of a 'god' and a son of a 'Patriarch.'

For this reason, Dionysus seeks refuge in the Mothers of the Universe in order to complete his 'becoming'; he goes through a self-birthing process whereby he returns to 'Earth' to perform his rites of transformation and liberation. In the wilderness, he succeeds in renewing himself thanks to a "biological process of propagation of oneself" through trees (Deutsch 18). For this reason, he is referred to as *Trigonos* ("Thrice-born"), the *Pseudanor*—"the man without true virility," and *Gynnis*—"the womanish" (Deutsch 17). Other names mentioned by Deutsch are *Dendrites*, "the tree-god" or *Endendros*, "he in the tree" (17).

Therefore, the Dionysiac calls for an awakening from the Apolline world of dreams and illusions; with Dionysus, one becomes intoxicated, that is, no longer 'disillusioned' by the light of the 'Sun.' Nietzsche distinguishes between intoxication and illusion, dream and imagination and argues that acknowledging the reign of Dionysus necessitates 'self-oblivion' through excess and intoxication and "[t]he essence of intoxication is the feeling of plenitude and increased energy. From out of this feeling one gives to things, one *compels* them to take, one rapes them - one calls this procedure *idealizing*" (*Twilight* 83).

The Dionysiac is, thus, a spring festival of chaos and creative intoxication where one witnesses intense feelings of joy and pain and magical experiences of delight and suffering. Nietzsche's Dionysus can be reached through loss, one needs to lose one's path and let go of perfectionism to enter into the wild and see "[t]he chariot of Dionysus [. . .] piled high with flowers and garlands; under its yoke stride tigers and panthers"; an initiation into a Dionysian consciousness occurs in nature and through a reconciliation with 'Mother Earth' that "gladly offers up her gifts" inasmuch nature is "the gospel of world harmony" where one may experience a variety of intoxications (Nietzsche, *Birth* 17).

At Cummington, Caroline feels the "intoxication of spring" (Nietzsche, *Twilight* 83) and tries to reconcile with Jesus Christ and approaches him as a Dionysian figure; she re-imagines the Robe of Christ with an abundance of colours. Jesus' metamorphosis occurs through an "intoxication of sexual excitement" (Nietzsche, *Twilight* 82) in nature; like Dionysus, he is 'Trigonos,' that is 'thrice-born,' but since

his resurrection–i.e. his second-birth’–as depicted in Giotto’s fresco makes him a ‘distant’ Eternal Son, Caroline offers him a third rebirth through a reconciliation with nature and, hence, the feminine powers of the earth.

Jesus is influenced by the spirits of nature that surround him and craves affection as he notices a “Beautiful Woman” who “smell[s] like jasmine, like myrrh. Honey and mushrooms and nuts”; while he contemplates the beauty of this woman, Jesus becomes “frightened by his own passion–this woman, this dark Jewish woman, appallingly beautiful, musky–her pendulous breasts, her full hips” and she “offers to wrap him in her hair [. . .]. Her open body like a boat” (56). Thus, when Caroline’s Jesus is crowned with crimson roses instead of the ‘strange star,’ he falls and starts his Dionysian becoming; his body and soul are reawakened and he is no longer that cold and remote

Divine Child.

Accordingly, Jesus becomes ‘imperfect’ and as Caroline says when she talks about “The Omniscience of Jesus,” “He doesn’t know what to say anymore or leave unsaid” (59). The intoxicated Dionysian Jesus is in “The Garden,” teaching Caroline how to create life through gardening; thus, he identifies with Dionysus as ‘Dendrites,’ a tree-god who entrusts Caroline with his plants saying, “Protect my beauties, my firstlings” (213). He becomes an “unheroic, soft” Dionysian “figure of vegetation and the vegetative reactions” (Hillman, *Myth* 285). He is not willing to be a Saviour, a hero who defeats death and grants his followers an immortal happy ending because Jesus is no longer interested in an otherworldly paradise; instead he enjoys life on Earth; Caroline admires him as he “dances among the lilies of the valley” (224) and tells her: “I am going to live’ (231).

At Cummington, Caroline reenacts a self-birthing process and enjoys her share of a Dionysian excess; she renews her primitive, Titanic powers. At Cummington, she is no longer affected by the Apollonian sun: there, “the sun is only the sun” (70), the sun is not at the center; “[there] at the Community, where there is so much life, the graveyard still at the center” (70). It is a Community of ‘souls’ where human beings, dead or alive, trees, stars, waters, and animals learn to communicate with each other, and to accept the multiplicity of souls for “the future is plural”; it is a “land of a

thousand dances” and a “place where a thousand birds are singing” (Maso, “Rupture” 173).

Caroline can feel the presence of her mother with these “good stones” at the graveyard (70) and in this darkness of deep blue seas, deep skies, and deep souls, she is offered the ‘Titanic’ fire instead of the sun: “I learned finally, Max, how to build fires and once I learned, I couldn’t stop making them. . . . There was real wood at Cummington, Max, from trees. [. . .] Real wood from real trees. Deer eating apples, Max. Sheep chewing grass. Right there in front of you. Real wood, really. Lots of fires” (105).

Caroline’s intoxication occurs during the ‘Gathering of Women’; every night, women artists perform a Dionysian cult, a nocturnal rite of liberation. The ‘spring’ ‘god of women’ intoxicates them with his magic and illuminates these female artists with his ‘secret’ teachings. Hence, Carole and her friends become ‘Maenads’ and ‘Bacchantes,’ priestesses of the Dionysian cult; they honor their inspirer *Lusios*, another name for Dionysus which means ‘the liberator’ (Deutsch 27).

Naked and exposed in this darkness, Caroline and her friends become able to commune with creation and see “Life in the Sky” (112): ‘It’s very dark, the darkest dark you can imagine’. They are absorbed in this Dionysian atmosphere, performing the rites of summoning the ancestral powers through chanting, drinking, eating, dancing, and mating. The protagonist feels connected to her Mother Earth at Cummington Dionysian ‘eden,’ she becomes open to the primitive darkness of that intoxicating world and celebrates this intoxication with other women, “drink[ing] cognac, in bowled glasses and smok[ing] hashish in the stone room. A scent of spices. A flash of dark hair. [. . .] The smell of blackberries. The touch of silver birch in the moonlight” (69).

B. The ‘Darkest Dark’: Art and the Dionysian Chaosmos

After this “Dionysian invasion” (Nietzsche, *Birth* 27) in the natural setting of Cummington, Caroline breaks free of the Apollonian influence; she renews her creative power and starts writing her second novel. The protagonist becomes interested in artists who have defied the rules of the masters; thus, entering a

Dionysian consciousness might also occur through psychic infection that results from sharing art. Caroline's release from Apollo is translated by introducing details of paintings, mostly by Impressionists and Symbolists such as Cézanne, Van Gogh, Matisse, and Picasso. Like Caroline, "Impressionists considered academic formulas obsolete and yearned to create art expressing their individual ideas, feelings, and interests" (Facos 305).

Indeed, writers who aim at building communities through their literature, usually try to involve their readers not only in an "intimate community" with the 'textual others,' but also in an "outward community" with "recommendations and discussion" (Llewellyn 160). For example, though the text seems to be haunted by Fathers and masters, symbolized by the frequent appearances of the Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (17, 24, 49, 239), there are also propositions to "escape the tyranny of 'the master mouthing masterpiece'" (Maso, interview with Jill Adams).

The first invitations are two paintings by Vermeer, the precursor of impressionism: *Woman in Blue Reading* and *Head of a Young Girl* (57). Eventually, the focus moves from the invisible face of the woman in Giotto's fresco to the detail of *Head of a Young Girl* presented on page 58 that highlights the woman's face and eyes, followed by an extract from Edward Snow's *A Study of Vermeer*: "For to look at it is to be implicated in a relationship so urgent that to take an instinctive step backward into aesthetic appreciation would seem in this case a defensive measure, an act of betrayal and bad faith." (qtd. in Maso 58).

The 'psychic infection' occurs when the involved person does not allow his or defensive ego to control the soul and, therefore, s/he receives the 'intoxication' of the artist thanks to the 'procedure of idealizing. Whether one listens to music, contemplates a painting or a photography, or reads a book, one is actually 'listening' to multiple voices that tell stories of souls and "let music into the body" (Maso, "Rupture" 189). For this reason, Nietzsche identifies a Dionysian art as one that touches us through opening the wounds for an 'idealizing process' (*Twilight* 83) that makes people give and share because a "wound is an opening in the walls, a passage through which we may become infected and also through which we affect others" and, then, we "receive the other as if he were music, listening to the rhythm and

cadence of his tale, its thematic repetitions and the disharmonies” (Hillman, *Insearch* 22).

Deleuze speaks of this kind of psychic infection in his *The Fold*; in a chaosmos, one reaches an unfathomable labyrinth, or ‘vast space’ of ‘irregular galaxies’ (as Nietzsche said) and a labyrinth, Deleuze clarifies, is “multiple because it contains many folds. the multiple is not only what has many parts but also what is folded in many ways” (3-4). A chaotic multiplicity, thus, invites a “read[ing] into the folds of the soul” for “[t]here are souls down below, sensitive, animal; and there even exists a lower level in the souls. the pleats of matter surround and envelop them” (Deleuze, *Fold* 3-4). The Artist has to confront chaos through his art, and a work of art should offer a space for this confrontation with ‘chaos’ to occur.

Indeed, *The Art Lover* suggests various artists who invite human beings to share “the interior Bible” of the soul, borrowing Cixous’s terms (5). There is a painting entitled *House of Dr. Gachet at Auvers* by Paul Cézanne and an abstract from *Impressionism* by Pierre Courthion who claims that “[f]or [Cézanne], everything came from inner conflict” (qtd. in Maso, *Art Lover* 146). Cixous says about this inner world: “One must penetrate into the country (_says Van Gogh_ stay in the Midi, until, by penetration, you become it)” (5). According to these artists, to enter the ‘interior Bible of the soul,’ one has to accept the the irregularity of the “galaxies within” because “they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence” (Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 118).

Deleuze and Guattari argue that human beings have always been obsessed with the fear of loss, of forgetfulness, of death, of nothingness, of the unknown, in one word of chaos. For this reason, they tend to look for a “little order” to escape chaos and, accordingly, need religions because they “invoke dynasties of gods, or the epiphany of a single god, in order to paint a firmament on the umbrella, like the figures of an *Urdoxa* from which opinions stem” (201-2). However, if one rethinks ‘chaos,’ one should come to realize that all misery and misfortune stem from opinions and doctrines and, thus, human beings need the “*chaoids*,” that is ‘the daughters of chaos’ (Deleuze and Guattari 208) to free people from the firmament and ideal world of *Urdoxa* and these ‘chaoids’ are: art, philosophy, and science.

The term ‘chaosmos’ is borrowed from James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, but Catherine Keller maintains that Deleuze’s use of the term reflects a Whiteheadian

cosmos to “conceptualize chaos” (60) since it mirrors Whitehead’s process thought and his focus on (inter)relatedness, plurality, and uncertainty. Therefore, Deleuze’s chaosmos does not mean a chaos separate from order, but refers to a state where both order and chaos become ‘interconnected’ with ‘tension’ and, hence, “[i]n a chaosmos, the future is kept open” through “the tension between chaos and cosmos, order and disorder, *arche* and *anarche*, where neither one nor the other can get the upper hand” (Caputo112).

In a chaosmos, one can still talk about ‘defeating’ chaos, but one “struggle[s] less against chaos [. . .] than against the ‘clichés’ of opinion” (Deleuze and Guattari 204); in other words, the only way to defeat chaos is by a “secant plane that crosses it” and this ‘fall’ into the chaos aims at bringing back a ‘composition’ of it and, as Deleuze and Guattari further explains, painters like Césanne and Monet “do not paint on an empty canvas, and neither does the writer write on a blank page, but the page or canvas is already so covered with preexisting, preestablished clichés that it is necessary to erase, to clean, to flatten, even to shred, so as to let in a breath of air from the chaos that brings us the vision” (204).

Thus, a work of art reflects a chaotic multiplicity of voices, including the invisible clichés and ‘opinions’ of a blank page, but *The Art Lover* makes this multiplicity visible through tolerating plurality and including the ‘opinions’ of the masters and the fathers and the ‘chaos’ of Dionysian and Deleuzian artists. For instance, Matisse’s drawings of charcoal on paper such as *Young Woman Sleeping in a Rumanian Blouse* (90, 139, 175), *Head of a Woman* (168, 178), and *Virgin and Child on Starry Background* (240), overshadow Giotto’s *Noli me Tangere* and highlight the ‘woman’ on canvas and, ergo, while Giotto’s fresco distances the woman to emphasize the figure of Christ and the theme of his resurrection, Matisse’s woman is the main theme of the drawing; there are no surroundings, no masculine presence, and no colours; indeed, Matisse’s works defy “those who seek the finished. Those who seek to portray cleanly, the most properly!” (Cixous 17). Hence, with Dionysus, artists are invited to acknowledge the power of the Titan world where ‘Mothers’ reign.

Art, to Deleuze and Guattari, should never limit or be limited by imposing rules and standards because “the only ‘duty’ of art is to add more varieties and possibilities” (Butler 34). It is for this reason that art conquers philosophy and

science because “[a]rt preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. It preserves and is preserved in itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 163); however, what is preserved is not the material or the work itself; Vermeer’s *Woman or Young Girl* “maintains the pose” that she had had for years, but what is preserved is the ‘sensation,’ “*a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*” (Deleuze and Guattari 164).

A sensation is made of two instants: a percept and an affect. Through a work of art, perceptions become ‘percepts’ because “they are independent of a state of those who experience them” and affections become ‘affects’ because they surpass the feelings of “those who undergo them” and, thus, sensations as percepts and affects are “*beings*” because they “exist in the absence of man” and, ergo, a work of art is a “being of sensation” (Deleuze and Guattari 164). Deleuze and Guattari emphasize ‘sensation’ because it is “composed with the void in composing itself with itself” (165-6). Accordingly, any work of art is a composition of the void that adds ‘varieties’ and opens ‘possibilities’ because it is composed with air, emptiness, and space. This emptiness is never filled, the space is always preserved and as Cézanne says the “sensation is not colored but coloring” (qtd. in Deleuze and Guattari 167); it never ends, it remains in the process of becoming and anyone involved in this process is always ‘becoming’.

In addition to Vermeer and Matisse, Vincent van Gogh’s *Crows over the Wheatfield* is involved on page 234, announcing the protagonist’s liberation who “feels the longing for everything in this world” (234) with the “Van Gogh taking [her] hand now and allowing her through his vision, into the world. The boat rocking. Into the pain of the world. The lake so dark. . . . The smell of early spring. The sound of water lapping against the boat” (235). Van Gogh’s life mirrors a Nietzschean’s ‘birth of tragedy’; he represents the prototype of a Dionysian artist in the novel who, quoting from the included piece of a newspaper article by Michael Brenson on “Van Gogh at the Met, the Artist Triumphant,” “risked his life in his work” and, thus, “[w]ithout sensing the restlessness that drove him toward unity and periodically drove him mad, there is no way to do justice to his courage and ambition” (qtd. in Maso 108).

In the last pages of the novel, a *Self-Portrait* by Picasso is introduced (217) to announce the death of the Hero, the Father, the Master, the Perfectionist. 'Death of a

Hero' is one example of a Symbolist art which is "distinguished by an artist's urge to convey a transcendent [. . .] idea" by being "static and simplified in form, composition, and color. Pictorial space is often shallow, and the viewer is often forced into an intimate relationship with the image" (Facos 339). As Michael Brenson states in his *New York Times* article entitled "Picasso Survey, the Late Paintings:" "When we arrive at this painting, we are as scandalized as he that even the old warrior, who in his late work seemed to have devoured nature itself, would one day have to say goodbye" (qtd. in Maso 215). Thus, the Devouring Father is dead and his order has ended because the future is a chaosmos where nothing and nobody is left untouched or unchanged; it is a world of becoming, of chaos that welcomes multiplicities of voices and experiences.

The future is also a "literature of love. A literature of tolerance. A literature of difference" (Maso, "Rupture" 182) that communicates with this world in flux and "provides a lot of space for a reader to exist, think her own thoughts, participate" for the novel includes "figments of the psyche" and these figments, as Maso proclaims, "break from me and join a kind of collective universal human dimension" (interview by Jill Adams). *The Art Lover* is left with no clear ending, "[u]nfinished and left that way. Unfinished, not abandoned. Unfinished, not because of death or indifference or loss of faith, or nerve, just unfinished. . . . To allow everyone to write, to thrive, to live" (Maso, "Rupture" 188).

By and large, *The Art Lover's* protagonist manages to free herself as a woman artist through embracing the Dionysian in art and nature. Caroline's predicament in the first part of the novel is a result of the influence of the Apollonian forces; she loses her interest in art because she is shackled by her 'Devouring Father' who insists on teaching her the perfectionist ideals of the Apolline masters of art. The frequent reference to Giotto's *Noli me Tangere* highlights the distance between Caroline and her father. The female artist seeks refuge at the Cummington Community of arts to reconnect with the creative and intoxicating powers of the Dionysian; she opens a conversation with the Divine Jesus to offer him a 'third' resurrection in nature.

The Dionysian Jesus helps Caroline to accomplish her transformation and she succeeds in reviving her love for life and art. Selected paintings and drawings by artists who inspire Caroline by their revolutionary approaches to art are cited to exalt a Deleuzian 'chaosmos.' This chaosmos is communicated through psychic infection that makes it possible for the female character to welcome a Dionysian invasion through art and stop the 'tyranny of the Master.'

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**Irony and Subverting the American Dream in Eugene O'Neill's
*Long Day's Journey into Night***

By Olfa Gandouz

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to investigate the politics and mechanics of irony in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) by studying James Tyrone's dream of achieving material prosperity and its role in generating the physical and psychological seclusion of the whole family. Irony is recognized from the very beginning of the play through the chasm between the feigned family union and the reality of familial disintegration. James Tyron's obsession with acquiring wealth has negative effects as it results in the loss of values, creates a wide gap between the Tyrones and leads to the failure of the dream of family reunion. Failure shows O'Neill's criticism of the American dream by deconstructing the link between social success and happiness. Irony is meant to help the playwright question the notion of success by poking fun at the character's appearances, psychological and moral status. This paper relies on Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody (1985) and offers a close textual analysis of the play to show that irony is meant to criticize a target idea by pointing out its limits. Stylistic, dramatic, theatrical and thematic elements will be

used to map out O'Neill's reliance on irony to dramatize the Tyrone's psychological wounds and the failure of their father's material success.

Keywords: Irony\ dysfunctional family\ American Dream\ parody\ pragmatics\ semantics.

The present paper aims at analyzing the semantics and pragmatics of irony in Eugene O'Neill's *Long day's journey into night*¹(1956). *Journey* has been examined from different perspectives. In his *Eugene O'Neill : The life remembered* , John Orr has examined the autobiographical dimension of the play; he referred to the playwright's alienated Irish family which failed to achieve spiritual stability during the twentieth century industrial New England. In *A Drama of Souls*, Egil Tornqvist is interested in the aesthetics of the play and focuses on O'Neill's super-naturalistic techniques. In *Mimetic Disillusion*, Anne Fleche perceives *Journey* from post-structuralist lenses. She relies on the Derridean deconstruction to demonstrate that it is not a realistic play as it is based on "deniable facts and ambivalent emotions" (Fleche 20). Other critics have focused on the production of the play; for example, the theater critic Walter Kerr has noticed the difficulty in staging Edmund's soliloquies, Mary's sudden shifts from an old woman to a fine young girl and Tyrone's hysterical state when he recognizes the loss of his artistic talent.

However, as far as my readings have gone, the various approaches to O'Neill's text have, in a way or another, overlooked the politics and mechanics of irony and few critics have discussed O'Neill's ironic twist of the American dream of family reunion.

¹ Henceforth, it will be referred to as *Journey*

My reading of O'Neill's ironic revisiting of the American Dream in *Journey* starts from Linda Hutcheon's post modern account of irony and her differentiation between the semantic and pragmatic aspects of irony. These features are "implied in the Greek root, eironia, which suggests dissimulation and interrogation" (Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 53). Dissimulation is related to the semantics of irony and gives a hint about the emanation of the ironic meaning. Indeed, "ironic meaning forms when two or more concepts are brought together. (...) The unsaid is other than, different from, the said" (Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge* 64). Not only does irony oppose between the literal and intended meanings, but it also has pragmatic function which consists in "questioning and judging" (Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody* 54). Irony is thus the process of moving from interpretation to judgement. For Hutcheon, it is "the inferring of meaning in addition to and different from what is stated, together with an attitude toward both the said and the unsaid" (Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge* 11). In *Journey*, the semantics of Irony are manifested through the themes of mask, accusation, guilt and blame. These themes are meant to question the trustworthiness of the American dream. On the other hand, Pragmatic irony crystallizes when O'Neill treats this metanarrative ironically by questioning the notion of success, underscoring his harsh criticism.

One of the distinguishing features of American culture is the exceptional belief in dreams. From a postmodern perspective, the American Dream can be considered as a metanarrative; Lyotard defines metanarrative as a "grand story... which seeks legitimating beyond itself to a universal reason for its justification" (Knowles 78). The dream has been a cornerstone in American culture as it had existed since the puritan forerunners and was reinforced in the twentieth century when America became a powerful international pole. The myth of the American Dream is interconnected with

a wide variety of other concepts like upward mobility, material prosperity, psychological comfort and ethnic integration. In *the Epic of America* (1931), the American historian James Adams writes, “the American Dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank, is the greatest contribution to the welfare of the world. (...) Each generation has been an uprising of ordinary Americans to save that dream” (Adams 4). The American Dream has originally been the ambition of the puritan ancestors to escape religious gross injustice and create “a city upon a hill”. Then, it shifted to the dream of independent colonies to have access to liberty. This dream is part of the collective memory of a whole nation; it is based on soaring expectations of a better tomorrow.

Journey is an ironic representation of its time (mid-twentieth century); before analyzing the semantics and pragmatics of irony in the play, it is pertinent to study the political, socio economic and cultural context of the 1940 and to examine the way the American dream has been transformed into a nightmare. After the American victory during World War II, the political discourse included the images of the brave Uncle Sam who defeated Nazism and his following step was to promote universal peace. In this context, “a Detroit free press editorial praising Truman’s speech was illustrated with a cartoon of Uncle Sam.... Uncle Sam looked clean and sharp, but the back of his jacket reflected in the mirror, was covered up with patches labelled, abuse of minorities, race bias and hate”(Fousek 2000). The optimism and promises to implement democracy could not erase the brutality of the war and its devastating consequences. Indeed, “The horrific images of Auschwitz and Hiroshima confirmed that a total war whose primary aim was intimidation[turned] human beings into

mere numbers. The result was a darkening on the intellectual outlook and a rejection of ideas of progress reason and social activism” (Levine &Papasotiriou 14).

The pessimistic and cynical outlook is embodied in *Journey*' setting which is meant to debunk the American dream as a grand narrative and to show the tragic effects of this dream on the Tyrones. The semantics of irony are recognized from the very beginning through the interplay between images of light and darkness, the prevalence of the latter. This suggests the chasm between feigned family union and the overwhelming dark reality of familial disintegration. In the opening scene, members of the family are gathered for breakfast in the morning at 8:30 am when the room is seemingly illuminated with sunshine rays. The sun ironically alludes to the precarious warmth and harmony between the Tyrones. However, as the play progresses we notice that the light extinguishes as “no sunlight comes into the room. outside the day is still fine but increasingly sultry, with a faint haziness in the air which softens the glare of the sun” (O'Neil 44). This haziness indicates the grim atmosphere inside the house of the Tyrones and shows that the family union of the first act is illusive. The idea of obscurity is evoked by the father's refusal to light the light; when Mary complains about darkness and asks him to enlighten the bulb, he answers: “having them on, that makes the electric company rich” (O'Neill 101). It is obvious that O'Neill ironically introduces a family whose members live under the veneer of being happy.

In addition to the interplay between light and darkness, the semantics of irony or the ironic juxtaposition between “the said” and “the unsaid” can be examined through the theme of home vs. house. The house of the Tyrones contains extra rooms rarely occupied by the members of the family. For instance, the parlour is “never used except as a passage from the living room to the dining room” (O'Neill 9). The parlour

is not functional because the family is separated from the outside world and does not receive any guests. This creates a situational irony that is based on the incongruity between expectation and reality. We expect through the series of windows and the airy atmosphere that there is certain vividness, but the Tyrones are deceptively engaged in routine conversation. The over-use of the word “home” instead of house is an instance of verbal irony through which we infer that the Tyrones are frustrated from having a stable house. The lack of stability springs from the fact that the members of the family are compelled to live in hotels and accompany James, the famous Broadway actor. Mary displays her aversion towards her husband’s constant mobility and feels greatly nervous at the end of the summer. She divulges to Tyrone: “Your season will open again and we can go back to second-rate hotels and trains. I hate them” (O’Neill 62). She is embarrassed with the appalling lifestyle in hotels since she is originally an Irish citizen, who was brought up in a catholic community where family union is a sacred icon.

Verbal Irony reaches its peak when Mary declares that the Tyrones are prevented from having a warm home. The mother who is supposed to contribute in promoting tenderness complains: “I’ve never felt it was my home. It was wrong from the start. Everything was done in the cheapest way” (O’Neill 38). Mary pokes fun at her husband who wishes to feel at home without making effort to create a favourable climate of family harmony. What is ironic about James is that he is slothful spends the whole day with his friends in bars “and yet he wants a home” (O’Neill 53). In this context, Mary reprimands him: “You should have remained a bachelor and entertained your friends in bar rooms” (O’Neill 58). Mary voices her dejection over not being able to have a stable home; “I’ve never felt it was my home” (O’Neill 66), she

complains. The repetitive use of the word home has a reinforcing function; in *Irony's Edge*, Hutcheon writes, "by Reinforcing, I mean the familiar intentional use of irony as being used to underline a point. (...) For emphasis, and often for greater precision" (Hutcheon 48). The reinforcing function of irony is meant to emphasize the family's homelessness. Tyrones's predicament is made more tragic as they do not have a permanent house or a warm home.

Not only is irony in *Journey* based on the differences between the literal and the intentional meaning, but it also has a pragmatic function which consists in giving a critical view of the Tyrones's way of life. *Journey* is a criticism of the husband's American Dream of material success. O'Neill represents a parodist vision of a notion which has shaped the attitudes of a whole nation and questions the sanctity of this notion by deriding its tenets. In *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon defines parody as "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion" (Hutcheon 6). In other words, parody is a repetition characterized by difference; it uses irony as a "rhetorical mechanic" and aims at reviewing a target idea by pointing its limitations. In the play, the notion of family is parodied. According to Mary, the family's disintegration is caused by James's materialistic inclination towards amassing a large amount of money at the expense of the family's basic emotional needs. In this context, she tells Edmund: "your father would never spend the money to make [this home] right" (O'Neill 38). Her speech includes an internal reproach of James' stinginess and his refusal of spending money lest he should relapse into misery. Indeed, the house of the Tyrones is pervaded with an atmosphere of sickness. Edmund blames his father for giving priority to money over health and is opposed to his carelessness about Mary's addiction. The son believes that Mary resorts to morphine as a means of

oblivion; it is a way to forget her psychological scars and her husband's lack of affection. In this respect, he insults his father and accuses him of being responsible for Mary's failure to give up addiction: "when I think of it I hate your guts! You've never given her anything that would help her want to stay off it! No home except this summer dump in a place she hates" (O'Neill 122). The son's verbal violence is meant to ridicule James's link between material success and happiness.

What is dramatic about Tyrone is that he is traumatized by the events of his childhood, especially his Irish father's return to Ireland and the whole family's eviction because of the inability to pay the rent. In *Journey*, the Irish American immigrants's dream of achievement is parodied through the traumatic experience of Tyrone's childhood. His parents represent the first generation of Irish immigrants who were disillusioned by the American dream. The disillusionment of the parents with the American Dream made James fear poverty and link between property and happiness. What is ironic about Tyrone is that he buys a car so that Mary can feel relaxed, but the commodity does not alleviate her painful alienation; she is still lonely because she is not able to invite anyone to drive with her. The irony is highlighted through the puzzling paradox between pretending to be moved by the gift and its uselessness. In the same context of linking between well-being and happiness, Tyrone believes that his sons are fortunate because "[they]'ve had everything-nurses, schools, college, they've had food clothing" (O'Neill 127). Edmund mocks his father when he informs him that he thought of committing suicide. The idea of suicide reflects the son's weariness and the father's failure to weave a well-knit family.

The failure of James's material success can be studied through the parody of Virgin Mary. James' physical and social instability because of his acting career has led to

Mary's seclusion and failure to be a good mother. Unlike virgin Mary's son who used to ask for forgiveness: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (qtd. in Exil 31), Jamie's heart is ironically etched with rancor "I can't forgive her, I'd begun to hope, if she'd beaten the game, I could too" (O'Neill 143). The modern Mary fails to be a good mother as she presents the source of horror for Jamie; he discloses to his father, "It was her being in the spare room that scared me" (O'Neill 33). He is opposed to her morphine addiction and associates her hooking on drugs to prostitutes: "I'd never dreamed before any women but whores took dope" (O'Neill 143). Linking dope to "fallen women" strips Virgin Mary from her sainthood. The parody of Virgin Mary is also conveyed through the mother's wish to get rid of her children. In one of her monologues, she explains her felicity when her husband and sons leave home because "their contempt and disgust aren't pleasant company" (O'Neill 82). This monologue is the outcome of an absent dialogue between the mother and the three men. Mary's vacillation between blaming the three men for leaving her alone and her voluntary choice of leaving them by escaping to the past creates a sort of situational irony. The aim of this irony is to introduce the effects of James' dream and its contribution in creating a dysfunctional family. Mary is seared with psychological scars and cannot forget her husband's indifference about her loneliness. "The wedding gown was the death of me" (O'Neill 99), she laments. That's why, she is brooding over the past happy old days when she used to be free from familial responsibility.

The lack of paternal and maternal love has led to the psychological disturbance of the sons. Indeed, Edmund and Jamie are leading an idle life and none aspires to have a job; the inactivity of the sons is meant to parody the work ethic. This notion

has been the basis of the American Dream. In his link between the American dream and the importance of work, the American sociologist Robert Wuthnow asserts: “virtually everyone claims their work is a major source of personal fulfilment” (Wuthnow 31). In the play, the notion of hard work is flouted because Edmund and Jamie are lazy and spend the day in bar rooms. Irony is unfolded through the collision between Edmund’ speech and his deeds. He complains: “too many things have happened today” (O’Neill 137), however he ironically deviates from the concept of hard work when he drinks to go beyond the agonizing reality of homelessness. He perceives drunkenness as the source of happiness “Be drunken, you would not feel the horrible burden of time weighing on your shoulders” (O’Neill 114). Edmund is thus a passive character who curses his existence and thinks that his birth is a mistake as he suffers from continuous alienation “I will always be a stranger who never feels at home” (O’Neill 135). Like his brother, Jamie “never wanted to do anything except loaf in bar-rooms” (O’Neill 27). Instead of being dynamic, he mooches money out of his father and spends them on whores and whiskey. This laziness is an ironic opposition to the spirit of the American Dream which relies on the work ethic to achieve salvation.

The circularity of the play is another mechanic of irony; irony is meant to criticize the capitalist American Dream of material success and its transfiguration of the individual into a cog in a gigantic machine; the circular shape of the play gives a pessimistic outlook by affirming that there is not any progress. The play opens and closes in the living room where the Tyrones are passively sitting at the table and playing solitaire. Solitaire suggests the solitude of family members who are living like “monads” because of their father’s career as an actor and the mother’s escape to the

past. The open closure confers an apocalyptic view which is evocative about O'Neill's ironic subversion of the American Dream. The ominous atmosphere of the final scene presents the father's recognition of his hamartia. He has ultimately recognized that believing in upward mobility is "the mistake that ruined [his] career as a fine actor" (O'Neill 130). He regrets selling his artistic skills for the sake of commercial success. The lack of achievement is also noticed when "Edmund and Jamie remain motionless" (O'Neill 165); they leave the stage without curing their open psychological wounds or achieving familial integration. The impossibility of soothing the psychological discomfort pushed Mary to resurrect the ghosts of the past when she used to be "so happy for a time" (O'Neill 156). The use of the word happy "takes on a Beckettian irony and serves to remind us of the comic moments in the play" (Berlin 223). This "Beckettian irony" crystallizes when Mary is still waiting for "something [she] needs[s] terribly. [She] remember[s]when [she] had it [she] was never lonely nor afraid" (O'Neill 153). She is probably still looking for a grand-narrative and longing for the American Dream of family re-union.

In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, O'Neill has revisited the basic tenets of the American Dream. The play is teeming with instances of verbal and situational irony that are meant to put into question the notion of success. At the end, James concludes: "Life overdid the lesson for me, and made a dollar worth too much" (O'Neill 153). He is overwhelmed with profound pangs of remorse and deduces that he has gained the world, but lost his spirit. The spiritual predicament of the Tyrone family and their entanglement in a web of accusations show the failure of the father's dream. This paper explored O'Neill's deconstruction of the belief in the American Dream as a grand-narrative. It reached the conclusion that the American dream cannot be fixed

or reduced into material prosperity but has also a spiritual dimension. Irony has a didactic function as it helps us have a new perception of the American dream; this dream is a mere illusion and James' tragic flaw remains his belief that material success can bring about happiness. Happiness is a mirage that fades away as soon as you get nearer into it.

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All submissions to TQ should conform to the requirements of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.), which can be obtained from the [American Psychological Association](#). Per APA 6th edition, please note that DOIs are required in references and can be obtained at <http://www.crossref.org/guestquery/>.

TQ prefers that all submissions be written in a style that is accessible to a broad readership, including those individuals who may not be familiar with the subject matter.

TQ solicits manuscripts in four categories: Full-Length Articles, Research Letters (Brief Reports and Summaries), Research Issues, and Book Reviews. For the necessary submission items and other requirements, please see the category below for the article you intend to submit. Prospective authors are encouraged to read articles from the section to which they intend to submit to get an idea of the style and level of research required for publication.

TQ does not accept paper submissions. To submit you need to send a pdf version of your article to Mimioun Melliti tayr.tayr@gmail.com. If a paper has more than one author, the person submitting the manuscript will have to identify the corresponding author and add the other authors. If you have questions about the submission process, please contact tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

To facilitate the double-blind review process, please remove the author's name from the main text, the in-text citations, the reference list, and any running heads. Please replace the author's name with Author. If there are multiple authors, please use Author1, Author2, etc. Manuscripts submitted without author's name(s) removed will be returned without review for alteration and resubmission.

It is understood that manuscripts submitted to TQ have not been previously published and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

It is the author's responsibility to indicate to the editor the existence of any work already published (or under consideration for publication elsewhere) by the author(s) that is similar in content to the submitted manuscript.

It is also the author's responsibility to secure permission to reprint tables or figures that are used or adapted in the manuscript from another source. Written permission from the copyright holder is required before TAYR can publish the material. For more information on copyright permissions, please contact tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

The TQ editor reserves the right to make editorial changes in any manuscript accepted for publication to enhance clarity, concision, or style. The author will be consulted only if the editing has been substantial.

The views expressed by contributors to TAYR Quarterly do not necessarily reflect those of the TQ editors, the Editorial Advisory Board, or TAYR committee members. Material published in TQ should not be construed as having the endorsement of TAYR.

All TQ authors may obtain a free final PDF offprint of their article--once the article has published online.

When evaluating a manuscript for publication in TQ, reviewers consider the following factors:

- The manuscript appeals to the general interests of TQ's readership.
- The manuscript elucidates the relationship between theory and practice: Practical articles must be anchored in theory, and theoretical articles and reports of research must contain a discussion of implications or applications for practice.

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- The content of the manuscript is accessible not only to specialists in the area addressed but also to TQ's broad readership.
- The manuscript offers a new, original insight or interpretation and not just a restatement of others' ideas and views.
- The manuscript makes a significant (practical, useful, plausible) contribution to the field.
- The manuscript is likely to arouse readers' interest.
- The manuscript reflects sound scholarship and research design with appropriate, correctly interpreted references to other authors and works.
- The manuscript is well written and organized and conforms to the specifications of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.).

For accepted TQ papers, authors have the option of recording a short video abstract that will be accessible to readers via TAYR website and Facebook group. The article will retain its text abstract, but the video abstract will add another dimension and draw readers into an article in a new way.

TQ encourages authors to consider uploading their data collection materials to specialist repositories and databases and either citing or linking back to the primary research article. For example, IRIS is an online repository for data collection materials used for second language research. This includes data elicitation instruments such as interview and observation schedules, language tests and stimuli, pictures, questionnaires, software scripts, url links, word lists, teaching intervention activities, amongst many other types of materials used to elicit data. Please see <http://www.iris-database.org> for more information and to upload. Any questions may be addressed to iris@iris-database.org.

Submission categories:

Full-Length Articles

Full length articles typically present empirical research and analyze original data that the author has obtained using sound research methods. TQ publishes both quantitative and qualitative studies. Occasionally, this section features reflective articles (i.e., think pieces) that provide a comprehensive review of current knowledge in a specific area and present significant new directions for research.

Manuscripts should be no more than 8,500 words, including reference, notes, and tables. Please indicate the number of words at the end of the article.

To submit a manuscript for a full-length article, please send a Word version of it to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

To facilitate the submission process, please send the following items in a separate word document to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

- names and contact info for all authors
- cover letter
- abstract (200 words)
- manuscript (8,500 words)
- tables
- figures
- acknowledgments (if any)

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If you have questions about the submission process, please contact tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

Forum

TQ publishes four types of articles in the Forum:

- Commentaries from readers regarding current trends and practices in the English language research
- Responses to articles and reviews published in TQ
- Brief discussion of qualitative and quantitative research issues
- Brief discussions of teaching issues

Commentaries submitted to the Forum should generally be no longer than 3,400 words. Please indicate the number of words at the end of the manuscript.

Responses to articles should be no more than 1,500 words. Please indicate the number of words at the end of the manuscript. The article will be given to the author of the original article or review before publication for a reply that will be published with the response article. Unfortunately, TQ is unable to publish responses to previous exchanges.

To submit a manuscript to the Forum section, please send it to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

To facilitate the submission process, please send the following items in a separate word document:

- names and contact info for all authors
- cover letter
- manuscript (3,400 words for commentary; 1,500 words for a response)
- author bio(s)
- acknowledgments (if any)

If you have questions about the submission process, please contact tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

Research Letters

TQ also invites Research Letters (short reports) on any aspect of English research theory and practice. The editors encourage manuscripts that either present preliminary findings or focus on some aspect of a larger study. In all cases, the discussion of issues should be supported by empirical evidence, collected through qualitative or quantitative investigations. Research letters or summaries should present key concepts and results in a manner accessible to our diverse readership.

Submissions to this section should be no more than 3,400 words (including references, notes, and tables). Please indicate the number of words at the end of the research letter. Longer articles do not appear in this section and should be submitted to the full-length articles section.

To submit a manuscript to the Research Letters section, please send your work to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

To facilitate the submission process, please send the following items in a separate word document:

- names and contact info for all authors
- cover letter
- manuscript (3,400 words)
- tables
- figures
- author bio(s)

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- acknowledgments (if any)

If you have questions about the submission process, please send an email to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

Research and Teaching Issues

Contributions to Research Issues and Teaching Issues are typically solicited. The editors pose a question concerning a salient issue in research or teaching and invite someone in the field to write an answer.

Readers may send topic suggestions or make known their availability as contributors by writing directly to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

Contributions to Research or Teaching Issues should be no more than 3,400 words, including tables, figures, and notes, and references. Please indicate the number of words at the end of the manuscript.

If you have been invited to submit a manuscript, send it to tayr.tayr@gmail.com.

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- names and contact info for all authors
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- tables
- figures
- author bio(s)
- acknowledgments (if any)

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