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Master-Thesis im Studiengang: Kultur-Sprache-Medien

**Culture, Gender and Transformation in Alan
Warner's *Morvern Callar* and Victor
Pelevin's 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids':
A Comparative Approach**

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to compare the books of Alan Warner and Victor Pelevin in terms of culture, gender, and transformation. Both *Morvern Callar* and 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' are written in the genre of bildungsroman, which allows us to observe the transformation and growth of protagonists. As both protagonists are young females (one of them working in the brothel, and another one — overcoming suicide of her boyfriend) it is interesting to compare the gender issues they face throughout the narration. The books were published in 1996 (Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar*) and 2008 ('The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' by Victor Pelevin), at the turn of the twenty-first century and the third millennium. Both writings contain numerous cultural references, music and arts of the time. As well as comparing the cultures represented in the books, I will also investigate the way the Zeitgeist affected the protagonists.

Allan Warner's book describes the coming-of-age story of Morvern Callar, a twenty-one year old working-class superstore assistant, who finds her boyfriend dead on the kitchen floor. Experiencing life after his death, Morvern finds that her life actually improves. Morvern, whose name was taken from a peninsula in Scotland, can be considered to be a symbolisation of the land. Representing Scottishness she grows and develops, bringing new hope to her motherland.

Morvern's surname - Callar - derives from the Gaelic word 'caller'. According to The Oxford English Dictionary, 'caller' means 'fresh, as being opposed to what is beginning to corrupt', also 'cool' (OED Online, 2014). Arriving in Spain, however, Morvern finds out about the Spanish meaning of her name — 'silent'.

Morvern is undeniably a very quiet girl, a description repeated by many of the characters in the novel, yet she prefers the word 'taciturn'. She is a listener, not a speaker. Morvern prefers observing the people and the world around her, thus finding her way. Morvern's playlist (the book contains many of the songs included in it) tells us more about her feelings than Morvern herself. What makes Warner's book particularly interesting, is the way the story can be told by the means of culture and media with a minimum amount of commentary from the narrator. Pelevin's novella uses printed media more than audio. However, there are a number of songs mentioned in the narration.

In 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids', Lena, a young girl living in Moscow applies for a job in a luxurious brothel for the top Russian oligarchs. Her job is to stay and sing naked in a Malachite Hall, 'coloured to match'. Lena, who does not want to call her work prostitution, tells her friends they are 'more like geishas'. Reading a magazine named 'Counterculture', Lena wants to understand the concept of a counterculture itself as well as the principles of arts and culture in Russia. Her name, being a short form of Elena, means 'sunshine'. And consequently, Pelevin's protagonist can be found to seek light and follow it.

As a side effect of an injection of a secret serum Mantis-B, which makes singing caryatids staying perfectly still, Lena starts hallucinating. Discovering the world of mantises, she realises how dull and corrupted her human world is. After that Lena is looking for any opportunity to stay in a world of mantises forever.

'Dismemberment of Orpheus' by Ihab Hassan serves as the axis of comparison and the main source of inspiration for this work. Music (as a part of culture), the dead male figure (referring to gender issues), and dismemberment (definitely transforming young female protagonist's personality) — are the key elements of this research.

1. Culture

1.1 Definition of the term Culture

Widely used nowadays, the term *culture* has gone through a long transformation since its first use as a 'cultivation of the soul' (*Cultura autem animi philosophia est*) by Cicero. Agricultural metaphor (from Latin *cultura* 'a cultivating, agriculture') was used in the meaning of the development of a philosophical soul, which was supposed to be the highest possible ideal for the development of any human being (Cicero, M. T., trans. Yonge, C. D., 1888, p. 69).

The Age of Enlightenment saw a broadening of the meaning of culture. It is no longer limited by the boundaries of philosophy. Pufendorf, Rousseau, and Goethe used '*cultura animi*' in a wider sense. For them, cultivation of a soul was achieved not only through the education by philosophy, but also by science, ethics, and fine arts (Velkley, 2002).

1.2 Culture forming identity

As a central concept in anthropology in the twentieth century, culture has been mostly used as a shaping element of national identity. According to Herder, it is important to find a collective self and trace one's ethnic past through national history and language in order to obtain an authentic

identity of a person in connection with one's nation. Thus, a national identity is seen as an integral part of a personal identity (Smith, A. D., 1991, p. 14).

Therefore, if a culture is a shaping element of a national identity, and a national identity forms a personal identity, we cannot deny the major role of culture in a personal identity formation:

... a sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture. It is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know 'who we are' in the contemporary world. By rediscovering that culture we 'rediscover' ourselves, the 'authentic self', or so it has appeared to many divided and disoriented individuals who have had to contend with the vast changes and uncertainties of the modern world (ibid., p.17).

In both books analysed in this thesis, culture plays one of the major roles in forming the identities of protagonists. The goldish lighter and red nails, raves and Holger Czukay's music as well as Scottish coast and Highlands and Spanish resorts form the area of culture surrounding Morvern Callar, the main character of Alan Warner's novel of the same name. To a certain point they affect the development of her personality and contribute to the construction of Morvern's identity. The identity of Lena, the protagonist of Victor Pelevin's 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids', is influenced by popular culture and *Counterculture*, contemporary art installations and gossip

magazines. Thus, both characters develop contradictory identities based on the mixture of low and high cultures.

However, contrasts serve as integral parts of one's identity. They are the boundaries that define the borders of Us and separate Us from the Other. Jeffrey Weeks in his article *The Value of Difference* develops the idea that one's identity is formed by conflicts and contradictions:

Identities are not neutral. Behind the quest for identity are different, and often conflicting values. By saying who we are, we are also striving to express what we are, what we believe and what we desire. The problem is that these beliefs, needs and desires are often patently in conflict, not only between different communities but within individuals themselves (Weeks, 1990, p. 89).

Throughout the novel Morvern's personality gradually develops from a working class girl, who works at a supermarket in a small port town to a self-sufficient woman, who builds her future and is now ready to build a future of another human being, this being is a 'child of raves'. The development is not finished, yet, as the identity itself is an unstable notion. It changes and evolves many times in the course of one's life (Giddens, 1991). The same can be said about the character of the second novel. Lena's identity develops as her 'colleagues' talk about contemporary culture, politics and ideology. These characters develop not only intellectually and empirically, but also spiritually: Morvern's epiphany under the

pomegranate tree; Lena's imaginary conversations with the praying mantis.

This mirrors Jonathan Rutherford's theory of constantly changing personality, in which he argues a static object 'can only conjure up the past, freezing us in another moment':

Identification, if it is to be productive, can never be with some static and unchanging object. It is an interchange between self and structure, a transforming process (Rutherford, 1990, p. 14).

Therefore, the changes in the characters' personalities prove their development and are not only necessary, but inevitable. Though the way they change is particularly interesting.

1.3 Transnationalism and transculturalism

At the beginning of the book Morvern Callar appears to be an ordinary working class girl who has nothing to expect from the future. She has started to work in a supermarket at the age of thirteen. She is twenty-one at the time and is still doing the same job (she only changes the department — from meat section Morvern moves to vegetables). Her boyfriend has just committed suicide and Morvern, it would seem, was left with nothing to hope for, nothing to live for. However, she finds out that her boyfriend left her some money, goes on vacation to Spain, comes back,

and returns back to the Spanish rave scene. Spain appears to be the place where Morvern gets her second breath, a missing component that makes her identity transnational and transcultural.

Susan Street argues that the idea of escape is a fundamental aspect of Morvern's transnational identity. According to Street, 'Scotland as a narrative setting is less important than its function as a place to be left' (Street, 2009, p.143). Morvern seizes an opportunity to leave Scotland and escape to Spain. Running away from her past, she escapes the present through new experiences in a foreign country: warm and sunny Spain appears to be the opposite of cold and misty Scotland. Moreover, as Street points out, Morvern's home town is a place to be left by its own nature (as a port town), as one of these 'pastoral, port and waterside locations that in themselves indicate points of possible departure' (ibid., p. 148).

Spain, on the other hand, represents the far and exotic Other, promising a different, if not a new, life. As Rutherford argues, Otherness is no longer seen as a threat to Us but as a unique experience that can be sold:

Difference ceases to threaten, or to signify power relations.

Otherness is sought after for its exchange value, its exoticism and the pleasures, thrills and adventures it can offer (Rutherford, 1990, p. 11).

It is within the quest for identity, that difference becomes a significant part of one's uniqueness and individuality. In other words, 'cultural difference sells' (ibid., p. 11). Morvern Callar buys this difference to purchase a different self, to obtain a new Morvern, and she succeeds.

In Pelevin's 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' Lena is warned against dissidence by unknown authorities who appear to be a team of oligarchs, military and civil servants as well as brand managers and ideologists. However, the more she is brainwashed, the more questions arise in her head. These questions are often asked by the praying mantis appearing in Lena's mind after injections of a special serum Mantis-B and are answered by some of her fellow prostitutes who apparently hold a degree in Arts and are surprisingly well informed about contemporary culture and politics.

Thus, Buddhism of the world of mantises and consumerism of the gossip magazines, as well as conceptualism and nihilism of contemporary arts are mixed in her life. The same way as songs about Yugoslavia, ancient Greek and Roman culture, Russian oligarchs, American brands, Japanese Asya and black Kima, Cuban cigars, Kthulhu and Yahweh, Central Asian ornamental design, Wittgenstein and Faberge mix in a transcultural reality that surrounds Lena and shapes her identity.

Mikhail Epstein defines the notion of transculture as an interaction between cultures or a place 'outside' one particular culture. Thus, he compares transculture to Bakhtin's concept of 'Outsideness' (sometimes the term is used in its untranslated version '*vnenakhodimost'*):

Although transculture depends on the efforts of separate individuals to overcome their identification with specific cultures, on another level it is a process of interaction between cultures themselves in which more and more individuals find themselves

"outside" of any particular culture, "outside" of its national, racial, sexual, ideological, and other limitations. I would compare this condition with Bakhtin's idea of *vnenakhodimost*, which means being located beyond any particular mode of existence, or, in this case, finding one's place on the border of existing cultures. This realm beyond all cultures is located inside transculture (Epstein, 1999, p. 30).

Hence the questions arise: Where are the borders of any particular culture? What do we call the new cultural existence? To understand the cultural shifts and their nature it is necessary to have a closer look at the subcultures represented in the books.

2. Cultural Transformation. Subcultures

2.1 High Culture

High culture as a contrast to low culture represents the culture of a higher society with its elevated style based on the aesthetic ideals of Roman and Greek classics. Matthew Arnold, who defines culture as 'a study of perfection' establishes a High Victorian cultural agenda as a model of high culture. He also argues that culture as a study is directed inward, which helps one not to obtain something but become it:

If culture, then, is a study of perfection, and of harmonious perfection, general perfection, and perfection which consist in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances, - it is clear that culture [...] has a very important function to fulfil for mankind (Arnold, 1869, p. 14).

Arnold has also brought to the academic world the term Philistines, naming Philistines 'the people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich' (ibid., p. 20). By that Arnold assumes that the culture is not the privilege of rich people, as they may as well be Philistines. This proves his idea that high culture 'seeks to do away with classes' and does not depend on one's wealth but on one's inward development.

Bourdieu, on the contrary, argues that the 'art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 7). High culture or taste, according to him, is a matter of one's class fractions (class-based social groups). Although the notion of taste is broader than high culture, as it includes not only etiquette, but appreciation of fine food and wine, and even military service, it also relates to different social codes, which can be observed in the dominant class, and cannot be accessed by the lower classes. Thus, according to Bourdieu, high culture is a prerogative of a high class.

Morvern Callar spent most of her life in a small port town of Scotland being fostered by a working-class family. She grew up in The Complex, which, according to Alastair Robertson 'is one of two council housing estates on the outer perimeters' of Oban, Alan Warner's native town (Robertson, 2002). Morvern herself describes The Complex as a place where she 'had had to grow up. Where one young husband owned a camcorder so his four married brothers and him swapped porno videos of their unknowing wives' (Warner, 1996, p. 43).

Thus, according to Bourdieu's theory, Morvern should have stayed at the same level as where she was brought up. As a representative of a working-class aesthetics she should have experienced her 'relationship to the aesthetic norms in a twofold and contradictory way':

...the working-class 'aesthetic' is a dominated aesthetic, which is constantly obliged to define itself in terms of the dominant aesthetics (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 41).

However, Morvern does not simply 'define herself in terms of the dominant class'. From the very first pages we read about Morvern's musical preferences, partly shaped by her dead boyfriend. She listens to 'new ambient, queer jazzish, darkside hardcore' music as well as to some classical recordings (Warner, 1996, p. 4). When she has brought the dead body, that was 'heavier than a six-wheeler loaded with tatties' upstairs to the loft, she listened to Stravinsky's 'Orpheus'. Listening to the ballet, Morvern watches her dead boyfriend. Her thoughts are not the thoughts of a 'dominated class', described by Bourdieu as 'a waste of time' (Bour-

dieu, 1996, p. 41). Morvern reflects in a mildly observing, even poetic way:

It started snowing again and flakes spun in through the skylights to the music. His lips were dusted with a layer falling right onto them (Warner, 1996, p. 43).

The ballet 'Orpheus', in its turn, refers to the myth of Orpheus, a legendary musician and poet from the ancient Greek myth, known for his magnificent music that was able to move even stones and trees. Like Orpheus, Morvern's boyfriend brought her to a different level of life by means of music. He enlarged her playlist being alive and raised her confidence and self-awareness being dead.

2.2 Dismemberment of Orpheus

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, after being torn apart by Maenads, Orpheus (more precisely, his head) is still singing (Ovid, trans. Garth, 1961, book XI), just like Morvern's dead boyfriend, being dismembered and buried in the Highlands, still follows Morvern with his music. Yet, Morvern does not stay under His dead patriarchic eye for a long time. Having read His 'Live the life people like me have denied you. You are better than us', Morvern types on the novel's title her name over her boyfriend's (Warner, 1996, p. 82).

The same effect we can see with the music that Morvern's boyfriend left her. While in the beginning of the novel Morvern distinguishes all the recordings she has into her boyfriend's and hers, this difference disappears by the end of the book. There is no more clear distinction between Morvern's records and her boyfriend's ones. Every piece of music becomes Morvern's. These are her records, playing in her walkman, shaping her life.

There is a soundtrack to almost every moment of Morvern's life (see appendix 1). She listens to the music in Scotland and in Spain, in the air-space between the countries and in the time space between two radically different periods of her life. This music does not merely serve as a background to the story. Morvern's recordings shape her identity. Moreover, at the most important and difficult moments of Morvern's life she turns her Walkman on to immerse into an alternative reality. Thus, she creates an alternative self, not a mere superstore assistant, but an adult and mature Morvern, who knows what she wants and where she goes.

While cutting her boyfriend's body to pieces, Morvern listens to her favourite jazz and ambient music, which can be seen in terms of Ihab Hassan's 'Dismemberment of Orpheus' as Postmodernism overcoming Modernism. Since the aesthetic of fragmentary narration is central to postmodern literature, the postmodern music reflects the literary 'fragmentation' of Morvern's dead boyfriend. Dismemberment of Morvern's dead boyfriend can also be seen as deconstruction of the text. Piece by piece Morvern tears off the limbs of her beloved, as if a postmodern

reader deconstructs a novel. 'Orpheus' is dead and dismembered; his classical recordings are overlapped by Morvern's fragmented ambient music.

According to Ihab Hassan, postmodern art proclaims dismemberment a central notion to contemporary life. Confirming this idea with the words of Lionel Trilling, Hassan claims:

... The idea of losing oneself up to the point of self-destruction, of surrendering oneself to experience without regard to self-interest or conventional morality, of escaping wholly from societal bonds, is an element somewhere in the mind of every modern person (Trilling, qtd. in Hassan, 1982, p. XV).

Drawing schematic differences between the two movements, Hassan provides a table, where postmodernism is opposed to modernism (see Appendix 2). Giving further explanations to the table, he clarifies that this comparison is based on ideas such as 'rhetoric, linguistics, literary theory, philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, political science and even theology' (Hassan, 1982, p. 268). Yet, the author admits, that the dichotomies 'remain insecure and equivocal' (ibid., 269).

In fact, substituting postmodernism with Morvern and modernism with her dead boyfriend, we can agree with most of Hassan's ideas (see Appendix 2). It is obvious, that Morvern's opportunism (taking 'chances'), anarchy, silence, deconstruction, and absence (both physical and mental) contrast with her boyfriend's thoughtfulness: design, hierarchy, logos, creation and

presence (in spite of his death at the beginning of the novel, the memory of him is present throughout all the narration).

Continuing this comparison of Morvern as a contemporary substance (art, culture, music, literature, and life in general) and her dead boyfriend as a past, it is interesting to see it in terms of Bakhtin's theory.

In 'Epic and Novel,' the first part of *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin investigates the differences of the novel in comparison to the epic. Calling the epic a "high genre" Bakhtin outlines its structure comparing the epic to the marble (unchangeable, solid), while the novel is compared to the clay (soft and adjustable).

The epic, according to Bakhtin, reflects on the events that happened in the distant past. These events cannot be changed or altered. Thus, all high genres (i. e. classical literature) 'are structured in the zone of the distanced image, a zone outside any possible contact with the present in all its openendedness', argues Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 23).

This distant past is Morvern's dead boyfriend. His footprints in Morvern's life are solid and unamendable. He is dead and obviously cannot directly contact the present.

Morvern, being an allegory of the present, 'cannot become an object of representation for the high genres' as a 'reality of a lower order in comparison with the epic past' (ibid., p. 23).

Thus, it is possible to conclude that according to Bakhtin's theory Morvern represents the present in terms of time, the novel in terms of a literary form, and the lower genre in terms of a literary hierarchy.

Her dead boyfriend, on the other hand, is the idealised past (Morvern even writes He with the capital letter), the epic:

This idealisation of the past in high genres has something of an official air. All external expressions of the dominant force and truth (the expression of everything conclusive) were formulated in the valorised-hierarchical category of the past, in a distanced and distant image (everything from gesture and clothing to literary style, for all are symbols of authority). The novel, however, is associated with the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought (holiday forms, familiar speech, profanation) (ibid., p. 24).

Thus, it is not only the class difference that separates Morvern from her dead boyfriend, placing her inferior. As a representative of a contemporary culture, she is bound to possess this transitional position of a 'flow' and cannot escape the prevalence of a low (or mass) culture in her life.

The same parallels can be found in 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids'. Though dismemberment of the oligarch Botvinik is the final scene of the novella, it is a crucial point for a postmodern protagonist, singing prostitute Lena, to overcome the modern world she was living in.

This comparison of a prostitute with a postmodern culture echoes in Bakhtin's statement:

The word postmodernism sounds not only awkward, uncouth; it evokes what it wishes to surpass or suppress, modernism itself.

The term thus contains its enemy within (Hassan, 1982, p. 263).

Lena tears off the head of the oligarch under the influence of a drug injection. The serum Mantis-B was used to make the singing caryatids remain motionless for hours. Yet, it had some side effects, causing them hallucinations of seeing — a praying mantis. After the imaginary mantis explained the sexual cannibalism of the species and ensured Lena: 'this is the very best thing that one creature can do for another' (Pelevin, 2011), Lena set her client 'free'. This happens directly after the sexual encounter: 'As soon as it was over, Lena followed the promptings of the ageless wisdom. She squeezed Botvinik's head tightly between her spiky hands and tugged hard' (ibid.).

The scene of a prostitute killing a client while 'dancing the dance that engenders new life' (ibid.) perfectly reflects Bakhtin's theory about postmodernism containing modernism within it.

Comparing Lena with the oligarch Botvinik in terms of Ihab Hassan's table of postmodernism vs modernism (see Appendix 2), the following differences can be found:

Botvinik: Conjunctive (physical 'conjunction' with Lena) and closed (a billionaire was mentioned in the *Eligible Bachelors of Russia*, though there were several theories about his life and no clarity), purpose (a serious businessman he has a clear aim at the Malachite Hall, where Lena works. He has got just 'half an hour'), design, hierarchy, finished work, type (as an 'eligible bachelor of Russia').

Lena: Disjunctive (literally makes Botvinik's body disjunct) and open (as a prostitute to anyone who pays), play (a job as a Singing Caryatid),

chance, anarchy, process, desire, mutant (imagining being a mantis, 'hiding her second pair of legs behind the first' (ibid.)).

Remarkably, this Orpheus (if we transfer the myth of dismemberment of Orpheus to Botvinik) does not play any instrument himself. However, the music begins as he enters the Malachite Hall. He is the oligarchic type of a modern Orpheus, producing songs not by the means of his vocal cords but by his money.

The list of the songs sung by singing caryatids (see Appendix 3) consists of a mixture of classical and rock music. Apart from this, in his book Pelevin mentions controversial Russian ska-punk singer Shnur, the Eurovision contest, and the Soviet Anthem. The music mentioned in the book is a set of bits and pieces that mixes musical styles and genres in one, just as mass culture does.

However, there is a song that goes through the narrative as a common thread. Nautilus Pompilius's 'Wheels of Love' serve as a warning to the characters, describing love as a death machine, rolling through the people. An epigraph to the song 'As Karenina wrote in her letter to Marilyn¹, the wheels of love will squeeze us into a pancake' is not mentioned in the novella. Yet, the song and the 'squeezing' (as with Botvinik's head in the final scene) of people, their lives and hopes under the wheels of love becomes a leitmotif of the novella.

¹ Marilyn Monroe, who also committed suicide

“Eve and Adam, they both knew, the wheels of love roll on through . . . ,” began Lena at the audition singing naked while staying on one leg, but she hit a flat note and stopped. This flat note sounds as a warning to her entering the world of commercial love.

Next time when Lena sees the luxurious limousine she ‘lowered her eyes to the glittering nickel-plated hubcaps, surrounded by black rubber. She realised these were the very same wheels of love that she had sung about at the audition. “The important thing now is not to hit any flat notes,” she murmured’ (ibid.).

Trying not to do anything wrong and ‘not to hit any flat notes’ singing caryatids, who all had “Wheels of Love” in their sets, are working in the Malachite Hall. It is important to know that in Russian drug slang ‘wheels’ mean ‘drugs having round form, pills’ and the phrase ‘under the wheels of love’ can also be translated as ‘high on the drugs of love’. Thus, the love can be seen as a drug, which ruins lives.

The caryatids meet oligarch Botvinik with the same song at the final scene, when Lena steps off her caryatid’s pedestal, switching to the national anthem of the Soviet Union just a moment before Botvinik’s death.

As Lena is struggling to tear the head of a grey mantis (Botvinik) off, her fellow caryatids change the song from the ‘Wheels of Love’ to Paul Robeson’s English version of the national anthem of the USSR. The head is finally torn off accompanied by the words: ‘Strong in our friendship tried by fire, Long may our crimson flag inspire...’ (ibid.).

Thus, when Orpheus is finally dismembered, it is a high culture (an 'art music') that marks his departure. Again, there is a dichotomy of a female protagonist versus male, postmodern against modern, a maenad tearing off the head of Orpheus.

2.3 Low Culture

However, it would not be correct to talk about the two books solely in relation to the dichotomy of high and low culture in them. Both Lena and Morvern cannot be considered as representatives of high or low culture solely. The mixture of the subcultures can be explained by the way of life they (and all the other characters, moreover, other people) have or, simply, by the epoch of postmodernity.

To explain the inherence of the subcultures from one another we should have a closer look at the phenomenon of low culture itself. Herbert J. Gans describes low culture as 'the culture of the older lower-middle class, but mainly of the skilled and semiskilled factory and service workers, and of the semiskilled white collar workers, the people who obtained nonacademic high school educations and often dropped out after the tenth grade' (Gans, 1975, p. 89).

This description coincides with Morvern's life. As far as we know from the description of her past (and Morvern does not say much about her child-

hood), she was an orphan adopted at a very young age: 'it was only before my fostermum died they explained I was orphaned' (Warner, 1996, p. 20). We can notice that there is no self-pity in Morvern's words but she does take pity on the weaker individuals:

...My fostermum couldn't have children so her and Red Hanna fostered me and took in other Special Girls every summer. I goes about the girl I shared the bunk with for summer. She always wore suppositories and changed them three times a day. Eventually she told me that her father used to attack her every night. She discovered that if she wore suppositories he couldn't get in her that way and I cuddled her all night (ibid., p. 20).

Yet, her working class environment did not take any pity on Morvern herself, and she had to start working at the superstore at the age of thirteen, deprived of further education or career prospects:

Cause of tallness I had started part-time with the superstore when thirteen, the year it got build. The superstore turned a blind eye; get as much out you as they can. You ruin your chances at school doing every evening and weekend. The manager has you working all hours cash in hand, no insurance, so when fifteen or sixteen you go full-time at the start of that summer and never go back to school (ibid., p. 10).

Thus, growing up in a working class family and surrounded by working class colleagues, Morvern seems to be an ordinary representative of low culture. However, the standards of her cultural and social life do not

match the standards provided by Herbert J. Gans. Among the standards of low culture Gans names the following:

- a) Aesthetic standards of low culture stress substance, form and being totally subservient; there is no explicit concern with abstract ideas or even with fictional forms of contemporary social problems and issues;
- b) Low culture fiction is often melodramatic and its world is divided more clearly into heroes and villains, with the former always winning out eventually over the latter;
- c) Working-class society practices sexual segregation in social life: male and female roles are sharply differentiated. [...] These patterns are reflected in low culture, so that there are male and female types of content, rarely shared by both sexes. (Gans, 1975, p. 90).

From the very beginning of the novel we can definitely say that Morvern does not actually play up to a specific gender role (see chapter 3 for a detailed description). There is no melodramatic attitude. Moreover, Morvern seems to face the suicide of her boyfriend without any drama, at least without any vocal drama. Abstract ideas fill the novel as well as Morvern's life throughout the novel: from her ambient recordings to the epiphanic scene under the pomegranate tree. Thus, the ordinary working-class girl appears to share some other standards, different from the low culture.

There is not much information about the childhood of Lena, the protagonist of 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids'. However, it is possible to trace her environment by the remarks she is leaving throughout the novella.

The girl lives in the South-West of Moscow, Belyaev metro station, which is among the last stations on the South of Moscow. Thus, we see that Lena lives in the suburbs and not in the centre of the city. We don't know much about her ambitions, but she obviously does not enjoy the idea of becoming a singing prostitute:

As she got dressed, she gazed self-consciously into the trash can — as if she had accepted that that was where she belonged from now on (Pelevin, 2011).

Lena's fellow singing caryatid Vera, on the contrary, admitted: 'for this kind of money I'd work as a car-jack, never mind a caryatid. My father's an alcoholic; at night I push my desk against the door to keep him out. I need my own apartment' (ibid.). There is no sign of an alcoholic father in Lena's life, yet, she yearns to enter the luxurious life of oligarchs.

Listening to the description of the 'aberrations' of Russian oligarchs, Lena 'suddenly wanted so badly to take a sip of twenty-thousand-Euros-a-bottle wine that her mouth started watering' (ibid.). Reading the 'Eligible Bachelors of Russia' Lena mentioned: 'You can always find something good in anyone. And when someone has a few billion dollars, you can find an awful lot of something good. You just have to look for it' (ibid.).

We definitely cannot call Lena a working or lower-middle class representative: she is reading any time she has a spare minute and takes interest not only in 'Eligible Bachelors of Russia,' but in arts and culture. Lena was reading a book waiting for the audition where she was 'aware that she

would have to sing naked'. She was reading 'Counterculture' every time the minibus took her and her fellow caryatids to and from work.

Hence, can we call a prostitute a representative of a high culture? Definitely not, as taking interest in arts and culture, Lena herself 'was quite disgruntled to realise her own ignorance in matters of contemporary culture'. She 'had genuinely believed that the artist Kulik had earned a fortune by chirping like a bird, and that "shvydkoi" was a Ukrainian term of abuse with a vile anti-Semitic aftertaste, not the surname of the head of the Federal Agency for Culture and Cinematography' (ibid.).

2.4 Mass Culture

If the books deal not solely with high culture, and not solely with low culture, we should find a subculture that combines the elements of both.

Herbert J. Gans unites this notion under the term 'mass culture':

The term *mass culture* is a combination of two German ideas: *Masse* and *Kultur*. The mass is (or was) the nonaristocratic, uneducated portion of European society, especially the people who today might be described as lower-middle class, working class, and poor. *Kultur* translates as *high culture*; it refers not only to the art, music, literature, and other symbolic products that were (and are) preferred by the well-educated elite of that

European society but also to the styles of thought and feelings of those who choose these products - those who are “cultured”. Mass culture, on the other hand, refers to the symbolic products used by the “uncultured” majority (Gans, 1975, p. 9-10).

Thus, it is the mass culture that combines the elements of both high and low culture. However, the term remains pejorative, as the main audience of mass culture is ‘mass’ and the boundaries of cultural forms are defined by the mainstream. As Gans points out:

... mass suggests an undifferentiated collectivity, even a mob, rather than individuals or members of a group (ibid., p. 10).

It is a loss of individuality that depersonalises any consumer of mass culture. Meaning, it is no longer a ‘representative’, but a ‘consumer’, as mass culture commodifies any forms of culture and turns any interaction with it into consumption.

Theodor Adorno replaces the term ‘mass culture’ with ‘culture industry’ in his essay *Culture Industry Reconsidered*:

We replaced that expression with 'culture industry' in order to exclude from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates: that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art (Adorno, 1975).

It is important to understand, claims Adorno, that mass culture (called ‘culture industry’) does not arise from the masses. Its products ‘are tailored for consumption by masses’ by the industry, turning the cultural ob-

jects into commodified objects. Calling the culture industry a 'system almost without a gap' Adorno believes that culture is used solely to create the income of its producers, intentionally integrating both the low and high art:

To the detriment of both it forces together the spheres of high and low art, separated for thousands of years. The seriousness of high art is destroyed in speculation about its efficacy; the seriousness of the lower perishes with the civilisational constraints imposed on the rebellious resistance inherent within it as long as social control was not yet total (ibid.).

Apart from commodifying the objects of art Adorno accuses the culture industry of strengthening masses' mentality, or manipulating:

The culture industry misuses its concern for the masses in order to duplicate, reinforce and strengthen their mentality, which it presumes is given and unchangeable. How this mentality might be changed is excluded throughout. The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry, even though the culture industry itself could scarcely exist without adapting to the masses (ibid.).

A number of magazines and other media mentioned in Pelevin's book illustrate the way ideology works. Reading an article of the 'Eligible Bachelors of Russia' Lena does not only learn the names of the 'eligible' oligarchs, she immerses in a new world of mysterious linguistic games, such as Crypto-Speak, Combat NLP and ideology. More detailed discus-

sion of 'Combat NLP' will be given in chapter 4 'Transformation' of this thesis. As for ideology, it appears to be the tricky notion that confuses and disconcerts Lena. Reading an article about oligarch Botvinik, she admits it is 'a bit too highbrow':

... Some phrases seemed like total gibberish to Lena, even though they consisted of words that she understood. For instance: "In modern Russia, ideologies have been displaced by technologies, which means that Botvinik, who fronted the new generation of neurolinguistic technicians, can quite legitimately be called both the supreme technologist for all the ideologists and the supreme ideologist for all the technologists . . ." Lena read this part through again twice, but she still didn't understand what it was all about (Pelevin, 2011).

After a death of Ekaterina Simonuk 'employed as an erotic decorative element in the blue billiard room' Lena and her colleagues are having a meeting with an ideologist, who is trying to brainwash the sex workers against any revolt, or, as uncle Pete mentions to caryatids, will 'explain everything to you in human terms so you don't develop any metastases in your brains' (ibid.).

The ideologist, who is not given any name, arrives in a full Second World War uniform and is sowing the seeds of anti-Western paranoia. He tries to evoke quasi-patriotism and make the sex workers proud of their service to Russian oligarchs (and not Western ones):

There is an undeclared war going on, and every time we feel in our hearts a pang of apparently just resentment at the excesses of our wealthy Russian knuckleheads, the oligarchs in London rub their sweaty hands together and laugh (ibid.).

Apart from this, he accuses Western media of brainwashing (not mentioning that this is exactly what he is doing himself), making clear that Lena's colleagues are too naive to understand anything about politics and have to trust the Motherland, and simply do as they were told:

This tragedy shows just how much impact the media bombardment from London and New York actually has. Don't think that you are too smart or above this. Don't think that this brainwashing doesn't work on you, that it's as unnatural as plastic. The brainwashing even works on me (ibid.).

This talk leaves Lena perplexed and confused, understanding that the ideologist has just twisted everything around 'just like a Möbius strip' (ibid.).

2.5 Counterculture

The world of people with its ideology, greed and lust gradually becomes dull, uncomfortable and depressive for Lena, who gets addicted to the drug. At this moment, she wants to spend more time in the world of man-

tises because it 'was a good place to be' as 'there was no gloom in it' (ibid.). The only salvation for her now is the 'Counterculture' magazine, which she reads every time the minibus brings Lena back home.

The term *counterculture* was coined by Theodore Roszak to describe the youth culture of the 1960s. In his book *The Making of a Counter Culture* Roszak finds common ground between newly emerging hippie culture and student radicals of the 60s. Their mutual rejection of the regime that Roszak calls *technocracy* serves as a basis for the culture that goes against the mainstream, the *counter* culture:

... a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion (Roszak, 1969, p. 42).

Continuing the investigation of counterculture, Roszak discusses in his book, Roszak refers to Herbert Marcuse's image of Orpheus as a counterculture hero:

Orpheus and Narcissus [Marcuse observes] have not become the culture-heroes of the Western world: theirs is the image of joy and fulfilment; the voice which does not command but sings; the gesture which offers and receives; the deed which is peace and ends the labor of conquest; the liberation from time which unites man with god, man and nature (Marcuse, qtd. in Roszak, 1969, p. 98).

Marcuse in *Eros and Civilisation* claims that the nature of Orpheus and Narcissus is 'the revolt against culture based on toil, domination, and renunciation' (Marcuse, 1966, p. 164). Consequently, dismembered poet and musician Orpheus appears to be the first proclaimer of a culture of rebellion.

In Pelevin's novella, Lena's first encounter with 'Counterculture' happens when she opens the 'Eligible Bachelors of Russia' and finds 'another slim, badly tattered magazine, titled Counterculture' (Pelevin, 2011). At first, she could not even understand if it was a supplement or a separate publication. Therefore, it is a world of 'Eligible Bachelors' (i.e. oligarchs) who support the counterculture financially. The world, represented by oligarch Botvinik playing a role of Orpheus, brings the counterculture to the attention of the main protagonist.

When Lena asks her fellow caryatids about the notion of counterculture they give her controversial answers. However, each of them correctly describes the counterculture from different perspectives. While sensitive Asya describes counterculture as 'the aesthetic of anti-bourgeois revolt, expropriated by the ruling elite', smart and cynical Kima explains it as a market niche:

And not just here, it's the same all over the world. Think of it — 'counter' — counterculture is any commodity someone's hoping to sell big-time, so they put it on the checkout counter (ibid.).

Expropriated by the oligarchs, the cultural revolt of 'Counterculture' magazine leaves its reader with the 'self-assured pride in the country's suc-

cess' (ibid.). Thus, the magazine serves as a tool of ideology. Anthony D'Andrea in *Global Nomads* proves the power of counterculture calling it 'a type of radicalised subculture, operating as a potent ideological referent in times of crisis' (D'Andrea, 2007, p. 20).

In Pelevin's Russia, thus, there is basically no other culture outside the oligarchy. Botvinik - the contemporary Orpheus - brings to Lena's attention the issue of 'Counterculture'; he pays for the music in the Malachite Hall. The oligarchy, therefore, provides both the official ideology and the fake countercultural ideology of a seeming revolt. The ideology of 'pocket dissidents' that writes on the same wall:

"BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD." – FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

and

"BEAUTY SUCKS D . . K." – LARRY FLYNT (Pelevin, 2011).

As a result, the 'beauty' decides to set her client free and is freed (simply killed) herself. Lena chooses the world of mantises, happily leaving the human world:

"I wonder what's inside me?" she thought. "Could it really be that same grey, stinking stuff? Well, now we'll find out... No, it's not the same. There, look at it. It's bright... luminous... pure... It's so very beautiful..." (ibid.)

The theme of departure, (whether from the real world to the world imaginary or from a homeland to another country) unites the two protagonists under the term 'neo-nomads'. Anthony D'Andrea in his study *Global No-*

mads provides an overview of critical studies on nomadic cultures, transnationalism, and transculturalism. To explain the notion of 'nomads' D'Andrea uses a famous epithet from *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari 'The nomad does not move'. By this D'Andrea clarifies that the neo-nomadism he is talking about in his book must be understood not as a mere state of movement, but more as a state of mind and being. Describing the lifestyle of contemporary Western neo-nomads who travel to Spain and India, D'Andrea does not deny the political or ideological concept of this counterculture:

New digital technologies of music, drugs and media have become constitutive of these cultures of resistance which sought to oppose the neoliberal order of Thatcher and Reagan (D'Andrea, 2007, p. 21)

Thus, D'Andrea admits the political reasons of the raves calling them a 'global counterculture', and unites several music genres of the 90s under an umbrella term 'Techno':

Techno is an umbrella term that comprises the whole range of electronic music genres (house, techno, jungle, trance, ambient, etc.), its ritual sites (rave, nightclub and trance parties) and subcultural components (fashion, music, drugs, lifestyle), all of which are associated with the rise and popularisation of digital technologies of art production, diffusion and consumption, notably music and iconography. Techno, in sum, signifies the emergence of aesthetic-political-technological forms regiment-

ed within a global counterculture that has to interact locally with multiple national cultures and institutional apparatuses in a variety of places globally (ibid., p. 21).

Morvern's ambient music travels with her from Scotland to Spain, enlarging the boundaries of Scottish working class counterculture. On the Spanish shore it smoothly transforms into a global Techno counterculture, as Morvern moves from the Mantrap pub with ceilidh and whiskey to the rave scenes with psychedelics.

Quoting Simon Reynolds D'Andrea claims that Techno culture became more than music, obtaining a form of religion. In fact, the development of the New Age subculture takes its roots from the counterculture of the 60s, transforming its aesthetics into a new belief that marks the second half of the 20th century:

Rave is more than music plus drugs, it is a matrix of lifestyle, ritualised behaviour and beliefs. To the participant, it feels like a religion; to the mainstream observer, it looks more like a sinister cult (Reynolds, qtd. in D'Andrea, 2007, p. 20).

This is the new religion of Morvern Callar, who discovers her spirituality on the shore of Spain. Walking to the nightclub she discovers a street procession of local people. Fascinated with the mystery she follows the crowd, seeing their local patron saint - 'the pale model of the virgin saint girl' as tall as Morvern herself (Warner, 1996, p. 154).

This comparison to the saint model being carried by the procession through the streets of a village, put on a vessel and burned while floating

in the sea, affects Morvern significantly. Keeping with her personality Morvern does not say a word. This night she turns to the hotel instead of the nightclub.

Gradually, the superstore assistant turns into a neo-nomadic wanderer, discovering and, more importantly, enjoying the lifestyle of the Spanish shore. This mirrors what Anthony D'Andrea describes as an 'alternative identity' that is developed due to the experiments (including psychedelic) of the counterculture:

Techno and New Age simultaneously constitute and express a global counterculture that, while being continuously co-opted by states of discipline and markets of desire, also entails the possibility of alternative identities based on metamorphic experimentation (D'Andrea, 2007, p. 226).

Morvern's psychedelic experiences generally are situated in Spain. However, her drug experiments continue in other places. When she comes to London to meet the publishers Susan and Tom, these seemingly cold and remote people gradually become warmer to Morvern (or just drunk), and Susan leads Morvern to the toilet to sniff 'this little bit white powder Susan had' (Warner, 1996, p. 162). As Roszak explains the drug use, it is a part of a revolt against the parental society. Drugs, according to Roszak, appear to be the tool of counterculture:

At the bohemian fringe of our disaffected youth culture, all roads lead to psychedelia. The fascination with hallucinogenic drugs emerges persistently as the common denominator of the

many protean forms the counter culture has assumed in the post World War II period. Correctly understood (which it all too seldom is), psychedelic experience participates significantly in the young's most radical rejection of the parental society (Roszak, 1969, p. 155).

However, the most prominent Morvern's psychedelic trip is described on the shore of Spain. Wandering around the village after taking drugs Morvern falls asleep at the orchard, among the orange and pomegranate trees. The scene of her awakening is extremely colourful. Warner describes the environment using intense psychedelic colours perceived by Morvern's altered mind: 'all citrusy' horizon, 'pinkish' bar of the sky, 'purple-like' shadows, 'peach' roof, 'pools of silver on all the greenery' (Warner, 1996, p. 211). Narrative itself focuses on Morvern's perception, depicting the image in her mind, rejecting any analyses, revealing none of Morvern's thoughts. She tries to stand up but is still not able to control her body. As she falls down Morvern's palm hits the stone and two fingernails fall off. Morvern faints and when she wakes up again she seems to be finally able to stand up, asking some powers to give her strength for 'a little longer'. This is the crucial moment revealing Morvern's faith that was not mentioned in the book before:

I took some slow steps forward not looking down at the cut knee. Just a little longer. Please, I says out loud (ibid., p. 211).

We cannot claim that the transformation of Morvern's personality took place due to her psychedelic experiments. However, the altered state of

consciousness was a notable part of Morvern's experience that moved her forward. Roszak, in *The Making of a Counter Culture* argues against the psychedelic propaganda of counterculture. Yet, he admits that psychedelic experience can serve as a method of exploration of one's consciousness:

If we accept the proposition that the counter culture is, essentially, an exploration of the politics of consciousness, then psychedelic experience falls into place as one, but only one, possible method of mounting that exploration. It becomes a limited chemical means to a greater psychic end, namely, the reformulation of the personality, upon which social ideology and culture generally are ultimately based (Roszak, 1969, p. 156).

2.6 Death in the books

It is the sight of two broken scarlet nails being carried away by ants that Morvern describes as the last memory of Spain. Her red blood and broken nails under the pomegranate tree appear to be the last debts paid to the shore for Morvern's experience of coming of age. The pomegranate tree with its overripe fruits is described as a dead creature with its flesh surrounded with flies:

All fruits on branches were burst right open and the bright reddy insides had spilled out in the sun. Clumps of flies were feeding on the peeled-back, split skin and glistening flesh. It looked like little burst, mutilated creatures were up the pomegranate tree (Warner, 1996, p. 211).

Thus, the last psychedelic experience of Morvern's ends up with the image of death. The pomegranate tree itself represents the death, acquiring this symbolical meaning in the myth of Persephone. She was tricked by Hades to eat some seeds of pomegranate, what makes her stay in the Underworld every half a year (Ovid, trans. Garth, 1961, book V).

Imposing death as a central theme of the novel, Warner leads his protagonist through the chain of dark macabre experiences. From the very beginning of the book Morvern has to face the end of life. As she realises that her boyfriend has committed suicide, she lights a cigarette while observing his dead body:

He'd cut His throat with the knife. He'd near chopped off His hand with the meat cleaver. He couldnt object so I lit a Silk Cut (Warner, 1996, p. 211).

His 'cut' leads Morvern to her 'Cut', a pack of cigarettes that can be smoked indoors, as the boyfriend is dead now and cannot object. This very first depiction of the death is liberating for Morvern. Her first thought after her boyfriend's death is not about grief or catastrophe, but about the prohibition, which is no longer valid.

After deciding not to tell anyone about the death of her boyfriend, Morvern takes as much benefit from the situation as she can: she receives money (first, from her boyfriend and then from his father, then more from the earnings of the novel), new social status (she is suddenly no longer a superstore assistant, but a 'Writer on Holidays', echoing Roland Barthes's essay of the same name) and endless freedom. However, Morvern's discourse is still full of traces of death. Morvern and her friends use the word 'mortal' instead of 'drunk', 'dead' is added to emphasise the meaning of the next adjective or adverb, serving as 'very': 'dead clear freezing day', 'dead exciting running snowball fight', 'dead brilliant dear-looking pedicure set', 'to come dead quick', etc.

The motif of death continues in London, when Morvern goes with the publishers Tom and Susan to a nightclub:

The guy behind the bar told us the club owner could only get the black marble for the bar from a stonemason who made graves and if you felt under the rim where I was standing you could feel an abandoned inscription. I ran my fingers under and it was right enough; we were leaned against all these grave stones (ibid., p. 211).

Returning to the resort in Spain after receiving the inheritance, Morvern reflects on the nails growing: 'It's proved nails grow quicker in summers and even for a while after you're dead. Not having the superstore work anymore, my nails did brilliantly' (ibid., p. 211). However, these are her nails that she has to lose in the final scene in Spain. The nails that were

supposed to be growing even after her death, fall off while Morvern is still alive. The ants carry them away as a symbol of her old life that has already come to an end.

The further to the end of the book, the less Morvern mentions her dead boyfriend. It is a new life in her, a child of raves, who preoccupies her now, not the old life with her boyfriend. While at the beginning of the book we often find the capital H for Him (as Morvern calls her boyfriend), it is totally impossible to find it by the end of the novel. The reason for this worshipful addressing to a dead one is not mere love or attachment, it is His superiority over Morvern. His higher social, financial, and cultural position multiplied by the status of a dead man made a memory of Him sacred, even though his death was liberating for Morvern from the very beginning. As Bakhtin claims in *The Dialogic Imagination* 'The dead are loved in a different way' (Bakhtin, 2008, p.24). A high genre epic narration which can be compared to Morvern's dead boyfriend himself (see chapter 2.1 of the thesis) idealises the past and the death:

The dead are loved in a different way. They are removed from the sphere of contact, one can and indeed must speak of them in a different style. Language about the dead is stylistically quite distinct from language about the living (ibid., p.24).

However, this love 'in a different way' is not limited with stylistic differences of the discourse. Her boyfriend's death provides Morvern with the opportunity for deep mourning that forces her to change the location and way of living.

Freud in his *Mourning and Melancholia* investigates the notion of mourning and compares it to a deeper and more desperate feeling of melancholia. As he defines mourning it is 'the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on' (Freud, 1966, p. 243). In Morvern's case we deal with the loss of a person and ideal, thus her mourning may be counted as doubled.

Continuing the description of the types of loss, Freud points out that it is not necessary the loss due to someone's death. The object of the mourning can be lost in a different way: 'The object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love (e.g. in the case of a betrothed girl who has been jilted)' (ibid., p. 245). This is what happens when Morvern's closest friend Lanna confesses that she was with Morvern's boyfriend just a day before his suicide. A day before Morvern and Lanna had sex with John and Paul. It is not clear who hurt Morvern more, whose betrayal offends her the most:

I shook my head and says, After all the making sure no tenderness could get taken by surprise. It still finds a way through all we did . . . and look at you. I turned round and looked at her.

Lanna was staring at me (Warner, 1996, p. 211).

The double loss of Morvern's boyfriend as a man and as an ideal is multiplied with the loss of her closest friend. Thus, her loss causes more than mourning. According to Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* Morvern's

feelings are closer to melancholia, which is described by Freud as a 'painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings' that 'culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment' (Freud, 1966, p. 244). However, as Freud continues, 'profound mourning, the reaction to the loss of someone who is loved, contains the same painful frame of mind, the same loss of interest in the outside world — in so far as it does not recall him — the same loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing him) and the same turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of him' (ibid., p. 244).

Hence, is it the mourning that makes Morvern leave Scotland to the sunny shore of the Spain? Or is it the 'expectation of punishment' caused by melancholia? Distinguishing the former from the latter, Freud points out:

In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished (ibid., p. 246).

This definition looks very similar to what can be observed in Morvern's behaviour after the loss of two closest persons. It is neither Scotland nor Spain that depresses Morvern, but her ego. She limits her life to raves

and promiscuity, as if trying to persuade herself that there is no other thing she is capable of. There are no significant social contacts described during her stay in Spain, Morvern does not develop any friendship or romantic relationship, as if deliberately cutting off this part of her life. She is waiting for her punishment that reaches her under the pomegranate tree. It is the face of real death, her death, that makes Morvern stand up and ask 'Just a little longer. Please'.

But even leading Morvern through the chain of macabre situations as if showing her the sign 'Memento Mori' Warner leaves her boyfriend as the only person lying dead in front of her. The death of Morvern's boyfriend echoes Roland Barthes's theory of the Death of the Author.

If 'to give an Author to a text is to impose upon that text a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to close the writing' (Barthes, 1968, p. 5), then Warner sets the novel free by 'killing' Morvern's boyfriend, who is a writer, at the beginning of the book. Changing his name on the novel's title to her own, Morvern deprives her dead boyfriend of authorship. Thus, she makes sure he is absolutely dead, both as a person and as an author.

Since the author is dead, Morvern has to read this 'tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture' (ibid., p. 4) on her own. She travels and collects experiences to prove that the life (as well as the novel) does not have the only one correct interpretation, but can be seen from different perspectives as 'multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other' (ibid., p. 6). 'The birth of

the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author', claims Barthes (ibid., p. 6). And this is exactly what happens to Morvern, as with the death of her boyfriend she enters a new period of her life.

In Pelevin's novella, however, death comes to both the protagonist and antagonist at the same time. As most of Pelevin's writings do, 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' includes a number of references to Buddhism, where death is not seen as a dark and macabre phenomenon. The 'endless river of life' as the essence of being is freed by death and the liberating process of dying is described as 'going back home':

To be alive is to dig the channel. To depart is to become the river that flows along it (Pelevin, 2011).

The sexual cannibalism of mantises is seen by Lena as 'the very best thing one creature could do for another, and she does as she has promised to the picture of Botvinik in 'Eligible Bachelors of Russia', setting him 'free'.

Under the influence of a serum Mantis-B Lena saw the world with the eyes of a praying mantis. She had 'spiky hands', a 'second pair of legs', and an 'ear of darkness'. Oligarch Botvinik appeared as an 'ash-coloured, with a narrow little head and expressionless faceted eyes. His three central eyes were dead and looked like plaques of dried-up skin, and he had an expansive abdomen, bloated and taut, which pulled him backward and made all his movement clumsy and ridiculous'. With his 'three central eyes' already dead, Botvinik is described as an already dying creature. Lena's mind creates this image to justify his imminent killing.

Lena's experience can be compared to Morvern's psychedelic trips, in that it has provided her with the same type of spiritual revelations, hallucinations and religious epiphany:

It could be described approximately as follows: whereas the last time Lena thought that the world around her had turned into a Windows Media Player, now she herself became the visualiser, and the world disintegrated into a host of discrete aspects that taken separately seemed absurd, astounding, impossible, and terrifying, but together somehow balanced each other out in a calm and happy equilibrium that settled into her head (ibid.).

The imaginary world of Lena's hallucinations is seen in terms of Buddhism: there is no presence of god, the life is described as suffering, and the death as liberation of the river that starts 'flowing through itself, and this was the greatest possible happiness' (ibid.):

She suddenly realised quite clearly that all living things — flowers, insects, birds, animals, and even people — didn't just exist for themselves, for no particular reason, but for one single, solitary purpose: to provide a channel for this great river. All living things were this channel. But at the same time they were also the river which, in some mysterious and inexpressible way, flowed through itself, unlike the way earthly rivers flowed (ibid.).

The great river of life, as explained by the archetype mantis, sometimes 'wants to be a prostitute, or a cat, or a geranium in a vase' and, therefore, every form of life is of the same essence. However, after 'freeing'

Botvinik, Lena saw 'the part of the great river that had been locked inside him' and it 'was released in a jet of dark smoke, like car exhaust fumes'. She wonders if she has the same 'grey stinking stuff' in her, but finds out that it is 'bright', 'luminous', 'pure', and 'beautiful'. Thus, a prostitute dies with the happy satisfaction of 'passing the exam'. Lena welcomes the 'two large praying mantises', who 'were hurrying toward her to assist in making the crossing':

They were clutching two special chattering sticks in their forelegs, using them to help her shrug off her human body forever. Although it was a bit painful, she knew the pain would disappear forever with the body (ibid.).

2.7 Plastic world

It is apparent that the major parts of the novels describe life, not death. The life on the threshold of a new millennium appears to be not only highly politicised, but also profoundly commercialised in all spheres of human activity.

The super secret underground brothel where Lena works is filled with the names of celebrities, the pimp uncle Pete wears the t-shirts combining the famous brands and provocative ideological messages. At the beginning of the novella he meets Lena wearing the t-shirt with the rainbow-coloured

slogan 'TALIBAN ICHKERIA', referring to the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, not recognised by Russia. The Taliban government recognised the republic in 2000 and was accused of giving military support (The Conflict Watch, 2013). The controversial effect of the slogan being worn by the Russian uncle Pete is disseminated by the colours of the letters: these are the colours of rainbow LGBT flag, it goes radically against the Islamic fundamentalism of Talibans and Ichkeria.

Seemingly posh uncle Pete's t-shirt with a brand name HUGO BOSS on it turns out to be a marker of fascism sympathies, as it is decorated with 'Nazi's runes'. Comparing the underground brothel with Hitler's bunker that she saw in a documentary, Lena agrees: 'Sounds about right for a place like this' (Pelevin, 2011). Another uncle Pete's Nazi t-shirt has an inscription 'ADIHIT' with 'the Adidas triangle, split into its trademark bands — but only two instead of the usual three, which made the triangle look like Hitler's toothbrush moustache' (ibid.).

The characters 'DKNY' stand for the abbreviation of 'Divine Koran Nourishes You' and 'Definitely Kthulhu, not Yahweh'. D&G hides the meaning of 'discourse and glamour' (the notions appear very often in Pelevin's books and become central motifs of his later works). Any brand on uncle Pete's t-shirt is associated with a certain political or ideological movement, showing the interconnections of commercial brands and ideology.

In Warner's novel Morvern names things by their brands rather than their meanings. This wide use of metonymy starts from the very beginning of the novel and goes throughout the narration. Morvern uses 'Silk Cut' in-

stead of a cigarette (she later changes it to 'Sobranie'), 'Perfect Plum Glimmerstix' instead of a face powder, 'Unsurpassed Wine' instead of a lip gloss, 'Southern Comfort' instead of a bottle or a glass.

When Morvern changes the location she lives in, she simultaneously changes things and brands that surround her. First of all, there is no gold-ish lighter anymore, she uses a new one. 'Silk Cut' is replaced by 'Sobranie'; her favourite music is now played not by her Walkman but by a brand new Sony HCD D109 music system. Morvern wears Nikes and 'ravey tops from the trendy shop' (Warner, 1996, p. 198). She lives in a holiday mode, not worrying much about the next day.

Roland Barthes in his essay 'The Writer on Holiday' describes society's expectations of the author who goes on holidays. The 'idea of the writer as a superman' (Barthes, 1991, p. 28), claims Barthes, makes masses believe that a writer should constantly work, even being on holidays: either on new material for his next book or editing existing.

According to Barthes, society believes that a writer cannot have an ordinary life, an ordinary job, and an ordinary holiday. That is why, claims Barthes, the society stigmatises a writer as a fake holiday-maker:

What proves the wonderful singularity of the writer, is that during the holiday in question, which he takes alongside factory workers and shop assistants, he unlike them does not stop, if not actually working, at least producing. So that he is a false worker, and a false holiday-maker as well (ibid., p. 28)

Morvern, however, has never read the novel that is published under her name. Neither is she going to start writing anything. When a publisher of her boyfriend's book (that is Morvern's now) asks her if she is going to write anything else, Morvern simply does not understand the question:

Have you been working on any new material?

Sorry?

Have you been working on material?

Material? (Warner, 1996, p. 159)

She feels totally comfortable accepting the life around her, preferring nature to culture. However, this does not erase the dichotomy from Morvern's life. From the very beginning of the novel Morvern's inferiority as a working class superstore assistant is highlighted in the disdain she shows for her client's plastic bags and plastic cards:

At the till I filled plastic carrier bags with Christmas stuff for folk.

A woman with a well-to-do south voice told me to wash my soily hands before touching her messages. Some bills came to hundreds of pounds. They all paid with these credit cards. I put the bags in trolleys and pushed them to the Volvos. I had a well-to-do family and their voices. The biggest bill and a trolley just for wine. A daughter my age who looked on while I loaded the boot.

No change for a tip cause they used credit card. The husband went, Merry Christmas (ibid., p. 11).

This rather sad experience from the first pages of the novel juxtaposes Morvern and her aspirations to the outer world of plastic. The dichotomy

nature versus culture is represented by Morvern and the world around her. Morvern's kindness (taking care of the 'Special girl' who used to be abused by her father), generosity (taking Lanna to Spain), and observing nature are contrasted by betrayals, plastic cards, and getting 'as much out you as they can'.

Barthes in his essay 'Plastic' reflects on the qualities of plastic as artificial material and compares it to the natural ones. What is significant, plastic appears to be a versatile substance that can serve different purposes and can become objects of both high and low culture: 'the quick-change artistry of plastic is absolute: it can become buckets as well as jewels' (Barthes, 1991, p. 97)

The amazement that people feel towards plastic is explained through its victory over nature. In permanent conflict between the nature and culture, humanity represents culture. Contemporary technical progress celebrates the use of artificial means, aiming to improve our everyday life. The multiple use of plastic, which can replace basically any natural material, gives humanity the power to overcome nature:

And this amazement is a pleasurable one, since the scope of the transformations gives man the measure of his power, and since the very itinerary of plastic gives him the euphoria of a prestigious free-wheeling through Nature (ibid., p. 98).

However, as Barthes continues, plastic is bound to stay artificial, as it will never be able to obtain the natural look:

It is a 'shaped' substance: whatever its final state, plastic keeps a flocculent appearance, something opaque, creamy and curdled, something powerless ever to achieve the triumphant smoothness of Nature (ibid., p. 98)

Plastic is a mere imitation of nature, claims Barthes. However, this imitation becomes quite fashionable: 'The fashion for plastic highlights an evolution in the myth of 'imitation' materials' (ibid., p. 98).

This comparison of an artificial material to the nature, or, more precisely, to the imitation of it, echoes in Mori's theory of uncanny valley. In 1970 robotics professor Masahiro Mori proposed a theory according to which the more human-like the appearance of a robot is, the more positive and emphatic emotional response to the robot will become. However, only to a certain point. When similarity to human appearance reaches about 80% — 85% the response quickly changes to a strong revulsion (Tinwell et al., 2011).

As Minsoo Kang explains the terror that human beings feel interacting with the human-like machines, it is 'the anxiety and terror that result are from the fear of losing the grip on reality and consequently being reduced to a powerless child' (Kang, 2009, p. 48).

This terror is the terror of oligarch Botvinik at the final scene of Pelevin's novella:

"Greeny, you're kind of strange," said the grey mantis. "As if you're not really here, but somewhere else. Are you high on something?" (Pelevin, 2011)

Singing caryatid Lena becomes that uncanny human-like creature. She loses her human appearance covering her body with the 'malachite paste':

... It looked like green, pearly shampoo — on the skin it turned into a fine, glossy film with a pattern that really did resemble a polished slab of malachite (ibid.).

It is Barthes's plastic that looks like a natural material, but will never be able to actually become a part of nature. Lena is covered by a film that resembles malachite, she stays still as a real caryatid. However, she sings and is available to perform any sexual fantasy of a client. She, in fact, becomes that eery uncanny being, that attracts though repulses oligarch Botvinik. When Lena describes her own reflection in a mirror, she talks of it as of a stone idol:

... this idol was made of polished malachite, and its hair seemed to be carved, rather coarsely, out of the same material. Only its eyes were still alive (ibid.).

The technologies of the future described in Pelevin's novella may seem unreal. But this does not make them less scary. Reflecting on the future of plastic, Barthes predicts it to spread wider into other parts of human life:

The hierarchy of substances is abolished: a single one replaces them all: the whole world *can* be plasticised, and even life itself since, we are told, they are beginning to make plastic aortas (Barthes, 1991, p. 98)

And it makes sense in terms of Pelevin's novella, where artificial subjects replace the natural ones, a secretly developed serum makes one motionless and a green shampoo turns into a film that looks like malachite. Nature, in general, serves the purposes of culture, as human bodies serve as the furniture in the luxurious underground brothel: billiard table legs or statues of Atlantes and Caryatids.

The objectification of the workers of the brothel is seen by the way they are addressed. Most of the time Lena's colleagues are called by the type of work they do: Mermaids, Caryatids, Atlantes. Oligarch Botvinik calls Lena simply 'Greeny' by the colour of her skin covered with the malachite film. A man with the silicon breasts, who works at the same place, bitterly admits to Lena: 'They'll drink their champagne, and we'll sing for them, coloured to match. And not only sing, we'll actually fight for the right to sing to them' (Pelevin, 2011).

3. Gender

3.1 Sexual Objectification

The competitive nature of Lena's job, however, was never questioned by the other girls in the novel. In fact, Lena does not agree with the man with silicon breasts and stays silent. She accepts her job as she 'had long ago

accustomed herself to the idea that on the path to success she would often have to undress in front of strangers' (ibid.).

Indeed, to work in the underground brothel a pretty face and physical attractiveness are not enough. The girls, who work in the Malachite Hall, have vocal skills and appear to be quite smart and educated. On their first trip to the underground complex 'almost too bright' Kima complains about the sign on the minibus that drives the girls to the place:

“Semiotic signs. That’s already enough to give me the shakes.

Semiotics is the science of sign systems, we covered it at university. Translate it into normal Russian and you get ‘sign signs.’

That’s enough to make anyone with an education laugh.” (ibid.)

However, her critical remark does not get the approval of the other girls, who are satisfied with the sign as long as it does not reveal their true occupation:

“Aha,” muttered Asya, who was also in a foul mood. “So it would be better if they wrote ‘whorish prostitutes?’” (ibid.)

The discussion on the nature of their job, however, shows different attitudes of the girls towards it. When Lena claims that they are not really prostitutes: ‘We’re more like geishas, really. We sing. We recite’, Asya comments: ‘Oh yeah, not just a plain glory hole. There’s a pair of earphones and a soundtrack as well. So the price is different’ (ibid.). She seems to be more comfortable calling their job by its name:

‘I don’t get you girls; I don’t see why we should have any complexes about the job. Because everyone’s a prostitute nowa-

days, even the air — for letting the radio waves pass through it' (ibid.).

The girls, thus, accept their sexual objectification from the very beginning. Their job seems to be the only (or the fastest) way to 'success', which means money. For them, to commodify their bodies is to obtain economic independence. In fact, the economic side of prostitution is put on the first place.

The Soviet-style wall newspaper hanging in the cafeteria of the brothel describes the difficulties one has to face when dating a modern girl. Serving as a marketing tool to multiply the profit of the brothel, it is in fact a sort of commercial of the sex market. The wall newspaper proposes that to pay for a prostitute is much cheaper than to pay for dating a pretentious Moscow girl:

The fundamental quality that a modern Moscow girl cultivates by the age of twenty is the naive readiness for elite hyperconsumption (in today's Russian this is known as 'pussyness'). Any fool knows that no one is going to let these legions of pussycats anywhere near a glamorous sugar daddy, he'll simply mess with their heads and then dump them. Basically, that's the way it's always been, throughout history. But today the means you have to use to mess with a girl's head are so crass that the reward awaiting you for this dirty, heavy work pales into insignificance. Especially since these efforts not only offend the moral feelings of a decent, Christian human being, but are also extremely ex-

pensive — and the true market price of the anticipated reward is significantly less than the bill for the first dinner in a good restaurant. And discussing the possibility of spiritual affinity with one of these Prada-wearing amoebas would simply be a waste of time . . . (ibid.)

The article insults Lena with its open misogyny. However, she does not say much about it and continues working, when Kima explains to her that the article was written in this style deliberately, ‘to give the cafeteria’s patrons a feeling of complete, elite access to anything and everything’.

Varya, a singing caryatid from the second shift, tells Lena how their clients fired champagne corks at the girls’ faces:

“Did you finish the song?” Lena asked sympathetically. “Yes,”

Varya replied [...] “What else could we do?” (ibid.)

Thus, the sexual workers accept not just objectification of their bodies, but also violence, enduring it as a part of their professional occupation. ‘Nothing personal, it’s just business’ approach makes Varya not just accept humiliation, but also try to improve her professional skills:

Lena wanted to talk a bit more, but Varya said she had to finish reading the book she’d brought with her — the other girls in her shift were all waiting to read it. The book was in English and it was called *Singing in Awkward Positions: The All-Inclusive Manual by Eros Blandini*. Eros Blandini, Vera explained, was a castrated dwarf who worked as the sound effects for the magical fairground attraction “The Singing Head”. He had spent his

long life singing out of lockers, crates, and dark corners while lying, sitting, and even standing on his head (ibid.).

At the beginning of the new millennium, talented and educated young girls in the Russia described by Pelevin choose to become singing prostitutes and tolerate violence. This is all done in order to earn money and become 'successful'. They are not just happy getting a place as a 'decorative element' in a posh brothel, but moreover, they try to grab every opportunity to keep their place and improve their 'professional skills'. This is because 'if you want to stay in business, even just stay where you already are, you have to keep growing all the time, because other people are trying to grow too and sideline you' (ibid.).

Roland Barthes in his essay *Striptease* refers to the aesthetic side of Moulin Rouge, discussing the sophisticated choreography and professionalism of the dancers. However, no matter how much aesthetic pleasure Barthes receives, he agrees that a dancer goes through objectification: 'the woman identifies herself here as a stereotyped element of music-hall' (Barthes, 1991, p. 85). The woman is established as 'an object in disguise', claims Barthes. Thus, no matter how artistic the dance is, the dancer is still 'an object'.

Morvern Callar, in spite of many scenes of nakedness, cannot be called an objectified female. She does not limit her sexual experience due to 'established social norms', there is no mention of her trying to keep fit or anyhow sexually attractive. Morvern paints her nails and uses make up, but not to meet any particular standards. Her nail painting is a ritual cele-

brating her liberation from the superstore work. At the beginning of the novel, while working in a superstore, she complains: 'I could never grow nails on that job: my hands were all soil' (Warner, 1996, p. 8), the soil is still there when she buries her boyfriend's dismembered body. However, when Morvern returned to Spain for the second time, her nails 'did brilliantly'. But only to fall off at the scene under the pomegranate tree. With the falling off of now long and healthy nails, Morvern obtains her full liberation, as if the nails overcame the superstore period and there is no need of them any longer.

3.2 Gender and Identity

The axis of identity search in the threshold of a new millennium has shifted significantly. It is no longer 'class' or 'gender' that defines one's personality. To say that Morvern is a working-class young woman is to say nothing. To describe the identity of the protagonists we should refer to much broader terms like 'geographical location', 'political views', 'sexual orientation', etc. Postmodern culture does not accept static description of identity by class and gender matters, which mostly maintain unchanged throughout one's life. The construction of identity in postmodernism era is seen as a continuing process. Indeed, it is not only the story line that keeps us interested in Morvern Callar's narration, it is her personality that

develops significantly. Anthony Giddens in *Modernity and self-identity* argues that identity is a capacity to keep a story of one's life going:

A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor — important though this is — in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self (Giddens, 1991, p. 54).

Morvern's story is going on from Scotland to Spain and back to Scotland. Her identity development did not stop with the 'death of the author', it was only the beginning that served as a trigger to the great changes of her personality. Lena's narration developed her identity spiritually, converting the insecure girl who sings naked on a table in front of uncle Pete to a 'liberator' who kills one of the wealthiest oligarchs, 'The Last Russian Macho'.

Supporting Giddens's theory, Homi K. Bhabha claims, in the era of 'post' (postmodernism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism) the categories of social and geographical location, race and sexuality are the main factors, which form one's identity:

The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organisational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions — of race, gender,

generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation — that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1).

In other words, the search of one's identity is not possible without addressing one's sexuality, sex and gender. Although these terms belong to the same field of one's personality, they describe different notions.

In *Gender Trouble* the third-wave feminist Judith Butler analyses Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex*, where she claims 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 273). According to Beauvoir, claims Butler, sex is a stable natural attribute of a human being, a given feature that anyone is born with. Gender, on the other hand, is a cultural, and therefore, obtained characteristic:

... if gender is something that one becomes — but can never be — then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort (Butler, 2006, p. 152).

Exploring the notions further, Butler agrees that gender is an activity, an action that is performed repeatedly to build one's identity. However, this activity is performed with regard to sex. Thus, argues Butler, both sex and gender are constructed:

Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production

whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive,” prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts. [...] This production of sex as the prediscursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender* (ibid., p. 10).

It is then reasonable to argue that both protagonists represent masculinity as much as femininity. However, the performance of sex and gender is affected by gender roles imposed by patriarchic society they live in.

3.3 Femininity and Masculinity. Gender Roles

In *Morvern Callar* Alan Warner challenges stereotypical gender roles. A young girl, twenty-one years old Morvern, appears to be the strongest character in the novel, while older male characters are weak and feminized. However, stereotypical gender characteristics in the novel are not reversed, and the characters are not presented as genderless or ambiguous. On the contrary, Morvern possesses the power of retaining her femininity. She paints her fingernails and applies make up as a typical (more-

over, stereotypical) young girl, even though she is tough enough to dismember the dead body.

In *Global Nomads*, D'Andrea provides a description of a nomadic woman. He claims, both pastoral and postmodern nomadic women bear the same traits:

Nomadic women – both pastoral and postmodern – often embody warrior-like values and dispositions of honour, superiority, and disinterest in romantic matters (Abu-Lughod 1999: 46, 153; Barfield 1993: 146). In a mythological vein, they have been feared as brave warriors, as Hippocrates and Herodotus narrate about Sarmatian women who participated in mounted raids and could only marry after killing a man in battle (Barfield 1993: 146; Davis-Kimball 2003). In contexts of postmodernist subcultures and predatory neoliberal capitalism, Techno women cultivate wildness, toughness and dexterity as impressive personality traits (D'Andrea, 2007, p. 28).

Thus, with all her outer femininity, Morvern fully matches D'Andrea's description of a nomadic woman. As a warrior, who values honour, she is devastated with her boyfriend's suicide and a double betrayal of Lanna and Him. However, she has enough strength to bury both the body of her boyfriend and her past. Alan Warner explains Morvern's power through her emotional restraint:

Morvern lies to protect herself since she's embarrassed by her feelings. Morvern's been portrayed as a party girl - well, yes,

she is a party girl, but she's also quite uptight and she has problems with her emotions. By holding back her emotions you get this big power (Dale, 2002, p. 35).

Morvern's 'disinterest in romantic matters' is seen through the narrative: even when she describes sex, Morvern avoids expressing any emotions. Her narrative style itself is focused on the touch, smell, look, and sound of the world around. Thus, Morvern's narration is more sensual than sexual. Describing the rave scene Morvern is in fact indifferent to the sex of the bodies touching her on the dance floor. However, she does not disregard sexual differences:

I was so close some boy or girl that their sweat was hitting me when they flicked arms or neck to a new rhythm. I slid my foot to the left. You felt the whole side of a face lay against my bare back, between shoulder blades. It was still part of our dance. [...] The face moved away then fingers touched my neck and I put my fingers on the cheeks to feel its maleness: bit beard. [...] The softness of wet bosom pressed my elbow so I threw an arm round a girl and the three of us danced in a link (Warner, 1996, p. 203).

Morvern's dead boyfriend is described as an educated man, yet his education is worthless. Living in Port he can't use it, there is simply no place for an educated man in a working class environment of a town. Sophie Dale quotes Alan Warner speculating on Morvern's boyfriend's background:

He's perhaps middle class, or at least his old man had money, owned this hotel or perhaps there's even a hint of a criminal background or tax evasion as to where his initial money came from (Dale, 2002, p. 36).

His education and class would normally be accommodating, but they prove to be inefficient. Thus, Morvern's boyfriend is feminized by this inability to use his skills. The Port seems to be a place for the working class. However, the working class males described in the novel also hold no power. They fit in with the settings, yet they are unable to provide for their families. Most of the working class men are described as drunken storytellers, as Panatine, who lost his finger in an accident that happened to him while he was drunk. Warner illustrates male characters of Port as those who are not 'man enough'.

Morvern's foster father Red Hanna works as a train driver and drinks often. He is fired on the last day of his work before retirement because of the drinking. He fails to develop close relationship with Morvern after the death of his first wife - Morvern's foster mother. At the time of the narration he lives with a woman whom Morvern calls Vanessa the Depresser, or V the D, and openly dislikes her: 'Aye go depress someone else'. However, Red Hanna fails to have a family with V the D, too. When Morvern comes back to the port after the meeting with publishers in London, she finds out that Red Hanna and Lanna became close. 'You just werent here when he needed you', explains Lanna and later asks Morvern if she and Red Hanna can stay in Morvern's room as 'V the D's

always phoning The Complex; we can't get any peace' (Warner, 1996, p. 183).

Red Hanna tries to give Morvern twenty pounds for her trip to Spain, however, his care appears to be in any case insufficient and unnecessary as Morvern already has thousands of pounds left by her boyfriend. Consequently, Morvern's care of Red Hanna looks stronger, and the daughter turns out to be more responsible than the father.

Even though most of the port inhabitants blame Morvern for not calling them while she was away raving, their disappointment seems to be more of a selfish demand rather than worry about Morvern. They did not worry about Morvern, it is she who should have called, and she was not there when they needed her. However, Morvern does not forget about her father when she is off to raves the second time. Leaving the flat, she writes a note to Lanna and Red Hanna: 'Sell everything here'. Thus, Morvern appears to be stronger than her father, who is actually not her real father. Morvern herself emphasises this fact through her insistence on calling him 'foster father' or Red Hanna.

Morvern's boyfriend, a man who is older, richer, and more educated, symbolically replaces Red Hanna when Morvern leaves home and starts living with her boyfriend. Obviously, he can support Morvern financially and take Red Hanna's responsibility. On the one hand, Morvern's boyfriend can be called a real patriarchic man, as he has a girlfriend and some money. On the other hand, he is the most emasculated male in the novel. He has no power in the novel, as he is already dead before the

novel even begins. Morvern replaces him taking her boyfriend's money, his music, and his novel. One would expect the town to notice his absence, even just as Morvern's boyfriend. However, his sudden 'departure to the country' does not alert anyone, making his image even less valuable and noticeable.

Morvern leaves her boyfriend nameless, thus, his lack of importance is highlighted by the absence of name. His name is called two times at the beginning of the novel: by Lanna and Tequila Sheila, but Morvern polishes it all with silence concealing his name from the reader.

Krystal Hart claims that maleness in Warner's novel represent Englishness, while female protagonist is a symbol of Scotland. Thus, when males remain inefficient and weak, Hart suggests that Warner's conclusion is 'if Scotland is better without England, then women are better without men' (Hart, 2006, p. 20).

The emasculation of Scottish males, represented in Warner's novel, finds its roots in the history of Scotland, claims Hart. Disempowered men of Scotland cannot be fully masculine as they are colonised, thus, they no longer represent their motherland Scotland, but England. However, we do not find any politicised discussion about the role of England in Warner's novel as, for example, in Welsh's *Trainspotting*. At one point of a novel Mark Renton, the Rent boy, expresses his point of view blaming in colonisation not England but Scotland itself:

Fuckin failures in a country ay failures. It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonizing us. Ah don't hate the English.

They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots (Welsh, 1996, p. 78).

Warner's male characters do not say much about colonisation; however, they cherish a hope for their young females. When Morvern meets her foster father's friends at Red Hanna's local pub, they happily empower her with the responsibility for the future, mentioning that they 'will support' the youth:

Oh, up the revolution then, we'll support yous but it's up to you young ones to bring it about.

Aye, we'll be behind you, Tad the Post says (Warner, 1996, p. 177).

Thus, with Morvern symbolically standing in front of the port, and men standing behind her, the metaphor for Scotland can be seen in terms of time. As the men described in the novel are much older than Morvern herself, and they are staying behind, they represent Scotland's past. While young and strong Morvern symbolises Scotland's future.

Her boyfriend's model of his home town, which he has constructed in the attic loft of their apartment contained each building, hill, and river of the

place. When Morvern puts her boyfriend's dead corpse onto it she watches the model being crashed:

His toes at the far end of the pass. His face beyond the railway line. His body crushed the hotel with its pointing-up tower at the top of the stairs. The Tree Church on the sgnurr above where he lay back upon the land (ibid., p. 177).

By doing this she does not merely destroy the memory of her boyfriend. She symbolically destroys an older Scotland. However, Morvern does not bear a sole destruction, she is also a creator. As a pregnant woman she brings a new life and new hope for Scotland:

She and her future child represent Scotland on the cusp of change, an expectant Scotland. On the eve of a possible independence for Scotland, a metaphorical second coming, Warner points to Morvern's offspring as the hope for a better future for Scotland, but Scotland's future remains forebodingly ambiguous... (Hart, 2006, p. 25)

In Pelevin's novel the notion of gender distinguishes the past and the present of the country. The old Soviet system in his novel bears all traces of masculinity, with its patriarchic order, ideology based on fear, and extensive propaganda. The Post-Soviet Russia appears to be more feminine, just as young Lena who is set to struggle against the system of oligarchs, yet does not have enough skills and experience.

In contrast to Morvern Callar, Lena does not receive any power from the male characters. She remains disempowered until the last moment when she agrees to undergo the 'exam' of the praying mantis.

Bourdieu in *Masculine Domination* describes the customs of Kabyle people and applies them to universal patriarchic values. He describes the exchange of brides between Kabyle families, when a young woman is given as a gift to form or strengthen kinship with a particular family. Thus, a woman in Bourdieu's work is given a commodified notion of a *symbolic good*. Along with other goods women form the economic system, and moreover, serve as a tool of domination:

This economy, oriented towards the accumulation of symbolic capital (honour) transforms various raw materials above all, women, but more generally any object that can be exchanged with formality - into gifts (and not products), that is, communicative signs that are, inseparably, instruments of domination (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 44).

It is not only a male domination over females. Bourdieu discusses the domination of some males over others, due to the possession of symbolic capital — women.

Lena in Pelevin's novel, thus, becomes objectified not only as a 'decorative element' of the brothel. She becomes a symbolic capital. By acquiring this capital Botvinik proves his title of 'The Last Russian Macho'. The inscription on the minibus — 'Semiotic signs' that was accepted by the girls as a mistake of the ignorant organisers proves to be a subtle and cruel

joke that shows the girls what they really are — mere ‘signs’, symbols of wealth, respect and ‘machismo’.

However, this disempowered and objectified symbol of contemporary ordinary Russian acquires the qualities of praying mantis. On the one hand, praying mantis is an insect. Insects are the smallest representatives of fauna, the easiest prey of larger animals, most inferior of creatures. Seemingly still and peaceful praying mantis stays immobile for hours with his fore-limbs folded in front of him in a ‘praying-like’ posture. This can be seen as an inferior position of a ‘little man’, a typical character of Russian literature, emerged in the nineteenth century but often appearing in contemporary Russian writings (Marsh, 2007, p. 548).

On the other hand, his immobility helps mantis to fool the prey, as mantis, after all, is a predatory insect (which is as a reason of the eggcorn ‘preying mantis’). Thus, Lena’s fragile submissiveness and disempowerment only disguise her true strength to subvert the power relations.

4. Transformation

4.1 Reality and Simulacrum

It is not only power relations that are twisted as a ‘Möbius strip’ in Pelevin’s reality. In fact, most of the things in ‘The Hall of the Singing

Caryatids' are represented in form of a dream. As one of the caryatids Kima says, the life in Pelevin's novella is pretty much like a dream:

"If we recall that life is a dream," Kima replied from her seat by the window of the minibus, "then we get the formula of modern civilisation and culture" (Pelevin, 2011).

As the characters of the novella (as in many other Pelevin's works) struggle to find out what is the reality, they quite often face the opposite: imaginary. In their life full of 'semiotic signs' (which can also be understood as 'signs of signs'), it becomes impossible to find the borderline between reality and its simulacrum.

Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* discusses signs and symbols. He researches their relations to reality and comes to the conclusion that contemporary society has put signs and symbols in the place of reality, thus turning our experience into a simulation of reality.

Pelevin, who often uses the notion of simulacrum in his writings, creates alternative simulation in 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids'. Just as 'Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra' and presents to the viewer the 'objective profile of America' (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 12), the underground brothel from Pelevin's novella becomes a simulacrum of contemporary Russia.

Mark Lipovetsky in his essay *The Aesthetic Code of Russian Postmodernism* examines postmodernist literature in Russia and discusses it in terms of Baudrillard's simulacrum theory. He argues that Baudrillard's theory fits perfectly in contemporary Russian writings:

The category of “simulation” first introduced by Jean Baudrillard is remarkably appropriate to the Russian version of postmodernism. Having fixed the blurred boundaries between signified objects and their referents, Baudrillard asserts that in the postmodern era, reality is replaced by a web of “simulacrae” — self-referential complexes of signifiers which no longer correspond to anything in the real world. Thus arises a “hyperreality of simulacrae.” The expansion of language takes place through a system of signifiers with no object. Simulacrae direct human behaviour, perception, and in the long run, consciousness, which in turn leads to the “death of subjectivity”: the human “I” is also constructed from an aggregate of simulacrae (Lipovetsky, 2012, p. 8).

Investigating works of many contemporary Russian writers, Lipovetsky finds a deep interconnection between reality and simulacrum that he calls a ‘paralogical compromise’:

The formation of paralogical compromise between simulacrum and reality -- an unstable zone where simulacrum constantly engenders reality while reality turns into simulacrum -- defines Russian postmodernism’s mechanism of aesthetic perception (ibid., p. 9).

However, in Pelevin’s writings it is not the reality that turns into simulacrum, claims Lipovetsky:

Pelevin does not explore reality's transformation into simulacrum, but rather the reverse process -- the birth of reality from simulacrum (ibid., p. 9).

Indeed, the world of 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' strikes with its phantasmagorical dream-like description of reality: super secret bunker, singing caryatids, Mantis-B serum, archetypal praying mantis. However, uncle Pete (whose prototype Peter Listerman is a really existing and quite famous man, who calls himself a matchmaker), endlessly powerful oligarchs, and omnipresent ideology make the novella undoubtedly real as any Russian would see his/her country in this description.

Yet, all these elements are mere symbols of reality, symbols of the country and of the power relations in it. As power itself produces only signs, as Baudrillard claims (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 27), Lipovetsky's theory is proved to be right. It is simulacrum that constructs reality of Pelevin's book. It does not hide the real Russia. As Baudrillard claims quoting Ecclesiastes: 'the simulacrum is never what hides the truth — it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true' (ibid., p. 1).

There are a number of layers of simulated reality in 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids'. Hallucinating about the archetypal praying mantis, Lena herself cannot define which of them is real:

It felt as if for a long, long time, almost from the very beginning of time itself, she had been holding her hands folded in front of her chest, and then she had had the illusion that they were raised above her head and pressed against a slab of stone. And

then she realised that the illusion she had had was her real situation. And then it was like when you wake up in the morning and it becomes clear that this absurdly squalid and unconvincing continuation of your dream really is the truth, and now you have to get up, get dressed, and go out into the world to feed yourself (Pelevin, 2011).

While her consciousness is being transformed under the influence of Mantis-B serum, ideological articles from the 'Counterculture' and 'Eligible Bachelors of Russia' influence her with intrusive ideological propaganda. Reflecting on power and ideology, Baudrillard points out to the differences between ideology and simulacrum. He argues that ideology corrupts reality, while simulation duplicates it:

Ideology only corresponds to a corruption of reality through signs; simulation corresponds to a short circuit of reality and to its duplication through signs. It is always the goal of the ideological analysis to restore the objective process, it is always a false problem to wish to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 27).

'The Last Russian Macho' Botvinik, however, choses another way to transform reality - Neurolinguistic programming, commonly known as NLP. The programming is an approach to communication and personal development created by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the 1970s (Dilts, 1980). NLP aims to influence one's behaviour through some linguistic commands (that is 'to program' someone through linguistics on a

neural level). The approach has raised many controversies and is proved by many theorists to be a pseudoscience (Druckman, Swets, 1988).

Pelevin mockingly uses NLP as a secret strategic weapon of top Russian oligarchs. Botvinik appears to be the most confident user of the technique, which in fact was used to transform him from a 'decent human being' to 'The Last Russian Macho':

Botvinik was not naturally suited to this role, having been raised by his parents as a decent, cultured individual. But even so, a specially assembled team of cultural analysts, psychologists, and specialists in neurolinguistic programming (NLP) had helped him achieve a total self-transformation, in the process developing for him the technique of "Crypto-Speak" — a conversational strategy that implants special microcommands in another person's consciousness. These microcommands were harmless enough in themselves, but in the context of a precisely calibrated phrase they effectively constituted a binary linguistic weapon. In combination with rigorously exact gestures, they affected the subconscious in such a way that a few minutes of interaction was enough for Botvinik to subjugate any typical Russian to his will (Pelevin, 2011).

'Russia's No. 1 Eligible Bachelor' Botvinik uses symbols as a part of his power. His linguistic technique - Crypto-Speak is a set of codes:

Not much was known about Crypto-Speak. It was believed that, in addition to exploiting traditional cultural codes, it made use of

command-memes assembled in accordance with kabbalistic principles out of letter-and-digit combinations disguised as everyday speech. This tool of psychological influence had proved stunningly effective — so effective that it had been classified and added to the armory of the major political technologists, many of whom regarded Botvinik as their guru (ibid.).

‘Semiotic signs’ are recalled every time Botvinik appears in the Malachite Hall. As a (stereo-) typical alfa-male he starts a hate speech on homosexuality when he hears caryatids singing Tchaikovsky. ‘There’s your primeval mystery for you, six hundred and eighteen, trunks, my precious trunks’: Botvinik finishes his speech with a Crypto-Speak phrase as a kind of spell protecting him from the allegations of his own homosexuality. However, ‘precious trunks’ as a ‘semiotic sign’ looks more like a Freudian slip. Moreover, just some moments later he is saying without any particular reason: ‘I’m not some kind of queer’. In fact, the oligarch is talking about Tchaikovsky and Wilde too often for an alfa-male as he is. This is another hint from Pelevin towards Botvinik’s true sexuality.

In *Morvern Callar* simulacra take forms of people as well as of objects. Just as Morvern is a symbol of ‘Scotland expecting’ (Hart, 2006), her boyfriend’s miniature model of his native town can be seen as a simulacrum of the old Scotland, Scotland with Him, the Scotland of His childhood:

The miniature town is materialised in the model Morvern’s boyfriend builds in the loft of their flat. [...] This is an obsessive-

ly constructed representation of the local area, a simulacrum more perfect than the real thing in its 'always summerness' (Jones, p. 174).

Smashing the model, Morvern destroys the past. Just as appropriating his novel and deleting his name on it, she erases any traces of his presence. Carole Jones in *Disappearing Men* defines the transformation Morvern undergoes as 'the transformation of toxic hegemonic masculinity, its ritual displacement into a process of regeneration' (ibid., p. 189).

Taking driving lessons Morvern faces signs very often. She claims that her 'favourite bit of the questions was the road signs'. She also adds: 'I never got them wrong cause some nights I sat in bed with *The Highway Code*, remembering them' (Warner, 1996, p. 57). Without any reason Morvern informs the reader about her favourite road sign, which is Quay-side or Riverbank, depicting a car falling into the water.

Usually emotionally restrained and introvert, Morvern rarely gives her reader any picture of her feelings. However, a car falling into the water drawn on the page after she had put her boyfriend's corpse on the loft makes us think if it is more than a road sign. Having just recently smashed a simulacrum of her boyfriend's past, Morvern unconsciously continues the destruction of her boyfriend's relics. Driving lessons that were paid for by her boyfriend are just another simulacrum of the past to be destroyed on the way to the future. That is why Morvern does not feel much disappointment when she leaves the car during her driving test, leading her to fail it.

4.2 The Wind of Change (90s-00s)

Changes in Morvern's life are followed by the changes around her. Alan Warner finished his novel in 1993 (Jeffries, 2012), the time of many significant changes in the United Kingdom (consequently, in Scotland) as well as all over the world. The end of Thatcherism and the dissolution of the Eastern bloc as the main objects of hopes and fears of people at the end of the twentieth century serve as intriguing backgrounds of the novels.

The Scotland of the 90s in Morvern's narration does not raise many disputes about the power of England. Half-unknown and half-independent, Morvern is a mystery for the publishers, who watch her 'like hawks'. However, Morvern does not express any open dislike towards the publishers from London. She acts usually: taking as much as she can from them, Morvern leaves to Scotland.

Tom and Susan do not tell stories, and that is what impasses her most. Their culture of 'discussing' instead of 'storytelling' goes against Morvern's familiar tradition of the port:

Tom or Susan would ask a question looking at you, you would shrug your shoulders with a bottle of beer in the mouth and they would answer the question themselves then argue about it.

They didnt tell stories they just discussed (Warner, 1996, p. 163).

Tom and Susan do not understand Morvern, who knows nothing about royalties or subsidiary rights, and she does not understand them. People from different political, social and class backgrounds they don't have much to talk about. Coming back to the port Morvern makes up her mind about the publishers:

I spent everything; had to borrow money off these London folk.

Boys?

Nut, just idiots (ibid, p. 180).

Facing another reality — the outer world, Morvern does not show much curiosity either. When she watches TV, the war in Yugoslavia is on the screen. Morvern does not like the news and quickly switches to a movie. She does not share any thoughts on the war that she sees on the screen, nor does she actually have any political views. A superstore assistant from the age of thirteen, Morvern never had any power to influence her own life, not talking about the life of the other people. She is used to accepting the world as it is and escapes the pictures of blood simply by switching to a movie:

Watching telly while eating you only saw men machine-gunning in a ruined town. It was Yugoslavia then there was a picture of a girl human with the head missing. I put off the channel and watched the video of Bad Lieutenant (ibid., p. 50).

The same background of the Yugoslav wars that continued for a decade from 1991 until 1999 on the territory of former Yugoslavia is present in Pelevin's 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids'.

A song that Lena is singing at the audition for the job at the luxurious brothel is a very emotional and sincere appeal to the country suffering the war. Its author Alexander Voytinsky claims in an interview that with this song he 'asked for forgiveness for being such a coward' not going to the war himself to help Yugoslavia (Voytinsky, 2004).

In Pelevin's novella the song turns out to be a ticket to the world of luxury and lust. As Lena is singing the song about the war, uncle Pete cynically asks her to raise a leg:

Lena had prepared a song for just this contingency, one that the t.A.T.u. girls sang, about Yugoslavia — it was a great vehicle for her thin, clear voice. Lena started singing: The Danube in the evening is flooded with White light, white light, white light . . .
"Lift one leg," said Uncle Pete. Lena blushed but went on singing as she raised her left leg, keeping it bent at the knee (Pelevin, 2011).

At the most emotional moment of the song describing the flames devouring the country uncle Pete interrupts Lena asking to sing some other song:

When Lena sang "You are leaving, consumed by the flames, Yugoslavia, without me without me without me," it seemed to trigger some kind of content-addressable relay in Uncle Pete's

head. He shook the ash off his cigar, frowned, and said: “That’s enough. Let’s have something else” (ibid.).

However, after all the singing and staying on one leg, Lena is accepted and Yugoslavia becomes the pet name that uncle Pete gives her.

Becoming the simulacrum of the country that no longer exists — Pelevin’s book was published in Russia in 2008, while the last union of Yugoslavia dissolved in 2006 (BBC News, 2006) — Lena herself does not exist anymore as a person she used to be.

4.3 Spiritual Transformation

The injection of Mantis-B serum transforms Lena both physically and spiritually. The meditative condition she feels after the injection changes her perception of the world. Lena, who used to claim ‘when someone has a few billion dollars, you can find an awful lot of something good’ is no longer interested in money. Neither is she interested in an ordinary life. The world of mantises is the only place she want to be now. As the mantis commands, Lena kills her sexual partner in order to become one of them, to be accepted to the world of mantises.

As Lipovetsky points out, quoting Lotman and Uspensky, Russian culture is a culture of extremes:

According to Lotman and Uspensky, Russian culture always moves toward a radical break with the past, which reveals the unwavering maximalism of its consciousness, rejecting the very idea of compromise, acknowledging heaven or hell (and periodically, in the course of cultural evolution, renaming the previous hell as heaven and vice-versa), but excluding the concept of purgatory on principle (Lipovetsky, 2012).

There is no transitional period for Lena, no purgatory between her hell and heaven. From a prostitute whose aim is money, she suddenly becomes a highly spiritual girl, whose only wish is to stay in a calm and serene world of mantises.

Morvern's transformation comes through many places and one of them is her local pub, the Mantrap. Meeting some ministers at the door of the pub, Morvern hears 'Abandon hope all you who enter'. The famous line is written on the gates of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*, the first part of *The Divine Comedy* (Dante, 1980). The pub thus is compared to hell. 'I always do,' answers Morvern entering the pub after she came back from her first trip to Spain. Her old life, this old Scotland, is seen now as a stagnated place, a pub which symbolises hell. Moving from this place, she comes back to Spain. On her way and throughout the novel Morvern does not say much. Her surname, which means 'silence' in Spanish, justifies itself.

Ihab Hassan in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* mentions silence as one of the most important metaphors of postmodernism. Among the meanings of silence Hassan names the following:

Silence implies alienation from reason, society and history. Silence betrays separation from nature (Hassan, 1982, p. 13).

Just like Morvern herself, silence does not need any reason, society or history. Morvern as a metaphor of silence goes back to the nature observing bugs and enjoying waves on the Spanish shore.

One of the most important for Morvern's development features of silence is its nature of extreme states of mind:

Silence fills the extreme states of the mind — void, madness, outrage, ecstasy, mystic trance — when ordinary discourse ceases to carry the burden of meaning (ibid., p. 13).

Mourning Morvern feels safe in her silence that only increases when she goes to the raves. Morvern's silence is a necessary tool of her personal development and identity building. When the world turns silent Morvern gets a chance to deconstruct and reassemble it again into a world where she would feel herself comfortable:

Silence de-realises the world. It encourages the metamorphosis of appearance and reality, the perpetual fusion and confusion of identities, till nothing — or so it seems — remains.

Silence turns consciousness upon itself, altering the modes of its awareness; or else condemns the mind to repetitions of the same solipsist drama of self and anti-self. Thus, the transvaluation of values or their complete devaluation ensues (ibid., p. 13).

Stuart Jeffries in his article about Alan Warner points out that when Warner was writing *Morvern Callar* from 1991 to 1993, nobody knew what he was up to:

At the time he was working on the railways. "I didn't tell anyone. Imagine if you'd failed. You'd be teased in the pub for the next 10 years. You don't go down to the pub and say: 'I've reached page 65 – it's going splendidly!' In that male culture on the railways, there was that sort of Hemingway concept that there's something effeminate about writing — bullshit of course" (Jeffries, 2012).

This secrecy of writing and the author's silence are echoed in the silence of Morvern Callar, who, as Sophy Dale claims, does not tell us the whole truth:

As a narrator, Morvern conceals her thoughts and works through indirection, such that the reader is intrigued by what she *doesn't* say (Dale, 2002, p. 35).

However, going her way Morvern comes to the end of the novel. Significantly, her last shelter in the novel is the Tree church, which is a direct opposition of the 'hell' of Mantrap, where she ran from. Moreover, it is a place of her boyfriend's childhood, the one that she has destroyed as a model at the loft. Thus, coming to the Tree Church at the end of the book as a transformed and renewed Morvern, expecting a child and bringing this expectation back to Scotland, Morvern revitalises the place.

Conclusion

The analysis of the books proves Rutherford's theory on constantly developing identities, their permanent transformation. Both Morvern and Lena are going through a number of events and experiences, which affect their personalities.

The choice of settings — Scotland contrasted by Spain for Morvern, and overground versus underground Moscow for Lena — make their experiences transcultural and transnational. Moreover, the cultures they experience come from different social classes. The mixture of high and low culture, which is inevitable in the era of postmodernism, enriches both protagonists and secures their personal development.

Matthew Arnold, who defines culture as 'a study of perfection', argues that it makes someone 'becoming something rather than having something'. Indeed, both Morvern and Lena do not obtain anything, they transform their personalities. As Arnold argues, culture 'seeks to do away with classes' and this statement is proved by the experience of the protagonists. Both of them are ordinary people, a working class superstore assistant Morvern, and a prostitute Lena. The narration follows their development and proves that their social statuses cannot be the obstacle for cultural identity growth.

The figure of Orpheus — a mythological musician and poet — is present in both books. However, if Morvern's Orpheus — her dead boyfriend edu-

cated Morvern directly by enlarging her playlist and teaching her new words, Lena's Orpheus — oligarch Botvinik does it indirectly. He is not an open-minded and smart person himself, though he has money and power to sponsor the magazine Lena reads. It is his money, and the money of his friends that pay for the injections of Mantis-B — the cause of Lena's spiritual transformation.

Music is one of the central cultural means used to shape the identities of the protagonists. Morvern more often discusses her playlist rather than her feelings. Dismembering her Orpheus she wears basically nothing, tells almost nothing — there is only her music and the process of deconstruction. In terms of Ihab Hassan's 'Dismemberment of Orpheus' this scene represents the Postmodernism dismantling Modernism. Fragmentation, being one of the central notions of postmodern literature, becomes literary fragmentation of Morvern's boyfriend's body.

Silence is another notable feature of postmodernism that Ihab Hassan highlights in his work. Morvern Callar, a silent girl, whose surname tells everything about her nature, uses silence unconsciously — as a protection from the outer world, as a meditative tool on the shore of Spain, and as a way to spiritual transformation.

Lena, who leads silent conversations with the archetype Mantis during her working shifts, realises the beauty of the 'world of mantises'. The spiritual transformation that happened to Lena has shifted her system of values. She is no longer a prostitute who hunts for the money of oligarchs,

but a mantis herself who is setting her male partner 'free' and is happy to be freed herself.

Overcoming cultural and gender issues the protagonists liberate themselves. The transformation of their identities allows both *Morvern Callar* and 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' to be attributed to the genre of bildungsroman. They get over gender issues and sexual objectification. Female protagonists construct their femininity as well as masculinity and break gender roles stereotypes. Both protagonists can be seen as symbols of postmodernism overcoming modernism, dismantling the old order through the means of culture.

Appendix 1

List of Music pieces mentioned in Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (in order of appearance the book):

Morvern's records:

Pablo Casals: Nana

Miles Davis: He loved him madly

Music Revelation Ensemble: Street Bride

Blue Öyster Cult: (Don't Fear) The Reaper

Rodgers and Hammerstein: South Pacific (musical): Some Enchanted Evening

Cameo: Word up! (album): She's Mine

Cameo: Just Be Yourself

REM: Automatic For The People (album): Try Not To Breath

Can: Delay 1968 (album): Oh Little Star of Bethlehem

Magazine: Secondhand Daylight (album): Rhythm of Cruelty

Magazine: Play (album)

Bill Nelson's Red Noise

Last Exit: Iron Path (album)

Spiral Tribe Sound System: Sirius 23 (album)

The Mutoid Waste Company

Stravinsky Ballets (Orpheus side)

Robert Moog

Darkside's Theme

Prince: The Future

PM Dawn: Of the Heart, of the Soul and of the Cross: The Utopian Experience (album): Set Adrift on Memory Bliss

PM Dawn: The Beautiful

Last Exit: Straw Dog

Last Exit: You Got Me Rockin'

Last Exit: Take Cover

Last Exit: Ma Rainey

Last Exit: Crack Butter

Last Exit: Panzer Be Bop

Miles Davis: Great Expectations

Sonny Sharrock: Dick Dogs

Ronald Shannon Jackson and The Decoding Society: Undressing

Luciano Berio: Visage

Miles Davis: Pharaoh's Dance

Ronald Shannon Jackson: Taboo

Ronald Shannon Jackson: Challenge To Manhood

Bill Laswell: Assassin

Salif Keita: Nyanafin

Les Tetes BrGlees et Zanzibar: Essingan

This Mortal Coil: Another Day

The Ink Spots: Up A Lazy River

The Cocteau Twins: Blue Bell Knoll

Material: Disappearing

The Can: Future Days

Holger Czukay: Persian Love

The Can: Ege Bamyasi Okraschoten (album): Pinch, Sing Swan Song,
Vitamin C, Soup, I'm So Green, Spoon.

The Golden Palominos: This Is How It Feels (album)

Dreamfish

Spiral Tribe Sound System: Earthworm Here Come The Warm Jets

Lee Perry: De Devil Dead

Lee Perry: From The Secret Laboratory

The Can: Unlimited Edition: Gomorrha (Dec 73), TV Sport (April 1971),

The Empress and the Ukraine King, Connection (March 1969)

The Future Sound of London: Room 208

Kraftwerk: Orbital, Computer Love

Weather Report: Mysterious Traveller (album): Cucumber Slumber

Brian Eno: Here Come The Warm Jets (album)

Czukay Wobble Liebezeit: Full Circle

Zawinul: The Harvest

PM Dawn: So on & So On

Can: Pauper's Daughter & I

Scritti Politti: A Little Knowledge

Neville Brothers: With God On Our Side

Robert Calvert: Ejection

Hardware: 500 Years

Keziah Jones: Free Your Soul

Daniel Lanois: Still Water

Spirit: Topango Windows

John McCormack: Come my Beloved

James Chance: Roving Eye

Hunters & Collectors: Dog

Leisure Process: A Way You'll Never Be

Material: Hallucination Engine (album)

Echo & the Bunnymen: Blue Blue Ocean

Parliament: Motor Booty Affair (album): One Of Those Funky Things

Appendix 2

Table of differences between modernism and postmodernism, presented in 'The Dismemberment of Orpheus' (1982) by Ihab Hassan.

Modernism	Postmodernism
Romanticism/Symbolism	Pataphysics/Dadaism
Form (conjunctive, closed)	Antiform (disjunctive, open)
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Mastery/Logos	Exhaustion/Silence
Art Object / Finished Work	Process/Performance/Happening
Distance	Participation
Creation/Totalization	Decreation/Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Centering	Dispersal
Genre/Boundary	Text/Intertext
Semantics	Rhetoric
Paradigm	Syntagm
Hypotaxis	Parataxis
Metaphor	Metonymy
Selection	Combination
Root/Depth	Rhizome/Surface
Interpretation/Reading	Against Interpretation / Misreading
Signified	Signifier
Lisible (Readerly)	Scriptable (Writerly)
Narrative / Grande Histoire	Anti-narrative / Petit Histoire

Master Code	Idiolect
Symptom	Desire
Type	Mutant
Genital/Phallic	Polymorphous/Androgynous
Paranoia	Schizophrenia
Origin / Cause	Difference-Difference / Trace
God the Father	The Holy Ghost
Metaphysics	Irony
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Transcendence	Immanence

Appendix 3

List of Music pieces mentioned in Victor Pelevin's '*The Hall of the Singing Caryatids*':

t.A.T.u.: Yugoslavia

Nautilus Pompilius: Wheels of Love

Aquarium: The Work of Master Bo

Singer Shnurkov "a battle against the dictatorship of the manager" -

Sergey Shnurov (the leader of the ska-punk band Leningrad): Manager

Pink Floyd: Another Brick In The Wall

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake

Joe Strummer and The Mescaleros: Mondo Bongo

Paul Robeson: Anthem of the USSR in English

Zusammenfassung

In meiner Masterarbeit ziehe ich einen Vergleich zwischen dem Buch von Alan Warner und Victor Pelevin, in Bezug auf Kultur, Gender, und Transformation. Beide *Morven Callar* und 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' sind dem Bildungsroman Genre zugeschrieben, welche sich mit Themen wie Entwicklung und Transformation der Protagonisten auseinandersetzen. Ich habe mich mit der Gender Problematik auseinandergesetzt, indem ich die jungen Protagonistinnen (eine im Bordell angestellt, die andere ihrem toten Freund nachtrauernd) miteinander in der Erzählung vergleichen habe. Die Bücher wurden 1996 publiziert, (*Alan Warner, Morvern Callar*) and 2008 (Victor Pelevin, 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids'), am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts und des dritten Millenniums. Beide Werke beinhalten Referenzen zu Kultur, Musik und der Kunst der Zeit. Durch die im Buch repräsentierte Kultur, dazu habe ich mich auch dem Zeitgeist gewidmet, welcher bestimmte Auswirkungen auf die Protagonistinnen habe.

'Dismemberment of Orpheus' von Ihab Hassan dient hierbei als Vergleichspunkt und Inspiration für meine These. Musik (als Teil von Kultur), getötete Männer Figur (als Darstellung von Gender Problemen) und das Zerteilen (als Transformation der Persönlichkeit der jungen Protagonistinnen), sind die Kernelemente der Untersuchung. Durch das Bezwingen der kulturellen und geschlechtlichen Hindernisse, befreien sich die Pro-

tagonistinnen und erlangen eine persönliche Freiheit. Die transformation der Identität erlaubt es beiden *Morvern Callar* und 'The Hall of the Singing Caryatids' dem Bildungsroman zugeschrieben zu werden.

Beide bezwingen Gender Problematik und die damit verbundene Sexuelle Objektivierung. In den Sie ihre Feminine Seite konstruieren und gleichzeitig Maskulinität, sodass Sie Vorurteile brechen. Beide Protagonistinnen können als Symbol angesehen werden, da sie symbolisch für Postmodernism stehen welcher Modernism anhand mit Kultur auseinander nimmt.

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