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(Re)Mapping Europe from a Black Diasporic Perspective: The Case of Bernardine Evaristo's Soul Tourists

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Abstract: *Inscribed in Homi Bhabha's project of "re-inventing Britain" and Stuart Hall's representation of cultural diversity, the present study explores the way in which the tropes of magical realism have been implemented to remap the new frontiers of the European construct in Bernardine Evaristo's Soul Tourists. In order to achieve this aim, a close reading technique has been relied on to deconstruct the text into basic dichotomies that trace the European centre and its margin. Furthermore, the British magical realism model of Anne Hegerfeldt is employed to highlight how the writer successfully reversed the realistic paradigm of the centre as she focalised the narration from an "ex-centric" point of view. In doing so, Europe became a warm home for the diasporic subject.*
Keywords: *Decentring Europe, Ex-centric Focalization, Magical Realism, Psychological Literalization, Soul Tourists.*
Résumé : *Inscrite dans le projet de Homi Bhabha de "réinventer la Grande-Bretagne" et dans le cadre de la représentation de la diversité culturelle par Stuart Hall, l'étude suivante explore la manière dont les tropes du réalisme magique ont été mis en œuvre pour remodeler les nouvelles frontières de l'identité européenne dans le roman Soul Touristes [Les Touristes de L'âme] rédigé par l'écrivaine Britannique Bernardine Evaristo. Pour atteindre cet objectif, une technique de lecture attentive "close reading" a été mise en œuvre afin de décomposer le texte en dichotomies de base qui tracent le centre européen et sa marge culturelle. En outre, le modèle britannique du réalisme magique d'Anne Hegerfeldt a été adopté pour souligner la manière dont l'écrivaine a réussi à inverser le paradigme réaliste du centre en construisant une narration d'un point de vue "excentrique". L'Europe est ainsi devenue un foyer très important pour la diaspora noire.*
Mots Clés : *Le Réalisme Magique, les Touristes de l'Ame, la littéralisation psychologique, la focalisation excentrique, Reconstruire l'image historique de L'Europe.*

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1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has conspicuously coincided with a tremendous shift in the direction as well as the concern of the Black British Female writing. Being deeply rooted in the British culture, the second-generation writers of Black diaspora, who are considered by R. Victoria Arana and Lauri Ramey (2004) as a "neo-millennial avant-garde", have evidently responded to Homi Bhabha's project of "re-inventing Britain" and to the deconstructive call mapped by the cultural theorist Stuart Hall. In this regard, this latter did not only theorise the burden of representation that the Black British carries in his/her artistic vitality, but he also theorised the decentring features that Black British writers should undergo in order to reshape the exclusive oneness upon which Britishness has already erased the concept of difference or what is known as a homogeneous one made out of many.

In order to raise awareness about the cultural diversity of the British and the European construct, many young Black British female writers such as Bernardine Evaristo have engaged with the aforementioned agenda employing their ethically-mixed artistic and cultural background for exploring "the third space" where the powerful centre meets its own Black margin. Within the same vein, Anne Hegerfeldt has pointed out that the tropes of magical realism with regards to their effective decentring and deconstructing nature have been displaced to the mother country for the sake of setting a testimonial account of an ex-centric perspective. This latter is needed to maintain a state of Interculturality where White Europe would reconcile with its repressed blackness. In order to achieve this aim, the study is aligned with the significant contribution of Anne Hegerfeldt and demonstrates that Bernardine Evaristo' *Soul Tourists* has genuinely exemplified the British style of magical realism by using different techniques such as psychological Literalization, duality, transgression and ex-centric focalization. The concern of the study is significant in the sense that it offers an intricate understanding of the contemporary moments where cultural sensibility is inscribed in the Black British female writing to deconstruct hitherto the real with the countless waves of the fantastic.

2. Historical and Theoretical Background of Magical Realism

Historically, the term "magical realism" was appropriated by the art historian Franz Koh's label" magischer Realismus" (magic realism) in 1925 as he described the new tendency of German artists against the mode of expressionism. It is considered as a reaction that carried in its form a "new objectivity" that was once distorted by the abstraction created by the expressionists as they attempted to reflect the inner experience at the expense of natural reality. Accordingly, he explained this phenomenon as a starting marker of a new moment in the German art identified as "post-expressionism". Magic realism is precisely defined by Koh as a type of painting which incorporates the "calm admiration of the magic of being, of the discovery that things already have their own faces" (Koh, 1995: 20) the fact which represents "the interior figure, of the exterior world" (1995:24).

Eventually, the term was used in literary studies to communicate the Latin experience after the Second World War up to the end of the twentieth century. First and foremost, it was evident that the impact of translating Franz Koh's Book, which is entitled Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus (Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism), into

Spanish has played its role in creating this type of literature in Latin America. Secondly, the Escape of many Europeans from Nazi-occupied Europe during the 1930s and 1940s towards central and South America undoubtedly contributed to the influence of German post-expressionism upon the literary production of the American continent as many artists and historians were among such mobility. Thirdly, the term "magical realism" was adopted by the Latin American writers who relied on Koh's concept of "magic realism" along with the French surrealist background of the "marvelous". Its main purpose was to engage it with their local mythologies on the one hand, and transform them in a mimetic mode on the other hand so that it created a genuine Latin American Novel. No wonder, by the end of the 1980s this latter was basically associated with magical realism where famous successful Latin writers such as the Argentinean writer Louis Borges and the Colombian Novelist Gabriel Marquez became the pioneers of this mode of writing.

As far as literature is concerned, magical realism has continued to echo completely its own sense of ambivalence in the narrative form as it offers a pressing combination of reality and fancy. Accordingly, the critical stance of *Magical Realism: Theory, History and Community* edited by Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris (1995) has conspicuously mapped the cartography of this genre and highlighted its international dimension so that it transcends the locality of the American continent. From a theoretical posture, magical realism is regarded as:

> A mode suited to exploring - and transgressing -boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would irreconcilable in other modes of fiction. (Zamora & Faris, 1995: 5-6)

This explains the way in which the incongruous oxymoron of "magic" and "realism" forged a harmonious space where dialectic features would coincide. As a demonstration, Zamora and Faris have referred to the experience of the Latin American authors as they incorporate "non-western cultural modes" and orality in their own Western-based writing including the novel or the short story to recreate a "new (disguised) mainstream" from a marginal perspective (4).

Along with this line of thought, it is important to illustrate the key highlights that exemplify the aforementioned genre. This latter is not merely as it seems in its simplest definition an "amalgamation of realism and Fantasy" (Flores, 1995:112), but it is composed of tools and techniques which gave it a fluid space that can co-exist between the boundaries of any given mode of thought; be it postmodern or postcolonial one. By following Faris' factors, which form the Rubric of magical texts and the revisited model suggested by Tomo Virk, it is luminous to notice that magical realist texts engage with the aspects of the story in a different way. This fact fragments the coherence of any traditional mode of realism, and in so doing it recreates a new alternative of reality. (Nevil, 2015: 25)

Within this context, Wendy. B. Faris has identified the five key characteristics that shape the magical realist form. First and foremost, it is recognized as an "international style" with different codes that inclined it to play a pivotal role in the evolution of "multicultural", postcolonial and "postmodern literary sensibility"(Faris, 2004: 1-3).

Secondly and more specifically, he points out that it contains an "irreducible element of magic" that cannot be explained by the Western paradigm of science and logic and this element works to foreshadow the "extraordinary nature of reality". Conversely, it also includes detailed "descriptions" that entail the presence of "the phenomenal world" for the sake of (re)creating the illusion of reality. In this sense, the magical can possibly be created within the frames of the real (2004: 7-16). Thirdly, magic realism owns beneath its narrative a specific hue that would communicate its "unsettling doubts" to the reader so that to transform the consciousness of this latter into a state of confusion. In this respect, the reader might have a contradicting interpretation of a particular event as its meaning probably lies between two dialectical cultural systems often Western empirical versus Non-Western magic (2004: 17).

The Fourth and the Fifth features are highly related to the aspects of the story and its impact on arranging different contesting spaces in a harmonious form. The former is then associated with the power of the magic realist narrative in incorporating different "realms". Mainly, the space that the narrator would offer in this context is fluid since it is stated in a particular inbetweeness where the norms of "real-world" are challenged and confronted by the "other-worldly supernatural norms" (2004: 22). Certainly, it evokes the uncertain and the unsettling doubts that the reader may develop due to the fact of being in different opposing worlds at the same time. Subsequently, the last characteristic came because of the four aforementioned criteria to "disrupt" the logic bases of "time, space and identity" in the story (2004: 23). Thus, it recreates through its hybrid nature and cultural duality a new sense of what has been considered as common. It leads, therefore, using Faris words "toward radical multiplicity" (25).

All in all, the primary criteria of magical realism offered from a generic point of view a conspicuous duality and heterogeneity which evaluate socio-economic reality and hence it genuinely redefines it. In a similar vein, Professor Stephen Solomon (1995) and Tomo Virk (2000) have differently explored the postcolonial layers that shape the genre of magic realism. On the one hand, Virk has revisited Faris' model and added three characteristics including the implementation of mythology, criticizing the Eurocentric discourse and providing the reader with an alternative narration of history (As cited in Mrak, 2013:2-3). On the other hand, Solomon has argued that the genre of magical realism is postcolonial in the sense that it carries with its narrative a poetics of resistance towards " the imperial totalizing systems" (1995:410). Interestingly, it has a decolonizing role as it challenges the hegemony imposed by the superpowers of the Western nation-state. Likewise, the genre under scrutiny can even be adopted by minor writers who seek to challenge and decentre the hegemonic representation within the Western paradigm in postmodern writing (Theo, 1995: 191-208).

3. Black Magical Realism Challenging the British Centre

Over the last two decades of the twentieth century, cultural studies along with literary criticism have vastly addressed the pressing concern of the Black status related to the British identity in contemporary English literature. At this level, the cultural theorist Stuart Hall argued that the Black experience was marginalised by the exclusive mode of representation constructed by white Englishness during the aftermath of the Second World War. Indeed, it reflected the English identity through a narrow mechanism that excluded

all the non-white English as "aliens" or "citizens who do not belong". Subsequently, he called for a new phase of British redefinition through the "burden of representation" (Hall, 1996: 443). In other words, he has theorised the poetics of resistance and reposition that the Black writer should adopt within the British exclusive mode of writing in order to remap a new fluid identity that is multiple in terms of representation and heterogeneous in its nature.

For the sake of repositioning the British narrative from within, many writers and critics have subsequently relied on the pivotal poetics of magic realism. Initially, it is worth referring to D'haen Theo (1995) who has given a tremendous credit to the previously mentioned mode as she thoroughly explained the extent to which the privileged centres of the metropole need to be revised through the implementation of a significant narrative that disrupts/decentres the Western hegemony. Before one proceeds with the explanation of how the genre under study functions within the exclusive mode of the British mainstream, it is very important to define the relevant components that are necessarily needed for the textual analysis.

3.1. *The Centre–Periphery Model and its Textual Representation*

Within a broader context, the model of centre-periphery was first developed in the arena of social sciences by Johan Gultang in the 1960s in order to measure the phenomenon of social change in a particular setting or what is known as "social position". This model is considered as a "holistic multi-dimensional approach for dynamic social phenomena" that totally functions to detect and explain the signs of social inequality (Veer, et al., 2009: 9). Additionally, its fundamental premises are based on geometric space in the sense that the centre of the urban city is regarded as the profound essence of this latter as it holds much of the significant artifacts whereas the periphery is contemplated as an absent agent that required less attention. As a demonstration, the central space of the city is metaphorically considered as important as it represents the city hall and the most significant historical monuments. On the other hand, and from a genuine perspective of reality, the margin of the city receives nothing but metaphorical slums or polluting factories.

Adopted from social sciences, the centre-periphery model is purely compatible and efficient in interpreting the experience of social inequality because of the cultural difference between the Western and the non-western. Undeniably, Postcolonial theory owes much debt to the theory of social position in constructing its analytical lenses so that to evaluate the Western literature in general and the postcolonial experience in a specific case. As far as hegemony and cultural imperialism are concerned, postcolonial critics have argued that the Western centre has not only manifested a superior position toward the Non-western space, but it also bypassed it to define this space from a subjectively made stereotypical stance.

In view of that, Stuart Hall has tackled this issue as he explained how the British cultural imperialism controlled all its territories in terms of power and ideology amid the colonial moment:

> The identity of Englishness…was first as a strongly centred, highly exclusive and exclusivist form of cultural identity. Exactly what the transformation to Englishness took place is quite a long story. But one can see a certain point at which the particular forms of English identity feel that they can command, within their own discourses, the discourses of almost everybody else; not quite everybody, but almost everyone else at a certain moment in history (Hall, 1997: 1).

By following this line of thought, it becomes clear that the British centre anchored its power upon a type of discourse that structured their superior position at the expense of the silent "other" non-British who were subordinated to its hegemony. Accordingly, it carries its ideological implications through a representation system known as the structure of binary oppositions (Derrida, 1972/1981: 41). By relying on it in the colonial context, the British centre has maintained its own superior power upon the colonial periphery for so long. For instance, one may refer to the stereotypical "cultural translations" that the British colonial system implemented to subdue the African culture and construct the colonial identity that fit the British Imperial agenda. This project was clearly deconstructed via the postcolonial writings of committed African authors such as Chinua Achebe (Haddouche, 2013: 165).

Similarly, the British centre has continued to communicate the discourse of superiority during the post-imperial moment. In this regard, the British Indian writer Salman Rushdie has deeply examined this issue in his article "The New Empire within Britain" and he argues that the British centre has consistently continued to practice the same imperial mindset upon its citizens and the immigrants in spite of the end of the age of colonialism. As an illustration, Britain passed the National Act of 1981 to take the state of belongingness from the citizens of the territories of the British Empire for decreasing the rising waves of immigration. Moreover, there were numerous racialised policies of "assimilation" applied against the Black subjects in the course of the Thatcherism era. Both the National act and the assimilation policies tread a fine line between the construction of the British centre: as powerful and superior whereas the Black periphery is simply constructed as marginalised, subordinated and inferior to the former.

3.2. *Magical Realism as an Internal Decentring Narrative*

Not only the black subjects who have been displaced from their homeland to an estranged locus of diaspora surrounded by the British centre, but even the genre of magical realism has also been transported to the hostland for the sake of changing the status quo. It is necessary to return to the argument of D'haen Theo (1995:197) about the pivotal role of magical realism in decentring "privileged centres" hereof. Its paradoxical duality recreates an alternative reality from a reversed perspective. In other words, this mode of writing implies the process use of marginalising the centre as well as centralising the margin. It is clearly known in the area of literary studies and the theory of enunciation that every writer speaks from a particular position in terms of history, class, gender, and race. Hence, the literary production could be shaped by the privileged position of a super male white English space that belongs to the hegemonic British centre. On the contrary, magical

realism adopts a different discourse that is culturally hybrid and so it disturbs the centre as it evokes obliterated stories from the margin.

To explore the British style of magical realism, it is necessary to consider the rubric that was originated by the scholar Anne Hegerfeldt (2002) as she elaborated on the postmodern British experience within the prevenient mode. Therein these extra additional characteristics would not only map its real and magical duality, but it delineates its heterogeneous nature, multiple perspectives, cultural hybridity, and more importantly its pivotal role in decentring the British centre on the one hand and re-centring the British margin on the other one. Accordingly, Anne's rubric is deeply needed for such scrutiny; it consists of the following techniques:

3.2.1. *The adaptation of the realist mode to fantastic elements*

Magical realism in the British context has the same primary rubric outlined by Wendy B. Faris. It contains elements of realism and other aspects of the fantastic. Nonetheless, Anne has explained how the narrator aimed at "naturalizing" these fantastic elements by appropriating their form inside the realistic convention. The reader, therefore, hesitates in identifying the convention that shapes the narrative before he/she would finally accept them as an everyday experience. For a demonstration, Hegerfeldt has referred to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* where the character Saleem seems to really have a superpower of telepathy and smell (2002:66).

3.2.2. *Literalization*

It is a technique used to suspend the reader's state of disbelief by giving the abstract a concrete form and transforming the metaphoric into a real experience. It can be delineated through linguistic devices or psychological transformation in the manner of metamorphoses and Ghosts' appearance. For instance, Salman Rushdie has relied on this technique in *Satanic Verses* as he made his major character Saladin Chamcha and the other immigrants transformed literary into beasts because of the racial prejudice that they experienced in Britain (2002: 68).

3.2.3. *Ex-centric Focalizer*

Likewise, it is similar to Wendy Faris' concept of the "defocalized" since the narrator is distanced oneself from the focal representation of the dominant centre. Nonetheless, it exhibits a challenging representation to the former as it evokes the repressed stories of the margin or what the author labelled "other perspectives" (in this instance it is the black diaspora) (2002:71).

3.2.4. *Knowledge and knowledge production*

The strikingly thought-provoking fusion of the real and the fantastic through genuine devices of Literalization and ex-centric perspective serves in communicating a new structure of knowledge that disrupts the coherence of the Western positivist paradigm. As an illustration, investigating history via magical realism mode casts an interesting light on debunking the post-enlightenment stereotypes made around the African, the Caribbean and the Indian constructed as inferior others or subordinated aliens to the English Empire/nation-state (2002:73-75).

3.2.5. *Fantastic reality*

The duality mode works successfully in founding a space where the fantastic becomes real; meanwhile the real could be doubted as being fictitious. Many studies have recently started to work on historiographical investigations in order to evince the fantastic constructions that lie behind even the most popular figures in English history such as King Arthur (Breeze, 2019). In this matter, fantasy might exist within the body of reality where myth, history and collective memory could have a pivotal role in shaping its boundaries. By implementing the "fantastic rhetoric" to the existing reality within the context of magical realism, the decentring or the deconstructing effect of this latter might become conspicuous for the reader. It is, thus, what transforms our already socially and culturally -made sense of perceiving reality in the way it looks (Hegerfeldt, 2002: 76-78).

4. Methodology

4.1. *Context*

The following paper tends to scrutinise the novel under study, which is recognised as a primary source, from a magical realist lens for the sake of exploring how Bernardine Evaristo has forged a challenging narrative for the British centre. This mode of writing has categorically transgressed contemporary British reality as it evokes the repressed voices of the Black margin through its decentring components. To achieve this aim, the researcher relies on Anne's Rubric of magical realism in order to identify the features that deconstruct the European reality and reconstruct it from an ex-centric perspective.

4.2. *Research Method and Instruments*

The study tends to adopt a close reading technique for the sake of carrying on an effective textual analysis that enables the researcher to deconstruct the text based on the centre-periphery model and the power relation between these two spaces. Equally important is the fact that the study also utilizes the theory of representation as it becomes common knowledge that "every regime of representation is a regime of power" (Hall, 1989:71). On doing so and by tracing how blackness and whiteness are represented in the frames of Europe, precisely in Britain, the reader will ensure whether there exists any shift in (re)articulating power between the European centre and its black margin.

Strategically, the above technique deconstructs the plot, the characters' development, the narrator's viewpoint and the magical realist features under the lens of the centre-periphery model in order to answer the following research questions:

- What is special about the British style of magical realism compared to its primary model?
- How is this mode of writing used by Bernardine Evaristo to (re)map the space of Europe from a Black perspective?

5. *Soul Tourist's* Reconstruction of Europe via the Tropes of Magical Realism

Bernardine Evaristo is spotted as one of the outstanding contemporary mixed-race writers who aimed through their writing to rewrite and reshape the legacy of British history and literature. Her mixed origin appears to shape her writing and celebrate the power of heterogeneity. Mainly, her novel *Soul Tourist*s is grounded in the narrative of resistance

and the remapping of Britain as well as Europe from a non-hegemonic perspective that celebrates the trajectory of fluidity, transition, and multiculturalism. By bearing in mind the paratextual importance that a title can display (Hammouche-bey, 2012:136), Soul *Tourists* carries in its structure a reading modulator that reflects the diasporic instability.

At this level, the novel opens up with a clear dichotomy between the British centre and its margin. It is conspicuously reflected through the juxtaposition of superior whiteness and inferior Blackness inside the British nation.

On the one hand, Blackness as a British margin is associated with dirt and melancholy through the diasporic character Clasford whose home reflects his physical disorder. He is terribly co-equipped with an emotional alienation towards his hostland Britain and his space is depicted as hellish as an "inferno"(Evaristo, 2006: 4-8). On the other hand, his son Stanley is portrayed as a character who is obsessed in a metaphorical way with the British centre as his home is totally covered and merely with "subtle complementary tones of white". His space is narrated in a paradoxical way to occupy a congruous state between being heavenly and empty (11). Obviously, diasporic studies shed light on the deep connection between the act of longing for home and the quest for restoring one's identity (Fali, 2015:269). In this context, Clasford home and identity are broken in England whereas Stanley's destiny is confined to the myth of the British centre.

Furthermore, Stanley's father melancholy in the hostland is caused by the fact of being nostalgic towards his mother country and profoundly alienated in Britain. In this way, his tragic fall is depicted through the discourse of his son Stanley as he commented on the words of his father:

> When mi fus come a this blasted country, and finally seeps down to accentuate his thirst and accelerate the decay of brown skin that had been, for thirty-two years, his formal application to British society, determining his acceptance or rejection, something he was always going on about. We doan belong ina this country…we doan belong, Stanley. The bitterness at his transformation from fully qualified chemist in his home country to ill-paid postman in his adopted one never quite overcome. (Evaristo, 2006: 19)

Clasford continued to have a miserable life in England until he witnessed his tragic end. With this in mind, the British margin seems to offer no chance but severe sufferance to the Afro-Caribbean diasporic subject of the first wave of immigration.

Meanwhile, his son Stanley is pictured as a successful accountant who is melancholic because of the tragic experience of his father; thenceforth he thinks that he is "no anchor" when it comes to belonging to Britain since he witnessed the tragedy that his father went through in England. The narrator delineates his desolate state before he died as follows:

> He hasn't washed in years; he won't let me or anyone else touch him. His nails grow and grow and grow, until they break off into jagged edges. His hair and beard, no longer dyed black, grow and grow… He doesn't smell as much as the room, though, because, like the stew outside, the germs die after a while. They say that after the first few years the dirt does not get any worse (8).

During the funeral of Clasford, Stanley started to experience the state of emotional loss vis-à-vis his own identity as he started to hallucinate about him. Herein, Evaristo has strategically put the seeds of the world of fantasy in the novel. As Stanley reflected on the death of his father, he thought:

> Then we enter the dark zone, the cold zone, the abysmal abyssal plane, I try to catch him, but he is lost to me now, as he disappears over the top of the largest mountain range in the world, beneath the continental shelf in the forbidding basin, his wasted legs paddling as his brown corduroy slacks fall down, his feet limp and crusty at the heels. I am no anchor; he supposed to be mine, he is going. (9)

Also, his friend Jessie another diasporic character of African descent is depicted as a lady who recently escaped a critical psychological state described as "clinica depressia" due to the emptiness that she experienced in the course of her childhood in an orphanage in Leeds. Moreover, she was subject to racial prejudice when she worked as an entertainer. She questions the calamity of being under such circumstances as so:

> That Harley Street specialist told me never to sing again. So I turned my hand to comedy. Do you think it was easy getting up on stage telling gags in 1970? I was shot down on account of my colour or gender or the size of my protuberances or usually all three… up there on stage giving it large, like my sole mission on this planet is to make them crack up so they forget their sorry little lives. But what about mine, eh... (33).

It is highly luminous that the afro-mentioned black characters occupy the space of the British margin which is associated with: inferno, solitude, melancholy, sufferance, coldness and addiction. In other words, the diasporic subject is driven to a state of estrangement against the exclusive frames of the white British centre.

5.1. *Speaking from an Ex-centric Space*

The diasporic characters of the second wave emerged as alienated entities inside the British margin. However, the writer has clearly depended on the use of magical realist features in order to reverse the hegemonic relationship between the powerful British centre and the repressed space of the periphery. By scrutinising the novel's narrative under the lens of Hegerfeldt Anne's rubric, it is highly noticeable that the focalization of the narrator seems to occupy an ex-centric status the fact which renders the coherence of the Western paradigm suspicious. To illustrate, it is important to explain the key techniques used to achieve the aforementioned aim:

5.1.1. *Juxtaposing duality and transgression*

As it is explained above, one of the most clearly highlighted techniques of magical realism is the adaptation of realism to the use of fantastic features that change the hue of social reality as it breaks away from post-enlightenment. Then, the narration of the novel seems to juxtapose the state of the present when Stanley and his friend Jessie have tried to travel

all across Europe to escape from the "weird domestic wildness" of Britain (Evaristo, 2006: 39) with the tropes of the distant past. This is obviously evinced as Stanley does not only seem to travel geographically across Europe, but he metaphorically travelled into the history/past of each country he visited.

At this point, the time is represented as cyclical since it offers a space in an explainable manner for the fusion of the past within the frames of the present in order to evaluate this latter from the perspective of the former. Yet, the way of representing the past with everyday reality is not explained or justified enough, the fact which has evidently transgressed the consistency of the realist focalization in the novel.

The narrator has deeply repudiated the convention of realism through the character Jessie who started to claim that the movie: "Sound of Music" is made in Germany instead of Austria. Bernardine Evaristo has introduced the congruous nature of the narrative as it is stated through the words of Stanley who reacted to Jessie's response:

> *The Sound of Music* was set in Austria, not Germany,' I corrected, seeing my breath cloud in front of me. 'The whole point was that Austria was under Nazi occupation.' Facts were facts and fiction was fiction and never the twain should meet. I suspected they were often intertwined for Jessie O'Donnell. (50)

Herein the mode of realism is juxtaposed with a plainly made form of an illusion to highlight the amalgamation of reality with the world of fantasy, which is the backbone of the magical realist genre. This statement has clearly opened up the space for the implementation of non-European legends in the novel.

For instance, the reader might experience a state of disbelief and hesitation in identifying the nature of the narrative as he/she is exposed to the description of Jessie and Stanley travelling to Italy in their Van. As they climb up the Mountain of Alps, the narrator shifts to place them in the timeframe of 250 BC when Hannibal of Carthage managed to invade Rome. Stanley recounted the event as if he time travelled to the distant past:

> Soldiers were up ahead. They had reached an impasse. The road was blocked by rocks, upon which logs were burning. To keep them warm? Standing apart from the soldiers was a dusky, bearded man with tightly curled hair that sprang out like unruly corkscrews; he was built like a boulder himself, his features deeply ingrained. Minions ran back and forth relaying his orders. This was a man not to be messed with. This was, of course, this Hannibal. When he looked at me, history ceased to exist. We were in the same place. We were in the same time. And I was calling for help (180).

Through this juxtaposition, Stanley and Jessie seemed to cross the Mountain in the past without any explanation. To emphasize on rendering this issue more complicated, the narrator goes through Stanley's focalization:

> Sure enough, we were: a moment later we rounded a bend and the road began to flatten out until it was horizontal again. Somehow we had managed to arrive at the bottom of the mountain, because somehow time had ceased to exist (181).

This temporal juxtaposition is plainly used by the writer to open up the state of the present for a possible reconsideration from the insightful tenet of the past. In other words, Stanley has admitted the captivity of the present and the significance of the past as he reflected in Monaco: "I was learning to live in the present, yet I had also accepted that I was driving into a future I could not plan and into a past I could not control" (173). Therefore, the temporal duality presented in the novel has equally depicted the fact that the present state of Europe is captive of its forgetful past.

5.1.2-*Psychological literalization*

In order to revive the past and make it speak up its hidden stories, the writer did not only count on the dual nature of magical realism, but she also depended on the use of psychological literalization. In relation to this issue, Hegerfeldt has explained that this technique is used to incorporate the "conceptual world" with the "material reality" in order to challenge the real world with the appearance of imaginary characters – namely – ghosts who speak from the past. Psychologically speaking, the presence of ghosts expresses the "materialized memories" that once have been repressed and now, they are ready to "make the past ontologically present" and in doing so it evaluates the state of the present from "an ex-centric focalization" (2002:70). Similarly, Bernardine Evaristo has provided her narrative with a space that paved the way to the appearance of black historical figures, who were excluded from the history of Europe, in the form of ghosts. As the major characters- Stanley & Jessie- travelled across Europe running away from the hellish life in England, Stanley kept meeting with ghosts that recite their repressive version of history.

For instance, Spain is reflected through the Rock of Gibraltar as a historical monument or a "crying mountain" (Evaristo, 2006: 145) where the Ghost of Zaryab appeared and described it as a homogeneous space that excluded the Moors and their successful historical legacy from the Spanish History. What's more, Zaryab acted as a genuine teacher of history as he started to evoke plainly the history of "Al-Andalus" from 711 up to the fall of Granada in 1492. He questioned the psychological state of Stanley and his alienation and ordered him to "Know thyself". Moreover, he stresses the fact that knowledge carries in its nature an emancipatory and powerful hue that deconstructs any sort of hegemony. He put it as follows:

> This is how great civilizations are created, by little men like myself…. we were true seekers of knowledge and therefore seekers of Our Creator. My time was an era of conquering, building and consolidating. The complacency that precedes the downfall of all great civilizations was still many centuries away. As yours is but a century away (157).

Unfortunately, Stanley contemplated the historical wonders of Spain via the mournful song of Zaryab who bids an ominous farewell to the most iconic city of the Moors:

> Weep for the splendour of Cordoba, for disaster has overtaken her, Fortune made her a creditor and demanded payment of the debt. She was at the height of her beauty; life was gracious and sweet, until all was overthrown

> and today no two people are happy in her streets. Then bid her goodbye and let her go in peace, since depart she must… (158).

Additionally, Gibraltar stands as a metaphorical space that evaluates the present state of Europe through the lens of the distant past. With this in mind, the narrator stressed this idea through the statement of Jessie when she pointed out: "Mountains are a reminder of how insignificant we are in order of things" (175). This means as the wonders of the past evinced, the state of the present became insignificant for the reader.

Another example of psychological literalization is the instance of juxtaposing the French symbol of monarchy and hegemony, The Chateau de Versailles, with its black marginal space. Painstakingly demonstrated this latter via another excluded figure from French history, Louis Marie is the illegitimate daughter of King Louis XIV whose royal blood was denied because of her black color and she was sent to the Convent of Moret. In this regard, the Ghost of Marie hovered back and forth in the Castle of Versailles telling Stanley about how nunnery can be considered as another strategy of exclusion. Moreover, the convent is delineated as an alienating space that represses any heterogeneous subjects that challenge the white homogeneity of the European character. Blackness can, therefore, be undoubtedly noticeable as a European Margin that the centre sought to suppress through many strategies and institutions. The Narrator put it clear how Marie is rejected due to her color:

> The Queen became pregnant with child and, fearful of its Negritude, was given to hysterical railings. When the child was born into the royal chamber, everyone gasped Métisse! The child was Métisse…. [Louise Marie] was extinguished from l'histoire (99-100).

5.2. *The European Centre as One Decentring Piece: from Melancholy to Certainty*

By equipping the space travel technique by another time travel strategy, the narrator has genuinely opened the current state of Europe to its dark past. Through the technique of psychological literalization, the ghosts from the black margin continued to meet Stanley in the European countries that he and Jessie visited telling him their hidden stories in a painstakingly-metaphorical way. No wonder, the ghostly voices of Louise Marie, Zaryab, Lucy Negro, Alessandro "the mulatto, Joseph Boulogne, Marry Jane Seacole, Chief Eunuch and Menelik and Pushkin have powerfully responded to the deliberately-made "national amnesia" that the privileged centre of Europe has created to repress the historical existence of the Black subjects within its boundaries.

Thus, their voices provide the novel's point of view with an ex-centric (marginal) focalization that seeks to reconstruct Europe by reviving the distant memories of blackness or métisse subjects in Europe. By so doing, Bernardine Evaristo has successfully created a margin that speaks up and hence, using Homi Bhabha words, it offers a hybrid space of "negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal" (Bhabha, 1996:58).

As an illustration, the narrator maps the wide Black presence in Europe to challenge the idea of single pure white Europe by creating a dialogue between Stanley, the Russian black poet Alexander Pushkin and his grandfather General Ibrahim Hannibal. In connection therewith, the reader gets exposed to the black presence in Russia during the

Eighteenth and the Nineteenth century the fact which historicized and legitimised the existence of blackness inside the core of Europe. The Russian poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, «the father of Russian literature", has revealed to Stanley the racial prejudice that he experienced due to his black roots:

> Grandad knows full well that my mother, Nadezhda Osipovna, acclaimed as "the beautiful creole", was surely the vainest woman in all of Russia and that she hated her middle -child moi! - because I alone had inherited something of the old Negro's features, marking me out as pot ugly. She made my childhood hell. When the English artist Dawe wanted to paint me when I was older, I wrote a poem called "Mon Portrait" – it's about how my African profile would last for centuries, only to be mocked by Mephistopheles…then that evil critic Faddei Bulgarin mocked my African grandfather [General Ibrahim who was captured and sold as a slave to Russia] …to which I replied with the poem " My Genealogy", all about how my black grandfather was close to the tsar himself. (Evaristo, 2006: 237-8)

His grandfather General Ibrahim has deeply communicated to Stanley the importance of sufferance, artistic resistance and pride in having a blissful life. As a reaction to this dialogue, Stanley felt so blessed to be a "citizen of the world" or at least a genuine citizen of Europe. He declared: "Because right now I am happy, here, now, with you guys. I never even knew there were black people in Russia. This journey has been a series of awakenings", then, the ghost of General Ibrahim confirmed the global identity of the diasporic black subject by saying: "We are everywhere" (243). In this sense, the knowledge that Bernardo Evaristo aims at (re)constructing where Europe has a white centre, yet a black or métisse margin is highly needed to decentre the former and create a new hybrid reality that offers a new psychological state for the European citizens of Afro-Caribbean descent.

The diasporic complexities and the perplexities regarding the confusing identity that Stanley has inherited from his father seem to finally dissolve due to the experience he had in the European countries that he has visited. Finally, he realised that he is not a mere "tourist" but a "soul tourist" who belongs to Europe based on historical as well as racial bonds. As he reflected on his state of belonging, he thought:

> Was he, Stanley, really an outsider? Maybe you didn't have to blend in or be accepted to belong. You belonged because you made the decision to and if you truly believe it no one could knock it out of you. These visitations came from inside the body of history, turning its skin inside out and writing a new history upon it with a bone shaved down to a quill dripped in the ink of blood. Europe was not as it seemed, Stanley decided, and for him, at least, Europe would never be the same. (Evaristo, 2006: 189)

Taking everything into account, Europe has finally come into good terms with its marginal blackness since it is conspicuously and historically heterogeneous and multifocal

in its nature. This fact has transformed Stanley's state of belongingness from melancholy to certainty.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, it is important to notice that Bernardine Evaristo is one of the most significant mixed-race writers of Contemporary British fiction who aimed at remapping the European frontiers from a black perspective. In this respect, her novel *Soul Tourists* is deeply responsive to the exclusive mode of realism that has once been relied upon to construct the homogeneous character of Europe in general and Britishness in a specific way. As a reaction, magical realism has been widely adopted in order to implement its decentring features in reconstructing the European centre from within. Thus, the novel offers a heterogeneous possibility where the diasporic subject constructs one's home within the fluid boundaries of Europe. From a theoretical perspective, it is worth concluding that the British style of magical realism has a genuine deconstructive feature that enables the literary narrative to remap the European "privileged" centre from an artistic stance since it carries in its seeds tools that, using Faris' words once more, lead to "radical multiplicity". (2004:25)

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