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Representations of Rave Culture in Selected Scottish Novels and Films  
(Prikazi reyv kulture u odabranim škotskim romanima i filmovima)

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the portrayal of the 1990s rave culture in Scotland by selected Scottish authors as a space in which the youth constructed their sense of self through the subcultural practice of resistance to the strict norms of parent and mainstream culture. The aim of this study is to show that raves are not meaningless outbursts of hedonism and determine their significance in the identity construction of the youth. Though rave culture in Great Britain was most prominent in the 1990s, this subculture has recently gained renewed attention, and the corpus of this study thus includes both recent interpretations of this phenomenon and works published in the period of its peak. The selected works are Alan Warner's novels *Morvern Callar* (1995) and *These Demented Lands* (1997), director Lynne Ramsay's film adaptation of *Morvern Callar* (2002), and director Brian Welsh's 2019 film *Beats*, adapted from Kieran Hurley's 2013 play of the same name. The selected novels and films are analysed through a theoretical prism that combines Lacanian key concepts pertinent to the inherently patriarchal process of subject construction and identification with the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque, as well as with other relevant concepts, including the Body-without-Organs concept (Deleuze and Guattari) and Hakim Bey's "temporary autonomous zone." The study finds that raves are a substantive practice of resistance and resubjectification by scrutinising the ways in which they have served as a platform for authentic reidentification unrestricted by social, political, economic and cultural paradigms. It shows that the works portray the autonomous space generated by raves as temporary and reintegration into the patriarchally charged social structure as inevitable for each subject-in-language. Drawing parallels between the selected works, the study sheds light on the contemporary significance of raves and ultimately concludes that rave culture remains a meaningful aspect in the construction of subjectivity despite the transient nature of raves as such.

**Keywords:** jouissance, the Symbolic, Body-without-Organs, carnivalesque, temporary autonomous zone

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of rave culture has received immense international attention (Thornton 1995; Reynolds 1999; St John 2003; Sylvan 2005; Bainbridge 2013) within the body of literature allocated to the copious amount of subcultures emerging as a multifunctional mechanism ultimately leading to the construction of one's own identity and sense of authentic self and belonging. Subcultures have predominantly been analysed as a response to the larger masses, standardised expectations, social norms and overall imposition of a "mainstream" culture pertinent to the dominant value systems, which explains their furcation into a number of groups differing from one another in beliefs, values and aesthetics. As Dick Hebdige notes, subculture as a form of expression essentially embodies the tension between subjugated classes and power structures that, according to Althusser, posit a ruling ideology, the adherence to which is perpetuated through various types of institutionalisation and normativisation – family roles, social norms, mass media, education, and so on (2002, 132-33). The formation of oneself as a functional member for integration into the socio-cultural dynamics and the various struggles such a process carries, precisely due to the roles, rules, norms the system imposes, are at the centre of subculture analyses and they are addressed in this study as well. The study concentrates on the rave culture that culminated in Scotland specifically in the 1990s and presented a commonly treated literary topic. For instance, Irvine Welsh, one of Scotland's most noted writers, has treated this theme in his works. His 1993 novel *Trainspotting* has been said to have "emerged from an Edinburgh-based literary movement" (Crumey 2007, 40). Lesley Downer described authors of this scene, including Alan Warner, as "writers who have smashed their way out of rave culture onto the British literary scene" and who "write about the people on the margins of society: the young, the poor, the dispossessed, junkies, Ecstasy users, football hooligans and people who live on the dole in housing projects" (quoted in Crumey 2007, 40). Indeed, these are the types of characters found in Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), *The Acid House* (1994) and *Ecstasy: The Tales of Chemical Romance* (1996) as well – works that fortified Welsh's essential position in Scottish writing.

Though this subculture in its purest form superficially seems to be extinct, it continues to be a relevant issue in regard to identity formation within societies, especially taking into account that works dealing with this subculture emphasise the monumental changes within social dynamics

during its peak – the aftereffects of which are still contemporarily felt. Recent occurrences (2020) of rave parties in the United Kingdom may serve as a testimony to the relevance of rave in young people’s lives. As the study aims to show, raves provide space for the youth to be their authentic selves free from restrictions imposed by different systems, such as family and law. Despite the lockdown ordered across the nation due to the coronavirus pandemic, as Sirin Kale writes in her recent Guardian article, “raves are sweeping the UK, just as they did during the “second summer of love” in 1988, when acid house swept the country and ecstasy and bucket hats were everywhere”, referring to these “quarantine raves” as “pressure valves” and citing some of the ravers who claim that “[p]eople feel trapped” and “[e]verything has got so commercial” (Kale 2020). Precisely the feeling of entrapment and the fight against commercialisation lie at the heart of raving as a practice, as this study further presents. Considering the release of *Beats* in 2019 and the organisation of “quarantine raves” defying coronavirus-related lockdowns in the United Kingdom in 2020, it is possible to say that raves are not merely a phenomenon left behind in the past, but one that still triggers contemporary interest. For example, the new Netflix series *White Lines* (2020–) that is “in typical Ibiza fashion [...] fuelled by drugs, sex and plenty of 90’s era raves” (Turner 2020), while thematically divergent from the works discussed in this study, perhaps serves as an affirmation of the longstanding interest and inspiration drawn from rave culture.

The objective of the present study is to analyse how the significance of rave subculture is portrayed in two novels by Scottish author Alan Warner, as well as two films dealing with the same theme. The novels included in the corpus of this study are Warner’s 1995 (debut) novel *Morvern Callar* and his 1997 work *These Demented Lands*, which is often considered a “semi-sequel” (Brown 2006, 114). The films included are director Lynne Ramsay’s 2002 film adaptation of *Morvern Callar* and Brian Welsh’s 2019 film *Beats*. The study is organised into several sections, namely Introduction, Theoretical Overview, Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion. The Discussion section is divided into three chapters, each concentrating on the analysis of one of the works within the corpus. The first of these chapters examines Warner’s *Morvern Callar* in terms of its portrayal of rave culture as a mechanism of transcendence from diverse forms of repression stemming from the imposed standards and structures within society. Due to the limited scope of the study, *These Demented Lands* is only touched upon as a subchapter of the first chapter. The subchapter looks into the way the same concepts are

represented in the continuation of Morvern's journey in the semi-sequel, thereby suggesting possible recommendations for further research on this particular novel.

The second chapter sheds light on Lynne Ramsay's film adaptation of Warner's novel and the third chapter concentrates on the film *Beats* by Scottish director Brian Welsh, which depicts the 1990s rave culture of Scotland. The novels and films share a number of themes, most significantly the repressive social system relying on hierarchy and categorisation, as well as the advancement of technology and rapid growth of consumerism, capitalism and materialism. Before the Discussion section commences, the paper offers a section dedicated to summaries of the theoretical approaches used in various studies of rave culture and those specifically utilised in each section of the present study.

### **THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

First, it is necessary to refer to certain approaches that have been produced within the body of literature concerning raving as a practice in order to pave the way for forming the direction this particular study takes in regard to the novels and films in question. Raves have been analysed in a variety of ways, but arguably the most prominent research has been founded on recognising the inadequacies of the perspective on subcultures taken by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The subcultural theory developed by the CCCS has been rendered problematic and research on rave culture has furcated into various directions as a result. Andy Bennett explains that the CCCS views subcultures as a resistance movement of the youth against the changes in British post-war society (1999, 600). Through this perspective, emphasis is placed upon the consumption of consumer goods, youth resistance, and of course a style-based view of subcultures. While these notions are certainly crucial, they also contribute to the implication of a coherence that is actually at odds with the various groups within the subcultural sphere. Bennett emphasises the Maffesolian concept of neo-tribes and the temporal nature of collective identities that are especially important in the case of ravers. He contends that musical taste, for instance, is a "distinctly fluid form of expression" and that "[m]usic generates a range of moods and experiences which individuals are able to move freely between" (Bennett 1999, 611). It is such fluidity that warrants the use of the term 'neo-tribe' and a continued interest in expanding and particularising the angles of analysis taken in regard to raves.

Another important perspective on rave culture is Sarah Thornton's, which similarly developed in the midst of recognising the insufficiency of the CCCS mode of examining subcultures. Thornton prefers to scrutinise the character of subcultural ideologies rather than the only the clash (between dominant culture and subcultural branches) itself, stressing the youth's need to "assert their distinctive character and affirm that they are not anonymous members of an undifferentiated mass" (Thornton 1995, 24). She argues that club cultures are in fact taste cultures (Thornton 1995, 15) and delves deeper into the intricate multidimensionality and nonlinearity of subcultural groups, examining their intrinsic mechanisms of identification and differentiation. Thornton coins the term 'subcultural capital' in order to encapsulate the idea of a subspecies of cultural capital that is less class-bound and more fuelled by the urge to escape the parental culture, thereby emphasising age as its key demographic and line of differentiation (Thornton 1995, 28), whereas other lines of distinction – "race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality" – are blurred in club culture (Thornton 1995, 32). The possibility of crossing boundaries and eradicating multiple points of differentiation immensely contributes to the analysis of the character of rave collectives, taking into account the emphasis on individual autonomy and an authentic space for personal expression free from constraints of the mainstream or parent culture. This autonomy ties in with this study in its aim to display the liberating aspects of raves as presented in the novels and films chosen for the corpus.

Finally, before delineating the direction this particular study takes in its research, it is also useful to refer to another set of theorists who have scrutinised rave culture. Tammy Anderson and Philip Kavanaugh outline the two different approaches generally taken towards the examination of raves, namely the direction of cultural studies and that of a public health concentration. Naturally, for the purposes of the present study, it is essential to refer to the former. Anderson and Kavanaugh highlight the term *PLUR* ethos (peace, love, unity, respect) as the driving force behind the youth's desire towards an alternative social world where their authentic nature can thrive. They adumbrate the way in which raves are orchestrated – entailing a "do-it-yourself" character and utilising "abandoned settings" that enable the output of an egalitarian plane of acceptance and unity between the otherwise diverse groups partaking in the event (2007, 502). Additionally, they point out that "[s]cholars such as Knutagard (1996), Melechi (1993), Redhead (1993, 1995), Reynolds (1999) and Rietveld (1993) have used raves' association with drugs as a platform to critique modern youth cultures, portraying them as a hedonistic and deviant

subculture without broader substantive meaning,” and that in this view “[i]nstead of political or social resistance, the main purpose of rave culture was simply drug consumption and individual abandonment” (2007, 505). They argue that one of the crucial reasons for the multifaceted evolution of rave research over time arises due to the tendency of public health related analyses to relegate raves to problematic and deviant events due to the encouragement of illicit drug use. Thus, “academic inquiry” is repurposed to cover matters in allegiance with the contemporary legislation, which bears the issue of disregard for the sociocultural and political aspect of raves (Anderson & Kavanaugh 2007, 511-12). The variations in rave scholarship have posited the dilemma of whether raves represent this mere hedonistic “postmodern pleasuredome” (Anderson & Kavanaugh 2007, 505) or a space created by the youth with strong socio-political implications. The present study aims to solve this dilemma in favour of the latter, as it argues that raves are alternative spaces where the youth are able to be free from the constraints of the social structure, thereby representing a profoundly meaningful practice to its participants.

Having outlined the inadequacies of the CCCS approach to subculture and scholarship which reduces raves to a mere “deviant subculture,” and having referred to the different directions taken within the framework of rave culture research as a result of recognising these inadequacies, it is now possible to define the lens through which raves are scrutinised in the present study dealing with the Scottish novels and films in question. In his analysis of rave and the imminent use of ecstasy it features, James Landau addresses the collectivity which ensues during a rave and the ethereal effect ecstasy has on one’s perception of reality and the self. Landau presents ecstatic raving as a form of unity that resists the standard distinctions between the oppositions of “self/Other and mind/body” and that is often paralleled with a religious experience due to its pursuit of a truth that, according to Simon Reynolds, cannot be articulated through language (Landau 2005, 105-6). Referring to different theoretical approaches, Landau depicts rave as a practice that transcends language, as a process of desubjectification, as it were, through which the human subject deconstructs its shaped identity and enters what Tim Jordan describes as a collective “delirium [that] is non-subjective and smooth” (quoted in Landau 2005, 112). Because raving frees up space for the ‘jouissant’ experience of ecstasy and allows for an alternative construction of being, it is convenient to view it from a perspective influenced by Jacques Lacan’s framework, which Landau addresses as well, albeit noting its “manifold difficulties” (2005, 114). An essential term that this study refers to that is linked to the jouissant experience of



raving is Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the Body-without-Organs (BwO), which pertains to the body as an assemblage of "potentials in the human nervous system for pleasure and sensation" (Reynolds 1999, 246). In other words, the raver's body as immersed into the rave and influenced by the sensory impressions of the dance, music, lights and ecstasy achieves a certain fluidity that evades the fixity of social structures and norms. This fluidity is reflected in the lack of an ultimate purpose, the BwO's movement away from the ordinary purposes of "the organism – which is oriented around survival and reproduction," as well as in the resemblance to the mystical goal of the "inchoate flux preceding individuation and gender" (Reynolds 1999, 246). Therefore, the present study focuses on the function of raving as a way of standing outside the restrictive patriarchal realm of the Symbolic – the final stage of human development and integration into society via language, culture and adherence to norms. The BwO is thus a crucial concept in this analysis due to its strong resemblance to the pre-Oedipal stage of human development (the Real), which focuses on the fulfilment of needs and pleasures.

Landau further explains that "physical distinctiveness" is something children only become aware of once the mirror-image phase commences, so the Real is a realm of unity (2005, 114) and the jouissant experience of raving possesses the ability of "free[ing] the body from its thematic veil so that it can become aware again [...] of identity and difference", which essentially means that the raver is able to deconstruct his previously constructed identity that conforms to the norms of society and culture and that the limit between him and the world is blurred (Landau, 2005, 119). In that sense, the raver is able to enter a process of reidentification on his or her own terms.

This study refers to the aforementioned concepts to observe ravers in terms of their relationship with the world, or, more precisely, the patriarchal Symbolic, as well as the function of language, narrative and authenticity. It looks at the context of rave as a subculture with focus on identity (re)construction and interprets Morvern Callar as having adopted the ecstatic experience of raving as a general mechanism of relating to the exterior world as a structure in an attempt to transcend the imposed lines of hierarchy and categorisation. In line with this argument, the analysis also references the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque – "a mode of discourse or ritual in which traditional hierarchies are turned upside down" (Castle 2007, 115). This carnivalesque inversion of conventional norms is precisely what occurs during a rave, due to the potential it grants to the subject-in-language to create an authentic space where the structural

aspects of the Symbolic are deconstructed. However, the repercussions of rave culture and the deconstruction portrayed in Warner's *Morvern Callar* (1995) are also addressed as the discussion about the novel concludes with the notion that an escape from symbolic marking, similar to a night of raving, is only temporary, and that one's identity ultimately cannot be constructed outside of the structural realm. As explained previously, the examination of *These Demented Lands* (1997) does not provide the possibility of closer examination due to the scope of this study, but it is worth mentioning based on its representation of the aftermath of Morvern's attempts at transcending the Symbolic. The study views the semi-sequel as reflecting the protagonist's perception of the world she is inevitably reincorporated into after her raving experiences, especially considering the focus is shifted from Morvern's interiority to her surroundings.

The analysis of Lynne Ramsay's film adaptation of *Morvern Callar* (2002) builds upon some of the arguments from the analysis of the novel, focusing mainly on the way in which they Morvern's self-reinvention (or resubjectification) is transposed on screen. The chapter relies heavily on how the significance of silence, music and landscape is interpreted by Ramsay. It is first and foremost Morvern's personal identity that is explored within her process of self-definition, while her national background also remains an important factor in her sense of self due to its intertwinement with class. Although Morvern's Scottishness and subalternity provide space for a full postcolonial analysis, for the purpose of this study it is necessary to only briefly refer to her nationality insofar as it relates to the function of raving. Stefanie Lehner draws attention to the necessity of avoiding the view of Scotland "as a unitary national fabric," taking into account the presence of privileged classes within this nation as well (2007, 293-94). It is precisely the issue of class division within Scotland that represents a crucial aspect of Morvern's trajectory. Lehner also addresses Žižek's conception of the subaltern as a "symptom of the late-capitalist global system" (2007, 300), which provides a fundamental backdrop for the analysis of Morvern in the film, taking into account the multi-layered subalternity imposed on her by the structure of society; through her position as a woman, her place outside the mainstream, and her economic reality. Touching upon the relationship between nation and narration, Dominic Head discusses Warner's novel and its pertinence to national identity by addressing it as an attempt at portraying the liberation of "the silenced Scottish underclass" (2002, 150) that Morvern essentially belongs to. Thus, the examination of Lynne Ramsay's film adaptation looks into the

relationships between identity, nation and class by focusing primarily how music and silence as two of the protagonist's fundamental subversive mechanisms have been transposed on screen.

Finally, Brian Welsh's film *Beats* (2019) captures the 1990s Scottish rave scene through the adaptation of playwright Kieran Hurley's one-man work of the same name (2013) and points to the revival of interest for this particular subculture. Presenting a rave organised after the introduction of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, the film encapsulates the tension between the youth and the system, and displays where the significance of raves lies for them. The chapter on the film relies on the same viewpoints taken in the preceding chapters, and further enriches the analysis by including other concepts to avoid repetition. Most significantly, it introduces Hakim Bey's notion of the "temporary autonomous zone," "immediatism," and Jan Jagodzinski's exploration of the significance of music in the context of the ravers' pursuit of pleasure, all of which are explained more closely in the course of the analysis itself. The chapter attempts to cast a spot of light on how the protagonists deal with the repressive Symbolic through the practice of raving and temporary sense of autonomy due to the inversion of social roles that is made possible within the isolated communal space they create by sharing the collective ecstatic experience. The ravers are perceived in the study as a specific type of neo-tribe, technotribe, or micro-community, as explained by Graham St John in his text "Post-Rave Technotribalism and the Carnival of Protest" (2003). Finally, the study also draws parallels between Morvern's trajectory and that of the micro-community of ravers in *Beats*, particularly due to the same socioeconomic conditions faced by these characters. The study eventually closes by consolidating the arguments made in each chapter to finalise the conclusion that the significance of raves lies in the possibility of (temporarily) transcending divisive lines within the social structure and that these events ultimately influence the individual development at multiple levels.

## I. *MORVERN CALLAR: THE NOVEL*

### a. **Rave Against the Symbolic**

Before scrutinising *Morvern Callar* more closely, it is necessary to refer to the overall purpose of raving and return to the approaches taken in regard to the research of this particular subculture that have stemmed from the recognition of inadequacy within CCCS-based analyses of subcultures as a whole. Since the understanding of rave culture had often been relegated to a “deviant subculture” concentrated on “leisure, and hedonism” and the “postmodern pleasuredome” by a significant amount of rave scholarship (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007, 505), clearly this phenomenon begged the question of whether there was more to it than merely the jouissant experience springing from the consumption of ecstasy and music at raves. Anderson and Kavanaugh claim that rave scholarship has developed to display the multitude and complexity of underlying purposes of raves that move far beyond simple drug use and the pleasuredome, showing that ravers “are not merely hedonistic thrill seekers who exhibit a complete disregard for their physical and mental health,” since they are quite aware of the effects and ramifications of substances consumed (2007, 508). The authors thus draw attention to the advantages of “well-rounded conceptual and analytical focus on all of the cultural, social, political, and economic aspects of any social world, scene, or lifestyle” (2007, 513). As this study aims to prove, the profundity of rave subculture is palpable in the case of *Morvern Callar*, where a number of aspects (class, gender, nation) concerning Morvern’s identity and sense of self are interrelated, impacted by narration, and inextricably linked to her desire to transcend their constraining nature through raving.

The depoliticising of rave subculture is openly challenged in Georgia Walker Churchman’s analysis of Warner’s debut novel, where she describes Morvern as “expressing (if not articulating), a political (if not politicised), sensibility alive to asymmetries and injustices of her situation” (2015, 92). Comprehending the protagonist’s internalised struggles impacted heavily by her position within society therefore ultimately leads to a better general understanding of the complexities of rave subculture and the interpretation of it as more profound than a mere search for pleasure. This is especially underscored when Churchman refers to Fredric Jameson’s critique of postmodernism in tackling Morvern’s affectlessness to argue that it is symptomatic of

the social order springing from late capitalism (Churchman 2015, 93). Morvern is a shelf-stacker at the local supermarket – quite a monotonous and repetitive daily task in itself – and the novel follows her experiences in the aftermath of her boyfriend’s suicide, whose lifeless body she finds upon waking up one late December morning. The protagonist’s character is quite clearly delineated from the very outset of the novel, especially in relation to her late boyfriend, who embodies the masculine, patriarchal social order as well as a class economically far superior to her own. She says “I’m taciturn. [...] It’s a word my boyfriend told me. It means I don’t really say much” (Warner 1997, 38). This particular statement hints at her subordination to him in the sense of intellectuality and identity; first, it is implied she learned this word from him, and secondly, it is his own description of her. Though Morvern is, in fact, taciturn, as is clearly visible within the novel itself, it seems that the boyfriend’s perception of her dictates the way she perceives and describes herself. As this study aims to present, her actions after his death, fuelled by the practice of raving, come together to offer a certain type of resistance and deliverance from that which he is a direct embodiment of – exuding authority over her and standing for the patriarchal structure of the Symbolic, which is naturally addressed in more detail as the study proceeds.

The issue of masculinity and Morvern’s sense of repression stemming from her position as a woman ties in well with the general idea of gender as a factor of identity politics and a line of differentiation which is blurred during raves. Berthold Schoene, for instance, explains that through her actions she “extricates herself [...] from her older boyfriend’s patriarchal authority but also, much more importantly, from her passive male-authoredness as a literary character” (2007, 256). He points out the centrality of gender as an underlying theme in all of Warner’s works, which is brought into close connection with the concept of Scottish nationhood and devolution as well. The concept of male authorship is explored further in section b. of this chapter. Schoene also refers to John LeBlanc’s view that Morvern’s flourishing as an individual accentuates the disintegration of a “dysfunctional patriarchal order and the rebirth of a matriarchal sensibility” and explains how she stands as a symbol for the entire nation in relation to this (Schoene 2007, 256). Emasculation in the sense of demolishing the patriarchal structure and resisting male-powered ideologies and constraints is established as the kernel of Warner’s debut novel, but also many of his other works, which Schoene explores within the same chapter. In relation to this, it is worth mentioning that Churchman points out Morvern’s “refusal of the

modes of understanding the world offered by both Brotherhood [introduced in the semi-sequel] and [her] partner” (2015, 93). From a Lacanian perspective, it is immediately possible to detect the attempt at subverting the inherently phallic structure that confines Morvern in a variety of ways, and throughout the course of this study more light is cast upon her techniques of accomplishing placement outside of this order.

Warner’s protagonist certainly stands in opposition to the standard norms on several levels. Since the Lacanian Symbolic is essentially a patriarchal/phallic order, a woman is fundamentally doubly oppressed; the system itself is repressive due to the rules and standards every human subject-in-language must obey, but its patriarchal character makes it twice as restrictive on the female autonomous agency and voice. Morvern’s position in the world is marked primarily by her gender, by her dull job, her environment, her seemingly unfulfilling relations with others (such as her boyfriend, her best friend Lanna, her boss, and her foster father whom she calls Red Hanna). Being part of the Symbolic inevitably leads to a feeling of lack, considering that speaking subjects always wish to occupy its central position (called, among other names, Phallus), but are unable to do so. Thus, the subjects may experience a desire to escape excessive symbolic marking through jouissance (excessive pleasure) or the death drive – that is, a return to the Real. In his study of Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* (1996), Derek Hook explains the relationship between the death drive, jouissance and melancholic/psychotic states that may arise due to these restrictions. Melancholia may ensue in both men and women due to the pressures of being symbolically marked (2017, 126), or having to conform to social norms, rules, obligations, laws, and restrictions. Morvern’s participation in the jouissant experience of raving and actions following the discovery of her boyfriend’s body may paint her as a melancholic subject and transgressive female attempting to defy marking and achieve desubjectification for the purpose of reconstructing her own identity anew, independent of the masculine discourse.

Taking into account all the points made regarding Morvern’s relation with the Symbolic, it is possible to refer to several concepts that may facilitate the understanding of her trajectory. The purpose of raving against the Symbolic can be perceived through the notion of liminality, a term David Mario Matsinhe borrows from Victor Turner and uses in his article “Nightlife, Civilizing Process and Multiculturalism in Canada” (2009). Liminal spaces are zones where the typical order of things is “suspended, reversed and mocked” (Matsinhe 2009, 120), thereby inherently

carrying a carnivalesque quality that ties in with the direction the present study takes. Matsinhe explains that in liminal spaces, where age, sex, class and similar categories are blurred, life is animated precisely by this carnival atmosphere (2009, 121). He then turns to Bakhtin and refers to his representation of the human body and its functions as the central points of the carnival (2009, 121-22), which is relevant to the question of the ecstatic experience of raving as well, taking into account the heightening of sensory impressions that ensues – for which the body is instrumental. From a Lacanian perspective, the liminal space created through raving is inextricably linked to the idea of *jouissance* and a return to the Real, since *jouissance* provides a “momentary break from the symbolic fictions that constitute identity” (Jagodzinski 2005, 12). Raves and, as this study gradually shows, Morvern’s general mechanism of relating to the world fuelled by this ecstatic practice both contribute to a space that allows fluidity and transcendence from those lines of classification that generate her unjust position. Maria Pini argues that the sense of belonging women feel in the rave community showcases that “adult femininity has been wrenched from its traditional associations with enclosure and settlement” (2001, 109). She explains that the liminal space of raving does not merely provide the sense of belonging to a unified community, but also the opportunity to find themselves “through losing themselves to something ‘bigger’” (Pini 2001, 113). This type of resubjectification is visible in Morvern’s own journey, where she drastically moves away from the patriarchally charged structure of the world and the conventionally assigned roles to each subject-in-language, especially those dictated by gender. Perhaps this resubjectification is enabled by the non-subjective delirium that the liminal space of rave entails, so that Morvern can be genderless and unmarked at raves while appropriating its mechanisms to find herself as a subject in daily life and the omnipresent social structure.

### **b. Narration and Voice**

The novel assumes the first-person perspective of Morvern and utilises a demotic style of narration while simultaneously retaining the “lyrical potentialities of language,” therefore blending it with the hieratic (Scott 2009, 125). Jeremy Scott further explains that the novel displays a highly authentic and multifariously idiosyncratic voice on Morvern’s part and blends her unique personality and perspective with the Scottish demotic style of speech. However, he suggests the possibility of interpreting this voice as only partially authentic considering the

lyrically fuelled descriptive passages of the novel which differ from her demotic register; in other words, the author himself may be seen as interfering in the narrative to contribute to the hieratic aspect of narration (Scott 2009, 133-36). Nevertheless, the narrative style Warner employs is certainly a process of distancing and differentiation from the use of Standard English as a long-established norm for the purpose of, as Scott mentions, the creation of a geographically and culturally rooted literature (2009, 127). The issue of experimental and non-standard narration is immensely important for the analysis of *Morvern Callar*, as it represents the striving for a unique aesthetic expression outside of the standardised 'mainstream'. Too, it echoes the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque in that it also presents a discourse which subverts the traditional structures – it is an inversion of hierarchies and destabilisation which “can liberate both author and reader from the restrictions of social and literary orthodoxies” (Castle 2007, 115). The subversion of tradition is multidimensional in the narrative about Morvern Callar, both in regard to Warner’s authorship and the protagonist’s own deconstruction of standard practices (of work, mourning, and property).

Furthermore, Warner’s novel not only distances itself from a conventional narrative style, but it also challenges norms through Morvern’s highly unconventional response to her boyfriend’s suicide and behaviour in its aftermath. Keeping in mind the Bakhtinian ideas of the carnivalesque and the Lacanian notions of the Real, Symbolic, death drive and jouissance, it is possible to explore both raves and Morvern’s behaviour in general as a determined act of subversion through resistance to and deconstruction of imposed identities. However, Schoene describes Warner’s female heroines by and large as “intransigent post-feminist[s]” (2007, 257) and argues that his attempt at portraying their powerful femininity is done through the attachment of masculine qualities to them. Though he says this of Warner’s characters in *The Sopranos*, it is quite applicable to Morvern. Because “the femininities of Warner’s girls are male-authored and hence the direct result of a male mind envisaging the female” (Schoene 2007, 258), it is hardly possible to describe Morvern as entirely detaching from masculine authority, notwithstanding the multiple carnivalesque actions of subversion she undertakes. The relative lack of authenticity in Morvern’s voice achieved through Warner’s own interference with the narrative and impact of his male-centred mode of perception represents a significant aspect. Namely, while *The Sopranos* showcases post-feminist individualism and the “capability for emancipation against all the odds” (Schoene 2007, 259), in the case of *Morvern Callar*, the relationship between narration



and Morvern hints at the ultimate impossibility of the reconstruction of self that Morvern seems to be trying to achieve. In the end, she is forced to return to the very same structure she strived to escape from as the author reassumes control.

It is worth mentioning the novel's epigraph before moving on to the scrutiny of Morvern's carnivalesque mechanisms of escaping the Symbolic through rave. The novel's epigraph is an extract from Isak Dinesen's (Danish author Karen Blixen's pen name) *The Immortal Story* (1961):

Mr Clay in the same hesitating manner told him that he had in mind books and accounts, not of deals and bargains, but of other things which people at times had put down, and which other people did at times read. The clerk reflected on this matter and repeated, no, he had never heard of such books. (quoted in Warner 1997, vii)

In order to understand the pertinence of this particular extract to Morvern's trajectory, it is necessary to briefly look into the context of *The Immortal Story* as a whole. One film critic describes the story as being about "the lures and perils of [the] processes [of storytelling]" and the "power play among its various participants" (Rosenbaum 2016). Additionally, it is a story concerned with a "cosmic meddler" – one who attempts to assume control over other people's lives and "usurp the role of the gods in another person's life, [...] to graft his own desire onto its fate-in-progress" (Judith Thurman quoted in Rosenbaum 2016). Thurman points out the connection between cosmic meddling and Dinesen's relationship with poet Thorkild Bjørnvig, for whom she was, among other things, a literary advisor. It is further explained that Dinesen relates to all four characters within the *The Immortal Story*, all of whom are solitary in different ways. This form of "cross-identification" and the "fluidity regarding gender" (Rosenbaum 2016) are crucial in the understanding of why this particular epigraph was chosen for the story of Morvern Callar. First, it may suggest Warner's own cosmic meddling in regard to Morvern's (re)identification process. Moreover, the extract itself may be considered in connection with the late boyfriend whose manuscript Morvern ends up publishing under her own name – a key aspect of her trajectory which paints *her* as the cosmic meddler who assumes control over somebody else's story, and hoping to thereby govern her fate through the appropriation of the male intellectual and financial property. Her late boyfriend expressed (in his suicide note) a wish to be

remembered through his posthumously published work, but Morvern entirely demolishes his chances at *his* own “immortal story” through her act of subversion

### **c. Subverting Gender, Class and Convention**

Morvern’s acts of escape, transgression and transcendence mainly rely on the subversion of patriarchal structures and the masculine principle and agency. From the outset of the novel, the masculine discursive power is subverted by the previously subordinate female agency. The blurring of distinctions raving inherently carries is reflected in the genderlessness of the experience generated by its employment of dancing and ecstasy. Though some critics, according to Carole Jones, have argued raves to be a feminine phenomenon, others have contended that this feminisation is what yields the sensation of being genderless, especially since, as Simon Reynolds claims, it sexualises the body without bringing forth sexual arousal and presents a “culture of clitoris envy” (quoted in Jones 2004, 59). Rave is located within the context of a Body-without-Organs, which operates at a level beyond rigid “stratifications of subjectivity” and allows uninhibited flowing of pleasures across it, creating a collective organism and unity discussed in the Theoretical Overview (Landau 2005, 112). When Morvern recounts her boyfriend’s suicide, which is the opening of the novel, she portrays it in a sharp, brief, factual manner void of emotion:

He was bare and dead face-down on the scullery lino with blood round. The Christmas tree lights were on then off. You could change the speed those ones flashed at. Over and over you saw Him stretched out then the pitch dark with His computer screen still on. (Warner 1997, 1)

She never pronounces his name; instead, she merely attaches the pronoun ‘Him’ to his persona, whether in narration or dialogue with other characters, thereby robbing him of a part of his identity and violating his authentic self and discursive power. Nonetheless, his presence continues to linger through some of the records he left behind which Morvern oftentimes listens to, as well as through the class he belonged to and embodied. Morvern’s apparent lack of emotion, which makes it seem as if she does not quite belong to her own body and this tragedy has not befallen *her*, has certainly been studied in relation to the postmodern collapse of individual identity associated with the disappearance of affect that Fredric Jameson brings into connection with schizophrenia. If observed in such a manner, the affectless Morvern becomes

the paragon of consumer culture emerging from late capitalism, considering her consumption of popular music, cosmetic products and drugs (Churchman 2015, 94). At the same time, this unconventional response might be linked with the aforementioned interpretation of Morvern as a melancholic subject, particularly taking into account the possibility of melancholy turning into psychosis. It is important to note that, while she does appear as the affectless figure of postmodern schizophrenia, she is implied to have a wealth of emotions that she simply does not articulate in conventional terms – which again points to the multidimensional resistance to tradition. This is especially evident in Ramsay’s film adaptation, discussed in the second chapter.

Though the violation of the masculine agency commences with the omission of her dead boyfriend’s name, it by no means ends there; once Morvern discovers the disc containing his manuscript which he left for her along with a note, she decides to assume control over his piece of artistic/intellectual property. The erasure of his name, both in her reference to him and the literal act of deleting his name from the manuscript to replace it with her own, is an instance of what Rachel Carroll describes as a “violat[ion] [of] the principles of patrilineal law” (2012, 91). Aware of her late boyfriend’s willingness to “SETTLE FOR POSTHUMOUS FAME AS LONG AS [HE IS] NOT LOST IN SILENCE” (Warner 1997, 87), Morvern deliberately allows his identity to fully glide into oblivion as she assumes authorship. The male voice of this “immortal story” is not merely silenced, but also violated and entirely erased. It is possible to look into the message the boyfriend left for her in more detail to understand the influence of the symbolic masculine normativity he embodied that she tries escaping throughout the novel. Clearly, although he dies, the structural aspect of the Symbolic does not die with him but remains for Morvern to navigate through in the aftermath. For instance, the message reads: “I WAS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR PEACE BUT HERE, YOU TAKE IT INSTEAD. EVERYTHING HAS BEEN ARRANGED, HANG AROUND HERE A FEW MONTHS” (Warner 1997, 87), which suggests a sense of masculine superiority that is retained even after he dies in that it seems as though the peace he is speaking of is attainable to Morvern only because *he* is the one leaving it behind. It is as though whatever she possesses, in concrete or abstract terms, is merely due to him providing it all for her, which reiterates both his inherent authoritativeness and the ensuing dismissal of Morvern’s agency. Furthermore, like in the instance where he had called her taciturn and virtually dictated how she perceived herself, he simply presumes that his idea of what

constitutes peace must be what she understands by it as well, thereby not leaving any space for her individual self-expression.

This robbery of Morvern's selfhood is further visible when the message reads "NOW SEND OFF THIS NOVEL AND HAVE NO REMORSE" and "RIGHT NOW, TO WORK!" (Warner 1997, 87). The tone becomes more overtly authoritative as he orders her to publish the manuscript practically immediately, not showing any concern for how she would cope with his dead body or the trauma of discovering it, but rather focusing on making a name for himself through the publication. At the same time, to ensure that his masculine legacy is not forgotten, he says "FEEL MY LOVE IN THE EVENINGS IN THE CORNERS OF ALL THE ROOMS YOU WILL BE IN" (Warner 1997, 87). However, Morvern does not comply with the authoritatively set expectations of her late boyfriend, but does precisely the opposite of what his message dictates when she publishes the manuscript under her own name and sets off to find peace the way *she* perceives it. She takes control over discourse and her agency. Even the very fact she does not refer to him by his name but rather the pronoun foreshadows the rebellion she takes against the normative presumptions of the patriarchal realm he symbolises and the discursive authority he possesses.

A parallel can be found between the late boyfriend's message and Morvern's boss, whom she refers to as Creeping Jesus, in regard to the authoritative tone and a contribution to Morvern's adamant wish to subvert the patriarchal order. In fact, the masculine power in terms of discourse and the social structure is evident from the beginning: "Trust Creeping Jesus to be stood there and he moved his mouth at me. He flicked one of the [Morvern's] earplugs out. You're late by forty-five minutes so get up there, I heard in his south accent" (Warner 1997, 7). Her perception of Creeping Jesus suggests a deep-rooted sense of understanding of the normative structural principles of the patriarchal Symbolic, taking into account that she is clearly accustomed to her boss's expression of class and gender superiority. Along with the boyfriend's message, Creeping Jesus's approach to Morvern exemplifies Lacan's "circuit of discourse" that Lacan defines as "the discourse of [his] father" and claims "one cannot stop the chain" (quoted in Homer 2005, 44). Thereby he emphasises the perpetual character of a discourse that is fundamentally patriarchal and governs that which humans as subjects-in-language are born into. This is the discourse Morvern is subjected to in her relationships with her economically superior late

boyfriend and the boss, both of whom authoritatively insist on her efficiency to fulfil their own goals. All of her subsequent actions following her boyfriend's suicide are thus steps she takes in order to attempt escaping the circuit of discourse in which she is inherently a subordinate subject.

When Morvern appropriates her late boyfriend's account balance, she temporarily manages to step out of the confinements of the working class she belongs to: "You'd never have dreamed of so much money being yours, never in a month of Sundays. I withdrew the daily limit" (Warner 1997, 61). Her appropriation of his already existing balance and the capital accumulated through his novel she passes off as legitimately her own allows her to blur the distinction between working and middle class; the modest life of a mere shelf-stacker is substituted with the (temporary) possibility of living luxuriously. If, as suggested before, Morvern epitomises the consumer culture and "vast internal emptiness of a generation" (Churchman 2015, 93) and appears emotionless in regard to her boyfriend's death, it may be possible to view her as having fully transformed into a BwO (perhaps as a result of previous participation in the rave culture), considering how she seems to experience her everyday life from outside of her body and let the pleasures of money, music, material items, traveling and casual sexual encounters flow uninhibitedly over her. Her functioning on a BwO basis can be seen in her eventual disposal of the perishing body in the mountains above her partner's childhood village; as she begins to prepare him for the disposal, the pleasures of materialism are juxtaposed with the horrific yet emotionlessly articulated sight of the dead body: "The new mirrored shades had come in handy cause the blood wasn't so bright reddy as it came fresh from under His body" (Warner 1997, 55). Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that this affectlessness is more a symptom than a condition, in the sense that it can be understood as Morvern's unconventional method of coping with the wealth of conflicting emotions and circumstances, as well as a response to the multi-layered repression experienced by the protagonist.

Morvern's treatment of the dead body and the assumption of her dead partner's intellectual and material property seemingly without doubts or questions of morality can also be read through the notion of the carnivalesque. Instead of shock and terror upon the sight of his body, Morvern remains void of emotion; instead of calling an ambulance, notifying the police and their family and friends, she leaves the body lying on the floor and goes about her day(s) as usual:

I came back towards the scullery then took a running jump over the dead body. The sink was full of dishes so I had to give them all a good rinse. The face was by my bare foot. I fitted the kettle spout under the tap. [...] I jumped back over Him ready to throw the kettle away, after all you don't want to scald your legs. My foot came down in blood. I stepped forward and swore out loud. I wiped my foot on the rug. (Warner 1997, 2)

Her behaviour can be characterised as carnivalistic in that it certainly subverts the traditional customs that ensue after one's death, thereby bringing disorder into an otherwise structured set of expectations and norms in a rather mocking fashion. Morvern adopts into her everyday demeanour the carnivalesque aspect of raving. At the same time, her carnivalistic inversion of standard norms presents another layer of her attempt to escape the Symbolic through the transgressive principles she applies to the situation. Lacan claims that transgression as such is non-existent; instead of it there is "an irruption, a falling into the field, of something not unlike *jouissance* – a surplus." This surplus that is produced replaces castration (= the natural barrier to *jouissance*) and represents a "compensation for a loss" (Lacan quoted in Hewitson 2015). Perhaps, then, Morvern's shameless and guiltless assumption of her partner's narrative and class and failure to notify authorities about his suicide create precisely this surplus with which she removes herself from the established order – not only spiritually, but physically as well, particularly through her trip to Spain.

Rachel Carroll suggests that Morvern's disposal of the body is done in a manner which the perpetrator of a homicide would have used and, though it was not she who killed him and there are no feelings of guilt, her actions still amount to a crime – one of a "gendered nature" (2012, 94). Additionally, the trip leading up to the burial is described by Morvern in a fashion which "invokes the notion of a Romantic subject" (Churchman 2015, 102). The sequence fortifies a sense of a nonnormative approach to the conventional acts of mourning and funerals. Morvern expresses deep admiration of the landscape as she listens to the music on her Walkman, simultaneously referring to the dismembered body in her backpack: "His chopped-off head bumped away against my back" (Warner 1997, 93). The entire sequence is presented in an almost playful manner, alluding to the unification with nature and Morvern's absence of grief: "I was hopping from boulder to boulder, balancing then quickly jumping forwards" (Warner 1997, 97). Churchman argues that Morvern's apparent affectlessness is "*set against* the deliberately self-destructive model of artistic creation" that her late boyfriend epitomises through being a

figure of the Romantic artist (2015, 98). The descriptive passages of the natural environment contribute all the more to “the destruction of [this figure]” (Churchman 2015, 100) because of the sharp contrast to the shocking notion of his dismembered body and Morvern’s act of burying it in a manner which demolishes his entire notion of subjectivity, posthumous fame and his homeland. Another way in which he reflects the figure of the Romantic artist is through his carefully constructed model of his childhood village. Churchman suggests that his obsession with this model also conveys his need for authority that is transposed into his relationship with Morvern, as she and the model of the environment he feels connected with both provide a space for him to take control (2015, 99). Therefore, it is even before the highly unconventional and degrading burial of the body that the subversion of the boyfriend’s authority takes place since Morvern actually destroys the model by dropping the body onto it, which echoes a sense of mockery that is associated with the carnivalesque.

Referring to the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, Andrew Robinson draws attention to the significance of grotesqueness and corporeality in carnivals which can be applied both to Morvern’s treatment of the model, the corpse and her overall behaviour in the novel. It is important to understand that the perspective of mediaeval Europe was encapsulated by a fear of the so-called “cosmic terror,” which explains the need for an intense maintenance of hierarchy and order to avoid its collapse – or the “threat posed by the Real to the master-signifier” (Robinson 2011). The dominant discourse and power structures are thus put in place to bar this feared collapse of order. As explained by Robinson, Bakhtin’s idea of folk culture overcomes the constraints of the cosmic fear and dominant discourse, particularly through the carnival’s use of parody, laughter and degradation, all of which ensure a sense of limitlessness. Morvern’s lighthearted approach and laughter as she goes on to dispose of the fragmented body of the self-destructive Romantic artist is certainly a form of parody, and the way she deconstructs masculine authority harks back to the idea of the cosmic meddler in the epigraph. She entirely demolishes the sense of order and belonging that her late boyfriend assumed through the construction of the miniature model of his village and the fictional world of his novel. Her treatment of the body and all his belongings for the purpose of undermining the patriarchal hierarchy projected through his behaviour is analogous to the aforementioned threat of the Real that causes the collapse of the master-signifier. This is further emphasised by the portrayal of rave as a form of returning to the Real,

taking into account that Morvern takes part in raves and her actions following the disposal of the body assume a festive character accentuated through her trip to Spain.

As explored previously, Morvern challenges and mocks the patriarchal order of things, but at the same time she does not honour femininity either; her affectless and darkly comic approach to the partner's body, his legacy and identity are completely opposite to the expected codes of behaviour from the female gender. It is worth recalling Landau's statement that rave resists traditional distinctions between self/Other and mind/body, so the egalitarianism of raves corroborates the notion that Morvern attempts to fully reject convention in all its aspect. Through crushing constructed gender roles and empowering herself economically and discursively by appropriating what had belonged to her privileged boyfriend, Morvern achieves several different forms of *jouissance* and appears to be floating between genders, and identities by and large, denying symbolic marking. As such, her mode of operating in the world reflects the pivotal features of rave culture advocates – an out of body experience, genderlessness, love and power. If raving is a practice which blurs lines and allows for empowerment of even the lowest classes or any other social category, uniting them predominantly through their shared love for music and drugs (that is, through their form of consumerism), then Morvern, who finds belonging in this rave culture, appropriates the same principles in her daily life as she manages to transcend the two primary lines of distinction – gender and social stratum.

#### **d. Escape from Language and Identity**

Aside from transcending the lines of social constraints in an abstract manner through the subversion of expectations and roles, thereby creating a “space for agency outside of communal expectations” (Jones 2004, 63), Morvern also physically transgresses geo-spatial boundaries by traveling from her native Scotland to Spain in order to complete the loss of self already initiated. Her status in Scotland is that of an outsider, as Carole Jones further contends (2004, 63), among other reasons due to her position outside of the firmly established and expected rules, roles and norms, but also due to her being an orphan and the failures within the relationships she had built intimacy in (for example, it is revealed that her best friend Lanna has slept with her late boyfriend as is now sleeping with her foster father). Considering Lacan's notion that it is within relational structures that one forms one's identity, it is only natural for Morvern to strive for full detachment from those which provide no pleasure, fulfilment or security for her – her friendship,



family dynamics, her nation and the residue of her relationship. Even though she takes Lanna to Spain with her, very soon she detaches from her as well and roams the resort and nature on her own. Her flight to Spain enables a completed deconstruction of the identity built upon the structures she left behind in Scotland as it enables unlimited indulgence in raving, escape from constraints and integration into an utterly different world from that which she is a member of (but does not conform to) back home. As suggested earlier, Morvern appears to have adopted the manifold liberating aspects of raving in her general demeanour, functioning as a BwO within her daily routine and thus having managed to psychologically transcend the constraints imposed upon her. Besides, as Reynolds states, “[t]he rave works as an intensification machine, generating a series of heightened here-and-nows” (1999, 246), so the transportation to “a Mediterranean rave paradise” (Jones 2004, 63) embodies, then, the physical counterpart to this transcendence and paves the way for its completion for the purpose of Morvern’s escape from the kind of symbolic marking she had been subject to in Scotland.

Immediately upon her arrival at the hotel in Spain, the further detachment from symbolic marking becomes clearer as she finds out from one of the staff members that ‘callar’ is in fact a Spanish word meaning “silence, to say nothing, maybe” (Warner 1997, 132). Combining the fact that a language barrier naturally presents itself with her arrival in a foreign country with the fact that her last name translates essentially to ‘quietude’ in the country’s language, there is yet another layer of subversion and defiance of structures at hand. Since the Symbolic is fundamentally constructed as a language system, Morvern’s resistance to it initiated in Scotland through her voluntary passivity and silence is only carried on further in her physical journey. For instance, her meeting in London with the publishers (Susan and Tom) interested in the manuscript she sent under her name presents a significant moment in terms of language and discourse. It eventually brings her appropriation of her dead boyfriend’s intellectual property and movement to a higher class to fruition, but it also depicts a sharp contrast between her background and theirs, thereby perhaps indicating that this movement can never be completed, in the same way that the self-annihilation that provides placement outside of the Symbolic only functions temporarily. Morvern’s difference from the publishers is exemplified through her unfamiliarity with terms used in publishing, such as “royalties” and “material,” and her explanations that she can use railway travel for free because her foster father works on the railway. While the publishers call it “privileged travel,” she insists that it is merely “free”

(Warner 1997, 168), undermining the idea that any sense of ‘privilege’ can be attached to her background. She explains that writing attracts her due to the opportunity of evading “waking up on cold mornings knowing it’s thirty-nine years to go till pension” (Warner 1997, 170) that such a lifestyle enables. Another contrast between her and the publishers can be seen in her wish to use a double-decker due to never having been on one before, whereas Tom and Susan have never been on a bus at all and use Taxi Cards to commute by taxis (Warner 1997, 170). Thus, despite the possibilities the manuscript offers her, the contrast in terms of both class and discourse appears to confirm that the transcendence into a higher class simply by possessing the means is not the sole factor in her reidentification process and freedom from the previously constructed sense of self.

Furthermore, it is important to note the absence of authenticity that this meeting showcases; Susan and Tom’s questions pertaining to the book and the act of writing in general are predominantly incomprehensible to Morvern and she usually responds with counter-questions or a bewildered repetition of the last phrase uttered by either of them. Similar to the way the author’s interventions within the narrative in order to polish it and combine the demotic with the hieratic interfere with the authenticity of Morvern as a character, her “cosmic meddling” through the appropriation of the manuscript and her subsequent evasion of responses about it underscore the absence of originality. Nonetheless, Morvern actually manages to squirm out of the constraints of this term of authenticity that relates to language and narration, and avoids it perhaps precisely by being so unfamiliar and new to the process of publishing. Her unconventional transcendence of discursive boundaries fuelled by the enigmatic and vague quality of her interactions with Tom and Susan echoes fluidity of identification and evasion of fixity that are omnipresent in the culture of raving.

As her behaviour towards her dead boyfriend’s body and appropriation of his literary property and financial means are a carnivalistic modus operandi for subversion of the patriarchal role and order and empowerment of Morvern’s own agency outside the restrictions of symbolic marking, so her voyage to Spain represents another layer of “escape from the economic and social realities of the port” (Carroll 2012, 97) since she is able to reinvent herself in a new fashion here. The issue of authenticity is no obstacle for her; through her interactions with the publishers and going clubbing with them – which naturally involves the intake of a variety of substances – she

manipulates the circumstances to her favour in the sense that she does not have to speak unless she wishes to:

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 didn't tell stories they just discussed. When Susan asked Tom to stop yapping so she could hear me talking it was: All I know is over there in that resort, with a couple of thousand pounds, happiness was as easy as your first breath in the morning, that Susan heard me say. (Warner 1997, 173-74)

In this passage, Morvern portrays both of her most empowering mechanisms at once: first, her silence and passivity which she has learned to use for the achievement of any ultimate goal she sets, including the defiance of a language-based relational system, and second, her substance-infused enjoyment of a “timeless paradise” which has enabled her to overcome the constraints of time, finality of life, gendered constructs and death itself (Jones 2004, 63-4). The happiness Morvern speaks of clearly stands in correlation to the uninhibited pleasures raves generate, to the final deconstruction of her previous sense of self constructed by the patriarchal discourse and left behind in her dull, restrictive hometown, and to the temporary reconstruction of her identity in the liminal utopian space of the rave. The reconstruction was only made possible, as she admits, by the ample financial means over which she assumed ownership. Certainly, then, it is the boyfriend's *literal* self-annihilation that sets the ground for Morvern's *metaphorical* self-annihilation in the form of escape from the Symbolic. It triggers her carnivalesque subversion of tradition, discourse and authority, it aids her (transient) fluidity and alternative world of her own, and ultimately influences both her disintegration and reconstruction. However, the eventual return to her hometown testifies to the transitory nature of the effects of carnival and transcendence.

Morvern's time in Spain is crucial to the novel's portrayal of raving as her internalised mechanism of escaping the order. In “The Difference Engine: Liberation and the Rave Imaginary”, Graham St John explains that raves “orchestrate a freedom from everyday anxieties and relations — the nuclear family, your boss, TV, quotidian subjectivity” (2005b, 35), which is precisely what Morvern aims to achieve from the outset. In addition, Tim Olaveson calls raves an “adaptational strategy” and claims ravers “have reharnessed the products of consumer

capitalism in the drive to recreate community and meaningful modes of existence” (2005, 97). Morvern’s approach to the rise in materialism and consumerism certainly corroborates this notion, as explored earlier in the paper. It is necessary to turn to the aspect of what it is to reach “meaningful modes of existence”. Though Morvern’s actions are motivated by a highly individualistic pursuit, it is important not to misconstrue the notion of community as a restructuring of society as a whole. Rather, it is related to the oneness of ravers and the collective organism formed during this ecstatic and liminal experience. It is thus closer to the concept of “*communitas*” explored by Mauss: “To a greater or lesser degree, all social distinctions melt to less strict manifestations, and the liminal subjects are permitted freer and more spontaneous self-expression. They loosen up and ‘let go’ of themselves” (2009, 121). Indeed, the liminality of the rave is captured in the novel in a sense which clarifies the ecstatic unifying experience but also hints at its role in Morvern’s process of resubjectification and thereby points to a better understanding of “meaningful modes of existence.” The entire sequence of Morvern’s arrival at, participation in and departure from the rave in Spain provides the opportunity for an intriguing examination. She begins by saying: “I walked through to the rave catacombs down the curved corridors. You heard the trancey ambient getting louder. You pulled aside the curtain and stepped into the hot complete pitch darkness” (Warner 1997, 214). Her reference to the space as “catacombs” certainly underlines the connection between ecstatic rave experience and religion, hinting at its transcendent, spiritual and mystical qualities. These are the qualities associated with the temporary existence in a realm outside the corporeality and rigidity of the Symbolic.

It is possible to address catacombs in terms of early Christianity in the Roman Empire, the significance of which primarily lies within their function as a burial site. It was forbidden to bury the deceased within the city walls, and while the nobles could afford “aboveground, mausoleum-like tombs” outside of the city, lower classes were compelled to build tunnels in the soft tufa rock that allowed carving (Crossan 1998). Furthermore, due to the religious persecutions of Roman Christians that were most intense during the first three centuries of the Common Era, catacombs also served as a space where they could practice their beliefs and rituals freely, along with developing images and symbols pertinent to their then illegal religion. John Dominic Crossan (1998) argues that the depiction of Jesus Christ in these scenes underscores his role as a new god who is not unattainable to ordinary people and the lower class. Quite on the contrary, he heals them and carries an ordinary appearance himself. L. Michael White (1998) explains that,

contrary to common misconception, catacombs were not used as secret meeting places for regular Christian worship during persecution periods, but rather only for burials and practices such as memorial meals. Nevertheless, taking into account the emergence of visual depictions of Jesus Christ and the possibility to freely practice rituals inside catacombs, it is possible to observe these sites in relation to Morvern's experience in the underground rave space. Aside from the mystical and spiritual connotations, the sense of freedom from restriction by the society and government pertinent to catacombs is perhaps what drove Morvern to draw this parallel due to the liberating aspect of raving. Moreover, the notion of lower classes finding solace in the vision of Jesus Christ as a new god among the ordinary people may be perceived as a metaphor for Morvern's act of transcending the line of class and emerging as a new self within the ethereal space of the rave. Finally, the connection of catacombs with death also evokes the death drive in that it evokes her boyfriend's death and especially the concept of self-annihilation that is necessary for placement outside of the Symbolic, which rave temporarily enables.

Emphasising the darkness and immersion into the music, Morvern explains the rave as "just a huge journey in that darkness" and says: "You didn't really have your body as your own, it was part of the dance, the music, the rave" (Warner 1997, 215). This particular moment portrays the non-subjective delirium that paves the way for transcendence and the ecstatic emotion she describes as the ravers form a collective organism undifferentiated through class, background and gender. It serves as a strong subversion of the hierarchical sense of order projected both by Morvern's late boyfriend and Creeping Jesus. The experience at the rave immensely influences even Morvern's use of language once she departs and goes swimming in the sea: "I sucked in air deep and dived down sharply in the nightwater. [...] I jerked eyes open in the nothingness" (Warner 1997, 221). The 'nothingness' seems to be parallel to the darkness of the rave catacombs, but at the same time her swim emphasises the kind of corporeality that is different from the immersion depicted in the rave. While the rave was the process of desubjectification, her swim in the nothingness of the nightwater seems to be the resubjectification that ensues. In addition, taking into account the religious allusions conveyed through the image of catacombs, the immersion into and eventual emergence from the water may be paralleled with the practice of baptism, which signifies the abandonment of one's old life and emergence into a new one (Pritchard 1990). This process of reidentification, and, as it were, rebirth (perhaps of a matriarchal nature) is especially noticeable as she exits the water: "I closed my eyes there in the

quietness just breathing in and breathing in. I hadn't slept for three days so I could know every minute of that happiness that I never even dared dream I had the right" (Warner 1997, 222). Not only is this statement quite a contrast to the taciturn Morvern, but it also serves as an articulation of otherwise unarticulated emotions (which she has a wealth of, despite the superficial affectlessness of postmodern schizophrenia and capitalism) towards the constraints of the Symbolic, as well as of the freedom that is so palpable in the Spanish resort. The subversion of her subordination within the structural realm is additionally stressed through the fact that she refers to happiness as a right, something that is denied to her through the authoritative masculine figures such as her late boyfriend (as stated in his own message to her) or Creeping Jesus.

#### **e. Return to Scotland**

Although Morvern is quite successful in the subversion of traditional roles and structures throughout the novel, upon her return to her hometown the impossibility of permanent transcendence of constraints and the transience of the happiness she envisioned in the resort become undeniably apparent. Along with her deliberate defiance at the beginning of the narrative, the ecstatic experience during the raves where "[y]ou felt air, responding to bodies moving about quickly to the sounds in the blackness" (Warner 1997, 214) reflects the notion of a return to the Real due to the emphasis on pleasure, gender non-specificity, and "nonorgasmic sensuality of the pre-Oedipal infant" (Reynolds 1999, 246) that the Body-without-Organs strives for. The darkness of the raves which allowed the ultimate fulfilment of *jouissance*, placement outside the Symbolic and inversion of structures is contrasted with the darkness that accompanies Morvern as she roams along the railway of the snow-covered Port following a power cut at the local bar. This is quite a different darkness, one which perhaps signifies the abandonment of heightened sensuality and of pleasure that the re-inscription into the familiar dullness of home generates: "In a queerly familiar way the looming things ahead were starting to take shape through the blizzard" (Warner 1997, 239). As Carole Jones states, this ending testifies to Warner's portrayal of rave culture as limited in "producing new social identities" (2004, 66). It thus becomes clear that Morvern is not destined to escape the restrictive traditional structures; she is compelled to reintegrate into the familiar repressive relational system she attempted (and temporarily succeeded) to subvert.

As Morvern observes the darkness looming around the village, she reveals that she is pregnant with “[t]he child of the raves” (Warner 1997, 242), which ultimately represents yet another violation of the patrilineal law considering that she appropriates “reproductive property” (Carroll 2012, 95) and the father’s identity remains unacknowledged. This could, to a certain extent, be viewed as a potential future for exercising the matriarchal sensibility that is envisioned as a replacement for the phallic order. More precisely, it seems that Morvern’s perspective is that rave and its mechanisms may generate these “new social identities.” However, Warner’s interference as the author is evident here and it is important to note that, although Morvern’s pregnancy and her treatment of it subvert patriarchal authority in her view, the pregnancy is ultimately futile in the deconstruction of the order and reinvention of identity. In fact, through it she inevitably becomes reincorporated into the social order and is newly marked in the Symbolic, taking into account that pregnancy and motherhood have long been analysed as constructed by the social system. The rebirth of a matriarchal sensibility accentuated in the swim analysed earlier is juxtaposed with the economic reality that inevitably affects her future motherhood. In other words, Morvern’s temporary status in the higher class is refuted once she spends all her money, having defied the “economy of profit” (Carroll 2012, 99), and her child places additional financial burden both on her and the nation. Her attempt at placing herself outside of the Symbolic order then yields a far more repressive situation than the initial one, since she returns in a state that not only prescribes a role for her but also intensifies the struggles that the class she comes from inherently carries. Besides being compelled to retreat to the same class, she must also participate in the fundamentally gendered construct of motherhood. In sum, Morvern’s destabilisation of the patriarchal order, first accomplished by unauthorised accumulation of wealth and authorship of the manuscript, and secondly through accidental “illegitimate sexual reproduction” (Carroll 2012, 103), is thus portrayed as futile as the order is ultimately ubiquitous and impossible to flee from. Finally, similar to the way the physical experience of raving in which she actively partakes is bound to generate the process of “coming down,” it is clear from Warner’s ending that the carnivalesque mechanisms, both concrete and abstract, through which Morvern operates as a BwO and blurs distinctions between different socially established categories, inevitably bring forth irreversible repercussions.

## I.1. *These Demented Lands*: The Downward Spiral

### a. The Darkness of the Symbolic

Though there is limited space in this study to scrutinise *These Demented Lands* and provide an in-depth analysis as for the other works within the corpus of the study, it is worth mentioning this semi-sequel considering its significance to the continuation of Morvern's journey of self-discovery and reinvention. Thus, a few of the most vital aspects of the second novel are addressed, namely the question of what it aims to convey, the issue of madness and Morvern's spiritual transformation in connection with her experience(s) at raves. The first novel ended on a vague note for Morvern in regard to her future, but clearly indicated the perpetuity of the relational system of the Symbolic by showing her inevitable reintegration as a future mother and presumably burdensome member of the community. Additionally, it foreshadowed the grim tone of the following one through its closing paragraphs that echo the darkness Morvern sees upon her return; quite paradoxically, it may be precisely this darkness that brings a kind of epiphany to her. *These Demented Lands* sheds light on the next journey she takes searching for employment and, once again, for identity. Whereas the debut novel primarily concentrates on the protagonist's internal struggle and relationship with the external world, the second actually shifts the focus onto Morvern's surroundings and other subjects-in-language she meets during her trajectory on the Scottish island owned by a certain John Brotherhood, where she gets a job at a hotel. Due to the shift in focus and stylistic changes, and most notably the novel's thematic treatment of madness, the semi-sequel has been brought into connection with the tradition of the Gothic. Touching upon the gothic elements of this novel is immensely significant for viewing it through the same prism as its prequel and underscoring the notion of perpetual self-reinvention and re-identification within the Symbolic. The continuously arising question of whether the insanity is rooted within Morvern or the others (Churchman 2015, 107) contributes to this notion, as it is an example of the way the relational system functions in the sense of personal identity being influenced by encounters with other members of the order.

As previously established, Morvern's affectlessness indicates the postmodern collapse of individual identity linked with a rise in consumer culture. Referring to Patricia Waugh, Churchman discusses hyperreality and the "endless self-invention and technological



reproduction” (2015, 92) the protagonist’s condition seems to be symptomatic of, especially in the debut novel. Furthermore, the macabre tone of the second novel strongly implies Morvern’s journey is taking place in “a netherworld of some kind,” or, in other words, “the land of the dead” (Churchman 2015, 105) where madness appears to prevail. Churchman also mentions Scott Brewster’s characterisation of madness in the Gothic tradition as an “uncontrollable surplus of natural feelings and appetites,” which displays not only questions regarding the characters’ sanity, but the readers’ as well (2015, 107). It is therefore possible to say that *These Demented Lands*, though a follow-up to *Morvern Callar* in a chronological sense, represents the other, darker side of the journey rather than its continuation as such. The first novel portrays her attempts at escaping the Symbolic, defying the language structure and taking control of her self-invention by appropriating the mechanisms of raving, the carnivalesque and the BwO experience into her daily routine and way of responding to the world. It hints at the growing trend of consumerism and the gradual mechanisation of the human race that would reinforce the authorities and hierarchies within the order, both of which trends she uses to her advantage while simultaneously trying to sever her ties to the constraints of the system. The second novel, on the other hand, as its very title implies, is perhaps a more direct portrayal of her perception of this structural realm and its impending transformation fuelled by the momentous changes to society at the time. The world she inevitably returns to after her temporary transcendence is in fact this demented land that is, in true gothic fashion, an exaggerated representation of the Symbolic; “the land of the dead” may not indicate death as such, but a spiritual and emotional vacancy, and a loss of genuine values.

Moreover, like gender and class, nationhood is another source of pressure for Morvern considering the position of Scotland in the grand scheme of politics, culture and language, and it is a source echoed in the semi-sequel. This particular aspect of repression stemming from marking within the Symbolic is dealt with in more detail in the analysis of Lynne Ramsay’s film adaptation of *Morvern Callar* in the context of subalternity, but it is useful to look into it briefly nevertheless. Though doubtful, Churchman touches upon Cairns Craig’s idea that the novel is “a commentary on Scotland’s ambiguous, ahistorical position” (2015, 108). While the debut novel and adaptation concentrate on Morvern’s *personal* struggle with Scottishness, *These Demented Lands* appears to provide a depiction of the country’s position itself. Nonetheless, Churchman contends it is less about nationhood and history than about language, and that it foregrounds the

concept of madness and failure of the attempt at comprehending the world. This failure is most evident in the perplexing environment Morvern finds herself in and where it is impossible to make sense of the world. Churchman further explains that the power the landscape exuded in the first novel, an aspect focused on more closely in terms of the film adaptation, is transferred onto Morvern, and that the novel assumes a tone of mockery portraying capitalism – the key reason for disempowerment due to its exploitative practices (2015, 108-11). It is quite possible, then, to perceive this novel as the dark reflection and exaggerated depiction of the social structure, both the form Morvern had initially transcended from and the form it would eventually transfigure into due to pivotal changes that become clearer to her upon her return to Scotland. The representation of the island and all the quaint characters Morvern encounters – the Devil’s Advocate, the Aircrash Investigator, DJ Cormorant, the eldritch John Brotherhood – is an instance of the gothic “writing of excess” (Churchman 2015, 106) that serves in this case as an intensification of the realisations Morvern comes to after her return from the pleasures of the rave paradise in Spain to the dull reality of Scotland. It emphasises the temporariness of raving as a form of transcendence, as presented in the first novel, and reinforces the idea of the inevitability of the Symbolic, especially by painting it such a dire and disturbing light.

### **b. Revisiting Raves**

It is necessary to mention that, although this study argues that *These Demented Lands* is an exaggerated display of the downward spiral of the world and the *aftermath* of raving, the novel still features raves and, through its use of hyperreality, relays the state of mind and realisations a raver may achieve during this BwO experience that alter their relationship with the social system entirely. In Morvern’s case, this is the better understanding of the world around her and the degressive path it is going through due to the massive changes within it, some of which are in fact also dealt with in *Beats* and this study’s discussion of that particular film. Taking into account the implied epiphany, it is only natural that Morvern’s interiority, which is brought to the surface in the semi-sequel, is actually analogous to a spiritual awakening and treated as such through the myriad religious undertones within the novel. The protagonist’s spiritual journey is, of course, not glaringly obvious from the outset, especially given the overall complexity of the text. However, the plot progresses, it becomes clearer that there has been a momentous transformation from the jouissance-seeking melancholic girl from the first novel to the more

profound, hopeful individual in the second one. It is in this sense that the excessive darkness of the world surrounding Morvern ends up actually casting light on her path, and it is perhaps precisely rave culture that led to her spiritual awakening. Furthermore, Jordana Brown contends that, because of the parallels drawn between the birth of Morvern's daughter and the Nativity, this trajectory conveys that "as a result of the death of the male God as guiding force, and following Morvern's Iberian conversion and sacrifice, it is now females who are equipped and empowered to save humanity" (2006, 114). Interestingly, this particular instance echoes Morvern's subversion of patriarchal authority from the first novel, suggesting that, despite her spiritual development, some of her core characteristics remain unchanged. Although it still displays the inevitability of existing within the Symbolic, this bizarre novel ends on an optimistic note that is an utter contrast to the previous novel's ending, which had indicated that motherhood and poverty would reincorporate the protagonist into the structural realm with a much higher degree of restriction than before the rave paradise experience.

Considering the crucial role capitalism and consumer culture play in Morvern's identity construction, it is useful to briefly examine the treatment of this theme in *These Demented Lands*. Namely, the critical approach to capitalism is evident in the main antagonist, the ironically named John Brotherhood, "a small-business owner with pretensions to philosophical insight, [...] a misogynist that enjoys making crudely sexualised comments" (Churchman 2015, 112) determined to achieve his profit-oriented goals and wipe out anybody who may obstruct his lucrative path. He says:

God knows, we've all been distracted with this millennial rave:  
El Big One. Promotion, busy pockets of the youth of today;  
look to the future, friend: mobile phones and jackets that say  
Security, don't you see that vision of the future? All is in the  
hands of the youth. All our hopes!" (Warner 1998)

The immense mechanisation and rise of technology during this period are echoed here as the key to a future shaped by consumerism and profit that this character sees as a mutual fate for all. The "Brotherhood" in his name is thus an utterly different one from the "brotherhood," or unity, that raves are organised for. While these blur lines of distinction, most importantly class, the capitalist antagonist's appear to advocate firmer social categorisation in the future. El Big One is orchestrated as "the rave to end all raves" (Rennison 2005, 143), a millennial rave to terminate

all the anti-establishment, unity-seeking, jouissant events that the youth engages in, where equality prevails and social compartmentalisation is non-existent. As such, the event would mark the final moment before this liberal youth is reprogrammed and exploited to generate the lucrative future Brotherhood envisions, one that reinforces phallogocentric systems and late capitalism. What he sees as hope, however, is clearly contrasted with Morvern's perspective; now a spiritual woman, she gives birth to her baby "against the backdrop of an apocalyptic rave full of smoke and flame" (Brown 2006, 114). "The child of the raves," the result of her violation of the patrilineal law, is juxtaposed with the dire image of the systematic, materialistic Symbolic as the netherworld, and rather than being a burden, as implied in the vague ending of *Morvern Callar*, she represents a new hope for the protagonist and the journey of perpetual self-invention and re-identification. In conclusion, *These Demented Lands* appears to depict Morvern's perception of the Symbolic after her raving experiences, and it does so by offering a strange description of a twisted cast of characters and hallucinatory environment while painting her more determined and alert. As opposed to the earlier melancholic version of herself, the spiritually whole Morvern refuses to be reduced to merely a body or continuous subaltern position based on her gender, national identity, class or any other marker. Morvern's growth as an individual, especially when contrasted with the spiritually and emotionally void new trends Brotherhood stands for, corroborates the novel's idea that the language-based realm is a constant which subjects-in-language cannot escape, but that it is more than possible to evade the mechanisation of the mind by accepting the inevitability of the structure while simultaneously treading different paths to self-discovery and staying true to one's own ideals as opposed to being transformed into a marionette of the domineering ('mainstream') culture.

## II. *MORVERN CALLAR: THE FILM ADAPTATION*

### a. **Silence and Subalternity**

It has already been established throughout the analysis of Warner's novel that Morvern is a character who defies conventionality and attempts to place herself outside of the patriarchal language order of the Symbolic and return to the idyllic Real, predominantly using carnivalesque mechanisms of subversion and the *jouissance* of raving to deliver herself from the constraints of social classification and distinctions, especially those of class and gender. The issue of silence is immensely important within this context in both the novel and film, since, as mentioned previously, even the protagonist's surname is revealed to mean 'silent' in the language of the rave paradise she escapes to, and her overall demeanour is characterised by silence. Attempting to free herself from the language structure, Morvern speaks very little and only when necessary, her "spirit of independence" (Head 2002, 150) intensifying with her trip to Spain where she is automatically freed from these restrictions – she does not speak Spanish but is not prevented by this from taking in pleasures she has come to consume. Morvern's silence as her most prominent feature is transposed quite well onto screen as actress Samantha Morton manages to convey the character's internal richness precisely through the very limited amount of utterances (Edwards 2010, 86-7). Moreover, Morvern's silence is inseparable from her personal and national identity, particularly due to the socio-political milieu she belongs to and the class structures within it. Similar to the way the mechanisms featured in raving become integrated into Morvern's daily routine, her silence, initially imposed on her through the belonging to the subjugated working class as opposed to her dead boyfriend's doubly privileged status as a middle class man, becomes a choice and a strategy. Morvern associates her identity with her subordinate status – something she strives to transcend, which she manages to do, albeit temporarily. The imposed silence, interpretable in terms of subalternity, is then transfigured into another tool of subversion; she uses it for her own empowerment while letting her boyfriend be "lost in silence" and become the subaltern himself.

It is important not to neglect the fact that silence in the film adaptation represents a multidimensional issue. Sarah Artt draws attention to its relevance to female directors and voices in the filmmaking industry, and explains that the use of silence as a strategy rather than

absence can be understood as “a profound feminist intervention that underscores the long history of women’s silence as absence or lack of agency within filmmaking practice and within the diegesis of narrative cinema” (2013, 1). Of course, it is possible to say that the deployment of silence by female directors assumes a broader sense of resistance than merely within the context of filmmaking as such, since its representation as a strategy can easily be applied to the general subversion of the patriarchal structure within which the acknowledgement of female agency is lacking. Therefore, this deployment of silence carries a multi-layered significance in Ramsay’s film adaptation of Warner’s debut novel. It pertains not only to Morvern’s position of a subject in the Symbolic, but also to the microcosm that is the world of filmmaking and the female position in the macrocosm by and large. Nevertheless, the centre of this study remains Morvern’s resubjectification process and the relationship between the complexities of her enigmatic character and the practice of raving. It has been established in the chapter on the novel that Morvern expresses an unarticulated but political (not politicised) understanding and response to that which she perceives as injustices in her position.

Morvern’s subalternity stems from different types of symbolic marking, such as her gender, which casts her “even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak 1988, 287), her nation and underprivileged working class, as well as her relationship with the men around her (most significantly, the boyfriend and Creeping Jesus, as explored earlier). However, unlike the fate suffered by Gayatri Spivak’s subaltern, who cannot speak due to, among other things, continuous imposition of patriarchal power structures, Morvern *appropriates* the silence inherited by her subjugated position and uses it as a tool in her attempt to place herself outside of the phallic order. Her silence serves as an emphasis of the lack of voice and agency she experiences in different aspects of her life. In fact, while her silence is deployed as strategy, the subversion of her late boyfriend’s authority, voice and artistic pursuit indicates his silence to be one of absence, reflecting Morvern’s wish to deconstruct the patriarchal order and pave the way for a new matriarchal sensibility. As in the novel (and as previously discussed), Morvern’s silence and status are initially both *imposed* on her, yet she manages to use them to her own advantage; silence, as Sarah Artt states, is presented by Ramsay as “something to be experienced, rather than an awkwardness to be overcome” (2013, 2). The majority of scenes in the film draw emphasis on the visual experiences of Morvern and the viewer, who is inevitably immersed “in a world that is rich in different kinds of silence” (Artt 2013, 3). From the very outset, the film sets silence as the

defining trait of the narrative, presenting a variety of shots appealing to the senses of vision and touch – from the perpetually flickering lights to Morvern tracing her fingertips across the inert, bloody body of her dead boyfriend. The latter scene (00:02:56–00:03:18) is in itself a shock and defiance of expectations, as it resembles a postcoital scene but turns out to be one of a horrendous experience, which exemplifies Ramsay’s use of the visual and corporeal to expose the character’s pain (De Luca 2019). Additionally, there is a dimension of silence as trauma (Artt 2013, 4) in the film, considering the vast amount of music and overwhelming (but not total) absence of verbal interaction. The fundamental significance of silence is perhaps best echoed, among other things, in an early scene in the film where Morvern is lying in the bath tub in an almost catatonic state for several moments and then proceeds to submerge in a fetal position as there is complete silence for the viewer to submerge with her (00:09:13–00:09:50). This could be read as a visual representation of the profound desire to return to the Lacanian Real that lies at the heart of raving.

At the same time, the manifold depictions of Morvern in a natural environment, the beauty of which is shown in the novel to arouse a great deal of responsiveness in her (Head 2002, 150-51) display an insistence on her placement outside the social structure and return to the purely beautiful natural surroundings free from such constraints as language, convention or order. It is worth mentioning that Churchman discerns between the effects of nature within the novel and the adaptation, claiming that the novel paints Morvern’s elation with nature as an indication of freedom, whereas the film depicts it as a response to trauma and an attempt at recovery (2015, 101-2). It has been argued that the postmodern schizophrenia and collapse of identity associated with the social dynamics are evident in the novel, where Morvern can, as suggested earlier, be perceived as a melancholic subject on the verge of psychosis. The adaptation captures more clearly the personal, intimate and individualised side of this mental suffering by interpreting Morvern as a victim of trauma, perhaps due to the visual representation of her process of emoting that suggests multiple layers under the surface of silence. A good example is the brief scene when she is baking with Lanna and her hands start shaking as a physical manifestation of her distraught state (00:41:34–00:41:45). The fact that the first discernible sound in the film is that of the keyboard when Morvern sits at the computer to read the suicide note perhaps foreshadows the significance that the manuscript and Morvern’s appropriation of it has throughout her journey to self-definition. Namely, this is the moment in which she learns of his

novel and her boyfriend's wish for it to be published, but it is on a separate occasion in the film (00:31:45–00:31:09) that she is shown substituting her name for his (James Gillespie, as seen on the computer screen).

While the note from the novel is more comprehensive and features his insistence that he not be lost in silence, his encouragement to Morvern to “LIVE THE LIFE PEOPLE LIKE [HIM] DENIED [HER]” (Warner 1997, 87) and assertion that he must leave this world even though he loves it, the film presents a shorter, sharper, note (00:30:50–00:30:59), but perhaps equally poignant and telling. His encouragement of her to live the life they (his privileged class, most likely) have denied her seems to translate simply to “I wrote [the novel] for you” in the film, which Morvern appears to take as a legitimate encouragement to falsely assume authorship of the novel and the ensuing profit thereof. He urges Morvern to get the manuscript published and tells her to “be brave” in both versions of the note. However, the film takes a different angle in regard to the money in the bank: “I left money in the bank *for the funeral*, the card is in the drawer, you know the code” (emphasis added). Warner's novel takes a more vague approach, hinting at the financial aspect merely with “EVERYTHING HAS BEEN ARRANGED, HANG AROUND HERE A FEW MONTHS” (Warner 1997, 87). Taking into account the directness with which the topic of money is dealt with in Ramsay's adaptation, the subversive character of Morvern's subsequent actions is even clearer because it is evident that the funeral money is used for her luxurious trip while she performs the burial herself. Moreover, as with the note featured in the novel, there is again a sense of masculine superiority here in that James seems to be disregarding any agency on Morvern's part through his instructions. This entire sequence contributes to the argument that notions of class and national and personal identity are echoed in the film, and they prove to be inseparable from Morvern's silence, which is, as on most other occasions, strongly emphasised in this crucial scene of appropriation.

It is possible to find the subversion of the phallic order through demolishing the boyfriend's artistic creation and the endeavour for an alternative matriarchally charged structure within the first scene of partying in the film. Lanna and Morvern go to a party at somebody's house, and the various shots the viewer gets of Morvern indicate rapidly changing emotional impulses in her (00:15:35; 00:17:27; 00:18:01; 00:18:09–00:18:19). Namely, it appears that she quickly alternates between expressing grief, numbness, content and happiness, which contributes to the



idea that the film portrays her as traumatised and suffering mentally rather than being affectless and mad. It is useful to note that this particular party does not provide the BwO functionality and the ability to immerse oneself into the community. This is because it is only at a later point in the journey, particularly in Spain, that Morvern is shown experiencing rave – the liminal space and pleasuredome offering a meaningful mode of existence. The insufficiency of a party that is not a rave is evident in her heightened emotional instability and inability to let herself go completely, but also some of her utterances at the party. Trying to overpower the loudness of the music, she shouts at one of the male attendees: “Is this your house? It’s a really nice house, isn’t it?” (00:17:15–00:17:19). This question/statement could be a hint of a materialistic pursuit as well as resentment toward masculine property and financial superiority epitomised by her late boyfriend. This is perhaps also underscored by the fact that at some point during the party she says: “Have you seen my boyfriend? I’ve lost my boyfriend” (00:18:03–00:18:09), indicating that she is still deeply influenced by the traumatic event, as the grief and sense of repression still permeate her mind and are, presumably involuntarily, verbally articulated. Perhaps this is also exemplified through her wearing an all-black outfit at the party. At one point, she goes to stand at a riverbank in darkness, and one of the most intriguing scenes of the narrative occurs as she lifts her skirt to show the passing boatman her thighs (00:16:00–00:16:55). Artt explains this scene by referring both to the novel and the film, and contends that this action is “proof that she is not a supernatural apparition, one of the many monstrous incarnations of women that lure sailors to their deaths.” Thereby Morvern undermines the “implied association of femininity with bad luck and destruction” (2013, 8). Artt further claims: “[S]he remains a mysterious, even slightly daring figure in the distance, and her ambiguity remains intact. She is neither the pin-up nor the mermaid” (2013, 8). What this contributes to is not only Morvern’s perpetual enigmatic silence and vagueness that subvert discourse, but also to the aim of demolishing established associations, refusing to be marked in a certain definitive manner, and possibly restructuring the world in more matriarchal terms as a result of this refusal.

The morning after the party, she stands ashore and looks at the island across the water. Lanna joins her, says “He didn’t tell you his reason?” and asks how she is feeling, but Morvern remains silent to these inquiries, possibly again as a response to the trauma she is more consciously aware of now that the party is over. Instead, she merely points at the island and tells Lanna that her foster mum is buried there (00:20:09–00:20:50). Her distraught behaviour at the party, the return

to silence as a strategy afterwards, and the brief reference to her foster mum's grave all point to the internalised distress caused by the patriarchal structure and to the initially uncertain start of Morvern's journey influenced by the endeavour towards a potential female-centric alternative order. This particular sequence is essential to the understanding of Morvern and her silence. Artt claims that Morvern is "an enigmatically silent yet active female protagonist" who is, in Ian Goode's words, "more drawn to nature than she is to other people." She also highlights Morvern's yearning for quiet places and solitude, along with the impossibility of achieving that in a small town like hers (Artt 2013, 7). In addition to this scene, the film frequently shows her wandering off to distant places, such as the place where she buries her boyfriend and the Spanish landscape when she leaves the hotel and bustling environment. When the publishers who come to meet her in Spain ask her whether she is enjoying her stay, she emphasises the beauty that is found in quiet places (01:16:25–01:16:31). She even takes them to a memorial site in Spain, signifying to them to be quiet, and the entire scene is played out in silence as Morvern is shown watching and tidying up the memorials (01:20:42–01:21:51). Perhaps her reverence for the memorials is a reflection of the grief that has been unarticulated but strongly present throughout the entire film as an aftereffect of the trauma/shock of her boyfriend's suicide.

#### **b. Class, Landscape and Music**

The film places emphasis on the representation of Morvern's *jouissant* experiences of raving and indulgence in materialism as well as her escapes to natural surroundings as coping mechanisms for the loss(es) she has suffered and the path of self-(re)discovery she embarks on. The temporary transcendence into a higher class mentioned and discussed on several occasions in regard to both the novel and film is presented in numerous shots, including her unwrapping of the Christmas gifts (00:07:16–00:9:00) right before the bath tub scene, her practical use of the new sunglasses as she prepares the body for disposal (00:35:10–00:35:55), and her use of cosmetic products, such as the shot of her applying make-up before meeting up with Lanna shortly after the discovery of the body (00:10:07–00:10:21). The score accompanying the scene where she prepares the body is also significant, namely "I'm Sticking with You" by The Velvet Underground. The lyrics "Anything that you might do, I'm gonna do too" may be interpreted as an indication of several issues related to Morvern's trajectory. First, it may refer to the transition into a higher economic class with the appropriation of James's money, as she is now able to do

what her working class could never allow. Secondly, there might be a connection between his and her vision of death in this sense; she is going through a process of metaphorical self-annihilation and essentially “killing” her old self – an act which was enabled by the boyfriend’s literal self-annihilation (as discussed in regard to the novel as well). This is also echoed when the lyrics continue with “Saw you hanging from a tree, and I made believe it was me.” Taking into account that her late boyfriend is understood as a figure of the Romantic artist sacrificing his life for his art to live on (Churchman 2013, 100), it is possible to draw a parallel between the notion of “hanging from a tree” (self-annihilation/suicide, despite James having committed it in a different way) and the unpublished novel. This image evokes not only Morvern performing a metaphorical self-annihilation for the purpose of resubjectification, but also the act of appropriating the manuscript that James seemed to believe would only thrive if he killed himself, as this would allow the immortality of art and posthumous fame. The song thus implies Morvern’s adamant attempt to reinvent herself separately from the way her boyfriend and the patriarchal structure he embodies have described (or identified) her. Aside from the issue of class, this scene also underscores the vital importance of music in Morvern’s life, which appears to function as a way of articulating her innermost thoughts and emotions, rather than doing so verbally (and conventionally), which is discussed more in the continuation of the present study.

As Morvern’s trajectory goes on, the film shows her silence to be “chosen rather than imposed” (Artt 2013, 5) and displays a clear differentiation between the function of her silence in Scotland versus in Spain. As Artt argues, in Scotland this silence is interpreted from the outside, while in Spain Morvern has the freedom to “impose meaning on [it]” herself (2013, 9). In both cases, the silence is chosen; what differs is the complete freedom from the phallic order that Spain provides as opposed to Scotland, which harks back to the analysis of her trip as the physical counterpart (and final step) of her transcendence of constraints presented earlier in the paper. For the protagonist, Scotland then represents a structure she may only partially free herself from. In addition, Stefanie Lehner suggests coining the term “subaltern aesthetic” for attempts of some (Scottish) authors to “allow the repressed subaltern voices to re-emerge as indelible” by depicting subjugated classes’ experiences within the social, political, cultural and economic strides that “implicate Scotland’s devolution within a global capitalist network” (2007, 300). Considering what has been stated in terms of Morvern, her class and her materialism, it is clear that such implications are also echoed in the novel, and perhaps even more noticeably in the film,

which could be observed as representing subalternity from quite an authentic angle. Naturally, Lehner's claims open up the possibility of a new in depth scrutiny and reinterpretation of *Morvern Callar*, novel and film, from a postcolonial perspective and as a symbol for the entirety of Scotland, which is unfortunately not possible under the scope of this study, as the focus is on Morvern's own resubjectification generated by rave mechanisms. Before addressing the role of consumerism/capitalism in depth, it is necessary to examine the significance of music, silence and landscape for her attempt to escape the Symbolic, in order to circle back to the issue of class at the end of this subsection again.

Morvern's efforts to stand outside the order are transposed onto screen in a variety of shots where Ramsay chooses to put emphasis on visually conveying the immensity of the protagonist's internal union with the world of nature and connection with music as a possible method of channeling her innermost thoughts. The significance of the natural world is especially clear in the scene where she finally disposes of the dismembered body by burying each part in the mountain above her boyfriend's childhood village and experiencing the beauty of the environment (00:36:21–00:38:49). Referring to the scene in the novel, Dominic Head describes it as "pastoral" and calls it a symbolic "site for the disposal of the untrustworthy Scottish novelist with his more conventional mannerisms"; in other words, the corpse of the man who embodied privilege, convention and traditional patriarchal order in its many forms is now buried so as to make space for the unconventionality and self-(re)discovery in a manner which defies tradition and the masculine power structures. Head further explains that her overall narrative presents "a transcendence of the restricted literary past," but draws attention to the idea that Morvern does not necessarily entirely replace what her boyfriend stands for; there is some acknowledgement of the traditional past on her part (2002, 151). These arguments hark back to the issues mentioned in relation to the narrative techniques and voice earlier in this paper; both Warner and Ramsay experiment with the narrative, in that the novelist employs the combination of the demotic and hieratic register and gives Morvern a relatively authentic voice, whereas the director experiments mainly with sound and silence. In both media, Morvern prefers silence, and Ramsay's use of music, according to Artt, is a practice which "transcends accent and speech" (2013, 3). However, neither the film nor the novel completely dismisses the significance of past traditions. It is only the current set of traditions in a variety of aspects that Morvern appears to try to subvert. Artt also states that "Morvern is sutured in to herself by her choice of music," and that the extensive

use of music “helps to make the audience more receptive to Morvern’s silence” (2013, 11). Asking the question “Does that mean that her silence is not really silence?” (Artt 2013, 11) additionally highlights the vagueness and ambiguities associated with Morvern’s overall demeanour and use of silence as a strategic and performative tool that is complemented with the music she thoroughly enjoys and fills her space with.

Recalling the previously referred to argument by Bennett that musical taste is a “distinctly fluid form of expression” and that “[m]usic generates a range of moods and experiences which individuals are able to move freely between” (1999, 611), it is easy to see the significance of music in the protagonist’s life and the freedom of not being confined in one spot. As seen almost perpetually throughout the film, Morvern listens to the music she chooses on her Walkman – including at rave parties (00:54:28–00:54:39; 01:28:35–01:29:40). It has been suggested that “music shapes and transforms [Morvern’s] experience of place” (Mazierska and Rascaroli quoted in Artt 2013, 10), which is evident throughout both the novel and the film, and it is necessary to perceive the protagonist’s entire trajectory through the link between identity, music and landscape, as these prove to be intricately woven factors in the process of her resubjectification. As explained throughout this study, music represents an integral part of raving as it contributes to the heightening of senses in terms of aural impressions. Though Morvern does not listen to what the DJ is playing, but is rather “immersed in her own sonic world” (Artt 2013, 10-11), she nevertheless manages to become part of the *jouissance*-seeking desubjectified mass of ravers insofar as they form a collective organism in a liminal space independent of the normative Symbolic. The fact that raving has been defined as a practice that transcends language is further solidified through Morvern’s deliberate taciturnity heavily pervading the narrative(s), and through her use of music as a form of unconventional articulation of the wealth of emotions within her. Artt argues that the music soundtrack is an “aural performance” (2013, 11), which certainly ties in with silence as strategy that paves a way towards self-reinvention. Additionally, she draws a strong connection between music and nature in Morvern’s process of resubjectification as she contends that her manner of experiencing the landscape through touch while listening to music “becomes something akin to dance” (2013, 11). Mazierska and Rascaroli claim that Morvern’s “experience of landscapes, both at home and abroad, is *multi-sensory*” and that “[s]he inhabits space in a sensual way and makes it her own” (quoted in Artt 2013, 10). Such a way of experiencing space certainly ties in with the characteristics of raving

and becoming part of a larger organism collectively transcending the world of symbolic markings and distinctive classes, genders, identities. The shots of Morvern “dancing” with the landscape while immersed into silence or the aural performance of music (00:36:58–00:37:05; 01:12:35–1:13:00; 01:22:23–01:22:45) are perhaps an effective transposition onto screen of what has been established in this study in regard to Morvern in the novel – the appropriation of raving mechanisms into her daily life.

Toshiya Ueno explains that techno-dance “contains ‘significance’ even in its non-discursive process,” is an “unconventional version of ‘resistance’” and “always driven by mimesis and mutual mimicry as an unconscious ‘(un)learning’ process by which to constitute the social-body and body-politics.” It is further argued that mimesis is often considered “a basis for the construction of society,” though the mimesis generated by techno-dance does not follow a conventional model but rather opens up a model-less space (Ueno 2003, 106). Taking into account everything that has been stated in this study and various other studies on rave culture, it is possible to say that Morvern attempts to create a new space separate from the patriarchal Symbolic, but does not quite follow any models to do so. Her behaviour and especially the interactions with Lanna testify her desire to create an alternative world for herself, free from the confinements of symbolic marking, but she does not follow a model as she rather wants to go where and do what she likes. The alternative domain is therefore entirely under the control of her own authentic agency. The *jouissance* associated with raving, Morvern’s deliberate placement outside of discursive practices, and her unlearning process are thus evident throughout the film. Ueno contends: “As far as dance can afford and enable these different modes of communication and sociality, as represented by such terms as ‘affective alliance’ or ‘tribal solidarity’, it contains a sort of hesitation, reluctance and resistance to conventional or ‘normal’ communication and social relationships in everyday life” (2003, 107). As stated previously, Pini explains the liminal space of raves as a way for the youth to find themselves “through losing themselves to something ‘bigger’” (2001, 113), and for women specifically it represents independence from traditional definitions of subjectivity. Operating through raving mechanisms, Morvern seems to be doing precisely this; resisting the norm, but simultaneously attempting to navigate society in terms defined by her, thereby restating her subjectivity by having previously lost herself to “something bigger” and taken control of discourse. Her relationship with Lanna’s grandmother serves as an

example of this restructuring of her social position and reformation of moral and social standards on her own terms.

Furthermore, it is important to address the role of landscape in more detail, with reference to specific scenes, the most intense of which is perhaps that of the burial. The conventional, privileged Scottish narrator and Romantic artist strongly depicts the ambivalence which ensues in Morvern's sense of self in relation with identity (also connected with nationhood), which for her seems to represent a highly perplexing and paradoxical mosaic of utmost love for the landscape, partial acknowledgment of the tradition, subalternity and a strong desire for liberation. The sequence, preceded by the preparation accompanied by "I'm Sticking with You," the implications of which have been addressed earlier, commences with a tracking shot of Morvern as she climbs up the steep mountain carrying the backpack containing her boyfriend's dismembered body. Once she reaches the intended location, the instrumental score stops and only the sounds of nature are audible (to the viewer) as she is shown spinning in circles with eyes closed and earphones in, taking in the pulchritude of nature before she begins digging (00:36:58–00:37:05). Afterwards she is running in a seemingly happy-go-lucky manner, resembling the innocence and carelessness of a child and letting the beauty of nature flow over her as she laughs (00:37:28–00:37:42). Arguably, this sequence depicts the return to the Real and Morvern's functioning as a BwO in her efforts to escape conventions, constraints and death.

Churchman claims that this narrative about Morvern Callar reflects what is known as a redemptive power of nature, where the individual goes to escape from civilisation (2015, 101) and recovery from traumatic experiences. Yet, in the next scene(s), as the score starts again, she is reminded of corporeality when she closely examines the bare branches and brook nearby and catches a glimpse of worms and insects, a common association with human decay, as they are crawling in the mud (00:37:47–00:38:49). The juxtaposition of these shots – transitioning from the wholesome love for nature and the Scottish landscape to the ominous tones of corporeality and imminent death – appear to sum up Morvern's own bifurcated sense of self which desires to escape from the struggles of symbolic marking. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that, despite the constant reminders of death and the physical world, the enjoyment of nature reflected through Morvern's heightened senses, especially touch (when she is touching the branches, for example), seems to overpower the awareness of the language structure. Artt explains: "Silence

does not equal passivity here but instead indicates an openness and a sensual appreciation of the landscape” (2013, 6). This sensual appreciation is stressed further in her trip to Spain as well.

Finally, having examined the intertwined roles of landscape and music in Morvern’s journey to self-(re)invention, it is now possible to refer once again to the notions of consumerism and capitalism. They play a crucial part in Morvern’s quest for freedom and provide context for her actions pertaining to James’s property. It has already been established multiple times that Morvern’s trajectory is based on the subversion of tradition and norms, often to a carnivalesque extent, and the fundamental urge to return to the Real or create a realm outside of the Symbolic. Morvern has been analysed in this study as a person who enjoys material things and strives to break free from the confinements of her own working class. However, her immersion into nature, music and silence make it worth noting that this is not a case of pure materialism, and the key is precisely the inversion of the order triggered by her appropriation of the late boyfriend’s property. To explain further, it is possible to consider Sarah Thornton’s (1995) view of subculture delineated in the Theoretical Overview. As stated before, she aimed to expand the analysis of subculture, portraying club cultures and subcultural capital as a foundation for breaking free primarily from the parent culture, and especially for creating their own distinct character which will autonomously govern the space they create. This is the liminal space of raving, but also Morvern’s everyday life fuelled by this practice. Morvern, similar to members of subcultures in Thornton’s perspective, is not merely a member of an “undifferentiated mass,” which is especially visible in the shots of her at the rave in Spain (discussed in the next subsection).

Morvern’s transition into a class that allows her a luxurious trip and relieves her need to worry about finances is not a sign of underlying pure materialism emerging, but rather of the opening possibility of fulfilling that freedom from constraint, such as the freedom visually presented through her “dance” with nature. This is corroborated by the fact that the funds she receives and manuscript she appropriates inherently carry the deconstruction of patriarchal authority and enable her to be independent of any culture, whether parent or merely economically superior. It is additionally confirmed by the perception of Ramsay’s Morvern as a traumatised human being more than capable of emoting, albeit not articulating those emotions in a traditionally expected way. Artt illustrates this wealth of emotions in by describing her silence as “mystical, sullen,



confused, contemplative, and joyful” (2013, 3). For instance, when Lanna reveals her sexual involvement with Morvern’s late boyfriend as they are both lying in bed in the dark, Morvern turns away from her and the shot focuses on her face, with raindrops sliding down the window and her silence conveying the pain and betrayal (00:42:00–00:43:25). Artt argues that this is also an example of “aggressive use of silence as punishment” (2013, 11). Morvern’s ability to feel is also evident in the fact that she nonetheless takes Lanna with her, as well as in the way she visits Lanna’s grandmother just to see how she is doing (00:29:05–00:29:52). The space in Lanna’s grandmother’s house is filled with silence and permeated by emotion, thus deeply accentuating the internal richness that is unconventionally expressed while complemented by the absence of verbal utterances.

Moreover, the conventional understanding of property – artistic, intellectual, and financial – is destabilised by all Morvern’s actions influenced heavily by the mechanism of raving. A prime example of this is the fact that the author of the novel is never revealed to anybody but the viewer. Discussing club cultures as neo-tribal formations, Graham St John refers to Michel Maffesoli’s explanation of the purposes of such neo-communities; namely, they are “disposed [...] collectively to achieve societies founded above all on quality of life” and they “constitute an ‘underground centrality’” as the “source of *puissance*, which is [...] ‘the inherent energy and vital force of the people’” (2003, 66). Additionally, it is emphasised that these neo-tribes operate on the concept of ‘passional logic’ rather than rationality, which is a trait of the ‘orgiasm.’ This orgiasm “refers to an *ethical immoralism*” as opposed to “a morality of “ought to be.”” The life lead by these tribes is referred to as an “unproductive life” due to its aloofness, and it incorporates a “Bataillian desire for loss” that culminates in “the *festal* – those moments of pure consumption occasioning transgressions of imposed morality” (Maffesoli quoted in St John 2003, 66). Furthermore, Jagodzinski notes that raves “produce “nothing” [...]: a product that is paradoxically noncommodifiable and useless” and explains: “The work that went on in the actual factory becomes a palimpsest of the anti-work that is now done within it, in the name of *jouissance* – pure relentless pleasure, pure enjoyment (*zoë*)” (2005, 258). This carnivalesque character of club cultures/raves and the striving for *jouissance* have been recognised in the case of *Morvern Callar*, both the novel and film, on multiple levels. When Morvern books the hotel in Spain, she tells Lanna not to worry about money, and repeats the same sentence in the end of the film when they are both back in Scotland and she reveals she would be going back. Lanna brings

up work, and she responds: “Fuck work, Lanna! We can go anywhere you like.” Lanna, however, remains adamantly against leaving Scotland and tells Morvern to “stop dreaming” (01:26:20–01:26:55). Morvern’s profound resistance to the traditional concepts of work, money, belonging, property and identity are again linked with the practice of raving, as visible through her wish to leave Scotland again.

### **c. Spain: Subverting Tradition through Rave**

As previously established, Morvern’s sense of self in relation to the nation she comes from is at the very least an ambivalent one; while she does not fully relinquish her nation nor invalidate the significance of past tradition and conventions, she does not wish to conform to the confining identity they interpose. The multi-layered subalternity in Morvern’s character is echoed in Ramsay’s film both through Morvern’s deliberate silence and the careful juxtaposition of shots that visually convey what transpires within her own struggle in the identification process. Artt draws on John Caughie’s comments, among which is the assertion that Morvern’s English accent in the film is a “scandalous transgression” since it posits her as a translated subject and thereby contributes to the widespread inclination to treat the Scottish accent and dialect as non-standard or foreign (2013, 3). However, as seen throughout the analyses of the novel and the film, Morvern’s relationship with speech and language is characterised primarily through resistance to the phallic order built upon them. Thus, as Caughie contends on a similar note, Morvern’s silence embodies the act of “not just trying on national identities but imagining not having one” (quoted in Artt 2013, 3), possibly fuelled by the desire to escape subordination that inherently arises with her tie to Scotland. It is also applicable to the broader sense of fluidity in self-expression and resubjectification associated with music, sensory impressions and the BwO. Furthermore, it is arguable that, while Morvern’s boyfriend epitomises tradition and the conventional Scottish narrator, Lanna embodies the contemporary Scottish working class youth and the national identity Morvern strives to run from; the vast contrast between them is made clear through their respective accents, actions and attitudes. Her best friend does not quite fit into the vision of a matriarchal order Morvern seems to be attempting to form as an alternative to the patriarchal structure, particularly due to Lanna’s passive and unquestioning acceptance of the position she is given as a subject-in-language. It is also worth noting here that she and Lanna differ even in the nature of the pursuit of materialism and luxurious experiences. While wealth,

trips and material items represent a profound way of deconstructing patriarchal authority and transcending the Symbolic and its constraints for Morvern, Lanna seems to perceive these things simply as pastimes and a temporary escape that ultimately ends in her having to return to the supermarket job. The film conveys Morvern's deliverance from the imposed identity and markers through a number of sequences during her stay in Spain. Though she arrives with Lanna, the two of them soon drift apart, both physically or psychologically, seemingly experiencing two divergent vacations. The trip to Spain ultimately refutes all the previously presented moments of intimate friendship between them, such as those of bathing or baking together.

It is important to refer to the representation of the rave in Spain and look into the way it can be analysed in regard to Morvern's relationship with the Symbolic. The rave is portrayed through a vigorous scene (00:54:28–00:55:08) depicting strobe lights, energetically dancing bodies, and an essential accompanying score. It can be connected with its description in the novel, where one no longer possesses authority over one's body and is immersed into the BwO collectivity of the ecstatic experience within this liminal space. However, while the other ravers are presented as vague figures with no distinct features, Morvern remains the focus of this collective organism as she moves through the dancers smoothly and slowly, the lights emphasising her features and revealing that she is wearing earphones, thus listening to the music she chose rather than what is played at the party. The same technique is applied to the later representation of raving, in the closing scene of the film. The insistence on outlining Morvern's features as opposed to the other ravers' may point to Maria Pini's notion of resubjectification. In the analysis of the novel, it has been established that raves provide the opportunity to find oneself through becoming lost to something bigger, in this case the silhouette-like bodies at the party. Indeed, it seems that the film highlights particularly this search for the self with Morvern staying true to the music she enjoys while also experiencing a sensual immersion into the BwO context of the pleasuredome as an alternative world.

In this particular instance, it is possible to read Morvern's dismissal of conventional approaches: "subjectivity is restated in terms which do not reproduce traditional distinctions between mind and body, self and other" (Pini 2001, 161). Though the loss of one's own physical self in the collective organism of ravers implies the blurring of distinctions between self/other, and is clearly represented in the film adaptation, the construction of the scene(s) per se suggests that

this blurring is more complex than a mere erasure of symbolic markers. In fact, it indicates the questioning of the very nature of those distinctions and their validity, which underscores the strong resistance against the established hierarchy and standards. Together with the evident insistence upon corporeality in most shots, and even the grotesque (such as the scene with maggots and worms after the burial), Ramsay's adaptation manages to convey the carnivalesque character of Morvern's resubjectification process. Additionally, as Caughie claims about Morvern's face at the rave: "a blank stare [...] invites us to put meaning on it – despair? realisation? awakening? – without giving us the means of determining which meaning to put" (quoted in Artt 2013, 4). This suggests the absence of normative discursive practices, and consolidates the role of Morvern's silence and the vagueness she insists on in the creation of an alternative domain of existence. It also solidifies Morvern's masterfulness in commanding her silence and ambiguity, and shows that she is the one who retains control over the meaning of her expressions and actions, independent of the phallic discourse.

Another significant issue is the separation from Lanna during the trip. She dismisses the landscape of Spain as "the middle of nowhere," whereas Morvern, on the other hand, finds it breath-taking. The entire sequence highlights the fundamental differences between the two, as Lanna grows increasingly frustrated and dismisses the sublime character of nature that Morvern sees, wishing they were in the club instead, whereas Morvern appears content, smiling as she enjoys the beauty of the wilderness. Sleeping on the ground later, Lanna is left alone as Morvern leaves some money for her and wanders off, smiling and experiencing the beauty of the environment (01:08:50–01:12:33). If her best friend reminds her of the constraints of a 'mainstream' working class (Scottish) identity and the betrayal connected with her late privileged middle class boyfriend, then Morvern's choice to leave her may be taken as the ultimate step to her transcendence of the perplexing and restrictive identity associated with her background. For Lanna as the typical working class subject, Spain and raving represent leisure, relaxation and hedonism, and in this sense she would fit into the inadequate view of subculture as coherent and homogenous. Morvern, on the other hand, experiences raves and the Spanish landscape deeply and perceives them as an alternative to the Symbolic and its constraints. As in the novel, it is the journey to Spain that contributes most to her liberation in the film. The act of moving forward from the restrictive class, nation and everything that Creeping Jesus, James and Lanna epitomise subsequently aids the protagonist's ability to manipulate her identification

process; once she detaches from Lanna, she hitches a ride with a Spanish family and introduces herself as Jackie. She does not speak their language and they do not speak hers, and Samantha Morton manages to convey the sense of bliss at being free from language structures and restrictions that Morvern feels. As the family joyfully start singing a song, she softly hums the melody and looks in awe at the landscape, once again drawing attention to the importance of music and nature in her sense of self. (01:13:02–01:14:08). It seems in this moment that the freedom from the Lacanian circuit of discourse has culminated with the effects of the rave and the separation from Lanna.

The freedom from being attached to Lanna also provides her the time and space to meet the publishers from London, Tom and Susan. Like in the novel, her responses to them are short and she declares she finds delight in quiet places. The more inquisitive they get, the more Morvern's established comfort in silence enables her to manipulate her appearance and identity. As Artt argues, she is "the antithesis of the stereotype of the British in Spain" (2013, 6); her position as an outcast in her own nation is now used to her advantage in a foreign country where she is able to skilfully construct her image and identity. In fact, she even does this through her clothing; she puts on a bright floral dress before meeting the publishers and transitions from her usual relatively androgynous and dark clothing to a style which would contribute to an image of femininity and positively influence – or even mould – the way Tom and Susan view her. Through her masterful use of silence and appearance manipulation, Morvern transcends language and thereby the phallic order, accomplishing an "individual rather than national authority" (Artt 2013, 6). Her command of silence and the act of leading Tom and Susan to the memorial site are ultimately also the reason they believe the image of her as "the author as an eccentric artist magically in touch with other aspects of the world" (Artt 2013, 9). Unlike the scene with the boatman, where she wanted to deny this sense of mystique, this time she imposes meaning upon her silence in the opposite direction as it is what suits the situation best and will be beneficial for her.

Morvern, who is now free from any symbolic markers, seems to be the one in control of the interaction and their impressions of her. In that sense, this reversal of roles, as it were, harks back to the notion of the carnivalesque to a certain extent. The meeting with the publishers as a whole reveals that Morvern seems like "a master of inner life" and "becomes an ambiguous and

fascinating figure to them” (Artt 2013, 8). Artt attaches a sense of “refusal to offer closure and concrete explanations” (2013, 8) to the film, thereby underscoring Morvern’s resistance to discourse and marking. Ramsay manages to capture Morvern’s fluctuations in terms of identification/resubjectification and desire not to stay confined in many ways, and an example might be found in her clothing. She alternates between the dark clothes in the beginning, such as the all-black outfit at the first rave, to very bright casual clothes in Spain, and spends time scrutinising the floral dress in the mirror (01:15:08–01:15:18). These shifts are perhaps a way of reflecting the fluctuant character she exudes. While Morvern has always dealt with her silence as a strategy, it is in Spain that her command of silence fully flourishes. As Artt says: “Morvern is free to impose meaning on her own silence and her silence is readily accepted” (2013, 9). Although Artt also argues that silence is imposed upon her in Scotland (2013, 9), it is important to recall the points made in this study in regard to this and differentiate between different kinds of silence. While subalternity and silence are, in fact, imposed upon her at home and through the various epitomes of the patriarchal order, this is the kind of silence projected through a denial of Morvern’s agency as a female subject-in-language. She very quickly chooses to use silence as her *strategy* after her late boyfriend’s suicide and learns to master it, so the notion of an imposed silence is only valid very early on in the film and transforms throughout its progression.

Aside from manipulating silence to her advantage and fully controlling the situation with the publishers, Morvern is also seen bending language in this way early during the stay in Spain, when she and Lanna pretend not to speak English and introduce themselves as Helga and Olga to two young men who come to sit at their table at the resort. Afterwards she gives Lanna a cue to get up and leave by touching her nose, which makes it clearer that Morvern is the one controlling this situation as well (00:49:39–00:50:23). By laughing at the two men and refusing to communicate with them, they subvert their masculine superiority and, in a way, disrupt the patriarchal circuit of discourse. Morvern’s treatment of silence throughout the whole narrative thus clearly aids her resistance to the imposed hierarchy of the father and thus the circuit of discourse. Rave as a practice of immersion, *jouissance* and construction of an alternative domain independent of the laws of the Symbolic merges with silence and supplements Morvern’s act of resistance. Artt refers to Susan Sontag’s explanation of one of the ultimate goals of art, namely “a consciousness purified of contaminated language and [...] the distortions produced by conceiving the world exclusively in conventional verbal [...] terms” (2013, 3). Therefore, both

Morvern's silence as a strategy and her profound relationship with music, which is so clearly transposed onto Ramsay's film adaptation, constitute a driving force, together with rave, for the demolition of the androcentric chain of discourse and the creation of the alternate dimension where she can temporarily be in control. This placement outside the language structure is obvious in the previously described scene of the Spanish rave, where Morvern is listening to her own music and is the only figure that is seen clearly; her silence is juxtaposed with the loud score of the film (the party) and is perhaps at its strongest at this point due to this contrast. She seems content, and continues to channel her emotions through the music, like in most other scenes – at home, during the burial, walking through the Spanish landscape, and so on. Yet, she is still immersed in the collective organism of the rave and at this moment exists outside of language.

Morvern is able to create an alternative world where she is free from patriarchal discourse and retains full control, operating once again on a BwO basis; the corporeality of sensory impressions is juxtaposed with the ability to simultaneously transcend the structured realm and achieve a kind of jouissance. Additionally, it seems that she realises the possibility of her “social mobility through the manipulation of her own silence in different contexts” which fully culminates in the meeting with the publishers (Artt 2013, 9). Since Morvern establishes the perception of herself as an artist in Spain, it is perhaps useful to mention Susan Sontag's take on silence as “the artist's ultimate otherworldly gesture [...] [through which] he frees himself from servile bondage to the world” (quoted in Artt 2013, 10). This further corroborates the idea of Morvern using primarily her silence, but also the appropriated mechanisms associated with raving, as an attempt to place herself outside the Symbolic. It is also possible to draw a parallel between this constructed image of Morvern as an artist/writer and the arguments made in regard to the lyrics by The Velvet Underground, where “hanging from a tree” has been said in this study to stand for James's suicide and identification. Finally, the control she assumes over language and discourse evokes the previously suggested idea that she “made believe it was [her]” in the sense that she not only appropriates the money and artistic/intellectual property, but also, as a stage in her resubjectification process, the *identity* of an artist.

#### d. Ultimate Fate

In contrast with the warm and resplendent surroundings Morvern immerses herself into in Spain, Scotland appears quite drab and entrapping before and especially *after* the trip. As in the novel, the conclusion of the protagonist's trajectory ends with a return to the restrictive order she had attempted to elude. For instance, Morvern is reminded of the inevitability of (re)incorporation into the phallic order and social categories within it as she is sorting through mail immediately upon her return to the flat she eventually abandons. However, the stack also contains the check from the publishers, and it is within the span of a minute that she transitions from the reminder of the Symbolic to the vision of new opportunities to escape it, echoing fluidity; she begins packing, eventually closing the door and pushing the key through the post hole (01:23:13–01:25:31) to demolish any possibility of returning. Reuniting with Lanna at the local bar, which exudes masculine energy and thus evokes notions of a patriarchal power structure, Morvern expresses her wish to go back (to Spain, and, more broadly, the space outside the Symbolic realm) while her friend dismisses it, stating that life is essentially the same everywhere else and she is pleased to be in Scotland. Once again, the protagonist encounters the identity of a subaltern working class woman that Lanna symbolises and that Morvern refuses to assimilate with.

The film depicts Morvern's return to Scotland depicted as a series of wanderings; among the last scenes are shots of her walking along the railway in the dark with bags before she departs her town (01:27:40–1:28:13), indicating that, although one journey has ended, she desires to continue attempting to evade the identity that she perceives through negative images such as subalternity and death by voyaging further and attempting to find herself. The scene that closes the film portrays Morvern at another rave, again being the only raver whose contours are finely delineated, and again listening to her own music (01:28:27–01:29:04). Artt explains the significance of the score in this part of the film as follows: "The tender music (the Mamas and the Papas' "Dedicated to the One I Love") indicates that what may have begun as a journey into decadence has since become something else [...] It has become a journey that has led to greater freedom, maturity, and mourning" (2013, 11). Indeed, what appears as decadence in Morvern's trajectory is, upon scrutiny, revealed to be a way for her to construct an alternative world of endless possibilities of self-reinvention.



Artt explains that “[t]he final moments of the film can thus be seen as an alternative, individual, aural and performative space for the female character, as Morvern completes her transformation into the flaneuse/traveler [...]” and that the overall ending is carries a sense of ambiguity (2013, 11). As throughout the entire journey, Morvern remains in control of her silence and expressions and articulates herself through music, preventing the possibility of a clear attachment of meaning and thus evading discourse once again. The enduring vagueness that the film conveys confirms this notion that Morvern, who has perpetuated a sense of ambiguity throughout the entire journey, retains the power of continuous fluidity in terms of identity that the liminal space of raving and jouissance have enabled. Her control is also affirmed in the closing of the film by “the click of the stop button [that] is the final noise we hear before the end credits [...] a sound motivated by touch – the touch of Morvern’s hand, a physical movement” (Artt 2013, 12). Therefore, while Morvern’s journey commences with the sound of the keyboard and is initially uncertain, it progresses into a process of resubjectification in which she places herself outside of the restrictive Symbolic, creating an alternative domain where she is in control and self-sufficient in all her internal richness and unconventional modes of articulation. Artt states that silence as represented in the film offers a “way of understanding a character’s interiority” and “of representing individual freedom that goes far beyond the expression of trauma or sexuality” (2013, 12). Indeed, Morvern has been shown to use her silence as a strategy which ultimately allows her inner self to thrive and transcend. The protagonist’s trajectory corroborates the notion that, in the same way as the music she chooses “is far more than simply a carefully chosen compilation soundtrack” (Artt 2013, 12), rave is more than a mere hedonistic practice of ecstasy induced transgression of law by the participants. It is a liminal space that opens up a world free from traditional processes of identification, where the authentic self is able to flourish without being fettered by the language structure.

Finally, a brief comparison should be made between the ending of the novel and that of the film. Ramsay’s ending suggests a different future for Morvern from the one depicted by Warner; yet, both are inherently ambiguous. In the novel, what Morvern’s pregnancy entails in terms of her future is vague, and it is certain that she is reinscribed into the identity she struggled to leave behind and thus into the Symbolic, despite all her actions to override these constraints. The film’s rendering, however, implies merely the continuation of her journey, as the previously examined ultimate scene encompasses a slow-motion depiction of the protagonist at a rave, with

red strobe lights and a sense of the BwO experience mutual to all the ravers around her. While Warner's novel proposes a dire fate of inevitable symbolic marking and corporeality, the film seems to juxtapose and equally emphasise both the spiritual and the corporeal through a variety of sequences, eventually giving prevalence to the former and, albeit equivocally, suggesting the possibility for Morvern to break free yet again.

### III. *BEATS: FILM BY BRIAN WELSH*

#### a. **Music and Jouissance**

Taking into account everything that has been noted in regard to a Lacanian view of subculture, it is more than adequate to examine Brian Welsh's 2019 film *Beats* in the same manner considering its focalisation of the 1990s Scottish rave scene and tension within the often conflicting interpersonal dynamics of the time. Additionally, as the director notes in the interview by Ben Dalton, Kieran Hurley's one-man play was adapted into a full-length film with the intention of representing "the world of electronic music and self-discovery" (in Dalton 2019), thereby certainly echoing the notion of a quest for identity that is so closely tied to the theoretical framework used for analysing the practice of raving. *Morvern Callar* (both the film and novel), *These Demented Lands* and *Beats* certainly share the themes of identity pursuit and tension between an individual and the social order, as well as the significance of music in rave culture. The analysis of Ramsay's film depicted music and silence as supplementary to raving in Morvern's trajectory of self-(re)invention and construction of an alternative domain of existence – one outside of the Symbolic. Similarly, the examination of Welsh's film aims to delve into the representation of music due to its indisputable centrality within what the film intends to display and the role it plays in the resistance to the restrictive structural world. In order to explore *Beats*, it is essential to keep in mind what has already been stated about the carnivalesque, the BwO experience, ecstasy, and the Lacanian notions of the Real, Symbolic, death drive and jouissance, while also introducing some new concepts. This is especially important to the examination of music within the context of pleasures and collective raving.

In his Lacanian approach to youth cultures, Jan Jagodzinski describes music as "the pivotal place where the voice exceeds the word so as to transgress and go beyond the Law" (2005, 33) and speaks of music and voice in connection with jouissance as "cathexed objects" in the sense of the human body's attachment to them (2005, 44). Furthermore, Jagodzinski discusses the four drives as sources of jouissance which Lacan discerned, two of which are the scopic and aural drive that relate to the erogenous zones of the eye and ear "where the *gaze* and *voice* subject the infant to desire" (2005, 49). Such an intense insistence upon bodily responses to audible impulses echoes the notion of a Body-without-Organs letting pleasures flow across its surface rather than

differentiating between sensory impressions. This blurring is particularly heightened through the use of ecstasy that is so essential to the practice of raving. In fact, Jagodzinski explains that the raver does not quite hear the beat but rather *feels* “its viscosity” under the influence of ecstasy (2005, 257). Moreover, he contends that the techno beat can be perceived as “the search to find the fundamental beat of the drive mechanism *before* sex/gender differentiation” and firmly connects this notion to that of the BwO, while also describing it as a return to the womb, as it were (2005, 259-60). *Beats* makes it quite clear from the outset that its plot focuses on the aftereffects of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act passed by the British government for the purpose of banning unlicensed gatherings accompanied by loud music and repetitive beats. The wording used in the Act certainly implies that there is no deeper meaning to this music (and by extension raves): “[the music is] wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats.” The exact declaration, quoted on screen (00:00:43–00:00:57), is followed by the very first shots of the film, which alternately depict the two main characters (Johnno and Spanner) dancing to electronic music in their respective rooms while speaking to each other on the phone. However, just as Johnno amplifies the sound, his mother, Alison, enters the room and switches off the music. This scene (00:02:20–00:02:34) indicates what is presumably one of the most striking conflicts in *Beats* and youth culture in general – it juxtaposes the spirit of individual freedom and selfhood with repressive systems of authority. In other words, from a Lacanian perspective it implies the tension between the death drive and the Symbolic which can be seen in several instances in the film and echoes Morvern Callar’s own conflict as well.

The vital importance of music is evident in the depiction of a raver’s BwO experience in *Beats*. It is worth mentioning Hurley’s treatment of music in the text: “[Johnno] focuses on the music, drowning out the world and his mum’s voice in it. It is “Annihilating Rhythm” by UltraSonic, it’s his total favourite” (Hurley 2013, ch. 6). In fact, this is the song used in the alternating shots of Johnno and Spanner described previously. Perhaps the title of the track can be interpreted as a reference to self-annihilation, or placement outside of the Symbolic, that occurs by immersing oneself in the music and “drowning out” the world, the structure and authorities. Some of the other bands and tracks mentioned by Hurley are significant as well, perhaps most notably the Shamen’s song “Ebenezer Goode.” The song, released in 1992, contains lyrics “so cleverly written that a lot of people still don’t get it [...] [o]ne way, it’s about this guy called Ebenezer

Goode; another way, it's about ecstasy" (Simpson 2012). The chorus is constructed so as to sound like "Es are good," but the lyrics in entirety introduce allusions to the drug, such as: "You can see that E's mischievous, mysterious and devious," thereby implying the transgressive character of ecstasy and raves, as well as the inexplicability (through language) of the experience that ensues due to the substance. Moreover, the lines "When you're in town and Ebenezer is around, you can sense a presence in the sound of the crowd" indicate the immersion into rave music and the collective body of ravers, and capture the animated quality of music, ecstasy and rave that is also clear in D-Man's statements and Johnno's experience (discussed further in this section). In addition, the song has been said to have "had that old-fashioned Charles Dickens [due to Ebenezer Scrooge] thing that older people could relate to [...] [w]ith the video and the jokiness, kids could like it" (Simpson 2012). In this sense, the song seems to transcend lines of categorisation of culture by generation; even though raves were frequented by the youth, it appears that "Ebenezer Goode" aimed to appeal to wider age group and thereby perhaps clarify the vital importance of raving for the ravers to those who disapproved of the practice.

When it comes to the role of music in Welsh's adaptation, a notable reflection occurs once Johnno and Spanner finally arrive at the unlicensed gathering planned throughout the film. The relatively lengthy sequence displaying the actual event (01:09:15–01:16:29) attempts to audio-visually capture the *jouissance* and collective organism springing from the blurring of lines between genders, classes and backgrounds. For instance, despite the film being black-and-white for the purpose of "mythologisation" and being "like a memory, like some kind of chapter drawn out from this scrapbook of a past," – as Welsh explains in the interview (Dalton 2019) – the different images overlapping with shots of the ravers were done in colour, perhaps suggesting not only the psychedelic effects of ecstasy but also the contemporariness of what those images stood for at the time and still stand today. Many of them evoke the consumer culture of the time that this study has already explored in terms of Morvern's financial pursuit. It is worth mentioning that Johnno is also a supermarket worker, thereby internalising a particular sense of inferiority similar to hers. The images include shots of the repetitive motions of machines in factories and of the former Scottish Ravenscraig steelworks, as well as images of demolition and logos of different ideological movements. The accompanying electronic score, which undergoes a myriad of variations – ranging from energetic, to soft and slow, to muffled – is naturally inextricable from the meaning behind these shots depicting rave as a unifying experience.

Namely, Jagodzinski interprets rave music as “a beat in sync with the functioning of the body as a ‘machine,’ as an automaton” (2005, 259); indeed, the audience does get to observe a large group of people operating as a single unmarked organism, their sense of touch heightened by the ecstasy that makes them feel the beat rather than hear it. Taking into account the aforementioned images and Morvern and Johnno’s jobs, it is possible to see the juxtaposition and contrast between the two types of repetitiveness. The jobs exude a sense of repetitiveness that fosters the feeling of repression, whereas the “repetitive” beats of the music open up an alternative realm with the possibility of *jouissance* as they are synced with the body as an automaton.

The combination of different audio-visual elements stretched over several minutes in the film is perhaps interpretable through the notion of *jouissance* connected with the previously mentioned scopic and aural drives, as it aims to depict the alternative construction of being stemming from the use of MDMA and the imminent immersion into the experience of raving. This alternative plane of unrestricted existence (in other words, an ostensible fulfilment of the death drive) generated by music and ecstasy of the raves is juxtaposed with the harsh realities of the Symbolic and its limiting and repetitive norms and hierarchies. Hurley describes rave music through D-Man (also D-Boy and various other combinations of the letter D and nouns), who contrasts it with the “narrative and linear” music of their parents’ generation: “This about a pulse yeah, it’s a living thing, a living pulse, yeah, and they can’t kill it” (Hurley 2013, ch. 8). Welsh includes this particular statement in the film as well (00:40:22–00:40:27). This vivid quality of music is emphasised in the text when Johnno is represented as “[v]isualising [music] like liquid flowing through his veins” (Hurley 2013, ch. 8). Therefore, it is necessary to return to the implied meaninglessness of music and raves. The Act suggests there to be no profound meaning to raves, and *Beats* showcases the notion that this implication is a misconception. Hurley’s text itself posits the idea that “[i]t doesn’t mean nothing” from the start (Hurley 2013, ch. 1), and this statement is repeated multiple times throughout the work. The way double negation is used in this case presents the achievement of affirmation, which is especially clear when the statement is repeated with emphasis as the closing words of the text: “It does *not* mean *nothing*” (Hurley 2013, ch. 16). Although there appears to be no further elaboration on what it is that music and rave mean, it is certain that they are not meaningless. Similar to the meaningful modes of existence in *Morvern Callar* that are intricate, unfixed and difficult to understand and articulate (as corroborated by the fact that Morvern’s actions and expressions are largely vague), the

liminal space of raves that the authorities are trying to take away presents an unarticulated freedom that transcends the limits of language. It is unknown what the meaning of raves truly is; Hurley simply states “It means” (Hurley 2013, ch. 1). Nonetheless, this ambiguity does not undermine the intensity of the alternative plane that raving provides for ravers. On the contrary, it accentuates the subversion of the language structure that this study discusses in pertinence to rave.

It has been established in Morvern’s case that she maintains control over her expressions and manipulates silence and appearance to her advantage, with her interlocutors, as well as readers and viewers, never being able to impose meaning upon the ways she articulates her thoughts and emotions. The ravers in *Beats* are on a similar trajectory, since rave enables them to step into a BwO mode of existence and retain authenticity and autonomy over their de- and re-subjectification processes without using the conventional method of articulation – language. It appears that language is insufficient to shed light on the innermost desires of the youth, which is why Morvern uses music and silence, and the ravers in *Beats* repeatedly state that there *is* meaning, showcase their passion for music, and relate to D-Man’s comments about radicalisation and solidarity. This study aims to provide suggestions as to what the meaningful mode of existence is for the characters adapted into Welsh’s film, of course from the Lacan-influenced perspective used throughout the analysis and with reference to concepts useful to the examination. For the purpose of providing such possible explanations, different characters and instances are addressed in the following sections, where similarities and dissimilarities in the meaning of rave for each of them are looked into, especially with reference to the concept of the TAZ.

#### **b. Clash with Authority**

The clash of the individual with authority, standards and hierarchies pervades throughout the entire film. While *Morvern Callar* certainly concentrates more on the protagonist’s inner struggle and appropriation of a carnivalistic BwO mechanism for functioning on a daily basis in resistance to repressive system(s), *Beats* is in terms of technique more similar to *These Demented Lands* in that it portrays the conflict chiefly from an external angle by exploring the collision of, as Cristian Ortega (*Beats*’ Johnno) puts it, “the personal [...] with the political” (Ferguson 2019). The film highlights the individual’s repression within hierarchical systems, beginning with the

fundamental one that every subject-in-language is implemented into – family. This tension is most clearly emphasised in the case of Johnno, whose principal source of repression lies first and foremost in his mother and stepfather, a police officer. Moreover, whereas the mother carries out the role of parental authority, the stepfather fulfils the twofold role of both the metaphorical Law-of-the-Father (despite not being the biological parent), and the quite literal sense of law enforcement, thereby embodying the legal system which issued the bill against unlicensed gatherings in the first place. In his study of neo-religious aspects of rave, Tim Olaveson refers to Hakim Bey's notion of the TAZ (“temporary autonomous zone”) in order to examine the underlying purpose(s) of raves, which he calls “utopian social formations” due to their ostensible timelessness and nonexistence of structure (2005, 93-4). Because of its aim to “maximize autonomy and pleasure for as many individuals and groups as possible” (Bey quoted in St John 2005a, 215), the TAZ is a concept not infrequently used in analyses of rave culture, as it is able to portray the idealism behind ravers' desires for the previously mentioned alternative dimension of existence – in other words, existence outside the Symbolic, where there are no carriers of authority repressing or inhibiting their potential jouissance.

It is best to take a look directly at Hakim Bey's description of the temporary autonomous zone: “The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it” (2003, 99). The comparison of the TAZ with an uprising immediately evokes the idea of the carnival as a way of subverting the authority of the dominant culture and the State that is afraid of a possible collapse of the order. It is thus understandable that the rave Johnno and his friends visit is a liminal space where temporary autonomy is granted to all its participants and where they are free from parental influences and the public sphere that considers raves criminal activities and a danger to society. The TAZ is further discussed in section c. of this chapter, due to its focus on the resistant aspect of raving. The following subsections (b.1., b.2., b.3., b.4.) look into different character interactions in terms of the power dynamics within their relationships in order to showcase some of the aspects that the youth are attempting to escape.



### **b.1. Johnno: Robert (and Alison)**

*Beats* establishes the rift between the individual and phallogocentric systems early on in the plot. Johnno's internalised antagonism towards the unquestioned authority automatically assigned within these systems is clearly visible in the portrayal of family dynamics within his home. For example, a telling instance occurs early in the film when his stepfather Robert calls for a toast to celebrate the fact that they would be moving, a change which Johnno does not take lightly (00:14:33–00:16:19). The stepfather's position as the head of the household is reinforced within the frame that depicts Johnno and Alison sitting at the table as Robert is standing, delivering his speech about family, changes and pride, claiming also to understand Johnno's discomfort in terms of the move. Yet, if one were to scrutinise the occasional close-up of faces, it would perhaps be noticeable that it a sense of discomfort does not overwhelm Johnno alone; Alison appears to be ambivalent to the speech and upcoming changes. The brief glimpses the audience gets of her face in the process reflect a mixture of joy and uncertainty rather than determination. Johnno underscores Robert's unquestioned authority when he initially rejects Spanner's invitation to the rave, stating "Robert will [... ] kill [them]" if he does not go to work and then directly home to pack (00:28:38–00:29:00). Though it may appear as a hyperbolic remark, it certainly indicates how intensely Robert holds on to his role in the phallogocentric order and perhaps foreshadows the force with which he beats Johnno (unaware of his identity at first) later on during the party.

Moreover, in Hurley's text, Robert is not Johnno's stepfather, and he is shown to be conflicted about the increasing number of raves. The text presents the mass vision that the youth are "[f]eral. Out of control" and "a danger to themselves and the rest of society" that Robert appears to agree with at some times and question at others (Hurley 2013, ch. 1). Hurley provides glimpses of Robert's past and relationship with his father, who had been a worker at Ravenscraig, and represents the clash between their different standards through internal dialogues. Both father and son joined the strike of 1980; it emerged in the face of the new Thatcher government and the "anti-union Conservative strategy of the 1980s," the end result of which was a series of plant closures that "reduced the nation's steel making capacity and fundamentally changed the economic and social landscape of entire regions" (Penny 2015). Ultimately, Robert's father continued to believe in "collective empathy" and "a fight for an

understanding of who we are, of what we are” that unions of workers embodied, whereas Robert claimed it was “pointless trying to imagine anything beyond the facts of what you can see around you” (Hurley 2013, ch. 7). It is important to refer to the socio-political context further, as both the film and the text reference prominent political figures and movements to shed light on the changes within the social dynamics that inevitably influence Johnno and his peers.

Introducing the story, Hurley sets the atmosphere for the reader to visualise the setting in which Johnno’s trajectory takes place. He tells the readers: “I need you to imagine John Major’s Back to Basics campaign” (Hurley 2013, ch. 2), thereby drawing attention to the 1993 speech in which Major insists on the reinstallation of traditional values. Major claims: “We live in a world that sometimes seems to be changing too fast for comfort. Old certainties crumbling,” indicating thereby what the Conservative Party (the Tories) saw as a loss of core values or “pillars of [their] society – the Church, the law, even the Monarchy.” He also expresses anxieties stemming from increasing crime rates: if we let young people at an early age think crime is a normal part of growing up [...] it is small wonder if they feel there is no peer pressure turning them to law and order, and they turn to bigger crime later” (Speech to 1993 Conservative Conference). Though only referenced briefly in Hurley’s text, this speech plays an enormous part in the readers’ understanding of Johnno and the ravers. Naturally, raves were seen as a public health concern and a criminal activity, hence the official outlawing of such practices that followed in 1994. Considering the resistant character of raves in terms of tradition, regulations and repression, it is possible to say that Hurley’s play juxtaposes the youth of the 1990s with the practices that aimed to restrict them, while also drawing attention to the changes within the social and economic dynamics that affected the whole population. Johnno is described as “disappointed with the world, and terrified of his own place in it” (Hurley 2013, ch. 2) and frequently wearing an oversized hoody with the hood over his face: “He’d taken to wearing it like that indoors even though in his bedroom the door to the outside world was always locked” (Hurley 2013, ch. 3). The outside world, fuelled largely by public health concern, economic and social changes and raging political debates about these changes is a world of discomfort, anxiety and restriction. Johnno’s hoody emphasises the attempt at escaping the structures of the Symbolic that are naturally taken further by joining the rave.

The play depicts Robert as believing Ravenscraig to be one of the “[m]onuments to an old way of thinking” (Hurley 2013, ch. 7) in the sense that the solidarity and collectivity once captured by the steelworkers was fading away. The shots of the Ravenscraig steelworks in the film then perhaps carry a multilayered meaning; besides standing for the industrial period and the repetitive motion of machines, they also symbolise solidarity and resistance against what is perceived as injustice or repression, relating to the way that ravers create a liminal space to resist the Symbolic. The literal connotation of machinery is now replaced by the notion of the mechanisation *of the mind* that D-Man and the ravers struggle against. Furthermore, having joined the police force because he was convinced “[i]f you want to help your community you find a more practical way of doing it” (Hurley 2013, ch. 7), Robert begins to symbolise the phallic order in the sense of a return to the core values Major speaks of in his 1993 speech, as well as the sense of law enforcement as one of the restrictive systems subjects-in-language are required to obey. However, it appears that Robert is not entirely certain what to advocate in terms of the changes to society and the raves, as confirmed not only by the very fact of *having* internal dialogues with his father but also the text itself: “But don’t young people have a right to party? And if the government is allowed to restrict their civil liberties, might not ours be next? Aye, thinks Robert. A wee place in the city. That’d be nice” (Hurley 2013, ch. 7). It seems as though Robert adapts to the socio-political circumstances and functions externally as a subject-in-language within the phallic order of the time, but internally does not quite know whether to agree with the role he is playing, exuding uncertainties and imagining a certain type of escape. Welsh’s adaptation does not go into a detailed portrayal of Robert and strips away the immensity of the influence that the political instabilities and the relationship with his father have in the text. By portraying Robert as Johnno’s stepfather, the film provides a different angle from which to view his role as a representative of the Phallus. The film paints him in and Alison in an arguably simpler light, but nevertheless highlights their roles within the Symbolic.

It is necessary to look into Welsh’s reference to politics through Tony Blair. Blair’s 1994 speech where he addresses the nation’s issues and explains why the Tories’ policies are insufficient is shown on the television as Johnno and his family are eating (00:13:25–00:13:42). The brief scene incorporates the part of his speech that addresses their “comprehensive crime prevention programme, an anti-drugs initiative, long-term measures to break the culture of drugs, family instability, high unemployment and urban squalor in which some of the worst criminals are

brought up” (Leader’s speech, 1994). Though Hurley and Welsh cite two opposing political figures, the essence of these references ultimately remains the same, as testified through Johnno’s mode of behaviour in both versions of *Beats*. He remains introverted and quiet, attempting to separate himself from the restrictive world symbolised by both Blair and Major, as well as by Robert and Alison. It is also clear from these divergent references that, notwithstanding which party were to govern, the youth would be bereft of raves – a space they saw as a one of being their authentic selves and being unrestricted. This is additionally evident in the fact that neither party opposed the policy outlawing raves.

Furthermore, Welsh’s film showcases implications of Alison’s status as a subaltern in her relationship with Robert based on her gender and his double-layered authority that has been mentioned previously in this study. The decision-making process in regard to moving, as well as the overall functioning of family dynamics, are definitively governed by Robert, which reflects the patriarchal centrality present not only in small-scale communities like family but also the general social structure. However, it is worth noting that the film seems to present Alison from a slightly different angle from the text in the sense that Hurley’s work provides more details in terms of her characterisation, similar to Robert’s case. Welsh portrays her initial subalternity and her drive to bring order to things well (such as when she bursts into Johnno’s room in the first scene and urges him to get neatly dressed). Hurley’s text stresses Alison’s act of checking to-do lists that include not only errands but also what to do when punishing or comforting Johnno. In addition, she makes up a checklist of the things she is certain Johnno will do if he continues to spend time with the crowd the parent and political culture see as problematic: “Dogging school? Probably. Tick. Fighting? Possibly. Tick. Drinking? Seemingly. Tick. Drugs? Tick. Tick, tick, tick, tick” (Hurley 2013, ch. 4). This certainly serves as a reminder of both parental authority and culture, as well as the overall structured nature of the Symbolic and what the subjects-in-language are required to fulfil on a daily basis. It further stresses the overwhelming concern of the public in regard to the health-related aspects of raves and ecstasy. Robert and Alison are therefore, in different ways, both symbols of the system the youth finds repressive and confining and choose to rebel against through the carnivalesque act of creating an alternative domain where they retain control and are independent of the outside world.

## **b.2. Johnno: Colin**

Johnno works at a supermarket and performs the task of stacking shelves. Similar to Morvern's job, this is not only a repetitive and dull task, but it also carries a sense of conflict between the employee and boss, or between lower and higher classes. As with Morvern and Creeping Jesus, there is a sense of authoritativeness and abuse of the circuit of discourse at the hands of Colin in his treatment of Johnno. This relationship is additionally characterised by the fact that it is implied Johnno got the job due to Robert being an acquaintance of Colin's. The film features an interaction between the two (00:06:03–00:06:55), where Johnno is stacking shelves and Colin lectures him about the increasingly consumerist and capitalist world by insisting on the need for customers of all markets to have the same experience. He treats Johnno as inferior and docile as he forces him to turn the jars of hot dogs he has stacked backwards so that they can show the front side and be "recognisable, repeatable" – a quality which echoes the establishment of social hierarchies and categories. He also orders him to "straighten up the rest of [the] aisle" in a tone that strongly resembles the way Morvern's late boyfriend and boss made use of discourse when interacting with her and instructing her. An instance of subverting authority exuded by both the stepfather and the boss occurs in the film when Spanner calls Colin pretending to be Robert and informs him that Johnno will not be coming to work because he is dead (00:32:03–00:33:17). Understandably, Johnno is upset, but the group treat the situation in a light-hearted way and insist on "making the most of it" as they make their way to the party – where the economic reality fades out. The idea of death here may also be interpreted through the perspective of the death drive and the placement outside of the Symbolic. Therefore, it is possible to recognise again the influence of class struggles in the search for a new meaningful mode of existence and a reidentification process separate from symbolic marking dictated by the phallogentric order and discourse.

## **b.3. Spanner: Fido**

Spanner is not exempt from the inferior position in a play of power dynamics either; like Johnno's enjoyment of electronic music in his room is interrupted by his mother, Spanner's is interrupted by his clearly abusive older brother Fido. Though not a parent, Fido assumes the same type of phallogentric authority as is assigned to Robert, possibly because of his age, physical strength, gang connections and financial superiority over his brother. The very first

sequence between the brothers (which the film shows intermittently, again in the form alternation between shots of Johnno and Spanner) features Fido pulling Spanner out of his room and chasing him down a staircase to lock him outside (00:02:39–00:02:43; 00:02:51–00:02:58; 00:03:08–00:03:16). The staircase in the overhead shot of this scene is constructed into a spiral – perhaps indicating the dysfunctional and turbulent life Spanner is confined into. An example of the repression endured by Spanner is when Fido attacks him and attempts to press his face to the stove burner simply because he told him to “stop showing off” in front of Johnno (00:24:37–00:25:22). Naturally, it is necessary to distinguish between Robert and Fido in terms of execution of authority; while the former appears benevolent, at least initially, the latter certainly abuses his position and essentially bullies Spanner in a myriad of ways. Lorn Macdonald, the actor portraying Spanner, called his character a “lovable rogue” and explained the immense significance Johnno has on his otherwise troubled life by stating that “[t]he whole world’s against him, except Johnno” (Ferguson 2019). Spanner is not only restricted by Fido, but also by the authority assumed by Robert and Alison, considering the contempt towards him that they express to Johnno. Robert makes an effort to distance Johnno from Spanner because he is “bad news for [the] family” as he “will drag [Johnno] down [and] he’ll drag [Robert] down if [Johnno is] seen with him” (00:21:09–00:21:16). Clearly, then, Robert prioritises his duties in the police force (and by extension to the social structure) through the attempt to maintain authority over the relational system in which Johnno is incorporated.

Additionally, though Alison agrees with Robert, she seems to do so quite passively, with no authentic say in the matter. Moreover, their dismissal of Spanner is also founded on the class structure and the perspective of class authority, which again points to the reasons raving is such a meaningful practice to the youth. Alison refers to him as a “charity case” (00:19:40–00:19:45), and later Johnno reveals to Spanner that she referred to him as “scum” (00:44:48–00:45:00). The two friends thus both sense the entrapment of centralised structures of authority in their respective lives already at the most fundamental level – family, and the rave they end up going to is their only chance at experiencing the TAZ.

#### **b.4. Laura: Les**

Although this particular relationship is less prominent, it is worth mentioning briefly due to its dynamic. When Johnno first meets Laura, he stares at her black eye and asks what happened to her face, receiving no response other than Spanner's negative reaction to the question (00:10:39–00:10:54). When the group goes with D-Man to his makeshift radio station (an example of the “do-it-yourself” nature of raves), it is revealed that Les works for Spanner's brother and it is evident that Laura does not feel comfortable around him (00:38:27–00:38:48). The interactions that ensue shed more light on Les as a person, as he turns out to be a contrast to the passionate and radical D-Man, who wants to fight for the rights of the youth in the aftermath of the outlawing of raves. He insists that the free rave party being organised should be turned into a lucrative event, stating that rave culture is “washed-up scene anyway,” proceeding to laugh at having given the guy sleeping on the floor drugs the night before for fun, and insult Spanner and Johnno (00:40:31–00:42:55). A physical altercation occurs involving Johnno and Spanner against Les when he attempts to order Laura to sit down and not go anywhere with the rest of the group, hitting Wendy when she tries to defend her.

Laura hits him over the head with a lamp and the group leave him locked inside as they run to the car and escape, with Les screaming at them and throwing bottles from the window (00:48:18–00:50:55). It is clearly possible to draw similarities between Les and Fido; both use their position in the structure and the phallogocentric discourse in an aggressive manner and it is implied that Laura's black eye was a product of a previous outburst of Les's. Parallels can also be drawn between Laura and Morvern Callar in terms of their subaltern positions in the structure, though the former experiences subjugation from her boyfriend at a different level due to the physical violence it entails. Fido and Les also stand for the dark side of capitalism in the postindustrial setting, where the focus seemed to be making everything commodifiable and profitable, including humans and their minds. This is naturally detrimental to the unproductive life and production of “nothing” during the jouissant experience of raving and temporary autonomy retained therein. Les serves as a symbol of the various forms of restriction and violation of personal rights done at the hands of “dominators” at the expense of the subjugated. Finally, Les and Fido see money as a way to further their positions in the class system and

maintain superiority, whereas for ravers money/class is one of the lines that are blurred at the free (financially and spiritually speaking) space of the rave.

### **c. Resistance through Raving**

As previously established, it is clear that the primary source of restriction for both Johnno and Spanner is family – the most immediate of symbolic structures. Another source is the branch of government responsible for eradicating what is arguably the sole space of liberty for the otherwise limited and powerless youth. The outlawing of transgressive, unlicensed gatherings confined leisure-seeking youth to controlled, “domesticated” closed spaces – Simon Reynolds’s “pleasure prisons” (St John 2003, 73), thereby reinforcing the soaring influence of capitalism, consumer culture, commercialisation and normativisation within society. *Morvern Callar* displays the complete appropriation of such new trends into the character’s personal mechanism contributing to the achievement of pleasure rather than an emergence of materialism; *These Demented Lands* flips the narrative and gives the protagonist spiritual growth that helps her further rise above the notion of class, understanding the transience of pleasure and luxury. *Beats* attempts to depict a slightly different side of the same circumstance – an openly rebellious endeavour towards the maintenance of authenticity and resistance to the expansion of the repressive mainstream (and parent) culture. In fact, *Beats* sheds light on the different forms through which constraint may be manifested within the Symbolic; for instance, Robert’s position reflects the subtle, seemingly beneficial yet still firm and repressive side, while Fido’s and Les’s reflect the aggressive side, as well as the rapidly increasing trend of consumerism and capitalism. The film ends up implying that the two sides are arguably inextricable from one another when the former transfigures into the latter as action is taken to squander the gathering.

The different forms of authoritarian bodies and repressive measures are eventually countered on several levels, most notably by Johnno but also by the other participants of the rave. Reynolds calls rave “a nowhere/nowhen wonderland” (1999, 248), which underlines the erasure of time, space, and any symbolic markers when taking part in the rave that is similar to the unawareness of the external world during the stage of the Real. For instance, the hoody Hurley describes as a way of shutting out the external world is also featured in the film and, along with his immersion into music, the hoody could potentially be read as Johnno’s own way of returning to the Real that culminates with his participation in the rave he is initially uncertain about. Referring to Michel



Maffesoli's idea of society as being broken down into micro-cultures and neo-tribes free from "structural determinants," St John examines collectives of ravers as "technotribes" achieving jouissance and TAZ at the festivals they frequent, noting also their increasing political engagement in the later 1990s (2003, 65). He also contends: "In these spaces, youth come to share a secret aesthetic, practising the 'forbidden' – transgressive embodiment, gender category rupturing, illicit substance use" (2003, 74). It is thus possible to argue that the desire to defeat the constraints imposed upon them does not reflect a pure act of escapism, but rather a placement outside the Symbolic as a form of reinvention or re-identification – similar to Morvern's attempts at transcending class, gender and nationhood lines. A strong implication of political engagement is certainly present in Welsh's *Beats*, intertwined with the desire for individual deliverance. First, the multi-layered repression imposed upon Johnno, particularly through his position as a son and stepson, supermarket employee and close friend of the rogue who is "bad news," is countered in many ways, even merely by his decision to attend the rave. For instance, he subverts parental authority by maintaining his friendship with Spanner despite their wishes, as well as by repeatedly defying their act of grounding him for this secret liaison, and finally by joining the neo-tribe of ravers. Moreover, Spanner subverts the materialistic consumer culture and aggressive authority by taking Fido's hidden stash of money determined to fight for a future he deserves, echoing what Morvern does with her boyfriend's property. Naturally, the future in question does not fit into the conventional understanding of future, such as that achieved through a regular job. This notion is continuously challenged in the film, and exemplified through moments like Spanner's encouragement of Johnno to stand up to Colin (00:06:59–00:08:00). The future he "deserves" is then more closely related to the fight for the rights being taken away from the youth by the government – in this case, the right to party.

Spanner states the money is his "prerogative" and says: "Just because I'm not going to school doesn't mean I'm not learning stuff" (00:27:41–00:28:00). Therefore, besides appropriating financial means to temporarily step into the space of luxury and pleasure that a higher class would allow him, Spanner also subverts the authority of education as a system, thereby implying that he has abilities and a capacity that a traditional way of teaching would perhaps not acknowledge. The sequence continues with Johnno's eventual acceptance of Spanner's invitation to the rave and shots of them running through the streets and passing closed down shops, making a stop at what looks like a junk yard and playing with items found there before meeting with

Wendy, Cat and Laura. This is perhaps an indication of the times that have faded (as referenced by Robert in the text as well) and the new social paradigm occurring in the postindustrial setting. The sequence is accompanied by a voice-over of D-Man talking about the way humans are treated by the structure, using verbs like “indoctrinated,” “stamped,” “measured,” “corrected” and so on, and claiming “the only good system is a sound system” (00:29:49–00:31:22). Therefore, the authority of the government and of any other form of established norms and rules is deconstructed in D-Man’s speech, especially when juxtaposed with the shots of Johnno and Spanner playing in a carefree manner.

The strong desire for *jouissance* and a return to an unmarked realm of pleasures and unity (the Real) finalised by the entrance into the collective organism of the rave is already implied through the slogans behind the organisation of the party by D-Man. Statements such as: “They want to privatise our minds, keep us in our separate little boxes” (00:40:14–00:40:22), which suggests the harsh, individualistic age of consumerism and sociocultural normativisation, are followed by motivational and encouraging invitations such as “Don’t be a slave – come to the rave!” iterated by Spanner as well (00:47:38–00:47:41). He addresses the youth as “wayward travellers,” “lost souls” and “lonely wanderers” (00:09:40–00:09:45). Such proclamations reflect the collective resistance towards the new mainstream linked with the increasing domination of capitalism that transforms humans into machines – slaves to the establishment – and aims to repress even their minds for the purpose of a profitable homogenisation of culture. D-Man repeatedly refers to the rave as a revolt and act of resistance, affirming that there is strength in numbers and claiming: “If I can’t dance to it, it’s not my revolution” (00:30:56–00:30:58). This certainly ties in well with the previously addressed statements of Toshiya Ueno in regard to dance as an unlearning process. Dance as a revolutionary tool in *Beats* therefore represents a way for Johnno and the others to unlearn the self they have been confined into by the establishment and create an unconventional space where their own authentic agencies are in control. Taking into account the characterisation of ravers as neo-tribes and Jagodzinski’s notion of raves as producing “nothing,” something “noncommodifiable,” for the purpose of anti-work and pure enjoyment, it is understandable that the group does not follow a model for reconstructing society. They merely strive for an ecstatic *jouissance* in a temporary autonomous zone where they can resist constraints and flow freely rather than be fixed.

It is worth mentioning the notion of appropriation once again as a way of transcending symbolic marking done through lines such as class or gender. Spanner and Morvern Callar appropriate the financial means of a subject superior to them in terms of class and discourse, as previously established. However, ravers as a whole appropriate different means to enable their gatherings, such as abandoned halls – settings that enable the *PLUR* ethos. In line with Reynolds's characterisation of raves as nowhere/nowhen places, Jagodzinski explains: "As non-places, these buildings are haunted by the abandonment of capitalism" (2005, 258), which signifies the new postindustrial dynamic and evokes again the idea that, in the face of changing social, political and economic patterns, the unity and solidarity formerly present and symbolised by worker unions has faded. Yet, transformed by the ravers into a TAZ, these abandoned places become void of class, authority and any other symbolic markings, taking into consideration that they become a "derealized" space (Jagodzinski 2005, 258), a liminal space of festivity where the energy of the dancers/ravers is central to their unconventional articulation of themselves. As such, they temporarily bring back the collective empathy of a past era. The festal space of the rave is empowered through its resemblance to the Real – free from time, work, social roles – and constitutes again an alternative domain of existence, as seen, for instance, when Spanner gives Johnno an ecstasy tablet and Johnno says: "See you on the other side then, mate!" (01:01:31–01:01:51). This "other side" is, naturally, the space outside of the patriarchal order that allows unlearning of the previous imposed identities as well as the rebirth in the sense that Jagodzinski describes as "an escape in utero," exemplified by ecstasy providing "a sense of peace with oneself and the world" (2005, 258). Therefore, this other world is a non-phallic realm of unity, one that enables a return to the Real, with heightened aural and scopic drives and no differentiation between self/Other, mind/body, male/female, or working/upper class.

The collectivity and animated quality of music and technology that ensue during the rave are captured in both the film and the text, with Hurley describing Johnno's experience as "a warm glow pulsing through his body, a sort of blissful golden effervescence" (Hurley 2013, ch. 11).

The unity and subversion of class, gender and background lines are described as follows:

Weaving in and out of dancing bodies they make their way into the crowd, passing the faces of all the dancers, kids like them, older folks who look like they work in an office or could be a younger teacher, girls with dreadlocks like Johnno's never seen, all together moving, every one ensnared in the rhythm, their

faces some contorted, lost in music, but each one fucking beautiful. They catch his eye and he feels he understands them. (Hurley 2013, ch.11)

This togetherness, collective orgasm and orgasm, and unproductive life away from the restraints from the law, work, family, and other repressive systems is also echoed in Welsh's film, not only through shots of the ravers dancing as a unified BwO, but also through, for instance, the close-up of D-Man holding Johnno's head and saying: "No more keeping your head down, living a lie. Yeah? We're gonna feel what we wanna feel and feel it together" (01:06:18–01:06:27). This indicates a profound relationship between the ravers that may evoke Pini's argument that raves frequently represent a non-traditional sense of home for them, rooted in "fleeting moments of intense interconnectedness with others" (Pini 2001, 167), which replaces the conventional notion of home that is fixed, structured, and, in *Beats* in particular, quite repressive. The autonomy over their own internal selves as a micro-community destabilises Robert's notion (expressed in the internal dialogues in the text) that such a collective empathy and solidarity are a point in the past in the same way that Ravenscraig is.

Aside from the immersion into music and the collective body of the ravers, another aspect that makes raves interpretable as a deconstruction of the Symbolic and return to the Real is the fact that the realm of raving provides a non-sexual type of excitement, though this was not initially the case for Johnno. While listening to the rave music in other settings, Johnno would feel excited in the same way as when "Spanner would boastfully show him [...] pictures of naked ladies" (Hurley, *Beats*, ch. 6). However, once truly immersed in the crowd at the party, despite the myriad sexual allusions, such as the kiss between him and Spanner in the film (01:09:31–01:09:37) or the squeezing in the text (Hurley 2013, ch. 11), the newly established domain does not carry sexual excitement. This non-sexual and non-phallic experience of rave strongly relates to the Lacanian concept of the lamella, explained by Jagodzinski as "the human as a pre-sexual being" and "substance which is pre-subjective – immortal irrepressible life of zoë that needs no organ" (2005, 259-60). As explained in section a. of this chapter, Jagodzinski argues this through seeing techno music as the force that returns one to the womb, where the asexual child is able to hear noises that are similar to techno in that there is an absence of clear-cut rhythm, and rules of music production are not followed. This is corroborated also by his reference to Reynolds's interpretation of samples within techno music and description of rave as an orgasmic experience

that is not sexually charged (Jagodzinski 2005, 260). In that sense, music is again shown to be instrumental in the ravers' journey to the "other side," or an escape from the language structure to the world before sex/gender differentiation (the Real).

The immersion into the rave being characterised by the loss of "sense of time and space" (Hurley 2013, ch. 11) adds another layer to the act of resisting traditions, in this case the traditional understanding of linearity and chronology. As previously explained, D-Man refers to the music of their parents' generation as "narrative and linear," unlike the sampled techno music of the raves. This evokes Thornton's view of subcultures as nonlinear and diverse rather than homogenous as the CCCS and the public see them. The experience of ravers induced by ecstasy resists the linear understanding of time, as well as space in the sense that they turn abandoned places into their own realm and move together as one body. This resistance takes place in the same way that techno music resists traditional rules of music composition. As in the Real, there is no awareness of space, only sensory impressions and *jouissance*. Taking into consideration the multi-layered blurring that occurs during the rave experience, it is useful to refer to Hakim Bey's explanation of the notion of immediatism as a "movement" which can "take the form of any kind of creative play [...] performed by two or more people, by & for themselves, face-to-face & together" (1994, 10-11). Through dancing, immersing in the same scopic and aural sensations and embarking upon a journey to the other side together, the ravers become performers without any mediation. The sense of freedom from media and from commercialisation incorporated into the concept of immediatism presents another way of the ravers' opportunity to take control over their own selves. Being controlled by media, and by extension the entire language structure, entails anxiety over "miss[ing] smell, taste, touch, the feel of bodies in motion" (Bey 1994, 9). However, the alternative, fluid world opened up by rave allows them to:

[...] create *something else*, something to be shared freely but never consumed passively, something which can be discussed openly but never understood by the agents of alienation, something with no commercial potential yet valuable beyond price, something occult yet woven completely into the fabric of [their] everyday lives. (Bey 1994, 10).

This description of immediatism harks back to Morvern Callar's appropriation of the rave mechanisms into her everyday life, and it sheds light on the sense of liberation felt by Johnno, who no longer worries about work, family, or the future – at least temporarily. The immediatism

of rave is also pertinent in the search for “a truth that cannot be mediated or explained in words” (Reynolds 1999, 245). This is evoked through the use of the ambiguous term “something” and the sense of vagueness the paragraph entails. It is something that they do not understand at a cognitive level but can experience, while “agents of alienation” (dominators, media, and the system) cannot even acknowledge nor relate to. Johnno senses this immediatism and absence of language during the party: “[a] gleeful, fleeting, wordless, exchange” (Hurley 2013, ch. 11). The insufficiency of language/discourse in finding the truth is a clear subversion of the phallogocentric language structure, similar to Morvern’s ability to articulate her own truth through means other than speech. Although they do not articulate their truths through words, their mutual internalised sense of repression is frequently transposed through D-Man’s statements about radicalisation and resistance, as well as the pulsing music, their acts of defiance, or artwork and images shown in the film. These are, once again, unconventional methods of expressing themselves. As argued in Pini’s study on rave culture, rave “may not be ‘saying’ just one thing, but nevertheless, it ‘speaks’” (2001, 157), which clearly echoes the frequently reiterated idea in Hurley’s text that it does not mean *nothing*. Though the meaning of it remains undetermined, its power to allow ravers to channel their innermost emotions and immerse into an environment different from the boxes they are put into in the Symbolic is undeniable.

Naturally, neo-tribal communities of ravers certainly depended on and progressed due to the advancements in different technologies, most significantly in the form of mass communication and electronic media, which St John contends “have shaped an aesthetically inventive youth culture, characteristically tolerant, nonsexist, ecological, global and detached from partisan politics” (2003, 71). However, they strove to “control [their] media, not be Controlled by them” (Bey 1994, 10). Thus, whereas these micro-cultures (Johnno, Spanner, D-Man) embraced technological progress as a means for the expansion of accepting, open-minded, freedom-seeking social formations reaching the PLUR ethos, the domineering culture (Les, Fido) viewed it as a lucrative mechanism of commercialisation and manipulation. The objective of the latter to transfigure the diverse subcultural groups into controllable, homogenous, conformist androids was thus clearly met with contempt and resistance by the youth. This is because the only acceptable mechanisation to ravers is corporeal (the body as an automaton moving in accordance with the beats), whereas the privatisation of minds they rise against would entail the squandering and re-modelling of their personalities, desires and attitudes. The TAZ created by D-Man and

the ravers in *Beats* is therefore a portrayal of the fundamentally carnivalesque act of resistance; it generates a space where the ravers are in control, not “living a lie” or being put in boxes. Despite having utilised media and technology, their experience inevitably remains concordant with immediatism, as well as with Pini’s notion of the “mind/body/spirit/technology assemblage” that enables “fluidity of borders between human and non-human” (2001, 169; 170). This fluidity refers to the functioning on a BwO basis, the body as an automaton, and the erasure of the need for language to express oneself, since Pini refers to Donna Haraway’s claim that “not all actors have language” when she explains technology, music and chemicals are actors in the rave (Pini 2001, 169). In sum, the film displays what St John discusses as a “carnival of protest” (2003, 65), a unified ritual where the roles of authority held by particular subjects in the Symbolic are inverted and autonomy assigned to the technotribal community sharing one jouissant experience, physically functioning as an automaton but psychologically maintaining their individual freedom(s) without needing to conform to conventional modes of articulation.

Before turning to the final arguments in regard to the trajectory (or trajectories) in *Beats*, it is perhaps useful to take a brief look at another aspect of resisting tradition that may be useful for further studies. Spanner and Johnno indicate another dimension of questioning established norms and expectations, although it is not possible to delve into it in depth within the scope of this paper. There is a very palpable implication of the norms of heterosexuality and masculinity being destabilised. The scene of the two wrestling scantily clad (00:18:52–00:19:10) and that of Spanner with his arm around Johnno in his bed (01:32:50–01:34:39) are mere examples of their proximity to the edge of the problematic chasm between the conventionally acceptable and unacceptable sets of behaviours pertinent to sexuality and intimate interpersonal relationships. Since raving represents a “disruption of phallogocentric authority” (St John 2003, 74) and rupture of all social categories, most importantly class and gender, the rave is the only place where they are able to be their complete, uncensored anti-establishment selves in a TAZ where there are no superordinates to manage them, and no norms, regulations or expectations to conform to; there is simply being and feeling. St John describes this particular freedom as follows: “Techno-rave culture is ambiguous, decentralized and nomadic, and since it cannot be entirely known or controlled its inhabitants dwell outside total governmentality” (2003, 74). *Beats* presents precisely the decentralisation, unification and equilibrium that the technotribe experiences during

the rave by depicting bodies moving as automatons, achieving jouissance and existing outside of the structural and hierarchical character of the repressive system.

#### **d. Compulsory Reintegration**

Johnno, Spanner and their peers were able to deconstruct the language-based relational system by orchestrating a carnivalesque rave party and inverting the roles within it. However, like in Morvern's case, the subversion of the phallogocentric authority and repressive hierarchical categorisation was time-limited and the rebelling subjects were compelled to reintegrate into the order eventually. The term "temporary autonomous zone" naturally clearly indicates the ultimate compulsory return to the Symbolic and the inextricability of the individual's existence from the order. The jouissance associated with the self-controlled reinvention of identity and liberation from constraints by integrating into the equilibrium the rave offers is thus only a transient phenomenon cut short in *Beats* by the incursion of police officers assaulting the ravers to disrupt the party. This particular instance somewhat echoes the carnivalistic behaviour of Morvern Callar; as established earlier, her subversive behaviour may be a form of surplus. To underscore, surplus is a phenomenon similar to jouissance which occurs to compensate for a loss and with which castration is substituted. Both Morvern and the ravers from *Beats* are appropriating subversive principles, but it seems that only the former is able to achieve the surplus, perhaps due to her immensely divergent manner of reaching it. Because the party in Welsh's film is a forthright and openly rebellious transgression (of the regulations) and is cut short, the neo-tribe does not reach this state; instead, they accomplish jouissance within a TAZ, but this excessive pleasure is disrupted by police action which is perhaps interpretable as a kind of castration in this case. For Morvern (in the novel), it is only upon her return to Scotland that castration occurs, with her being "penniless and pregnant." The imminence of re-incorporation into the system and the temporality of the "Dionysia of modern times," as Michel Gaillot calls raving (quoted in St John 2003, 68), are well-reflected in the scene of the physical assault on Johnno. The tension between son and (step)father and the collision of the personal and political reach full culmination together in these shots, particularly because the clobbering is perpetrated by Robert, who is unaware of the beaten raver's identity until he is finished.

The incursion is preceded by shots of ravers and a score that entails lines from "Dominador" by Human Resource: "I'm bigger and bolder and rougher and tougher, in other words, sucker, there



is no O/other” and “I’m the one and only dominator” (01:17:27–01:17:45). At the same time, other “dominators” (Fido and Les) are shown appearing at the rave just before the police. The score is essential in two respects: first, the understanding of the meaning of rave to the participants – being their own dominators, not only blurring distinctions between self/Other but also deconstructing the *existence* of the Other. Subjects-in-language strive to stand in the position of the otherwise unattainable Other, or Phallus, and for ravers this seems to become possible within the ecstatic liminal space they create outside of the Symbolic. However, the second function of the score is serving as a turning point, as the autonomy is about to end. and the compulsory reintegration, where a number of other dominators stand above them, is to commence. The vicious disruption of the rave emphasises the unbreakable structured character of human existence in the Symbolic and the perpetual presence of categorisation by various standards. For instance, Robert’s use of authority and physical strength was a fulfilment of orders passed onto him by his superordinates and implemented in accordance with the regulations of the time; thus, his actions were dictated by the hierarchical relational system. The bird’s-eye shot of Johnno after the beating (01:20:50–01:21:01), lying in an almost fetal position on the single-colour square-tiled floor in his green hoodie, provides an additional dichotomy between the Real enabled by the rave and the Symbolic that unavoidably waits after the temporary autonomy has run its course. The simple texture of the floor itself suggests the dull and structured character of the Symbolic, as well as the efforts to homogenise society and put people into a “box.” Therefore, whereas on the one hand the shot signifies, particularly through the hoodie and lights of the venue, the rebirth/escape in utero and away from the restrictive world, it also stresses the inevitability of being reborn into the “regular” world as a subject-in-language again. As the TAZ ends, Johnno becomes lost to Spanner and the group, but he is found again by Alison and reintegrated into the family system, albeit without Robert.

The final moments of *Beats* convey the same realisation as the ending of *Morvern Callar*; despite the temporary disruption of phallogocentric authority through the jouissant experience of raving, inclusion into the structure is a compulsory part of each subject-in-language. At the same time, Welsh’s film shares a common conclusion with Warner’s semi-sequel too. Namely, it has been argued in this study that *These Demented Lands* portrays the darkness of the increasingly mechanised, divisive and exploitative capitalist world the youth of the 1990s faces, and that it is ultimately an optimistic fable showing that the inevitability of the repressive Symbolic does not

inherently entail a life defined by entrapment. Similarly, the resolution of *Beats*, delivered as a sequence of photographs of the significant characters and brief information about the future of each of them (01:34:50–01:36:34), suggests a sense of non-passive acceptance of the increasing technologisation and mechanisation. The resolution displays the possibility of a kind of deliverance from such constraints in a way that does not necessarily align with the death drive, BwO, or a temporary autonomous zone, but rather with the perpetual process of self-invention that fluctuates together with the paradigm shifts within structures and interpersonal relationships. The newly shaped life of Johnno's family is a corroborating aspect; after the rave incident, Alison and Robert split, and she made the decision to move to Peebles with Johnno and his little brother Connor, eventually starting her own business selling cosmetics online. The audience is informed that she also met a new partner, but did not marry him despite his adamant requests. Though the Symbolic remains a patriarchal system by nature, Alison is able to take control over essential aspects of her life such as finances and marriage, thereby defeating that dimension of her subaltern status which had been imposed on her through Robert. He, on the other hand, ended up pursuing his career further and living alone.

The ending also sheds light on the postindustrial world and the late capitalist shape of economy flourishing, where commodifiable products gain a wider range, exemplified by the online sale of cosmetics and the fact that Wendy ends up working permanently at a call centre she had initially started at with the intention of working there only long enough to acquire sufficient financial means for a trip with Cat. Similarly, Laura graduates in Economics and ultimately works as an insurance broker. It is also mentioned that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 was not revoked, which fortifies the repressive character of the new dynamics, but the characters nevertheless end up navigating the world to the best of their abilities. In addition, the significance of music and the fact it “does not mean *nothing*” is underscored as the film reveals that Cat died in 1997 and the techno song “The Bells” by Jeff Mills played as her coffin was carried out. This could be seen as an implication of literal death, like in Morvern's boyfriend's case, being the only permanent way out of the Symbolic. In sum, despite having had the chance to experience a space free from time, class and obligations, the ravers are reincorporated into a world dictated by various systems – economy, education, family, work, and so on. Interestingly, the audience is not informed about what Johnno and Spanner went through individually after the rave; rather, this closing part of the film shows that the two of them ran into each other in

Glasgow ten years after the rave and made a deal to meet up next time Johnno visited, despite being aware that would not happen. In that sense, the film emphasises again the profound bond between the two that was not merely reflected in the participation in a rebellious rave but rather in the mutual understanding of one another and contribution to the other's individual development, which evokes the Lacanian notion that identity construction occurs within a relational system. Though the bond was proven temporary, similar to the autonomous zone of raving, the effects certainly remain and contribute to the identity construction of both characters.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study has taken an approach in the analysis of the representation of rave culture in selected Scottish novels and films that is largely influenced by Lacan and studies on rave culture utilising the same perspective. While Alan Warner's debut novel *Morvern Callar*, Lynne Ramsay's adaption of it and Brian Welsh's film *Beats* were analysed in detail, the scope of the study restricted the space allocated for the analysis of Warner's second novel. This is chiefly due to the repetition of the same themes and protagonist in *These Demented Lands*, albeit in a different and more macabre tone than in the preceding novel. Nonetheless, some of the concepts that have been touched upon in terms of this work may be developed further in a study centred primarily on this particular novel and an in-depth exploration of its portrayal of the Symbolic and Morvern's individual growth in relation to the patriarchal realm, drawing upon the pertinence of rave culture within these contexts. Taking into account the bizarre names of the characters and places in *These Demented Lands*, there is space for an analysis focusing specifically on the language/discourse itself as well. Additionally, though it has been mentioned that Churchman argues the novel is more about language than history and nationhood, it is in fact possible to view these as interconnected rather than separate and produce a study based on the relationship between these aspects.

It would also be quite intriguing to produce an all-encompassing study on how rave culture pertains to the questions of national history and identity of Scotland or to the issues of gender and sexuality in any of the aforementioned works. *Beats* could be a particularly interesting work to explore in terms of these issues due to its recent emergence and the ubiquitous presence of sexuality and nationality as underlying themes within its plot. Though this particular study has established that the rave experience in *Beats* is non-phallic/asexual, the allusions related to sexuality are clear. Thus, for instance, a future study may be developed in regard to the questions of homosexuality and heterosexuality in this film due to the various hints of internal quandaries among the characters.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to assert that the significance of the Scottish rave subculture essentially lies in the subversion of standard norms and hierarchies within the social structure for the purpose of one's ecstatic redefinition of self and identity. In order to provide a strong foundation for such claims, the study has relied upon concepts developed by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, most importantly the Real and Symbolic, *jouissance* and the death drive, all of which have been used in multiple studies pertinent to rave culture. The study has also utilised the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque due to the festal quality of the liminal space of rave, where authority of family, government, economy, and other systems is subverted and the order itself is inverted as the youth assume control. It has been established that the changes within the political and economic strides in Scotland in the 1990s were monumental to the consciousness and self-definition trajectories of the youth, whereby raves proved a so-called "temporary autonomous zone" that provided the possibility of deliverance from constricting rules and norms and an inversion of authority and hierarchy.

The main arguments were laid out in the first chapter, within the analysis of the 1995 novel *Morvern Callar* by Alan Warner. Morvern has been shown to operate on a Body-without-Organs basis and manage to deconstruct the authority of the patriarchal/phallic language-based order by displaying carnivalesque demeanour in different aspects of her life, most notably appropriating her dead boyfriend's money and manuscript. Taking advantage of the soaring materialism and consumerism of the time, she also transcends from her working class status to a higher one, thereby accomplishing one of the key features of raves – blurring distinctions. However, her eventual lack of money and corporeal phenomenon of pregnancy dismiss the ecstatic out-of-body experience generated by raving, and the novel has been shown to convey the idea that her journey ends in reinscription into the social structure and compulsion to adhere to the gendered construct of motherhood and the socioeconomic realities awaiting her as a single parent. The study has further revealed that Warner's semi-sequel presents the same themes in a simultaneously grimmer and more hopeful tone. Though *These Demented Lands* (1997) could not be scrutinised in depth, the main ideas introduced illuminate the epiphanies and spiritual growth Morvern achieves after her experiences of raving, as well as the perception of the increasingly competitive and mechanised world. Through its use of religious undertones,

glaringly gothic elements, the theme of madness and perpetual ambiguity, the novel offers an excessively obscure depiction of the Symbolic, but also Morvern's acceptance of the compulsive integration into it in a non-passive manner.

Analysing the 2002 film adaptation by Lynne Ramsay, the study has cast a spot of light on Morvern as a subaltern subject and concentrated on music and silence as supplements to raving in her transcendence of the subjugated position she feels she is in. The second chapter of the Discussion has explored the significance of silence as Morvern's prevalent trait and mechanism of empowerment to step outside of the patriarchal realm. It has been established that Ramsay nevertheless draws attention to the inevitability of the corporeal and seems to portray the perpetual coexistence of corporeality and spirituality. This coexistence is clear in the experience of raving and ecstasy itself, where the body acts as an automaton and has heightened sensory impressions, but the realm to which the mind goes is an alternate one. The adaptation has been shown to imply the continuation of Morvern's voyage to identification as she strives to shed the markers of a subjugated identity her background inherently reduces her to. Echoes of the theme of nationhood and national history have been mentioned in regard to *Morvern Callar* and *These Demented Lands* as well, but due to the lack of space for developing such an analysis in more detail, the theme remains part of a recommendation for further research.

Brian Welsh's rave-centred film *Beats* from 2019 has been examined in terms of the tension between individual identity and sense of self on one side, and hierarchical structures like family and government on the other. It has been argued that their organisation of a rave despite the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 is the culmination of their attempt at a placement outside the markings and categorisations of the Symbolic, transfiguring them into what has been termed neo-tribe, technotribe and micro-community, a collective organism with a mutual source of repression and a shared jouissant experience. The chapter has explained the immense significance of music to the ravers and their relationship with the socio-political and economic dynamics of the time. The study has shown that music and rave do have a profound meaning, notwithstanding the fact that this meaning cannot be clearly pinpointed, similar to the case of Morvern's silence. *Beats* has been established to represent rave culture in the context of the TAZ and immediatism that provide an alternative realm where the ravers can search for a certain truth unarticulated through language. In this sense the expression of their innermost emotions

resembles Morvern's in that it is done in unconventional manners, subverting the language structure. The disruption of the TAZ in *Beats*, however, has been revealed to reflect the inevitability of the Symbolic and (re)integration into its complex structures. Moreover, the study has found that each work ultimately reinforces the idea of the constant flux of life within which relational structures and self-(re)invention are perpetuated, an indication ratified by the vagueness in relation to the continuation of Morvern's journey in both novels and the film, as well as by the glimpses of the characters from *Beats* ten years after the film's events.

Finally, it is possible to conclude that the practice of raving as a collective experience of unity, equality and freedom presents a certain type of milestone for the protagonists of each work in their comprehension of the world and their search for identity. They reach the conclusion that raving is only a transient fulfilment of the death drive, and that the Symbolic is unavoidable; however, instead of falling back into the pattern of melancholy induced by repression, they strive to find various forms of fulfilment even within the system, squandering the "vast internal emptiness of a generation" in the pursuit of their own truths. The conditions circumscribed in the portrayal of the ravers' trajectories, most notably the issues of materialism, capitalism, social norms, personal belonging and identity, ultimately confirm that raves are not a mere hedonistic practice, and prove rave culture to be an intriguing phenomenon worth revisiting even at a point in time almost three decades later, as these are circumstances still faced by subjects-in-language in the contemporary social structure.

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