

wedding as making a mockery of the people to whom she belonged and casting doubt on her legitimate existence in this world. Finally she experiences a psychic disintegration when her mind becomes split into two separate entities arguing loudly in her head about the proposed wedding. So on the morning of the wedding, Tambudzai feigns paralysis so as not to participate in a ceremony which she has come to believe has little or no cultural value. She eventually tells Babamukuru over all his threats that she will not be part of the wedding. This shows Tambudzai recouping cultural value for the ways of her people, which is a major tenet of both bioregionalism and post-colonialism. Aberly (2006) has noted that 'this deeply rooted respect for indigenous thinking and peoples is a tenet fundamental to bioregionalism'(20). While post-colonialism is concerned with the return to and respect for the indigenous cultures that were seriously contaminated during the colonial contact. Therefore in refusing to participate, Tambudzai has finally made a choice of the indigenous over the foreign and has finally started the homeward journey. Later in the text when Tambudzai witnesses the nervous breakdown of her cousin Nyasha which her mother blames on the 'Englishness' which they have adopted, and after her experience of English culture at the Sacred Heart College for girls, Tambudzai makes a journey to the homestead. Like the journey before, this one also has a metaphorical undertone as it shows her returning to her cultural roots after seeing the downside of the foreign English culture. At this point Tambudzai carefully and objectively scrutinizes her motives in leaving the homestead and she realizes that she had been too eager to leave it and embrace the Englishness of the mission. At the end she comes to a resolve not to be brainwashed. She goes back to her roots and it is here that she can find peace and have a stable identity. This holds with McGinnis'(2006) observation that 'Bioregionalists believe that we should *return* to the place "there is", the landscape itself, the place we inhabit and the communal region we depend on' (3). It is noteworthy that it is only when Tambudzai returns to this rural homestead that she can objectively analyse some of the decisions she had taken before and realize where she went wrong. Thus she resolves not to be brainwashed anymore but to uphold her cultural values. Both bioregionalism and post-colonialism are concerned with the healing of human and non-human cultures that have been harmed by human activities. Thus Thayer (2003) has stated that 'The ultimate measure of a convergent bioregional approach, if it is to influence the mainstream, will be its contribution toward regenerating local cultures, ecosystems, and resources into the indefinite future' (5). This is the equivalent of the 'dismantling of the European codes' (Ashcroft et al 2006 220) which is a major project of post-colonialism. This is the process of decolonization on which post-colonialism centers. This involves a process of undoing some of the more damaging effects of colonialism on the colonized. In bioregionalism this is what Berg and Dasman in Aberly's 'Interpreting Bioregionalism' call reinhabitation which means learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation.

It involves becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it. It means understanding the activities and social behavior that will enrich the life of that place [...]. (23) Bioregionalism and Post-colonialism are therefore both concerned with the similar processes of resistance towards foreign intrusions in eco-cultural spaces, the healing of those spaces that have been hurt and the promotion of behavior that is conditioned by the place where one finds oneself. All of these aspects are evident in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* which shows the pitfalls of neglecting the local and going after the global or foreign. It is in this that this paper considers her novel as mirroring the intersection of these two movements. Aberly (2006) has advised that:

The way to the future can be found by adapting genetically familiar ways of life practiced by ancestors and surviving indigenous peoples, not in mutating humans into endlessly replaceable logs in the machine. The focus here is on a "tribe of ecology" instead of the nation-state; a campfire circle instead of the nuclear furnace; localized rituals instead of consumerized Christmas, touch song and shared experience instead of the narcosis of television-induced monoculture (16)

Aberly's vision for the future is the same shared by bioregionalism and postcolonialism. This is the privileging of indigenous ways of life and knowledge over foreign, imported values that fail to take cognizance of the uniqueness of each place or culture.

Conclusion: Bioregionalists believe that a viable culture must find its roots somewhere, in some place (McGinnis, 2006:5). In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* we see how the rural homestead represents a metaphorical bioregion where Tambudzai has a stable identity; therefore it is *that place* where a viable culture can flourish. Both Bioregionalism and Postcolonialism respond to the ways in which human culture has been threatened by colonialism, modern technologies, environmental degradation as well as globalization. In *Nervous Conditions* this comes forcefully to light when we see how the colonized lose their identity when they engage in a foreign culture at the expense of the local. By playing with the ideas of place and displacement, Dangarembga highlights the importance of each individual belonging to a place and this place has a cultural and not a political boundary where its occupants forge an identity that centers on their rituals, traditions, local language and meals amongst others. She juxtaposes this with the mission which represents displacement where the local identity is lost and the individual loses the sense of place and belonging. Thus the importance of *living-in-place* is very crucial to the individual. As earlier mentioned, this place is not only physical but most importantly represents a 'terrain of consciousness', thus it is also a cultural place. As possessive beings, humans have the tendency of keeping jealousy what they consider as belonging to them, thus when people recognize as theirs, as their life-source, as the place which supports their physical and psycho-social well-being, they will be attached to such a place and will work for its improvement, thus place and its culture have a

very important role to play in the all-round make-up of individuals and so should not be disregarded, or treated with scorn. This is more urgent now in the global age where there are talks of a global culture and global villages which disregards locally evolved cultures and make cultural boundaries more than ever before fluid. Both bioregionalism and postcolonialism are agreed on the importance of upholding one's local culture and it is in this that in my paper I have attempted to demonstrate how they converge in this novel.

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Beginning from the End: Assessing *The Marriage Plot* by Jeffrey Eugenides

- Claudio Sansone

Abstract: This article aims to promote discussions of *The Marriage Plot* which has been generally overlooked or set aside by academia since its publication in 2011. It begins with a look at the closing paragraphs of the text, and develops a number of interpretive theses that underline hidden complexities which could be key to further study. A number of the arguments are estranging, and perhaps highlight a darker subtext in the closing pages than is immediately apparent, whether or not they are valid, the presentation of these arguments hinges on the possibility of a complicit meta-textual activity on both character's part. Whether the subtle hints this construction relies on are sufficient remains an open question. Eventually, certain problems with the definition of the very problematic encountered leads to a wider analysis of the text's possible functions as a (meta-)meta-text. Certain elements which would naturally blind-side critics are touched upon, not because any answer can be offered here, but because they should – following the discussion that makes up the body of this article – appear worthy of further study.

Keywords: Eugenides, meta-fiction, intentional fallacy, historicism, deconstruction

"It's a literary question."

"O.K."

"From the books you read for your thesis, and for your article—the Austen and the James and everything—was there any novel where the heroine gets married to the wrong guy and then realizes it, and then the other suitor shows up, some guy who's always been in love with her, and then they get together, but finally the second suitor realizes that the last thing the woman needs is to get married again, that she's got more important things to do with her life? And so finally the guy doesn't propose at all, even though he still loves her? Is there any book that ends like that?"

"No," Madeleine said. "I don't think there's one like that."

"But do you think that would be good? As an ending?"

He looked at Madeleine. She wasn't so special, maybe. She was his ideal, but an early conception of it, and he would get over it in time. Mitchell gave her a slightly goofy smile. He was feeling a lot better about himself, as if he might do some good in the world.

Madeleine sat down on a packing box. Her face looked more drawn than usual, and older. She narrowed her eyes, as if trying to bring him into focus. A moving van rolled down the street, shaking the house, the arthritic Great Dane next door bellowing hoarsely after it.

And Madeleine kept squinting, as though Mitchell was already far away, until finally, smiling gratefully, she answered, "Yes."¹

The ending to the Eugenides' latest novel *The Marriage Plot* continually suffers the critique that it is just another version of the postmodern