Collections in **Atonement**, **Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit**, **Bring up the bodies**, and **Cloud Atlas**: A Prelude

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Abstract

I will read the fascination with collectors and collecting in Ian McEwan's **Atonement** (2001), Jeanette Winterson's **Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit** (1985), Hilary Mantel's **Bring up the Bodies** (2012), and David Mitchell's **Cloud Atlas** (2004) regarding at least three theoretical questions. Can collected things and objects ever assist in imagining more satisfying social roles and identities? Can collecting material traces lead to an accurate or truthful depiction of the past-present-future life writing? how and to what extent does each item on a collection question and explode pedestrian images of a pre-conceived world? Those novels represent one of the most popular and critically acclaimed examples of the widespread interest in collecting, apparent in contemporary British fiction.

Keywords: Collecting. McEwan. Jeanette Winterson. Mantel. Mitchell.

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Coleções em **Atonement**, **Oranges are Not the Only Fruit**, **Bring up the Bodies** e **Cloud Atlas**: um prelúdio

Resumo

Lerei o fascínio por colecionadores e coleções em **Atonement** de Ian McEwan (2001), **Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit** de Jeanette Winterson (1985), **Bring up the Bodies** de Hilary Mantel (2012) e **Cloud Atlas** de David Mitchell (2004) em relação a pelo menos três questões teóricas. As coisas e objetos coletados podem ajudar na imaginação de identidades e papéis sociais mais satisfatórios? A coleta de vestígios materiais pode levar a uma descrição precisa ou verdadeira do passado-presente-futuro na escrita de uma vida? Como e em que medida cada item de uma coleção questiona e explode imagens triviais de um mundo pré-concebido? Esses romances representam um dos exemplos mais populares e aclamados pela crítica do interesse generalizado pela coleção, aparente na ficção britânica contemporânea.

Palavras-Chave: Coleção. McEwan. Jeanette Winterson. Mantel. Mitchell.

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> "I don't care anything about his house", said Isabel.
>
> "That's very crude of you. When you've lived as long as I you'll see that every human being has his shell and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us – and then it flows back again. I know a large part of me is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things! One's self – for other people – is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps – these things are all expressive." (JAMES, 1986, p. 37).
>
> Objects … no longer simply material bodies offering a certain resistance, they become mental precincts over which I hold sway, they become things of which I am the meaning, they become my property and my passion. (BAUDRILLARD, 1996, p. 85).

Collecting things in literature encloses any discourse within brackets of common perception and value; it is the court of final appeal whose existence is presupposed by every thing or object collected. The concept of collecting might seem therefore as unproblematic as an axiom of foundation.[1] Yet this analogy gives us the peace of delusion, since it effaces the difficult prehistory of the axiom and of every ground of consensus. The shifting narrative or novelistic ground disturbs consciousness at the depth where we are moved to believe not only something but someone: the human totality at once known as the collection and the collector. Baudrillard, in his **System of Objects** (1996),

1 In mathematics, the axiom of regularity (also known as the axiom of foundation) is an axiom of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory that states that every non-empty set A contains an element that is disjoint from A. In first-order logic, the axiom reads:

$$\forall x \, (x \neq \varnothing \rightarrow \exists y \in x \, (y \cap x = \varnothing)).$$

teaches us that "for while the object is a resistant material, it is also simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone" and he goes on to declare that "the objects that occupy our daily lives are in fact the objects of a passion, that of personal possession" (BAUDRILLARD, 1996, p. 7). For that reason, the French philosopher states: "Thus any given object can have two functions: it can be utilized, or it can be possessed" and he adds, "The object pure and simple, divested of its function, abstracted from any practical context, takes on a strictly subjective status. Now its destiny is to be collected. Whereupon it ceases to be a carpet, a table, a compass, or a knick-knack, and instead turns into an 'object' or a 'piece'" (BAUDRILLARD, 1996, p. 8). Not only simply material bodies, objects in a collection become mental precincts over which the collector holds sway, they become things of which "I", however unstable and fragmented, become the meaning, however imaginary and provisional, the things and objects collected become "my" identity bits and property, "my" personal story and passion ("I" may even suffer for or because of them). In short, "once the object stops being defined by its function, its meaning is entirely up to the subject. The result is that all objects in a collection become equivalent" (BAUDRILLARD, 1996, p. 8).

I will, in the form of a prelude, read the fascination with collectors and collecting in Ian McEwan's **Atonement** (2001), Jeanette Winterson's **Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit** (1985), Hilary Mantel's **Bring up the Bodies** (2012), and David Mitchell's **Cloud Atlas** (2004) regarding at least two theoretical questions. Can collected things and objects ever assist in the imagination of more satisfying social roles and identities? Can

collecting material traces lead to an accurate or truthful depiction of the past-present-future life writing? Those novels represent one of the most popular and critically acclaimed examples of the widespread fascination with collecting in contemporary British fiction. This renewed interest can be traced back to the 1963 publication of John Fowles's **The Collector** and figures subsequently in a wide range of novels. Those novels include Fowles's **The French Lieutenant's Woman** (1969), Julian Barnes's **Flaubert's Parrot** (1984) and **England, England** (1998), Peter Ackroyd's **Chatterton** (1987), Bruce Chatwin's ***Utz*** (1988), and another novel by Jeanette Winterson, **Sexing the Cherry** (1989). In those texts, characters are drawn to collecting in response to frustration with their ultimate human questions (even though they are paper beings, characters in prose fiction) and with social identities more generally. Not all of those novels deal with collections the same way, but they all suggest that collecting can in certain instances help individuals to imagine alternative identities.

Literature itself, at least in those novels, is in a state of recovery of energies spent in chaos, and the author/artist/collector must return to discomfort in order to recover his/her power of intervention, possible in all its intensity only in spaces averse to familiarity. We could call these places latency spaces, as opposed to dormancy spaces – the bed, the order, and the domesticated. There is wilderness in the disorder, an anteriority that makes it the territory *par excellence* of the artist/collector. The center of Walter Benjamin's (2008) perception of the symbolic power of childhood is in the collection. Collecting trinkets is a way to de-hierarchize the world, placing all sorts of objects side by side. The child's collection promotes a resemanticization of things

that assume imaginary functions, recreating the world as fantasy (as fiction, as a mask). By dedicating herself to the collection, the child is challenging the reality around her, giving it a different meaning. When one collects leftovers in drawers/boxes, these become the realm of remains, allowing for new relationships in a continuous creative impulse. Out of a mismatch between objects, of displacements, of the confusion of the multifarious, the creative force of chaos comes. To live in an orderly fashion is to fall into the realm of limitation. To inhabit chaos is to open up to a particular perception of the possibilities of representation. The child artist's task is to try, in her own way, to conquer another order, which is not merely imitative. The collection is the living world, which changes with the addition of new elements and new relationships, enhancing reformulations. The collection, the appropriation of the residual, by adult or child, sustains a bold decision to be on the side of need and the not yet fully-fledged desire (curiously enough, Jacques Lacan's [2006, p. 29-89] primary others): lack of selective criteria and desire for a previous meaning or meaning at all. Moving on to the field of literature, we can say that the contemporary British writer, inhabiting a time with multiple dimensions, is the personification of disorder. There is no better catchphrase, the multiplicity of dimensions in a collection, to switch to our first section on **Atonement**.

2 Briony as author and collector in Atonement

The epigraph to Ian McEwan's **Atonement** is taken from Jane Austen's **Northanger Abbey**, a work much preoccupied with the destructive nature of fantasy and the fantasy of lists and series. **Atonement** has a similar wariness of the unbridled

imagination. Briony, who will come finally to reflect on these matters as a successful novelist herself, is only 13 when we first encounter her, surrounded by a collection and immersed in a so-called cabinet of curiosities. Briony's disorderly imagination, bent on collections of all types, perceives a threat to order in what she takes to be the sexual freedom of a family employee named Robbie, her sister Cecilia's soon-to-be lover. The crime to which this leads her is what she will spend a lifetime striving to atone for. She even morphs from a childish writer of dramas, like **Arabella**, to the writer of the novel itself, as we finally get to know at the end, which shifts the novel's setting from a country house to the retreat from Dunkirk and turns Briony, the literary narcissist, into Briony, the self-oblivious nurse tending the atrociously wounded in wartime London. Who is Briony and what type of collector is she?[2]

We first see our heroine as a child possessed by desire and need:

> She was one of those children possessed by a desire to have the world just so. Whereas her big sister's room was a stew of unclosed books, unfolded clothes, unmade bed, unemptied ashtrays, Briony's was a shrine to her controlling demon: the model farm spread across a deep window ledge consisted of the usual animals, but all facing one way – towards their owner—as if about to break into song, and even the farmyard hens were neatly corralled. … Her straight-backed dolls in their many-roomed mansion appeared to be under strict instructions not to touch the walls; the various thumb-sized figures to be found standing about her dressing tables – cowboys, deep-sea divers, humanoid mice – suggested by their even ranks and spacing a citizen's army awaiting orders. (McEwan, 2001, p. 5).

2 Although many of the articles listed will not directly answer that question, at least they will provide a basis for the answer (D'ANGELO, 2009; D'HOKER, 2006; FRASER, 2013; IONESCU, 2006; MATHEWS, 2006; O'HARA, 2011; EAGLETON, 2001; SPIRIDION, 2010).

Briony seems to attend to many things at this first scene, but she dislikes the unfinished and the badly done. She seems oblivious to that which awkwardly tries to take a small flight and falls to the ground. Her childish, fussy attempt at drama expresses the writer-to-be, the rather embarrassing way of her trying to fly high and fall into the mysteries of the human condition. Briony knew that in order to understand herself and human condition, it was necessary to fall flat on the ground on which people walk and to collect bits and pieces of the world on the way.

We still see Briony as someone with "a taste for the miniature [that] was one aspect of an orderly spirit. Another was a passion for secrets: in a prized varnished cabinet, a secret drawer was opened by pushing against the grain of a cleverly turned dovetail joint, and here she kept a diary locked by a clasp, and a notebook written in a code of her own invention." (McEWAN, 2001, p. 5). Yet once more:

> In a toy safe opened by six secret numbers she stored letters and postcards. An old tin petty cash box was hidden under a removable floorboard beneath her bed. In the box were treasures that date back four years, to her ninth birthday when she began collecting: a mutant double acorn, fool's gold, a rain-making spell bought at a funfair, a squirrel's skull as light as a leaf." (McEwan, 2001, p. 5)

As a Renaissance scholar/collector with a precious cabinet of curiosities and oddities of *naturalia* and *artificialia*, Briony, from its very beginning, is replete with such Austenian and Jamesian mysteries regarding elusiveness of truth, amorality of art, destructiveness of certainty about objects and people (and why we collect them), and fragility of it all.

The thought around the scientific discoveries of the early English modern age (early modern usually refers to the 16th century), combined with the proliferation of empiricist and classificatory knowledge, is the hallmark of European and colonialist heritage in the 19th and early 20th century. In **Atonement** and with Briony, the collection is the living world, which changes with the addition of new elements and new relationships, enhancing reformulations. Overflowing with do-it-yourself elements, the collection sums up the appropriation of the residual, the need of selective criteria, and the need of a previous meaning moving on to the literature field. We can tentatively conclude that the contemporary writer figure inhabiting a time with multiple dimensions is the personification of disorder and hard to decipher mementoes:

> But hidden drawers, lockable diaries and cryptographic systems do not conceal from Briony the simple truth: she had no secrets. Her wish for a harmonious, organized world denied her reckless possibilities of wrongdoings. Mayhem and destruction were too chaotic for her tastes, and she did not have it in her to be cruel. (McEwan, 2001, p. 4-5).

Ironic at its utmost, this first-chapter statement from the narrator is nothing less than the hardships to compile the annals of disorder, which is the world we inhabit. In her eagerness to understand, Briony knew that in order to comprehend, accept, and atone for the inherently flawed human being, it is necessary to fall flat on the ground on which one walks and collect the remnants, the remains, and the leftovers.

Later in life, Briony brought to the fore a density of memories and experiences. What a great collector of time she has become. We could say with Derrida's **Memoirs of the Blind** (1993): the

ruin is Briony and that memory opened like an eye or like the hole in the skull cavity, which allowed us to see without showing anything, anything at all. Said otherwise, reading (young Briony and her negotiations with need and desire, old Briony and her equivocated experience, McEwan and his part being also that of a collector, we the readers and the novel) is hard and entails an unpredictable enterprise. In addition, reading collections is a therapeutic voyage, which implies the effort to join, without being ever completely successful, loose fragments of a dispersed and partially open textuality.

In **The Order of Things** (1994), Foucault set out to analyze the language path and the mobility of things, reviewing how modern culture manifested an order (even if hidden). He concentrated on modalities of (supposed) order (exchanges as found in collections and in the act of collecting) and concluded that they owed their laws, their regularity, and their chaining to their representative value. The objective of his method was to see which order modalities were effectively recognized, placed, and linked to space and time. We see in Briony a world of singular secret affinities in another collection: a mutant double acorn, fool's gold, a rain-making spell bought at a funfair, a squirrel's skull as light as a leaf, a menagerie of animal figurines, spooky dolls, let alone the most prized item of her collection: writing paper, her *stylus*, and her "controlling demon". (McEwan, 2001, p. 5).

3 Parody and pastiche of religion as collections in Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit

In the coming-of-age and coming-out story **Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit**, the Bible prominence as element of

pastiche and parody, let alone a collectible of sorts, has dazzled readers. Winterson's articulation of a middle-class, pedestrian lesbian subject is actually inseparable from her rebukes against the Bible.[3] The novel repeatedly turns over and returns to several fragmentary narrative types about the origins of identity as collection and story making as collecting, to the syntaxes of detail as well as to the poetics of waste. Winterson parodies biblical texts and the hallmarks of gay and lesbian literary tradition as precursors for the main character's prophetic, yet tacky, voice. **Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit**, curiously enough, begins with a list and not necessarily with a collection:

> Enemies were:
> ● The Devil (in his many forms)
> ● Next Door
> ●Sex (in its many forms)
> ●Slugs
>
> Friends were:
> ●God
> ●Our dog
> ●Auntie Madge
> ●The Novels of Charlotte Brontë
> ●Slug pellets (WINTERSON, 1985, p. 3)

This pros and cons list, of likes and dislikes, resembles lists found in **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time** (2003), by British mystery novelist Mark Haddon or in **Extremely Loud & Incredible Close** (2005), by the US novelist Jonathan Safran Foer. Both utilize captivating child/adolescent narrators with special needs: Asperger's and post-traumatic stress disorder. The technique in Winterson's novel seems sensitive to smaller, mismatched, disconnected, irreconcilable objects, which also

3 See Bijon (2008) for an enlightening reception of the novel.

refer to a more individual dimension of experience. It brings together elements from different registers, banal and unusual, removing them from their original context, subtracting their use value, freeing them from the logic of functionality to weave in their own way a world of singular secret affinities. Nonetheless, the poet/protagonist/collector will establish, paradoxically, a world of absences in a collection to come.[4]

As an intriguing writer who addresses a creative metafictional challenge to institutionalized religion in her controversial novel, Winterson offers a narrative of embedded texts that function as interpretative riffs on the challenged religious texts, like pastiches and parodies arranged in a plethora of collections, of which I will discuss only a few. After rejecting the authority of religion and history as reliable sources of truth, she proposes other possibilities of interpretation that seem more realistic and more personal with the following excerpt:

> To celebrate his ten thousandth convert, the pastor had been funded to take a long holiday and tour his collection of weapons, amulets, idols and primitive methods of contraception. The exhibition was called "Saved by Grace Alone". I had only seen the leaflet, but my mother had all the details. (WINTERSON, 1985, p.31)

Interestingly enough, this collector's deepest enchantment seems to be bewitching things as if he were going to touch them with a magic stick, so that they suddenly petrify. Saved by (God's?) grace is definitely not what one would expect from a pastor's amassing of objects as diverse as weapons, amulets, idols, and contraceptives. Winterson's method in her novel looks like literary editing, in other words, she seems to have nothing

4 See also Su (2004) and Swann (2001) for the novel genre and the use of collections.

to say about her characters, only to show them collecting chunks of countryside, pedestrian life and junk as leftovers from a society bent on easy, discarded consumption. She will not list memorabilia, wonders, and the like, valuable things in all, nor will she appropriate witty formulations from patristic fathers and theologians. However, rags, waste, everyday items and unusual things: she wants to inventory them all; rather do them justice in the only possible way. Winterson is at her best using them in the novel and showing their importance to the extent that objects, things, and collected bric-a-brac assist in imagining social roles and identities more satisfying. In addition, the proportions material traces take to an accurate or truthful depiction of the past-present-future life writing in Winterson's novel create momentum.

As Winterson points in another list/collection of the novel, the concept of remnant, of distorted pieces and disjoined fragments, of waste, refers more to notions of need and desire (in Lacanian sense, they constitute the subject), than to displacement and non-coincidence, leaving us, perplexed readers, questioning speeches' integrity, meaning or sense:

> My mother had taught me to read from the Book of Deuteronomy because it is full of animals (mostly unclean). Whenever we read "Thou shall not eat any beast that does not chew the cud or part the hoof" she drew all the creature mentioned. Horsies, bunnies and little ducks were vague fabulous things, but I knew all about pelicans, rock badgers, sloths and bats. This tendency towards the exotic has brought me many problems, just as it did for William Blake. My mother drew winged insects, and the birds of the air, but my favourite ones were the seabed ones, the molluscs. I had a fine collection from the beach at Blackpool. She had a blue pen for the waves, and brown ink for the scaly-backed crab. Lobsters were red biro, she never

> drew shrimps, though, because she liked to eat them in a muffin. I think it had troubled her for a long time. Finally, after much prayer, and some consultation with a great man of the Lord in Shrewsbury, she agreed with St Paul that what God has cleansed we must not call common. After that we went to Molly's seafoods every Saturday. Deuteronomy had its drawbacks; it's full of Abominations and Unmentionables. Whenever we read about a bastard, or someone with crushed testicles, my mother turned over the page and said, "Leave that to the Lord" but when she'd gone, I'd sneak a look. I was glad I didn't have testicles. They sounded like intestines only on the outside, and the men in the Bible were always having them cut off and not being able to go to church. Horrid. (WINTERSON, 1985, p.38-39).

After this rather long extract, I propose we think about the way these remains of interdiction and proscribed seafood traces appear and are used to contrast institutionalized religion with memory, and the material presence that the collection of prohibited sea animals displays of long-forgotten untruths with weaves of memory in pastiche and parody. The insistence on the remains' materiality, on nonsensical interdictions, creates an obstinate conservation of remnants and residues that leads to the emergence of other pieces of stories, of another "reality" built with these fragments of the past and impelled by these fragments of the past, but abandoning the past in favor of the present, of a presence. What present and which presence? A logic of the present and a presence that displaces every drive for restitution. The use of literature gives Winterson, in this novel, the possibility of moving to a comparison between the constructive and rebellious mentality of the curiosity cabinet and to the organizing logic of the exhibition (universally institutionalized religion) to take place. Winterson's literature thus replaces the traditional sense of the sublime, represented by the curiosity collection in the book

of Deuteronomy filtered in the novel, in which the reader is at awe by the spectacle of ridicule of the thing imitated in pastiche and of the thing intimated with exaggerated comic effect.

4 Corruption of power, deceipt, *res derelictae* or the excesses of *Habeas Corpus* in Bring up the bodies

Part of a trilogy (dubbed **Wolf Hall**), the novel **Bring up the Bodies** (2012), also known by the sobriquet "A Man for All Treasons", complicates the view of Thomas Cromwell as, at best, a Tudor-era fixer-upper (a person who is handy at making repairs) and, at worst, a murderer and torturer. Mantel's Cromwell is, amongst many contemporaneous and contemporary corrupt court politicians, the industrious creator of the modern administrative state and the modern public servant in high echelons. Cromwell is bent on absolute personal gain as well as on personal concealment behind the destructive political machine or beneath the (in)visibility of party politics and personal political mottoes and slogans.[5] The historical figure of Cromwell reformed English government by replacing personal rule with modern bureaucracy and by systematizing the royal finances, always serving as underdog, pen-pusher or apple polisher to the ruler. These accounts rebut the simple image of Cromwell as criminal, for he is as cunning and unethical as any politician. Mantel's Cromwell continues to represent two contemporaneous species of crime and corruption: crimes against the state, in the form of treason (back in the Tudor court and in the form of personal enrichment in our disjointed world), and crimes by the state, in the form of espionage, criminal organization, and torture.

5 Bordo (2012), Lacroix (2016) and Margaronis (2008) are very informative regarding the critical reception of the novel.

Because crimes depicted presuppose the existence of early modern English administrative state itself and contemporary "democracies" everywhere, Mantel's Cromwell may not be as distinct from Robert Bolt's devious Cromwell in the play **A Man for All Seasons** as the previously mentioned critical reception would suggest.

It is not inappropriate to propose the expansion of the collecting and taxonomic mentality, with its character of compulsion to repetition (in the Freudian sense of the term), appears as a corollary of the "psychic trauma" of the death of rational thinking. I would add ethics and personal responsibility, derived from "bad" evolutionism or decrease in both civilization and civility, which is now closer to murderous hypocrisy. The first excerpt I select is, again, a pastiche and parody of Renaissance cabinets of curiosities with their *mirabilia,* religious wonders, and rich relics:

> It is late now; he will finish up at his desk, then go to his cabinet to read. Before him is an inventory from the abbey at Worcester. His men are thorough; everything is here, from a fireball to warm the hands to a mortar for crushing garlic. And a chasuble of changeable satin, an alb of cloth of gold, the Lamb of God cut out in black silk; an ivory comb, a brass lamp, three leather bottles and a scythe; psalm books, song books, six fox-nets with bells, two wheelbarrows, sundry shovels and spades, some relics of St Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins, together with St Oswald's mitre and a stack of trestle tables. (MANTEL, 2012, p. 72).

The preciousness of the rags or the overvaluation of values, to use terms dear to Benjamin (2008), are made evident here. The poetics of collection and archive is not essentially different from anything in this pastiche and parody of power splendor and

spectacle, where words are disconnected from their function in order to become expressive allegories of all things immoral and schemed with evil in mind. Lists, inventories and, in this case, the collection refer to the time immemorial logic of consumption and accumulation. However, while Mantel is involved with this popular, but infamous theme, the novel's space is invaded by another logic: the discursive residues that evade order and reason, and I cite four different excerpts:

> The present king keeps about himself a **collection** of men of base degree, and no good will come of it. Cranmer creeps forward in his chair, as if to intervene, but Surrey gives him a glare that says, you're exactly who I mean, archbishop. (MANTEL, 2012, p. 191, emphasis mine).

> **Inventories** for this project: lime and sand, oak timbers and special cements, spades and shovels, baskets and ropes, tackets, pin nails, roof nails, lead pipes; tiles yellow and tiles blue, window locks, latches, bolts and hinges, iron door handles in the shape of roses; gilding, painting, 2 lb. of frankincense to perfume the new rooms; 6d per day per labourer, and the cost of candles for labour by night. (MANTEL, 2012, p. 202, emphasis mine).

> "Now she shall be bridled, by God." Henry's tone is ferocious; but the next moment he has modulated it, to the plaintive accents of the victim. He opens his walnut writing box. "Do you see this little book?" It is not really a book, or not yet, just a **collection** of loose leaves, tied together; there is no title page, but a sheet black with Henry's own laboured hand. "It is a book in the making. I have written it. It is a play. It is a tragedy. It is my own case.' He offers it. (MANTEL, 2012, p. 315, emphasis mine).

> When Wyatt writes, his lines fledge feathers, and unfolding this plumage they dive below their meaning and skim above it. They tell us that the rules of power

> and the rules of war are the same, the art is to deceive; and you will deceive, and be deceived in your turn, whether you are an ambassador or a suitor. Now, if a man's subject is deception, you are deceived if you think you grasp his meaning. You close your hand as it flies away. A statute is written to entrap meaning, a poem to escape it. A quill, sharpened, can stir and rustle like the pinions of angels. Angels are messengers. They are creatures with a mind and a will. We do not know for a fact that their plumage is like the plumage of falcons, crows, peacocks. They hardly visit men nowadays. Though in Rome he knew a man, a turnspit in the papal kitchens, who had come face to face with an angel in a passage dripping with chill, in a sunken store room of the Vatican where cardinals never tread; and people bought him drinks to make him talk about it. He said the angel's substance was heavy and smooth as marble, its expression distant and pitiless; its wings were carved from glass. (MANTEL, 2012, p. 346).

Whereas excerpts 1, 2, and 3 illustrate the evasion of order and reason in the mention to collections and inventories, excerpt 4 is like Pandora's box: the references to "deceive" and to variations on the same theme suggest a box that recalls something that generates perplexity and revolt rather than curiosity. Ideally, it is better not to be revealed or studied, under penalty of showing something terrible, which may escape or has long escaped our control. The archival list, inventory, and collection are the foundations of many things that exist and the organizational bases for the novels studied so far. It is also the archive as desired literary form or literature, in this case, meaning a repository or collection especially of dire and state-destroying information. In Mantel's novel, the *Habeas Corpus*, again a pastiche, parody, and pun throughout, is a writ requiring a person to be brought before a judge or court, especially for investigating restraints on a person's liberty, used as a protection

against illegal imprisonment. Nevertheless, the reader is forced to ask: where are the judges? Is Justice forever to be blocked from flowing eye liquids?

5 Collecting landscape as soul-scape in Cloud Atlas

To represent the experience of the large, abstract economic, social, and political phenomena of globalization, David Mitchell argues for individual ethical and ethnical agency and collective, diasporic identity even within the impervious and cyclical unfolding of history itself. The fragmented (like a modernist experiment) structure of **Cloud Atlas** illustrates and magnifies the driving need to see such a narrative through completion. The novel implies neither straightforward chronology nor consistent perspective:

> The novel consists of six chapters not always clearly divided: Chapter One ends mid-sentence, interrupted by Chapter Two, which in turn is interrupted by Chapter Three, and so on, up to Chapter Six, which appears in its entirety all at once. It is then followed by the second half of Chapter Five, which is in turn followed by the second half of Chapter Four, and so on, back to Chapter One. These chapters are also interlinked, as Chapters Two through Six incorporate as a crucial event the discovery of the preceding story; in the second half of the novel, each chapter save the last depicts its protagonist completing the story he or she discovers. (MEZEY, 2011, p. 12).[6]

Mutatis Mutandis, as André Malraux would call true museums, instead of imaginary ones, the art/literature that demands this vast resurrection, especially the one we see in **Cloud**

6 For serious critical reception of the novel report to: EVE, 2016; HORTLE, 2016; PICK, 2017; OORT, 2005; SHAW, 2015.

Atlas is not the most easily defined. It is our task, as informed readers, to distinguish the outside of an aquarium. Nonetheless, we are fishes in the aquarium contemplating, elaborating, and theorizing about our life and about our life in the aquarium. To some, a hodge-podge of fate, fatalism, and reincarnation, **Cloud Atlas** again incorporates the evils of bad choices, the cyclical return of those bad choices, until "souls cross ages like clouds cross the skies, 'tho' a cloud's shape not hue nor size don't stay the same, it's like a cloud an' so is a cloud" (MITCHELL, 2004, p. 308).

Responding to the call of literature immersed in collections or of collections saturating literature, the autochthonous, primeval, original inhabitants of one of the places in the novel collects the landscape:

> When men's ships bore vicissitudes to Old Rekohu, as Mr. D'Anoq narrated, but also marvels. During my stowaway's boyhood, Autua yearned to learn more of these pale peoples from places whose existence, in his grandfather's time, was the realm of myths. Autua claims his father had been amongst the natives Lt. Boughton's landing party encountered in Skirmish Bay & spent his infancy hearing the yarn told & retold: --of the "Great Albatross", paddling through the morning mists; it vividly plumaged, strangely jointed servants who canoed ashore, facing backwards; of the Albatross servants' gibberish (a bird language?); of theirs smoke breathing; of their heinous violation of that tapu forbidding strangers to touch canoes (doing so curses the vessel & renders it as unseaworthy as if an ax had been taken to it); of the pursuant altercation; of those "shouting staffs" whose magical wrath could kill a man across the beach; & of the bright skirt of ocean-blue, cloud white & blood-red that the servants hoisted aloft a pole before rowing back to the Great Albatross [...] (MITCHELL, 2004, p. 29).

In his 1435 painting treatise *De Pictura*, Alberti (1972) spoke of the painting as an open window on history. **Cloud Atlas** is an open window on history with a very important emphasis on its framing. Alberti names "frame" this window, with its function of clipping, of discourse. Not only does the frame open up onto history, but it also helps unfold so-called reality; it is what simply allows for history and its fictional, poetic writing to exist. The Albertian painting, the perspective painting that makes the world a scene, a perspective box, proceeds to establish what can be narrated and described as to what happens on the world scene, it is the condition of history. The open window on history, as the collection of stories quoted from the novel, is a window that delimits time. It constitutes something like an "episode", an elementary unit of history. History supposes the establishment of a framework and framed history presupposes a theater of the world, a frame necessary for history to exist, for something that happens on the world scene to be represented, for the world to be the place of a story. In **Cloud Atlas**, this historical frame is made evident "When [white] men's ships bore vicissitudes to Old Rekohu", as cited above.

How, then, to make a picture of what exists without an image, of what cannot be counted or described? Something that is abstract and that has not been put into words yet. The answer is rather uncomplicated: make an imaginary collection of stories as mentioned before for the demands of this art, and it demands vast resurrections, not easily defined. The resurrections in the novel are ours, and in order to distinguish the outside of an aquarium it is preferable not to be fish. I propose the action of taking the object out of the image, of extracting the object from any double relationship is what 21st century literature has been

dedicated to and is still devoted to: lists, inventories, and, in the case of the present article, collections have been used to this end. How, then, to make a picture of something that is without an image, of that which cannot be counted or described, of that which is vanishing, almost formless?

What does an art form mean when it implodes images? In other words, what do 21st century British novels want by imploding images and putting them on lists, inventories, and parodic collections? There are certainly the inexpressible and the cross-overs between the inexpressible and the things that are expressed in language. The contemporary British novel is not a place of consolation, forgetfulness, and betrayal for the faint-hearted scholar still stuck on relations of fidelity or infidelity, of victimization and oppression, of the inexpressible and the expressible. It is where the not representable (even the highly pixelated) bits and pieces of "reality" would come to show themselves. Every item on a list, inventory or collection seem to mitigate the horror of death, of disease, of misery, of existence itself, let alone of mediocrity and of ignorance that surround us. Jacques Lacan would call it the horror of the real. One of the relevant questions, then, would be, how and to what extent does each item on a collection question and explode pedestrian images of a pre-conceived world? Moreover, how to expose what makes history implode, how to do work without transposition or forgetting? How to make the impossible enter thought, the not representable enter representation, absence enter presence? The 21st century British novelists seem to address these questions by using more and more frequently lists, inventories, catalogues, and collections.

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