

# OTTESSA MOSHFEGH'S *MY YEAR OF REST AND RELAXATION* IN A WORLD WITH NO REST NOR RELAXATION: NARRATIVE PROSTHESIS AND HYPERREALITY

ESPERANZA GONZÁLEZ MORENO  
*Universidad de Granada*  
[esperanzaglez@correo.ugr.es](mailto:esperanzaglez@correo.ugr.es)

Received 16 September 2022

Accepted 11 December 2022

**KEYWORDS:** Disability studies; Simulacra; Postmodernity; Poststructuralism; Ottessa Moshfegh

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Estudios de discapacidad; Simulacro; Posmodernidad; Posestructuralismo; Ottessa Moshfegh

## **ABSTRACT**

The representation of a form of disability in literature can be used not only as a way of distinguishing the character and setting the narration in motion but as a metaphor of social and individual collapse. Following this idea, I will focus on Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, a 2018 novel that narrates the experiences of a privileged woman in a context of growing aestheticism and its consequent loss of political meaning in the American society of the 90s. In it, I argue, the depression that she suffers from can be observed to work as the engine of the narration and the result of the emptiness derived from the current society of spectacle.

I use David T. Mitchell's and Sharon L. Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis* to delve into the role that the depression the main character suffers from plays in the novel and how she follows the pattern traditionally found in disability narratives. I also use Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the current state of simulacra to explain her disabled experience.

## **RESUMEN**

La discapacidad en literatura puede usarse no solo como elemento distintivo de un personaje y motor de la narración, sino también como metáfora de colapso social e individual. Siguiendo esta idea, me centraré en la obra de Ottessa Moshfegh *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, una novela de 2018 que narra las vivencias de una mujer WASP estereotipada en un contexto de creciente esteticismo y su consecuente pérdida de significado político en la sociedad americana

de los años 90. Sostengo que en esta novela la depresión de la protagonista impulsa la narración y encarna el vacío producto de la actual sociedad del espectáculo.

Utilizo *Narrative Prosthesis* de David T. Mitchell y Sharon L. Snyder para profundizar en el papel que la depresión del personaje principal juega en la novela y cómo esta sigue el patrón tradicionalmente encontrado en las narrativas de discapacidad. También uso el análisis de Jean Baudrillard sobre el estado actual del simulacro y los efectos de la misma en el individuo para explicar su experiencia discapacitada.

## INTRODUCTION

Before pandemic times, the epidemic of depression was already present among us. The prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), proved to be higher in developed countries than in developing ones (Kessler and Üstün), is considered a phenomenon directly linked to the society of spectacle present in Western countries and linked to the neoliberal system. That is, in a system where products and life itself have turned into “merchandise to be consumed” (Nico et al. 34), images represent the dominant model of social relationships. The transformation of the real into unreality through mass and social media has encouraged the constant comparison of contemporary subjects with an unreachable model of life as the final strategy of promoting the immoderate consumerism present in late Capitalism. The incapacity of reaching the impossible illusion of “a life with full consumer power, constant state of happiness and pleasure, continuous well-being, high productivity, and professional fulfilment” (Nico et al. 35) explains the increasingly extended feelings of unhappiness, inferiority, and dissatisfaction with oneself (Nico et al. 37) directly linked to the development of depression.

When examining the representation and analysis of vulnerability during the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the trauma, grieving, and structural oppression of those considered as struggling through precarious lives offer a valuable field of study in which the consequences of the advance of capital and its strategies can be observed. However, through the digital gaze—described by Luciano Floridi among the characteristics of the latest revolution that Karl Schwab pointed out we are living in— “the self uses the digital representation of itself by others in order to construct a virtual identity through which it seeks to grasp its own personal identity” (Floridi 71). Taking this into account, the codified nature of globalized capitalism

also includes the privileged among those in which the emptiness of the reproduction of images leaves the burden of a meaningless existence. Through Judith Butler's understanding of vulnerability, not as passivity but as "an invariable feature of social relations" that exposes the human "condition of dependency and interdependency that challenge the dominant ontological understanding of the embodied subject" (21), it can be observed that the globalized and codified nature of postmodern times absorbs even the most privileged ones into the darkness of its disillusionment without a chance to recognize their vulnerability in isolation.

Because there are also those who do not have an image to aspire to, those who already are the image of perfection. Otessa Moshfegh provides us with this different perspective in *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*. In a pinpoint critique of the apparent subversiveness pervading the advances of neoliberalism in pre-9/11 America (Dirschauer), the narrator of Moshfegh's novel has been interpreted as representing positions as different as the wider signifier of a postmodern rebellious character who will not conform to the rules of "an unhealthy late capitalist society" nor "what novels do" (Greenberg) and, applying Hannah Arendt's ideas, another victim of the extreme alienation from political life (Keeble). She has also been presented as an example of an unpleasant female character that will not show the kindness taken for granted in women (Bernt and Ivana).

Although previous analyses of the novel have explored the possibilities of reflection on the reader's inner perceptions that *My Year* offers (Kukkonen), none of the readings carried out so far provide an analysis based on the significance psychology and mental illness play in the novel, nor do they question the post-postmodern honesty and achievement of reality that the main character seems to conquer. In contrast to them, my analysis sets the main character's depression as a key aspect of the narration and questions whether her return to life is such or just another mirage in the maze of staged authenticity where the modern subject believes it has found a core of reality (MacCannell 18), yet only goes deeper into the spiral of pseudo-events.

Based on theories recently developed within the field of disability studies, I argue that *My Year* can be read as a case of narrative prosthesis. Following this concept, the depression of the character appears as the "stock feature of characterization" that sets the narration in motion and provides the narration with the crux it requires to call for a story (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 47). The scheme that Mitchell and Snyder provide in *Narrative*

*Prosthesis* will serve as the structure of the analysis of Moshfegh's novel, on which basis, Baudrillard's ideas will be used to explain the disabled existence of the postmodern subject. Once this article has described how the difference of the narrator is depicted, Baudrillard's ideas on the current state of the image and its effects on current life experience will explain how Moshfegh's narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the origin of her narrator's deviation and its formative consequences (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 53). The role played by depression as narrative prosthesis may be observed to represent the emptiness derived from the stage of simulacra as formed by signifiers without signified. When reality turns into the dream of hyperreality, the insomniac subject is propelled towards disjunction, i.e., disability, which can only be made to disappear through the prosthesis of pill-induced sleep.

The communication between the field of disability studies and Jean Baudrillard's ideas illustrated in *My Year's* narrative proves to be a fruitful analysis of the non-essentialist understanding of depression and disability and their function as the metaphor of the general alienation and emptiness produced by simulacra. In this line, the prostheses in the form of the pills, the narrative engine, and the reincorporation into the dream of simulacra through nostalgia challenge the understanding of the narrator's sleep as inactivity and expose the hyperreal nature of any attempt at escaping the paralyzing effects of neoliberalism.

## **CRITICAL BACKGROUND: DISABILITY STUDIES AND HYPERREALITY**

Disability, understood as the "cognitive and physical conditions that deviate from normative ideas of mental ability and physiological function" (Mitchell and Snyder, *The Body* 2) and in contrast with the invisibility suffered by other minorities, has been frequently used in literature (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 2). As this definition shows, the critics in this field of study view disability as "part of a historically constructed discourse, an ideology of thinking about the body under certain historical circumstances" that, far from the essentialist reclusion of the disabled into otherness, "involves everyone with a body that lives in the world of the senses" and "regulates the 'normal' body" (Davis 2) too.

In literature, Mitchell and Snyder claim that many writers have made and continue to make use of disability as a “complicating feature of their representational universes” (*Narrative Prosthesis* 2) as well as the signifier through which other socially disempowered communities make themselves visible, the signified beneath the “‘real’ abnormality from which all other non-normative groups must be distanced” (Mitchell and Snyder, *The Body and Physical Difference*<sup>1</sup> 6). Having observed this, they define “narrative prosthesis” as “the prevalence of disability representation and the myriad images ascribed to it” in narrative works (*Narrative Prosthesis* 4). This “perpetual discursive dependency upon disability” can be frequently found as “a stock feature of characterization” and “opportunistic metaphorical device” that both differentiates the character from the uniformity of the norm and serves as a “signifier of social and individual collapse” (*Narrative Prosthesis* 47).

From this perspective, the use of disability in narrative attempts to prostheticize “a deviance marked as improper to a social context” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 53). The impairment serves to mark out the character and justifies “[t]he very need for a story [...] called into being when something has gone amiss with the known world” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 53). However, by doing so, their exceptionality ostracizes them or “inaugurates the need for a story but is quickly forgotten” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 56). Narrative prosthesis impels the story, and narrative pays it back either by leaving disability behind or punishing it for its lack of conformity (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 56).

Mitchell and Snyder acknowledge that contemporary American literature breaks down with this stigmatizing manipulation of disability and “references the disabled body through an exposé of the social discourse that produces it as aberrant,” by making a portrayal of disability as “socially lived, rather than a purely medical phenomenon” (*Narrative Prosthesis* 166). Still, in some cases, even these works maintain the traditional narrative scheme of disability Mitchell and Snyder described as:

first, a deviance or marked difference is exposed to a reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative consequences;

---

<sup>1</sup> From now on, *The Body*.

third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story rehabilitates or fixes the deviance in some manner (*Narrative Prosthesis* 53)

These stages and the ideas here referred will be used in my analysis of *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* to demonstrate that, while still making use of narrative prosthesis, the novel challenges traditional notions of “disabled,” “mentally ill” and “normalcy.” In conjunction with Baudrillard’s ideas, the novel will be dissected to unveil the meaning behind the label of “depression” that the main character seems to be holding on to.

In order to study a novel that delves into the postmodern subject, Jean Baudrillard’s ideas present a useful theoretical framework. In 1981, the French philosopher discussed simulacra as the representative postmodern paradigm. In contrast with previous times, when metaphysics was still present in the difference between the concept and the real, he sustains that, since the last decades of the 20th century, we live in the era of simulation, where the real has been substituted by the signs of the real in an “operation of deterring every real process via its operational double” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 2). Since the publication of *Simulacra and Simulation*<sup>2</sup> in 1981, the development of the Internet and its extensive use in every human sphere have only continued to accelerate the state of simulation and the already-empty-of-meaning image.

This increasing disappearance of representation and destitution of the real by the hyperreal in the process of simulation explains the current obsession with the resuscitation of the real. Baudrillard claims that society, incapable of mourning the death of reality, clings to the perfection of eternal simulacra as the only “reality” left. According to him, everything, from history —the last great myth (*Simulacra* 50)— to politics, is dead, with fewer relics left. According to his ideas, we live in the copy of a universe purged of death, a universe of perfection in which everything can be eternally simulated because nothing is any longer subject to violence and death, only to the law of supply and demand (*Simulacra* 27). No escape can then be found out of the hyperreal, as every attempt of counteracting simulation with reason or morality only serves to reinforce the system and credibility of simulation (*Simulacra* 15). In this line, power, also dead,

---

<sup>2</sup> From now on, *Simulacra*.

resuscitates in scandal, and every reaction against it results in the underscoring of the “reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 23) so that we end up with nothing but the “radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of [capital’s] power” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 23). Baudrillard argues that the social has disappeared too, and it is now produced through the multiplication of exchanges in the same hyperdensity of information that simultaneously destroys and makes history eternal as a chain of indifferent events (*The Illusion of the End*<sup>3</sup> 3). It is in this context that he contends that the original essence of the real has disappeared in the fulfilment of the perfection of its simulation model (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 6).

In *The Illusion of the End*, Baudrillard observed that the final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which the action of the novel develops, was being lived as a failed mourning work of revision of the past: events were being resuscitated and rewritten in a process that destroyed them in their conception as irreversible, exceeding meaning and interpretation (*Illusion* 13). This need came from the same impossibility of accepting the death of reality explained above. Events became disconnected and absolute, and, with them, time turned into a void that left the individual alone, with no past nor memories, only “the catastrophic memory failure” (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 20). The world where “there is more and more information, and less and less meaning” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 79) drives us to the constant remaking and whitewashing of the scandal of the past (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 11-12) as the only thing to hold on to when the present no longer bears truth, but only credibility (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 54).

Even though he sustained that things were already dead and that the apparent unfolding of events observed was nothing but the artificial product of the denials of death (*Illusion* 116), with only radical illusion ahead of us (*Illusion* 123), Baudrillard’s opinion changed with the terrorist attack to the World Trade Center: “the ‘mother’ of all events” (*The Spirit of Terrorism*<sup>4</sup> 4). According to him, terrorists made use of the strategies of the system to directly attack globalization as such, exploiting the weapons of power — “money and stock market, speculation, computer technology and aeronautics, spectacle and the media networks” (*Spirit* 19)— to direct an attack to its heart. The Twin Towers went from being the former symbol of omnipotence to, by their

---

<sup>3</sup> From now on, *Illusion*.

<sup>4</sup> From now on, *Spirit*.

absence, representing “the symbol of the possible disappearance of that simulation” (*Spirit* 47), bringing back images and events with their gift of death. As Keeble explains, in *My Year*, the 9/11 attacks appear decentred, which sets the novel apart from “9/11 novels” (*Spirit* 3). Instead of the unexpected disruption of a time of peace, innocence, and abundance, Moshfegh can be observed to use it as the logical corollary of the depressing neoliberal system portrayed throughout the narration. Jean Baudrillard’s ideas on the World Trade Center attacks similarly situate them as the implosion and disruption of the perfection that the Twin Towers embodied and, therefore, will be paralleled in the analysis of *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*.

### **FROM DEPRESSION TO REHABILITATION: ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL *MY YEAR OF REST AND RELAXATION***

*My Year of Rest and Relaxation* recounts the life of a nameless 26-year-old woman between the years 2000 and 2001. Despite her apparently successful life, the recent death of her parents, the traumas associated with them, and her present disillusion and boredom with life, make her feel strong disenchantment and frustration with everything and everyone that surrounds her. That is why she only keeps contact with her psychiatrist, Dr Tuttle; her only friend, Reva; the doormen at her apartment block, and the Egyptian men working at the bodega that she frequents.

Dr Tuttle is an unusual psychiatrist that offers the narrator unlimited medication for the false insomnia that she claims to have. The protagonist feigns insomnia in order to get the anti-anxiety and anti-psychotic medication that she takes to sleep during most of the day. The protagonist of *My Year* does so as the only available alternative to death until, after an episode of true insomnia caused by an excessively strong pill, she decides to hibernate for four months, hoping to wake up to a renewed, meaningful life. Once she does so and “resuscitates” as a person able to enjoy life, the attack on the World Trade Center happens and the novel ends. In the disaster, her friend Reva commits suicide, which the main character interprets as an “awakening.”

The protagonist and narrator of *My Year* describes herself as someone who “looked like a model, had money [she] hadn’t earned, wore real designer clothing, had majored in art history, so [she] was ‘cultured” (Moshfegh 13). She represents the embodiment of the female beauty canon, the intellectual elite, and the privileged class in

the mind of a depressed character, which apparently contradicts the idea of the body as “surface manifestation of internal symptomatology” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 59) commonly found in the representation of disability in literature.

Instead of the “disruption of acculturated bodily norms” pointing to “a corresponding misalignment of subjectivity” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 57), the narrator has a beautiful bodily signifier that mismatches the depressingly dark void her mind as signified represents: “Since adolescence, I’d vacillate between wanting to look like the spoiled WASP that I was and the bum that I felt I was and should have been if I’d had any courage” (Moshfegh 35). Despite the privileged situation and perfect appearance of its narrator, the readers get inside the mind of a person who, according to the latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5), fits into the description of a patient with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD).

The narrator exhibits most of the symptoms of MDD throughout the novel: she has a “depressed mood most of the day” (APA 125): “I thought that if I did normal things [...] I could starve off the part of me that hated everything” (Moshfegh 35), and a “[m]arkedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day” (APA 125). Nevertheless, the most pervasive symptom throughout the novel is “hypersomnia nearly every day” (APA 125), which functions as the engine of the narration. Although her desire to sleep is mostly motivated by her “[r]ecurrent thoughts of death” (APA 125): “It wouldn’t be that bad to die, I thought” (Moshfegh 170); “If, when I woke up in June, life still wasn’t worth the trouble, I would end it” (Moshfegh 260), and produced by the more than a dozen pills she takes a day; she considers herself “a somniac,” “a somnophile” (Moshfegh 46). With regards to her “[f]eelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt” (APA 125), her rejection of herself pervades the whole novel: “I would risk death if it meant I could sleep all day and become a whole new person” (Moshfegh 26).

In her case, the universally desirable corporeal norm (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 29) does not function as the signifier of an able individual. In contrast with the affirmation that “[o]ne cannot narrate the story of a healthy body [...] without the contrastive device of disability to bear out the symbolic potency of the message” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 63-64) and that “[t]he materiality of metaphor via disabled bodies gives all bodies a tangible

essence in that the ‘healthy’ corporeal surface fails to achieve its symbolic effect without its disabled counterpart” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 64). The model-like body of the narrator, along with the despair of her mind, function as the best corporeal representation of the individual and social collapse the novel narrates; her canonical appearance still functions as a corporeal metaphor and “anchor in materiality” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 63). This novel, therefore, provides an “alternative perspective on what it means to live with a disability in a culture obsessed with forging equations between physical ability, beauty, and productivity” (Mitchell and Snyder, *The Body* 7).

Her normative body becomes as much of a cage of depersonalization as the disabled one: “Being pretty only kept me trapped in a world that valued looks above all else” (Moshfegh 35). Even though diagnostic labels contribute to the stigmatization of the disabled individual, as Wolframe explains, the lack of them turns invisible and illegible the experiences they conceptualize (34). In the case of the narrator, the signifier of her beauty and the lack of an official diagnostic record continuously hide her from the ableist gaze of psychiatrization. Even her only friend, Reva, discards the narrator’s possible mental problem and focuses on her physical aspect, like when she compares her friend to a character whose central feature is suffering from borderline personality disorder (BPD) before, once again, referring to the perfection of her body: “But you look more like Angelina Jolie in that. She’s blond in that” (Moshfegh 11).

Similarly, although the narrator took hour-long naps in the supply closet at work and was always “sloppy and lazy [...] grayer, emptier, less there” (Moshfegh 39), nothing but her looks were perceived in her. This not only offers us a vision of the protagonist in line with other disabled characters but also highlights the paradigmatic hyperreal nature of signifier without signified that she and the world surrounding her came to represent:

Natasha had casted me as the jaded underling, and for the most part, the little effort I put into the job was enough. I was fashion candy. Hip decor. I was the bitch who sat behind a desk and ignored you when you walked into the gallery, a pouty knockout wearing indecipherably cool avant-garde outfits. (Moshfegh 37)

Far from the narratives that frequently “sentimentalize [the impairment] and link it to the bourgeois sensibility of individualism

and the drama of an individual story” (Davis 3-4), the situation of the narrator acquires social relevance and there is no victimization nor sentimentalism in her story. Despite her anhedonia and lethargic state, she is in charge of her life and has the medical treatment she wants to receive, as her relationship with Dr Tuttle shows.

The narrator starts seeing her therapist in January 2000 out of her “wish to escape the prison of [her] mind and body” (Moshfegh 18). In order to heal the depression that her metaphorical insomnia—or the awakened vision of reality as disenchantment with hyperreality—has caused her and reincorporate herself into the normalcy found in the dream of simulation she is deprived of, she pretends to suffer from clinical insomnia. From the very first session, she lies to the therapist to get “downers to drown out [her] thoughts” (Moshfegh 17). These downers would induce her to chemical sleep and function as the prostheses that help her fit back into the dream of hyperreality.

In their sessions, the psychiatrist embraces the current biomedical discourse that understands mental illness as a brain disorder linked to “genetic vulnerabilities, early childhood illness and adversity, or other traumas” (Jones and Brown) (“[o]rphans usually suffer from low immunity, psychiatrically speaking” [Moshfegh 92]) and poses medication as the only solution: “do you mean you’re reading philosophy books? Or is this something you thought up on your own? Because if it’s suicide, I can give you something for that” (Moshfegh 111). However, this attitude does not seem to annoy the protagonist. Being aware of the common perception of trauma victims, she adopts the discourse normatively associated with that model and expresses what is expected from her in order to get her pills:

“I want downers, that much I know,” I said frankly. “And I want something that’ll put a damper on my need for company. I’m at the end of my rope,” I said. “I’m an orphan, on top of it all. I probably have PTSD. My mother killed herself.” (Moshfegh 21)

By adjusting the report of her symptoms and the possible origin of her disorder to the expectation of medical practice, the narrator “exposes a pleasure at the heart of professional activity that results in the will to produce a pathological subject of diagnosis” (Mitchell and Snyder, *The Body* 19). She gives Dr Tuttle what she needs as a psychiatrist in order to get what she wants as a patient. It can be observed that she does not try to overcome liability but employs

“apparent liabilities as weaponry in the rhetorical dispute over [her] intentions and ambitions” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 104). Even though she could have been diagnosed with depression had she received any attention, she does not stand as a victim of medical discourse and excessive medicalization. Instead, the narrator instrumentalizes and plays along with medical diagnostics in order to get the treatment she has already prescribed herself to get back to life in sleep.

From the very first page, there are already hints at the second point of the structure proposed by Mitchell and Snyder. The “explanation of the deviation’s origins and formative consequences” (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 53) is present in the link established between her vital exhaustion and the unstoppable intrusion of consumption in her unconscious (“I’d wake up to find voice messages on my cell phone from salons or spas confirming appointments I’d booked in my sleep. I always called back to cancel, which I hated doing because I hated talking to people” [Moshfegh 1]). Once established that she is a disabled character, Moshfegh’s narrative exposes that the disabling element in her life is her awakened vision of reality, as will be analyzed in the following lines.

When considering lived experience through his ideas on simulation as the current phase of the image and the death of reality it hides, Baudrillard concludes that “[t]he reality of simulation is unbearable” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 41). In the novel, simulation is portrayed as the disabling origin of the narrator’s depression in her incapacity to adapt to simulated normalcy. Far from reducing disability to an individual experience, the systemic dimension of simulacra pervades her narration. Her living experiences can be read as a metaphor for the state of the social system, and her use of sleep as prosthesis points to the socially induced need to fit into normalcy as part of hyperreality.

The readers are aware of such a disconnection from reality in the detachment from the common aspects of life that she expresses throughout the narration. The need to disconnect from the pretense of reality that simulation represents is settled on at the beginning of the novel: “I took a shower once a week at most. I stopped tweezing, stopped bleaching, stopped waxing, stopped brushing my hair. No moisturizing or exfoliating. No shaving. I left the apartment infrequently” (Moshfegh 2). Her decision to stop taking care of her body can be interpreted as the only way of stopping the production of value without meaning that her corporeal normalcy had come to embody.

Like the body of a cripple in the literature on disability analyzed in *Narrative Prosthesis*, her bodily perfection was emptied of meaning and conceived “as anything but a message, as a stockpile of information and of messages, as fodder for data processing” (Baudrillard *Simulacra*, 100).

To avoid the discomfort that the awareness of the lack of reality in simulation caused in her, she also stopped watching TV, because it “aroused too much in [her], and [she]’d get compulsive about the remote, clicking around, scoffing at everything and agitating [her]self” (Moshfegh 3). The narrator’s rejection of the consumption of television can be understood as her refusal to allow simulation into her life, the “dissolution of TV in life, dissolution of life in TV” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 32) Baudrillard observed in his work. In the conception of reality as simulacra, in media, “[t]he real object is wiped out by news—not merely alienated, but abolished”, only the image without meaning remaining, only “traces on a monitoring screen” (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 56).

The same process is observed in the newspaper headlines that the narrator reads. As she explains, they are the only words she reads so as to steer “clear of anything that might pique [her] intellect or make [her] envious or anxious” (Moshfegh 6). In her descriptions of her visits to a nearby bodega, several of the headlines (Moshfegh 104, 179, 191, 243) can be read in lists of disconnected events that help to temporarily situate the narration while pointing to the “storm of events of no importance, without either real actors or authorized interpreters” (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 14-15) that history had become, according to Baudrillard. The events are not presented in action anymore but “in speculation and chain reactions spinning off towards the extremes of a facticity with which interpretation can no longer keep pace” (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 15):

The new president was going to be hard on terrorists. A Harlem teenager had thrown her newborn baby down a sewage drain. A mine caved in somewhere in South America. A local councilman was caught having gay sex with an illegal immigrant. Someone who used to be fat was now extremely thin. Mariah Carey gave Christmas gifts to orphans in the Dominican Republic. (Moshfegh, 104)

In a system solely concerned with looks, the narrator chooses to close her eyes to the signs around her as an escape from the frustration caused by her incapacity to adapt to the system they

compound. Nevertheless, there still remain representatives of the system of simulacra in the narrator's life, and not all of them are as rejected as the ones explained here, as can be observed in her relationship with her friend Reva.

The narrator's relationship with her best and only friend is a complicated one. Reva's attitude towards simulacra is the opposite of the narrator's, who describes her as "a slave to vanity and status" (Moshfegh 9). Reva does not give up on her belief in the system despite suffering from bulimia and alcoholism and only finding pleasure in chewing gum and the gym. Even though her inability to fit in the unattainable simulation of normalcy makes her unhappy, instead of rejecting the impossible standard that could never bring happiness, she cultivates hatred towards herself and those whom she considers to be in a better position, whom she compares herself with and tries to look down on: "Melanie Griffith looks bulimic in this movie [...]. I don't know. I'm kind of out of it. I'm *fasting*"<sup>5</sup> (Moshfegh 82).

Reva's attitude even against the narrator ("I think Reva took some satisfaction in watching me crumble into the ineffectual slob she hoped I was becoming" [Moshfegh 14]) can be observed to distortedly match Bacon's assertion that the deformed individual develops resentment against the world "as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature" (Bacon 158 qtd. in Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 106). Living in a hyperreal state not based on meaning nor reason but representation, every individual becomes a disabled one. Unable to fit in nor accept themselves and, in cases like the narrator's friend, developing scorn against the hostile world they are in, it is life itself that becomes an impairment.

However, and despite their incompatibility, Reva acts as the less addictive substitute for television and is accepted as representative of simulacra in the narrator's life. Her internalization of the hyperreal combined with the narrator's awareness of the system of simulation is frequently exposed in the comparisons that underscore the similitudes between Reva and artificial products of communication: "When Reva gave advice, it sounded as though she were reading a bad made-for-TV movie script" (Moshfegh 57), "It always impressed me how predictable Reva was—she was like a character in a movie. Every emotional gesture was always right on cue" (Moshfegh 123), "Everything she said sounded like she'd read it in a Hallmark card" (Moshfegh 165), "She was just as good as a VCR, I

---

<sup>5</sup> Emphasis from the original.

thought. The cadence of her speech was as familiar and predictable as the audio from any movie I'd watched a hundred times" (Moshfegh 204).

Not only Reva's way of expressing herself but also the content of her speech is plagued by simulation. Her visits are always accompanied by her commentaries on beauty, gossip, trends, and pieces of advice on "life wisdom" (Moshfegh 13) that she acquires through workshops and self-help books with titles such as *Get the Most Out of Your Day, Ladies* (Moshfegh 15) and *The Art of Happiness* (Moshfegh 180). Like her taste for gum and the gym, they are recycled products of the social, the resurrection of a lost reality in the hyperreal, just another resurrection of "lost faculties, or lost bodies, or lost sociality, or the lost taste for food" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 14) as the ones Baudrillard pointed to in his work.

In the life of the narrator, Reva represents the accepted intrusion of simulation. Probably tolerated as the source of information on the counterpart state to the protagonist's suffering from insomnia, Reva continuously demonstrates how asleep she is and the deep despair such a dream state causes in her. The narrator finds in Reva the comfort of a shared misfortune and the company of another disabled individual incapable of fitting in.

## **NOSTALGIA FOR THE REAL**

Even though throughout the novel the narrator's clear vision of the hyperreal is exposed as the explanation of her disability's origins and formative consequences (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 53), her deviation from simulated normalcy is not pigeonholed into a representation of mental illness as "an exemplary state of extreme consciousness" (Dash 41 qtd. in Holladay 209). Despite being aware of the reality lost in simulation, the nostalgia for the real is also frequently present in the protagonist's discourse as the product of the panic induced by her nihilistic existence. For the asleep narrator, as a postmodern representative, nostalgia serves as the escape out of the void in which her awakened vision of reality put her. As Baudrillard explained, this panic-produced melancholic state leads us toward melancholia as the fundamental tonality of current systems of hyperreality (*Simulacra* 56). Understanding the difference between melancholy as nostalgia and melancholia as depression, the main character's attempts at clinging onto the vestiges of reality can be observed to not only not save her from disillusionment, but also

reinforce it while trying to avoid it. She is trapped in the endless pursuit of reality that can only feed hyperreality, and, combined with her insomnia, depression, as can be observed in the different instances of the novel in which nostalgia is present.

According to Fredrick Jameson, the latest form of the image in the postmodernist order of simulacra supposes the purest form of capitalism: the elimination of every precapitalist organization, including the penetration and colonization of the Unconscious (35). In Moshfegh's novel, even though the narrator seems to be aware of the hyperreal nature of reality, she and her sleep-walking self still exhibit the irreversible damage of simulacra in its inexorable advance and the recourse to nostalgia as a tempting lifeboat. The strong pills she takes to sleep make her incorporate into the simulated normalcy that her consciousness rejects. In her sleep, she carries out without second thoughts all those things she consciously avoids, "while [she] was sleeping, some superficial part of [her] was taking aim at a life of beauty and sex appeal," "[she] couldn't trust [her]self" (Moshfegh 86): "I'd wake up to find voice messages on my cell phone from salons or spas confirming appointments I'd booked in my sleep" (Moshfegh 1), "I made appointments to get waxed. I booked time at a spa that offered infrared treatments and colonics and facials" (Moshfegh 86).

On another occasion, the narrator woke up from a somnambulist episode wearing party clothes, her body recently waxed, a French manicure in her fingernails, a vinegar and gin smell, and a stamp on her hand from a club she did not know. With her, she found a few dozen Polaroids that documented her night out, the kind of party where you found everyone "pushing toward the ecstasy of the dream of tomorrow, where they'd have more fun, feel more beautiful, be surrounded by more interesting people" (Moshfegh 183). Instead of the vestiges of a lived past, she finds images of a past that never existed for her. Like the events generated by the news and the work created by capital, her experiences disappear in the horizon of its signs (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 16). As Baudrillard observed at a global level, for her, time no longer exists, there is only "an empty actualité where only the visual psychodrama [...] was left to unfold" (*Illusion* 16). Her unconscious self, incapable of accepting the meaningless and purposeless nature of past simulated experiences, feels the need of documenting it. Therefore, the Polaroids can be observed to represent for the narrator the same stockpile of the past in plain view that Baudrillard observed humanity needed in order to avoid "[o]ur entire linear and accumulative culture" from collapsing (*Simulacra* 10). They

worked for her asleep self as the batteries of artificial memory described in *The Illusion of the End*, collectively used to “face up to the absence of a future and the glacial times which await us” (9).

In her sleepwalking episodes, the unconscious, already colonized by the simulacrum system as Jameson described (35), does not oppose resistance to the oasis of reality that nostalgia as trust on the lost vestiges represents. The disabled subject can thus return to normality through the prosthesis that unconsciousness represents, at least until the decisions of the conscious self puts a stop to the nostalgic activity by locking herself in her apartment. However, her nostalgia for lost references is not only present in her sleep-walking experiences. Despite the disillusionment and indifference with the hyperreal normalcy standard, she still consciously recurs to it on some occasions in an attempt to resurrect reality, because “[a]nything is better than to contest reality as such” (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 80). Entirely aware of the work of simulation that she carries out in her own memories, she describes her sadness as an “oceanic despair that —if I were in a movie— would be depicted superficially as me shaking my head slowly and shedding a tear,” followed by a “[z]oom in on my sad, pretty, orphan face” (Moshfegh 221). Allured by the hyperreality of happy family relationships provided by television, she makes up memories of her dad pushing her “on a swing at sunset,” her mum bathing her, and happy birthdays from her childhood in a “grainy, swirling home video footage” (Moshfegh 221). But nostalgia cannot produce any significant impact on her awakened self. Instead, she can only feel “canned” nostalgia, “[l]ike the nostalgia for a mother I’d seen in television —someone who cooked and cleaned, kissed me on the forehead and put Band-Aids on my knees, read me books at night, held and rocked me when I cried” (Moshfegh 135).

Nevertheless, the trick of nostalgia for the lost real is able to escape the control of the hyperconscious narrator in her views on the social. Her acknowledgment of the illusion of the real beyond simulation gives origin to her idealization of the working class as a core of reality and the rejection of what she regards as instances of the middle-class hyperreal. “[O]rdering a brioche bun or no-foam latte” and “children with runny noses or Swedish au pairs” make her turn into the humble bodega near her house, which she considers to be a vestige of reality, “[t]he bodega coffee was working-class coffee” (Moshfegh 5). Similarly, she indulges in romanticizing the lives of the workers in the pharmacy —being jealous of how jovial and relaxed they looked, as if they had a life (Moshfegh 96)—and even the contact of her

trash with other people's trash in the trash chute made her feel important, "like I was participating in the world. [...] The things I touched touched things other people had touched. I was contributing. I was connecting" (Moshfegh 115). The narrator is thus the representative of the despair suffered by subjects in this hyperreal "excess of reality, this excess of power and comfort, this universal availability, this definitive fulfilment" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 103), which she faces by falling into the trick of nostalgia, even while being awake.

These ideas on the nostalgia of the main character conclude the analysis of the elements in the novel that identify simulation as the origin of the narrator's disability. The analysis of the representation of nostalgia in *My Year* provides varied instances of such a melancholic state as the ultimate resource to face disillusionment. It has been observed that the depressed protagonist cannot control her prosthetic unconscious self and its utter belief in reality, eventually leading her to lock herself in her apartment. When conscious, she also recurs to nostalgia in an attempt to avoid the memories of her miserable childhood with no result because she is too aware of what she is trying to do. Contrarily, her belief in the lower classes as a core of reality effectively works as the nostalgia that escapes her critical insomnia. In the following point, it will be observed how such desires for escaping disillusionment are resolved and, therefore, as in the scheme provided by Mitchell and Snyder, disability is made to disappear.

### **REHABILITATION OF THE DIFFERENCE: BACK ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW**

As Mitchell and Snyder point out, the majority of novels dealing with disability are resolved when the difference that sets them in motion is made to disappear. The options offered by this ableist narrative pattern are that either the deviant subject is rescued from social censure, that a revaluation of an alternative mode of being is carried out or, that the deviant subject is exterminated as "a purification of the social body" (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 54). Unable to change the system that disables her or to function as a simulated normate,<sup>6</sup> the narrator of *My Year* sets death

---

<sup>6</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson coined this term to refer to those read as abled subjects, "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural

as her last available option. Her long hibernation is meant to operate as a simulated death that would allow her to “resurrect” as a renewed, non-deviant person. Thus, although Reva’s unexpected visit in the middle of her hibernation is regarded as “the way you’d feel if someone interrupted you in the middle of suicide” (Moshfegh 7), the narrator specifies that what she was doing was “the opposite of suicide” (Moshfegh 7). On this occasion, she makes clear her hibernation was “self-preservational,” and that she went through it because “[she] thought that it was going to save [her] life” (Moshfegh 7). Her elimination as a subject that deviates from the system is presented as the only alternative, because putting an end to the simulated system where there is no “representation of death, nor even—and this is the worst—illusion of death” (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 99) is virtually impossible.

Intriguingly, she does not consider her hibernation as reintegration into the system, but as “a quest for a new spirit” (Moshfegh 264). The social dimensions of her impairment remain completely unaddressed, which targets her clear vision of the system as the problem she needs to get rid of in order to emerge from hibernation as a “renewed” (Moshfegh 258) person. For that purpose, she required “a completely blank canvas” (Moshfegh 258), which she envisioned in the form of “white walls, bare floors, lukewarm tap water” (Moshfegh 258-9). She also donated almost all of her clothes to Reva (Moshfegh 255) and almost everything in her apartment to a thrift shop (Moshfegh 259). In her attempt at reincorporating herself into the real, she joins the hyperreal dictation of resurrecting the vestiges of reality in a reinvention of “penury, asceticism, [and] vanished savage naturalness” (*Simulacra* 14) Baudrillard observed in line with the recycling of lost faculties, bodies, and sociality.

These preparations proved useful after her awakening. Then, she was able to perceive that “[t]here was kindness” and pain was no longer “the only touchstone for growth” (Moshfegh 288). The blank canvas on which she worked conceded plenty of space for her new vision of reality, which, instead of pain as the basis for her personal growth and conscience of death and conflict, held nostalgia for reality as the central pillar of her life. In her description of her new life, it can be observed that, instead of disillusionment and nostalgia for meaning in hyperreality, she looks for the already-lost meaning in simple life,

---

capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them” (1997, 7).

which she relates to animal life as a more natural way of existence. She slept on the floor (Moshfegh 278) and spent her outdoor time with animals instead of humans (Moshfegh 278-279). After hibernation, she even describes herself as “a newborn animal” (Moshfegh 278).

She renounced cell phones and coffee (Moshfegh 278-279) too, and refurbished her apartment with objects from a Goodwill store. She explains that she “liked looking at things other people had let go of” (Moshfegh 279) and imagining invented strangers using them: “a couple making love on the sofa, thousands of TV dinners, a baby’s tantrums, the honeyed glow of whiskey in an Elks Lodge tumbler” (Moshfegh 279). She uses second-hand objects in the same way ideologies or retro fashions make a comeback or, in Baudrillard’s own terms, as a resurrection of “the period when at least there was history” (*Simulacra* 46). As a result of being able to imagine linear temporality again, she sells her parents’ house, because she can picture the future of someone else in it: “I could survive without the house. I understood that it would soon be someone else’s store of memories, and that was beautiful” (Moshfegh 288).

Even though she thinks that with her renewed purer life she has escaped from her source of disillusionment, her appreciation of asceticism and recycling of old furniture are no more than the last of utopian desires in simulation (Baudrillard, *Illusion* 117). Baudrillard explains that, in the age of simulacra, “[t]he more we seek to rediscover the real and the referential, the more we sink into simulation, in this case a shameful and, at any event, hopeless simulation attempt of escaping the system through the resurrection of reality” (*Illusion* 117). In her healing, she concludes her trajectory as part of the pattern of narrative prosthesis in the extermination of her difference. With the narrator’s hibernation, the impairment her insomnia represents is annihilated, and she is absorbed into the simulation of normalcy from which not only did she not escape, but actively engaged with, letting the system remain undamaged, unaltered, and continuously turning every vestige of reality and dissidence left into another part of its eternal cold perfection. She is “healed” once she is able to go back to the dream in which, in comparison to the lack of fittingness of her friend Reva, her privilege allows her to live.

Still, the narrator’s “unawakening” into simulacra is neither the end of Moshfegh’s narrative nor its only awakening. In a reversal of the narrator’s pseudo-suicide, Reva’s death by jumping off from one of the Twin Towers signifies an awakening from simulacra. In contrast

to the protagonist's final solution, Reva's was not planned, but sudden and unexpected, and, more importantly, it was real.

Throughout the novel, her development follows the completely opposite trajectory to the narrator's. The frustrated friend of the successful WASP narrator always played along the rules of simulacra. The system set what she was and aspired to be, it was both the cause of her despair and the supplier of the solutions. In the novel, Reva represents what Baudrillard called the "neo-individual," "the purest product of 'other-directedness'" (*Illusion* 106). In his words, she would not be an individual but "a pentito of subjectivity and alienation" (*Illusion* 106) devoted to "the sacrificial religion of performance, efficiency, stress and time-pressure," the "total mortification and unremitting sacrifice to the divinities of data [l'information], total exploitation of oneself by oneself, the ultimate in alienation" (*Illusion* 106).

On the 6th of January, Reva told the narrator that the company in which she worked, Marsh, started "a new crisis consulting firm" (Moshfegh 203) in the Twin Towers because of terrorist risks, which proleptically anticipates her suicide as much as explains her presence in the World Trade Center the day of the attacks. Working at the buildings that had become the embodiment of simulacra inscribed her life in the system even deeper, "a system that is no longer competitive, but digital and countable" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 38). The Towers were the representation of the disappearance of competition in favor of networks and monopoly, and their twin nature worked as the signifier of "the end of any original reference" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 39).

Baudrillard analyzed the 9/11 attacks in the context of simulacra and the impact they exercised on the system. In contrast with other terrorist attacks, which he perceived as mere signs without any other function apart from their recurrence in images anticipated in simulacra (*Simulacra* 22), the conscious manipulation of the precedence of simulacra the terrorists carried out drastically imbued the attacks to the World Trade Center with meaning. The control of the media and resources along with the kamikazes' deaths, which were not only real but also sacrificial (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 17), added the power of symbolism lost in the current hyperdensity of information in news to the attacks and turned them into the "absolute, irrevocable event" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 17). Baudrillard's analysis contends that the terrorists understood that the game played by the system was always "on the ground of reality," so, in order to dismantle its power, their attacks should be carried out instead in "the symbolic sphere [...]"

where the rule is that of challenge, reversion and outbidding” (*Spirit* 17). This way, the 9/11 disaster became the resuscitation of images and events as such (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 27). The terrorists in their attack “restore[d] an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange” (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 9).

In the novel, such a signifying event is developed on the last page in less than twenty lines, offering an enigmatic and encouraging ending in Moshfegh’s short last chapter. In it, the narrator introduces the topic by saying that she bought “a new TV/VCR” to “record the news coverage of the planes crashing into the Twin Towers” (Moshfegh 289) and, afterwards, she points out that “Reva was gone” and that, probably, the woman in the videotape “leap[ing] off the Seventy-eighth floor of the North Tower” (Moshfegh 289) was her. As when Reva announced her mother’s death (“‘My mom died,’ Reva said during a commercial break” [Moshfegh 109]), her own death is inscribed in television.

However, taking into account Baudrillard’s ideas explained above, what the narrator plays on repeat is not just another “indefinitely refracted” (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 23) hyperreal event. Even though the precession of simulacra did not disappear in the extensive coverage of the event in the news and the image still consumed the event, “absorb[ing] it and offer[ing] it for consumption” (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 27), the narrator was observing what Baudrillard described as the crystallization of “the orgy of power, liberation, flow and calculation which the Twin Towers embodied, while being the violent deconstruction of that extreme form of efficiency and hegemony” (*Spirit* 59). Reva’s death, as horrific as the image of one’s only friend committing suicide may seem, was perceived as an awakening by the narrator, understood in Baudrillard’s terms as Reva’s release from “the horror of living and working in sarcophagi of concrete and steel” (*Spirit* 41) and the “institutional violence, both mental and physical, in homeopathic doses” (*Spirit* 59) that she went through as neo-individual.

When confronted with the impossibility of keeping on living, the protagonist chooses the simulation of death, inscribed as she is in a system that, in Baudrillard’s terms, “hounds out any form of negativity or singularity, including that ultimate form of singularity that is death itself” (*Spirit* 94). On the other hand, the co-protagonist, when confronted with the collapse of life as she understood it, takes her life in her own hands and “against a system that operates on the basis of the exclusion of death, a system whose ideal is an ideal of zero

deaths" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 16), she kills herself, exercising the most singular event as the finishing touch of a life of serial production.

## CONCLUSION

The use of disability as narrative prosthesis in literature has contributed to and exposed the construction of disability throughout history. In some cases, as it can be observed in the treatment of it in *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, the image offered, far from contributing to the stigmatization of the impaired subjects, can help in understanding the social dimension of disability.

The objective that this analysis sought was to demonstrate that the disability of the narrator serves as narrative prosthesis and engine of the novel in the reflection of the disillusionment the system of simulacra produces in individuals and that her hibernation was not a rebellious act but another failed attempt at escaping from reality when playing by its rules. Conversely, the attack on the symbolic realm represented by Reva's suicide actively works in the unveiling of hyperreality. The narrator's development throughout the novel shows that her depression is not an individual disturbance but a socially induced one, serving as representative of the damaging effects of normative simulacra on individuals. The narrator's disillusionment with life is explained by her perception of the lack of meaning in the hyperreal. Her frequent exercises of nostalgia when attempting to escape from simulacra during her somnambulist episodes, her whitewashing of the vestiges of reality, and the ascetic life she carried out after her awakening serve as representation of the widespread resurrection of the lost past as a substitute for the mourning reality that pervades contemporary culture. The final chapter, with Reva's death in the 9/11 attacks, gains a social dimension as Reva's "diving into the unknown" (Moshfegh 289) becomes a singular instance of the collapse of globalization.

In my analysis, I intersect Baudrillard's views on simulation with the field of disability studies to explore the disabling effects that late capitalism has on individuals by imposing simulacra as the normalcy standard of social and economic health. Furthermore, as the counterpart of the visible metaphor that disabled bodies traditionally represent, the analysis of invisible disability here carried out proposes an interesting turn on the disabled condition in times when the emptying of meaning in images encompasses every aspect of life.

**WORKS CITED**

- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5®)*. American Psychiatric Pub, 2013.
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*. Pub. L. 101-336. 26 July 1990. 104 Stat. 328.
- BACON, Francis. *Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works*. Edited by S. Warhaft, Macmillan, 1965.
- BAUDRILLARD, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1981. Translated by Sheila Glaser, Michigan UP, 1994.
- . *The Illusion of The End*, 1992. Translated by Chris Turner, Stanford UP, 1995.
- . *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 2002. Translated by Chris Turner, Verso, 2002.
- BERNT, Camille. *Into the Abyss: Self-Destruction as Feminist Resistance in Ottessa Moshfegh's My Year of Rest and Relaxation and Han Kang's The Vegetarian*. 2021. Dominican University of California, Senior Thesis,  
<https://scholar.dominican.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=literaturelanguages-senior-theses>
- BUTLER, Judith. "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance." *Vulnerability in Resistance*, edited by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, Leticia Sabsay, Duke UP, 2016, pp. 12-27.
- DASH, J. Michael. "The Madman at the Crossroads: Delirium and Dislocation in Caribbean Literature." *Profession*, 2002, pp. 37-43.
- DAVIS, Lennard J. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. Verso, 1995.
- DIRSCHAUER, Marlene. "Sleep as Action? World Alienation, Distance, and Loneliness in Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*." *AmLit*, 2022. Online. <https://unipub.uni-graz.at/amlit/periodical/titleinfo/7652760>
- FLORIDI, Luciano. *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*. Oxford UP, 2014.

- FOUCAULT, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, An Introduction*, Vintage Books, 1980.
- GARLAND-THOMPSON, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Literature and Culture*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.
- GREENBERG, Jonathan. "Losing Track of Time." *Daedalus*, vol. 150, no. 1, 2020, pp. 188-203.
- HOLLADAY, Drew. "Mental Disability and Social Value in Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*." *Literatures Of Madness: Disability Studies And Mental Health*, edited by Elizabeth J. Donaldson, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 199-214.
- IVANA, I.M. *In Praise of Unlikeable Women: Exploring Unlikeability in "Postfeminist" Times in My Year of Rest and Relaxation and Fleabag*. 2020, University of Utrecht, Master Thesis, <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/398024>
- JAMESON, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1989.
- JONES, Nev, and Brown, Robyn. "The Absence of Psychiatric C/S/X Perspectives in Academic Discourse: Consequences and Implications." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2012.
- KEEBLE, Arin. "The End of the 90s in Porochista Khakpour's *The Last Illusion*, Rachel Kushner's *The Mars Room* and Otessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 2022.
- KUKKONEN, Karin. "Exploring Inner Perceptions: Interoception, Literature, And Mindfulness." *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 26, no.11-12, 2019, pp. 107-132.
- MACCANNELL, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. California UP, 2013.
- MITCHELL, David T, and Snyder, Sharon L. *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*. Michigan UP, 1997.
- . *Narrative Prosthesis. Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, Michigan UP, 2000.

- MOSHFEGH, Ottessa. *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, Vintage, 2018.
- NICO, Yara, Leonardi, Jan Luiz, and Zeggio, Larissa. *Depression As a Cultural Phenomenon in Postmodern Society: An Analytical-Behavioral Essay of our Time*, Springer Nature, 2020.
- SCHWAB, Klaus. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Crown Publishing, 2016.
- WOLFRAME, PhebeAnn M. "Going Barefoot: Mad Affiliation, Identity Politics, and Eros." *Literatures of Madness: Disability Studies and Mental Health*, edited by Elizabeth J. Donaldson, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 31-49.
- World Health Organization. *Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders: Global Health Estimates*, World Health Organization, 2017.