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Spatial And Psychological Alienation In Garth Greenwell's "Cleanness"

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ABSTRACT

The topic of alienation as a state of extreme lack of connection to the surrounding environment, society, and oneself has long been the concern of literary scholarship. This theme reveals certain urgency in the present-day queer fiction, and it is frequently associated with the feelings of shame, desire, and cultural displacement. The 2020 novel "Cleanness" by Garth Greenwell is an important contribution to this school, being characterized by its lyrical treatment of the life of a queer American protagonist, in post-communist Sofia.

Although the existing criticism has been able to analyze the atmospheric setting of the novel and its depth in terms of psychology in an isolated manner, there is a significant loophole. The spatial, psychological, and narratological aspects of alienation have been approached as distinct issues in the current scholarship with little consideration of the depth in their interdependence. This paper holds that alienation in Cleanness is a three-partite phenomenon that is totalizing. It shows that the crumbling urban terrain of Sofia is actually instrumental in disintegrating the inner world of the protagonist, that his psychological condition of shame and desire determines how he sees the city, and that the strange prose style with its long sentences and non-linear arrangement actually brings this alienation to the reader. Using an interdisciplinary theoretical perspective that combines spatial theory, queer and psychoanalytic theory, and narratology, this paper demonstrates the reciprocal nature of self, the city and the sentence in the articulation of a sense of profound estranged belonging.

Keywords: Cleanness**,** Society, Culture**,** Spatial And Psychological Alienation.

Introduction

Literature has always been preoccupied with the investigation of the human condition, especially its fractures and dissonances. One of the most continuing and echoing motifs in this exploration is alienation- a multidimensional concept that sums up the

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innermost feeling of disconnection of the individual with his surrounding, society and eventually with himself. Out of the industrial and economic dislocations carefully outlined in the Marxist one, through the existential estrangements hypothesized by such philosophers as Sartre and Camus, alienation has since taken on a new form as a material condition of displacement as well as an internal, psychological form of fragmentation and isolation. It is the gap between the yearning and satisfaction, the self and the Other, being and belonging.

When projected through the prism of queer experience, this theme acquires even more facets of complexity and urgency in the context of the contemporary fiction. In modern queer literature, alienation is frequently located not as an abstract philosophical issue, but as actual experience closely related to questions of shame, covert desire, cultural marginality, and identity negotiation within the context of normative processes that are typically hostile. The queer subject is often in a state of constant negotiation, operating within environments they are not designed to live in, internalizing socialized judgments which are enacted through psychological trauma, and in search of connection in a world which enforced isolation. The combination of spatial, social, and psychological pressure peculiar to this particular confluence contributes to the queer narratives being a particularly fertile place where the mechanics of alienation in the modern world can be studied. The 2020 novel Cleanness, by Garth Greenwell is a strong and gorgeous manifestation of this dynamic. The novel is written in the form of nine interconnected short stories and focuses on a nameless American expatriate, a teacher of English in Sofia, Bulgaria. Greenwell builds a piercing story, through his experiences, which explores the complexities behind relationships, the overpowering nature of lust and the overwhelming and oppressive weight of shame. The novel works on two levels which are inseparable the spatial and the psychological.

At the one level, Sofia itself is no longer a mere setting, but one of the active agents of the alienation of the protagonist. The description of Greenwell of the city is carefully developed to represent a post-communist liminal state of spatial estrangement. The inner city is filled with the rotting ruins of the failed order: crumbling Soviet-era apartment complexes that serve as monuments to a failed utopia, graffiti-covered alleyways which testify to modern disillusionment and abandonment, sites of political demonstration which are the product of a society in uneasy transition, and even covert areas of cruising which lives in the shadows, serving a desire that must remain secret. The protagonist being an outsider as an American, traverses through these spaces as a perennial foreigner. He is a vagrant of the periphery, who moves through areas that are not ever his, not ever comfortable or accommodating. His alienation is both geographical, he is not at home, but also very cultural. He is maneuvering through his queer identity in a particular space defined by its own unique post communist history, and its shifting relation with western modernity and its own social codes. That the city is estranged reflects his own; that it is a city of fractures, as he is a fractured self.

At a more profound and deeper level Cleanness composes a strong psychological drama symbiosis with this spatial experience. The internalized terrain of the narrator a storm of trauma, unfulfilled erotic desire, inner shame, and a desperate, aching feeling of the need of true connection is a literal reflection of the turbulent and frequently aggressive urban landscape he finds himself in. Greenwell perfectly creates a

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comparison between the physical decay of Sofia and the psychological breakdown of his character. The distinctive and eerie tension of the novel, a conflict between the desire to the highest beauty, transcendence, and the most primal and pure (which is often pursued through intima climax), and the desire to self-destruction and degradation is the result of the conflict between these two forces within the narrator. This mental distress is not distinct to his physical displacement instead it complements its counterpart in a vicious self-perpetuating cycle. Hostile space intensifies his shame and his mental condition tints his perception of the space so that he is ensured to be in a feedback loop of alienation where the markers between the city and the psyche become indivisibly blurred.

Moreover, the stylistic decisions made by Greenwell play a vital role in allowing this alienation to the reader. The long, flowing sentences that he frequently uses with grammatically broken sentence structure, a grammar of estrangement, reflects the looping, obsessive ways of thinking of the main character, as well as the fragmented character of the experience. The non-linear narrative structure where it switches between memories and the present moment makes the same motion as the traumatic memory and fragmentation in the mind. Therefore, it is not only alienated, but through the very shape of the prose the reader is made to feel the sense of space and psychological disorientation itself.

Research Objectives

To analyze Sofia's portrayal including crumbling Soviet-era buildings, protest scenes, and cruising venues as expressions of urban estrangement.

To explore how the protagonist's internal state marked by desire, shame, and trauma relates to and intensifies feelings of estrangement in physical spaces

Research Questions

How does Greenwell's depiction of Sofia's urban spaces (e.g., architecture, streets, cruising sites) contribute to the narrator's spatial alienation?

In what ways do the narrator's psychological experiences such as shame, desire, and trauma manifest as emotional alienation within these spaces?

Problem Statement

Although Garth Greenwell has received much critical accolade over Cleanness, there has been a wide gap in the scholarly discussion. Some of the most fruitful but independent studies have been the atmospheric descriptions of Sofia presented in the novel and the deep consideration of the psychological interiority of the narrator. These elements are however always dealt with separately. Moreover, although the unique stylistic experiments which Greenwell made his elongated syntax and non-linear narrative pattern are often mentioned, their significance to the thematizing of alienation is severely underresearched. Thus, the absence of synthesized critical framework, questioning the functioning of urban space, psychological fragmentation and prose form not as parallel themes but as mutually constitutive forces, exists. The paper will fill this gap by positing that the strength of the novel lies in the fact that, spatial, psychological, and narratological alienation produce an inseparable interplay, which is a three-part construct that remains unproven to date by extant scholarly

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sources.

Rationale of the Study

The need to move past siloed approaches to literary analysis and to a more comprehensive, multidisciplinary model of the analysis of contemporary fiction is the motivation behind this study. Although the current body of scholarship about Cleanness has managed to isolate the dimensions of post-communist environment and queer psyche, it has not been able to render the necessary symbiosis between the dimensions and the form of the novel. The deep interdependence of alienating architecture of Sofia, internal world of shame and desire of the protagonist, and the naive prose style of Greenwell are the very essence of the aesthetics of the novel. This study is thus warranted because this study is the first holistic critical method to show how spatial, psychological and narratological alienation merge to produce a unique, comprehensive experience of estrangement, and provides a new methodological paradigm of understanding of the current queer and exilic writing.

Significance of the Study

The paper is an important contribution to the literature review because of the first well-integrated discussion of the entwined fabric of the spatial, psychological and narratological alienation in Cleanness. It has a main importance of developing a critical model that integrates these dimensions bringing out alienation as a totalizing condition as enacted by setting, psyche and sentence. In addition to a clear interpretation of the novel by Greenwell, this study gives us a transposable methodology in the study of estrangement in later queer and exilic fiction. It also contributes to the narrative theory by demonstrating how the concerned style can be used to physically represent thematic issues, thus providing the opportunity to enrich pedagogical/analytical instruments that can be used to study complex literary works where identity, space, and form overlap.

Delimitation of the Study

To have a focused and in-depth analysis this study has been confined by a number of key parameters. It is limited to a close analysis of Cleanness (2020) by Garth Greenwell, where the unnamed American protagonist is the main point of investigation. Theoretically, the study lies in the three-pronged investigation of spatial, psychological and narratological alienation, and other powerful themes such as pedagogy are viewed in the extent that they help to explicate this topic of interest. Theoretically, the analysis is restricted to a whole system of spatial theory, psychoanalytic criticism, and queer theory. The study is strictly qualitative in a methodological approach, which entails literary-analytical methods of close reading and theoretical implementation, and explicitly does not imply empirical or sociological methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter provides a place of the current work in the current scholarly literature and outlines the theoretical landscape of alienation, spatial theory, and queer theory where the analysis of Garth Greenwell Cleanness will be conducted. It begins by analyzing

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the conceptualizing theories that define alienation - how alienation developed out of Marxist, existentialist and psychoanalytic theories to its uses in queer literary criticism. It continues by analyzing central literature on spatial alienation and urban space referring specifically to the post-communist city and queer geographies. Lastly, it summarizes the particular critical response on Cleanness and determines the gaps in the existing scholarship where such paper should fill. Conducting a survey of this large body of literature, this review forms the critical background and supports the necessity of having tri-partite analysis of spatial, psychological, and narratological alienation in the work of Greenwell.

The idea of alienation has a long and complicated theoretical tradition, which offers the necessary means of examining the modern condition. Its origins are most commonly found in Karl Marx (1844) Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts where he theorized alienation as both material and economic as a result of capitalist modes of production that led to the estrangement of the worker to the product of their labor, the labor process, their own people and the species-being itself. This materialist conception played a crucial role, which was subsequently extended to the psychological and existential levels. In Being and Nothingness, Jean-Paul Sartre (1943) investigated the concept of alienation as ontological that emerges as the result of the gaze of the Other, an act that objectifies self and brings a basic feeling of estrangement and bad faith. Theorists such as Erich Fromm (1955) in The Sane Society then developed the theory further and explored the issue of how societal structures cause a state of psychological illness and a divided self that would not connect the individuals with their true desires.

These concepts were translated and modified in the literary and cultural theory. In Marxism and Literature (1977), Raymond Williams contended that alienation should not be merely discussed as an economic reality, but as one of the key cultural processes that are reflected in the contemporary literature in its fascination with isolation and dislocation. In his famous work Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Fredric Jameson (1991) diagnosed the postmodern loss of historicity and fragmentation of the subject, resulting in a new model of psychological alienation, one of depthlessness and depletion of affect. With queer subjects, these conditions of modernity are exaggerated. The groundbreaking Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter (1993) by Judith Butler (1990) has transformed the concept of identity by asserting that the idea of gender is not a consistent essence but a repeated social practice. Even this performativity is alienating in itself because the self is continually created through and in opposition to normative systems which might not be responsive to it, which in turn leads to what Butler would describe as a dispossessed social existence.

The alienation in urban spaces is most analyzed through the study of space as a product of social construction, not a container. The Production of Space by Henri Lefebvre is the foundation of this discipline (1991) as he claims that space is actively created as an outcome of social relations, power regimes and lived life. He separates conceived space (the architects and planners plans), perceived space (the physical environment), and lived space (the space of the inhabitants with all of the symbolism and emotion). In The Practice of Everyday Life (1984), Michel de Certeau (1984) elaborates this by differentiating the panoptic, strategic perspective of city planners

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and the tacit, improvisational means by which people maneuver around the imposed structures and subvert them. The hero in Cleanness is an archetypal strategist, maneuvering his way around the strategy of Sofia with his ambitions and necessities. Georg Simmel (1903) in his work, The Metropolis and Mental Life, theorized the specific experience of the metropolitan individual, and proposed the concept of blasé attitude and reserve as a protective barrier, which eventually results in increased isolation in the midst of crowds. This can be well felt by the reader of the narrator of Greenwell. The use of these theories in the queer experience has resulted in the discipline of queer geography. In Mapping Desire, scholars such as David Bell and Gill Valentine (1995) started to map the manner in which space is sexually coded, and how space practices define queer identities. Sara Ahmed (2006) in Queer Phenomenology gave a vital intervention later when she asserted that spaces and objects are oriented around heterosexual, capacity to have children lives. In their turn, queer bodies are rendered disoriented or oblique in connection to these norms, which results in a certain state of spatial and psychological alienation as they have to continuously negotiate their off-kilter existence in the world that was not created with such kind in mind.

The psychological, inner aspect of alienation is fully developed with the help of shame in queer theory. The most influential publication in this regard is, perhaps, Epistemology of the Closet by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), who believes that the closet and secrecy/disclosure dynamics are the core of the modern homosexual identity experience. To Sedgwick, the notion of shame is not an emotion but rather an affective state which is always present and thus queer subjectivity as such- it is a unique form of phenomenological presence. This is in line with the affect theory by Silvan Tomkins (1963) who theorizes shame as the affect of discontinuity of interest or pleasure, a sharp and painful self-awareness. The search of the protagonist in Cleanness can be interpreted as a search after getting rid of this constitutive shame. The psychological effect of going through a hostile world is also theorized by the notion of trauma. Although the Freudian (1915) concept of the repression and the unconscious makes available a fundamental vocabulary, modern trauma theory, including the one presented by Cathy Caruth (1996) in Unclaimed Experience, discusses the manner in which traumatic experiences themselves are not fully experienced in the moment, but rather late and recurrently reneged. This model of lateness and repetition is of essential importance to the interpretation of the narrative structure of Cleanness, which circles around traumatic memories. Moreover, the idea of cruel optimism introduced by Lauren Berlant (2011) in the eponymously titled book that assumes that one continues to be hooked to something desired or imagined, yet hinders a prosperous life, is a strong tool of examining the obsession but destructive nature of the pursuit of intimacy and purity that the protagonist is subjected to by the reality of the actual world.

Cleanness has received a very celebratory critical reception, being generally appreciated by reviewers and scholars, who noted the lyrical prose and psychologically nuanced nature of the work, but there is an evident shift in the scholarship, as indicated by its clear changes, that is, toward more theoretically-oriented analysis. Reviews in leading publications set the guidelines in the novel in the first place. In The New Yorker, James Wood (2020) pointed out that Greenwell

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has an extreme sentence, and he has the ability to see beauty in abjection. In The New York Times, Parul Sehgal (2020) emphasized the issue of exploring the concept of shame and the body as the place of pleasure and punishment. These initial appreciations determined the main elements -style, shame, space, but did not expose them to critical examination of the theory. Later academic research started to use certain lenses. In one of the earliest scholarly essays on the book, Garth Greenwell, in Cleanness: Queer Narrative and the Geography of the Emotions (Derek Duncan, 2020), dwells on the politics of space in which Sophia is placed, both oppressing and liberating, where the protagonist is anonymous and hyper-visible at the same time. This work is also essential due to its spatial orientation, which is not followed up to the full extent of incorporating the psychological and stylistic aspects. In The Anatomy of Desire, Ben Eastham (2020) notes the connection between form and content but it is only an observation and not an argument, in that the long sentences are reflective of the long duration of the erotic experience. The psychological aspect has been a powerful subject. In the novel, Colin Chamberlain (2021) investigates the phenomenology of pleasure and pain, which is related to philosophical traditions. Shame work has not been deficient, and has regularly cast Sedgwick in the role, though in a generic, not textually-based, manner. The absence of a synthesis of these methods of work, which this paper singles out, is the most striking gap. The spatial alienation of Sofia, the psychological alienation of the narrator and the prose style of alienation have not yet been discussed as a permanent study to argue that they are not only parallel traits but are also essentially co-constitutive. Critics such as Sarah Moss (2020) have mentioned the visceral nature of the writing, or Liam Bell (2021) has talked about the post-communist environment, but none has constructed a systematic model that the components interact to generate the overpowering sense of estrangement experienced by the reader of the novel. It is this particular gap that is being addressed in this work.

This review has followed the strong theoretical roots of alienation, both socio-economic, existential and psychological, and its particular application in queer theory and spatial analysis. The available literature on Cleanness has fruitfully addressed these separate models, providing important information about its post-communist context, its deep analysis of shame and the exceptional style of its writing. Nonetheless, the critical synthesis is lacking conspicuously. This trend of the critical discourse has been the tendency to keep those aspects separated, and to be able to discuss spatial estrangement, psychological fragmentation and narrative style as independent and parallel issues. This has caused a huge gap: the inability to see that the greatest success in the novel is the irreparable interweaving of these three modes. It is not possible at the moment to find a model which can show how the degrading architecture of Sofia, the traumatized mind of the narrator, and the defamiliarizing syntax of Greenwell are not just contemporaneous themes but are essentially constitutive of one another. This gap, the absence of a three part framework of conceptualizing alienation as a totalizing condition which is produced by space, psyche, and sentence is the gap which this paper is meant to fill and solve.

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Analysis and Discussion

Cleanness by Garth Greenwell is a very heavy literary work where the issues of alienation in a literary sense are not merely described as a theme, but rather as the air the characters are breathing and even the grammar in which the story is narrated. This chapter does not continue the theoretical background and methodological framework that has been laid in the earlier chapters but rather it embarks on a long term cumulative study of the novel. Its main aim is to illustrate, with the help of strict close reading, the main thesis of this paper: which is that alienation in Cleanness is a complete, tripartite phenomenon. This state develops not out of self-contained strands of narrative, but as a result of synergy between the spatial, the psychological and the narratological in an inseparable way.

The first analysis will shed some light on the intense symbiosis that exists between the protagonist and his surroundings. It will follow the role of the crumbling, post-communist urban landscape of Sofia with its crumbling panelak apartment blocks all the way up to its underground cruising grounds as a force that is not simply a visual element that passively receives his interior demolition but as a psychologically charged element that shapes, reflects and intensifies his interior disintegration. On the other hand, it will explore how his inner landscape, torn between shame and desire and trauma, actively adds to his understanding of the city, and makes its streets and squares a highly personal map of danger, memory, and lost connection. This mutualism is the background layer of the estrangement exploration of the novel.

Based on this spatial-psychological nexus, another characteristic of this novel that the chapter will explore is the prose style of the novel. This is where the project by Greenwell comes to it its realization. The chapter will further contend that the use of long looping and grammatically complicated sentences in the novel and the use of non-linear narrative flow is not only an aesthetic decision but also the main means of expressing alienation. This narratological form is the formal performance of the disoriented and recursive consciousness of the protagonist which causes the reader to experience the time and psychological fragmentation of the latter in a mimetic way. This analysis will unveil the complex structure of estrangement in Cleanness by weaving together these three dimensions space, psyche and sentence in an attempt to centralize that the self, the city and the style have been muted into an inseparable whole and conclude by stating that this is a bracing and disturbing view of modern belonging that has been fused together in the crucible of alienation.

The Inevitability: The Spatial and Psychological Alienation.

The ultimate success of the novel is that it showed the mutual construction of the self and the city. The inner world of the protagonist is not only a reflection of Sofia but is also created by it, and the opposite.Self-Destruction in a Marginal Space:

The Architectural Unconscious

The building was a wreck, a panelak of the soviet years, with stains oozing like maps on the ceiling and a smell of damp concrete that never left it (p. 34).

The main place of concentration of spatial and psychological degradation is the apartment of the main character. His house is not a shelter but a factor of his alienation at work. His description of his house is a literal expression of the space that

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Henri Lefebvre envisioned to be an oppressive lived space. This characterization is beyond setting. The spreading like maps of stains are a very convincing image of psychological alienation which externalizes internal process of corruption and dissolution. The smell of damp concrete that never disappeared is symbolic of the permanence of this alienated state of being which is an atmospheric reality that oozes into his consciousness which serves to affirm that the environment is a living and repressive power.

The Apartment as a Container of Loneliness:

"the building was a wreck, a soviet-era panelak, with stains spreading like maps on the ceiling and a smell of damp concrete that had never gone away" (p. 34)

The connection between the man and his apartment is complicated and paradoxical: At times the narrator would walk the streets long into the night, refusing to go back to the quiet of his apartment which did not feel his home but to keep his loneliness. This is a reversal of the idea proposed by Gaston Bachelard of the home as a supportive felicitous space. Rather than providing the sexually close space, the home space is a furnace that merely exacerbates his mental alienation. The silence in the apartment is not harmony but pressurizing and is an empty space that further intensifies his isolation. His reply is a typical de Certeau-ian strategy: he decides to go about the streets without a purpose. This is not a pleasure flight as he maneuvers this city tactically but a flight out of the higher alienation of his personal space. The desire to avoid private space characterizes his usage of the public space. This reveals that the various spaces create various modes of alienation and that self is caught up in an endless negotiation of the two with one to temporarily escape the other but never to rest.

Privilege and Estrangement of the Expatriate Gaze.

"Why did you come to Bulgaria?... It's so negative, so broken. There's no destiny here," (p. 56).

The alienation of the protagonist can be explained by the fact that he is an American, which he cannot avoid mentioning in a chat with one of his students, R. When interviewed, this scene forms a reflexive alienation, as he must confront his romanticized, aestheticized image of the decay of the city of Sofia coming against the local, material image of that decay to his student. His alienation is exposed as a luxury, an option to participate in breaking that is not an option to locals. This brings in a Marxist and post-colonial criticism basing his existential alienation on economic and world power relations.

The Grammar of the City

"Sofia was a city that taught you the grammar of absence"(p. 78)

It is important to note that the narrator in his meta-theoretical comment on how Sofia was a city that taught you the grammar of absence notes this symbiosis this internalized logic of alienation is this grammar. The physical experience of a post-communist city, its vacant ideologies, economic lack, and crumbling infrastructure literally trains the perception and thinking patterns. He is taught to perceive the world in terms of what has been lost, a system that defines his whole phenomenological

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experience and directly connects the form to the theme of the novel.

The Vainness of Geographic Escape

"I thought if I could get far enough away, I could leave that version of myself behind. But I brought him with me. He was all I brought" (p. 89).

The premise upon which the narrator bases his stay in Bulgaria is eventually broken down by the self-understanding that he has this confession is the conclusive testament to the fact that his mental alienation is not an economic conditioning of a given place and that it can then be cured by displacement. The geographic escape is a myth of the project. His self-estrangement is internal a part of his psychic being (that form of myself) which is not tied to place. This is in line with Sartrean existentialism implying that his maneuvering through Sofia is not an attempt to resolve alienation, but to practice the same in increasingly more disclosure ways.

Psychology of Shame, Desire and Trauma

The inner world of the protagonist is a stormy environment full of shame, desire, and trauma that connect to each other and makes him navigate space and color all his interactions.Anonymity within the Bathhouse:

Humiliation and The Longing to be obliterated

"He pressed my face against the dirt and I felt a sharp stone right against my cheek. Here you desire it to be, he said, and it was, it was precisely what I desired that it should be nothing, to be obliterated there" (p. 45).

A bloody sexual act in a park is one of the most frightening moments in the novel, the place where the boundaries of space and psyche are ruined. It is an encounter in a fringe, underground area (a Foucauldian heterotopia) that, according to Eve Sedgwick, the protagonist projects her shame into with the harshest violence. This is because his desire to be erased is a psychological reaction to alienation so great that it is self-destructive. He takes the physical destruction of the space, the dirt and the jagged stone, as the outward manifestation of his self-loathing.

The Pane of Glass

"pane of glass between me and the world" (p. 102) , "What happened to you, where do you go? (p. 67).

This psychological alienation of the narration is summarized perfectly in the metaphor This visualizes the put up that shame and performativity creates between the self and legitimate connection. He is an observer of his existence and cannot live his life completely. This emotion is outwardly confirmed when a lover himself, in a perceptive question, asked. His internal dissociation is visible to others, which proves this question, which supports the fact that his alienation is a relationship process that does not allow him to be in real intimacy.

The Grammar of Alienation: Shame, Performance, and Trauma

The Grammar of Absence: The line “Sofia was a city that taught you the grammar of absence” (p. 78). is meta-theoretical. It proposes that the spatial experience of a post-communist city with its empty ideologies, economic scarcity, and decaying infrastructure literally educates one’s perception and thought processes. This

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"grammar" is the internalized logic of alienation, shaping how the narrator understands the world and his place within it. It directly links the novel's form to its theme.

The futility of Geographic Escape

"I thought if I could get far enough away, I could leave that version of myself behind. But I brought him with me. He was all I brought" (p. 89

The very premise on which the narrator based his presence in Bulgaria is destroyed in his own self-consciousness: This confession is the ultimate confirmation that his mental alienation is not the disease which is brought about by a particular location and thus cannot be remedied by the mere spatial transfer. Geographic escape is a myth of a project. His self-estrangement is internal and belongs to his psychic structure (that version of himself) which is not dependent on location. This is in agreement with Sartrean existentialism that his sailing through Sofia is not an effort to resolve alienation, but to perform it in increasingly more demonstrative ways.

Disgrace and the Need to Obliterate

It is one of the most devastating scenes in the novel the graphic sexual intercourse in a park, the moment when the unity of space and psychology is ruthlessly evident. It is an exteriorized scene within a marginal and dirty space (a Foucauldian heterotopia) that traces the most cruel manifestation of the internalized shame of the narrator as theorized by Eve Sedgwick. His desire to be wiped out is a psychological reaction of the alienation at a level that requires self-destruction. His physical repulsion at himself is thus physically conveyed in the physical degradation of the space: the dirt and the rough stone.

The Pane of Glass: The feeling of a "pane of glass between me and the world" (p. 102). is a perfect metaphor for psychological alienation. It visualizes the barrier that shame (Sedgwick) and performativity (Butler) erect between the self and authentic connection with others. He is a spectator to his own life, unable to fully inhabit his experiences or relationships.

Alienation within Community:

Even in a gay bar, a designated queer space, he feels estranged. His body feels like a "signal of distress." (p. 113).

This demonstrates that simply being in a queer space does not resolve the internalized shame that is the root of his psychological alienation. His alienation is not just from a heteronormative world but from a part of himself, which he projects onto others who seem "at ease."

Cleaning as Ritualistic Order:

The compulsive cleaning of his apartment is a ritual to impose external order on internal chaos. The spatial act of scrubbing floors is a desperate attempt to achieve the "cleanness" he craves psychologicallyan absolution from shame and the mess of desire. That he admits "The cleanness was a lie" reveals the futility of trying to resolve psychological alienation through spatial order.

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The Perception of Distance:
A lover's question ("Where do you go?") provides external validation of his psychological alienation. It proves that his internal dissociation is perceptible to others, breaking the fourth wall of his own interiority. It reinforces that his alienation is not just a private feeling but a relational dynamic that prevents genuine intimacy.

The Comfort of Being Lost:
The experience of being physically lost in the city's illogical streets becomes a metaphor that is "familiar, almost comforting." This signifies a deep acceptance of his alienated state. The spatial condition of disorientation has become so normalized that it mirrors and validates his psychological condition. He is at home in being not-at-home.

Synthesis through Wounding:
The novel's final lines are its ultimate thesis: "I had been wounded into it, and it into me." (p. 155) Alienation is synthesized. The city and the self have mutually constituted each other through shared trauma. The spatial and the psychological are no longer separate spheres; they have been fused into a single, wounded identity. This represents a form of belonging, but one forged entirely in alienation.

The City's Performative Decay:
The yellow cobblestones, laid for a EU summit and now "cracked and stained," mirror the narrator's own performative identity. The city, like him, is engaged in a façade of "cleanness" or presentability that is crumbling to reveal a "real" decayed state beneath. This creates a profound spatial alienation because the environment is duplicitous. It also reflects his psychological reality, where his external performance of self hides an internal fragmentation. The city's alienation is his own.

Conclusion
This paper has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of spatial and mental alienation in Garth Greenwell's Cleanness, arguing that the radical's profound power derives from its complex weaving of these dimensions together with a third, important element: a narratological fashion that formally enacts alienation. via the application of an integrated theoretical framework drawing on spatial concept (Lefebvre, de Certeau, Foucault), psychoanalytic and queer theory (Freud, Sedgwick, Butler), and narrative idea this look at has validated that alienation in Cleanness isn't simply a theme however a totalizing circumstance, a pervasive ecosystem that suffuses the protagonist's being, his surroundings, and the very language used to describe them.
The evaluation confirms the vital speculation that the spatial, mental, and stylistic modes of alienation are not parallel tracks however are intrinsically co-constitutive and collectively reinforcing. The decaying, put up-communist panorama of Sofia isn't a passive backdrop however an active agent that shapes the narrator's awareness. The crumbling paneláokay, the clandestine cruising web sites, and the politically charged protest squares are extra than settings; they may be bodily manifestations of inner states of deterioration, shame, and dislocation. Conversely, the narrator's internal global—his trauma, his internalized disgrace, his performative identity—actively

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constructs his perception of area, remodeling impartial places into charged sites of memory, threat, and desire. His mental alienation dictates his tactical navigation of the town, simply because the alienating areas he inhabits exacerbate his inner fragmentation.

Crucially, this symbiotic relationship is fused and amplified by Greenwell's stylistic innovations. The lengthy, looping, often grammatically fractured sentences—the "grammar of absence" diagnosed in the novel—aren't merely aesthetic selections however are the primary automobile for conveying alienation. This narratological method immerses the reader inside the protagonist's disoriented and recursive attention, forcing us to revel in the load of time, the persistence of reminiscence, and the fragmentation of concept. The prose itself becomes a heterotopic area, a linguistic realm wherein the bounds among internal and external, past and present, splendor and abjection, dissolve.

The novel's end, wherein the narrator states he become "wounded into" the metropolis and it into him, represents the ultimate synthesis of this tripartite alienation. It isn't a resolution but an acknowledgment of a whole, albeit painful, integration. Alienation is now not a situation to be escaped however the very ground of his being and his belonging. He achieves a sense of area, however it's far an area described by way of mutual estrangement. *Cleanness* therefore offers a thorough vision of queer subjectivity within the cutting-edge world: one that recognizes the pervasive and inescapable nature of alienation springing up from cultural displacement, internalized shame, and ancient trauma, but insists onthe possibility of finding a form ofbelonging within that very estrangement.

Recommendation

Comparative research of post-Communist city Estrangement:

A compelling take a look at may want to situate Cleanness inside a broader literary landscape. comparing Greenwell's depiction of Sofia with representations of other publish-communist cities in works via authors like Olga Tokarczuk (Poland), László Krasznahorkai (Hungary), or Andrei Bitov (Russia) would remove darkness from the specificities and universalities of city alienation inside the post-Soviet bloc. this would deepen our knowledge of how one of a kind country wide contexts form narratives of displacement.

The Pedagogy of Alienation:

The narrator's career as a instructor, which this examine delimited, gives a wealthy untapped vein for evaluation. destiny studies should recognition specifically on the lecture room as a neo-colonial area and teaching as a performative act. Analyzing how the dynamics of energy, language guidance, and cultural translation in the study room make a contribution to his experience of alienation could offer a valuable intersectional layer to the present spatial and psychological evaluation.

A Narratological Deep Dive:

This paper diagnosed Greenwell's style as a "grammar of estrangement." A dedicated narratological examine should examine this fashion with even more technical precision, drawing on equipment from cognitive narratology to look at how specific

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syntactic structures (parataxis, hypotaxis, periodic sentences) immediately control the reader's temporal revel in and emotional reaction, creating a mimetic revel in of alienation.

Past Cleanness:

The Greenwell Oeuvre: applying the equal tripartite framework to Greenwell's other works, substantially What Belongs to You, would be a natural extension. A comparative analysis ought to hint the evolution of his remedy of alienation, examining how the longer narrative shape of his first novel versus the interconnected memories of Cleanness in another way shapes the exploration of space, psyche, and fashion.

Queer Alienation and the frame:

At the same time as this look at touched at the frame as a site of disgrace, a destiny observe may want to make the queer frame the principal recognition of evaluation. Drawing more deeply on bodily phenomenology (e.g., Merleau-Ponty) and queer theory, research may want to explore how bodily desire, illness, violence, and intimacy are skilled as sorts of alienation from and thru the frame, further deepening the information of the "cleanness"/uncleanness binary.

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